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Campus radio stations are tempting targets for purchase by outside interests

cmreview.org/college-radio-in-transition/

College Media Review

September 16, 2011

By DANIEL REIMOLD



KUSF "Funeral" observed on campus (Photo by Jennifer Waits)

In late January, at a small makeshift cemetery, a young woman dressed in black rested flowers in the grass in front of a radio station's headstone. Near the top, the gray grave marker sported the acronym R.I.P. The identity of the deceased appeared underneath, spelled out sloppily in red paint: KUSF 90.3 FM.

The moment of mourning was actually a silent protest. It was part of a larger movement opposing the sudden death of KUSF, the station affiliated with the University of San Francisco. As *PopMatters* reported in mid-March, on a Tuesday morning just before the start of spring semester, USF officials "shut down the transmitter for 34-year-old college radio station KUSF without warning during the middle of a volunteer DJ's show. A band waiting to appear on the show was sent home, the locks on the station doors were changed, and KUSF volunteers were escorted out. By 5 p.m., music from San Francisco's classical station KDFC was heard emanating from KUSF's airwaves."

The rapid shift to a classical format was a financial decision. USF administrators sold the station to an outside public radio group for \$3.75 million. The sale is pending approval by the Federal Communications Commission.

Near the start of a campus forum to discuss the station's sale, USF president Stephen Privett, also a Jesuit priest, told the hundreds in attendance he needed to leave at a set time. "I want to be honest with you," he said. "I have a funeral tomorrow morning that I have not yet prepared for." Among the cries sounded in response, according to *The San Francisco Chronicle*: "This is a funeral right now, pal!"

A funereal gloom— and a sense of FM doom— looms large over the college radio landscape.

Hundreds of student stations nationwide continue to provide undergraduates with invaluable on-air experience and act as the last bastions of non-mainstream music promotion. But their survival prospects on the AM/FM dial amid a down economy and unending Internet and iPod assaults are bleaker than they have ever been.

"It seems as if the other people I speak to in college radio trudge on believing they are losing relevance every single day and 'the end is near,'" said Schyler Orr, general manager of KAMP student radio at the University of Arizona. Taylor Smith, general manager of WRMC at Vermont's Middlebury College, agreed, noting, "College radio does seem to be entering a dark age." Lindsay Zoladz, former general manager of American University's WVAU, wrote in a late April *Washington City Paper* piece that she began referring to her role as "the head custodian aboard a sinking ship."

Orr, Smith and other station managers stress that students are still eagerly joining their staffs; local and indie bands are still being discovered, promoters and record labels continue sending music, and stations are coming together with unparalleled vigor to combat the challenges being flung at them like Angry Birds. "On the one hand, it's frightening and dark days, but on the other hand there are lots of fights and a lot of spirit," said college radio expert Jennifer Waits. "Radio stations all over the country are pitching in and speaking up about their desire to preserve college radio. It's empowering."

Yet, the truth remains – the combined power of student stations' wattage, funding, and administrative support is decreasing. Hopes for high-tech trends such as HD radio have not been realized. Online streaming has also not yet emerged as a savior. And radio's prominence within university curricula and media programs is at an all-time low. As legendary U.S. rock magazine *Crawdaddy!* proclaimed in April, "The future of college radio is in crisis."

"Potential Purchase Targets"

At present, the most worrisome trend is the increasing number of terrestrial student radio stations that have been sold or operate under the threat or rumor of sale. As Waits wrote for *PopMatters* in March, even more popular, reputable, and venerable

student stations are being eyed as “potential purchase targets.” A December 2010 *New York Times* report similarly shared, “[A]s colleges across the country look for ways to tighten budgets amid recession-induced shortfalls, some administrators . . . have focused on college radio, leading even well-endowed universities to sell off their FM stations.”

Among the recent victims of sales or sales talk: KAUR (Augustana College), KTRU (Rice University), KTXT (Texas Tech University), KUSF (San Francisco State), WCAL (St. Olaf College), WDYN (Tennessee Temple University), WHIL (Spring Hill College), WJHU (Johns Hopkins University), WNAZ (Trevecca Nazarene University), WRVU (Vanderbilt University), and WXEL (Barry University). Other stations have had their funding slashed or student staffs drastically reduced.

In late April, to help raise awareness of the increase in sales, College Broadcasters, Inc. called for a moment of silence on college radio stations across the country. At 11 a.m. EST on April 28, numerous stations interrupted regular programming for 60 seconds. In its place, the sound college radio supporters fear most: dead air.

Administrators who have singled out student stations for on-the-dial deaths call college radio, as Zoladz wrote in *Washington City Paper*, an “obsolete format.” They cite the paucity of students who regularly tune in to the stations and the large majority unaware they even exist. In some cases, they point to stations maintaining school affiliations while sporting staffs made up of more outside locals than students. They mention programming that is not line with student or mainstream interests. And they throw up their hands at stations’ non-profit status.

College radio’s retort: These are the things that make us great.

College radio has always been a little-known but much-loved enterprise. It has always had a commitment to its surrounding communities. It has always boasted a healthy amount of student staffers and raised enough money during fundraising drives. And it has always challenged students and others with programming centered on quality, not cash. “College radio is non-profit and that is perhaps its biggest strength,” said David Ayrton Lopez, the general manager of Stanford University’s KZSU. “We are not pressured to play music that will generate revenue. It is more about music and less about money. This translates to artistic freedom.”

“Radio with a Sense of Adventure”

Student stations still want their freedom primarily on FM. The Internet has been a helpful add-on— and the lone home for campus stations that cannot afford wattage— but it is not a desired permanent replacement.

This past semester at Ohio State University, rising junior Steve Meil launched AROUSE (the Amateur Radio Organization for Undergraduate Student Entertainment) to revitalize OSU student radio. His long-term goal is to start a full-bore freeform student station— on FM.

Meil has been told he will need roughly \$100,000 a year for the first five years to get on the FM airwaves, not counting electricity and miscellaneous operating costs. He will need to hire and work with legal consultants to navigate the FCC approval process. He will need to secure dedicated studio space. He will need to purchase the proper equipment and hire engineers to handle installation and oversight. He will separately need to train an array of behind-the-scenes and on-air staffers.

He is fully aware an online-only operation would be much cheaper, smaller, and easier to manage. He wants no part of it. “Online streaming, it’s easy, but it’s the minor leagues,” he said. “With [terrestrial] radio, it’s in your face. It’s right there. It confronts you. With the Internet, you have to look for it. You can’t just turn a dial and find it. The Internet just isn’t there yet.”

Beyond niche podcasting success, the web has not yet established itself as a destination radio platform. A spot on the dial remains the way to reach more listeners. “In terms of viable numbers, if you’re not on the air, you’re fighting an uphill battle,” said Warren Kozireski, the general manager of WBSU at SUNY-Brockport and CBI past president. “Online, you’ll have friends of the DJs listening and maybe a handful of others. If you don’t have an operation where you can be a preset on someone’s car radio or home stereo, you’re kind of lost.”

