

New Web site readies for July debut

This month, the NCPA will unveil a new web site designed to keep members informed, highlight the best work from the state's newspapers, help sell advertising and drive traffic to member web sites.

The all-new site, created by web designer Sabrina Davis of Cambridge Communications in Wilmington, has been in the works since last fall, NCPA Communications Manager Brian Rapp said. "We are finishing up our work and reviewing some of the interior page designs, but most of the major redesign details have been completed," he said.

The redesign is the first phase of a strategic plan to better communicate with members. Phase II, a complete redesign of the look and content of the NCPA's monthly newsletter, is in the works.

The address stays the same –



The new North Carolina Press Association Web site's main page will feature easy navigation tabs to the organization's three main divisions and a member-submitted photo.

www.ncpress.com. The new home page will offer clearly marked links to the NCPA, NCPS and the NC Press Foundation pages. Each of the three tabs will link to pages designed to highlight the work of each organization and assist members and clients in utilizing all NCPA has to

offer.

All ncpress.com browsers can bookmark the new homepage to access the latest industry news headlines, check out upcoming seminars and conventions, post jobs notices, sign up for committees and join one of eight listserves to share ideas. The NCPS site will link members and current and potential advertising clients to information about our classified and display network ads, press release information and valuable newspaper

research.

The NCPF tab links to a separate web site for Newspapers in Education programs. Follow the NCPF link to the updated tourism ads page, where you can download the latest state ads at a variety of sizes in a flash.

A new addition to the home page

continued on page 5

Member-submitted photos to highlight Web site's home page

As part of its Web site redesign, the NCPA is looking to showcase the best work of the state's photojournalists.

The new NCPA home page will feature a rotating series of photos submitted by member papers. Since the new Web main page will change photos every time the site is accessed, we will be needing as many of your best photos as we can get. All NCPA-member papers are eligible to submit entries.

Entries should be emailed (in JPEG format of at least 200 DPI resolution) to NCPA Communications Manager Brian Rapp (brian@ncpress.com). Please include a caption, name of photographer and paper and date photo was taken.

For more information, email Rapp or call (919) 789-2091.

Inside

The North Carolina Press
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Some final thoughts . . .	2
Kitty Hawk decision sets record	4
N&O, FO top ad contest honorees	5
More survey results needed	6

With this, I end a year's worth of columns as President of the North Carolina Press Association, and prepare to pass the gavel to Tim Dearman, who has been nominated to succeed me.

Tim is expected to take office in Charlotte during this month's summer convention. He, I believe, will be an outstanding NCPA president, bringing wit, wisdom and integrity to the office as he takes charge of this organization.



He inherits a staff that has met and in most cases exceeded my expectations in the past year. I'm grateful to them all, but I have to give

the NCPA into online advertising in a way that's beneficial, and profitable, for our member newspapers.

Johnny Whitfield's Professional Development Committee has been successful in bringing training to the trenches. Attorney Amanda Martin went the extra mile in

Some final thoughts on a presidential term

By Deuce Niven

NCPA President and Associate Publisher/Editor, *Tabor-Loris Tribune*

special mention to Executive Director Beth Grace, Controller Bobby Bracy, Advertising and Marketing Director Lindsay Webster and Member Services Director Holly Johnson.

I'm especially grateful to a terrific NCPA/NCPS board. Their leadership has provided invaluable guidance as we've endeavored to chart a new course for the NCPA.

Part of that formal process involved a strategic planning meeting that was especially impressive for the strong participation of the board and their willingness to toss out "the way it's always been" mentality as different methods seem prudent.

Committee involvement has been strong this year, with equal emphasis on taking a new look at old programs and embarking on new endeavors.

This summer convention, much like the Winter Institute, promises to be a showcase on doing things a bit differently. I believe we've heard membership tell us that these meetings need to provide great training and networking opportunities at reasonable prices. John Pea and his convention planning committee have scored home runs on both fronts. Join us in Charlotte and I believe you will agree.

Our collective futures seem irrevocably entwined in online ventures, and Rip Woodin's leadership on a committee formed just a few months ago will continue into the new year. His committee is charged with finding ways to move

bringing some legal training for reporters to locations across the state. Look for additional training opportunities coming to cities near you in the coming year.

Other committees have been equally active, some working a bit more behind the scenes. I'm especially grateful to David Woronoff and Rick Thames for their leadership on the Legislative Committee, and lobbyist John Bussian's work in the trenches at the Legislature.

I may be most grateful for the time I've had to spend with members. Our "On the Road" sessions at newspapers across the state were designed to give members a chance to get to know the NCPA staff, to talk about issues members believe are important, and to let us know how NCPA can serve its members better.

A wonderful added benefit has been time to meet with fellow publishers, editors and other newspaper staffers. I've learned much from you all, and I thank you.

I believe the state of the NCPA is strong. I commend its new leadership to you, its members. Many thanks for a memorable year and encourage your continued vigilant support of your elected leaders and hired staff.

THE NORTH CAROLINA PRESS

Beth Grace Publisher
 Holly Johnson Editor
 Brian Rapp Managing Editor
 Lindsay Webster NCPS Marketing Director
 Leta Pope NCPS Network Advertising Director

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North Carolina Press Association Mission Statement

To protect First Amendment freedoms; to keep public meetings and public records open; to keep the entire state government process accessible to the public.

