

# news clips

VOL. 18, NO. 11

## “Print-challenged” people across country helped by VoicePrint

By Carolyn Mullin  
news clips editor

**T**hough VoicePrint Canada relies heavily on the printed word for its existence, one of its promotional pamphlets loudly announces ‘Hear All About It!’

That’s because VoicePrint exists as a national non-profit organization bringing the printed word to a vision-impaired audience through audio recordings.

You know you have entered a special world when you enter the national headquarters in downtown Toronto. Though looking rather unassuming in a low-rise trailer behind taller buildings in the Don Valley area of the city, inside you find friendly greetings and – if you can see them – you notice the items placed there for those who can’t, including handrails in the halls and braille on various documents, including business cards.

Beyond administrative offices, the building houses several sound booths, recording and computer equipment tai-



Producer Tony King works with a volunteer reader.

Photo, Carolyn Mullin

lored to the company’s needs – and to the employees who have vision impairments.

“I like the knowledge you can get from the information recorded,” says Billy

Shakleton, one of the producers. Vision impaired, he and two others spend their days digitally fine-tuning volunteer’s audio recordings. *Continued on Page 4*

## The state of the newspaper industry

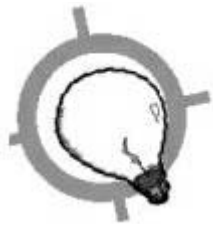
By Don Lamont  
Executive Director

**W**hen you go to a presentation by Len Kubas you always get something that causes you to think. His speech at the recent Suburban Newspapers of America convention in Toronto was no exception. This time he talked about trends impacting newspapers in North America and he encouraged those attending his workshop to read a study of the newspaper industry undertaken by the Pulp and Paper Products Council (PPPC), an association of North American newsprint suppliers.

If you pay close attention, Len’s speech, the PPPC report as well as other information picked up in the corridors at the SNA

convention, amounted to a State of the Union report for newspapers. While much of the discussions concern daily newspapers, there is a lot that can be learned for community newspapers about how flyers, demographics, technology, advertiser’s behaviour and the newspaper industry’s approach to change are affecting things.

At the SNA conference, Kubas said daily newspapers’ share of both Gross Domestic Product and retail sales in the U.S. began to decline around 2000, with their continuing difficulty increasing ROP revenues due to new competitors, the changing face of retail, and the effectiveness of preprinted inserts. In Canada, daily newspapers average \$80 in ad revenues per household vs. \$34 for non-dailies (30 per cent); whereas in the U.S. dailies take \$383 and non-dailies \$66 per household (15 per cent total). *Continued on Page 2*



# Just a thought

by Don Lamont

## Unpaid ads key part of program

*Continued from Page 1*

The good news is the prospect for community newspapers looks brighter because our revenue is growing, both for ROP and flyers, largely due to increased flyer business. Still, newspapers generally have become less attractive to many classes of advertisers because of declining paid circulation and continually rising rates. According to the PPPC study, the three biggest challenges facing newspapers are:

1. The retail industry is consolidating and shrinking;
2. Advertisers are rationing their spending more carefully;
3. Competition from new and emerging media.

The PPPC study says the maturation of the Baby Boom Generation is a main reason underpinning the upheaval affecting newspapers – particularly the echo of Baby Boom, which will be the first truly literate computer generation accustomed to receiving information and entertainment electronically. Rapid advances in technology have created more media choices than ever and this is contributing to declining paid circulation.

Newspaper Association of America (NAA) data shows Sunday and weekday daily newspaper circulation has fallen 11 per cent since 1990, while Sunday is off six per cent. These figures are consistent with OCNA's calculations for paid community newspapers in Ontario. Thankfully community newspapers in Canada both paid and free are still maintaining high readership levels within their circulation areas.

In many North American communities today, daily newspapers reach less than half the households in town and advertisers have sought out other media. The last mass medium will not be attractive to advertisers if numbers dwindle to that of a niche medium.

Consumer spending on services is out-pacing spending on goods. Retailers are focusing on urban and suburban markets and big box stores, power centres, category killers, Wal-Mart and non-store retailing are all expanding. Building materials, garden equipment and suppliers are growing most quickly. In Canada, about 50 per cent of retail sales occur in six markets. Toronto has about 17 per cent of all Canadian retail sales; Ottawa has per cent, and the rest of Ontario 18 per cent.

In the U.S., the top 50 retailers spend 1.7 per cent of revenues on advertising and the ratio is declining (department stores spend the most at 4.5 per cent). On average these retailers spend 46 per cent of their advertising budgets on inserts.

There was plenty of talk about flyers at the SNA conference because that's where print advertising is headed. Wal-Mart is by far the biggest retailer in the U.S., approaching 30 per cent share in all categories: It's No. 3 in Canada and climbing quickly. Wal-Mart spends about .3 per cent of its revenues on advertising (20 per cent on inserts). It uses newspapers very little for ROP.

*Continued on Page 3*

## Ad\*Reach report

OCNA has one month to go before the end of our fiscal year and the picture for Ad\*Reach sales is readily apparent. Sales will be lower overall in fiscal 2004 largely because North American auto dealer advertising is down dramatically (well over \$1M) for GM and Chrysler compared to 2003. Sales for fiscal 2003 were significantly lower after record sales in 2002.

On top of that, the sponsorship scandal has tightened federal government spending for most of the year, although October was the first good month for federal advertising in a long time. At year's end we could be close to last year's performance, which was pretty good historically speaking but not as high as 2001, the benchmark year. Still, we are optimistic the federal spending pie will grow in 2005; and with the progress we are making with Eileen Barak, our industry representative in Ottawa, we are positioned to take a bigger slice in future.

Likewise, provincial government advertising is down as the McGuinty government wrestles with its deficit. We grew provincial advertising to an all-time high in 2003, but this year's result is destined to fall below that.

The good news is that all other business is up 37 per cent to date – but not enough to cover losses in auto and government advertising.

Since 1998, about 50 independent newspapers have been sold to corporate members and this has impacted Ad\*Reach's display advertising sales as these members are now represented by corporate sales. Many of those papers attracted considerable national advertising.

