NEWSPAPERS CAN SECURE THEIR FUTURES BY REMEMBERING THEIR PASTS

by

Alyssa Lenhoff

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in English

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

July 2003

NEWSPAPERS CAN SECURE THEIR FUTURES BY REMEMBERING THEIR PASTS

Alyssa Lenhoff

I hereby release this thesis to the public. I understand this thesis will be housed at the Circulation Desk of the University library and will be available for public access. I also authorize the University or other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.

Signature:

Alyssa Lenhoff 8/5/03
Student Date

Approvals:

Julia M Gergits 7/30/03
Dr. Julia Gergits, Thesis Advisor Date

Jay Gordon 7/30/03
Dr. Jay Gordon, Committee Member Date

Chuck Nelson 7/30/03
Dr. Chuck Nelson, Committee Member Date

James Schramer 7/30/03
Dr. James Schramer, Committee Member Date

Peter J Kasvinsky 8/1/03
Dr. Peter Kasvinsky, Dean of Graduate Studies Date

ABSTRACT

For several decades, newspapers have been lurching from one idea to the next in an effort to keep readers. Few of the many readership initiatives have succeeded. In fact, many have cost newspapers readers they could hardly afford to lose. One of the biggest pushes to hold readers began in the 1980s and involved a series of steps that put news and information behind graphics and other devices intended to replicate television. Patterning themselves after *USA Today*, many American newspapers lost sight of their historic franchise as the gatherers and communicators of society's most important information.

This study raises questions about the commonly cited theories to explain readership declines and the efforts to stem those losses. The solution suggested is that newspapers must evaluate readership studies before launching any action intended to correct problems.

Newspapers have realized readership success by practicing narrative, enterprise and investigative journalism.

The appendix to this study is intended to offer teachers and students of journalism practical help for the fields of narrative, enterprise and investigative reporting.

CHAPTER 1 – REVIEW OF RESEARCH

Readership Declines *2*
Responses to Declines *4*
Explanations for Declines *5*
Television Examined *6*
Changing Technologies Examined *14*
Lifestyles Examined *17*

CHAPTER 2 - EXAMINATION OF THE EXPLANATIONS AND EXCUSES

A Defeatist Attitude *19*
Scope of Study *22*
Rhetorical Context *23*

CHAPTER 3 - A DISCUSSION OF THE MAJOR PROBLEM

Content Influenced *32*

CHAPTER 4 - REPRIORITIZING

Modern Trends *34*
Historical Roots *39*
Editors and Instructors *41*

APPENDIX

CHAPTER 1 – REVIEW OF RESEARCH

Readership Declines

Nationally, newspaper readership has declined in the last four decades (Tolley 1, Newspaper Association of America, "Daily Newspaper Readership" 1 and Albers 1). In 1964, for instance, 80 percent of the nation's adult population read a daily newspaper; by 2000, about 55 percent was reading a daily newspaper (Newspaper Association of America, "Daily Newspaper Readership" 1). Another way to see the decline in newspaper readership is to compare it to population statistics. Author Robert L. Stevenson's article for the *Newspaper Research Journal* compared population and readership statistics. According to Stevenson's research, the U.S. population rose 82.1 percent from 1946 to 1993, but newspapers' daily circulation rose only 17.4 percent during that period (Stevenson 5). This trend is expected to continue with another 5 to 10 percent loss of readers in the next decade (Christie, DiSenso, Gold & Rader 1). While statistics indicate that fewer people are reading newspapers today than 20 years ago, the reasons for the decline are debatable, and many resources – human as well as financial – have been dedicated to study of the question. The debate about why circulation has plummeted has yielded few ideas for reversing the decline.

Newspaper leaders must study the many variables involved in readership declines before taking steps to reverse them. Cited explanations for declines center around the emergence of new and better technologies and the changing lifestyles and preferences of people. This study will raise questions about those theories, examining how many actions intended to help circulation have actually worsened or complicated the problem of declining readership. The study will suggest that universities can play a role in shaping the future of the newspaper profession. Finally, this examination will include recommendations that newspapers can best secure their futures by looking to and learning from their pasts. Instead of a constant cycle of readership studies and newspaper revamping based on those studies, newspapers should focus on their historic strengths to secure the audiences who seek in-depth coverage and analysis. If newspaper editors, journalism educators and working journalists are concerned about the observable decline in newspaper readership, they need to return to journalism's roots, which are solidly embedded in narrative journalism. To pull in and hold readers, journalists must recognize good stories and tell these stories in a compelling way. Readers need, want, and appreciate stories that relate to them and their world. A return to narrative journalism will invest the profession in the most ancient of rhetorical operations – the telling of good stories. Good, sound narration will then lead to other branches of journalism, including investigation and exposition. Arguments to support this position will be explored in this study and involve three basic points: Newspapers will never be as visually interesting or as quick as television and the World Wide Web; newspapers exist because civilized society needs reliable, in-depth analysis of events and trends; and newspapers that have focused on their historic missions have thrived. The final piece of this paper is intended for those involved in training future generations of newspaper professionals. Instead of following the industry, journalism educators have a responsibility to lead the industry by instilling in their students the fundamentals of good newspapering.

This study is limited to discussion of the situation and relies on the experiences of industry professionals and available data. It is intended to raise questions and suggest a course of inquiry that could be followed and does not attempt to offer one definitive answer to the question of why newspapers have been losing readers. Instead, it poses a theory that the answer cannot be found in a single study but instead requires careful analysis of all available data.

Responses to Declines

During the past 50 years, a great deal of time and money have been devoted to the study of newspaper readership (Deleersnyder, Geyskens, Gielens & DeKimpe 338, Aregood 1 and Ward & Morgansky 1). Author Richard Aregood described the many readership studies: “In nearly every corner of the newspaper world, somebody seems to be studying readership”(1). Community Newspapers of America, the parent company of about 500 small- and medium-sized newspapers, spent what one of its vice presidents estimated to be “several millions of dollars” on readership studies during the 1990s (Rosczcyk). The problem, Vice President Steve Rosczcyk concluded, was that the studies focus on issues in isolation. He said one study might ask readers about their lifestyles, including such questions as how much time they spend reading the paper. When the results of that study were compiled, they showed that people don’t have a lot of time for a newspaper. So, the vice president explained, newspapers respond accordingly with news in quick-read and condensed formats (Rosczcyk). Then, the next readership survey would roll out with a focus on what people want to read, Rosczcyk said. This study then showed that people want in-depth and investigative stories told in narrative styles (Rosczcyk). The problem, of course, is that fulfilling both desires is impossible. They offer competing and conflicting missions. How could newspapers be both brief and in-depth? Rosczcyk said the next study to come along might trigger yet another course for newspapers to follow. These studies have been common, he said, since the 1960s and pose one of the biggest threats to newspaper circulation: “Everyone reacts to the data in a knee-jerk fashion and you wind up losing your core readers by all of the changes you make thinking that you are helping yourself” (Rosczcyk).

Explanations for Declines

Readership declines have plagued the United States since World War II, according to Shelton Gunaratne, a professor at Moorhead State University who has directed many readership studies (3). He has charted these declines in a series of online articles and lectures for the Associated Press Managing Editors Association. Gunaratne’s statistics showed that the dailies circulated per 100 people in 1994 declined to 32.1 in the United States (2). His findings are confirmed by others, including Tolley (1). Gunaratne compared the United States’ statistics to other countries, finding that Eastern countries were faring much better: “In contrast, Japan showed steadiness at 57.5, while Singapore (35.5) and Malaysia (11.7) showed growth consistent with their booming economies” (Gunaratne 1). Gunaratne said the data indicate that the United States newspaper industry has failed in its attempts to reverse readership declines because it keeps changing course, allowing marketing initiatives to define and redefine the purpose of the newspaper. Daily newspapers in the United States have attempted to stem losses with what Gunaratne has described as cosmetic measures that have failed. Japan and Singapore newspapers, for the most part, have stayed on course with traditional offerings of in-depth news, feature stories, business reports and entertainment (Gunaratne 2). In his research, he focuses primarily on contrasting experiences and marketing efforts, blaming marketing for hurting instead of helping newspaper readership in the United States (2). Gunaratne’s explanations will be explored in more depth through an analysis of actions some United States newspapers have employed to address readership declines. *Television Examined*

One of the most recognized and often-cited studies of readership declines was conducted by Wolfram Peiser. Beginning in 1996, Peiser set out to chart the effect television proliferation has had on newspaper reading (185). Peiser performed his research using secondary data from the United States and comparing it to information he acquired in a direct way in Germany (185). Peiser's 2000 article, "Cohort Trends in Media Use in the United States," appeared in *Mass Communication and Society* and concludes that the American television generation, defined as those born after 1950, have a closer relationship to television than their preceding cohorts (185). He determines that newspaper reading was lower among younger cohorts, but he is careful not to simply credit television's successes without first considering other factors. His studies, he said, were important because there has been "comparatively little research about whether the introduction of television marks a divide between cohorts (a divide at least with respect to their media use) and, if so, whether this may be construed as a long-term effect of television" (186). Peiser's study may also have some value for today's generation who can be classified as the Internet generation (Tapscott 4). Don Tapscott in *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation*, draws parallels between the television generation and the net generation, arguing that both generations will be altered by the new media (6). Peiser, however, is quick to note that other variables – not just the emergence of the new media – could be driving readers away from newspapers. Unlike other cohort studies, such as one conducted from 1972 to 1991 by N.D. Glenn, Peiser does not declare that newspapers have lost younger audiences to television forever

(Glenn 217). Peiser said it is important to consider some other factors: "For example, younger cohorts might be expected to read less frequently than older ones because of their higher mobility and weaker community ties" (201).

A study by Donald Roberts analyzed total media exposure for 8- to 18 year-olds revealing that these American youth spend nearly one-third of their days with some media, with television consuming the most time (8). The average daily time 8- to 18-year-olds spend with television is three hours and 16 minutes (Roberts 11). Those same children spend an average of 44 minutes each day with print media, 48 minutes with the radio and 31 minutes with computers (Roberts 11). The figures for adults aren't terribly different, with the average reader spending 28 minutes a day with his or her newspaper and 90 minutes a day watching television (Greer 1). Roberts' study, which was conducted in 2000, might show different results if it were repeated today, especially in the computer category. Roberts' data determined that 7 percent of these youngsters' total media exposure time was spent on computers – 5.5 times less than they were spending with television and 13 minutes less than what they were spending with print media each day (11).

The work of Peiser and Roberts confirms the beliefs that television and the Internet are attractive media for children in that age range. But the information does little beyond that. Using such data, however, some have concluded that the Internet will cannibalize traditional information sources such as newspapers (Deleersnyder, Geyskins, Gielens & DeKimpe). Their predictions may prove to be true. But the important question for newspaper managers have to understand they may be cannibalized, and if they have a chance to prevent the encroachment, they must understand why. Answers to these questions will allow newspapers to find a possible course of action instead of allowing their fears of these statistics to cripple their actions. Researcher Stu Tolley makes an important statement about how to read statistics: “From these facts, some conclude that newspapers are the buggy whips of the late 20th Century. They may be right. But statistics are not destiny. Certainly the newspaper business is not helpless unless it chooses to be” (5).

A study of the effect of the Internet on newspaper readership in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands revealed, “the often-cited cannibalization fears have, at least, in the information goods industry, been largely overstated” (Deleersnyder, Geyskins, Gielens & DeKimpe 337). The fears, however, have been spread with such fervor that important underlying information has been lost in and some in the newspaper industry have been addressing what may have been overstated or misstated problems in the first place.

An *American Journalism Review* article by John Morton serves as a prime example of how statistics and studies have been read without first understanding the whole picture. Morton attempted an explanation and analysis of Peiser’s study: “Newspaper reading habits tend to be passed along from parent to child. Children born into newspaper-reading families tend to keep up the tradition, those born in non-newspaper families tend to become nonreaders” (64). This statement is true enough on its face, but the problem then develops when Morton tries to understand why this is the case without enough information for such an explanation. Citing the period between 1982 and 1991, Morton said American newspapers enjoyed a period of stability in terms of readership and circulation (64). He concluded that readership patterns were stabilized during this period because of "the physical appearance of newspapers – especially due to increased use of color, thanks to the impact of *USA Today*." (64). Morton ends his article by urging newspaper executives to lure younger readers "in a responsible way, of course" (64). Morton is correct in his history: *USA Today* did touch off a newspaper design revolution during that time. But he is flawed in his linking of that design revolution to stabilized circulation. Other factors, including the then-booming economy, could have played a role in the circulation stability of that time. Morton's analysis and his conclusions are based on no solid statistics and a flawed reading of Peiser's work. Peiser never concluded a direct cause and effect between increased television availability and decreased newspaper reading (Peiser 201). Instead, Peiser said the data indicated the need for further study and consideration of other possible factors. Morton, however, took Peiser's findings out of context and developed his theory about *USA Today*, which is offered in a vacuum with no supporting readership data. Another problem with Morton's article is that he offers little direction for newspaper executives. He fails to address how to acquire younger readers. Tolley, however, does have advice: "Can newspapers find a way, year after year, to get copies of newspapers into the schools, homes and especially the lives of preteens and teens at least several times a week? (6).

While posing solutions may have been outside of the scope of Morton's article, he created the expectation for this advice by saying that *USA Today* had helped the circulation of American newspapers. Morton iis not alone in the line of thinking that he is advocating. Rosczcyk said entire re-designs and newspaper transformations have been based on such superficial analysis of studies. Peiser's study could be used to support an entirely different explanation for the problem of declining newspaper readership. The problem could be as simple as television or lifestyle changes drawing people away from newspapers at about the same time that television was becoming popular. While the readers were away, newspapers engaged in a series of actions intended to bring readers back (Gunaratne 2). It could be argued that when the readers grew disillusioned with television and came back to newspapers, they found that the newspapers had little for them because the re-designs and re-engineering had made them appear too much like television or other more superficial information sources.

The definitive answer to the question of how television has affected newspaper reading appears to be unanswered, and it may be impossible to ever resolve such a massive inquiry. Study data can support a variety of theories. For newspaper leaders, however, what is important in the process is not attaining the final answer about how television has impacted newspaper reading, but instead, acquiring answers to the question of why television has impacted newspaper reading. What is attractive about television? Is it its speed? Its visuals? The answers, considered in their entirety, can suggest a real direction for newspapers (Tolley 7).