With more student stations silenced or relegated to still mostly untapped web streams, radio’s “local flavor” may also be lost. “Many Americans, including members of Congress, have complained that consolidation, voice tracking, syndication and automation have left communities without a true local radio station,” Mark Maben, the general manager of WSOU at Seton Hall University told CBI at the time of its call for the moment of silence. “Student stations are often the last locally-focused radio outlet in their community.”

They are also among the last stations exhibiting any spontaneity— in programming, playlists, and on-air presence. “It’s easy to bemoan commercial radio . . . because it’s all so regulated and formatted, but each individual hosting a college radio show, assuming they have free reign over what they play, exerts their own personality into their show,” said Adam Spektor, general manager of WRUW at Case Western Reserve University. “I think people really enjoy that, hearing someone on the air who is as sincere, human, and passionate about what they do as they are, as opposed to having to go by strict guidelines or scripts.”

In a related sense— even though “the Internet has stolen some of college radio’s taste-making muscle,” according to a 2009 *Chicago Daily Herald* report— student stations still remain the last major platforms for offbeat and independent music. According to Becky Sullivan, station manager of KJHK at the University of Kansas, “College radio is still providing what made it popular back in the eighties . . . an incredibly eclectic mix of music that is really impossible to hear anywhere else.”

This eclecticism is especially valuable in an iPod era in which so many of us only listen to the same songs, again and again. “It’s great to have your entire library at your fingertips, in the way we listen to music today, but serendipity is now all but extinct,” former WVAU general manager Zoladz wrote in late April for *Washington City Paper*. “We drill deep into our own niches, meaning that we don’t give the time of day to things we don’t already anticipate that we’ll like. Half the fun of college radio is being exposed to things outside your perspective, or even your comfort zone.”

Slogans tell a similar story. One of the mottos of Internet radio service Pandora: “It’s a new kind of radio— stations that play only music you like.” By comparison, consider the tagline of a show that aired this spring on Binghamton University’s WHRW: “Music you didn’t know you liked until you heard it!”

Many student stations sport similar audience-challenging music philosophies. The focus of WWHR at Western Kentucky University is to “revolutionize the commercial audio landscape.” Meanwhile, University of North Carolina’s WXYC is set on playing “music usually considered too erratic, abrasive, or long for regular radio play.” At KVRX at the University of Texas at Austin, it’s “None of the Hits, All of the Time.” The University of Idaho’s student-owned and operated KUOI sums up its mission in six words: “Radio with a sense of adventure.”

“Radio Isn’t Just Radio Anymore”

Stations are also embracing adventure off the air as they work to reinvent and expand their reach. Station managers describe efforts to transform their call letters into full-blown brand names. “We have tried to make our station much more than just a radio station, but rather a brand that students turn to for everything music, news, and sports at our university,” said Ryan Patena, the general manager of WIUX at Indiana University. “While one cannot be oblivious to the fact that radio itself is a dying medium, I am optimistic that new opportunities will allow college radio to continue to have a strong presence at universities.”

Some view the web as the greatest opportunity. “Instead of killing it, the Internet has just forced college radio to get more creative,” *College Music Journal* editor Rev. Moose told the *Chicago Daily Herald* in 2009.

Since the net's arrival, college stations have been far ahead of their commercial brethren in harnessing the power of radio 2.0. More than 16 years ago, the first two stations to broadcast online were student-run, the UNC's WXYC and Georgia Tech's WREK. Subsequently, as Waits wrote in a 2010 *PopMatters* piece "Technology and the Soul of College Radio," college stations were "building websites, setting up netcasts, establishing archives, and developing online playlist capabilities while their commercial radio counterparts struggled to even put up basic web pages."

The current generation of college radio-heads hope to continue the explorations and innovations of their predecessors.

When she was six years old, Sara Miller, station manager at the University of Minnesota's Radio K (KUOM), received a small transistor radio from her grandmother. She called it her "first window into the wider world. Long after bed time, I would lay under the covers pressing the maroon plastic to my ear, listening to music and voices from places as far away as Chicago—impossibly exotic for a child from the northern woods of Minnesota."

Years later, she runs a student station "on the bleeding edge of emerging media technologies"—boasting dozens of student staffers, a website, blogs, a Twitter feed, a downloadable "Track of the Day" mp3, and music and talk programming available on four local FM and AM stations, online, and via an iPhone app. The station even has its own computer desktop wallpaper.

"College radio is in a unique position to be at the forefront of the changing media landscape," Miller said.. "The people who lead college radio stations are at the forefront of the technology revolution, so we are in the best position to move forward and create a new media model for the next generation. . . . Our strategy is working—Radio K has a record number of online listeners, web visitors, and social media followers. This increase is a direct result of new ideas and technologies that our students are employing."

Student stations are increasing their social media presences daily. A growing number are maintaining blogs, podcasts, YouTube channels, and live webcasts. Some are also staging regular studio performances and nearby concerts featuring local musicians.

Michael McAfee, station manager of KVRX at the University of Texas at Austin, said the key is realigning passive listeners as active participants. Among other efforts, the station has been hosting a monthly showcase concert at Austin's Spiderhouse Ballroom featuring up-and-coming Texas bands. "As long as college radio can stay true to its independent principles while diversifying our product, we will live on," he said. "It isn't

enough to broadcast every day and hope that people remain loyal. You have to engage them and offer them incentives, like \$5 concerts, to stick with you. Essentially, we have to become more than just a radio station.”

Or as Caroline Marchildon, the station manager of WUOG at the University of Georgia said, “Radio isn’t just radio anymore.”



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Dan Reimold

On the auction block: College radio sales and transfers

 cmreview.org/71/

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College radio stations across the U.S. at both public and private universities have been sold, are under consideration for sale or have been transferred from student stations to non-student operation. Here is a list.

- KAUR, Augustana College, still owned by Augustana but being operated by Minnesota Public Radio
- KTRU, Rice University, sold to University of Houston for use as public radio station
- KTXT, Texas Tech University, still owned by Texas Tech but control transferred to public station KOHM
- KWJC, William Jewell College, leasing airwaves to Air-1

- WCAL, St. Olaf College, sold to Minnesota Public Radio
- WDYN, Tennessee Temple University, sold to Charlotte Radio Group
- WJHU, Johns Hopkins University
- WNAZ, Trevecca Nazarene University, sold to Bott Broadcasting
- WRVU, Vanderbilt University, leasing airwaves to Nashville Public Radio—
paperwork for sale has not yet been submitted to FCC
- WXEL, Barry University, sold to Classical South Florida
- KUSF, University of San Francisco, leasing airwaves to Classical Public Radio
Network— FCC still investigating and has not yet approved potential sale
- WAWL (now WJBP), Chattanooga State Technical Community College, sold to
Family Life Radio Network
- WJMF, Bryant University, leasing airwaves to WGBH for use by its classical station

— *Daniel Reimold and Jennifer Waits*

Filmmakers document how Virginia Tech's newspaper coped with horrific tragedy

 cmreview.org/documenting-disaster/

College Media Review

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By **DANIEL REIMOLD**, the University of Tampa

“Documenting Disaster” is a must-see film for student journalists and their advisers. The 45-minute documentary, the work of four very recent graduates of Christopher Newport University, offers a glimpse into the newsroom of *The Collegiate Times*, the student newspaper at Virginia Tech, in the immediate aftermath of the April 2007 shootings.