Recent changes in Ad\*Reach staff have had little bearing on sales in 2004. Staff changes provide an opportunity to look at our operations afresh. Ad\*Reach has come a long way in recent years despite the sale of independent newspapers, and we will continue to transform ourselves to maximize national sales for members.

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## industry news

# Increased readership means increased sales

*Continued from page 2*

About 12 billion pre-printed inserts were circulated in Canada in 2002. Community newspapers have about 35 per cent of the flyer market in Canada, while dailies with TMC/EMCs take about 40 per cent. Generally speaking, a flyer will generate more sales than will a display ad. Pre-printed inserts grew in Canada from about 13 per household per week in 1996 to about 21 in 2004, or 62 per cent.

Metroland probably delivers about 15 per cent of all flyers in Canada. The number of pieces it distributes grew about 112 per cent from 1996 to 2003. Figures calculated by Kubas Consultants suggest between ROP and inserts, non-daily newspapers earn about 14 per cent of their revenue from inserts, while dailies earn 26 per cent. For large community newspaper companies heavily involved with flyers, that figure goes to 33 per cent for Metroland and reportedly to 50 per cent of revenues for Transcontinental, depending on how you count it.

Looking at the cost structure of preprinted inserts, the greatest opportunity for profit going forward lies with the distribution of flyers, which accounts for 40 per cent of the costs. There is still huge potential in distribution for low-cost distributors offering good service, with the ability to pinpoint the best customers. Top-flight distributors can place a community newspaper at the door from 3 to 12 cents each, again depending on how you cost things.

Kubas believes there are ways to improve the effectiveness of ROP advertising by understanding your readers and giving them what they want, using more colour and modular pricing, offering frequency incentives and by developing publications that cater to service sector spending.

The PPPC study says most newspaper publishers believe if they invest in creating new content and new types of newspapers they will attract new readers,

which will grow advertising again. However, some feel the newspaper industry won't be able to persuade investors to risk the high profits newspapers now attain on new investments needed to ensure long-term growth. Therefore most newspapers will fund these investments through cost savings, an even more tight-fisted approach to operations as well as occasional infusions from cash flow.

## Reader desires

Incidentally, a recent study by the NAA found newspaper readers want the following things. Deliver this and your readership will grow – and so will display advertising.

- Accurate coverage, free of errors
- Newspapers delivered complete and in good shape
- Advertising content
- Intensely, local, people-oriented coverage
- Relaxing, easy to read style

If they simply do what they have done in the past, daily newspapers will continue to lose readers and advertisers. Many daily newspapers have not renewed their reader base. Many believe youth will not become readers of the core product like their parents.

North American newspaper publishers believe their most critical challenge is maintaining and building circulation as well as attracting younger readers. Publishers intend to meet this challenge by concentrating on readership and creating a portfolio of information products relating to the local community, positioning themselves as the last mass media, emphasizing local readers, and connecting more deeply with more readers. Some products will be electronic and some will be print.

In other words, many publishers may not be able to maintain the daily newspaper as the vehicle for attracting all classes of readers; and publishers intend to use the brand itself covering various products

as the vehicle. Therefore, many plan to buttress the core product and capture other audiences with products appropriate to the reader's interests and buying habits thereby creating new centres of growth. But they must move quickly before others fill these niches.

Many feel most newspapers will only tinker with their existing product and business mode and make incremental change, while a minority would move to a modified version. Only a handful would pursue a truly new vision. Historically, the newspaper industry tends to be risk adverse – attack market weaknesses incrementally and not risk the high profit margins.

The PPPC study also predicts newspapers will move away from heavy coverage of breaking news towards giving context and explaining meaning. In recent years some newspapers have grown fatter in order to attract a wider audience. In future, newspapers will drop pages that do not interest large numbers of readers. Emphasis will be given to controlling costs, including newsprint. In short, daily newspapers will become smaller and more colourful.

The PPPC study predicts some daily newspapers may reduce their prices, but there will not be a great movement towards making daily newspapers free distribution for the foreseeable future (giving it away for free destroys their value proposition). Under these conditions, the synergies and cost savings arising from industry consolidation will continue to fuel mergers and acquisitions and joint ventures.

Community newspapers in Ontario face different and similar challenges to those of the daily newspapers in North America. But publishers in the community newspaper industry in Ontario can learn from paying attention to the state of the entire newspaper industry in North America.

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## voiceprint

# Local centres will emphasize community news

*Continued from page 1*

Dead air is eliminated and audio from different sources is smoothed out to produce a similar tone and frequency before being fed into a computer. The resulting half-hour programs, subdivided into all manner of categories, including the arts, sports, science and health, and international news, are then released through various channels such as the Secondary Audio Program of CBC Newsworld; on audio channels of ExpressVue, Star Choice and Look; and on the web at [www.voiceprintcanada.com](http://www.voiceprintcanada.com).

While the national service has been operating for nearly 15 years, Local Broadcast Centres – focused on community news – have started springing up in larger cities across the country. Over the next seven years, according to program coordinator Vanessa Carlisle, 100 LBCs will be created to provide more localized news to the communities.

Under the national program, editors spend their days scanning magazines, national newspapers, journals and periodicals for potential articles. As mentioned, they are subdivided into appropriate categories and then packaged as 30-minute segments. Volunteers come in to read those segments at the VoicePrint studios.

With the LBCs, community newspapers will play a much more significant role, Carlisle notes, since they can be the sole source of local news. Using the same 30-minute segment model, categories for the LBCs include news, sports, birth and death notices and grocery specials. Each LBC will also contribute a top news story with a maximum of five minutes' air time to be included in the national news broadcasts.

Instead of broadcasting to cable television, local segments are produced for the web.

Ontario's first LBC opened

in September in Toronto to serve the GTA as well as Oakville and Mississauga. Carlisle has been thrilled with the response from all sides – volunteers, subscribers and the local print community.

"Toronto Community News has been great," she notes, by providing free subscriptions to their products and by releasing the copyright to their material. It didn't hurt that the papers offered much publicity at the time of the launch as well.

## Rollout

Carlisle is hoping for more involvement from community newspapers as the rollout continues in the months and years ahead.

"You can learn so much from this service," notes Steve Pownall, national program manager. "There is a lot of information you just wouldn't get because of time or resources" whether you are sighted or not.

