

# Cites & Insights

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## The Front

### Gold Open Access Journals 2011-2015: A Subject Approach

*Gold Open Access Journals 2011-2015: A Subject Approach* is now available as a free PDF or a \$6 trade paperback.

As usual, you'll find links for the Lulu paperback, the free Lulu pdf, and the pdf on my website for those not wishing to open a Lulu account at [the project page, waltcrawford.name/goaj.html](http://theprojectpage.waltcrawford.name/goaj.html)

The new book is a supplement to *Gold Open Access Journals 2011-2015*, adding a chapter on each of 28 subjects and slightly expanding the subject-segment chapters from the earlier book.

### Label Problem Found and Corrected

If you care about one-year patterns of OA journal growth and shrinkage, and if you've already downloaded a copy of [Gold Open Access Journals 2011-2015](#) or [Gold Open Access Journals 2011-2015: A Subject Approach](#), you might want to download them again, either directly from waltcrawford.name (the links here) or from Lulu (easiest to start at [the project page](#)).

As far as I can tell, I'm the only person who's purchased either book as a \$6 paperback so far, so that's not an issue.

Why download again?

I discovered a label problem with the growth and shrinkage tables--**all of them**.

To wit: where it says "grew" it should say "shrank" and vice-versa.

The tables have been fixed and the books have been reloaded. You can tell the corrected versions because the copyright page mentions the correction.

Corrected versions were in place as of 4 p.m. PDT, Saturday, June 18, 2016.

The June 2016 *Cites & Insights* also had a few mislabeled tables; the issue has been corrected and replaced.

Only these tables (and in some cases the brief commentary following them) are at issue. The dataset is unchanged. No other tables are affected. No article counts are affected.

### What's Next?

*The Countries of OAWorld 2011-2015* should be ready in July, barring new problems. It includes a briefer version of each region chapter, a four-page (or sometimes three-page) chapter for each country with at least ten DOAJ-listed journals that aren't in APCLand, and for most regions a chapter briefly summarizing journals for each country with fewer than ten OA-World journals.

### Inside This Issue

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I believe there will be 83 chapters in the book. I find the country stories fascinating—and you pretty much get to write the stories yourself from the tables and graphs, because I'm providing very little commentary. The book's likely to be a little over 300 pages, which may mean an \$8 paperback; the PDF will once again be free. (As I write this, I'm on the 31<sup>st</sup> chapter, Lithuania.)

### The Books

There have been more than 2,000 downloads of the original book (of which 600 or so might be replacement downloads) and 50 or so of the subject book (of which a few might be replacements).

At this writing, nobody but me has purchased either book as a print paperback.

Maybe almost everybody involved with OA is fully converted to digital reading. Maybe \$6 (plus shipping—make it \$10 overall) really is too much money. Personally, I find the paperback much easier

to use than the PDF, but that's me. I can say that it's a good-quality trade paperback, with 60lb. cream paper—but if all you want is the PDF, that's fine. The text and layout are identical, and the PDF does have color graphs (which render as grayscale in the paperback). I would get either eighteen cents or thirty-four cents from each paperback sale, so I really have no reason to push the paperback. I just think it works better; then again, I'm old.

## Media Of Magazines and Newspapers

This may be an odd set of discussions, and if you're one of those who believes all print media are doomed, you'll doubtless find it unsatisfactory. But it's been a while since I dealt with these areas ([March 2014](#) for magazines, much longer for newspapers), and they're still interesting topics and vital media.

### A Little Background

What's my own household situation?

- **Newspapers:** We've taken the San Francisco *Chronicle* for decades. We still do—but now we read it on a Kindle Fire HD 8.9. That's partly because we were having delivery problems, but mostly because the *Chronicle* decided that subscribers needed to pay 40% of the bills (since Craigslist basically destroyed classified ads, the great cash cow of daily papers), which meant we'd be paying \$600 a year. The Kindle edition is \$5.99 a month (we made the switch when the Fire HD 8.9 came down in price: it seemed like a good fit). I frankly miss some of the ads, and we don't get the comics or all of the photos, but it's been a good switch. We also get and read *The Independent*, a local free weekly (one section broadsheet, one section tabloid, and a monthly slick magazine), and that's in physical form. (My wife also has a Kindle Paperwhite, which she uses for some book reading; that's a different essay.)
- **Magazines:** Lots of them, all in physical form (I gave up on *Slate* and think of *ars technical* as more tech-news site than e-magazine). How many? At the moment, it looks like 16 paid for as subscriptions (three bimonthly, one “weekly,” one 20 issues per year, the rest more-

or-less-monthly) and nine that come with memberships or donations (two monthly, the rest either bimonthly or quarterly). Ah, but that subscription count goes down to 15 right about now... (see later). I love good magazines, thoughtful packages of articles and (usually) related ads. And I tend to read them cover-to-cover, which dissuades me from adding even more. Amazon keeps trying to sell us on digital magazines; so far, I'm not interested.

So that's where I'm at. In the past, I've subscribed to *lots* more magazines (at one point I was up to eight computer magazines alone; that's now down to zero), and I've seen quite a few magazines flame out or die slow deaths. (Three of those 16 subscription magazines are what's left of the “major” science fiction/fantasy magazines—including one, *Asimov's*, where I've read every issue since its inception 39 years ago—and none of the three has strong circulation. More's the pity.)

But I've also seen some magazines get stronger and new ones emerge, particularly new magazines that come with memberships or donations, as groups have found that a good magazine reaches their donors/members in important ways: e.g., *Nature Conservancy*, *World Wildlife*, *Stand!* (the recently-formed slick magazine of the ACLU) and *Church & State* (although that one's certainly not new).

But enough of me for now; on to the discussions.

## Magazines

I'll begin by repeating portions of the introduction to [the March 2014 essay](#) because it's still applicable—but I'll update some of the numbers. (I'm tempted to quote the full introduction, but that's roughly 5,000 words.) As usual, quoted material is smaller type and indented on both sides (except for subheads).

### *The Story is Doom; Never Mind the Facts*

Did you know that restaurants are doomed in San Francisco? After all, dozens if not hundreds shut down in 2013. And yet, no responsible media outlet would run such an outlandish story—because *The Story* isn't *Doom*. Selective reporting can be wildly misleading, but if it supports *The Story*, it seems to be acceptable.

I was going to start this essay by providing typical definitions of “magazine” and offering my own thoughts on the subject. But a funny thing happened: I went to Wikipedia to see what it gave as a definition. It's [one of those definitions](#) that's technically defensible but effectively meaningless, as it lumps all serial publications together as “generally

published on a regular schedule and containing a variety of content.” (Actually, that may not even be true—as Mr. Magazine, from whom we’ll hear later, defines “newsstand magazines,” many are one-shots, *not* published on a regular schedule. But that over-complicates things.) At the end of that largely useless article, presumably as an ending of some importance, is this sentence:

In 2011, 152 magazines ceased operations and in 2012, 82 magazines were closed down.