It is built atop the firsthand accounts of former *Collegiate Times* staffers and their former faculty adviser, Kelly Furnas, now Kansas State University's associate director of student publications. Together, they mounted a vigorous, real-time reporting operation that frequently scooped the national press and helped the Hokie community make sense of the chaos. The film also features an interview with Larry Hincker, who faced a “media zoo” in the tragedy's wake as head of Virginia Tech university relations.



The filmmaking team, who also collaborated as staffers at CNU's student newspaper, *The Captain's Log*, include Victoria Shirley (who served as *Captain's Log* editor in chief), Samantha Thrift (news editor), Andrew Deitrick (online editor) and Cassandra Vinch (sports editor).

The film premiered with a pair of shows in mid-April at CNU— the second showing held on the four-year anniversary of the shootings central to the story. According to Deitrick, approximately 100 people turned up at each show, including some family members of the student victims. The full film is now available online at <http://www.thecaptainslog.org/documentingdisaster.html>.

The documentary reveals much about the newspaper faced not only in gathering information about the tragedy but also its internal debates over how to package what it did gather. The documentary discloses that a *Collegiate Times* photographer was temporarily held by police

while trying to snap some shots. It reveals the staff's passionate debate over whether the student killer (who committed suicide) should be counted in its final tally of the dead and the staff decision early on that the *Times* should focus "on the community, instead of the massacre" to in some small measure contribute to the campus healing process.

In an interview, Shirley, Thrift, and Deitrick touched on what surprised, angered and saddened them most during the six-month filmmaking process, a journey which took them from Manhattan, Kan., to downtown Washington D.C.

Q: How did the idea for the film come about?

Thrift: The *Captain's Log* went to Louisville for the ACP/CMA National College Media Convention [last October]. I went to a session where Kelly Furnas was speaking about how the newsroom handled April 16 [the date of the 2007 shootings]. After I saw it, it just hit me that it was a story that needed to be told. ... Two of the victims (of the shootings) went to my high school, and my sister was a good friend with one of the victims and my best friend was a friend with the other victim. And the shooter went to my high school, too. ... Before that session, I hadn't even thought about [the role of the *Collegiate Times* during the tragedy]. It was a completely new perspective, and that's one of the reasons I was so taken aback by it. I literally ran to my friends immediately after [the session] and told them everything about it. It hit me, and I thought it might touch other people to hear the story, too.

Deitrick: We're blessed by having a very awesome adviser [Dr. Terry Lee, associate professor of English and journalism at CNU] who hooked us up with some of his own research money. It was an initial concern [money] but he said, 'Don't worry about it. Whatever you've got to do, do it.' And he also does documentaries, so equipment-wise and financially we were pretty good to go.

Q: How did you decide *how* to tell story?

Shirley: I would say our overall theme changed very quickly after we talked to Kelly Furnas. Our initial perception was, 'Wow, how were they able to separate themselves from [being both] students and journalists to cover the story? They must have been such professionals to be able to do that.' But once we mentioned that to Kelly Furnas, he said, 'No, I encouraged them not to split themselves into two pieces and [instead] to be a member of the community and report on this and that's what made their coverage ultimately different.'

Q: What particularly surprised you during filmmaking?

Shirley: I talked to Larry Hincker, who was the PR guy at the time. I think as student journalists we always think it's us and them, us and the administration. We never stop to think about what the administration goes through. And he was going through as much stress as the *Collegiate Times* staff members. He wasn't sleeping. He was so caught up in the day as it was happening it didn't even occur to him to email his family to get in touch with them

until that night. . . . Something I also hadn't really realized was just how cruel the national media was. . . . We're all student journalists who aspire to have jobs in this industry later in life. There were times I was watching just how insensitive the national media was and asking myself, 'Could I do this? Is this what I will turn into if I make it to the network level?' It just disgusted me. I think through all of it, it taught us, as journalists, what type of journalists we want to become and we're not going to ever dehumanize.

Q: What were the emotional high and low points?

Thrift: My largest concern throughout the process was not being so involved in it that we became numb to the story. That's why I'm glad when we watch it, every time I see Nikki Giovanni's speech [the famous "We Are Virginia Tech" poem reading], I still get chills. That's what was so important to me. Even at the very end, we had a couple of victims' family members come to the shows and some friends, and when I saw them being emotional my emotions came flooding back.

Deitrick: When we went out to Kansas to meet Kelly, we had a really casual dinner with him and then he pulled us into his office at night. And here we are in the middle of nowhere – Manhattan, Kansas – and he pulls from the bottom of his bookshelf a stack of papers from the week [of the shootings]. And that's when it became, for me, real. Later on, [Samantha] and I went to see "Living for 32" [www.livingfor32.com], a documentary by one of the victims of the shooting who survived. It's about gun control. . . . At one point, it had a showing a few minutes from our school and we went there and several of the victims' parents were there. We were there promoting our own documentary, but we had time to speak to them and that was another one of those 'wow' moments where we've been looking at this on a computer screen and in our heads for most of the semester but here's someone who's really been through it and really knows the emotional toll from the whole thing. Those kinds of things helped bring it to life for me personally.

Shirley: One of my main responsibilities was to find all the B-roll, all the national coverage, all of that. Emotionally, it was tough, especially this one clip where we showed this student was obviously having a hard time keeping it together on camera and this CBS reporter kept poking him and poking him, trying to get tears for ratings and I just got so angry. . . . While editing, I cried watching the footage. I'm the editor in chief of the newspaper here and just putting myself in [former *Collegiate Times* editor] Amie Steele's shoes, it really hits home. That's what made it real for me.



Q: What was the post-production process like?

Shirley: We turned my living room, to my roommate's dismay, into an editing hub. We had two monitors and we lived in my living room for the month that was dedicated to post-production. Usually post-production takes the longest amount of time, but we weren't blessed with the abundance of time because we wanted to premiere on April 16, so I would say most of us were editing eight to 10 hours a day for three weeks. I personally can say that I definitely suffered in my academics because of it. But this was my No. 1 priority.

Thrift: People would get tired of us using the excuse of the documentary for not hanging out. [Laughs]

Shirley: In retrospect, it was all worth it. I would do it again.