Pownall and Carlisle are

asking for community newspapers to keep VoicePrint in mind as the rollout continues. With only limited funding and resources, they rely heavily on donated subscriptions and the release of copyright for printed materials. When the LBCs are opened in new communities, they are also hoping not just to read the community news, but be part of the headlines to help earn new subscribers.

Though VoicePrint has had some celebrity readers and retired broadcasters take a turn in the soundbooth over the years, anyone can get involved – once they pass the audition. Test your radio voice by calling 1-800-567-6755, and when prompted, record your audition right then and there. VoicePrint staff evaluate the call to find those with clear, slow enunciation to be put on the list of volunteers.

For more information, go to the website: [www.voiceprintcanada.com](http://www.voiceprintcanada.com), or call 1-800-567-6755.

## Two heads better than one to shake out design cobwebs

Two heads really are better than one, when it comes to looking at a newspaper.

OCNA's Newspaper Exchange program allowed The Wingham Advance-Times and the Ingersoll Times – two publications owned by different companies – to critique each other, providing feedback

on what was being done well and where improvements might be made.

For our staff at the Advance-Times, the exercise was a valuable one. When most dealings are with one's own newspaper and one's own newspaper company, a fresh point of view can help shake

out cobwebs.

There is a strong temptation, not only to do things the way they have always been done, but to believe that is the way they must be done.

Participation in OCNA's free Newspaper Exchange encouraged the Advance-Times to dispense with that

way of thinking. The result cannot help but be a better newspaper. The Advance-Times would welcome the opportunity to participate in another exchange.

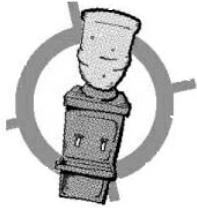
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# Water Cooler

compiled by  
Carolyn Mullin

- Tim Cumming left journalism to become a teacher but now he's back in the news biz, returning to his old post as editor of **The Goderich Signal-Star**. He has more than a decade experience in community newspapers, having served as editor of The Huron Expositor (Seaforth) and The Shoreline News (now amalgamated with The Beacon Times as The Shoreline Beacon) in Port Elgin. Matt Shurie left the position of editor/sports editor at the Signal-Star to become news editor at the Woodstock Sentinel-Review.
- Tom Urbaniak has left the **Mississauga Booster** to take an eight-month position as visiting faculty member in political science at the University College of Cape Breton, N.S.
- **The Almonte Gazette** recently welcomed new reporter Simon Whitehouse.
- **The Stratford City Gazette** netted Edward Fraser for its news staff as a sports and general reporter.
- Jim Barber, entertainment and sports editor at the **Barrie Advance**, has added the title of lifestyles editor to his portfolio. Lori Martin, formerly the lifestyles editor, is now responsible for regional feature planning, Sunday edition planning and copy editing.
- Emily Paige has joined the editorial staff of the **Tilbury Times**. The recent graduate of St. Clair College's journalism program will cover council news and regular happenings.
- **The Manotick Messenger** recently welcomed Carleton University honours journalism program graduate Dave Pizer, who will continue to work on a master's thesis while covering the local news scene.
- **The Londoner** added to its columnist roster with Sheryl Rooth, offers Rants and Reasonings, and Susan Reed is a psychotherapist offering a column in the Family Matters section.
- Paul Mayne recently left the post of editor at the **Spirit of Bothwell** to take on a job in London.
- Sun Media has purchased the **Cochrane Times-Post** and **L'Ours Noir**, effective Nov. 1, from Fern and Huguette Perron who are now planning their retirement. Fern had been a partner in the Cochrane Northland Post since 1980 before leaving to start the Cochrane Times in 1994. They later purchased the Northland Post in 2000 and merged it with the Times. Fern has been a career newspaper professional while Huguette became more involved in the business after retiring from her career as a court interpreter/translator. Timmins Times Managing Editor Don Biggs will serve as Publisher of the Cochrane Times-Post.
- With **niagaralife** magazine's recent 20th anniversary, founder Anita Skinner is passing the publishing torch to Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing. The company was officially sold in October, while Skinner will stay on to help with the transition. Formerly called The Downtowner, niagaralife is mailed out five times a year to upscale homes throughout the region to inform readers about theatre, wine, food, and events in Niagara.
- Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing has also purchased **Oakville Today**, effective Oct. 26, from Lars Melander. The paper originally hit the street back in 1984 under the title Abbey's Own. Melander changed its name in 1991 to Abbey Oaks News and again in 2001 to Oakville Today. The 26,500 circulation weekly covers the northern portion of Oakville, including the neighbourhood of Glen Abbey. Melander will stay on as general manager and is continuing to operate business as usual.

send updates to [c.mullin@ocna.org](mailto:c.mullin@ocna.org)

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Used Equipment

OCNA is offering a Used Equipment section in newsclips to encourage members with redundant equipment (computers, cameras, scanners or anything) to place free classified ads with us, c/o OCNA, 103-3050 Harvester Rd. Burlington ON L7N 3J1.

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### Columns available online

Looking for regular or semi-regular columnists for your newspaper? Check out the OCNA website. Columnists William Thomas, Eric Dowd, and now John Maclean upload their column for your use at a nominal charge. John Maclean is a veteran observer in the Parliamentary Press Gallery. Go to <http://www.ocna.org/cgi-bin/afsp7.pl?l=/Syndicated%20Work>

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## on writing

# Finding the killer of the youth's creative spirit

By Stephen Vogler

Globe and Mail, Oct. 7/04 with permission

I believe it was Mordecai Richler who one said that writing is like sex – much better to do than to talk about. I feel much the same way. Nonetheless, I recently agreed to speak about writing to students of an elementary school on the B.C. coast.

With 25 seven-year-olds staring wide-eyed up at me from the classroom floor, I realize Mr. Richler's thoughts will be of little use to me now. I somehow thought the kids would be older - that I could talk about getting published, honing one's craft, always wanting to move on to something bigger, better, a wider readership, a bigger pay cheque. All of this, I now realize, will mean nothing to these kids.