Hey, in 2012, millions of Americans died. Therefore, America is *doomed*. Unless you also look at births. Going to [the source for that factoid](#), itself decidedly a deathwatch-style story, we find the shutdown number (which is for U.S. and Canadian magazines, although it’s reported in an international newspaper) [in a press release from MediaFinder](#).

Here’s the first paragraph of the press release:

In 2012, 227 magazines launched, compared to 239 magazines in 2011, reported MediaFinder.com—the largest online database of U.S. and Canadian publications. During the same period, only 82 magazines closed, compared to 152 magazines in 2011.

So it would be equally factual and much more meaningful to reword that Wikipedia sentence as follows:

In 2011, 87 more U.S. and Canadian magazines were launched than ceased publication: 57% more new magazines than dying magazines. In 2012, launches exceeded closures by an astonishing 145, with 177% more starting than stopping.

More than 2.5 times as many magazines started up as stopped in 2012. Therefore, what, *magazines are dying*? And yet, the article (in *International Business Times*) makes it a terribly sad affair:

One of the saddest things about being a media reporter these days is having to report on the constant stories about once-profitable magazine brands imploding into shells of their former selves. So many print publications are folding that it hardly qualifies as news. But if you’re old enough to remember when the dead-tree model was king, you can’t help but mourn the passing of titles that once presided so authoritatively over their respective domains.

In other words: Screw the facts, *the story* is death. That’s what you report. The wan excuse for this nonsense? “This being the digital age, we’re still grading on a curve.”

I checked the *Wikipedia* article again just now (June 16, 2016). That silly “In 2011…” statement is still there, but it now begins a more nuanced paragraph:

In 2011, 152 magazines ceased operations and in 2012, 82 magazines were closed down.<sup>[11]</sup> Between

the years of 2008 to 2015, Oxbridge communications announced that 227 magazines launched and 82 magazines closed in 2012 in North America.<sup>[12]</sup> Furthermore, according to MediaFinder.com, 93 new magazines launched between the first six months of 2014 and just 30 closed. The category that produced new publications was “Regional interest”, six new magazines were launched, including 12th & Broad and Craft Beer & Brewing.<sup>[13]</sup> However, two magazines had to change their print schedules. Johnson Publishing’s Jet stopped printing regular issues making the transition to digital format, however still print an annual print edition.<sup>[14]</sup> Ladies Home Journal, stopped their monthly schedule and home delivery for subscribers to become a quarterly newsstand-only special interest publication.<sup>[15]</sup>

The Oxbridge sentence is garbled to the point of being misleading: it refers *only to 2012*, not to a seven-year range. Take away the irrelevant clause and you have a statement that’s harder to square with the magazines-are-dying idea: in one year, 2.8 times as many magazines were launched as went under. (The “However” sentence seems to suggest that *two magazines* out of tens of thousands dropping print runs is a big deal. Doom-saying dies hard.) I can’t say what Oxbridge says about other years; it’s a paywalled study.

### *Doing the Numbers*

The March 2014 discussion includes quotes from the [2013/2014 Magazine Media Factbook](#). Rather than quote those, here are some relevant facts from a “print magazine facts only” subset of the 2015 *Factbook*; you can get either the full *Factbook* or the print subset [here](#). The MPA (formerly Magazine Publishers Association) is, of course, pro-magazine (but not necessarily pro-print) but the facts appear to be well sourced (they relate to the U.S. and Canada; almost every nation has lots of local/national magazines). For example:

- While magazines come and go, more than 180 print magazines have been around more than 50 years and 67 have been around more than a century.
- More than 230 new print magazines launched in 2014—more than went away—including cases where digital sites launched print magazines.
- The top 25 print magazines reach more adults and teens than the top 25 prime-time TV shows.
- Looking only at consumer print magazines (excluding thousands of trade magazines), the count has been higher than 7,000 since 2008

(varying between 7,110 in 2009—the only big drop, near the start of the Great Recession—and 7,390 in 2012; in 2014 it was 7,289).

- Oddly enough, adults between 18 and 35 read *more* print magazines than us old folks.

Going to the total *Factbook*, which includes digital subscriptions (still magazines, to be sure—and since only 6% of adults read digital magazines in 2014, this is *mostly* print):

- The adult audience continues to grow, from 210.7 million in 2012 to 215.7 million in 2014.

### What isn't a magazine

Sometimes it's easier to define something by what it's not. The Dictionary.com definition is a good starting point, but it's worth narrowing. For example:

- Magazines aren't journals, although a few journals may be magazines. I define journals as periodicals (print or otherwise) consisting primarily of peer-reviewed scholarly or research articles. *Library Journal* is a magazine, not a journal (it may be defined as a trade magazine and not included in the 7,390 count; the same goes for *American Libraries*). Difficult cases include, for example, *Science*, which could be considered both a journal and a magazine.
- Magazines aren't newsletters, although there are also tricky cases. One distinguishing characteristic may be that magazines normally have cover pages that don't include editorial copy and are usually (not always) heavier stock than the rest of the magazine, while most newsletters have copy beginning on the first page. (Yes, *Cites & Insights*—once printed out—is a newsletter, but since it's not newsy, I call it an e-journal. It's certainly not a journal.)
- With apologies to *The Economist*, magazines aren't newspapers, although many newspapers include magazines. I note that most numbers involving magazines leave out the national weekly newsprint “magazines” like *Parade*—and I'd guess that magazine counts in general leave out things like the San Francisco *Chronicle's* monthly magazine (which is magazine-size and on slick paper but not available as a separate subscription) and my local case, *The Independent's* monthly magazine (which resembles a magazine in *every* respect except that it comes as part of the free *Independent*—the local weekly paper—subscription). As far as I'm concerned, *The Economist* is a magazine—specifically, a weekly newsmagazine.
- Most magazines are roughly full-page size (somewhere in the neighborhood of 8" x 10.5"

in the U.S., sometimes a little bigger or a little smaller), but there are lots of digest-size magazines (typically around 5.5" x 8.5") and the occasional oddball that's tabloid-size or close to it.

Does that help?

### Personality, specialty and intended audience

Good magazines are never simply random collections of articles by various authors bound together between covers. I can't imagine a magazine of that sort would last very long. (If you're wondering: There is a *Random Magazine*—a humor magazine in India—and was for some time also an art-oriented online *Random Magazine*.)

Realistically, every magazine has a *personality*—which you could call an editorial vision or a persona, if you prefer. I was about to write that every magazine is curated, but that's another overuse of “Curation”; the right word is edited, not curated.

Every magazine also has a specialty, even if that specialty seems to be “general interest.” I think of *People* as a celebrity magazine (along with *Us* and several others). Some specialties are broad; some are extremely narrow. You might be surprised at the number of magazines in some specialty lists—and most such lists are likely to be incomplete.