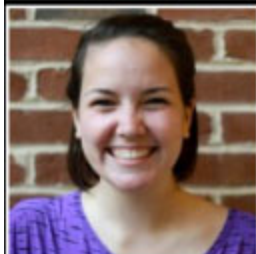
Victoria Shirley is a senior majoring in Communication Studies and minoring in Political Science. She is currently the Editor in Chief at The Captain's Log, the founder of CNU TV and also runs her own wedding and event videography business. Since the launch of her business, she has shot 38 weddings, two corporate videos, and an athletic video for the NCAA field hockey championship. Victoria has interned at Newport News TV, FOX 43, and WAVY (NBC) 10 and hopes to one day be a full-time television reporter as well as a full time videographer.



Andrew Deitrick is graduating this spring with B.A.'s in Religious Studies and Journalism. He currently serves as the Online Editor for The Captain's Log where he managed an award-winning website. Andrew will be attending a masters program in religious studies at the University of Colorado in the Fall.



Sam Thrift is graduating this spring with a degree in Communication Studies and a minor in Journalism. Currently the News Editor of The Captain's Log, she aspires to be a journalist after graduation. Before this project, Sam interned for WJLA ABC-7 news in D.C. and the Foreign Press Association in London.



Cassandra Vinch is graduating in May with a Bachelor of Arts for Communication Studies, as well as a minor in Journalism. With experience as the Sports Editor for The Captain's Log, Sports Anchor for CNU TV, as well as an internship with the sports department at NBC-4 in Washington, D.C., Cassandra strives to become a sports broadcaster in the near future.

Research spotlight: Peer-to-peer mentoring works in the college newsroom

cmreview.org/use-of-peer-to-peer-mentoring-in-the-college-student-media-workplace/

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Student journalists crave feedback on their work, but it doesn't always have to come from their advisers. This study shows peer-to-peer mentoring positively impacts the students who participate and brings time-strapped advisers some relief as duties change.

By Dr. DOUGLAS J. SWANSON, *California State University, Fullerton*

Abstract

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Literature review

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

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

Mentoring can greatly reduce workplace role ambiguity (Gentry & Shanock, 2008; Viator, 2000) and provide valuable information about workplace expectations (McCormack, 2010; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). It allows dissemination of information that might otherwise not be shared among co-workers (Guiniven, 2008). Mentoring can lead to development of "personal influence" that has been found to increase

worker job satisfaction (White, Vane, & Stafford, 2010, p. 79). Personal influence is a significant force in the workplace, because employees who are “in the know” are more likely to feel respected and less likely to “spread rumors” about the organization (White, Vane, & Stafford, 2010, p. 80, 69).

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

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

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

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

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

Research questions

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

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

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

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

Methodology

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

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

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

In total, 1,334 e-mail addresses were collected from 242 college student media websites. On April 7, 2011, a survey invitation was sent to each e-mail address. The e-mail contained a hyperlink to be used to access the approved survey instrument. On April 19, a similar follow-up reminder was sent. After each e-mailing, approximately 50 e-mails were returned as undeliverable. A total of 144 respondents accessed

the online survey. The instrument contained initial filtering questions to exclude respondents who indicated that they were not presently working in a college media workplace. As a result of the initial filtering, 24 respondents were excluded, leaving a sample population of 120 respondents. This reflects a response rate of 9%.

Results

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Respondents were asked who is responsible for assessing the results of peer-to-peer mentoring. Almost half (48%) indicated the responsibility lies with a senior member of the student staff. A lesser number of respondents (36%) indicated there appears to be no assessment plan in place. Twenty one percent indicated identified a faculty or professional staff member as responsible. The remaining respondents (18%) said that individual workers are responsible for assessing their own success.

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

Students overwhelmingly reported positive experiences as a result of peer-to-peer mentoring. In fact, there was strong indication that in some respects students may prefer it to traditional instructional methods. Among those who had participated in peer-to-peer mentoring, 48% indicated they would rather learn new skills from a peer as opposed to learning from a faculty or professional staff member. Forty-two percent claimed their student peer mentor was “more helpful than a faculty or professional staff member would have been.”

Among respondents who had participated in peer-to-peer mentoring, 90% said they would recommend it to other students working in college media. Respondents recognized both personal and professional benefits from mentoring. Figure 2 identifies respondents' level of agreement to a series of statements focusing on specific benefits of the mentoring relationship.

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

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

- *"I think that it is important that the mentee wants to learn. There is definitely a certain type of motivated personalities at our student newspaper because they are the people who seek help when they need it."*
- *"People want to see you're inspired to work otherwise they are less likely to take the time to help you."*
- *"I highly recommend it; our student newspaper is entirely student-run, and I think there is a lot of pride inherent in figuring out how to do something with your peers instead of being told how to do it by a faculty member. It also allows for greater creativity since each new generation is learning different things and learning differently—there's a higher turnover of ideas."*

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

- *"Be willing to share your time with the peer you are mentoring; take a step back to see their perspective as they learn."*
- *"I believe there has to be some amount of give-and-take from both sides. The mentor must also be helpful and educated themselves on the skills they are trying to teach."*

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

- *"Offer multiple trainings and make them submit a reflection of their training experience, including how the training applies to the current job and possibly in their future outside of Student Media."*
- *"Have a structured peer-to-peer mentoring program in the future with requirements for the younger person to have to complete by the end of it. You need to provide a structure so that everybody gets something out of the program."*
- *"Follow-up is key; if you establish a relationship with a younger staff member and let it fall off after they become better acquainted to Student Media, they tend to start slipping in their learning experience."*

Limitations

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

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

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

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

Discussion

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

Figure 1

Workplace skill sets addressed by peer-to-peer mentoring

(n = 33 respondents)

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

Figure 2

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

(n = 33 respondents)

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

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

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Doug Swanson

Social media use forces the question: Where do you draw the ethics line in the cloud?

 cmreview.org/social-media-policies/

College Media Review

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By PAT WINTERS LAURO

The Journalists Code of Ethics has long been a bible for reporters, but following its rules in the world of social media is complicated. In a breaking story, do you re-Tweet important information without confirmation? What about the sticky matter of personal online identities? These are the kinds of questions leading college media outlets to address ethics guidelines specifically for social media.

The Journalists Code of Ethics has long been a bible for reporters, but following its rules in the world of social media is complicated. In a breaking story, do you re-Tweet important information without confirmation? Do you need to confirm Facebook? And what about the sticky matter of personal online identities? Can you discuss your stories or your Facebook wall? These are the kinds of questions leading college media outlets to begin to address ethics guidelines specifically for social media.

Many a reputation was saved back in the day by an alert editor with the time to vet and discuss a story before it went to press. But today, as news is Tweeted and posted to Facebook in real time and the lines between the personal and the professional blur, journalists make important decisions that can destroy a reputation in the time it takes to enter 140 characters on a cell phone.