A study by E.D. Sheppard and D. Bawden addresses some of those whys in its examination of television's impact on newspapers. There is no way for newspapers to compete with the speed of information delivery of television (Sheppard & Bawden 211). The researchers probed the television coverage of the Gulf War crisis showing that television surpassed newspapers for instant access to information with CNN leading the way (Sheppard & Bawden 212). The authors cited how CNN became the official source of information for even top U.S. administrators: "President Bush first learned that his order for the attack had been put into effect through this broadcast" (Sheppard & Bawden

212). But information delivery speed is only part of the value of newspapers and only one factor in a credible study of the differences and worth of each medium. In addition to its ability to deliver information instantly, television also has an edge over newspapers in its ability to deliver powerful images dramatically (Sheppard & Bowden 214). Its strengths, however, are balanced by its many weaknesses in a contrast with newspapers. Sheppard and Bowden explored some of those weaknesses: "News items involving ideas, processes and trends, rather than single events…pose problems for television coverage; there is evidence to suggest that such news is covered inadequately, or ignored completely by television" (Sheppard & Bowden 214).

Television as a source of information has resulted in other dramatic changes for the news industry. The question of what is news has been affected by television. For years, news was defined by the objective importance of an event or issue and the more subjective determinations of the reporters and editors involved in the stories (Sheppard & Bawden 215). While there was subjectivity in the process, it was still a pure quest for that which was timely, useful, unusual, controversial, educational or involving a person, place or thing of prominence (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, Ranly 4-6). Television's need for ratings has skewed the process of determining what is news (Altheide 4). Television has been eroding news to the point where it is becoming similar to entertainment (Sheppard & Bawden 216). Newspapers have been following the lead set by their television counterparts.

Other factors of television news challenge its ability to deliver quality content, including the usually short time – three to four minutes – devoted to each story (Sheppard

& Bawden 216). In addition, its often-dramatic visual images increase its attractiveness among some but actually reduce its information content to a cursory level:

> It seems likely that another medium, specifically the newspaper, must compensate for the breadth and depth of coverage which television news is said to lack, despite the views of some commentators that they now represent only a secondary source of news, unable to compete with the immediacy and visual impact of television" (Sheppard & Bawden 216).

It is clear that television has value. But the value it brings will never rival the role of newspapers in modern society. Proving this assertion, however, is challenging and much of the debate is "supported only slightly, or not at all, by empirical studies" (Sheppard & Bawden 215). Saying that their study is one of few to look at content, Sheppard and Bawden conclude "newspapers offered more context, comment and analysis compared to television which emphasized superficial information" (227). If content, context and analysis are the strength of newspapers and if there is no way for newspapers to ever offer information at the speed of television or with the dramatic impact, it seems a possible course of action is suggested. Newspapers, it can be argued with this data, should pursue their strengths and not trying to compete in categories such as speed or drama where there is no way to ever win a battle with television.

Peiser's study was often cited as an explanation for the decline (Peiser 1). Some concluded that it was a hopeless struggle. In fact, one media analyst, Bill Frederick, issued a stern warning to newspaper journalists in an online article published in his industry newsletter: "Do you work for a newspaper? Here's some advice for you: Start looking around for something else to do. Get your real estate license, go to law school, sign up with Amway or start taking in your neighbors' laundry because newspapers are fading away" (1). Frederick said newspapers have been in decline ever since television stations began broadcasting news (1). Frederick's conclusions could be construed to have support from some studies, including Pew Research Center surveys confirming that the decline of newspaper readership coincides with the advent of television news (Pew 2). However, Frederick's analysis, Peiser's study and the Pew statistics, considered in isolation, fail to evaluate the entire picture. Frederick sees one piece of evidence, declining newspaper readership, and another piece of information, the rise of television news, and links them as cause and effect with no further study or analysis.

The June 2, 2003, issue of *Editor & Publisher* lends more support for the argument that newspapers should exercise their ability to offer content, context and analysis. The article discusses the substance of newspapers and how that often translates into success with circulation. The journalism industry publication revealed its study of the 10 newspapers that have made the most progress with circulation (Fitzgerald 10). In its examination, *Editor & Publisher* looked at circulation figures, newsroom initiatives and other newspaper efforts, trying to establish patterns to explain circulation declines or increases. In all cases, *Editor & Publisher* concluded that the newspapers had grown their circulation because of content, not color or sizzle. *The Chattanooga Times Free Press* of Tennessee made the top ten list because of its circulation gains that Editor & Publisher said could be attributed to devoting more space to news. *Times Free Press* Editor Tom Griscom told *Editor & Publisher* reporters that decades of readership studies showed declines with little hope of reversal until the newspaper stopped its series of constant re-designs and new products intended to grab certain readers (qtd. in Fitzgerald

11). Instead, Griscom said, the newspaper merely increased the size of its news hole and within a year, saw circulation grow by more than 300 readers (qtd in Fitzgerald 10). Another paper to make the list is the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* that enjoyed a 2,000 daily circulation increase and an 11,000 Sunday jump after beefing up its investigative and in-depth reporting. In addition, the paper worked on its community coverage. *Editor & Publisher* said the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* understands what so many others forget: "If you do a great job with content, it brings readers to your paper. And readers bring advertisers" (Fitzgerald 13). A similar story is told about the Belleville News-Democrat in Illinois: "Investigative reporting isn't limited to big, occasional series, but is stressed throughout the paper" (Fitzgerald 14). Greg Edwards, editor of the paper, credits his reporters' hard-hitting stories with the paper's ability to grow circulation for the past 20 years "despite a shrinking home county of St. Clair" (qtd in Fitzgerald 15).

The *Editor & Publisher* article discusses trends that are part of what is hoped will be a newer wave of thinking (Fitzgerald 15). Instead of focusing on content, many newspaper executives and analysts spent years blaming readership declines on competition from other media, changing technology; and people's changing lifestyles.

In summary, attributing newspaper readership declines to the growth of television may be part of the explanation. What is important is to look at the whole picture, including changes newspapers made to their own content as a result of feared threats of television news, the demographics of the people who have continued to read newspapers, and individual newspaper experiences. Attributing the decline of readership to trends in the competitive environment is an unsatisfactory explanation. Newspaper leaders must learn to be critical readers of statistics and studies, asking additional questions and searching for the whole picture. They must probe every piece of data and look beyond the obvious.

Changing Technologies Examined

Closely related to the-television-can-do-it-better-and-quicker argument, is the commonly cited explanation that newspapers are dying because of changing technology. In his report issued at the Newspaper Association of America Convention in April 2002, NAA President and CEO John F. Sturm blamed the decline on choices people now have for how they receive their information: "We know readership has been slowly trending down, and the reason for this trend is understandable. People today simply have more choices for how they get their information and entertainment"(1).

At the heart of Sturm's conclusion is the Internet as an information vehicle for people (2). In a 2002 online article, Rob Runett, manager of electronic media analysis for the Newspaper Association of America, documented people's use of the Internet for finding news. Runnett wrote: "The American public's appetite for finding news and information online during the past three years has soared at a rate nearly equal to the growth of the U.S. online population." Twenty-three percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 were turning to the Internet for news; 24 percent were using newspapers; and 36 percent were relying on local television news (Runnet 1). The statistics for older Americans between the ages of 50 and 64 were dramatically different, with 18 percent going to the Internet for news, 60 percent to newspapers and 64 percent to local television news (Runnett 2).

In a 2000 online article published by "The Digital Edge," results of a 1999 survey by the Newspaper Association of America were discussed. The article said that 3,693 interviews were conducted in the top 50 designated market areas (1). Based on those interviews, NAA researchers determined that few readers of online newspapers were abandoning ink-on-paper editions (2). In that sample, 74 percent reported no change in their use of print newspapers; 15 percent of online newspaper readers reported less frequent use of the print editions; and 8 percent reported increased use of the newsprint version (Digital Edge 1). The statistics suggest some contradictions, but many important similarities and trends. People are online and seeking news (Digital Edge 2). It is not known, for instance, what prompted the 8 percent to seek more use of newsprint versions of newspapers. While these studies do raise questions, they also send a clear signal. The signal to newspaper executives is obvious: give people news where they want it. If it is true that people are abandoning printed editions of newspapers, a deeper analysis of why other media choices might be more appealing is required before passively accepting the theory that choice has accounted for newspaper readership decline. This deeper explanation will yield a course of action that executives could follow in their quest to maintain readers.

Instead of viewing changing technology as a threat for the future of newspapers, data collected by Finnish researchers suggests that changing technology may only be a threat for newsprint (Sodergard, Aaltonen, Hagman, Hiirsalmi, Jarvinen, Kaasinen, Kinnunen, Kolari, Kunnas, Tamella 1111). The Finnish researchers' study of the future of Integrated Multimedia Publishing devices showed that people cared about newspaper content. Study participants were given hand-held devices equipped with web surfing, e-mail, and a television channel to access various programs and a newsstand for reading magazines and newspapers (1119). The researchers found that most people viewed the device as a source for acquiring serious daily news content. The researchers described a reaction from some users of the devices: "Some users were actually confused when asked if they used it for entertainment. It does not have to be fun, said one user" (1121). This study has potential implications for the future of the newspaper industry. If people use these hand-held devices for reading newspaper content, it seems an easy step to conclude that newspapers and what they offer can be delivered in any format.

Along those same lines, Stephen Kimber's 1997 article in *Information Processing and Management* predicted that the newspaper of the future would be "a converged, seamless mix of text, audio and video that combines the advantages of the traditional newspaper's important power to time-shift information to suit readers' needs and desires and provide context for events with the unmatched power of audio and video to convey immediacy and emotion" (596). Kimber's predictions of the newspaper of the future have not yet been realized. His ideas suggest a course of action that is not currently being pursued with much – or any – enthusiasm by American newspapers. Central to Kimber's predictions is a core belief in the power of newspapers.

Lifestyles Examined

A third commonly cited explanation for newspaper readership decline is people's lifestyles and a lack of free time (Bombara 2, Bishop 1, Hoenish 1, Bogart 18). In 1999, the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Philadelphia Daily news reported 8 percent circulation decreases (Bishop 2). The publisher of the parent company of both of these papers, Robert J. Hall, wrote a letter to his employees explaining his thoughts about the decline. Hall's letter, quoted in the *Philadelphia Business Journal,* attributed the declines in large part to "changes in consumer lifestyles" (qtd. in Bishop 2). The question Hall fails to answer is why. What has changed about "consumer lifestyles?" In an online article titled "The Future of American Newspapers," media critic Steve Hoenisch cites decreased "leisure time" as an explanation for declining newspaper readership (2). Others have echoed this familiar explanation, including author Leo Bogart, who wrote: "The number of weekly hours the average person has available for leisure fell from 26.2 in 1972 to 16.6 in 1987, according to the Harris Poll" (Bogart 18). If it is true that people are too busy to read, the next question must be why aren't people making time in their lives for newspapers. What is replacing newspaper readership? What are people doing? The critical follow-up questions would be: why newspaper readership is classified as a leisure activity; Is newspaper reading a leisure-time activity; Or is it as essential as taking out the trash or doing laundry? These questions are important for the newspaper industry to ponder as it sets out a course for its future.

A 2003 study by Greg Martire of the reading habits of 1,803 adults and six different newspapers revealed that a lack of time is often cited as an explanation for why people aren't reading a newspaper (3). When Martire probed deeper, he found that the excuse of "no time to read" has little or no basis in reality and instead determined that people will find time if the content interests them (3).

CHAPTER 2 – AN EXAMINATION OF THE EXPLANATIONS AND EXCUSES

Given the clear decline of newspaper reading, as documented by the Newspaper Association of America, Tolley and Albers, editors are left with the question of how to change the situation. Answering the question, in turn, implies a set of more specific questions not thus far addressed in the studies mentioned, such as where are people getting information and how much time are they spending reading news online. The answers to these questions could be important guides for how to rebuild readership. Newspaper executives may conclude that they need to strengthen their online products. They may also conclude that they want to publish different information or stories online. The statistics about the Internet and free time provide important clues about how executives could structure their online and print products, offering different versions based on who is reading what. For instance, the print format of the newspaper would need to be targeted to an older audience, while the online newspaper would want to appeal to younger groups of people. The point is that there are options for newspapers once they understand that changing technology does not lock them out of the competition for disseminating news.

A Defeatist Attitude

In addition to the questions already raised about the foregoing explanations, there are at least two additional problems with the three theories of readership declines: they are defeatist, and they allow newspapers to avoid responsibility for their performances. For instance, if newspapers accept the explanation that competition is too great, they accept that there is nothing they can do to compete. Along those same lines, newspaper leaders who believe that reading a newspaper is leisure-time activity will be permanently halted by the alarming statistics showing that people do not have free time. Richard D. Gottlieb, president of Lee Enterprises in Davenport, Iowa and the former chair of the Newspaper Association of America, has criticized his colleagues in the newspaper industry. Gottlieb said that newspaper leaders are acting as though the fight is over: "Our industry is filled with people who do not yet believe. They think it's only a matter of time before new technology makes us irrelevant, before we lack a critical mass of readers, before we lose our bases of advertisers. They think we are a dinosaur waiting to become extinct" (1). This resignation can be seen in the trends with online newspapers during the 1990s. Doug Brown, in an article for the June-July issue of *American Journalism Review* explored how quickly many newspapers invested large dollars into their online product while neglecting the core value of their newspapers – content (54). Seeking a "fresh culture," Brown said many newspapers created entirely different online products with little or no association with their print newspapers. Quoting Bob Benz, general manager of interactive media for the E.W. Scripps Co., the article said: "by keeping that sharp demarcation, the Web sites lost the community connection, the tentacle reach that took newspapers as much as 100 years to build" (qtd. in Brown 55). Once Scripps realized that its websites weren't working, the company studied why. The answer they reached was that they were too quick to abandon strengths of their print newspapers and that they failed to bring those strengths to their online products. Benz told Brown that the company recently added its traditional newspaper muscle to its online product and that the company has transformed its "online ventures from struggling editorial sideshows to increasingly muscular profit centers" (qtd. in Brown 56).

Benz' experience indicates people still want and need what newspapers have always offered – a collection of experiences preserved. More people still obtain their news from newspapers than from any other source – about 60 million people (Newspaper Association of America, "Daily Newspaper Readership" 1). Dave Lindorff, a freelance writer based in Philadelphia, has analyzed newspaper circulation trends and responded to the much-exaggerated demise of the industry:

> The American newspaper industry has experienced probably the longest funeral service in recent history. One might think the eulogy was invented for it. For two decades the nation's newspapers have watched circulation slide on average about 1 percent a year. Each year, as the numbers come out, pundits call them out as yet further proof of impending death. Things aren't quite so bad. In fact, the numbers, looked at more closely, show the contrary (1).

