

# CHANGING MODELS FOR JOURNALISM: WHAT HAPPENED AND IS HAPPENING

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# NEWS IN THE NEWS

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## Former News-Gazette building sold to local businesswoman

CU-CitizenAccess.org

September 28, 2020  2



The former News-Gazette building in downtown Champaign on Monday, September 28, 2020. photo by Darrell Hoemann/C-U Citizen Access

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## LOCAL NEWS

# Monday paper delivery eliminated

Posted: Nov 11, 2019 / 05:53 PM CST  
Updated: Nov 11, 2019 / 06:34 PM CST



ON LAST NIGHT IN CHAMPAIGN. ONE MAN WAS SENT TO THE HOSPITAL LOCAL NEWS

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CHAMPAIGN, Ill. (WCIA) — Some of you may have been surprised when you didn't find your Monday paper this morning. You aren't alone. News-Gazette announced yesterday they will no longer be delivering on Mondays, but that's not the only change.

We now know there were around 34 people laid off from the Champaign location. Sources say that breaks down as 19 in editorial, 12 in circulation, one in finance, one in digital services, and one weekly editor. In an article Sunday, the Executive Vice President of Champaign Multi Media Group Paul Barrett said taking away the Monday paper was to reduce cost and get the paper back on its footing.

Champaign Multi Media group bought the paper at the end of August. As part of that process, the



# MORE REAL ESTATE SALES

## Tribune Tower sold for mixed-use redevelopment

By Robert Channick  
Chicago Tribune • Last Updated: Sep 28, 2016 at 8:27 am



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1 of 34 <>



# CUT THE STAFF

BUSINESS NEWS CHICAGO

## Chicago Tribune staff gets buyout offers as Alden takes over

The hedge fund looks to cut payroll after funding its acquisition with \$278 million in debt.

By David Roeder | May 26, 2021, 5:59pm CDT

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# ANOTHER BUY WITH LAY-OFFS



 VOICE of SAN DIEGO



The San Diego Union-Tribune building in downtown San Diego on July 10, 2023. / Photo by Ariana Drehsler

San Diego's daily paper of record, the Union-Tribune, was sold by billionaire owner Patrick Soon-Shiong and his family to MediaNews Group, owned by Alden Global Capital – a company that has come to be feared across the ever-dwindling newspaper landscape.

Just 10 minutes after U-T staffers learned of the sale, they received an email notifying them of staff reductions to come, [one staffer tweeted](#). Alden would offer buyouts “in an effort for staff reductions to be voluntary,” the email read.

# VULTURE CAPITALISTS

When Alden buys a paper, the results are unfailingly negative for the community. It had already happened in Denver, San Jose and a multitude of other places. Alden slashes newsroom staffs, sells off its real estate and focuses on wringing out the last possible drop of revenue while ignoring long-term sustainability, hence earning the name “vulture capitalists.” I knew this from years of covering the news media and from writing a book about the dire effects on our democracy when local news declines. In short, we become more politically polarized and less engaged in our communities.

Democracy itself is suffering as local news fades. The renowned Yale historian Timothy Snyder, who wrote “On Tyranny,” describes this as the most troubling media story of our time, a major contributor to the loss of a common basis of reality that’s necessary for successful self-governance.

# THE HEDGE FUNDS

c.com/magazine/archive/2021/11/alden-global-capital-killing-americas-newspapers/620171/

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BUSINESS

## A SECRETIVE HEDGE FUND IS GUTTING NEWSROOMS

Inside Alden Global Capital

By McKay Coppins

# NEWS INDUSTRY IN THE NEWS

The 21st century has seen many of these generational owners flee the industry, to devastating effect. In the past 15 years, more than a quarter of American newspapers have gone out of business. Those that have survived are smaller, weaker, and more vulnerable to acquisition. Today, half of all daily newspapers in the U.S. are controlled by financial firms, according to an analysis by the *Financial Times*, and the number is almost certain to grow.

# NEWS INDUSTRY IN THE NEWS

What threatens local newspapers now is not just digital disruption or abstract market forces. They're being targeted by investors who have figured out how to get rich by strip-mining local-news outfits. The model is simple: Gut the staff, sell the real estate, jack up subscription prices, and wring as much cash as possible out of the enterprise until eventually enough readers cancel their subscriptions that the paper folds, or is reduced to a desiccated husk of its former self.