Students typically are ahead of the curve when it comes to using new tools, but they often don't fully comprehend the power and the consequences of the tools at their disposal. In fact, even experienced journalists and media outlets have been tripped up by today's rapidly changing media landscape. CNN, for instance, fired its longtime Middle Eastern Affairs editor, Octavia Nasr, after she tweeted her sympathy on the death of Shiite sheik Sayyed Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, calling him one of "Hezbollah's giants." A TV station in Arkansas fired its TV news crew after it uploaded videos on YouTube spoofing TV news segments, Gawker.com reported. And *The Washington Post* suspended a sports columnist after he deliberately Tweeted misinformation as a hoax to prove how quickly the media picks up on sports rumors without independent verification. Ironically, the Tweet was picked up, which proved his point. As *Boston Globe* editor Marty Baron told Jim Romanesko at Poynter: "My advice: This is the world journalists live in. Like it or not, you can't ignore it. And if you can't ignore it, participate fully. Just be careful you don't Tweet something that could cut short your career."

The social media issues getting everyone into trouble fall into two areas: how to handle official news gathering/ reporting and the use by journalists of personal social media accounts. While getting in the paper without prior editorial review was unheard of before the advent of Web 2.0, today it's become commonplace depending on the news organization, said Jill Van Wyke, assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Drake University in Des Moines. "It makes me nervous, but I think it's just where we are in media and journalism ... with that urgency and that immediacy," she said. Van Wyke said Terry Heaton said it all in a response to a blog post by Steve Buttry: "The code of the SPJ was written for the age of 'finished product' news, whereas today's news is all about real time."

Van Wyke said she is impressed with the detailed and transparent approach taken by the *Sioux City Journal* under editor Mitch Pugh. The paper developed a breaking news policy and posts a link to that document with each breaking news story. The policy includes details such as when the police scanner can be used as a source and how it uses information sent from the public. The paper requires that police scanner information be confirmed elsewhere or gets approval from an editor, and while it considers information from the public, it "strives to independently verify," especially if it is sensitive in nature.

Interestingly, newsrooms are more conservative than the community about breaking news online and generally see little difference between breaking news online and in print, according to research conducted by Pugh and the *Sioux City Journal* for the Associated Press Manager Editors Online Journalism Credibility Project. "Journalists are more skeptical of Facebook and social media in general as a news source than the public-at-large," according to the report, which found that the public is adapting to new technologies faster than newsrooms and expects to get "information" as it happens. The public, the study also found, generally recognizes the difference between developing news on, say, Twitter, versus finished copy, and depending on its level of sophistication, understand that standards of breaking news are often based on the medium. [T2] Wrote one editor: "Anything that is a fact helps our readers understand what's happening. Just because we do not know EVERYTHING does not mean that we don't know SOME THINGS (sic). The web allows us to publish things in installments, updating the story as we know more." However, the research also showed that the public has higher expectations of newspapers online or in print than of other media outlets.

Many large news organizations do have policies specifically for social media, including *The Washington Post*, the *Associated Press* and the *American Society of Newspaper Editors*. At the time the research was conducted in 2010, however, it showed that most news organizations did not have policies for breaking news online or for reporting with social media. Van Wyke said that in her journalism class, she does an exercise where students go through the process of considering guidelines for social media, taking into account venerable codes such as the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics. The class is revealing, she said.

“I live the SPJ code,” said Van Wyke. “It’s the first thing I teach – the basics are beautiful. But I think we either need a separate policy for digital breaking news or the whole code has to be updated.”

In his blog, *The Buttry Diary*, Steve Buttry, director of community engagement and social media at the Journal Register Co., has written extensively on social media codes. One criticism he has had is that codes too often serve to instill fear in journalists rather than a free flow of information. In a July post, he praised the Associated Press’ updated social media code for stating that it relies on its journalists’ good judgment, but he was disappointed in some rules such as AP’s policy not to break news that it hasn’t published, no matter the format. That means the rule is not to break news first on Twitter, for instance, a rule that Buttry deemed short-sighted, and he linked to *New York Times* reporter Brian Stelter’s discussion of how Twitter helped him to cover the Joplin, Mo. disaster. At Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, N.Y., Mathew L. Cantore, adjunct professor and co-adviser for the *Hudsonian*, said student editors decide whether Tweets and Facebook posts require advance approval of an editor. The decision changes year to year, based on the student editors. Cantore said some editors want to approve every post, while others opt not to “micromanage.”

As a rule of thumb, Cantore said, it’s generally the editor in chief, the web editor and perhaps the managing editor who have passwords to the accounts for posting. The passwords are changed from year to year as the editors change, and he too knows the passwords never touches the accounts. The paper does not have an official social media policy, but he said he planned to suggest the students consider one.

Perhaps the stickiest issue colleges now face is what students may or may not say on their own personal accounts as it relates to their work as journalists. At the College of Charleston, students report on the official Facebook and Twitter media accounts and are guided to respond to comment or Tweets “when appropriate,” says Mandi Bryson, assistant director of Student Media Organizations at the College of Charleston. The students are encouraged to stay away from “using their personal accounts for work related information,” she said.

“We always remind them that even though it is a personal account, you are always a journalist, Bryson said. “That’s just the way the public views it.” The biggest issue is (to) ‘be smart.’ One of the things we are trying to accomplish is holding the students accountable for their actions, both while in an official capacity and personally.”

Cantore said the *Hudsonian* also encourages students to keep their opinions to themselves to avoid any appearance of bias in coverage. “It’s really not a new challenge,” Cantore said. “It’s just taken on a different form.”

Clearly, today's technology makes it easier to express an opinion, said Frank LoMonte, executive director of the Student Press Law Center. "Before, you really had to do something conscious to affiliate yourself with a cause," he explained. "You had to put a bumper sticker on a car or show up at a rally. Now you just have to click a 'like' button. It adds a degree of a casualness and ambiguity to the face you are displaying."

LoMonte advises student journalists not to cross the line between following or observing a group and making opinionated comments that could cast doubt on your professionalism. "You couldn't possibly enforce a policy that says, 'Don't follow Twitter or Facebook accounts of causes or people you cover,' but you could say, 'Don't voice public opinions indicating a bias or a lack of objectivity,'" he noted.

The student press has a right to adopt a code telling students not to express opinions about news they cover and to take action if they do, LoMonte said. However, the policy should be student-driven, especially at a public university where the college, including its adviser, would be running afoul of the First Amendment if it attempted to lay down the rules, he said.

Even then, he warns, it is not a good idea for the policy to be too specific about what can and can't be said in personal accounts. "You want to hesitate a little bit before asserting total control in their off hours, because you don't want to assume liability for that," LoMonte said. "The last thing you want to do is take ownership for what all your employees are doing on Saturday afternoon on Facebook. "

Just as news is now reported in installments that eventually complete the story, so are news organizations – be they the student press or the professionals – having to adapt their social media policies with each changing technology.

"Eventually the industry will come up with some best practices," LoMonte said. "But right now, we're very much in the shake-out phase."



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Pat Winters Lauro

To friend or not to friend: Buddying up with students on social media is up to you

 cmreview.org/the-curious-case-of-facebook/

College Media Review

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By PAT WINTERS LAURO

To friend or not to friend your students?