Every magazine *should* have an intended audience (or, if you must, a demographic), which relates directly to the specialty and can help define it. Without an intended audience, the magazine's editorial team has no basis for determining such things as the level of language, typical length of articles, importance and number of photographs and more. Of course, many magazines have readers who are outside their intended audience, but there should be a reasonably well defined core group, the group to which the magazine is marketed and the group likely to be loyal to the magazine.

Which brings up another aspect of successful magazines: They have loyal readerships, people who read them year after year. For ad-driven magazines (many but certainly not all), loyal readerships provide the basis for selling ads. Most magazines encourage reader loyalty by offering subscription prices that are much lower than newsstand prices, sometimes astonishingly low (especially if a magazine is close to a breakpoint in guaranteed circulation, which affects ad rates). Many subscription-based magazines offer multiyear subscriptions that are significantly lower per year than single-year subscriptions—both to enhance reader loyalty and because gaining new readers and renewal mailing campaigns are both expensive.

Maybe I'd define a magazine as “a publication—print or digital—that appears at least four times a year, has front and back covers without editorial copy in its

print version, isn't primarily made up of peer-reviewed articles, offers an edited package of content aimed at an intended audience in a narrow or broad field, and has a well-defined personality."

If you don't understand the personality, specialty and intended audience of a magazine, you probably won't like or understand the magazine. If you think magazines don't *have* personalities, specialties, intended audiences and loyalty, then you're probably more inclined to believe they're on their last legs. I believe you'd be wrong. I anticipate that by the time I die there will still be thousands of print magazines in the U.S. and Canada, almost certainly with at least a couple hundred million subscriptions and total revenue (ads and subscriptions) well into eleven digits.

### *Package and familiarity*

Every good magazine is not only edited, it's a designed package—a package that typically has some consistency from issue to issue. The package is one reason magazines work well in print (and possibly less well in digital form); subscribers look forward to getting the next package and can read a package when and where they like, or let it sit in a pile until they're ready.

Ads are part of the package for most (not all) magazines, and—unlike radio, TV and online, where they're almost always interruptions to be endured, they can add value to the package. They don't have to be endured: You can always flip past ads. But for most specialty magazines (that is, for most magazines), many and sometimes all ads *relate* to that specialty. In the process, they provide additional information. The sound and home theater magazines I take would be less valuable without the ads; that's also true for the cruise and travel magazines.

Most magazines are *familiar* packages. Once you've read a couple of copies, you can anticipate the flow of material in each issue: not the specifics, but the general approach. In many cases, there will be contents page(s), some set of columns or short service-oriented items, some set of feature articles and photo essays, possibly some set of reviews, and frequently a special final-page feature. That's a typical approach, certainly not the only one. There may be special issues that deviate widely (you expect that too), but it would be as odd for *People* to have a 15,000-word investigative essay as it would for *Fortune* (where you *do* expect 10,000 to 15,000-word essays fairly frequently) to have a 10-page photo spread on fall fashions. For good magazines, familiarity breeds loyalty.

That's it for the philosophical and statistical background. Now, for my grumpy essays about two particular magazines, then some notes from two years'

of tagged articles on magazines (mostly from *Mr. Magazine* and *Media Life Magazine*).

### *The Sad Case of Condé Nast Traveler, the Odd Case of Fast Company*

This is a tale of two magazines—or, rather, two tales of one magazine each. What the two have in common, other than being monthlies (which doesn't always mean 12 issues a year: as with many monthlies, *CNT* comes out 11 times a year, and *FastCo* comes out ten times a year): at this point, they're both somewhat oversized. *CNT* is 9" wide by 10.9" tall; *FastCo* is 8.8" wide by 10.9" tall. The most common U.S. consumer magazine size is 8" wide by about 10.5" tall. The extra height doesn't much matter; the extra width makes them fit badly in a standard magazine rack. As far as I can tell, *FastCo's* always been strangely-sized (and has matte covers rather than the usual gloss), while *CNT's* change is part of the transformation I'm grumpy about.

What's the sad case? We subscribe to three travel magazines (plus two cruise magazines and a membership-based travel magazine): *CNT*, *National Geographic Traveler* and *Travel+Leisure*. I've subscribed to *CNT* for quite a while, certainly more than a decade, and always liked its longish in-depth articles, attention to detail and habit of always providing prices when discussing hotels or restaurants or cruise ships. I gave up on *Travel+Leisure* for some years because it seemed to be all little bits and didn't seem to include the basic facts. (*National Geographic Traveler* has always been in between, but generally good on including prices).

Unfortunately, the new editor of *CNT* brought in a total redesign: bigger pages (if fewer of them), lots more big photos and fancy layouts, lots more front-of-book short items and fewer in-depth articles. Oh, and one more thing: *the prices disappeared*. (Once in a rare while, you see one, but "rare" is the operative word.) So you read about places to stay and have no idea whether they cost \$30 a night or \$3,000 a night. That, along with the huge increase in "neat things to buy" features showing you a bunch of watches or bracelets or handbags or whatever that you should buy to be an In traveler—and those features *do* sometimes have prices, frequently four or five digits or the magic "price on request" statement—say to me that *CNT* is now part of the growing stable of IYHTA media: **If You Have To Ask**, you can't afford it and you're Not Our Kind.

Meanwhile, Time Inc. took over *Travel+Leisure*, and I find that recent issues have more good stories,

and that mentions of hotels (or restaurants or cruises) almost always have prices.

I'm not sure when my *CNT* subscription expires (it usually comes polywrapped with an ad for some other magazine, with the address and subscription date on the ad). I am sure that, unless things change, I'll drop the subscription, even though it's basically given away (\$20 for two years). I find *IYHTA* offensive even when I'm pretty sure we *can* afford it. That the magazine has turned from substance to mostly fluff is another reason to let go; I'm rarely fond of magazines that appear designed for non-readers.

Then there's *FastCo*. Years ago, when there were several modern-business magazines, it struck me that *FastCo* was more a cult than a magazine. As alternatives disappeared, I gave it another try, and for a while I thought it was getting better—but now I think it's back to being a cult, and maybe it was never anything else. I'm frequently unsure whether I'm looking at an ad or an article; it's just saturated with a “we say what's cool or innovative or creative or disruptive or transformational or whatever this year's In term is” sense that I find smug, a little suffocating and mostly nonsensical. I gave up on *Wired* years ago—and the June 2016 *FastCo* is my last, no matter how many offers they send me. (*Wired* is better written and no more absurd.)

It's not that I detest business or business magazines. I like *Fortune* a lot. I like *The Economist*, but I couldn't justify the sheer amount of reading time or the price (time is one big reason I don't read *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* or *Time*). I'm just not much for cultish writing.

Now, on to the roundup...