He shows that demographics of newspaper readership have remained solid from an advertisers' point of view. Each day, about 56 million Americans buy a newspaper, and each copy is read by an average 2.33 readers (Lindorff 1). These figures suggest that about 58 percent of Americans read a daily newspaper (Lindorff 1). In higher income and education brackets, that figure is even higher, with 69 percent of people earning $75,000 or more a year reading a newspaper and 67 percent of college graduates (Lindorff 2). These statistics show that the newspaper industry – while certainly in need of improvement – is not doomed and that there is ample reason to be optimistic about the future. The numbers also show the dangers of abandoning the core product – newspapers and their strengths – in favor of another medium as Scripps did.

The figures for newspaper readers could, of course, be larger, and newspaper marketers have been trying to develop content or a formula that will bring in and hold additional segments of readers. George Thurlow and Katherine Milo have studied the readership habits of certain age groups and concluded that newspapers need to match their content with perceptions of what a particular segment of readers desires (34). Younger readers want more news about technology, while older readers want more content focused on health care (Thurlow 36). Frequently, newspapers have been quick to revamp their content based on such studies (Gunaratne 1). Gottlieb said newspapers have overreacted to such data, often bumping stories with traditional news value off of the page to make room for a story about technology, health care or one of the other targeted topics proclaimed hot by a readership study (2). Design, color and sizzle have also been invoked regularly to ignite stalling circulation figures (Brown 54 and Morton 2). Other analysts, including Brown and Morton commonly focus on design and color – the criteria that they believe attracts readers to newspapers. The problem with this type of superficial analysis is that it fails to consider the larger picture of what newspapers have done, why they have done it and, most importantly, how readers have responded.

Scope of Study

This study will establish the need for that type of in-depth inquiry. Through an examination of published materials, interviews and analysis, this paper will evaluate some of the major efforts and initiatives newspapers have taken in recent years to bolster declining circulations. The study will use the trends launched by the architects of *USA Today* as an example of the dangers of reacting to statistical readership data in a vacuum. The *USA Today* experiment is an icon for analyzing the effects of artificial marketing to drive readership. By studying *USA Today*, it will be possible to draw conclusions that could apply to other newspapers that have been quick to respond to studies and data. This study will also explore the foundations of journalism and argue that the future of newspapers is best secured by studying and applying the past. It will further argue that universities and schools of journalism must play a role in leading the charge back to the basics of effective newspapering. Evidence shows that newspaper leaders can reverse readership declines by taking simple steps and by remembering their important missions. In essence, newspapers need to do what they've always done well – tell stories in a more comprehensive and interesting way than any other media. The final portion of this study, attached as an appendix, was compiled through hands-on research and is intended to point a direction for university journalism instructors. This appendix is a discussion of practical methods for teaching students to practice narrative, enterprise and investigative journalism. The material in the appendix was developed through classroom application.

Rhetorical context

Journalists have long been historians for society. From their work later generations will sift truths and generalizations that help form societal identities. Author Hayden White in *Tropics of Discourse* outlines the importance of seeing the rhetorical significance of published histories. White explains that discourse is always moving between "received encodations of experience and the clutter of phenomena which refuses incorporation into conventionalized notions of reality, truth or possibility" (4). He is suggesting that all writing and communication are interpretive and "preinterpretive" (4). If White is correct that discourse is as much about the nature of interpretation as it is the subject matter being interpreted, this holds intriguing meaning for journalists who have long insisted that their work is objective. The notions of objectivity have served as a sort of shield for journalists who believe that their personal ideas and beliefs do not influence their stories. White, however, said information passes through several stages of existence in a quest for understanding (5). The process, however, is not scientific and is influenced by countless factors along the way. White explains the dangers of attempting understanding: "There is no rule to tell us when our original, metaphorical constitution of a domain of experience as a possible object of inquiry is complete and when we should proceed to a consideration of the elements which, construed in their particularity, simply act as parts of an as yet unidentified whole, occupy the domain in question" (6). Since it is often impossible to deconstruct discourse after the fact, White's point raises important lessons for modern journalists, including the need to be mindful of the importance of their information and the bias and experience they bring to shaping that information. Translating White's concepts to simple terms, journalists cannot possibly bring total objectivity to their work and instead must strive for information that is constructed with loyalty to the truth while being mindful of external shaping forces.

White also establishes arguments to question the validity of much of the work of modern historians, and while he doesn't make this connection, it is possible to extend his argument to journalists as well. He said many historians are unwilling to see certain truths because these truths might alter their views of the proper order of life (31). This argument is supported by his analysis of how most historians have embraced literature and the arts, while ignoring science. Extending this thinking to journalism enables us to see how future historians could use the work of some of today's newspapers to acquire a false understanding of modern society. Newspapers, such as the *Tribune Chronicle* in

Warren, Ohio, have instituted rules about the types of stories that can run on Page One and how much "negative" news can appear in each paper (Anonymous). These practices will certainly send false messages to historians trying to deconstruct and then construct an image of society. For instance, stories about murders are not given much prominence in the paper unless they involve the murder of a "totally" innocent person (Anonymous). Top *Tribune Chronicle* managers have explained that the murders of drug dealers, drug users and prostitutes no longer constitute news, as these people are not deemed innocent by *Tribune Chronicle* managers. (Anonymous). Bringing White's thoughts to this situation at the *Tribune Chronicle* underscores the dangers of using newspapers as accurate reflections of society. Instead, the *Tribune Chronicle*, and all newspapers, are merely the collections of the various filters through which information passes and the experiences of the individuals in a position to apply those filters.

White also argues the dangers of history by citing the work of Nietzsche: "Nietzsche hated history even more than he hated religion. History promoted a debilitating voyeurism in men, made them feel that they were latecomers to a world in which everything worth doing had already been done, and thereby undermined that impulse to heroic exertion that might give a peculiarly human, if only transient, meaning to an absurd world" (qtd. in White 32). This contempt for historians and their work has been widespread throughout many generations and holds a unique importance for journalists today whose work will always be judged with critical eyes by those who want to dismiss the past. White argued that a hatred of history was at the heart of the Nazi uprising in Germany: "This antihistorical attitude underlay both the Nazism and the Existentialism that would constitute the legacy of the thirties to our time" (37). It is critical for journalists to understand the rhetorical significance of their work for history. Newspapers become one of the most common tools for the work of later historians. These newspapers must be cognizant of how their interpretations of news and what it is will then become later generations' understanding of what was – a burden far more weighty than the half-pound of newsprint that is used to publish each day's paper.

David L. Altheide has examined how popular culture and the entertainment format of news reports has contributed to changing "cultural frames of references for experiences, events, problems and issues" (289). Mass media audiences, especially those who gain most of their news from television, believe they are in danger in their daily lives (Altheide 288). This is no accident, Altheide argues, because television managers and those newspapers that are patterning themselves after television want to grow their audiences and they know that stories about crime will appeal to their audiences. This desire to feed the interests of media managers is often at odds with the reality of what is happening in the everyday lives of the consumers of news and the communities where they live and more importantly in direct opposition to the tenets of quality journalism (Altheide 289). He explains the dangers of such a system for defining news: "I argue that when symbols are pervasive they both reflect and contribute to frames and discourse for subsequent meaning configuration" (287). Simply, Altheide is suggesting that reality can be shaped by false symbols.

Delivering news to the public requires a deep understanding of rhetorical context and significance. If Altheide is correct in his estimation of how meaning is acquired and how societal discourse is established, newspapers must be mindful of the dangers of mimicking television and merely giving audiences what has been proven to titillate, scare or intrigue them. Doing this will threaten the future of the industry and will have lasting implications for history and society. The need to be pure of outside and unrelated interests in news delivery, such as those driving television broadcasts, is extremely critical for newspapers as the guardians of the public's trust.

CHAPTER 3 – A DISCUSSION OF THE MAJOR PROBLEM

The concept that newspapers have a rhetorical significance beyond each days' product is a troubling thought when viewed through the pages of one of the nation's most financially successful dailies, *USA Today*. In addition to its own stature as a newspaper for the middle and working classes of society, the national newspaper also sparked a trend in modern journalism that de-emphasized traditional strengths of daily newspapers (Rosczcyk).

Inspired by Gannett Newspapers' insistence that *USA Today* was the model for newspaper effectiveness, many American newspapers in the 1980s began placing more emphasis on form instead of content (Rosczcyk). Newspapers began patterning themselves after *USA Today* to stem readership losses. Newspaper executives thought that by mimicking the Gannett flagship paper that they were giving people what they wanted – easy-to-digest news that resembled what television was already providing viewers.

Bold headlines measuring two inches or more and brightly colored pictures were slapped around stories of two or three paragraphs in *USA Today* and the scores of papers that followed that mold. A story about a study linking wine consumption with health would assume a position on the page above an account of unemployment hitting a record high (Rosczcyk). Colorful charts and graphs and pictures would be splashed throughout the paper. In the last few years, *USA Today* has modified some of its early practices, but it still focuses on easy-to-digest news (Lindorff 2). The *USA Today* phenomenon took hold in the newspaper profession. Mimicking Gannett, newspaper editors across the country adopted rules saying that no story could run longer than 10 inches and that no story could jump from the front page to another page (Rosczcyk).

Susan Svihlik, editor of the *Potomac News*, spent much of her early career working at Gannet Newspapers and said she has had a difficult time adjusting to life on the "outside" where she does not have to impose story-length or jump rules:

> "What I am realizing now is that Gannet started with good intentions but those good intentions snowballed and created a whole generation of newspaper staffers who have forgotten that we are in the business of telling important stories, not merely filling holes on a page with soft news and making it all look really pretty." (Svihlik)

In addition to rules about length, the Gannett phenomena inspired newspaper editors to place a higher premium on graphics and photos than ever before. Some newspapers even adopted rules for what percentage of the page had to be consumed with graphic elements and what percentage could be words (Svihlik). While undeniably true that news pages must be visually interesting, it is also true that many newspapers placed design needs far above content concerns. All of this, of course, was done, as Svihlik attested, with the best intentions.

The experiment worked for *USA Today*, which built and held an audience, but it failed miserably for thousands of small daily newspapers that lost more circulation in the years after cloning themselves to be a *USA Today*-like paper (Wise 1). What happened, according to Eric Wise of the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association, was that readers viewed the papers as irrelevant (2). They could get the pretty pictures and superficial information on television. Several other newspaper analysts have examined the effects of

USA Today-type journalism and arrived at similar conclusions. Lindorff, for instance, wrote: "During the 1980s, the newspaper industry and many top papers attempted to compete with television in the effort to be more entertaining and more readable. It was a mistake. They lost reader confidence"(1). Lindorff concluded that newspapers lacked the spontaneous interaction as well as the technological abilities to compete with television and its ability to deliver news instantly and in visually interesting packaging (1).

Some industry analysts have already realized that *USA Today* and all that it represented was no panacea for newspapers. The *USA Today* experiment is a powerful example of the dangers of reacting to raw data in isolation. One of the men at the forefront of the *USA Today* revolution has realized that the experiment did not work for newspapers other than the one for which it was designed – *USA Today* (Garcia 1). Mario Garcia, one of the nation's leading experts on newspaper design and one of the *USA Today* architects, shocked some when he announced in 2000 what sounded as a reversal of his earlier-announced beliefs regarding design and reader habits. Garcia proclaimed that rules dictating what needs to be on a front page are useless and not in the best interests of readers (1). In a 2000 online article published by the Poynter Institute, Garcia wrote, "No two days in the news are alike for the editor putting together Page One. On certain days, one big story may equal four, or even seven, small ones. Sometimes a photo may carry the weight of 10 stories, and so on. Individual elements are what count, not a systematic formula that forces elements to satisfy a quota on the page"(1). Garcia's reversal does not seem to have setback his career. He continues to serve as a newspaper consultant and is often cited as a design expert in industry journals and conferences.

Garcia is not the only journalist retrenching and evaluating what has happened to the profession. Roy Peter Clark, another journalism guru who was at the center of the 1980s and 1990s debate about writing shorter stories, said he never intended for newspaper editors to impose story-length rules. He has also acknowledged that newspaper editors have gone too far to make their pages visually interesting (1). In an online article for the Poynter Institute, Clark explored the question of story length, "How long should a newspaper story be? As long as it needs to be! The simple truth is that some stories are best told in 200 words, while others require 20,000"(1). Clark, Garcia and a few others analyzing the past are not powerful enough to turn back the trend of placing design concerns above content concerns in the name of holding readers. While it is important to realize the poor journalistic practices of the *USA Today* model, it is equally as critical to recognize that efforts to curb readership decline must not be launched in isolation.

A few industry experts are beginning to see this bigger picture by examining the failures of shorter stories, more graphics and bigger art to bring in new or hold existing readers. For instance, Frank Barrows, managing editor of the *Charlotte Observer*, has concluded that the way to secure new and keep existing readers is to practice traditional journalism (qtd. in Mencher 195). He offered simple advice: "The future of newspapers is breadth and depth" (qtd. in Mencher 195). Although Barrows issued a relatively straightforward directive, accomplishing his goals of breadth and depth will undoubtedly be challenging because of the practices that have become acceptable in newsrooms over the last 20 years.

Content Influenced

A whole generation of journalists is operating under false assumptions. It is fair to assume that no one believed that the premium on design would overwhelm news and information (Greer 1). Newspaper architects merely believed that it would be a way for readers to find the news more appealing. Unfortunately, it signaled to reporters, editors and ultimately to readers, a shift in priorities. For instance, reporters realized that the stories that could be accompanied by art received the best placement in the newspaper. In a recent interview, Ed Simpson, editor of the *Joplin Globe* in Missouri and winner of dozens of national editing and reporting awards, said he has struggled with the art versus story dilemma for his entire career: "I will have the best story that everyone should read, but it won't have any art. So I have to battle the demons in my mind that say that stories have to have art to receive good play." Even Simpson, who said he loves great stories and who preaches the virtues of long investigative tales, explained that there have been times when he has made bad news decisions based solely on whether a story was accompanied by art. Too often, Simpson said, the better and, perhaps, more important stories could not be paired with art. The Friday, April 4, 2003, editions of *The Joplin Globe* ran a story about a large garage sale as its lead because the story had a picture (Simpson). The first paragraph of the garage sale story is "With coffee in one hand and a map in the other, antique dealers, amateur collectors and plain-old junk lovers from throughout the Four States will be waiting outside Neosho homes well before dawn Saturday for what's being billed as Missouri's 15th Annual Largest Garage Sale" (A-1). Lower on the front page is a story about a woman whose three children had been found after being abducted. The story of the abduction did not have a picture. The lead of the abduction story is "Jennifer Roland has a bump on her head, and visible bruises and scrapes on her arms, but none of that mattered to the 21-year-old mother the day after her three young boys were found safe after being abducted by their uncle" (A-1). In an interview after the April 4 2003, editions ran, Simpson said the wrong content decision was made. He said he did not feel as though he had a choice, however, because of the art accompanying the garage sale story. Simpson is not alone. Designers and editors at newspapers across the country have been moving important stories to lower spots on the front page. In some cases, they will be moved off of the front page entirely, nudged out by a feature story about a school field trip to an apple-picking farm or other stories with minimal news value but strong art.