To promote thorough communications among members and to encourage membership growth and activity.

To maintain high industry standards.

To represent the business interests of North Carolina newspapers.

To promote literacy throughout the state.

North Carolina Press Services Mission Statement

To maintain an innovative, profitable sales and marketing program that promotes and enhances the total newspaper industry.

NCPA Web Address:
www.ncpress.com

Stay connected...

www.ncpress.com

Visit the NCPA Web site.

With 2008 statewide elections on the horizon – including a wide-open race for governor in North Carolina – it's not too early to survey the candidates' messages to see if transparency in government has currency in a run for the Governor's Mansion.



And while we're at it, it would be good to consider what a dream open-government candidate would look like, at least on the open-government issues dear to the hearts of most newspaper publishers.

Lately, business-side issues have grabbed most publishers' attention in Raleigh. Attacks on legal advertising, the threat of a new tax on advertising, and off-again, on-again talk of a tax on internet transactions remain high on the radar screen. In fact, it's not a stretch to say that business issues dominate the thoughts of most publishing industry executives as the industry continues in transition.

But that doesn't mean the industry's first principles are any less important. To the contrary, those principles arguably distinguish the print media from other purveyors of news and information.

In short, the green eyeshades around us would go wild for a gubernatorial candidate who stakes the race on transparency – especially a candidate who would talk about the need to improve the state's public records and open meetings laws. Someone, for starters, who would pledge to put real teeth in our open-government law – like criminal penalties for those who close out the public and automatic recovery of legal expenses for those who have to sue to get the government to comply with the law.

Is it possible to awaken to a governor like this? Has any modern-day candidate given serious thought

to pledging to forge improvement in the public's right to know about government?

The truth is that it used to happen

How about transparency for next governor?

By John Bussian
NCPA Legislative and First Amendment Counsel

around here more than it does now – at least in certain races. Governor Easley famously rode to victory as attorney general in the early 90's on a platform centered on citizens rights and open government. Yet, by the time Easley ran for governor, he was talking mainly about other things. Current AG Roy Cooper has again shown signs of his old, open-government crusading self, but only time will tell if it becomes a leading campaign theme for him.

Probably the only high-ranking elected officials in the state who made open government a centerpiece in their campaigns for offices they currently hold are Sen. David Hoyle of Gaston County, Sen. Martin Nesbitt of Buncombe County and Rep. Jennifer Weiss of Wake County. Given the integrity issues swirling through state government, it's baffling why there aren't more.

Enter the veritable cast of thousands looking at the next governor's race. None – other than former NC Supreme Court Justice Robert Orr – mentions transparency in stump speeches or policy statements. Not the Democratic contenders, Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue or Richard Moore. And not Republicans Bill Graham or Fred Smith.

So here's hoping someone running for governor will do what Alaska's current governor, Sarah Palin, did – run hard and run chiefly for transparency in government. Governor Palin's enthusiasm for open government undoubtedly can

be traced to her formal training as a journalist (she has an undergraduate degree in journalism) and her early career work in the media.

Still, it's one thing to be a fan of open government and it's another to stake your political career on it. Just maybe, though, Palin's success in

a crowded 2006 field in the Alaskan governor's race is instructive.

If there were ever a time for an open-government governor in North Carolina, this is it.

**NCPA
Legal
Hotline**



919-833-3833



Sentinel wins attorney fees in record-setting ruling

By Brian Rapp
NCPA Communications Manager

A judge's decision to award the *Outer Banks Sentinel* \$75,000 in legal fees it spent in a long-running public records battle is good news for citizens and newspapers forced to go to court to get records that are public under state law.

"It's extremely difficult to get anybody to pursue a public records lawsuit unless they have some reasonable expectation that if they prevail, they won't be in the poorhouse as a result," said attorney Hugh Stevens, who with attorney Michael J. Tadych, represented the newspaper in its long battle with the town of Kitty Hawk.

Stevens, counsel emeritus for the North Carolina Press Association, said Superior Court Judge Richard Parker's June 18 order is the largest of its kind in a North Carolina public records case. The largest legal fee award before Parker's ruling was \$50,000 to the *The (Raleigh) News & Observer* in a 1989 case involving access to meetings and records of the University of North Carolina. More recent records disputes in Chatham County and Whispering Pines resulted in smaller attorney fee awards. In the Chatham County case, the award was just 10 percent of the \$35,000 legal bill.

"This is a judge who has shown he understands the importance of open government and the importance of not putting roadblocks in

the way of people having access to records because they can't afford to spend thousands of dollars and never recoup that money," said

result, the paper's legal bills soared. Semans said that the \$75,000 award doesn't begin to cover her costs. As of June 18, her bills amounted to \$112,000.

Based on the costs so far, the copies of those records have

cost the *Sentinel* roughly \$70 a page, Semans said. State law allows only a "nominal fee" to be charged per page for copies of public records.

Semans and Stevens applauded the decision as a step forward in the struggle for more public access to the workings of government agencies and officials. But Stevens does not believe it repays *The Sentinel* for the time, money and effort it has spent fighting this battle for the past two and a half years.