#### *texture*

If you think digital magazines *do* make sense—and if you want to read a *lot* of magazines—then Next Issue Media's [texture](#) may make sense. I tagged it in January 2014, and it's still around; I have no idea how well it's doing. It's put together by six big publishers and it offers quite a lot of magazines.

But it's also either \$10 or \$15 per month (\$15 per month is the “most popular plan” and gives you the widest choice). And, well, \$180/year is more than we spend for the subset of our magazines that show up in this catalog—quite a bit more. Add to that a preference for actual print and, for us, it's a non-starter. For other people, it *might* be great—if you think your tablet is big enough, if you like the right magazines, if you read enough of them. (You can share one subscription among five devices.)

It was Next Issue when I tagged the item; it re-launched in September 2015. A [March 2016 story](#) by *Mr. Magazine* seems to treat it as a startup, so maybe it's too early to tell. There is this: my Kindle keeps suggesting digital magazine subscriptions—but they're individual subscriptions.

Looking at that March 2016 story—an interview with the editorial content director—includes this:

It was getting harder and harder to find magazines, especially in New York, and I never seemed to have one in my hand when I wanted to read one. And carrying around my device and just loading the app, I was suddenly able to read things that I hadn't in months.

But but but...while *Mr. Magazine* is devoted to newsstands, most magazine readers *subscribe* to magazines—at least for magazines other than celebrity rags and maybe similar categories. And maybe New York (by which I assume she means Manhattan or, at most, New York City) is suddenly devoid of print, but around here, every drugstore and most supermarkets carry at least a couple hundred magazines. (*Texture* offers around 200.)

Then again, this director is given to contradictory statements: when it comes to print magazines vs. reading on a tablet, she says “the transition is here”—but a bit later, when magazine publishers are quoted as saying the tablet is dead, she quotes Bruce Springsteen: “everything that dies one day grows back.” (She also seems to think that magazine articles are inherently matters of “a few minutes,” which may surprise editors at *The Atlantic*, *Fortune* and the *New Yorker*—all of which have *long* essays in many issues and are available on *texture*. Of course, she formerly edited *Parade*, and there a few minutes was about right. For the whole thing.)

Of course, I also get irritated by having magazines constantly referred to as “brands.” I don't subscribe to brands; I subscribe to magazines.

#### *Five things you didn't know about Gens Y and Z*

This [January 17, 2014 Media Life](#) item covers a range of media-related items relating to people aged 14 to 34, based on “Intelligence Group” findings. Most of these don't relate directly to magazines and may be things you've heard elsewhere (most of them would rather socialize offline than online, most prefer traditional TV watching to apps, they're less into Facebook than older folks) but one is relevant here:

#### 3. They love magazines

There's an abiding affection for magazines among this demographic, especially Generation Z. More than two-thirds favor print magazines over digital ones.

“They love fashion magazines, they love cooking magazines, they like Elle, Teen Vogue, Vogue, People, those kinds of things, and they like to read them in a social setting,” Gutfreund says.

### *Magazine single-copy sales tumble once more*

This is the [February 7, 2014](#) version of a recurring item at *Media Life* and there’s no getting around it: single-copy sales (on newsstands and magazine racks) are becoming less and less relevant.

In this case, sales for 386 magazines that report such sales—a tiny fraction of the magazines out there (not much more than 5% of consumer magazines), but a significant group where newsstand sales are concerned—were down 11% in the second half of 2013 from 2012. That was the biggest drop since 2009, in the depths of the recession.

Here’s the odd sentence—one that I suspect hasn’t made sense for a while:

Newsstand sales are generally seen as a bellwether for magazines, an indicator of the industry’s health.

Maybe not. As the story notes, subscriptions were also down, but only 1.2%, and while digital editions don’t account for much of total sales, they were up 36.7% (to 3.5% of total circulation).

The piece offers some reasons: people aren’t making as many impulse buys, Borders went under, and wholesalers upped their truck-delivery prices, leading some publishers to abandon newsstand circulation.

I haven’t purchased a magazine at a newsstand in years—and I love magazines.

These roundups also report details for a hundred or so of the magazines, always interesting. So, for example, *Cosmo* lost 25% of newsstand sales—but total paid circulation was down 0.3%. *Money* showed a 6% increase in newsstand sales—but lost almost 11% of its subscriber base, so it was down more than 10% overall. (The largest circulation magazine lost 10% of its newsstand sales—yielding an average of 94 such sales per issue out of 22.3 million—but who knew that *AARP The Magazine* was even sold on newsstands?) Oddly, given the previous item about the impossibility of finding magazine racks in New York, both *New York* and the *New Yorker* had substantial newsstand gains, although for the *New Yorker* that’s still only 35 thousand out of 1.06 million circulation.

While we’re here, let’s pick up some later doom&gloom in the same area. A [February 17, 2015 story](#) shows an even bigger decline, 14.2%. In this case, it didn’t help that one distributor shut down entirely. It dropped again in the first half of 2015, according to an [August 10, 2015](#) report—and once

again a double-digit newsstand drop doesn’t reflect a very slow overall circulation decline (2.2% for the year). Even that one’s tricky: although the reporting base includes most of the largest magazines, it’s still a tiny portion of all magazines.

Most recently, a [February 23, 2016 report](#) shows a much smaller decline, 7.2% for newsstand sales—and overall circulation was flat between 2014 and 2015 (or down less than 1%). (Know what the second largest circulation magazine is? *Better Homes and Gardens* with 7.6 million, although that’s less than one-third of *AARP The Magazine*.)

Going through what turns out to be 125 magazines that *Media Life* actually provides information on, it’s interesting to see just how many million-plus magazines there are: too many to list here. Magazines with more than two million paid circulation include *Seventeen*, *Cosmo*, *Glamour*, *People*, *Time*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Family Circle*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Martha Stewart Living*, *Oprah*, *Redbook*, *Parents*, *ESPN The Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated*, *AARP The Magazine*, *National Geographic*, *Reader’s Digest* and *Southern Living*. Huh. Other than *AARP*, which I regard as a membership benefit rather than a subscription, I don’t subscribe to any of these, although I do subscribe to one that’s almost there (*Smithsonian*, 1.84 million).

You might find “What’s really killing magazine newsstand sales” [on May 3, 2016](#) at *Media Life* interesting, given the firmly pro-newsstand approach of the person interviewed. This person says—correctly, I suspect—that cheap subscription prices are one reason newsstand sales keep falling, but comes to a conclusion I find a bit startling:

In my opinion, media buyers don’t really care where the circulation comes from. I believe they look at circulation numbers in aggregate.

If they did care, I think publishers’ approach to subscription pricing would be different. The fact that a consumer makes a decision to pay full price for a newsstand copy, which indicates that it is likely that person will read the magazine and look at the ads, has no more value in a media buyer’s eyes, in my opinion, than the copies of the two titles that I have continued to receive at my home for the last three years even though I’ve told the publishers to stop sending them, don’t pay for them, nor read them any longer.