CHAPTER 4 – REPRIORITIZNG

A great deal of work and thinking, including a massive readership study by Northwestern University, has been accomplished in the last year regarding readership declines. Some of this work creates a clear path for looking back and drawing strength from the historical roots of journalism. Editors and journalism instructors can use this history to translate current readership decline thinking into a productive vehicle that could actually accomplish what years of failed readership studies have attempted: readership gains.

Modern Trends

A study by Northwestern University has shown that readers can be brought back to newspapers with relevant and fresh news and stories told in a narrative fashion (Northwestern University Readership Institute 2). Prompted by observations that news was taking a back seat to design, researchers at The Readership Institute at the Media Management Center of Northwestern University launched a comprehensive study of who is reading newspapers, who isn't reading them and why. In the first known effort of its kind, the "Impact Study," Northwestern researchers examined more than 47,000 stories in 100 newspapers across the United States and interviewed 37,000 readers and nonreaders (Northwestern University Readership Institute 1). They were not seeking isolated information about types of stories that attract young readers, but instead they wanted to know, in practical terms, what people valued in newspapers. The researchers started with a basic question: "Can decades of newspaper readership decline be reversed?" (Northwestern University Readership Institute 1). Months later, they arrived at the conclusion: "The answer is definitely yes. The things that newspapers can control – such as editorial and advertising content, service and brand – are much more powerful drivers of readership than the forces newspapers can't control, such as increased competition, demographic change and perceived 'no time to read'" (Northwestern University Readership Institute 1).

The study revealed that readers want the story topic to be "interesting and enjoyable" and they also want it to be "relevant" (Northwestern University Readership Institute 2). The researchers also found that readers care about whether the story is "clear, complete, balanced and factually accurate" and whether it is "readable" (Northwestern University Readership Institute 2). The researchers then discussed strategies for how to implement the findings. Phase one involves putting consultants to work defining the data and translating it into terms that newspaper editors and reporters could understand. Phase two, longer-term in focus, will be an examination of journalism education based on results of the study.

The results of the study showed that readers want the following news in the following order:

1. Community announcements, obituaries, stories about ordinary people
2. Health, home, food, fashion and travel news
3. Government, politics, war and international news
4. Natural disasters and accident news
5. Movies, TV and weather news
6. Business, economics and personal finance news
7. Science, technology and the environment
8. Police, crime, courts and legal news

9. Sports news

10. Education news

11. Parenting, relationships and religion news

12. Arts news

13. Automotive news; and

14. Popular music news (Northwestern University Readership Institute 10).

The next step, according to the Northwestern Researchers, is to train reporters and editors to write the news in a way that is appealing. The study underscored the importance of this "readability" factor: "Readability seems to be the most direct way to increase story appeal after selecting the topic" (Northwestern University Readership Institute 11). The researchers determined this by studying readers' reactions to the different writing techniques used to communicate a health, politics education and crime story. Each of the stories was written in three different ways: a 500-word inverted pyramid; a 500-word narrative; and a 1000-word narrative (Northwestern University Readership Institute 11). Readers appreciated longer stories for giving them all of the important facts and showing various sides of an issue, but they also found longer stories more difficult to follow and less relaxing to read. These complaints, however, disappeared on some stories, including science and education. Regarding length, the Impact Study concluded: "The important question seems to be whether reader interest is intense enough to overcome a more arduous reading experience" (Northwestern University Readership Institute 12). Although length was dismissed as a key readability component, style and content were deemed far more important.

Feature-style writing increased reader "satisfaction," and researchers have classified this style of writing as "narrative." The architects of the study feared that editors and reporters might view this style of writing as inferior. The researchers issued a warning:

> "When we talk about feature-style writing, we don't mean feature stories. We're not describing a story type but a writing style, also called narrative writing. … A concern editors commonly express is that feature-style writing means 'softening' or 'dumbing down' the news. Feature-style is not a euphemism or proxy for soft news in the research results. It is a description of a writing style. Writers can use feature-style writing to cover hard news stories without compromising the stories' informational value or focus" (Northwestern University Readership Institute 12).

Statistics from the study show that newspapers use inverted pyramid style for 69 percent of all stories, feature-style writing for 18 percent and commentary for 12 percent (Northwestern University Readership Institute 11). The inverted pyramid, where stories typically follow a straightforward formula of fact after fact, is an appropriate style for almost all stories. Although it is appropriate, the authors of the study stress that it is not always the best choice and clearly not the choice most preferred by readers. The researchers wrote: "Newspapers that run more feature-style stories are seen as more honest, fun, neighborly, intelligent, in the know and more in touch with the values of readers" (Northwestern University Readership Institute 12). There are gender preferences for writing styles as well, with women responding better to feature-style stories. The preference among women for feature-style stories, the researchers said, is not a desire for traditional feature stories, such as health, fashion and travel. Instead, it is merely a preference about writing style.

The Northwestern study, one of the most comprehensive and first widely accepted studies of readership, emphasizes three critical points about readers' desires: Readers want stories they deem to be relevant; they want to read new and different stories they have not seen or heard elsewhere; and they want them told in a narrative style. Even the researchers, who spent considerable time to reach their conclusions, have admitted that their findings are hauntingly familiar to the once-accepted practices of the newspaper profession to make content relevant, important and different and to tell compelling stories. In simple terms, the researchers are pushing for enterprise, investigative and narrative journalism, and for much of its history, the newspaper industry was heavily dominated by enterprise and investigative articles and stories that were told in a narrative fashion (Bryant 1). The trend away from narrative, enterprise and investigative journalism occurred in the early 1960s when newspapers began losing some of their advertisers to television (Pember 56). Faced with less room for stories, newspaper editors imposed rules about story length and began eliminating stories that were not deemed to be absolutely necessary. Television also took away newspapers' franchise on the narrative:

> If you look at newspapers from 20, 30, and 40 years ago, they're mostly narratives. Anything else was called a feature. Then came network television, pumped-up local stations, and CNN. Narrative – the old art of telling the story, seeing the plane crash, the building burn, the kid rescued, the athlete win, the fugitive captured – became video. Television became

> the nation's storyteller of choice. What were newspapers left with? The essay (Bryant 2).

The Northwestern study presents more comprehensive analysis and a better understanding of the readership situation than many earlier studies. It might be a mistake to follow all of its directives before also looking at studies that have examined television, changing technology and lifestyle threats, such as those completed by Peiser, Deleersnyder, Geyskins, Gielens & DeKimpe, Roberts, Sheppard & Bawden and others. The messages from an examination of the Northwestern University study layered with the others might present a near-complete picture of what readers want and need, why they need and want it and in what form they desire it. Clearly, narrative, enterprise and investigative forms of journalism will rise to the surface as top desires and needs of readers.

Historical Roots

Narrative, enterprise and investigative journalism can be traced to the 1800s when newspapers in Boston and other metropolitan cities published long, detailed accounts about the lives of the rich and famous or the troubles of the poor. In the early 1900s, some journalists practicing investigative reporting earned the title of "muckrakers" for their crusades for the truth. Journalist Ida M. Tarbell wrote countless investigative stories about Standard Oil, exposing how the company had been exploiting workers (Pember 575). In 1924, *The Tribune* in Chicago led the United States Senate to oust William Lorimer from office after exposing widespread bribery and extortion in connection to his election to office (Pember 562). The papers of the early and mid-1900s offer numerous examples of strong investigative reporting that prompted significant social changes.

The narrative stories that appeared in the late 1800s and early 1900s also offer interesting perspectives about the way journalism was once practiced. Some of the narrative stories from that time period allowed people to "vicariously enjoy wealth, status and celebrity" (Pember 210). These stories filled a real need for working-class people to know how others lived and to make decisions about their lives and futures. These stories captured readers' attention because of their narrative style, interesting language and attention to rich detail. It was common for these early reporters to write a narrative of a dinner party, including who was on the guest list, what they wore, what the hostess served, what dishes the hostess used for her guests and who said what (Pember 210). Laced into these details would be a broader story about the lives of the rich and important and how they achieved their status. Newspapers of the 1830s to the 1860s also offered readers detailed accounts of crime news told in a narrative style to entertain readers with the missteps of others. *The Sun* newspaper of New York, owned by Benjamin Day, is considered the pioneer of the practice of humanizing routine news. In *American Journalism*, Frank Luther Mott has collected stories showing the enterprising and narrative flavor of some early American newspapers. A Sept. 2, 1933, story read:

> Margaret Thomas was drunk in the street – said she never would get drunk again 'upon her honor.' Committed, 'upon honor.' William Luvoy got drunk because yesterday was so devilish warm, drank nine glasses of brandy and water and said he would be cursed if he wouldn't drink nine more as quick as he could raise the money to buy it with. He would like to know what right the magistrate had to interfere with his private affairs. Fined $1 – forgot his pocketbook, and was sent over to Bridewell. Bridget

> McMunn got drunk and threw a pitcher at Mr. Willis of 53 Ludlow St. Bridget said she was the mother of three little orphans – God bless their dear souls – and if she went to prison they would choke to death for the want of something to eat. Committed. Catharine McBride was brought in for stealing a frock. Catharine said she had just served out six months on Blackwell's Island, and she wouldn't be sent back again for the best glass of punch that ever was made. Her husband, when she left the penitentiary, took her to a boarding house in Essex St., but the rascal got mad at her, pulled her hair, pinched her arm, and kicked her out of bed. She was determined not to bear such treatment as this, and so got drunk and stole the frock out of pure spite. Committed. (Mott 222-223)

The language and writing in this story appeal because of the use of humor, irony and gossip. Readers are presented with facts in an interesting and entertaining way. Journalists of this time had genuine writing styles and voices, and readers developed loyalties to newspapers based on individual reporters or bylines.

Bryant said the loss of narrative from the pages of modern newspapers has left reporters with the weak essay as the only option: "The essay is different. It's journalism's salad, peppered with Baco-Bits of perception, sprinkled with crunchy factoids, tossed into a shredded mix and served with analysis crackers. The essay can be – and often is – a tasty meal on the reader's plate. But it's still salad" (Bryant 2). Readers need more of a meal that can be found in the narrative style of journalism.

Journalist Jon Franklin, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner said narrative is merely "chronology with meaning" (1). He said newspapers' prime purpose is for publishing narrative stories: “What are our pages for, if not the episodic revelation of our public (and sometimes private) lives? (1).

Editors and Instructors

Teachers of journalism must help students recapture the art that once was effective newspaper storytelling through a re-dedication to the real purpose of newspapering. Journalism teachers must be the first line in a massive education effort. John Ullman, an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire and a former journalist, is one of several journalism educators to recognize the important role educators must play in re-shaping the industry. Ullman, who has presented several lectures and papers to the Associated Press Managing Editors Association and is a trainer for many small- and medium-sized Midwestern newspapers, described the trends of shorter articles and more graphics as a “dumbing down to compete with television” (Ullman viii). Ullman has sharp words for the editors who have presided over the shift away from content in newspapers: “Without question, and with few exceptions, the current crop of editors/managers at daily newspapers will be judged in decades to come as being generally bad for journalism and probably bad for newspapers specifically” (xiii). Tom Wicker, a former associate editor of the *New York Times* and author of numerous books about the journalism profession, shares Ullman’s concerns. A transcript of Wicker’s 1999 lecture to journalism students at Northwestern University is included on the website for Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism. Wicker said newspapers must become more intellectually oriented and less event- and celebrity-focused: "If the print press follows TV down-market to celebrity [journalism], that's a quick road to extinction. … TV can do it better. Let them do it better" (Wicker 1).

Instead, newspapers must focus on their traditional strength, which is the ability to delve into issues in-depth, Wicker said.

A few leaders in the journalism profession, including top editors of the *New York Times,* are awakening to the simple truth that there is no magic formula, no amount of color, and no size of type that will draw in and hold readers. To prove that these design and story-length dictates have not worked for many of the nation's newspapers, these editors point to readership studies that continue to show declines (Newspaper Association of America, "Daily Newspaper Readership" 1). Instead, these leaders are recognizing that journalists need to do what they do best – tell stories, provide information and serve their readers. During the opening ceremonies of the 2000 annual Newspaper Association of America convention, organizers showed a film sponsored by the *New York Times* (Newspaper Association of America, "The Message and the Medium" 2). The film, *10 Lessons Learned from 1,000 Years of Journalism,* showcased simple wisdom developed by the Newspaper Association of America: "The message is more important than the medium" (Newspaper Association of America, "The Message and the Medium" 2). The entire convention, the first of the new millennium, echoed that theme with presenters urging newspaper editors, publishers and reporters to remember the basics of journalism. William S. Morris, then chair of the Newspaper Association of America, reminded publishers, "Those who wrote newspapers' obituary, like those who wrote of Mark Twain's demise, were wrong. The new century finds us on a roll" (qtd. in National Newspaper Association of America, "Still the Best Medium" 1). Morris told the audience that more changes are inevitable in the system for delivering news to consumers but that newspapers are still the best medium (qtd. in National Newspaper Association of America, "Still the Best Medium" 1).

The get-back-to-the-basics encouragement issued at the Newspaper Association of America convention is grounded in enterprise, investigative and narrative stories. In a speech to those gathered at the 2002 National Writers Workshop in St. Louis, Gerald Boyd, managing editor of the *New York Times*, offered some simple wisdom, "For too long, our profession has been in a slumber, leading our readers to regard us as superficial, predictable, and even irrelevant" (3). He said this perception caused readership declines: "Let's not kid ourselves. That was one reason for the continuous decline in circulation within our industry despite our best attempts at marketing and promotion (Boyd 2). Boyd said the future of newspapers depends upon reporters crafting stories that people want to and can read and above all, stories that are relevant. Boyd's remarks mirror the conclusions reached in the Impact Study.

The challenge for newspaper leaders is to help reporters and line editors shed years of bad habits, including prescribing story lengths, writing only in the inverted pyramid style and assigning only stories that have to be accomplished on deadline. Investigative reporting, enterprise reporting and narrative journalism – long the mainstays of the journalism profession – hold the greatest promise for the future of the newspaper industry. Other media, including radio and television, have tried to produce meaningful enterprise, narrative and investigative reports that appeal to their wide audiences, but the stories don't work for them (Sheppard & Bawden 213). The radio network, National Public Radio, prides itself on its in-depth stories and penchant for narrative journalism, but it also recognizes that its appeal will be dwarfed by commercial radio. In an article about NPR, Norman Solomon explained that NPR's audience is limited: "One in seven Americans age 25 or older listens to an NPR member station each week" (1). Television programs such as 60 Minutes have also achieved success within certain segments, but its viewers never number the readership of daily newspapers (Solomon 1). Television viewers far prefer other offerings to 60 Minutes (Solomon 1). In April Nielsen surveys, for instance, no news show made it into the top 10 viewed shows (Bauder 1). It is clear that television and radio are not capable of handling this level of substance. Newspapers have a unique franchise on this level of substance in reporting that no other medium has been able to replicate, and above all, people want and need this information.