"We are certainly grateful, in this case, that the judge saw fit to award this amount," he said. "But my argument is that, in every case where a lawsuit has to be brought to get access to records that are judged to have been accessible in the first place, you should get whatever the actual legal costs are because you still wind up paying more for the documents than the law stipulates. Plus, you've also had to endure an unreasonable delay in the process."

Stevens also noted that the residents of Kitty Hawk – the very people the paper fought to inform – are now the ones who will have to pay an additional cost for information they should have been able to obtain freely.

"This sends a signal to taxpayers that when elected officials make bad choices, they may have to pay for those choices."

Hugh Stevens
NCPA Counsel Emeritus

Sentinel Managing Editor Sandy Semans.

The state's public records laws do not carry any penalties for those who violate it. There is no punishment – beyond a lawsuit — for agencies or officials who refuse to comply with the law. Unfortunately, citizens and newspapers rarely recoup even a fraction of the cost of taking such cases to court.

"I think this [Parker's decision] is important because attorney's fees are the only leverage you really have in these cases, other than the expectation of officials honoring the public records law," Stevens said.

Parker's ruling capped legal action that began in April 2004. The *Sentinel* asked for copies of the billing records from the town's contract attorneys after a reporter discovered that a budget amendment to cover the town's legal expenses was more than five times the annual average fees paid to Kitty Hawk's former attorney.

An appeals court ruling in January affirmed that the documents were public and the newspaper was entitled to them. But the law firm – its relationship with Kitty Hawk was dissolved earlier this year – fought back with repeated appeals. As a



Fred Crisp awards go to Tarboro, Raleigh ad execs



The 2007 winners of the Fred D. Crisp Jr. Outstanding Sales Professional of the Year awards were honored at the NCPA Best Ad Contest awards banquet June 8 at The Omni Hotel in Charlotte. Sales Manager Gene Hudson of *The Daily Southerner* in Tarboro (left, being congratulated by NCPA President Deuce Niven) won for community papers while Jeff Knight, senior account representative for *The News & Observer* in Raleigh, won for dailies. *N&O* Local Advertising Manager Sandy Fain (right) accepted Knight's award.

Web

continued from page 1

will be a series of photos submitted by member papers (see related box). A contact link to NCPA staff will also be more prominently displayed.

The redesigned site also will make it more user-friendly for members to register for NCPA and NCPS professional development seminars, Winter Institute, the annual summer Convention and Newspaper Academy. Registration and payment for all events can now be completed and submitted directly through the site.

The page will work to drive traffic to member web sites. A one-stop link that lists all member newspaper with a clickable link to each paper's home page will remain

a staple in the new design. And many of the industry headlines will redirect readers back to member pages.

A Legislative Alerts link, set up this year to help members track the latest moves in the state Legislature, will remain in place and be updated as often as events warrant.

"The ultimate goal of the revisions to both the Web site and newsletter is to make both vehicles more accessible, more informative and more important in the daily reading habits of NCPA members," Rapp said. "With the Web site, in particular, we hope that our member papers bookmark this site and check www.ncpress.com daily."

Sentinel

continued from page 4

"This sends a signal to taxpayers that when elected officials make bad choices, they may have to pay for those choices," Stevens said. "In his ruling, Judge Parker said it was not a pleasant task to award attorneys fees at the taxpayers' expense. But it was the responsibility of the town's officials to keep their attorneys under control."

Stevens said he hopes the long-term effect of the decision will help other publications and citizens compel reluctant officials to grant records requests without the threat of a lawsuit.

"Ideally, this may mean we won't have to litigate at all," he said.



Local WWII novel set for serialization in January

Join a statewide reading program based on a longtime favorite North Carolina novel, *Taffy of Torpedo Junction*.

Thanks to UNC Press, the book's publisher, Newspapers in Education and the North Carolina Press Foundation will make the story available to North Carolina newspapers. The goal is to have as many newspapers as possible publish the story and involve as many young and adult readers as possible.

Newspapers will receive the book for publication starting the week of Jan. 7, 2008. Publishing one chapter per week, the story will finish in mid-May.

The book is divided into 16 chapters with between 800 and 900 words per chapter. Each chapter comes with illustrations and an NIE activity. Curricula also will be provided at the state NIE Web site.

Each chapter must retain credit lines for UNC Press and NC Press Foundation.

Here's a description of the book from the Web site

for UNC Press:

"A longtime favorite of several generations of Tar Heels, *Taffy of Torpedo Junction* is the thrilling adventure story of 13-year-old Taffy Willis, who, with the help of her pony and dog, exposes a ring of Nazi spies operating from a secluded house on Hatteras Island, North Carolina, during World War II.

"For readers of all ages, the book brings to life the dramatic wartime events on the Outer Banks, where German U-boats turned an area around Cape Hatteras into 'Torpedo Junction' by sinking more than 60 American vessels in just a six-month period in 1942. Taffy has been enjoyed by young and old alike since it was first published in 1957."

For samples of chapter one and other information about Taffy's serialization, contact Sandra Cook at sandynie@unc.edu, or phone (919) 843-5648.

More details about the story will be posted soon on www.ncnewspapersineducation.org.