# BURNING THE VILLAGE TO SAVE IT

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## Scoop: Huge layoffs expected at Lee Enterprises

 Sara Fischer, Kerry Flynn



Illustration: Annelise Capossela/Axios

Lee Enterprises has been quietly laying off dozens of employees across its local papers and at the corporate level as it continues to cut costs following the [unsolicited takeover bid](#) from hedge fund Alden Global Capital, sources tell Axios.

# THE FALSE PROMISE AGAIN

Associated Press

## GateHouse, Gannett merger is official, creating largest U.S. newspaper chain

Published: Nov. 19, 2019 at 6:35 p.m. ET

By Associated Press

3

Layoffs expected, but execs say they will try not to slash reporting jobs



# LESS PRODUCT – “A NEW SATURDAY EXPERIENCE”

Media & Marketing

## Gannett to stop Saturday print editions at 136 newspapers nationwide



By **Don Seiffert** – Managing Editor, Boston Business Journal  
Jan 12, 2022 **Updated** Jan 13, 2022 11:17am EST

**See Correction/Clarification at the end of this article.**

The nation’s largest newspaper chain is discontinuing Saturday print editions starting March 5 at more than half of its newspapers nationwide, saying it will instead offer “new, additional benefits” including expanded access to online editions.

Gannett Co. Inc. told staff in an email on Wednesday that it is “introducing a new Saturday experience in 136 of our markets which transitions from delivering the Saturday print edition to providing exclusive access to the full Saturday e-Edition.”

According to the company’s most recent annual filing, it operates 253 daily newspaper across the country.



# GOING

Business & Work

## Gannett initiates another round of layoffs, cutting its news division by 6%

Among those affected were reporters at flagship paper USA Today and producers working on Gannett's digital optimization teams.



(AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

By: Angela Fu

December 1, 2022



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# GOING, GOING

## After weeks of silence, Gannett revealed that it laid off 400 employees and cut 400 open positions

The round of layoffs, which started Aug. 12, followed a dismal second quarter.



(AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

By: [Angela Fu](#)



August 31, 2022

Gannett CEO Mike Reed told staff in a companywide Q&A session Wednesday that Gannett laid off 3% of its U.S. workforce, or roughly 400 employees, in

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# STILL GOING BUT NOT GONE

Media & Marketing

## Gannett eliminated 20% of its journalism jobs in 2022

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# A BRIEF WALKOUT

**Hundreds of journalists strike to demand leadership change at biggest US newspaper chain**



# REAL NUMBERS – HALF GONE

BY ALEXANDRA OLSON

Published 4:39 PM CDT, June 6, 2023

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NEW YORK (AP) — Journalists at two dozen local newspapers across the U.S. walked off the job Monday to demand an end to painful cost-cutting measures and a change of leadership at Gannett, the country's biggest newspaper chain.

According to the NewsGuild, Gannett's workforce has shrunk 47% in the last three years due to layoffs and attrition. At some newspapers, the union said the headcount has fallen by as much as 90%.

The Arizona Republic, for example, has gone from 140 newsroom employees in 2018 to 89 this year, the NewsGuild said. The Austin American-Statesman's newsroom shrunk during that period from 110 employees in 2018 to 41 this year.

# STILL SQUEEZING OUT PROFITS

The country's largest newspaper owner Gannett, for instance, has cut more jobs than Alden in recent years, said Ken Doctor, a former media executive and columnist, who has followed Alden closely.

"People get confused because these people are cut-throat capitalists," said Doctor. "But their papers are making money and they're holding onto them for the time being."

The fear, of course, is that when revenues and circulation fall beneath a certain threshold, Alden will leave its papers for dead. Alden is the country's second largest newspaper owner, behind Gannett.

The Union-Tribune now has [108 editorial staff members](#); down from more than 400 in 2006.

# STILL SQUEEZING OUT PROFITS

How does it wring profits from smaller numbers of paying readers? It's simple: Call it the Bamboozle the Boomer gambit. See, below, the bill of one long-time subscriber to the Denver Post. He recently got a simple renewal note, reproduced here:

SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE - Reminder Notice	
<b>Account Information</b>	
Notice Date	08/29/2023
Account Number	106548572
Paid Through	08/22/2023
Subscription	7Day

RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS	
<b>Renewal Options</b>	
13 Weeks 7Day *	\$407.95
26 Weeks 7Day *	\$810.95
52 Weeks 7Day *	\$1616.95

Current offers for new subscribers:

THE DENVER POST

<p>Sunday &amp; Holidays Home Delivery</p> <p><b>\$11.92 per month.</b> (Only \$2.75 per week) Renews automatically. Cancel anytime.</p> <p>Select Offer</p>	<p>7-Day Home Delivery</p> <p><b>\$41.60 per month.</b> Renews automatically. Cancel anytime.</p> <p>Select Offer</p>	<p>Wednesday and Sunday Home Delivery</p> <p><b>\$13.00 per month.</b> Renews automatically. Cancel anytime.</p> <p>Select Offer</p>
--	---	--

That's right. Only \$1,616 (and 95 cents) to get 52 weeks of home delivery.

# STILL SQUEEZING OUT PROFITS

The usual stealthier strategy of Alden: send postcards with six-point type crying poor and informing its aging customer base that the paper will cost seven cents or so more a day. All those cents and postcards add up, so that many long-time subscribers are paying \$600, \$700, \$800, and more for their denuded print. So this notice stands out in its baldness. Note the new subscriber price, below the invoice, of \$41.60 a month or \$500 a year — a relative bargain.

# A LONG PREDICTED FALL

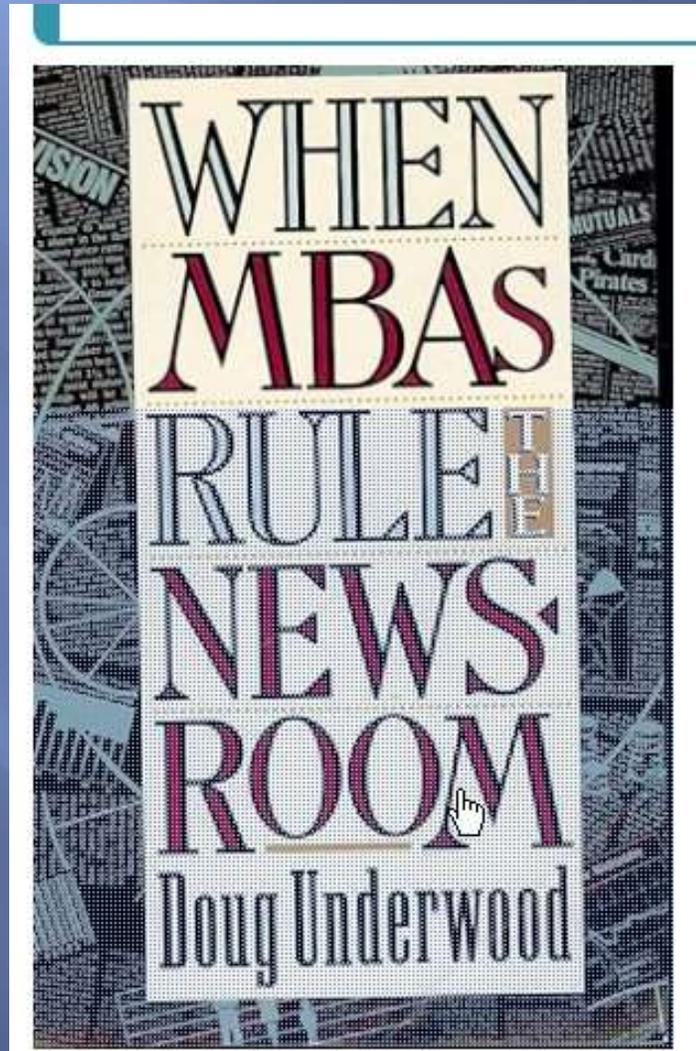
## The Disappearing Audience

- The percentage of people reading a newspaper reading a newspaper had been dropping since 1950
- Percentage of people who read a newspaper in 1967 -73 percent
- Percentage of people who read a newspaper in 2008 – 30 percent

# FACTORS FOR FAILURE

- Failing to adapt to the Web and digital world
- Craig's List takes away classified, real estate and other ads. Mostly free but still makes \$1 billion a year on paid ads.
- The Tech Giants take in more than 70 percent of all digital advertising.
- Taking on enormous debt to acquire papers
- Absentee ownership
- Loss of quality

# ENTER THE BAD MBA



# IMPENDING CRISIS: A LONG TIME COMING

As recounted in his book, Underwood told of a top news consultant, Steve Star, telling a 1989 meeting of newspapers publishers “that if something didn’t happen turn around the decline in daily newspaper readership the future on the industry looked bleak. He called it “an impending crisis.”