The teacher, perhaps sensing my predicament, asks how many of them want to become writers. Twenty-five hands shoot into the air, 50 eyes still staring, large and sponge-like. Innocence is a wonderful thing. I decide to go straight to the most essential aspect: Language. With language you can create whole worlds, I tell them. You can bring light to places of darkness, unravel mysteries, or create them. Imagine a day – no, a whole week, I say, in which nobody uses language, nobody tells any stories. All those amazing things that happen to each of us would be kept to ourselves.

We would all be separate. Language, I say, connects us. I don't think this will necessarily get through to all of them, or even most of them, but if it sticks with just one, somewhere down the line, that will be important. The story I read to them, about two sisters who paint their world into existence and step into it, hits home. They're enthralled, and I feel they'll all enter Grade 3 still wanting to be writers.

While I wait for the Grade 5 and 6 students to walk in, the principal warns me

they're a rambunctious lot, even though he's weeded out the four biggest troublemakers. Rather than lining up in three perfect rows, they scatter to creative spaces like cubby-holes and window sills. "You dress just like my grandfather," one of them tells me. While I have nothing against his grandfather, I find the comment difficult to take as a compliment.

None of them, I discover, wants to become a writer. I ask them what happens between grades 2 and 6 to cause this. They don't know. Realizing this is no time to launch into a thesis on language, I start with a story from my book. I've written in the first dog, I tell them. They love the irreverent tone, the way the dog makes fun of people's foolish rules, "walking around like they think they own the place."

They get all the jokes, and a few even want to buy copies of the book. They may not want to admit to becoming writers, but they still take immense pleasure in a good story. "You look really cool," one kid says in the hall afterwards. Redemption.

Last but not least, the Grade 3s and 4s enter the classroom.

Predictably, half of them want to become writers. I tell them about the odd phenomenon of Grade 2s wanting to be writers but not Grade 6s, and wonder what happens in between. Here is my chance to find out, at the impressionable age of eight or nine – when children begin to form their own identity and ideas – what happens to them. I recognize right away that their teacher will be the hardest sell of all. The other two were entertained along with the kids. Not this one. She sets her mouth in an expression that will crack like china if it's dinged with a spoon. No matter, I'm here to entertain the kids, not the teacher.

I tell them that language is as precise as science, as demanding and critical as the movements of the rock climbers they can see out the window on the Stawamus Chief.

Sometimes we feel trapped by language, I say, by the words that knock around in our heads telling us what we can and can't do.

Or by others telling us who we are and who we're not. But language, when used well, is a joy; it has rhythm and music and can liberate us. Stories above all, are fun.

Like the Grade 2s, they imagine a week without any language with which to share experience. Would anything in that week really have happened if we didn't relate it to one another in stories, I ponder? Such existential questions begin to stretch my own brain, let alone those of the impressionable eight- and nine-year-olds. I decide to move on to the story.

Of course, they choose the dog's tale over the young children's story. They don't get as much of the humour as the Grade 6s, but still enjoy it.

Their teacher, however, misses all of the humour. Or rather, she isn't willing to acknowledge anything so trivial as humour. Her face remains set in that brittle china mould.

I understand then, without a doubt, what happens to children's enthusiasm for things like writing, painting, arithmetic and life between Grade 2 and Grade 6. The bitter Grade 4 teacher is what happens. The death of a natural excitement to learn. Nay, the murder. I hope, more than ever now, that my talk about language gets through to some of them; that it will come in handy when they find it necessary to create new worlds, explore life's mysteries or shed light where there is darkness. My only qualm that day is that the four so-called trouble makers were left completely out of the story.

*Stephen Vogler has written for CBC Radio's Ideas, Outfront and DNT0 programs as well as for Explore magazine. He is the author of Whistler Features and has been known to write in the first dog. Reprinted with permission.*

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## member news

# Expositor lauded for First Nations stories

By Neil Zacharjewicz  
Manitoulin Expositor

In a recent study to measure the quality of mainstream media news coverage of First Nations issues, no newspaper fared better than the Manitoulin Expositor.

"Both in terms of quantity and quality, the Expositor was a pretty good model for responsible journalism," stated Maurice Switzer, director of communication for the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI).

The Debwewin Three-City Anti-Racism Initiative was undertaken by Communitas Canada, a non-profit educational and research institute based out of North Bay, to examine the extent of racism experienced by Aboriginal people and members of visible minorities living in the Northeastern Ontario cities of North Bay, Timmins and Sault Ste. Marie. Due to the size of the Aboriginal populations of the three centres, the organizers decided to include a previously-tested media-monitoring concept designed to evaluate print media coverage of Native issues. A total of 15 newspapers were evaluated as part of the study, including the Manitoulin Expositor, the Almaguin News, the National Post, North Bay Nugget, Parry Sound North Star, Temiskaming Speaker, Tribune/West Nipissing This Week, Algoma News, Elliot Lake Standard, the Sault Star, Toronto Star, the Cochrane Times Post, the Northern Daily News, the Timmins Daily Press and the Timmins Times.

According to the report, "Overall, Northern Ontario daily and weekly newspapers rated positively on the quality and quantity of their coverage of Aboriginal issues. The North Bay Nugget published the most relevant articles, followed by the Sault Star, but the weekly Manitoulin Expositor received the most favourable evaluation in its presentation of Native issues coverage. The most negative assessments were directed at articles published by the National Post, which was seen to provide the least balanced and most stereotypical coverage of Aboriginal people of the 15 newspapers monitored."

The Manitoulin Expositor was evaluated among the newspapers deemed to be in the Sault Ste. Marie area. The evaluation was conducted by a team of six

Algoma University students, three of whom were of Aboriginal descent, and assessed a total of 101 stories from the five newspapers under the supervision of Cecilia Fernandez, an active member of the community's Unity and Diversity group. Of the 101 stories evaluated, 23 were articles from the Manitoulin Expositor, and were chosen from the period of Feb. 4, 2004 to March 17, 2004.

While the Manitoulin Expositor did receive the most favourable response from the evaluators, Mr. Switzer noted this does not mean the Expositor is "the best." However, what it does mean, he said, is the Expositor demonstrated "the most credible journalism" during the period the paper was evaluated.

## FACTOID

The Expositor received the most favourable evaluation in its presentation of Native issues coverage.



Expositor publisher Rick McCutcheon said he did not realize the paper had been surveyed. As the newspaper of record for Manitoulin, he said the Expositor covers each community's significant events.