I subscribe to magazines because I want the magazines, and I consider the ads in most of those magazines to be useful additions. This person *should* know that unpaid/unrequested copies can’t be counted in

the reports required by the USPS. Subscribers have some connection to the magazine; that counts for something. (That's particularly true in cases where the subscriptions aren't all that cheap!)

### *Digital is Putting its Best Pixel Forward & Going Print: The Audience-Empowered Print Future*

We'll be hearing a lot from Mr. Magazine, Samir Husni, starting with [this February 20, 2014](#) piece at his blog. Since Husni specifically looks for magazines at newsstands, his preference is clear, and he continues to make a convincing case. He runs the Magazine Innovation Center at the University of Mississippi's Meek School of Journalism and New Media (he has a Ph.D. and is a professor at the journalism school).

When I founded the Magazine Innovation Center (MIC) in 2009, I did it listening to the naysayers of the publishing world who were shouting at the top of their lungs: "Print is dying or already dead! Long live digital!" Luckily, I've never believed much in negativity or ghostly visions seen by prophets of doom; everyone needs their eyes checked occasionally.

I've been hearing and arguing against these naysayers for a long time, especially to the extent that they view the Death of X (X being any older technology) as being Inevitable even if people still want X. This particular discussion deals with the remarkable turnaround we're seeing: web platforms that start print magazines.

So, for example, Net-a-Porter started *Porter Magazine* (currently a bimonthly), with this comment from Natalie Massenet:

"We think it's a continuation of our service," she said of the forthcoming magazine. "It will be entirely shoppable, ads will be shoppable — we're going to try and create something completely new there."

"I know it sounds crazy," Ms. Massenet said. "It's not for the fainthearted, but we're a multimedia company, and in the same way that you have to have a Facebook page and an Instagram account and be on mobile and have a website, you also need to be in print." [Emphasis added,]

Then there's PitchFork, a music commentary site that had already been around for 15 years when, in 2014, it launched the quarterly *Pitchfork Review*—with an urn as the first cover:

Chris Kaskie, president of Pitchfork Media, explains: "That's about, well, if print is supposedly dead, let's join them."

Michael Renaud, Pitchfork's creative director:

"It's our way of saying we know a lot of people expect this to fail, but we believe in print."

The quarterly is still operating.

Politico's case is a little fuzzier. The site's well known, and it also produces a print newspaper in New York and the DC area.

Then there's *Newsweek*—which went digital-only in 2012 and came back to print in 2014.

The article shows covers for a fair number of other magazines that are or were byproducts of web-first operations. Some have come and gone; some are still around; one oddity is only in print at doctor's offices but you can subscribe to a digital form. Husni suggests that effective web-to-print cases will use the web *brand* but create new content for the magazine, and that makes sense to me: different media do different things well.

### *For magazines, it's not all bad news*

With some notable exceptions, magazines rely on two revenue streams: sales (primarily subscriptions) and advertising. Advertising and guaranteed circulation rates are why some magazines have absurdly low subscription prices, especially if you're in the right zip code or other identifiable category. So it's probably not surprising that *Media Life* seems to focus more on ad pages than circulation, at least at times—as in [this April 25, 2014](#) story.

On average, magazines tracked by Publishers Information Bureau (another tiny subset of all print magazines, around 188 of them) had 4% fewer ad pages in the first quarter of 2014 than the first quarter of 2013—but 68 magazines had *more* ad pages, sometimes a *lot* more (*Eating Well* more than doubled ad pages).

The message, as always, is that there's no such thing as The Magazine; some magazines prosper even as others fade away. And new ones keep popping up, an odd situation if print is dead/dying.

### *Startups keep happening*

Let's look at some discussions of magazine startups over the past couple of years, with most of these items from *Mr. Magazine*:

- According to this [June 30, 2014](#) item, 123 new magazines (appearing at least quarterly) were launched in the first half of 2014, in addition to 311 "book-a-zines" (one-shots such as special editions).
- For the full year of 2014, says [this January 1, 2015](#) piece, 234 new quarterly-or-more magazines were launched, 21% more than in 2013. (As this piece explains, Husni *only* counts magazines he's acquired a copy of, so he's omitting some local and regional magazines and many subscription-only magazines.)



- A [July 1, 2015 story](#) says that introductions of new “frequency” magazines in the first half of 2015 were down from 2014—but only by five, to 118 new magazines. Husni also notes something unusual that’s a sign of faith in print: every major magazine and magazine media company introduced new titles, which he says is “A first in a long long time.”
- The third quarter of 2015 saw mostly new “book-a-zines,” but [this October 2, 2015 story](#) says there were still 43 new quarterly-or-more titles.
- For 2015 as a whole, [as reported on January 4, 2016](#), there were at least 236 new magazines, slightly more than in 2014. The post takes issue with MediaFinder claims that new magazine launches are down 35%...to 96 new magazines, compared to 148 in 2014. (Even that source is generally good news: MediaFinder says that only 32 print magazines shut down, compared to 91 in 2014—so there’s a significant net gain in either case.) Clearly, somebody’s wrong—and since Husni only counts magazines for which he has physical copies, it’s hard to believe he’s that badly off.
- Since I’m writing this in June 2016, it’s too early for the first-half numbers, but [this April 6, 2016 post](#) offers first-quarter numbers: forty magazines, down five from 2015 but still indicating a healthy market for new print magazines. (There were 21 more in April and 25 more in May, so the first half will have *at least* 86 new magazines and probably at least 100.)

In short, new magazines keep popping up at a much faster rate than old magazines die. They’re frequently more specialized, and we’re unlikely to see replacements for *Life* or *Saturday Evening Post*—but print magazines are doing fine. The next few items deal with narrower issues.

### *Proving Legacy Media Can Flourish In A Digital Age*

That’s the beginning of a long title for this [August 28, 2014 Mr. Magazine](#) interview with Bob Cohn of *The Atlantic*. (The timing’s oddly perfect: shortly before writing this, a colleague inquired whether it was possible to subscribe to *The Atlantic* digitally and *not* get the print magazine, which bundles iPad and Android access. It is, on the Kindle at least, but not directly from the publisher.)

Here’s the lead quote:

“I think that it would be Pollyannaish to say that print will never disappear. I do think that someday print will not be around, but I’ll have to say that it’s much farther into the future than many of us were talking about four years ago. And I don’t see it coming in the near future at all. Print is stronger than ever.” Bob Cohn

*The Atlantic* is 159 years old, and according to this article it’s increasing *newsstand* sales and making money on the digital side. From the interview, it seems clear that the magazine has the advantage of *not* being part of a conglomerate: it’s a magazine with a proud history and ability to change as needed.