Newspapers have an important mission and by becoming sidetracked from that purpose, newspapers are doing a tremendous disservice to their communities, their history and their futures. Trying to cater to the fleeting whims of a certain segment of readers or believing that form alone will attract readers has already cost newspapers precious resources and credibility. It is time for newspapers to stop the paper chase for the latest study that will answer the mystery of why readership is declining. It is now time to return to the fundamentals that have always worked and that the most comprehensive studies say will continue to work – old-fashioned story-telling richened by great reporting and strong writing.

APPENDIX

In an effort to help this study have applied value for students and teachers of journalism, the following portions of this report will depart from a theoretical analysis of what has been practiced. Its tone will also shift to a practical teaching tool. The following sections move to pedagogical advice for those interested in rededicating themselves to newspapers' traditional strongholds of investigative, enterprise and narrative journalism. For the last five years, there has been an ongoing debate about the ideal journalism education and the role of educators (Stephens 1, Sloan 1, Samuelson A-35). Journalist Mitchell Stephens has argued that too much time has been spent on the basics and not enough on advancing the profession (1). Students must be allowed to explore and move beyond the inverted pyramid. Investigative, narrative and enterprise stories are directions where they should be challenged to move.

Investigative reporting

The term "investigative reporting" came in vogue with Woodward and Bernstein and their *Washington Post* reporting about improprieties during the Nixon administration. An entire generation of journalists was influenced by the thought of meeting sources called "deep throat" in back alleys and gathering information from dozens of different sources. While Woodward and Bernstein did a lot to promote the public image of journalists, what they did is what good reporters should always do –get to the bottom of everything, follow tips, ask the next questions, ask the tough questions, dig for more information. At its essence, investigative reporting is simply good reporting. Teaching reporters and journalism students to practice investigative journalism is not difficult and requires only a dedication to go beyond the obvious to a deeper layer. The national association of investigative reporters, Investigative Reporters and Editors, defines investigative reporting as "Reporting that exposes wrongdoing or violations of law, regulation, codes of standards or common understanding or decency; is the work of the reporter rather than others; treats a subject or importance to readers; and results from attempts by others to hide or keep something secret." Sydney Schanberg, a respected journalist whose work led to the movie *The Killing Fields,* said the definition of investigative reporting is actually not all that sophisticated: "Investigative reporting really is shoe leather reporting. You go out, ring doorbells, talk to people. You don't sit on your duff in the office. You go to people's houses and have the door slammed in your face" (qtd. in Mencher 260). In addition to the shoe leather and the work ethic implied, successful investigative reporting also requires several other ingredients: sources, determination, a long attention span and supportive editors.

The Internet and the digital age have made digging for records and documents much easier and less expensive than it was even five or six years ago. Aside from time, few barriers prevent even small newspapers from tackling big investigative projects.

Ullman said he has a great deal of sympathy for enterprising reporters who want to go beyond the who, what, when and where of the story and begin probing the why. He explained, "Most newspapers are not set up very well for producing projects. Part of the problem is that the newspaper is event driven and preoccupied with putting out that day's newspaper. This in turn often makes supervising editors unreceptive to longer-term project ideas offered up by their staffs" (5).

Before beginning most investigative projects, reporters must have the following:

- An understanding of their state's open records laws and an understanding of the Federal Freedom of Information Act.
- Time and a commitment from an editor to support the project and help the reporter get it done.
- Reliable sources who are willing to share information and help lead the reporter to documents and others who have knowledge of problems and situations.
- Depending on the project being attempted, reporters may want to also have a command of various computer software programs for data management.

Many city editors and managing editors need encouragement to allow their reporters to pursue long-term investigative projects. Included in this encouragement should be some reminders of the historical and critical role investigative reporting has played in the evolution of democracy. Ullman has discussed this importance: "Investigative reporting has earned an important role in our democracy. Its historic predecessor, muckraking, is responsible for numerous safeguards built into everyday life. It played a major role in under girdling the realization of the need for regulatory agencies" (8).

Boyd, of the *New York Times* in his 2002 speech at the National Writers Workshop, encouraged small newspapers to tackle what they view as big stories. He urged: "At this, a unique time for our nation and the world, we must reestablish that which made us great and practice it as if our future depends on it. It does" (2).

Ideas for investigative stories do not appear the same way a notice for a city council meeting makes it into the newsroom. Instead, these projects start with a hunch of wrongdoing: "Investigative reporting projects must start with a reason to believe that something is wrong, that someone has done something wrong. These are rarely dreamed up in the newsroom. They come in from the street. That is, a tip, an indictment, or a series of observations by a beat reporter start an investigative report in motion" (Ullman 3).

Many good reporters who have earned reputations as strong investigators have said they are "lucky" and that news tips and ideas for stories appear before them (Simpson). The truth is that these reporters make their own luck. They know what to look for and they follow leads.

Investigative reporting does not have to involve massive amounts of money, time or resources, all considered to be scarce resources. Svihlik said her newsroom budget has been slashed in recent years and that she cannot conceive of launching an investigative project. She caught herself as she was explaining her financial woes: "I just realized what I am saying. Investigative projects don't have to involve a lot of money or even a lot of time. I know that. But I and many others have been conditioned to think of big, expensive beasts" (Svihlik).

Enterprise Reporting

The second type of story that has been missing from the pages of many modern newspapers is the enterprise story. Much like investigative reporting, enterprise reporting is not new. In fact, it is also what good reporters and good newspapers have done for centuries. Enterprise reporting is merely finding stories off of the beaten track. It is these stories that people will not be able to find anywhere else except a newspaper and it is these stories will secure newspapers' futures. These stories give readers a real reason for opening a newspaper instead of merely tuning into a radio or television account of the same event. Instead of writing about what happened at a city council meeting or whom police arrested, enterprise reporters find issue stories related to the news and they make those stories matter to readers. These enterprise stories look into an issue in a deeper way than a traditional news story. They scratch beyond the surface and usually involve people affected by a situation.

Unlike investigative stories, enterprise stories do not carry a connotation of wrongdoing. Usually taken from an event in the news, they probe a situation more deeply and help readers come away with a more developed understanding of a situation. In late March of 2003, many newspapers realized that they were in danger of losing their readers to television if they did not find enterprise stories about the war in Iraq. Because television news was beaming in live satellite pictures of rolling tanks and shooting missiles, print journalists had no choice but to compete by finding the stories behind the news. On April 4, 2003, the Tribune Chronicle published several stories about war developments. One was a traditional news story, documenting the battle for control of the airport. The lead story, however, was an enterprise tale of how Iraqi men claimed that they were told to fight or die. The first few paragraphs of the story, written by the Associated Press, reads: "KUT, Iraq - Many in Kut waved white flags and welcomed the U.S. Marines, and this is why: Saddam Hussein's regime, they said, was going door to door and giving their young men a sinister choice. Fight, or die. 'God help us because Saddam Hussein is killing us,' said Kasem Fasil, an old man with a solitary jagged tooth.

Behind him, smoke billowed from Iraqi military jeeps and a military school shelled by Marines. 'They want to give us machine guns and make us fight,' he said. 'We are not soldiers. How can we fight? And if we don't fight they kill us.' And so, as the Marines fought Thursday for this city southeast of Baghdad - countering suicide attacks, dueling at close range with grenade-throwing Republican Guard fighters and Baath Party irregulars - many of Kut's people made it clear they were sitting this one out" (Associated Press qtd. in The Tribune Chronicle A-1). Newspapers' need for enterprise stories is extremely obvious in times of great national or international news. The need, however, is no less at other times.

Most newspapers still assign beats to their reporters such as cops, courts or government. Some reporters see getting a beat as key to their career progression. This thinking – while common – is slightly misguided. Once on a beat, reporters often stop doing enterprise stories and, instead, become more like scribes, waiting for officials on their beat to tell them what is news. Good reporters find news and do not accept someone else's ideas about news. The best beat reporters are those who cover the nuts and bolts of their beats and who go beyond routine coverage to find the enterprise stories that will allow their readers a real look inside of a situation or event. Taking risks is a critical component of effective enterprise reporting.

Narrative Journalism

In newsrooms across the country, many reporters and editors are meeting for lunch, gathering after work and coming in early to talk about writing. Newspapers are beginning to spend serious money for writing coaches to teach reporters to tell stories that captivate readers. Narrative journalism, at its essence, is merely story telling with attention to dramatization, detail and dialogue. Stories that are written in a narrative style stimulate as many of the readers' senses as possible. In other words, with a narrative story, readers should be able to see, hear, feel and, sometimes, even taste what the reporter is describing. Newspaper editors are sending stories back to reporters, telling them to "take readers to the scene of the accident." These editors are insisting that readers want to hear the firefighter's heart race and her arm burns as she catches herself on fire rescuing a baby. At the opening of baseball season in 2001, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* turned out a large narrative project, the first of many in its efforts to change the language of its news pages. The Poynter Institute's web site has chronicled the Pittsburgh effort to capture the narrative story of opening day in an article written by that newspaper's writing coach, Bob Batz Jr. He summarized the opening day effort: "At the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, photographers and reporters worked together as a team to put together a new kind of narrative. When the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team held Opening Day at their new stadium, PNC Park, a largely volunteer team of *Post-Gazette* staffers combed the ballpark for vignettes that would tell the story inning by inning" (Batz qtd. in Poynter 2). The baseball project grew out of a storytelling group that organized at the Pittsburgh paper in early 2001. The Poynter article, explained the purpose of the group: "The idea was for writers and photographers to work together to create different, better, even great stories" (Batz qtd. in Poynter 1).

Some newspaper editors, including those at the *Post-Gazette*, who have re-dedicated themselves to the craft of narrative journalism are finding that narrative journalism is as much about reporting as it is about writing. In fact, in reality, it is all about reporting. Without good material to write, a narrative story can never be told and should never be attempted. It will fail without detail that must come from strong interviews.

The TV, the Internet, pagers and now, cell phones and Palm Pilots are delivering what used to be newspapers' alone – The News. What this means for reporters today is that readers can get the nuts and bolts anywhere. What they want from newspapers is far more sophisticated and far more in line with what our industry was created to do – to tell stories to our readers. Early American reporters referred to what they wrote as "stories." Somewhere in the last two decades, the word story was nudged out by the term "article." This is far more than a semantics issue. Newspaper reporters write stories. Articles are published by sterile think tanks. For their articles, newspaper editors came up with formulas for how they were to be written. The formulas varied slightly from editor to editor. But at their core, the formulas consisted largely of the "inverted pyramid" where the most important news was loaded at the top and the information deemed to be less relevant was put at the bottom. This inverted pyramid style of writing stomped out most – if not all – efforts to tell stories in an interesting and reader-friendly way.

Northwestern University's Readership Initiative project, reported on Northwestern University's Medill website and numerous other studies have shown the importance of being able to deliver news to readers in a format other than the traditional Inverted Pyramid. (Northwestern University Readership Institute 12). There are times when the Inverted Pyramid is what the story demands and deserves, but there are countless other opportunities when reporters must become gifted storytellers, when their words must grip and move their readers to the point that they get up from the couch and shout to someone else, "Hey, Ethel, you've got to read this." (Simpson)

Becoming skilled at telling stories is not as complicated as it may sound. In fact, most students of journalism are already on their way to becoming gifted storytellers by virtue of one simple fact – they know, or should know, how to get information. Information and details are the most important parts of effective story telling. It is logical. If a reporter doesn't have anything to write about, he or she cannot write it in a compelling way.

When reporters are conducting their interviews, they are actually taking the first and most important step toward writing the story.

Investigative, narrative and enterprise stories all share some common features. The most important similarity is in how the information must be gathered. No decent investigative, narrative or enterprise story can be done without conducting great interviews.

Great interviews begin far before the reporter sits down with pen and notebook in hand and questions in mind. All good interviews are based on extensive preparation. Many reporters have stories of how they botched what could have been great interviews because of how they failed to prepare themselves well enough.

Mary Neiswander, a former investigative reporter for the *Long Beach Independent Press Telegraph*, had an interview with the woman who was raising one of Charles Manson's children. Neiswander's friend, who was a detective, arranged for the woman to meet her in the bathroom of a courthouse. The two women started talking and then Neiswander casually mentioned that the company that she worked for owned a newspaper in her hometown. "She jumped from the chair, screamed and ran out of the door," Neiswander said (qtd. in Ullman 46). Neiswander said she should have talked to the staff of that newspaper before the interview. She said she would have found out that the woman hated the newspaper staff. Neiswander violated one of the first ground rules of effective interviewing. Never, in the beginning of a story, offer any information that could be construed as controversial or offensive to the person being interviewed. Ullman collected advice from Neiswander and other investigative journalists about interviews. Neiswander's comments were simple and direct: "You should find out everything you can about the person. A newspaper morgue is the easiest way. Public records are another way" (qtd. in Ullman 46).

In addition to being prepared and using common sense, reporters can take other steps reporters to ensure quality interviews. It is important to conduct as many interviews as possible in person. When a reporter is in front of someone, he or she will notice details that will move the story beyond the traditional Five Ws and the H. It may be how the person's desk is covered with half-eaten sandwiches from the last five late nights at work – a detail that will illustrate how the person has been working hard. This detail will be more compelling than the simple words – "John Doe said he has been working hard." When conducting interviews in person, reporters collect valuable details.

These details may then become key transitions for stories. What kind of desk does the person have? Does the person use a cell phone? Does the person have a clock in his or her office? Does the person wear a watch? Reporters should ask questions about things that seem out of the ordinary. It may take the interview on a good path or bring up an interesting issue for the story. At a minimum, it will put the person being interviewed at ease. Most likely, the person will want to talk about an object or a picture in his office. The object or the picture then becomes a comfort subject for the person being interviewed and may prompt him or her to begin talking. Once a person starts talking and reaches a level of comfort with a reporter, the dialogue usually continues.

Ask the follow-up question. Make people tell reporters stories with details. Train them from the beginning to include detail. If someone is telling a reporter about how she has grown the biggest carrot in all of North America, the reporter should ask her how she did it. If she said she fed and watered it, that's not enough. When did she feed it? How often? With what? What happened if she wanted to go away for a day, did she make special plans for the carrot to be fed? Did she sing to it or talk to it? Get her going.