The answer, says Frank LoMonte, executive director of the Student Press Law Center, is that it's your call.

In high school, where students are under the age of 18, it's generally accepted that teachers should not "friend" students on Facebook or any other social media site. However, in college, where most are of legal age, it comes down to preference.

Some professors are concerned that accepting a “friend” invitation could be perceived as favoritism. Others decide to wait to friend a student until after he or she is graduated to avoid any appearance of favoritism. Still, other professors send their students to LinkedIn, which is used more as a site for professional contacts.

“It really gets into what it is to be a ‘friend,’ ” LoMonte said. “Today it goes from a high degree of affection all the way to, ‘You’re a person I keep up with.’ Maybe it’s harmless. ... It’s very much a moving target as we decide what it means to be someone’s friend.”

LoMonte advised that before you decide, make sure you are familiar with your institution’s policies regarding social media. Colleges are beginning to adopt codes for employees, and some might restrict contact on social media.

Matt Cantore, co-adviser to the Hudsonian student newspaper at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, N.Y., came up with a novel idea. If students send a request, he can send them to a “fan” page he created specifically for students. With a fan page, students can view content and make comments without asking to be a friend. The advantage is that a fan page has limited access.

While it might sound presumptuous to ask students to become fans, the word “fan” is about as murky as the word “friend” in the world of Facebook terminology. In other words, it does not necessarily have the same meaning as the one found in the dictionary. Similarly, “fan” pages are created for a wide variety of reasons, and many have nothing to do with seeking popularity.

For Cantore, a fan page is just an easy way to communicate with students in real time without getting into the issue of giving selective access. As an instructor, Cantore uses the page, for instance, to answer student questions in real time. An advantage is that since all posts go on the Facebook “wall” or newsfeed, the whole class benefits. However, a note of caution: fan pages are open to the public.

“It sounds funny, but ... as a professor and an adviser, it’s a reasonable thing to do,” Cantore said.

Joining the Click: College Media Review now digital only

 cmreview.org/editors-corner-2-0/

Lisa Lyon Payne

November 14, 2011



Welcome to the launch of the web-only version of College Media Review, the flagship publication of the newly-dubbed College Media Association, Inc., itself the new moniker for the organization formerly known as College Media Advisers since 1983 and founded as the National Council of College Publications Advisers way back in 1955. Judging by that pattern, we brace for another name change around 2039. But by any name, we're the largest organization of college media advisers in the country, and role of College Media Review remains the same. This edition is the latest transformation of the publication, which is launching to an all-digital format to save print costs and, in a sense, to practice what we and our colleagues are preaching and teaching.

We recognize the new and expansive storytelling opportunities this form allows us. As much as we are proud of our print product, it was limited to just that and, in an age of multimedia storytelling, left us strapped to tell the stories in the most compelling manner.

The irony of that in a college media publication does not evade us.

While the magazine has stayed abreast of the seismic shifts in the digital and social media landscapes in recent years, we've been limited to reporting about them with text, photos and screen captures. Our move to a digital format opens the screen for our contributors, particularly those whose worlds revolve around online and broadcast media, to better tell their stories and define the issues that face our industry. This issue of College Media Review probably won't look like the next one — we're still tinkering in the short term with what we're going to offer and how we're going to do it. We're also taking the long view in how we're going to expand CMR develop it as a resource for research.

So, keep reading.

This edition includes a report from Daniel Reimold on the pressures facing terrestrial college radio stations as universities, more and more, pursue the sale of FCC licenses to the highest bidder. And Pat Lauro delves into the nebulous territory of social media policy when it comes to separating the coverage of news from commentary. The lines sometimes seem to blur when it comes to advisers' social media relationships with students; Lauro offers some guidance in sorting that out, too. Reimold switches from radio to film when he interviews the Christopher Newport University staff and reviews its documentary of *The Collegiate Times'* coverage of mass homicides on its Virginia Tech campus in 2007.

From the standpoint of peer-reviewed research, Cliff Brockman, Bob Bergland and Dave Hon offer readers, in their 2011 Ken Nordin Award for Research study, analysis of some of the best college news websites, what makes them tick and how we all might learn from their successes. Also, Douglas Swanson reports from his peer-reviewed research that peer mentoring may kill two birds with one stone: journalism students seem to prefer it over traditional advising methods and it provides additional resources to advisers.

With all the changes, there remain some fixed points in this newest version of College Media Review. It depends on your readership, and it is a platform for an examination of issues that impact our profession. We want to want to hear from you.

Robert Bohler, Editor

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Research spotlight: Top student news websites share multimedia, interactive features

 cmreview.org/nordin-award-winning-research/

College Media Review

November 14, 2011

As college budgets become tighter and news consumer habits change, all eyes are on how student media is adapting to changes. This study of student news websites that sit in the Pacemaker Winners' Circle describes the features that push them to the front of the pack in multimedia, interactivity and content management.

“Pacemaker Winners’ Circle: A Study of Multimedia, Interactivity and Content Management Systems at Top Student Newspaper Websites”

By Cliff Brockman, Wartburg College; Bob Bergland, Missouri Western State University; Dave Hon, Missouri Western State University

Overview

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

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

The plight of the first category of newspapers can be clearly seen in one very telling statistic: a little over one-third of the college newspapers listed in the Editor and Publisher Yearbook did not even have a functional website in a 2007 study (Bergland and Hon 2009). That number though is significantly higher than the figure for professional weekly newspapers,

which had 27 percent without websites (Fuller 2010). While every newspaper's situation is different, hopefully this content analysis of the multimedia, interactive and distribution features of these websites, coupled with information about publishing processes and especially Content Management Systems (CMS) gained through interviews, will give other newspapers some ideas that might work within their particular situation.

Literature review

To be frank, there has not been much scholarship that has addressed online college newspapers, nor have there been many studies that deal with content management systems of college or commercial newspapers, in spite of the huge role that a CMS plays in the day-to-day operations of a newspaper. There have been some articles that have dealt with features of college newspaper websites, dating back to 1999, when Bruce Garrison outlined components that college newspaper websites should have, such as fresh content, "searchability" and interactivity (Garrison 1999). Subsequent essays by Garrison in *College Media Review* provided an overview of convergent journalism experiments in commercial newspapers (Summer 2000) and the literature in the field (Fall 2001) and audio and video streaming for college newspapers (Fall 2000). A later Garrison article detailed the strengths of leading commercial newspapers that college newspapers could emulate (Spring 2003). However, actual research on online college newspapers has been scarce. One research project was conducted by Reimold, who studied the online-only magazine he advised (Spring 2008). Another notable exception is Adams and Bodle (Fall 2001), although they focused more on readability levels of writing rather than components of online websites. Another research study that did focus more on features of college websites was done by Bergland and Hon (2009). Using a random sampling of over 350 newspapers, the pair looked at the presence of various multimedia and interactive newspapers, finding that 30 percent used College Publisher, 35 percent used some other content management system and 36 percent had no functioning website at all. Murley and Carroll (2007) also looked at multimedia and interactivity on college websites in their unpublished survey of College Media Advisers solicited through the organization's listserv. But, no studies have yet been done that have more than tangentially touched on Content Management Systems, although there have been a few non-research articles that have addressed that issue in the past two years. Two important ones were published in *College Media Review* in 2009, in the spring and summer issues. In the first, "College newspapers face a world of changes and choices in charting their online pathway," author Brady Tufel discussed some of the major options and interviews college advisers, publication managers, students and College Publisher officials face in providing an overview of the choices some universities are making. He noted that half of the 14 Online Pacemaker winners in 2007 were using College Publisher. In a follow-up article in the summer, "Selecting the right Content Management System," Colin Quarello provides more specifics, outlining the pros and cons of the five main Content Management Systems: College Publisher, Drupal, Movable Type, WordPress and Joomla, with a few words added about those schools that create their own CMS. Of course, the dominant