NCPS asking for more survey responses

A reminder to all newspaper ad managers that the NCPS Online Advertising Survey, currently available on SurveyMonkey, should be completed as soon as possible.

This information is vital so that NCPS can move forward with online advertising sales efforts in North Carolina.

For a link to the survey, or if you have further questions, contact NCPS Advertising and Marketing Director Lindsay Webster at (919) 789-2085.

We want your news!

Got an exciting bit of news about innovations at your paper, or someone receiving a major award?

NCPress is searching for more news for and about our member papers. Let us know what's going on so we can spread it around the state!

If you've got news for us, contact Brian Rapp at brian@ncpress or call (919) 789-2091.



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Dispatches from a latter-day Johnny Appleseed

By Jock Lauterer



Let's get this straight: Newspapers are not vanishing. At least not my kind of

newspapers.

Yes, many major metros are in a circulation free-fall. But not my guys. The small, local or what we call "community newspapers" – papers with circulations below 50k, many of them found off the interstates on the so-called "blue highways" of this nation – are doing very well, thank you.

In fact, these "relentlessly local" papers are so quietly successful that big-city papers have finally noticed and are copying them. Example: pick up today's *News & Observer* and count the number of local stories on the front page.

North Carolina has only eight papers that might be considered major metros – all the rest are "my peeps" (as Selena, my hip Carrboro daughter, calls "her people"). This includes the 192 weeklies and small dailies of the Old North State. And of course, add to that mix, our own Carrboro Commons.

If you're like me, numbers make your eyes glaze over. So I'll make this quick. Of the 9,321 newspapers in the U.S. only 217 are considered "large."

Now listen to this stat: statewide and nationwide, 97 percent of our newspapers are SMALL PAPERS. And they reach almost three times as

many readers as do "big" papers.

These are the papers that tell you when your garbage pick-up has changed, what the town council is up to, who's going to be playing at quarterback this week, who made the honor roll, when that road widening project will be done and how best to avoid traffic jams ...

These are also the papers where many of our students get their first internships and many grads get their first jobs. Just looking at the sheer numbers, wouldn't you think it's the job of a great public university to encourage and empower such an industry?

That was my thinking when, in 2001, we launched the Carolina Community Media Project as a way to help strengthen the state's community papers – both rural and suburban.

So how can I, just one person, make a difference here? That's where Johnny Appleseed comes in.

As a child, I loved the story of Johnny Appleseed, the wandering pioneer nurseryman, planting seedlings for free wherever he went. In my Little Golden Book, Appleseed was barefoot, skinny, bearded and whistling, toting a backpack full of tiny saplings — happy in his work. Reading my Little Golden Book, I thought to myself: Would that someday I could be so happy in my work.

And so it has come to pass. When, in the summer of 2001 I set out on the first series of free, on-site workshops for small newspapers around the state, it's not surprising that Johnny Appleseed's name and

vision sprang to mind.

Co-sponsored by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Carolina Center for Public Service, the "roadshow" needed a descriptive handle. What better than that of the happy wanderer? Thus the name was coined: the Johnny Appleseed Summer Community Journalism Roadshow.

The name was so catchy that smart-aleck colleagues began suggesting that I add the name of a new road warrior for each succeeding summer's workshop. So today it has come to this: The Johnny Appleseed, Charles Kuralt, Jack Kerouac, Willie Nelson, James Taylor, Johnny Cash, 'Possum-Dodgin,' Summer Community Journalism Roadshow.

Over the course of seven summers, the Roadshow has gone to 110 community newspapers, literally from Murphy to Manteo (or for real Tar Heels: from Wolf Creek to Whalebone). So far this summer the Roadshow has gone to Warrenton, Littleton, Hillsborough, Mebane, Denton, Bryson City and Burgaw.

Come along, won't you? This summer I'm blogging from the road. Join me at carrborocommons.org or weblogs.jomc.unc.edu/bluehighways.

Jock Lauterer is the director of the Carolina Community Media Project and teaches community journalism and photojournalism at the UNC-CH School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

These people are coming to NCPA's 2007 Annual Convention ...



Howard Weaver
Vice President-News
The McClatchy Co.



Reid Ashe
Executive Vice Pres./COO
Media General Inc.



Scott Flanders
President/CEO
Freedom Communications



Tom Curley
President/CEO
The Associated Press



Max Heath
Vice President
Landmark Community
Newspapers



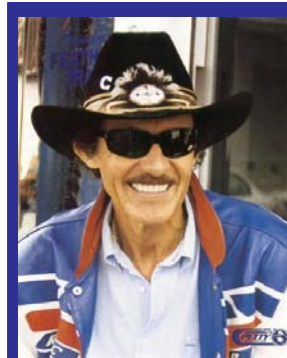
Jay Smith
President
Cox Newspapers Inc.



Mary Jacobus
President/COO
New York Times Co.
Regional Media Group

...are you?

Oh . . .
he'll be coming, too.



134th Annual Convention Omni Hotel, Charlotte Schedule of Events

Thursday, July 26

10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

NCPA & NCPS Board Meetings

2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Communities Roundtable

Speaker: Jock Lauterer

The director of the Carolina Community Media project at UNC-Chapel Hill leads a lively discussion of industry issues with community newspaper publishers and editors.