I may miss some of *The Atlantic*’s stories because I mostly read the magazine, and there are more digital-only stories—but the best-read stories tend to be the ones that are also in print. (Cohn also says something about appearing 12 times a year—but, in fact, *The Atlantic* is one of many “monthlies,” appearing ten times a year.)

### *Magazines’ one area of hurt: On PCs*

The title on this Bill Cromwell [October 24, 2014 item](#) at *Media Life* may seem strange, given what seemed to be a litany of falling newsstand sales and ad pages: there’s only *one* area of hurt?

Stranger still is the data hook for this item: a 2% decline in unique-audience web viewership of magazines from September 2014 to September 2015. *Two percent* (well, actually, 2.2%): from 229 million unique visitors to magazine web sites all the way down to 224 million.

Of course, compared to other figures (as usual, for a tiny percentage of magazines, fewer than 150 in this case), it is pretty negative. Mobile unique visitors went up from 128 million to 243 million—and the strange combination of print and digital facsimile editions (which is mostly print) went from 999 million to 1.02 billion.

The story ends with one of those remarkable predictions about the near-term future—*very* near-term, 2019 in this case:

A recent survey by Zogby found that 14 percent of Millennials say they completely avoid sites that do not have mobile services, and 60 percent say that within five years, all web surfing will be mobile.

Sixty percent of “Millennials” say *all web surfing* will be on mobile devices by 2019? (Sixty percent of “Millennials” use that old gray term “web surfing”?) Whatever. Do note that “mobile devices” *excludes* laptops: those are nasty old computers, and nobody will use them by 2019.

## A Eulogy for The New Republic

Here's a sad one, if you accept Jonathan Chait's [December 4, 2014 take](#) at *New York*. To wit, he disses the new ownership of *The New Republic* as ignoring the legacy of the magazine for the lure of The Brand. I don't read *TNR* so can't comment on the validity of the argument, but it's an interesting piece and speaks to the connections we build with some magazines.

One excerpt, noting that Hughes is the owner and Vidra is the CEO:

The problem...is that Hughes and Vidra are afflicted with the belief that they can copy the formula that transformed the Huffington Post and BuzzFeed into economic successes, which is probably wrong, and that this formula can be applied to *The New Republic*, which is certainly wrong.

Several weeks ago, Vidra communicated the new vision to the staff in what I am told was an uncomfortable stream of business clichés ungrounded in any apparent strategy other than saying things like “let's break shit” and “we're a tech company now.” His memo to the staff predictably uses terms like “straddle generation” and “brand.” It promises to make *TNR* “a vertically integrated digital media company,” possibly unaware that “vertically integrated” is an [actual business concept](#), not a term for a media company that integrates verticals.

The comments are...well, I could only take two pages of them. The non-troll ones offer a variety of views suggesting that *TNR* was in trouble long before the new owners.

## A Return To Print: Plough Quarterly Digs Deep Into Christian Issues One Cause At A Time

Another *Mr. Magazine* interview, this one [on February 19, 2015](#) with Sam Hine, publisher of *Plough Quarterly*—and it's interesting because this is a(nother) case of a long-established print magazine (94 years) that went online-only (in 2002)...and returned to print in 2014.

“Magazines are more relevant than ever,” said Sam Hine, publisher of *Plough Quarterly* in a press release that was released before the magazine's re-launch. “They have been reimagined to answer a widespread dissatisfaction with the online reading experience. People are hungry for something that isn't ephemeral—a quick scan, then on to the next thing with a click, swipe or tap. If content has integrity, people will be happy for a beautifully crafted product they can keep around or pass around.”

*Plough Publishing* is also a religious book publisher.

One more excerpt:

The decision was made in 2002 to close the print magazine because we decided we could reach more

people at less cost online only. And that was probably true, but over the years since, we had a very successful website, but we felt that the engagement with the material was superficial. People were only spending a few minutes, even less than a minute, on an article and not really thinking deeply about the topics we were raising.

There is also a limit to presentation, how nice you can make the reading experience online. And we heard from readers who missed the print magazine and told us that they would love to receive a quarterly journal from us. All of those things convinced us that it was time to bring back print.

As of this writing, the quarterly is still around (on Issue 9, which would be about right). Print plus digital, \$18/year. Digital only: \$18/year...but digital-only isn't more expensive in Canada and overseas.

## A Thriving Print Scene | Best Magazines 2014

This [April 21, 2015 story](#) at *Library Journal* is simultaneously encouraging and annoying. It's annoying because the very first sentence stamps *LJ*'s consistent “it's all going digital!” slant on the situation:

Even as the digital shift continues, print magazines remain a vital part of a multilayered, interconnected media marketplace. The new magazines launched in 2014 display publishers' appreciation of, and commitment to, the value of the printed page.

“The digital shift” might as well be an *LJ* trademark, and it may always have been a meaningless way to oversimplify an increasingly complex media and technology scene. The rest of the story is interesting, even if some of it is based on Mediafinder's apparently-incomplete statistics (as noted earlier in this roundup): to wit, of 2014's magazine closures, a lot came about because one craft company (publishing 20 craft magazines) and one odd publishing/distribution company (with dozens of niche auto/motoring magazines) shut down.

Otherwise, the story discusses ten “best” new magazines of the year, including two quarterlies costing \$60 and \$69.99 respectively. At those prices, they'd better be awfully good...

## The Magazine of the Southwest

This curious little piece is by Dan Piepenbring [on July 15, 2015](#) at *the Paris Review* (which is both a website and a print quarterly). It's a eulogy for a defunct magazine, *Desert*, as presented on the Internet Archive's [Magazine Rack](#). That archive is quite something, with 239 collections, many but not all defunct computer magazines.

Not much to add. I'd disagree with one side comment (he calls *OMNI*, which was but is no longer in

the archive, “once the best sci-fi magazine around.” and I never thought it was all that great—but then, I read science fiction and fantasy, not “sci-fi”), but that’s personal judgement. The piece is mostly nostalgia, and there’s nothing wrong with that. If you’re an older computer geek like me, browsing the Magazine Rack may make you nostalgic as well...a kind of fond memory I associate more with print magazines than with websites.

### Why The Atlantic Doesn’t Want Me Anymore

We’ll close this section with another plaintive piece, by Noah Berlansky [on November 30, 2015](#) at *Splice Today*—a piece whose major thrust is slightly undercut by this brief update at the top of the story:

Update: On December 1 the digital editor at *The Atlantic* told me there had been a miscommunication and that I could still pitch for the magazine.

That said, I also wonder about the subtitle for the story: “No free speech for freelancers.”

As a freelancer, I’ve written approximately 150 articles for *The Atlantic* since 2011. They even gave me a little title for a while, “contributing writer,” to acknowledge the frequency of my appearances. I worked with numerous editors on numerous channels. It was a great gig, and I was proud to be such a visible part of a prestigious magazine.