In a January issue of the Youngstown State University *Jambar*, a student reporter wrote a story about a professor who has a prize-winning dog. (Student E "Professor Raises Championship Dog"). The professor told the student that he and his wife "spoil" the dog. The reporter never asked the follow-up question to find out that the professor and his wife cook three meals a day for the dog of lean ground beef, boneless and skinless chicken and eggs cooked in Pam. If the reporter had asked the follow-up question, she would have also learned that the dog sleeps in his own twin bed on silk sheets that are changed twice a week – more often than his masters' sheets are washed (Student E "Personal interview"). Readers would have loved to have known those details and would have certainly read the story the entire way through to lap up any more fun facts like those.

When producing their stories, reporters must also make sure that they are crafting writing that stimulates as many senses as possible – sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. The more senses that are stimulated, the better the quality of writing.

For instance, a *Jambar* reporter in January 2003 conducted an interview with Pat Sweet, wife of the university president. (Student B "YSU's First Lady"). The reporter was planning to write a profile about Pat Sweet. The first draft of the story started with a rather nice lead, "Pat Sweet doesn't want to be an accessory." This lead was then supported with comments from Sweet about how she views herself as more than the "woman behind the man." The first draft of the story merely tells that. It doesn't show anything. The reporter did a great job of getting some direct and powerful quotes from Sweet. She also attained a list of Sweet's accomplishments and nailed down the nuts and bolts, such as where Sweet attended college, how she and her husband met and how many children they have. What the story failed to do is to introduce Sweet to readers in a way that readers want and need to see her. What she has written are lifeless words on a page.

The first draft of her story and the rewrite with narrative detail are included below to illustrate how the same story can be told in a much more interesting and powerful way by invoking narrative journalism techniques. The story written in the narrative format is far more likely to capture readers' attention and bring them back to the newspaper for the next issue, again hoping for an informative and entertaining read.

Both of the stories are written cleanly. But the second story is far more likely to capture readers with details such as Sweet offering her visitor cookies. Readers have ideas about the kind of people who offer cookies to their guests. It will help them visualize her more than mere quotations and an occasional transition.

Student Work

PAT SWEET

FIRST DRAFT

Pat Sweet isn't just an accessory.

Sweet, wife of University President David Sweet is proving she knows how to stay busy and knew from an early age that, as she put it, "wanted to use my brain." A graduate of the University of Oklahoma, with an undergraduate degree in Psychology and a minor in political science, she decided early on that she "didn't want to be an accessory."

A member of the Symphony Board, and a number of non- - profit organizations, Sweet is an "advocate for revitalization of the city," and feels that is "exciting and rewarding to be part of the resurgence" in Youngstown's urban environment.

"We like urban areas, and Youngstown is a wonderful community, " said Sweet in an interview in her Liberty home Friday afternoon.

Sweet has been living in urban environments since her marriage in 1965. First, living in Columbus, OH, and then moving to Cleveland in 1977 when her husband became Dean of the Levin College of Urban Development at Cleveland State University. Sweet ran some of her own development projects there, as well.

As Executive Director of the Educational Fund of the League of Women Voters, Sweet worked on a number of publications. These include "A City Guide to Cleveland", and "One Man, One Vote," a handbook chronicling the black movement to gain voting rights.

Sweet also became involved in a number of non-profit organizations, and student focused leadership programs. Lookup to Cleveland, a student leadership program that helped students find a role in their city's future, was one of them.

"It's one of the things I am most proud of," said Sweet of the program. "It's critical to groom the city's next generation, and cultivate their interests."

While living in Cleveland, Sweet also reached out to the students of Cleveland State University. Opening her home every year, Sweet and her husband hosted a picnic each spring for the students of the college of urban renewal.

Moving to Youngstown in 2000, Sweet resigned her post with the Cleveland League of Women Voters. In Youngstown she remains active with the area's non- profit organizations, and student development and leadership.

"I wanted to be a full-time helper," said Sweet with a smile. "I wanted to be an advocate for the University to the community."

The mother of four promotes the university's art program, her staircase and den covered with student artwork, and emphasizes the need for the university to connect with the community.

"I want students that go there to feel rewarded. I hope they take advantage of the arts, sports and clubs offered, " Sweet said.

She is also involved with the redevelopment of Youngstown's urban area. A few months ago, Sweet organized a trolley tour of the north side for local women leaders.

As for living her life in the public eye, Sweet considers it one of her biggest challenges.

"I have a lot of opinions. You have to guard how you express yourself," she said. "Sometimes it's difficult because people put expectations on you."

PAT SWEET

REWRITE WITH NARRATIVE STYLE

The Jambar

Wearing a gray skirt, sweater and black boots, Pat Sweet was at ease with a guest coming into her home. "Come in. Come in," she said, taking her visitor's coat.

Cookies were laid out on a counter in the kitchen and nearly every room was decorated with a flower arrangement.

But first, the tour. Sweet led her visitor up the brightly-lit back staircase of her Liberty home to the upstairs office she shares with her husband.

Walking quickly, she moved from room to room, explaining renovations they have made in the last few years.

Pat Sweet - wife of YSU President David Sweet - is proud of the home, proud of the work she does as a volunteer in the community and proud of her husband.

Back downstairs in a room with a piano and two large windows looking out to the backyard, Pat Sweet talked about how she has lived her life to be more than just what she called "an accessory."

“I wanted to use my brain," she said, explaining that she earned a Bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma.

Pat Sweet said she and her husband both majored in psychology and minored in political science - a fact that she said led to many lively conversations when they were younger.

Sitting cross-legged on a white couch, Pat Sweet said one of the biggest challenges she faces is knowing when to keep her opinions to herself.

"I have a lot of opinions. You have to guard how you express yourself," she said. "Sometimes it's difficult because people put expectations on you."

Stiffening her position on the couch and losing her easy smile, Pat Sweet said she has the hardest time controlling her opinions about her husband.

She said she was surprised that people questioned whether David Sweet deserved a raise YSU trustees awarded him earlier this year.

"It was very difficult," she said, explaining that she and her husband are not accustomed to being "front-page" news.

In addition to being her husband's supporter, one of her long-time friends called her one of YSU's biggest supporters. "She is dedicated to the university. She is a tremendous sports booster and loves YSU athletics," said YSU Vice President John Habat.

In a telephone interview, David Sweet said his wife has given him "moral, intellectual, loving support."

He continued, "She is key to the progress we have made here....She is a gracious hostess in terms of inviting people to our home, encouraging folks to invest in the university and its students."

Motioning to an already set table in the dining room, Pat Sweet explained that she would be hosting a dinner party that evening. She said she likes to use her own dishes and glassware instead of having the caterer bring them.

Over the past 21 months, Pat Sweet said

she has opened her home to more than 1,500 people and hosted 44 different events.

Pausing to notice that her visitor had not yet eaten a cookie, Pat Sweet said, "You can't leave until you eat a cookie."

Glancing out her back window to the snow-covered trees, Pat Sweet said she feels at home in the Mahoning Valley.

"We like urban areas, and Youngstown is a wonderful community," she said.

Pat Sweet, a mother of four and a grandmother, said she is active with a number of organizations, including the Symphony Board, and other non-profit groups.

She calls herself an "advocate for revitalization of the city."

"[It's] exciting and rewarding to be part of the resurgence," she said.

A few months ago, she organized a trolley tour of the north side for local women leaders.

Sweet has been living in urban environments since marrying David Sweet in 1965.

They first lived in Columbus and then moved to Cleveland in 1977 when her husband became dean of the Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University.

Talking about her past came easily for her. Sipping on her iced tea, she listed many organizations she worked with in Cleveland.

As executive director of the Educational Fund of the League of Women Voters, she worked on a number of publications, including "A City Guide to Cleveland." She also helped develop "One Man, One Vote," a handbook chronicling the African-American movement to gain voting rights.

She also worked with several student-focused leadership programs, including Lookup to Cleveland where students try to find a role in their city's future.

"It's one of the things I am most proud of," she said. "It's critical to groom the city's next generation, and cultivate their interests."

While living in Cleveland, Sweet also said she reached out to the students of Cleveland State University the same way she is trying to reach out to the students of YSU.

"I want students that go there to feel rewarded," she said. "I hope they take advantage of the arts, sports and clubs offered.

Lining the front staircase of their home and on the walls in their den hang artwork created by YSU students. Referring to a drawing in the den, she said she asked a YSU student majoring in art to draw her a colored pencil image of Don Quixote.

She said her husband likes Don Quixote and they have decorated their den with numerous paintings and drawings of the literary figure.

When she and her husband moved to the community in 2000, Pat Sweet resigned her post with the Cleveland League of Women Voters.

"I wanted to be a full-time helper," Sweet said.

Teaching Tips for Narrative

Teaching young reporters to write in a narrative style is actually a rather easy task. The biggest threshold that editors and journalism instructors will face in teaching narrative journalism will be to convince students that the details required for effective narrative storytelling are appropriate and interesting.

In Spring 2003, ten students enrolled in the Journalism Workshop course or completing internships at *The Jambar* at Youngstown State University were introduced to the concept of narrative journalism. For two weeks, students were asked to read, analyze and then write responses to numerous stories written in a narrative style. In addition, the students talked with me and each other about the practice of narrative journalism. Many had strong reactions to it, saying they never knew that it was acceptable to include anything except the Five Ws and the H in a story.

One of the stories the students read and responded to was an article written by Rick Bragg of the New York Times. Bragg, in a story that ran on the front page of the New York Times in January 2003, told the story of a man accused of a Ku Klux Klan slaying from the 1960s, the police officer who pursued the decades-old case and the trial awaiting both (A-1).

Bragg's story is reprinted on the following page to lend context to the student reaction summarized later.

Example of Narrative Journalism

January 26, 2003, Sunday
NATIONAL DESK

Last Cry for Justice in Mississippi As U.S. Trial Revisits '66 Killing

By RICK BRAGG (NYT)
1694 words

JACKSON, Miss., Jan. 23 -- Now, at 66, Donald Butler hunts only deer, patiently searching the muddy winter landscape with eyes that are not as sharp as they used to be, but keen enough. "I killed two this year," he said.

Once, he was a determined young investigator with the Mississippi Highway Patrol, and his manhunts for violent white supremacists led him deep into mazes of public apathy and political corruption.

"No one was trying to catch them real hard," Mr. Butler said of the men who escaped their crimes as juries ignored evidence and even confessions. But he hunted, as if he knew the ghosts of their victims would be unappeased.

"I sleep good," Mr. Butler said of his own conscience. "I worked so many cases, a lot of it runs together."

One case does not. It was a bloody and senseless murder, and the men accused of it walked free for decades. But the case will soon have a new day in court, in a new world.

Mr. Butler's memories of the case, of one night in particular, still glare like a high beam on a dark and lonely road.

It was June 1966, and he was driving a suspect home from Jackson to Natchez on Highway 51, after questioning him. Mississippi was bleeding from the civil rights movement, but this case was different. A 67-year-old black farmhand named Ben Chester White, a man with no civil rights involvement, had been found dead in Pretty Creek, near Natchez.

His body had been riddled with bullet holes and his head blown apart by a shotgun. Three Klansmen, Ernest Avants, Claude Fuller and James Jones, had been questioned, and it was Mr. Jones who rode with Mr. Butler in the green 1962 Chevrolet.

Mr. Butler remembers the conversation this way:

A hard drinker, Mr. Jones had been dry all day and was suffering. Mr. Butler picked at him.

"You're hiding something," he said.

Mr. Jones sat and shook.

Then, as the car rolled through South Jackson, Mr. Jones screamed.

"The brains!" he cried. "When he shot him, the brains went all over."

Then he babbled on, about how he and his two his friends had picked Mr. White at random, how Mr. Fuller shot him again and again with a rifle, how Mr. Avants fired a shotgun into the man's face, how it did not matter that the victim was an unknown because he was just bait, anyway, to lure and assassinate the heart and soul of the movement, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Even after the confession, 37 years passed with no convictions of the accused men in Mississippi state courts, and only Ernest Avants is still alive.

Now, in the first federal murder case against a civil rights era defendant, the United States plans to bring him to trial as early as February in one last stab at retribution for a banal and brutal crime.

"They just got out and got beered up, trying to prove their manhood to each other," and went looking for somebody, said Mr. Butler, of the forethought that went into the killing of Mr. White.

"You can't make that right," he said, "no matter what you do."

Mr. Avants is 72 now, and several small strokes have left him with dead spots in his brain. He is gaunt and sick from cardiovascular ailments.

He is too far gone, his lawyers said in a federal hearing on his competency last week, to help them in his defense. They said he might not even be able to fully comprehend what is happening in the courtroom.

In conversation, his lawyer said, he "lapses" in his train of thought and begins speaking of scorpions, or the battlefield in Korea, where he was a tank commander, or drifts to when he was a sawmill hand.

"It would be very problematic trying to give him a fair trial with him trying to defend himself in a situation like this," said Tom Royals, his defense lawyer.

Christine Scronce, the former director of forensics at the Federal Medical Center in Rochester, Minn., testified in the hearing on Thursday that Mr. Avants "has very good recall of the evidence against him." But, she said, he might not recall what his lawyer told him yesterday. "He doesn't think that a key is a cat, does he?" said Jack Lacy, an assistant United States attorney.

After listening to expert testimony from each side on Mr. Avants's mental and physical capacity, Judge William H. Barbour Jr. of Federal District Court ruled that Mr. Avants was fit, clearing the way for the trial.

Like many others from the civil rights era who have been recalled to courtrooms to face old charges, Mr. Avants will do so in a vastly different age.

For years, his acquittal of state murder charges in the 1960's had shielded him from new prosecution. But Mr. White's body, the government now contends, was found on federal land, in a national forest, enough to get around double jeopardy and give federal prosecutors jurisdiction.

In 1966, it was the State of Mississippi v. Ernest Avants, and while the case began with promise on that highway in South Jackson, it ended like most others of that era, leaving black Mississippians empty and dismayed.

Mr. Avants lives in Bogue Chitto, a small town south of Jackson, with his wife, Martha, who makes their living by cleaning houses. He spends his days watching television -- he likes Court TV -- and reading the newspapers.

It was his birthday on Thursday, but he had forgotten that, his lawyer said. While his short-term memory seems to be leaky, his long-term memory, his historic one, is impressive, said Brian Keith Joyner, a federal probation officer who has visited Mr. Avants every month since his indictment on federal murder charges in 2000.

"He has an encyclopedic memory," Mr. Joyner said.

Mr. Avants does not recall ever having done violence to a man named Ben Chester White.

He does not recall giving this statement -- attributed to him in yellowed court documents -- to investigators in 1966: "But before I shot him, Fuller had already shot him with a carbine, had emptied the full magazine of 15 rounds into him before I shot him. I blew his head off with a shotgun."