3 p.m.

NCPF Board Meeting

6 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Bus transportation to Lowe's Motor Speedway

7 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Reception & Dinner

*Honoring the 2007 North Carolinian of the Year:
NASCAR Legend Richard Petty*

Friday, July 27

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Legislative review breakfast

Get the latest news from the NC Statehouse and hear from guest speaker, Sen. Dan Clodfelter.

9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Optional activity: tennis tournament

9:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Virginia Tech tragedy:

New reporting for the new media world

Coverage of the tragic shootings heralded a new day for breaking news coverage; journalists and students under fire reported their stories from the inside. Hear what happened from those who were there.

11 a.m. - Noon

Concurrent Sessions

Saving Sundays

*Speaker: Tom Silvestri, President/Publisher,
The Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch*

How do papers maintain - or even grow - Sunday readership? Get some ideas and inspiration to make your weekend paper stronger.

What newspaper people need to know about video

*Speaker: Al Tompkins, Broadcast/Online Leader, The Poynter Institute
Grab readers with stories that move! Poynter teaches the print press how to tell stories a whole new way.*

Noon - 2 p.m.

Lunch/Annual Business Meeting

Daily/Community Association Meetings

2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Do we have a future? The execs talk

What's ahead for newspapers and how do we secure our future? Sit in on this extraordinary chat with some of the nation's top newspaper executives.

6 p.m. - 10 p.m.

President's Reception & Banquet

*Keynote Speaker: Al Tompkins, The Poynter Institute
"How To Do Online Without Breaking the Bank,
Killing Your People or Ruining Journalism"*

Bar Association Awards

Lassiter Award

Saturday, July 28

7 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Breakfast available

No formal program is planned, so please dine at your leisure.

10 a.m. - ?

Leisure activities

Golf (at Rocky River Golf Club); Museum of the New South Tour; Mint Museum of Craft & Design Tour; Carowinds; Discovery Place(w/IMAX Theater); Bobcats Arena Tour

For registration form and further details, go to www.ncpress.com



Business tops media in consumer trust survey

By Randy Hines



A recent global survey revealed more consumer trust of business than media or government. The largest-ever

Edelman Trust Barometer indicates an all-time high of 53 percent of U.S. respondents trust business “to do what is right.”

“I think there is a perception that business is beginning to step up to the plate to take more direct action on issues like climate change and community relief,” explains Nancy Ruschinski, president of Edelman’s U.S. Midwest region. “And people are starting to take notice.”

U.S. media earned a 43 percent trust score, beating only the government with its 38 percent. Among the other three options, non-governmental organizations had the best response with 57 percent, followed closely by 56 percent for religious institutions and 53 percent for business.

For news about a company, American business magazines retained their rank as the most credible. All other U.S. media sources dropped from the 2006 rankings: newspapers at 37 percent, down from 44 percent; television news at 35 percent, down from 38 percent; and radio news at 39 percent, down from 48 percent.

The highest media trust percentages came from China (68), Brazil (62), Mexico (61), Netherlands (55) and India (55).

Only 19 percent of the United Kingdom respondents, on the other

hand, trust their media to do the right thing. Media also pulled in low scores in France (27), Germany (29), Sweden (29), Italy (33) and Canada (34).

The 2007 study of 3,100 college-educated, 35- to 64-year-olds showed a growing division between developed and developing countries. For example, media in general had a 56 percent score in developing countries to do what is right, but only 37 percent in developed ones.

Articles in business magazines are typically viewed as the most credible sources of information. In 11 of the 18 countries in the Edelman study, business mags are the most or second-most trusted supplier of information about companies.

“In much the same way that business has adapted to globalization, business magazines have succeeded in reflecting the complexity of the world,” observed Frederick Kempe, former editor and associate publisher of *The Wall Street Journal Europe*. “They strive to be accurate, tough-minded and smart. I would think that is the reason the survey shows them at the top as credible news sources, while the rest of journalism has grown sloppier with the 24x7 news cycle.”

In the U.S., business publications ranked first, followed by industry analysts and news coverage on the radio. However, in Japan, newspapers are the most credible. Newspapers overall were considered highly credible in Spain (65 percent), but the opposite was true in France (20 percent). China ranked its television stations first.

Technology ranked at the top overall within the business rankings, and was the only universally trusted industry. However, bloggers face a difficult time. Consider the question: “If you heard information from each of these sources, how credible would the information be?”

Bloggers came in dead last among 13 choices. Only 16 percent of citizens in developing nations and only 13 percent in developed countries opted for the blogger as a credible supplier of information.

Their fate, in fact, was a major topic of debate during June’s New Media Academic Summit 2007 in New York City’s Harvard Club. Sponsored by Edelman and PRWeek, the event gathered journalists, bloggers, communication professionals and academics for two days to discuss the changing media environment.

Although bloggers are often characterized as teenagers ranting about their weekend activities, many of them are legitimate citizen journalists. Under those situations, most of those in attendance agreed such bloggers deserve shield law protection.

Does your North Carolina newspaper have a blogging policy?