"We don't really differentiate whether it is M'Chigeeng, Mindemoya or Little Current," Mr. McCutcheon stated. "I've always felt it was our obligation to cover the whole community and to give the whole community a voice."

Evidently, he said, the evaluators felt the same way. "It is somewhat flattering to the editorial staff. It underscores our long-time policy that we cover the news on Manitoulin," Mr. McCutcheon said. "Wherever there is news, we do our best to cover it, and to make it a part of the historical record."

Furthermore, Mr. McCutcheon indicated that, if reported objectively, news is neither positive or negative, and he said he believes the community on Manitoulin perceives that.

"The Expositor is responsible, in the true sense of the word," Mr. Switzer stated. "The researchers showed the most respect for Expositor coverage of Aboriginal issues."

Mr. Switzer indicated one of the things

that was notable about the Expositor was, despite the fact it is a weekly newspaper and did not have as many resources as the larger newspapers, it produced more articles than some of the papers that had greater publishing frequency and resources. He pointed out the Parry Sound North Star and the Tribune/West Nipissing This Week, based out of Sturgeon Falls, printed a poor number of stories considering both papers were located next to substantial First Nations communities. The study also noted the Toronto Star carried only 18 Native issue articles during the five-week span in which the paper was evaluated.

As a result of the media-monitoring study, the project determined there was an emphasis placed on negative news stories produced on Aboriginal issues, with over 50 per cent of the evaluated articles dealing with crime, conflict, controversy or tragedy. However, it was also noted this was consistent with surveys critical of a general media tendency to publish negative news.

The study also revealed articles about Aboriginal issues produced by Aboriginal writers were rated among the best by monitors, while articles from outside non-Native sources, like wire services, were rated among the worst articles.

## Recommendations to Media

As a result of the study, several recommendations were generated as to how the media could improve their coverage of native issues. One recommendation suggests mainstream media proprietors arrange cross-cultural awareness training for their staffs, including their journalists. As well, the study suggests mainstream media organizations use Aboriginal organizations such as the Union of Ontario Indians as resources to develop story ideas and news content to assist the media in better serving their markets, such as identifying regular Aboriginal columnists. The study indicates wire services and national publications would benefit from networking with community and Aboriginal journalists to improve the standards of their reporting on Aboriginal issues, proposing possible internships and exchanges. Finally, the report recommended all journalists programs should include mandatory courses dealing with diversity issues, including Aboriginal topics.

## editorial

# Be consistent, not combative with sources

By Jim Stasiowski  
Writing Coach

“If you hate cops,” a 1960s-era bumper sticker said, “the next time you need help, call a hippie.” (For those too young to remember the 1960s, a hippie was a person who protested against the Vietnam War, racism, sexism, authority in general, haircuts and most forms of soap.)

Hating cops is still a popular pastime, especially among newspaper reporters.

OK, “hate” probably is too strong, but reporters often do not like police officers, and with some justification. When we need information about a crime, we often find the police unyielding.

And yet, police officers and reporters have a lot in common. For instance, we interview for a living. The cop takes on the suspect; we take on our sources.

We should, then, learn from those police who are good at interviewing.

A few years ago, I was on a shuttle from an airport to a downtown hotel. The shuttle was stuck in traffic, so I did what I always do: I started talking.

Fortunately, the passenger next to me, a lean, dapper chap, was talkative too.

He was a retired police officer who travelled around training active-duty cops in the proper way to interrogate people.

Boy, had I found the right guy.

I told him I was a writing coach, and we compared notes on interviewing. We agreed the biggest mistake most cops and reporters make is, they expect to fail.

Think about it.

The cop walks into the interrogation room. There sits a cocky, knows-all-the-angles suspect. The cop has a few clues, but nothing conclusive. The cop, then, assumes the suspect will say nothing incriminating, so the questions have a whimpering sound, a “You-don’t-happen-to-know-about-such-and-such-do-you?” tone.

The suspect, my ex-cop acquaintance said, knows he has the upper hand.

Similarly, the reporter walks up to the mayor (or school superintendent, or football coach, or police chief) and expects to be rebuffed. Our questions, instead of being firm and sharp, are as soft as chewed gum. The source, sensing our meekness, either spins a noncommittal reply or tells us, in code, to buzz off, to stop bothering

him or her.

The meekness isn’t accidental; it stems from the fact we all want to be liked.

Both cops and reporters are human beings doing jobs that take superhuman resolve. When a source yells at us or accuses us of being (pick one or any combination of) – stupid, insensitive, rude, overbearing, nit-picky, sensationalistic – we tend to back away.

Sources know our tendencies. We need to become less acquiescent.

When the source is inclined not to cooperate, try these approaches:

1. Be confident. That doesn’t mean you know everything; if you did, you wouldn’t need the interview. But show you know enough that the source is going to sound ill-informed if he or she doesn’t help with the story. Give the source the impression he or she is supposed to help.

2. Have a plan. Don’t just ask, “So, what do you think of such-and-such?” Realize you may need a series of questions that get increasingly specific, that eventually focus on the key facts you need. Anticipate evasions. Mentally rehearse how to corner the source.

3. Converse, don’t interrogate. If time allows, start an interview with something lighthearted, such as a comment about the weather, the traffic, the World Series. The source is not your friend, but you don’t have to be stiff, regimented. You’re hoping the source drops his or her defences. Be curious, not combative. Play the role not of a stern inquisitor, but of a considerate listener. When questions come like punches, the source covers up.

4. Vary the tone and topic. If you have three very tough topics to cover, give the source easy topics between them. You are alone, but you still can play good-cop-bad-cop.

5. Carefully use guilt or shame. When the source is evading, have ready such rejoinders as, “Gee, an answer like that makes you sound as if you don’t grasp the issue,” or, “Well, I think you’ll agree the public has a right to hear your views, so why not be more specific?”

6. Keep your eye on your goal. The reluctant source has a limit, a line he or she does not intend to cross. Your goal is to persuade the source to reveal more than he or she intended. Don’t surrender until your time or the source’s patience have expired. Most sources will try to knock you off

your stride; your goal is to knock the source off his or hers.