player, as noted in the Tuefel and Bergland and Hon (2009) articles, is College Publisher. According to their promotional materials, over 600 newspapers are currently part of the College Media Network, which was just purchased by Access Network Company (Access Network Company 2011).

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

Their print editions have verve. Their online editions have templates.”

Of course, templates are better than nothing, which is what many college newspapers have. Bryan Murley in a blog on PBS’s Media Shift, criticizes the many college papers who have not embraced the web and cites the Bergland and Hon study which found that more than a third of the randomly sampled Editor and Publisher college newspapers did not have a website.

In the commercial newspaper realm, there have been many, many studies of newspapers and their switch to convergence, ranging from ethnographic studies to more quantitative studies of the features of websites such as Greer and Messing (2004) and more recently, the Bivings Group’s analysis of the top 100 circulation newspapers (2006) and Russial’s analysis of newspapers with over 30,000 circulation (2009). These studies do have some bearing on various aspects of this research project, as will be discussed later. However, many of the studies have focused on larger newspapers, often far beyond the circulation of most college newspapers. As a result, it is not surprising that the choice of content management systems is not a subject of their studies. For one, many of the newspapers are owned by chains, and the individual newspaper usually does not have any choice in the CMS it uses; it uses the same basic CMS that the other newspapers in the chain have used, since the parent company has typically expended a great amount of resources in buying/creating a proprietary CMS for all of its newspapers to use. Going with the same CMS leads to cost savings in terms of economies of scale, support costs and systems and training. In addition, the largest newspapers not part of a chain often also have the resources to design their own CMS, rather than choose an out-of-the-box model. Smaller, community newspapers, unfortunately, have received much less academic scrutiny. Those studies that have looked at smaller newspapers don’t often focus on the online element, and those that do have not addressed the CMS issue. For example, even in a 2011 issue of Newspaper Research

Journal devoted to community newspapers (including two articles devoted to online aspects of community newspapers), there is no mention made of Content Management Systems. Again, for those newspapers that are parts of chains, there is often no choice in the matter of CMS. But for independent/family-owned papers, CMS selection is very important, especially because there are often very limited resources and very little expertise at these publications. Staffs are often small and overworked, and the hit counts typically don't justify expending a great amount of time and resources in creating a first-rate website. As a result, some of these small, sometimes family-owned newspapers turn to options such as TownNews, a customizable CMS system similar in some ways to College Publisher. In fact, several college newspapers, both big and small, have dropped College Publisher or other CMS's to use TownNews. According to Town News college representative Paul Wilson, 28 college newspapers are currently with TownNews and using their BLOX CMS (including Pacemaker winner Iowa State, one of the first college sites to use TownNews), with about 10 more under contract and ready to launch soon (Wilson 2011).

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

Methodology

Before beginning our study in 2009, we had to find answers to several important questions: How would we select the "best" newspapers to study? What website features would we look for? What was the best means for finding out information about the CMS's used and the decisions made by the newspapers? To create a method for finding out the answers to those questions, we built upon the research methods and findings of the college and commercial newspaper studies mentioned above, as well as some studies that we've integrated into the discussion below.

Selection of newspapers

Because "good" and "best" are very subjective terms, we chose to evaluate newspapers that had already been named superior by other groups. While there are numerous journalism contests, one of the biggest and most prestigious is the Pacemaker award, which is given to the very best publications by the Associated Collegiate Press, an 80-year-old organization that boasts 20,000 students affiliated with its member schools. One of the Pacemaker categories is "Online," a general excellence category. The Online Pacemakers have been in existence for 10 years and were preceded by the ACP "Best of the Net" competition, which

goes back to 1995, nearly the beginning of online collegiate journalism. Over 200 newspapers submitted entries in 2009 and 2010. According to the ACP website, “Awards will be based on design, ease of navigation, writing and editing, graphics and interactivity.”

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

Website features

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

weeks, this methodological approach might result in not coding for the presence of, say, interactive graphics, when at some point during the year the site might have had an interactive graphic.

Decision-making processes

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

- RQ1: What multimedia features are present in award winning websites?
- RQ2: What content management systems are college media using?
- RQ3: What advantages or disadvantages are there in these content management systems?
- RQ4: What impact does the choice of content management have on multimedia features on the website?
- RQ5: How do the features of these websites compare to a nationwide study of a few years earlier?

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

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

Results

Content Management Systems

All of the sites use Content Management Systems (CMS) to run their websites and upload content to the sites. There has been a considerable shift in the CMS used by the 2010 winners. WordPress (WP) is the leading system among the 18 websites we surveyed in 2010 with 50 percent using it. In 2009, only 6 percent used WordPress. In 2010, 33 percent of the sites were “homegrown” (HG) systems students built themselves, compared to 48 percent

the year before. About 1 percent used College Publisher (CP) in 2010 compared to 31 percent in 2009. One percent of the 2010 winners used another system while in 2009 that number was 14 percent.

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

- Personal interest of editors. (WP)
- Short learning curve, popular. (WP)
- User friendly, wide choice of plug-ins. (WP)
- University switched to WordPress and offered server space and technical support. Student familiar with it helped build site. Highly recommended. Simple and quick to use. (WP)
- Personal preference of editors that took on the project. (CP)
- Flexibility. (Homegrown)
- Selling and placing ads is ridiculously easy. (TownNews)
- We have a lot of ability to do the things we want to do. (Joomla)

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

- Looks good, staff preference. (WP)
- Ease of uploading. (WP)
- Ease of use, lots of plug-ins, free. (WP)
- Free, ease of use, features. (WP)
- Good educational tool, can update stuff, simple, self-explanatory, can change things. (WP)
- Easy to learn and use. (CP)
- Flexible, easier to do different things if you have a programmer. (HG)
- Can tweak it at any time, however we want. (HG)
- Can modify it, ability to do almost anything we need it to do. (HG)
- Ability to monetize, create new ways of getting revenue from advertisers. Important that we control the method and revenue stream. (HG)