It all started, Mr. Butler said, in the late spring of 1966, as Dr. King toured the South, including Mississippi, talking about freedom.

In Natchez, Mr. Avants, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Jones, young Klansmen who made a hard living at the paper mills, sawmills, logging crews and farms, came up with a poorly thought-out plan to lure the civil rights leader to Natchez, to assassinate him, according to court documents.

"Fuller was the tough one, and mean, too. Avants was a motormouth," said Mr. Butler, who would go on to lead the Highway Patrol. Mr. Jones was the weak link, the one with a conscience, Mr. Butler said.

The men came upon Mr. White, who made his living plowing and pulling stumps on another man's farm, and told him they wanted his help to search for a lost dog, according to court records. Mr. White had never been to a civil rights rally, or a sit-in. People in Natchez remember him only as a kind man and a hard worker.

The three Klansmen, according to testimony, confessions and their own statements, drove Mr. White into the Homochitto National Forest in Mr. Jones's car. But instead of taking him out of the car to kill him, they opened fire as he sat inside, investigators said.

An explosion of gore filled the car, horrifying Mr. Jones, investigators said.

The men dumped his body into Pretty Creek from a bridge, but the car was so bloody that it had to be burned and abandoned, Mr. Butler said.

A few days later investigators gave Mr. Jones a polygraph test about the crime, specifically about what had happened to his car. Mr. Jones said it had been stolen.

"He flunked," Mr. Butler said, and that was the ice-pick of information he used to chip at Mr.

Jones that night on Highway 51.

"He confessed to me" that night, and continued to confess to other investigators, leading to charges against all three men.

But no one served a day of prison time. In a 1967 murder trial, Mr. Avants's lawyer argued that his client could not have killed Mr. White because he had already been killed by Mr. Fuller's bullets, and Mr. Avants was acquitted.

Mr. Fuller never went to trial, saying he was too sick with arthritis and ulcers. Mr. Jones was freed after a mistrial, after saying that he was sorry.

Mr. Butler was never called to testify.

Black Mississippians said it was just one more instance in which the state apparatus, and the white-run society, folded over and around suspects, to shield them.

"Most of them are dead now," said Mr. Butler of the participants in that case.

There seems little life left to Mr. Avants. His heart and lungs are weak, according to his medical history. His mind is damaged, even his prosecutors concede.

But they believe he will know he is in a courtroom, and know why he is there.

The trial has been set for Feb. 24.

Mr. Butler went hunting again last week and came home empty-handed. He did not mind. A certain number of them are going to get away.

Student Work With Narrative Journalism

Students read the Rick Bragg story and then wrote short responses to it.

A student wrote, "The description was good. It made the story read much quicker and smoother. The lead tied in very easily and was an attention-grabber. It also worked well with the end typing everything up, and coming back to the lead. Again, going back to the description, it made the story come alive. You felt as if you were there" (Student A).

The student wrote, "The story was entertaining and very descriptive. I finished reading it" (Student A).

Another student likened the Bragg story to a short story: "I liked the way this article was like reading a short story. It pulled you into the action by getting you familiar with the lead character first and developing a connection of a personal kind. It definitely fits the narrative journalism genre" (Student B).

A third student had similar observations: "I think the story is a good representative of the new wave of news reporting. It's no longer good enough to give the who, what, where, when and how. Good newspaper reporters, battling the Internet and TV, make the audience feel something. The reporter did this here with the scene description and characterization. I read it all the way through because it was interesting, like good fiction" (Student C).

The journalism workshop students responded more as readers than as writers, with only one student raising questions about the blurring of traditional reporting objective standards by narrative journalism. This student was troubled by the language of the Bragg story: "This does not sound like an objective story to me. I think I hear the reporter's bias in here" (Student D). The point that this student raised is important. There are dangers with narrative journalism, including going too far in reporting irrelevant details that could be interpreted as value judgments.

The workshop students and *The Jambar* reporting interns were, for the most part, deeply moved by the story and continued discussing it and other examples of narrative journalism that they had been asked to read. After intense discussions, study and practice with narrative journalism, the students were told they had to try narrative journalism techniques on their next story for the class. The results were dramatic.

On the following pages are examples of student work before and after the discussions and study of narrative journalism. The pest control rewrite is, perhaps, the most dramatic. The student reporter said the examples of narrative journalism and then the follow-up discussion helped him visualize and then practice the style of writing.

The pest story was the first story this student completed for the Workshop class. He had failed to turn in two previous stories. "I simply didn't know how to write them so that anyone would want to read them," the student said (Student D).

He said he felt liberated after reading the Bragg article. "I thought you always had to write in a boring style," the student said.

The rewrite of the pest story ran in the Feb. 12, 2003, edition of the Jambar. It also ran in the online version of the newspaper, where tracking software showed that it was read more than any other story in that edition.

PEST STORY

FIRST DRAFT

Despite the recent report to the Jambar that cockroaches were seen on the second floor of Kilcawley Center, Matt Novotny, Director of Kilcawley Center, says that the bugs, along with other pests, are not a problem at the center.

Novotny said that the incident had not been reported to him and stressed the importance of notifying him in the case of spotting a pest in Kilcawley Center.

Novotny did, however, recognize both the importance of pest control and the variables that made his building prone to crawling intruders.

"It's something that we have to battle all the time," he said.

Among the steps that Kilcawley Center takes for pest control are a twice-monthly inspection and treatment by an exterminating contractor and an annual search around the perimeter of the building for burrows made by mice or other pests, Novotny said. He added that with the history of the building itself there are other problems that they face. Among these problems were spaces in walls between additions to the center and cracks in walls, which make good homes for cockroaches.

He said that pest control is something that he and his staff take very seriously. "We monitor very closely", he said.

The pest control for the rest of the campus is coordinated by YSU's Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety department.

Sandy Senedak, Associate Director of the department, said that the university has a very low rate of incidents involving pest control. She said that the campus, like Kilcalwey Center, is monitored very closely and also have inspections twice a month.

The inspections are mostly preventative, she said, and focus on possible problem areas such as concession areas on campus. Senedak said that EOHS also takes other steps for the pest control on campus. Traps are set for rodents in buildings during the winter, she said, because they tend to seek shelter from the elements during this time of the year.

During the cold winter days, squirrels can also find their way into buildings, she said. But she reassured that the squirrels are not hurt, rather, they are trapped and released into a park.

PEST
REWRITE WITH NARRATIVE STYLE

Attack of the squirrels

Rodents seeking warmth from university buildings pose a pesky problem

The ground is frozen and covered with snow. The trees are barren, and the wind whips through your body.

You make your way to the doorway of the nearest university building, and lucky for you, it opens just as you approach.

People look. Someone laughs. Others point. You run down a flight of stairs.

There's some food over there. You walk over, making sure no one sees you. You make your way right up to the food, then suddenly there's a snap behind you.

They got you.

After a long, bumpy car ride, they let you go in the park. Back into the cold. Back where you started.

Such has been the fate of a few squirrels that have dared to seek shelter in university buildings.

Squirrel control is one of many campus pest control issues handled by YSU's department of Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety.

Sandy Senedak, associate director of EOHS, said squirrels and other animals, such as mice, are sometimes found in buildings on campus during the cold winter months.

She said workers set traps for rodents in campus buildings during the winter because the animals tend to seek shelter from the elements.

Senedak stressed that the squirrels are not hurt. Instead, they are trapped and released into a park.

YSU's preventative maintenance program, Senedak said, helps to keep pests out of buildings all year.

She said that the campus is monitored closely with bi-monthly inspections.

The inspections are mostly preventative, she said, and focus on possible problem areas such as concession areas on campus.

Matt Novotny, building director, coordinates the pest control at Kilcawley Center. Novotny said he is proud of his staff's work keeping Kilcawley pest-free.

Among the steps that Kilcawley Center takes for pest control are a bi-monthly inspection and treatments by an exterminating contractor.

Novotny also said he and his staff conduct a yearly search around the perimeter of the building for burrows made by mice or other pests.

He added that with the history of the building itself there are other problems that they face. Among these problems were spaces in walls between additions to the center and cracks in walls, which make good homes for cockroaches.

He said that pest control is something that he and his staff take very seriously.

"We monitor very closely," Novotny said.

Novotny said he wants to be alerted to any pest sightings in Kilcawley.

"It's something that we have to battle all the time."

Beginning Steps for Narrative

There are several steps reporters tackling a narrative can and should take before beginning their story as well as while they are conducting interviews and writing the first draft:

1. Before beginning to write a story, reporters should ask themselves if they care about it. If reporters don't care, readers are never going to. Reporters must get the details and additional information that will make them care. Reporters are no different than their readers.
2. Reporters should close their eyes and see the story. If they can't get a mental picture with graphic visuals, they don't have enough – or the right kind of - detail to write a story. If they can't see it, can they smell it or feel it? Will the story stimulate at least one and preferably more of readers' senses?
3. Are there people to illustrate the story? If reporters don't have people, they should expect their story to be dull. People want to read about other people. As humans, people care about people, not cold facts.

The decision about when to stray from the Inverted Pyramid is completely up to individual reporters and editors. Any story can be told in a narrative way. Some stories, however, lend themselves to the narrative technique better than others.

To help decide when to use the narrative technique, there are some questions reporters and editors can ask themselves. If a "yes" can be supplied to more than two, reporters may want to try a narrative style. However, it is critical for reporters to be able to answer yes to the first two before tackling a narrative story:

1. Are there visual details?
2. Are there people?
3. Does the proposed story center around news that may be reported by broadcast or Internet media before many newspaper readers will hear about it?
4. Is the news quirky?
5. Does the news involve some kind of drama or conflict?

Narrative journalism is expected to become more common in newsrooms because of the work of organizations like the Poynter Institute, which is devoting numerous resources to its advancement. As this happens, some misconceptions are growing about it. One of the most common misconceptions, according to Clark of Poynter, is that narrative stories must be "feature" stories. (1). Effective narrative stories do not have to be "soft" news. Even "hard" and breaking news can be written in a narrative style.

For instance, Gary Dorsey, a staff reporter for the Sun Sentinel in Maryland told a critically important story about the spread of anthrax in August 2002 by using the narrative technique. (Dorsey A-1). Dorsey opened his story in a traditional narration style centering on chronology: "On the morning of his second day in the hospital, Rich Richmond's lungs filled with fluid, and blood drawn from his arm produced a culture swarming with angular strands of anthrax. Unchecked, experts knew, the bacterium could flood the bloodstream and rapidly shut down his immune system. Doctors feared the 56-year-old man might look reasonably well, but be dead by afternoon. It was Sunday, Oct. 21, 2001, and the veteran postal worker found himself fighting for his life even as he refused to believe he had been the victim of an unimaginable attack" (Dorsey A-1).

The Gary Dorsey story of Rich Richmond's struggle with Anthrax clearly shows that even the top news can be told effectively with the narrative style.

Another common misconception is that a narrative story cannot be written on deadline. It is often easier and quicker to write in a narrative style, according to Batz of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. (qtd. in Poynter 2). Narrative styles often mirror how people think and write naturally. It takes effort to pack information into a summary lead. Just telling a story is what reporters do all day when talking to the co-worker at the neighboring desk.

Simpson of *The Joplin Globe* said he has had to work with reporters who are under the false assumption that stories written in a narrative style are not as important as those written in the inverted pyramid. "I have a feeling that this is based on how they learned to write. They learned to write in elementary school and even in high school by noticing details and by telling stories. Somehow they equate this with being sophomoric" (Simpson). Readers, however, have spoken on this issue. They want information to be presented in an interesting and colorful manner.

Simpson said many readers perceive stories written in the Inverted Pyramid style to be "boring, dry and not relevant to them" (Simpson). Harvard University President Lawrence H. Summers spoke about narrative journalism in November 2002 at the Nieman Narrative Journalism Conference. Not a journalist by training, Summers said his credibility on the subject emanated from his role as a consumer of news. He said he takes newspapers that practice narrative journalism far more seriously than those that don't.

Summers said:

> Whenever people say to me, as they do with great frequency 'the press is terrible. It always goes for sensationalism. It never goes for the really fundamental, important underlying trends that are really much more important,' I always say to them…Just tell me, your hometown paper has three stories on the front page: New Revelation on Lewinsky Matter, Holbrook and Berger Battle over Bosnia Policy, Trend Toward Economic Reform Continues in Slovenia. You tell me which story you'll read first. And everyone who says they'll read three, then two, then one, has standing to say that the press isn't doing what it should be doing…It does seem to me to be a reasonable notion that newspapers and magazines should write stories that people want to read and find gripping and interesting (1).

Summers continued talking about the importance of telling important stories in manners that real people want to read (1). He cited an example of a man losing his job because his factory moved to Thailand. He said the better way to tell that story would be to get into Sam's life and tell it through Sam (2). Instead, he said most reporters would merely document that the basic facts of the plant closing and moving (2).

Story Ideas

To ease into the practice of writing stories in a narrative way, it may be more comfortable to begin with a little help. Below, I have offered some story ideas and a plan about how to tackle each with a narrative style of writing.

(I have listed only a few. You are welcome to use any of the ideas below. But my main motivation in listing them is to stimulate your thinking about ideas that will grab readers.)

1. THE BUDGET – OK. You are the lucky reporter who has to write about the new budget adopted by the governmental organization you cover. Here are your choices. Pick wisely:
    - A. You can write the traditional – City council voted Tuesday night to approve a $10 million budget.
    - B. On the last page of a thick computer printout are the numbers that show how much City Council has to spend for holding itself together - $10,000. That's how much city officials will be spending this year for paper clips and staples.

    So, your lead could be:

    The pages look alike. Page one is titled: "City Council Budget for 2002-2003." Page two carries a similar title and then column after column of how city leaders propose to spend taxpayer dollars.

    There are the biggies – like payroll at $1.9 million; health benefits at $1 million; equipment updates at $650,000.

    Then, in the last column of page 16 is the expenditure for keeping city documents together - $10,000 for paper clips.

    The nut graph for this story could then be:

    The money for office supplies is one of more than 1,000 items on the $10 million budget city officials approved Tuesday night.

Also in the budget are 3 percent raises for all city employees…

The second approach to the story is far more interesting and something that will grab your readers. People understand paper clips and staples. They also understand raises for workers.

When doing a budget story, strive to get the kind of details that will interest your readers and make them want to read the story.

2. THE ROAD DEPARTMENT IS A TREMENDOUS SOURCE OF INTERESTING STORIES – Here are a few story ideas to ask the people who maintain the roads in your community:
    - Do they count how many dead animals they find each day, week or month? Which stretches of road are the most perilous for our furry friends? How does a motorist avoid hitting an animal without causing harm to himself/herself or other motorists?
    - What is the weirdest thing a road department worker has ever found along the side of the road? Use this to report a story about trash along the roads.
    - With answers to some of the questions above, you will be able to craft a narrative story that will be compelling and informative.