If we do our jobs well, the bumper sticker of the new millennium will be: “If you hate cops, the next time you need help, call a newspaper reporter.”

*Writing coach Jim Stasiowski welcomes your questions or comments. Call him at 410 247-4600 or write to him at 5812 Heron Drive, Baltimore, Md. 21227.*

## Letter to the Editor

I am observing a very sad trend in corporate re-organizations of community newspapers.

There seems to be a plethora of Vice Presidents for Advertising Sales, CFOs, Strategic Initiatives, Technology etc, however, it seems these companies are devoting fewer and fewer resources and personnel to the EDITORIAL portion of their publications.

As Lord Beaverbrook once commented “Editorial ????? – Oh yes. the stuff between the ads...” I appreciate the fact that advertising pays the bills and supplies the needed profit, but without “the stuff between the ads,” there will be no ads.

Don’t be too surprised nor complain, that within a few short years, our readership will suffer, due to too much canned and superficial editorial content. I firmly believe that strong editorial content will create discussion / debate, pro or con OF THAT NEWSPAPER.

Don’t try and appease the general populace, take a stand! By taking an opinionated stand, it will create a debate and or discussion. But these discussions / debates will be about the newspaper’s position etc. After all, we are members of the Ontario Community NEWSPAPER Association, not the Ontario Community FLYER DELIVERY Association.

Strong and pointed editorial will keep a strong readership, which will equal improved advertising sales.

**Michael Wollock**  
Publisher, The News  
Ottawa News Publishing Co. Ltd.



design

# Taking licence with little old ladies

By Edward F. Henninger  
OMNIA Consulting

**S**ome little old ladies I love. My grandmother was one. Come to think of it, my other grandmother was, too. Other little old ladies I don't love. I'm referring to those publishers and editors who act like little old ladies when it comes to the design of their newspaper.

One particular editor comes to mind. Try as I might, I could not get him past the fact I had run some letters together in the redesigned nameplate I was proposing for his newspaper. Somewhere, sometime, someone had told him that letters touching each other was a design no-no and was never to be permitted.

The design editor, the publisher and others involved in the project bent over backward time after time as they joined me in trying to convince the editor it was fine to let letters touch in a nameplate, though doing so in headlines – and certainly in text – was not a good idea. The design editor even stressed the nameplate could be thought of as a logo and, therefore, we could use much more licence.

Our little old lady was having none of it. He had learned it his way and it was going to be his way.

Rules and standards are wonderful things. They define what is allowed and keep us from traveling the dark road to design disaster. Like our grandmothers, the rules gently guide us along our way to what is wholesome and right.

But even our grandmothers knew that you can't have fun whooshing down the

playground slide unless you climb a steep set of steps to get to the top.

To not allow ourselves some freedom as we design is to deny ourselves the opportunity to discover and develop new approaches, new shapes, new dimensions for our readers. And, really, our readers are not going to hyperventilate because an R flows into an N or because we drop the dot from an i. Often, they won't even notice. What they will notice is the structure and the spacing between letters is uniform and the letters seem to flow well from one to the other – whether they touch or not.

I often wonder whether the editor who gets caught up in such minutia has enough to do with his time. Seems to me there are more important issues to handle.

Dealing with a design consultant, I understand, is a matter of trust. Part of my job is to build that trust as we go through the redesign process. Part of the editor's job is to allow himself to trust, to allow himself to grow, to allow himself to put aside some long-held beliefs in an attempt to welcome new ideas and new approaches.

Sometimes that's difficult.

Sometimes it goes against the grain.

But sometimes, it's the right time to kick off your shoes, hike up your skirt – only in the most ladylike fashion, of course – and dance 'til you drop.

Even the most proper little old ladies know that.

*Edward F. Henninger is an independent newspaper consultant and the Director of OMNIA Consulting. Offering*

*design consultation, redesigns, workshops. You can reach him at: 803-327-3322. E-mail: go2omnia@aol.com. On the web: omniaconsulting.org*



## NewsMakers

- **The Oakville Beaver** has published a comprehensive arts directory for the more than 300 individual and 150 group and business members of the Oakville Arts Council. The listing helps residents and businesses connect with special gift producers, talent masters and entertainers in the community.
- **The Brampton Guardian** recently reported more than three million visitors in a one-year period to its online version of the Brampton Guardian Gold Book. A community service providing consumers with retail, service and entertainment information, the print version will also see an increase of distribution in 2005.
- **Transcontinental's** Rémi Marcoux, founder and executive chairman of the board of Transcontinental Inc., was honoured with the Ernst & Young Lifetime Achievement award at the Entrepreneur of the Year 2004 ceremony in Montreal in October. Over the past 18 months, Marcoux has received numerous awards from his peers and the Canadian business community, including an honorary doctorate from HEC Montréal, Printer of the Year by Graphic Monthly, and was named by CEO Magazine as one of the 10 most respected CEOs.
- **The Mississauga News** is using CityXpress platform for continuous online auction to recruit new advertisers and generate incremental revenue. The Mississauga News, a three-times-weekly community newspaper with a circulation of approximately 120,000, began its continuous auction program in June 2000, and adopted CityXpress auction platform earlier this year. The newspaper now has 5,000 registered auction bidders, 100 active auction advertisers and generates \$400,000 (CDN) annually in auction revenue. By providing products that sell in the auction, businesses earn credits, which they can use for future print advertising.

## Junior Citizen deadline November 30

**T**here are only a few more days for community newspapers to put forward their nominees for the 2004 Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Awards.

Several community papers have received nominations and forwarded them to our office, while others have taken the great initiative to do their own nominating of a young person aged six to 17 who has shown themselves as exemplary. Nominations for the prestigious award must be received in the OCNA office by Nov. 30. Each year, more than 150 of the province's outstanding youth are recog-

nized through this program. Forms can be mailed directly to OCNA's office, but supporters may also be dropping forms off at your newspaper office. Please forward them as quickly as possible.

And remember, every young person nominated will receive a certificate of congratulations from the local community newspaper, regardless of final placing.