Advisers said there were also disadvantages to their CMS:

- Harder to train staff. (WP)
- Some limitations to templates. (WP)
- Have to work within the constraints of the system. Previous editor thought it was a disadvantage because he wanted to work with code. (WP)
- It is relatively “idiot proof,” but it’s unwieldy when we want to change the layout of the pages. (WP)
- Loss of control over design, features and ad revenue. (CP)

- Very difficult to change things. (CP)
- Annoying to have to go through tech people to make changes. (CP)
- Advertising structure is convoluted and doesn't work well with a school our size. (CP)
- Need a programmer (developer has graduated). (HG)
- Very expensive and hard to maintain. (HG)

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

- "Didn't keep up with the times." (*Mirror*)
- "Advertising restrictions were a big one and we didn't like their templates." (*The Ithacan Online*)
- "We outgrew them. And, CP took over the primary advertising spots and it was hard to grow." (*College Heights Herald*)
- "We would never go with College Publisher. Never. We would not relinquish control. We do not allow anyone to sell advertising except us." (*Kansan.com*)
- "It doesn't fit our needs and especially the advertising and the way the whole system works is not a good fit for us." (*The Daily Gazette*)
- "Other CMS didn't do what we wanted, so we custom designed one." (*The Phoenix*)
- "With College Publisher there was only so much you can do with it. We didn't have time or expertise to do something more with it, it wasn't very dynamic." (*The Red and Black*)
- "We Beta tested CP 5, and did not find it intuitive or simple to change. It had unsophisticated design aspects. I didn't think customer support was as good as it needed to be. Not a true vendor relationship. We really had no revenue opportunity, since they took the top banner ads." (*KentNewsNet.com*)
- "Never considered it, didn't know it (CP) existed." (*Megaphone*)

Website features

Multimedia Features

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

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

Reader interactivity

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

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

Reader Popularity

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

Marketing

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

- All of the 2010 websites had RSS feeds, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. Those numbers reflected the growing popularity of these features. In 2009, 60 percent had RSS feeds, 87 percent had Facebook pages and 73 percent had Twitter accounts. This compares to 25 percent for all college newspapers in the Bergland and Hon study.
- About half, 56 percent, required a free registration as a way to help track traffic to the website in 2010. That number is almost the same as 2009 when it was 57 percent, and much higher than the 2008 overall college newspaper figure of 16 percent.
- One had a mobile device alert feature in 2010. In 2009 it was zero.
- None sent out email digests with links to stories in 2010. In 2009 there was one.
- Many of the sites, 78 percent, had “e-mail to a friend” links. (We did not check this in 2009.)

Alternative formats

Several of the websites provided alternative formats for viewers.

- Users could view PDFs of the front page or the entire paper on 33 percent of the sites in 2010, up from 27 percent the year before. The 2008 Bergland/Hon study was a little more than half that, with 19 percent of overall newspapers offering a PDF version of the paper.
- There were links to an electronic version of the paper on 33 percent of the sites in 2010. That was up from 20 percent in 2009.

Operation of websites

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

Here are a few representative comments about website operation:

- “The print version is compiled on Tuesday night and shoveled online the next morning. Last year, we had a staff of four motivated editors who would look at the print story and size it up for use of multimedia efforts. The students looked at it as the different journalism animal it is. Last year it was updated six times a week, but those students graduated and the site is updated less frequently. (*Mirror*)
- “Desk editors create shells. After stories are finalized, Web editors paste and publish into the shells.” (*The Daily Northwestern*)

- “Reporters email editors who upload, then another editor looks at it and clicks publish. Some reporters have the ability to upload, then the editor comes in and reads it, and another editor publishes it. (*The Red and Black*)
- “Everything goes through a traditional editing process, the managing editor or editor-in-chief approves the material and then the section editors post the stories. Blogs are not pre-approved, although comments are.” (*The Ithacan Online*)
- “Copy editors look stories over and then a ‘sender-editor’ actually posts the stories. There is no formalized process for multi-media posting.” (*The Daily Gazette*)
- “Contents are shoveled to the website.” (*The Phoenix*)
- The Web editor does the posting. The Web editor had at least one other role with the paper. Reporters are not allowed to post.” (*Megaphone*)
- “Stories are posted by one of four ‘executives’ after stories are edited. All reporters’ work must be seen by at least four people.” (*TommieMedia*)

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

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

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

Staffing

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

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

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

- \$40 per week. (*Mirror*)
- \$800 per quarter for the managing editor. (*The Daily Northwestern*)
- Editors received a small stipend. (*The Ithacan Online*)
- Editors: \$300 per semester; reporters and photographers: \$100 per semester. (*The Daily Gazette*)
- \$8.80 per hour. (*The Phoenix*)
- \$7.55 per hour. (*Megaphone*)
- Director: \$3,000 per semester; three managers: \$1,550 per semester; 11 other staffers: \$750 per semester. (*TommieMedia*)
- \$10-12 per hour (*mndaily.com*)
- \$7.50 per hour (*Kansan.com*)

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

Hosting

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

Length of time online

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

Conclusions and key findings

Content Management Systems

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

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

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

Features

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

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

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

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

Trends to watch

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

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

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

There was one other example that may be an indicator of future trends. The *Megaphone* at Southwestern University exhausted its printing budget near the end of the 2010 school year and published its final two editions online only. Adviser Bob Bednar said it could be a foreshadowing. "We are watching the tealeaves and we could move the whole paper online

eventually,” Bednar said. There has been some discussion, but it hasn’t seriously been considered yet, he said. “But if we lose some of our budget, then clearly that would happen,” Bednar said.

Limitations of the study

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

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

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

Suggestions for future study

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

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

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Appendix A

2009 ACP Pacemaker Winners

Four-year Daily Newspaper

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

Four-year Non-daily Newspaper

- **The Signal**, Ouachita Baptist Univ., Arkadelphia, Ark.
- **The Orion**, California State Univ., Chico, Chico, Calif.
- **The State Hornet**, Sacramento State Univ., Sacramento, Calif.
- **Golden Gate [X]press**, San Francisco State Univ., San Francisco, Calif.
- **The Circuit**, Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa
- **Tulane Hullabaloo**, Tulane Univ., New Orleans, La.
- **The Maneater**, Univ. of Missouri, Columbia, Mo.
- **The Whit Online**, Rowan Univ., Glassboro, N.J.

- **The Temple News**, Temple Univ., Philadelphia, Pa.
- **Whitworthian**, Whitworth Univ., Spokane, Wash.

Appendix B

2010 ACP Pacemaker Winners

Large-school Newspaper

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

Small-school Newspaper

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

Online-only

TommieMedia.com, Univ. of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn.

Appendix C

ACP Online Pacemaker Winners Study

Close-ended questions:

- 1) University size:
- 2) Print circulation:
- 3) Frequency of print publication:

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

Open-Ended/Likert-Scale Questions

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

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Bergland

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Brockman

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Hon