3. TOLL BOTH WORKERS HAVE STORIES TO TELL – The people who work and spend one-third of their lives inside a small, square box have some stories to tell.

- How about a feature on how they fight the cold, the hot and most of all, the boredom. What do they bring into their booths with them?
- What trends have they noticed among motorists? How many with cell phones? How many wear seatbelts?
- Tell the story from the vantage point of inside the tollbooth. What does it look like in there? What do the headlights coming down the road look like? What does the toll booth worker do when he or she has to go to the restroom?

Example of Narrative for an Issue Story

In an effort to illustrate this concept, I have included the first portion of a story I have written about corruption in the Mahoning Valley for the Plain Dealer Sunday Magazine. This story certainly includes the basics of who, what, where, when and why, but it also moves on to a critical point of telling readers why they need to care about public corruption. The story is also told in a narrative style.

Daylight shrouds Oak Street in a glow that hides what lives there and what has died there.

Just after sunset and minutes after the day's last green and blue Western Reserve Transit Authority bus chugs up the hill, the signs surface.

From his now iron-studded windows, Cosmo has been watching Elm Street for more than 30 years.

More than a dozen people have been shot and killed in a one-mile radius of Cosmo's shop and home since 2000.

A barber by day and a self-described prisoner of his own home by night, Cosmo Reyes has a theory for why Elm Street and much of the Mahoning Valley are overrun with drugs, shootings, the mob, crooked politicians and, above all, economic despair. His theory: Adherence to mob values and ideals.

It's politically correct to pronounce oneself as anti-mob these days in Youngstown.

Former U.S. Rep. James A. Traficant and dozens of others with ties to organized crime have been exposed and, in some cases, sent off to jail.

This emerging mob-bashing, however, is not expected to bring much change to the Mahoning Valley now suffering from one of the nation's highest poverty and unemployment rates.

Some argue that mob bosses – even those long dead or behind bars – have charted an unchangeable destiny for the Mahoning Valley.

"These values are what will keep the area down forever," said Pat Ungaro, Youngstown's former mayor.

Cosmo and some others who have spent time thinking about the mob have concluded that people of the area are stubbornly clinging to values and notions that the mob founded, preached and used to sustain itself:

- Patronage is OK
- People of the Mahoning Valley must rely on others, not themselves, for advancement and help.
- People are more powerful than ideas and information.

Ungaro, who served as mayor of Youngstown from 1984 to 1998, said the mob infrastructure is still in place. "It is not as perverse and intimidating as it once was," Ungaro said. "But the behavioral part of the problems don't just go away overnight."

Ungaro credited the FBI with doing a good job in removing many of the mob operatives. What is next, however, is not a task that the FBI can accomplish.

"The philosophy has to change," Ungaro said.

Now working as the township administrator in Liberty Township, just over two miles from his former office in downtown Youngstown, Ungaro said he believes the community is in a bit of a "Catch-22."

Ungaro said many people see few opportunities in the community and idealize the days when mob bosses instilled order and their own unique brand of fairness.

The danger of false memory is one of the main points two Youngstown State University professors have stressed in their book, Steeltown U.S.A.

Sherry Lee Linkon and John Russo have been studying the influence of the community's past on its future.

Troubled by stories in the national media that portray the community as mob-controlled or broken, the professors have tried to show the importance of remembering Youngstown for what it was.

In order to bring opportunities to the community, however, Ungaro said it is necessary to be clean of any mob influences, including those that are real and those that are only imagined.

Ungaro said he is one of few community leaders willing to talk publicly about the many economic development opportunities that were lost because of attempted or feared mob shakedowns. "We lost a lot of business because of that," Ungaro said.

"Some businesses that didn't locate here were concerned about shakedowns. That was their number one concern. But they were also worried about who was going to build the building. They felt the mob controlled the building that would be done. They also felt they would have to pay the public officials from the mayor on down if they wanted to come to our community."

Ungaro said he does not understand why officials were and are reluctant to speak out about the mob. "The mob has had a big history of controlling public officials here and of controlling labor leaders here. Period," Ungaro said.

He said an open discussion about what role the mob played and what role it is continuing to play is the first step toward understanding. "You have to have understanding before you can hope for change, especially in people's ideas," Ungaro said.

Ungaro's ideas about the importance of free and open discussion mirror one of the main points of a book written by two Youngstown State University professors.

Works Cited

Albers, Rebecca Ross. "Research Review: Facing Readership Facts" TechNews 7 Apr. 2003. 3 July 2003. 1-3. <http://www.naa.org/TechNews>.

Altheide, David L. "Tracking Discourse and Qualitative Document Analysis" Poetics 27. (2000): 287-289.

Aregood, Richard. "10 Tactics to Grow Readership" Presstime May 1999. 15 May 2003. 1-5. <http://www.naa.org/presstime>.

Bauder, David. "American Idol Tops U.S. Ratings." AP Online 1 Apr. 2003. 4 Apr. 2003. 1-4. <http://www.canoe.ca/TelevisionRatings/us.html>.

Batz, Bob Jr. "Pitching in on Opening Day." Poynter Online 5 July 2001. 9 Oct. 2002. 1- 12.<www.poynter.org/worthalook/wa1050701.htm>.

Bishop, Todd. "Dailies Copy Sales Declining." Philadelphia Business Journal 30 Apr. 1999. 6 Apr. 2003. 1-5. <http://philadelphia.bizjournalis.com/philadelphiastories/1999>.

Bogart, Leo. Press and Public: Who Reads What, Where, and Why in American Newspapers. Manwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, Lawrence Associaties, Inc., 1981.

Bombara, Paula. "Readership Decline 'No Problem' Says Papers." B & T Marketing & Media 7 Apr. 2003. 15 June 2003. 1-4. <www.bandt.com.au/articles>.

Boyd, Gerald. 13 Apr. 2002, St. Louis. 01 Feb. 2003. 1-5. <http:www.poynter.org/nww/stlouis2002>.

Bragg, Rick. "Last Cry for Justice in Mississippi As U.S. Trial Revisits '66 Killing." The New York Times 26 Jan. 2003: A1.

Brooks, Brian, George Kennedy, Daryl Moen and Don Ronly. News Reporting and Writing. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.

Brown, Doug. "Searching for Online Gold." American Journalism Review June-July 2003: 54-60.

Bryant, Robert L. Jr. "Skip the Salad, Pass the Meat." Columbia Journalism Review May/June 1993. 14 July 2003. 1-2. <www.cjr.org/year/93/3/meat.asp>.

Christie, Ed, Paul DiSenso, Michael Gold & David Rader. "Print versus Electronic Media: The Threat to Newspapers and Newsprint" Digital Futures March 2000. 6 April 2003. 1-27. <http://www.sric-bi.com/DF/oldMFSummaries/PrintTOC.shtml>.

Clark, Roy Peter. "If I Were a Carpenter." Poynter Institute 2000. 01 Feb. 2003. 1-3. <http://www.poynter.org>.

Deleersnyder, Barbara, Inge Geyskens, Katrijn Gielens & Marnik G. Dekimpe. "How cannibalistic is the Internet channel? A study of the newspaper industry in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands." International Journal of Research in Marketing. 19 (2002): 337-348.

Digital Edge. "NAA Study: News Seekers Flock to the Internet." Dec. 2000. 14 July 2003. 1-4. <http://www.digitaledge.org/monthly/2000>.

Dorsey, Gary. "The Trials of a citizen soldier." Baltimore Sun. 25 Aug. 2002: A1+.

Fitzgerald, Mark, Greg Mitchell and Joe Strupp. "10 That Do it Right." Editor & Publisher 2 Apr. 2003: 10-15.

Frederick, Bill. "All the News That's Fit to Print." Expert PR 02 Feb. 2003. 1-2. <http://www.mediamap.com>.

Garcia, Mario. "Looking Back." Poynter Institute. 2000. 01 Feb. 2003. 1-2. <http://www.poynter.org>.

Glenn, N.D. "Television watching, newspaper reading, and cohort differences in verbal ability." Sociology of Education Jan. 1994: 216-230.

Gottlieb, Richard. "Don't Worry, Get Busy." Presstime May 1999. 6 Apr. 2003. 1-2. <http://naa.org/presstime>.

Greer, David. "Newspapers should grow readership, even if it means giving papers away" Kentucky Press March 2002. 6 July 2003. 1-2. <www.scpress.org>.

Gunaratne, Shelton. "New Thinking on Journalism and News Puts Emphasis on Democratic Values." Moorehead State University 1996. 25 Feb. 2003 . <http://www.mnstate.edu>.

Hoenisch, Steve. “The Future of American Newspapers.” Online posting. 01 Feb. 2003. 1-17. <http://www.criticism.com>.

Investigative Reporters & Editors. “Toward Understanding.” Online posting. 01 Feb. 2003 <http://www.ire.org>.

Joplin Globe. “Garage Sale Brings Big Crowds, Profits.” 4 Apr. 2003 A-1.

Kimber, Stephen. “The Message is Still the Medium: The Newspaper in the Age of Cyberspace.” Information Processing & Management 33.5. (1997): 595-597.

Lindorff, Dave. “Our Surprisingly Healthy Newspaper Industry.” Media Life May 1999. 7 Apr. 2003. 1-2. <http://archives.medialifemagazine.com/news1999>.

Martire, Greg. “Marginal Sunday Readers: Results of NAA’s Six-Market Study” Newspaper Association of America 2003. 10 July 2003. 1-4. <http://www.naa.org>.

Mencher, Melvin. Basic Media Writing. Madison: Brown & Benchmark, 1996.

Morton, John. “Why Circulation Keeps Dropping.” American Journalism Review Jan-Feb. 2002: 64.

Mott, Frank Luther. American Journalism. Toronto, Ontario: The MacMillan Company, 1962.

Newspaper Association of America. “Daily Newspaper Readership Trends” 01 Jan. 2001. 03 Feb. 2003. 1-2. <http://www.naa.org/marketscope/databank/tdnpr1299.htm>.

Newspaper Association of America. “The Message and the Medium” 01 Jan. 2000. 03 Feb. 2003. 1-3. <http://www.naa.org/conferences/annual2000/index.html>.

Newspaper Association of America. “10 Lessons Learned from 1,000 Years of Journalism” 01 Jan. 2000. 03 Feb. 2003. 1-4. <http://www.naa.org/conferences/annual2000/index.html>.

Newspaper Association of America. “Still the Best Medium” 01 Jan. 2001. 03 Feb. 2003. 1-4. <http://www.naa.org/conferences/annual2000/index.html>.

Northwestern University Readership Institute. “The Value of Feature-style Writing” 7 Apr. 2003. 1-27. <http://www.readership.org>.

Peiser, Wolfram. “Cohort Trends in Media Use in the United States.” Mass Communication and Society 3.2,3 (2000): 185-205.

Pember, Don. Mass Media Law. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003.

Pew. "Pew Research Center Media Report." 2000. 5 Mar. 2003. 1-3. <http://www.people-press.org/media00rpt.htm>.

Roberts, Donald F. "Media and Youth: Access, Exposure, and Privatization" Journal of Adolescent Health. 27 (2000): 8-14.

Rosczcyk, Steve. Personal interview. 1 July 2003.

Runett, Rob. "Yes, Circulation Directors, They're Still Buying the Paper." Newspaper Association of America Jan. 2002. 7 Mar. 2003. 1-6. <http://www.naa.org/preview.cfm?AID=3869>.

Samuelson, Robert J. "Snob Journalism" Washington Post 23 Apr. 2003: A-35.

Sheppard, E.D. and D. Bawden. "More News, Less Knowledge? An Information Content Analysis of Television and Newspaepr Coverage of the Gulf War." International Journal of Information Management 17.3 (1997): 211-227.

Simpson, Edgar. Personal interview. 14 Dec. 2002.

Sloan, Robin. "Columbia's Other Task Force." Poynter Online. 7 May 2003. 2 July 2003. 1-5. <http://www.poynter.org/content/contentview.asp>.

Sodergard, Caj, Matti Aaltonen, Sari Hagman, Mikko Hiirsalmi, Timo Jarvinen, Eija Kaasinen, Timo Kinnunen, Juha Kolari, Jouko Kunnas, Antti Tammela. "Integrated Multimedia Publishing: Combining TV and Newspaper Content on Personal Channels" Computer Networks (1999): 1111-1128.

Solomon, Norman. "NPR and the Fallow Triumph of Public Radio." Media Beat 11 Apr. 2002. 4 Apr. 2003. 1-2. <http://www.fair.org/media-beat>.

Source, Anonymous. Personal interview. 18 June 2003.

Stephens, Mitchell. "A J-School Manifesto." Columbia Journalism Review September-October 2000. 5 July 2003. 1-5. <http://www.cjr.org/year/00/3/stephens.asp>.

Stevenson, Robert L. Global Communication in the Twenty-First Century. New York & London: Longman, 1994

Student A. Personal interview. 03 Feb. 2003.

Student B. Personal interview. 03 Feb. 2003.

Student C. Personal interview. 03 Feb. 2003.

Student D. Personal interview. 3 Feb. 2003.

Student E. Personal interview. 3 Feb. 2003.

Student E. "Professor raises champion dog." Jambar [Youngstown] 28 Jan. 2003: A-1+.

Sturm, John. "The New Challenges." Newspaper Association of America 01 Jan. 2002. 03 Feb. 2003. 1-3.
2003. <http://www.naa.org/conferences/annual2002/index.html>.

Summers, Lawrence. Nieman Narrative Journalism Conference. 10 Nov. 2002, Harvard University, Cambridge: "harvard.edu." 05 Feb. 2003. 1-5. <http://www.president.harvard.edu/speeches/2002/nieman.htm>.

Svihlik, Susan. Personal interview. 15 Dec. 2002.

Tabak, Elizabeth. Personal interview. 03 Feb. 2003.

Tabak, Elizabeth. "YSU's First Lady." Jambar [Youngstown] 13 Feb. 2003: A1+.

Tapscott, Don. Growing up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

Thurlow, George and Katherine Milo. "Newspaper readership: Can the bleeding be stopped or do we have the wrong patient?" Newspaper Research Journal 14 (2000): 34-43.

Ullman, John. Investigative Reporting. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Wicker, Tom. "Newspapers Must Give Depth." Medill. 03 Nov. 1999. Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism. 02 Feb. 2003. <http:journalism.medill.northwestern.edu/inside>.

Wise, Eric. "Readership Decline is not inevitable, study shows." Press. June 2001. 6 Apr. 2003. 1-5.
<http://www.pnpa.com/publications/press/june01/readership.htm>.