Tembec Paper Group has taken on a leadership role once again as corporate sponsor, while our members have contributed materials and promoted the program in their papers. For more information, visit [www.ocna.org](http://www.ocna.org)

send gossip to  
[c.mullin@ocna.org](mailto:c.mullin@ocna.org)

## ontario press council

# Star columnist waited too long: OPC ruling

Definitions of the word “underlings” are at the root of a complaint against the Toronto Star by Guy Giorno, former chief of staff in the office of Ontario Premier Mike Harris – a complaint upheld by the Ontario Press Council on the narrow ground it took a full year for a considered response to emerge.

A column by Jim Coyle published Oct. 3, 2003, just after the Conservatives were defeated in the provincial election, discussed what it described as “the cabal of backroom cynics formerly known as the Whiz Kids.”

“One of them was known as ‘Rasputin’ to his underlings,” Coyle wrote – a sentence that did not name the individual, but which Giorno said referred to him.

“The sentence is not accurate,” he wrote in his letter of complaint. “It is not accurate because when I worked for the Premier of Ontario my subordinates (underlings as Mr. Coyle puts it) did not call me this ... Instead, the term originated in Frank magazine. Later, the term may (according to the newspaper) have been used by MPPs.”

Describing the column as a “reflection

on character,” Giorno said he took pride in the work atmosphere of the premier’s office.

“I am understandably concerned that a columnist would print a statement that (1) is false and (2) revives an insult not published for more than five years.”

At a Press Council hearing, Coyle cited 15 dictionary definitions in support of his contention that the word underlings has a much more general meaning than that cited by Giorno.

“According to a wide range of references, the word underling means a general inferiority of rank and status. It is not a synonym for staff, employees or direct reports.”

He added MPPs (as members of the legislature are known in Ontario) “were (and arguably remain) inferior in power and influence to those in positions such as Mr. Giorno during the former Conservative government and could fairly be called underlings to him.”

“Therefore, the statement that one among the circle of backroom advisers to the premier in the former government was known as Rasputin to his underlings stands

as wholly accurate, legitimate and defensible.”

Referring to a year-long exchange of e-mail correspondence, Giorno said if Coyle really believed the Rasputin reference meant MPPs, the Star should have said so after receiving his letter of complaint. He added if he had received an explanation at the outset he would not have complained to the Press Council. But he said he remained skeptical of the explanation, which he maintained was made up at the last minute.

“You only dig up 15 dictionary meanings when you want to obscure the real meaning.”

In its adjudication, the Ontario Press Council noted what Giorno described as “a last-minute, made up, invented” explanation was offered for the first time at a hearing more than a year after Giorno complained.

Without passing judgment on the validity of the explanation, the Council believes it should have been presented, preferably in a subsequent column, soon after the complaint was received. And on that account, it upheld the complaint.

## Complaint against Monitor dismissed

The Ontario Press Council recently dismissed a complaint the Espanola Mid-North Monitor published a misleading story under the headline “Victory for hydro victim” about a trailer park resident whose electricity was cut off.

The story, published May 19, said Gord (Skip) Kemsley had been fighting for 10 months to have sewer costs removed from the bill he received from Espanola Regional Hydro which included charges for water, sewers and electricity.

Gary Keith, Hydro general manager, complained the article contained many false statements. He said there was no victory for Kemsley – his hydro had been cut off the previous December because his payments were in arrears. And, he added, the sub-headline, “Utility to reimburse trailer park tenant,” was wrong – “There is nothing to reimburse the tenant.”

The article was based on a May 6 letter from the Ontario Energy Board to the chief financial officer of Espanola Regional Hydro Distribution Corporation, which said:

“... billing and payment information provided to us by the customer shows that he submitted sufficient funds to cover

amounts owing for electricity. It appears that the customer subtracted amounts owing for sewer charges from the total bill, but paid electricity charges in full ...

“Given that it appears Mr. Kemsley did pay electricity charges in full, it appears he may have been improperly disconnected.”

Keith said Kemsley made a notation on his cheques that he did not want any of the money to go to sewer charges, but Regional Hydro staff did not know this because they do not see the cheques. As a result, he added, any payment was divided among the three services, meaning all received less than the billed amount. And when hydro arrears reached \$50 his electricity was cut off.

The Press Council noted the May 6 letter contained inaccuracies, but concluded the article was a reasonably accurate reflection of its content.

The council also noted there may have been some misunderstanding of the combined billing system for water, hydro and sewers. But in dismissing the complaint, it says it believes the article was a reasonably accurate rendition of the contents of a May 6 letter from the director of marketing operations for the Ontario Energy Board.

### THE ONTARIO COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER FOUNDATION

is the charitable arm of OCNA which provides funding for Journalism and Advertising scholarships; sponsors the Mary Knowles Award for Community Service; and other educational endeavors.

Donations are gratefully accepted by sending a cheque to The Ontario Community Newspaper Foundation, c/o OCNA, 103-3050 Harvester Rd. Burlington ON L7N 3J1.

If your staff performs fund-raising activities throughout the year, please keep us in mind. Tax receipts provided.

online advertising

# Recipe for newspaper disaster brewing

By Peter M. Zollman  
Interactive Insider

**H**ere's a potential recipe for newspaper disaster: TAKE: One weekly pennysaver-type publication, with lots of auto and real estate ads, especially from private parties, and dozens of display ads for specials from small retailers and service businesses.

**ADD:** A comprehensive listing of every local business, including brands sold, hours of operation, qualifications like "In business 42 years," address, phone number, a map and more details.

**MIX WITH:** A detailed search engine tool that reviews all the information in every ad and makes it available fast, with just a few keystrokes.

**SERVES:** Audience and advertisers.

**LEAVES OUT:** The local newspaper.

Think it can't happen? It's already started.

In Australia and Sweden, major directory publishers have acquired pennysaver publications with plans to merge the ads and the local business database in an online service that competes directly with daily newspapers and other shopping resources.

Visit Sensis.com.au. Looks a little like Google, doesn't it? Two simple boxes: "I'm looking for" and "in this location."

While it works only in Australia, you get the idea. It's simple, it's clean, it's effective – or it will be when it's fully integrated (which they say will be fairly soon) – and it's owned by the leading Down Under publisher of white- and yellow-page directories.