But it’s over. My editor told me last week to pitch no more, because of [this piece](#) on Jessica Jones, published on *Splice Today*.

The essay was, I thought, a self-deprecating, humorous take on the ridiculousness of the cultural journalism treadmill. I mentioned an *Atlantic* article in passing, but it never occurred to me that anyone would take the piece as some kind of condemnation of the magazine. But that’s how my editors saw it. If I disliked the magazine so much, they said, then it must not be a good fit.

“This piece” is, to my casual eye, a whiny little item about being less advantaged than some staff writers.

Read the rest of the piece yourself. To me it seems partly to be irritation that *The Atlantic* is using staff writers more than freelancers, partly an attack on what Berlansky perceives as hypocrisy by the magazine—that is, writing in favor of free speech while...well, I’ll quote the final paragraph:

*The Atlantic’s* actions here seem unusually petty, but all influential magazines use that influence to regulate the public discussion in one way or another—by giving some issues (like college free speech, for example) a large platform, or by rejecting ideas that seem uninteresting, outside the mainstream, or simply out of line with the venues’ ideology (advocating more public spending doesn’t fly at *Reason*.)

Some free speech is seen as valuable and worth defending, and other free speech is illegitimate troublemaking. Those with institutional power determine which is which. As I discovered, magazines like *The Atlantic* are in the business of regulating and controlling speech, not in the business of freeing it.

I am explicitly in favor of free speech. That does *not* require me to either provide a platform for your speech or to listen to you. To me, that final paragraph is a serious misunderstanding of free speech. You may feel differently. A sidebar discussion makes more sense if you assume that Berlansky had nothing to do with that subtitle; otherwise...

*And that’s it...*

For a curiously disjointed set of magazine-related items. The overall story: print magazines aren’t going away any time soon, even though newsstand sales seem to keep sliding. Most years, as far as I can tell, a lot more new magazines are introduced than shut down: that’s not the pattern of a near-death field.

The next section covers a longer period but says a lot less, I’m afraid:

## Newspapers

I won’t attempt to say newspapers are doing just fine. Craigslist and other sources undermined classified ads, the cash cows that made daily newspapers so profitable that companies paid far too much to buy them—which is just one of their current problems. Delivery’s gotten more expensive. Other media, online and otherwise, have made the headline-news function of a daily paper superfluous (thoughtful editors and publishers decided *long* ago to make newspapers sort of local daily magazines, even sometimes abandoning the inverted pyramid style since they assume we already know the punch lines).

For quite a few years, the contraction in daily newspapers was largely evening papers disappearing and “second papers” in all but the largest cities folding, although ownership consolidation also played a role.

The troubles haven’t gone away—but neither, in recent years, have most of the daily and weekly papers. At the current rate of attrition, it’s not clear that they ever will entirely disappear, although I wouldn’t take that bet. (I’d bet there will still be some metro dailies and hundreds of smaller dailies by the time I die, but there we’re only talking one day to 30 years or so.) Newspapers aren’t booming, but neither are they rapidly fading away.

There are three big factors to consider: number of papers publishing “daily” (let’s say at least five issues a week) or weekly; circulation in print or paid-digital form; and advertising dollars. The first group of items looks at changes in those factors. The second offers some insights into what’s still an eight-digit business in the U.S.

### The Stats

Some data points over the past five years (or more):

- “Newspaper Statistics (not what you think)” [on January 19, 2010](#) at *What’s Next: Top Trends* sets a positive note for 2008 (yes, newspaper problems started *long* before 2008): worldwide, daily newspaper circulation *rose* 1.3% for paid editions, to 540 million daily sales; including free dailies, total increase was 13% over a five-year period. The US did see a 3.7% fall. The futurist writer’s take: “The model isn’t broken. It’s just that some titles are badly run, have too much debt and are in the wrong regions.”
- A [January 15, 2012](#) *Mr. Magazine* item (about *Parade*, which comes with Sunday papers) says that *Parade* increased circulation by 600,000 in 2011—in the same set of 630 newspapers—to reach 32.5 million weekly copies. There’s a note that 100 million Americans still read newspapers.
- While circulation was still declining in late 2012 and early 2013, it was a *slow* decline at that point, according to a May 1, 2013 *Media Life* story: 0.7% for weekday circulation (among 593 audited U.S. papers with at least 50,000 circulation) and 1.4% for Sundays—but that followed a 0.6% Sunday increase April-September 2012.
- Because some daily newspapers have become less daily over time, the audit bureau dropped its requirement to report average Monday-Friday circulation in late 2013, making comparisons difficult. But 300 larger newspapers still report those averages, and among other things *USA Today* grew enormously (mostly digital subscriptions) to pass *Wall Street Journal* as the country’s largest newspaper—and when one newspaper in a competitive market drops its daily print edition, a competitor’s circulation is likely to grow rapidly.

A sidebar: one doomcryer a couple of years ago made the prediction that, within a few years, the U.S. would only have one or two national newspapers. That

doomcryer was right—if only because, other than *USA Today*, there’s no such thing as a national newspaper in the United States and hasn’t been for a long time. Mentions of an incredibly parochial paper in one very large American city, a paper that seems to think it determines what’s news, will be cheerfully ignored.

- According to an [April 21, 2014](#) *Media Life* story, print ad revenue declined 6.5% during 2013—but that’s a decline to \$23.57 billion, still a respectable amount of money. It’s about half what it was a decade earlier, when big dailies really were cash cows. Apparently digital subscriptions are taking up part of the slack: subscription income, both print and digital, *rose* 3.7% in 2013 to \$10.87 billion. This story says there were about 1,400 daily papers in the U.S. at that point, presumably including 800 or so with less than 50,000 circulation. (Oh: there is a third source of revenue, albeit a small one by comparison: \$3.42 billion in digital advertising.) This might be a good place to note that *Media Life* refers to newspapers as a \$20 billion industry, not a \$34 billion industry, because subscription revenue apparently doesn’t count.)
- A [February 5, 2015 discussion](#) with the head of an ad tracking firm has the cute title “Stop the presses: Newspapers aren’t dead” and two major messages, one a prediction that seems far too glib. That one: metro newspapers—the large-circulation papers that get discussed most of the time—are being undermined not just by ad losses but by smaller, more local print papers “chewing away at the fringes,” to the point that this person says “In 10 years I think there will be very few daily newspapers left.” That seems like too short a horizon—but the other side is that “community papers will do just fine.” Or maybe community papers are never dailies? (See later in this section.)
- An [April 30, 2015](#) *Media Life* story reports on a Pew study finding that, despite increases in digital newspaper subscriptions, 56% of readers in 2014 read the newspaper in print only. That’s up 1% from 2013, but that’s a statistically meaningless difference. Pew thinks average circulation is down 3.3% from 2013 to 2014.
- While the audit bureau has made it difficult to do overall comparisons of circulation, it’s still possible to compare advertising revenue—and this [October 22, 2015](#) *Media Life* story offers a

surprising change: newspaper ad revenue was up 16% for the third quarter of 2015 compared to 2014. (A [December 11, 2015](#) story says there was a sizable month-to-month gain from October 2015 to November 2015...and that circulation revenue is actually increasing.)

