

Discussion table:

"New Commercial Models: How should we pay for news?"

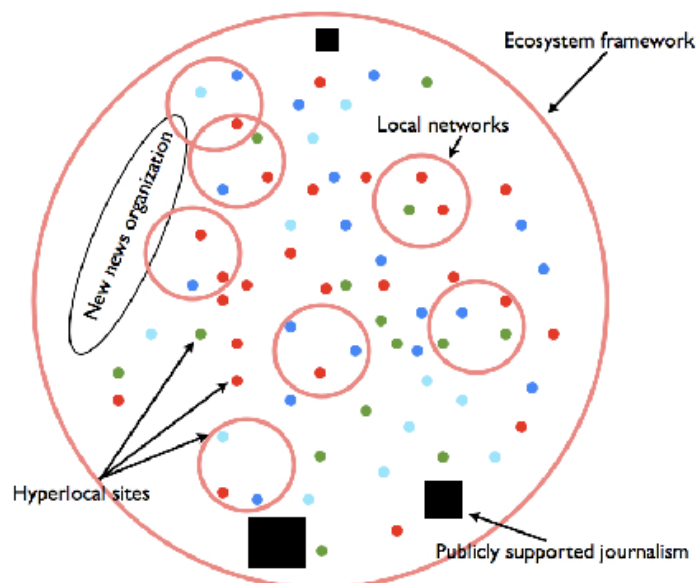
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THE NEWS LANDSCAPE TODAY:

- Rocky Mountain News shut down; no sustainable model for 2-daily-newspaper town.
- Denver Post: 3 rounds of newsroom layoffs since 2006.
- Layoffs elsewhere: e.g., Fort Collins Coloradoan: 1/2 staff today as at beginning of 2007.
- Newspapers used to do bulk of investigative, watchdog reporting.
- Investigative projects and reporters are first to go.
- Commercial TV news not capable of taking up the slack (double-ditto radio).
- *IN SUM: Weakening of traditional press watchdog role; important public-interest stories untold; wrongdoers (govt., business) getting away with it; less-informed voters.*

THE EVOLVING COMMERCIAL NEWS LANDSCAPE:

- Improving economy; can newspapers rebound? ... Doubtful. Consumer, advertiser habits have changed. ... Possible uptick, but not enough to support strong watchdog news operation.
- Tomorrow's newspaper: breaking news, sports; less of costly investigative reporting.
- "Old" alternative press (e.g., WestWord): Can it step up? ... Similar economic, structural problems as dailies.
- New online/mobile for-profit news entities (no print): e.g., RockyMountainIndependent.com, staffed by former RMN journalists. Can they find a sustainable business model? ... If-fy.
- Watch for rise of "placebloggers"; neighborhood news websites; "hyper-local" news sites. ... Wave of "mom-and-pop" digital news providers who manage to eke out a living.
- New wave of digital, mobile tools, solutions to make "mom-and-pop" publishers more professional.
- **Down-sized "old media" and new wave of small (but growing) "new media" create new news ecosystem.**
- *New non-profit news entities, enhanced public radio/TV will fill holes left by commercial media (e.g., investigative journalism).*



The new metro news ecosystem as envisioned by Professor Jeff Jarvis, CUNY Graduate School of Journalism

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR COMMERCIAL NEWS MEDIA (NEW & OLD)?

- ~~More media consolidation to save money for publishers? ... NO!!!!~~ (That's why we're in this mess.)
- Instead: Break up media conglomerates; discourage new mega-media mergers. Local ownership.
- L3C: limited liability low-profit company. ... Mission first, shareholders second. Investors agree to low-percentage profit margin. (Newspapers of past: 20-30% or higher profit margins.)
- Modern digital ad model. ... News publisher as ad agency; gets advertiser message everywhere.
- Ad networks. ... Needed to support multiple news sites in geographic area, or by topic.
- Consumers pay for news online. ... All news on website? Risky; probably suicidal. ... Just unique content, features? Good potential IF content is unique, valuable to reader; not a panacea.
- Pay options:
 - Micropayments. ... Pay per article.
 - Subscriptions. ... Fee for access to all or part of news site.
 - Metered subscriptions (e.g., after 5 articles viewed free, demand to subscribe).
 - Print subscribers free online; non-print customers pay online subscription fee.
 - Niche-news sites that charge for subscriptions; e.g., Broncos Insiders coverage, community.
- Consumers voluntarily donate for online news; free if they don't want to pay.
 - 1-click donation schemes; if you like article, give author 10 cents.
 - Pay any amount you please, or zero (per visit, per article, etc.).
 - Join web-content donation network (\$5/month or your choice); support all sites you like and/or visit. (See Kachingle.com)
 - Begging for donations on news site, a la public radio.
- News memberships; for single news organization or consortium.
 - Extra news services, features, premium content; NY Times, The Guardian considering.
 - Access to journalists (e.g., BillOreilly.com Premium Members get e-mail read first; weekly private webcast with Bill to ask him questions).
 - Discounts, preferred or free seating at lectures, events featuring journalists and guests.
 - Must be member to comment on stories online, be part of news conversation.
- Commercial + news memberships:
 - All the news goodies, plus discounts, deals, freebies from advertisers.
 - "Gold-C" books model modernized, digitized, expanded.
 - Non-news-junkies also support cost of journalism.
- News everywhere strategy.
 - Don't fight distribution of news content ("copyright infringement"); promote it.
 - Monetize distribution of news (blogs, aggregators, other websites) by embedding ads, donation pleas, e-commerce links. (See Newzpool.com, ads embedded in MSNBC.com video)
 - Radically new free-syndication strategy; share remote publishers' ad revenue. (See Attributor.com)
- Save money by letting non-profits do investigative reporting; partner with them.
 - Spot.us: Raise money from public to pay journalist to report story. Published by old media.
 - Non-profit investigative news operations: Appearing around U.S.; foundation, philanthropists' funding. They will syndicate to traditional media or give their content away free.
- E-commerce. ... News companies participate in transaction (not old way: selling ad space).
- Money from Google?
 - Showing new willingness to share some revenues with news publishers. ... Fast Flip.
 - News industry pressuring Google to pay for links to news content? ... Fool's errand.
- Government aid. ... Unpopular with commercial news publishers. Not likely.
- Mobile phones. ... Business models for news beginning to be explored.
 - Selling apps.
 - Selling premium content, services within phone app.
 - Advertising, sponsors.
 - E-commerce within phone app.
 - Personalized news (for a fee).
- E-readers. ... Kindle, (expected soon) Apple Tablet, Plastic Logic, Sony Reader.
 - Subscription fee per news title, or bundle of news titles; advertising; e-commerce.
- Out-of-the-box revenue ideas:
 - Public coffee shops in news company offices. (Mingle with journalists; public meetings.)
 - News-related events, lectures, etc. as a business.

OTHER IDEAS? ... PLEASE SHARE THEM. steve@outing.us