Sensis also offers BuySell.com.au, AutoTrader.com.au, CitySearch.com.au, Whereis.com (a mapping site) and JustListed.com.au, a real estate site. JustListed says it's "Sydney's fastest growing real estate website [with thousands of listings] – all types of Sydney property available to buy, rent and lease." (Sensis also uses that JustListed database for a Web-to-print real estate publication directly competing with newspapers. It's more than 100 pages, sells for A\$1.50 at newsstands and is distributed free by real estate brokers. But that's another story for another column.)

Sensis is owned by Telstra Corp., Ltd.,

the telecommunications company that's in turn part-owned by the Australian government. Telstra dominates the country's telecomms – land-line, mobile, data and broadband. Its BigPond ISP is No. 1 in Australia, and it has a major share of the largest cable TV company.

Other examples? In Sweden, directory publisher Eniro AB bought classified publisher Gula Tidningen from Trader Classified Media. In Hungary, TCM bought directory publisher Kisokos. In Canada, Yellow Pages Group offers local search in a pay-per-click ad program with FindWhat.com.

## FACTOID

What can you do to compete? Build comprehensive online local service directories at minimal cost for advertisers and then upsell into print.



What's wrong with this?

Nothing if you're a capitalist. Perhaps everything if you're a newspaper. Because as competitors aggregate more and better local advertising information and make it easier for customers to find what they need, and as audience(s) migrate steadily toward online and other interactive media, the ad pie gets sliced again. In a more challenging environment than ever.

### Works both ways

It can work both ways, of course. The Hearst Corp., a newspaper publisher and long an owner of yellow pages in Texas, recently announced it's buying White Directory Publishers, a large independent yellow page publisher in the United States. Although Hearst has been quiet about its plans, other than to say the purchase "allows us to increase substantially our presence in one of the fastest-growing segments of the media business," integration with newspaper advertising databases where possible is an obvious and logical strategy.

Now, it's unlikely your newspaper owns the local yellow pages. Few do. And as competitors, yellow page companies rarely work with newspapers – other

than occasionally as sponsors, or perhaps through a cross-brand advertising and marketing relationship, on the paper's and the directory's website.

### So what can you do to compete?

- Build comprehensive online local service directories at minimal cost for advertisers and then upsell into print. This may require a whole new sales model for your company, perhaps even a new sales unit (of one person?).

- Offer an effective self-service advertising tool and promote it heavily. Several vendors provide modules that let advertisers design and place their own ads, for print and/or online, paying with credit cards. If you could add just 0.5 per cent of your total revenue next year in new sales from self-service advertisers, wouldn't it be worth it?

- Explore how to provide pay-for-performance advertising online. Pay-for-performance is anathema to most newspapers, but if Google Local and Yahoo Local can do it, shouldn't you consider it? It can be especially valuable in categories that appear heavily in yellow page directories (attorneys, plumbers, dry cleaners, etc.) but rarely run in newspapers.

Newspapers – all media, for that matter – are undergoing painful and challenging transitions. They're evolving from mass to targeted; from a single audience to multiple audiences; from a single medium (in newspapers' case, newsprint) to various media; from ad-takers to ad sellers; from offering a relatively simple product ("the paper") to a wide range of products to meet the needs of various advertisers and audience segments.

If the yellow pages can do it, you can too.

*Peter M. Zollman is founding principal of the AIM Group and Classified Intelligence, consulting groups that work with media companies to help develop profitable interactive media services. Classified Intelligence just published a free new report, "EBay, Craigslist, E-Commerce and Newspapers," sponsored by CityXpress Corp., which is available for free download from ClassifiedIntelligence.com. Zollman can be reached at pzollman@aimgroup.com, (407) 788-2780.*



## advertising

# Not about what you sell, but to whom it's sold

By John Foust  
Raleigh, NC

**K**en is known in his community as a savvy business owner. He sells carpet – a lot of carpet. And he has been doing it for a lot of years.

I asked him how he makes media buying decisions. Without hesitation, he said, "I want my message to reach the right people."

"What about the cost?" I asked.

"Sure, cost is important," he said, "as long as you're talking about something that will get the job done. But what good is cheap advertising if it doesn't reach the right people. It's all about audience. I'd rather pay a dollar for a widget that works than fifty cents for one that doesn't."

Occasionally, I pose the question, "What do you sell?" to ad sales people. The most common response is "space." In a literal sense, that's true, because advertising is purchased in spatial increments – full pages, half pages, quarter pages and so on. But space is secondary to Ken. His number one concern is reaching "the right people."

Yes, it's all about audience. Ken can buy space from a variety of sources. But if you want to sell advertising to him, talk

about his target audience. Show him that lots of carpet prospects read your paper, and he'll buy lots of space. The better the audience, the bigger the space.

I once asked a sales manager at a machinery company what his staff needed the most. His answer could apply to any business, "Product knowledge."

What is your product? Readership. No other media alternative can duplicate your exact audience. The challenge is to make those readership numbers interesting. Most people find raw statistics to be cold and boring, so it is easy to understand why some sales people race through their statistical information. They cover readership like a stone skipping across a lake. It gets mentioned, but there's not much depth.

There are two things you can do to explain readership more effectively: organize and visualize. Let's take a closer look.

1. Organize the information. Stay away from vague terms like "a lot" or "everybody." Help your prospects think in terms of market segments – or niche audiences – characterized by population, income, education, age, transience, employment, retail sales, etc.

In recent years, sales automation has simplified the presentation of this kind of

information. That's fine, but keep in mind that not all sales people use laptop computers, and not all prospects like to watch slide shows. Automation should support – not replace – the give and take of dialogue.

2. Visualize the information. Statistics are boring. Look beyond the numbers and breathe life into your presentations.

For example, can you use play money to illustrate discretionary spending levels in different coverage areas? Can you compare a segment of your audience to the seating capacity of a local arena? Or can you point to the traffic in front of your prospect's business and relate a fact about the percentage of the people in those cars who read your paper?

Organize and visualize. Then people like Ken will advertise.

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*John Foust conducts on-site and video training for newspaper advertising departments. His three new video programs are designed to help ad managers conduct in-house training for their sales teams. For information, contact: John Foust, PO Box 97606, Raleigh, NC 27624 USA, E-mail: [jfoust@mindspring.com](mailto:jfoust@mindspring.com), Phone 919-848-2401.*

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