- A [March 3, 2016](#) *Media Life* story says it in the title: “Fact: The print newspaper’s still quite alive.” It’s mostly an infographic, including this key point: 38% of Americans aged 18-34 still read print newspapers, as do 44% of folks aged 35 to 54.
- Finally, a somewhat more negative [June 17, 2016](#) *Media Life* story cites losses in various areas that suggest that, overall, newspapers haven’t yet bottomed out. If Pew’s numbers are right—and given some huge caveats in the report itself, that’s unclear—things are still sharply negative. Even there, consider just how rapidly print newspapers are dying: in 2004, there were 1,457 dailies and 915 Sunday papers; in 2009, there were 1,387 dailies and 911 Sunday papers; and in 2014, there were 1,331 dailies and 923 Sunday papers. At that rate, 4.1% to 4.5% drop in dailies over five years, we’d be down to 700 dailies in...2084, 70 years from now. (Sunday? Since they’re growing, it’s hard to project a death date.)

### *A few thinkpieces*

Getting beyond the stats, here are a few somewhat philosophical items, mostly from *Media Life* (which has recently been running a series on reinventing newspapers).

### *Making the case for print newspapers*

This October 20, 2015 piece is an interview by Diego Vasquez with H. Iris Chyi, a scholar at UT Austin who recently published *Trial and Error: U.S. Newspapers’ Digital Struggles*. Basically, she says newspapers have been putting up digital-first content for the last 20 years rather than focusing on making the *print* newspaper better—and the digital strategy is not working. A few excerpts:

To almost everyone’s surprise, the supposedly dying product (print) still outperforms the supposedly promising digital products by almost every standard — readership, engagement, paying intent, and advertising prospects.

A reality check is much needed...

Why?

Traditionally, U.S. newspapers are never known for emphasizing audience research —because they didn’t have to.

Then, facing a moving target like online publishing, newspapers panicked and outsourced their homework to business consultants such as [Clayton M. Christensen](#). While theorists may deductively design a blueprint for the future, the chance of making mistakes is high.

The thing is, for a revolution that is so profound and moves at such a rapid pace, no one, not even the most intelligent visionaries, could have completely foreseen its path.

The only way to learn about what’s going on is through trial and error and accumulating empirical evidence along the way. Instead of listening to their readers, most newspaper firms act upon the assumption (or theory) that print is dying so they have to transition from print to online...

The most important benefit newspapers could gain by refocusing on print is that they may refocus on what they are good at, which happens to be what readers want, too.

I think that’s great news for almost every newspaper publisher, because having a product that most readers use, prefer, and are willing to pay \$300 to \$500 a year for, is, as [Ken Doctor](#) put it, “a good problem to have.”

She notes that ad buyers pay attention to effectiveness—and that the average cost per thousand impressions for banner ads on newspaper web sites is \$6.99...compared to \$60 for print newspaper ads. That makes sense: I actually miss the ads in the print newspaper, whereas—as she notes—online ads on newspaper sites, especially the “oh, you wanted to read the story? you’ll have to wait” variety, are “annoying to say the least.”

### *What we know about newspapers*

The subhead for this [November 11, 2015](#) *Media Life* story is “They are not dead. They’re not dying. They’ll be reborn, again.” The story starts with a quote and comment:

He’s a wry old newspaperman, speaking in the dark humor of wry old newspapermen.

“You can love a newspaper, kid, but it will never love you back.”

He’s speaking of his first and truest love, of course, but it’s also a rueful foreboding of what he and so many others knew to be true. Newspapers were dying.

He had [a] point. Papers were folding across the country, taken down by a new medium that was all that people were talking about.

They were indeed. Cities that had five or six newspapers were down to three or two...

OK, so the date wasn't 2009; it was 1965. And "newspapers were not dying. They were being re-born."

The rest of this piece—which sets the stage for the "Reinventing the American Newspaper" series—is eight "notions," starting with a variant on that sub-head, stating that the real damage to newspapers hasn't been the internet so much as monopoly ownership and, well...

mismanagement, incompetence, short-sightedness, greed, thick-headedness and a shocking inability of newspapers to learn vital lessons from their mistakes

The editors believe that the print newspaper *can* work economically, partly because it's *there* in a way no website or app can be. Given the understanding that *Media Life* is all about the advertising, there's this:

Newspapers may be an expensive medium and old-fashioned to boot, but at the end of the day newspapers can still deliver the return on investment advertisers are looking for.

If an advertiser can spend \$1 and gets back 25 cents, that's a good deal. It's a better deal than spending 10 cents on digital and getting back a penny. Cheaper does not mean better.

Another notion says that some papers get it—many of them small community-oriented papers. Yet another, and I certainly buy this one:

Editorial matters a whole lot. The newspaper industry has largely forgotten that. People look to newspapers for reporting of the sort radio and TV do not provide. They quit subscribing when they don't find it.

All great newspapers are written for their readers, and it has always been so. The reinvented American newspaper will be all about quality editorial. Editors will figure out new, smarter and more creative ways to cover their communities.

### *Revealed, the real American newspaper*

Another in the *Media Life* series, this time on [February 22, 2016](#). The story is about the *other* American newspapers, the ones that are actually doing pretty well: newspapers with, say, 8,000 circulation rather than 80,000.

Small newspapers are interesting in themselves for what they can tell us about life in small-town America, but *Media Life's* interest goes beyond that, to what they can contribute to the reinvention of the American newspaper, the subject of this series.

It could be a lot.

Small papers are doing far better than the big dailies. While they took a big financial hit in the recession,

they've largely come back, as the major dailies did not. They've suffered far less from the digital onslaught.

They make money, and they are profitable, if not as profitable as in the past.

The story notes five reasons community-oriented newspapers are doing well. Briefly: deep community roots and local coverage; supported by local businesses; print-focused; lean operations; experienced staff.

*And that's a wrap...*

I had a few other items tagged, but they don't seem very relevant at this point. So there it is: Newspapers—print newspapers—aren't dead or dying at a particularly fast rate. The good ones are changing, and that change may be more local. Of course, if you believe *Huffington Post* is a paragon of journalism, you probably stopped reading this some time ago...

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(A little sidenote: this was planned as a 16 page issue, including a review of *Dragon NaturallySpeaking* done as an unedited *Dragon NaturallySpeaking* session. Turns out that left me half a page short, and I decided the "review" was unfair to *Dragon NaturallySpeaking*. So 14 pages it is.)

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## Masthead

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