© Copyright 2007. Former North Carolina educator Dr. Randy Hines teaches in the Department of Communications at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, PA 17870. Contact him at 514 University Avenue, Selinsgrove PA or e-mail him at randyhinesapr@yahoo.com.

Some valuable tips for public meeting coverage

By Matt Baron



The summer after my freshman year in college, I resigned my local newspaper reporting job in favor of serving Dilly Bars at the Dairy Queen

down the street.

I had written for the paper for three years already, and told my editor that I felt “burned out.” I forget if my boss at the Marshfield (Mass.) Mariner probed very much – all I was thinking of was hustling over to DQ for my higher hourly wage plus free ice cream – but if he did, I am sure I told him that a key source of that burnt-out feeling was coverage of local governing bodies.

I absolutely dreaded that aspect of the job. I felt overwhelmed by the prospect of making sense of all that was going on, and certainly wished never again to set foot or notebook inside another of those gatherings.

Twenty years and hundreds upon hundreds of meetings later, I can honestly say that I would rather cover a government meeting than work behind an ice-cream counter. Like anything, experience – including plenty of mistakes along the way – has shown me much of what works, what doesn’t work and what to look for in public meeting coverage.

While this is not a comprehensive listing, here are some tips that I hope you find helpful as you head into your next meeting:

Anticipate the News

After reviewing the agenda – as

well as background information, if the government body provides it in advance – think about possible stories that could flow from the meeting. Is there anyone you should contact before the meeting to line up an interview for a reaction afterwards?

For example, if the board is planning on voting whether to approve a liquor store, contact neighboring businesses and residents to learn their views. Reach the prospective owner to learn more about his history and plans for the business. Research past, similar stories to see what types of issues have surfaced.

Show Up Early, Be The Last To Leave

This is a simple formula with a simply amazing return on the time investment.

Even more astounding is how few reporters actually take advantage of this opportunity to connect with existing sources, develop new sources and ferret out story ideas that all too often never see the light of day.

One obvious group of individuals to approach are the municipal officials, both staff and elected. But also make a genuine outreach to the “non-officials.”

Before the meeting, you can chat with citizens and any other observers and get the inside track on stories that will rise to the surface during the meeting.

The seeds of trust and respect planted during these seemingly frivolous encounters come to harvest days, weeks, months or even years

later. And as any farmer can attest, not all seeds reap a bumper crop. The point is to plant aplenty, and you boost your overall likelihood of a rich story yield.

Skip Press Row

Some communities dedicate an area for the press. While at first I puffed out my chest and felt “special,” over time I began mixing with the general public. Why?

- It enables me to get a clearer pulse of individuals’ private reaction to public discussion and decisions.

- It shatters a subtle, yet real communication barrier that press tables can create. Citizens tend to be reluctant to come up to the “throne” occupied by reporters, especially when our backs are turned to them. Only the boldest dare approach.

- Skipping the press table can also provide better “pursuit angles” as you seek to question folks who have just blasted the town board or otherwise served notice that they are now a potential part of a new or ongoing story.

Of course, if you met them beforehand and had all their contact information you could simply let them go – and grin as your competitors scurry after them.

You might even have some spare time to swing by the DQ for a Dilly Bar.

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Exploring the FOI black hole

By Doug Fisher



Call it the black hole of various federal and state freedom of information laws.

The language usually is some-

thing like this section of South Carolina's law: "Matter specifically exempted from disclosure by statute or law."

Sometimes, like the federal law, the language is more complicated: "This section does not apply to matters that are specifically exempted from disclosure by statute ... provided that such statute (A) requires that the matters be withheld from the public in such a manner as to leave no discretion on the issue, or (B) establishes particular criteria for withholding or refers to particular types of matters to be withheld."

Whether a few words or many, these sections open black holes in open-records laws that can suck in a lot of mischief. But what is the potential damage to the public's right to know? And what surprises are likely to await those who otherwise might assume that records vital to understanding how government works are open?

Last year, The Associated Press began answering some of those questions with an extensive study of state secrecy laws passed after the September 11 attacks. It found 616 laws that restricted access and 284 that loosened it.

But few have truly plumbed the depths of such black holes. The

Tennessee Coalition for Open Government listed more than 200 exemptions to that state's open records law as of February 2005.

Now, a senior honors student at the University of South Carolina, Mary Beck, has catalogued the extent to which that state has sprinkled records exemptions throughout its laws. (*Full disclosure: I was her thesis adviser.*) Her findings in a small state should make press associations and news organizations throughout the country consider their own "black hole" inventories.

Beck found more than 170 exemptions buried throughout the state laws. In addition, more than 50 exemptions were not listed in state law but promulgated by agencies under the state code of regulations.

Some have been well publicized and remain controversial, including many provisions that can keep the public from knowing complaints have been made about licensed professionals.

Some might raise eyebrows. Among them:

- Information the Agriculture Department collects in investigating trade practices that might hinder marketing of soybeans, sweet potatoes or pork.
- Workers' compensation statistics given to the state Labor Department to allow it to assess hazards and schedule inspections.
- Supporting statements detailing how a cable TV company figures out how much it owes a city or town in a franchise fee.
- Statistical information about medical malpractice suits. The intent appears to be to keep individual

patient information private, but the exemption could be interpreted to keep all statistical information off-limits.

Some of these date to the 1960s, before the state's current freedom of information law was enacted. And some, like the cable TV fee records, are as recent as last year.

Unlike the AP, Beck found few exemptions that appeared to pass in reaction to the September 11 attacks.

The South Carolina Freedom of Information Act specifically says "it is vital in a democratic society that public business be performed in an open and public manner," and legislators direct judges to interpret the law in favor of openness.

As Beck notes, "The danger of putting so many exemptions outside the FOIA is that they will be interpreted more broadly than the framers of the open records law intended."

The S.C. Press Association intends to put Beck's work on its Web site as a resource for journalists around that state. Perhaps journalists – or a journalism student – in your state can compile a similar list that your press association also can share. You might be surprised at what you find.

(The AP stories can be found at: www.ap.org/FOI/foi_031306a.html and www.ap.org/FOI/foi_031306c.html).

Doug Fisher, a former AP news editor, teaches journalism at the University of South Carolina and can be reached at dfisher@sc.edu or 803-777-3315. Past issues of Common Sense Journalism can be found at <http://www.jour.sc.edu/news/csj/index.html>.



Get the right info from advertisers

By John Foust



There's an old saying, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail."

Pretend for a moment that you go to the grocery store to buy the ingredients to bake a cake. But there's a problem: You don't know what's required. So you run up and down the aisles, throwing everything you see into the cart. By the time you get to the checkout line, the cart is overflowing with detergent, paper towels, cereal, toothpaste, lettuce, soft drinks, vegetables, flowers, ice cream and dozens of boxes.

There is no rhyme or reason to the cart's contents. Granted, there is a slim chance that the necessary ingredients are somewhere in the shopping cart, but that's not likely.

This is a ridiculous example, even to a non-cook like me. But it shows how foolish it is to start something, without first figuring out what it takes to finish successfully.

Many advertising sales people have settled into familiar routines, unaware of the vital importance of client meetings. They drop by an account's office, visit for a few minutes – and then ask what he or she wants to run in the next ad.

These meetings are comfortable and predictable. In other words, they are unlikely to produce the ingredients of exciting new ad campaigns.

Every contact with an advertiser presents an opportunity to sell. This means a sales person should go into each meeting with a plan – whether it is to introduce himself or herself,

learn about the client's marketing goals, present a new ad idea, review the schedule, discuss a special issue or gather information for future advertising.

Perhaps the least understood kind of meeting is one in which the sales person gathers information for a new ad campaign. Without a plan, it can resemble that mad dash through the grocery store. Without a shopping list, you'll ask a lot of general questions – and end up with a cart which is full of useless information.

Although creative strategy discussions vary according to specific situations, here are some basic topics to consider:

1. *The target audience.*

Don't try to target "everybody." In this world of niche audiences, the advertiser who tries to appeal to everyone will appeal to no one.

It helps to define the audience in terms of demographics (measurable characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, income, education, geographical region) and psychographics (values, lifestyles, attitudes, etc.).

Some publications – and some advertisers – have access to this kind of audience information. If research isn't available, use your common sense – and your client's first-hand experience – to identify the niches which have your advertiser's best prospects.

2. *The advertiser's products and services.*

Look for ways to connect what the audience wants or needs to what the advertiser offers. Identify the

problems that are being faced by the target audience. Then ask: How can the advertiser solve those problems? Focus on features and benefits.

With an organized shopping list, you'll find it easier to get the information you need. Then you'll be ready to cook up some good advertising.

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Photoshop CS3 – plenty to fuss about!

By Kevin Slimp



I try to offer some variety in my columns, but sometimes it's hard. Most of the e-mail requests I receive are related

to Acrobat (PDF files), Photoshop and InDesign – all Adobe products. It's hard to remain objective when most of the software released for our industry seems to come from one company.

But I can't put it off any longer. Photoshop CS3 deserves its own review.

A lot of you downloaded the free trial of Photoshop CS3 last year, when the free beta upgrade was released for Photoshop CS2 users. However, most folks in our business haven't had the opportunity to see what all the fuss is about. Let me tell you, there is plenty to fuss about. I plan to limit our discussion to three features in Photoshop CS3 that are sure to become favorites of paginators and photo editors.

Improved Curves

Most photo editors can adjust Levels and Curves in their sleep. They know to bring the highlight and shadow end points in using Levels, then adjust the midtones using Curves. Using both tools is handy, thanks to the histogram included in the Levels adjustment window.

Levels might be history thanks to the histogram now available in the Curves adjustment window. Now

Photoshop users can bring the end points in using Curves, without visiting Levels first. The Curves histogram shows up in light gray underneath the adjustment Curves. Users who want to adjust the highlights and shadows, lighten the midtones, then create an "s" curve to create contrast, can do all this in Curves.

Controlling Grayscale Photos

Photo editors have created all kinds of ways to convert photos to grayscale in Photoshop. A lot of photo editors convert images to Lab colors, selecting the Lightness channel to convert to grayscale. Most simply select Image-Adjustments-Grayscale.

Photoshop CS3 introduces the Black & White tool. Adobe must have had newspapers in mind when they developed this tool because it's perfect for many of the challenges we face.

The Black & White tool, found under Image-Adjustments, lets the user adjust individual color channels in an image while viewing its representation in grayscale. To test this tool, I took a photo of my son at his birthday party. When I converted the image to grayscale using Image-Mode-Grayscale, it was difficult to see the difference between the green and blue balloons. Using the Black & White tool, I was able to lighten the green balloons and saturate the blue balloons to get the results I wanted.

Sure, I could have done this in earlier versions of Photoshop, but it would have taken more tools and more time. This tool alone justifies

the cost of an upgrade.

Yes, You Can Create Animated GIF Files

Sure, I could create animated files in earlier versions of Photoshop. An animation is a sequence of images, or frames, that is displayed over time. Each frame varies slightly from the preceding frame, creating the illusion of movement or other changes when the frames are viewed in quick succession.

Prior to CS3, I had to create my artwork in Photoshop, then move to a separate application (by clicking on a button at the bottom Photoshop's tool bar), to create a sequence of frames which eventually became an animated GIF file. In the CS3 version, I can do all my work in Photoshop.

Yes, it's true we could accomplish these tasks in earlier versions of Photoshop. The nice thing about the CS3 version is that you can do them much more quickly and without a long learning curve. Newspaper photo editors are busy people; finding time to learn new tools can be a problem. But these tools are very intuitive in CS3 and you will be using them in no time.

The cost to upgrade to Photoshop CS3 varies, depending on the software you already have. Visit <http://www.adobe.com> for more information.

Kevin Slimp is director of the Institute of Newspaper Technology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Past columns can be found at kevinslimp.com.

Clippings

Ruth Barbour, the former editor of *The Carteret County News-Times* in Morehead City, has established the Barbour-Henry Endowment, a \$500,000 gift to Carteret County Community College to create a faculty chair in marine technology education.

Earl Brackett celebrated his 56th year with *The Gaston Gazette* in Gastonia in June. He started with the paper when he was 16 years old.

Jessica Connor, editor of *The Crossroads Chronicle* in Cashiers since 2004, recently left to become director of marketing and administration for the Bascom-Louise Gallery and Fine Art Center, Highlands. Kelly Donaldson, a former sports editor at *The News Herald* in Morganton and *The Times* in Gainesville, Ga., replaces Connor.

Brook R. Corwin has been promoted to associate editor at *The Tribune* in Elkin. Corwin has been a staff reporter since 2005.

The Dispatch, Lexington, recently celebrated its 125th birthday. The first issue of the *Dispatch* was published on May 12, 1882.

Alan Ford, sports editor at *The Star* in Shelby for 25 years, was honored with the Tim Stevens Media Representative of the Year award by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association for his contributions to high school sports reporting.

John C. Huff Jr. has been appointed editor of the *Sun Journal* in

New Bern, replacing Mark McKillop. Huff previously was executive editor and newspaper consultant for *The Post and Courier*, Charleston, S.C.

Mike Humbert has been promoted to copy editor and full-time photographer at *The Robesonian*, Lumberton.

Elizabeth Leland, staff writer for *The Charlotte Observer*, won the 2006 Sigma Delta Chi award for feature writing for her story "The Old White Oak of Matthews."

Scott Madere has been hired as an advertising executive with *The Daily Herald*, Roanoke Rapids.

Duane McCallister, retired publisher of *The Gaston Gazette* in Gastonia, was appointed to the board of trustees of Gaston College.

Bret McCormick, a 2006 graduate of UNC-Charlotte, is the new sports editor at *The State Port Pilot*, Southport. He replaces Keith Barber, who moved to California.

Justin Parker, former sports editor of the *Huntersville Herald*, has been named sports editor for the *News-Topic*, Lenoir.

Greg Phipps, a former sports-writer with the *Topsail Voice* in Hampstead, is now sports editor for *The Courier-Times*, Roxboro.

Dennis Rogers, a columnist for 31 years with *The News & Observer* in Raleigh, retired in June.

Fuller Royal, a staff photographer for *The News Reporter* in Whiteville, took first place in the men's portrait category at the South-

eastern Professional Photographers Association convention in Atlanta for his photo "The Firefighter."

Sandy Selvy has been named publisher of the *Stanley News & Press* in Albemarle. Selvy succeeds Scott Brooks. Also, B.J. Drye has been named assistant editor.

Shelley Smith has been hired as a news reporter for the *Avery Journal-Times* in Newland. She formerly reported for *The Salisbury Post* and *The Kannapolis Citizen*.

Jason Tierney has been hired as a graphic designer for *The News of Orange County*, Hillsborough.

Obituaries

Dora Catherine de Wolfe Gummerson, 92, a former food editor for *The Charlotte Observer*, died April 18.

Sean Jarem, 28, a reporter for *The Dispatch* in Lexington and editor of the *Davidson Reporter*, died May 16.

Donald R. Jones, 71, retired circulation manager of *The Stanley News and Press* in Albemarle, died May 15.

Calendar

July 26-28

NCPA Annual Convention
Charlotte

Sept. 26-29

NNA Annual Convention & Trade Show
Norfolk, Va.

NCPA Job Bank

Visit the NCPA Job Bank at www.ncpress.com to view the full listings.

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