# THE FIRST HARVESTERS

On February 15, 1977, Capital Cities Communications Inc. bought the *Star* for \$125 million.

James H. Hale, named publisher the day sale papers were signed, made changes newspaper-wide, cutting costs while **leading expansions and improvements that yielded record profits**. Ultimately, however, declining circulation threatened afternoon newspapers nationwide. The *Times* and *Star* were combined, and the morning *Star* began on March 1, 1990.

# THE FIRST HARVESTERS: BURKE AND MURPHY AND CAP CITIES

- Lay off the senior, expensive reporters
- Hire young ambitious journalists at wages that allow them to qualify for social services
- Bust any union efforts
- Suggest that unrelated male and female reporters room together to save money when traveling on stories
- ...But they did pick spots to shine to keep the news marketable

# MADE SO MUCH MONEY THEY BOUGHT ABC



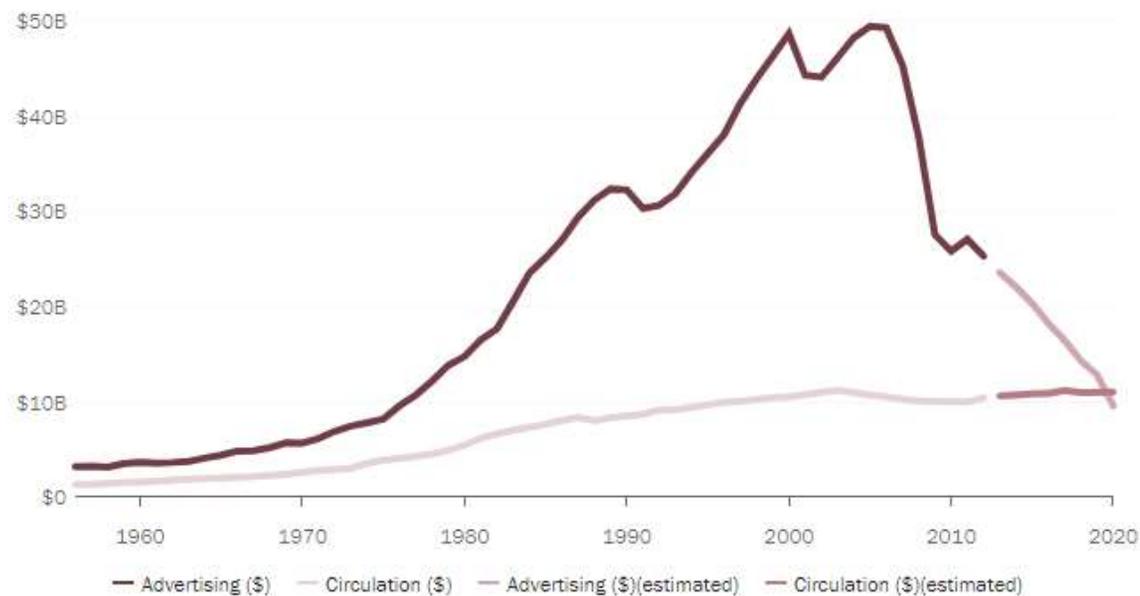
Daniel Burke, left, and Thomas Murphy organized the acquisition of ABC by Capital Cities for \$3.5 billion in 1986. Steve Fenn/ABC, via Getty Images

Capital Cities was a highly profitable company that owned television and radio stations, newspapers and trade magazines. ABC was the third-largest network, but still a vast operation that ran television and radio stations and produced programming.

# NEWS TRENDS

## Estimated advertising and circulation revenue of the newspaper industry

Total revenue of U.S. newspapers (in U.S. dollars)



Source: News Media Alliance, formerly Newspaper Association of America (through 2012); Pew Research Center analysis of year-end SEC filings of publicly traded newspaper companies (2013-2020).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

[Chart](#) [Data](#) [Share](#)

# IN 2010 THE TRIB HAD 441,000 SUBSCRIBERS

MEDIA ALLEY

## WSJ Only Major Newspaper to Increase Circulation in Last 6 Months

Newspaper industry sees overall decline, but digital circulation softens print blow

Stableford October 25, 2010 @ 3:11 PM

f t in e null

1. Wall Street Journal 2,061,142 | 1.82%\*
2. USA Today 1,830,594 | -3.66%
3. New York Times 876,638 | -5.52%
4. Los Angeles Times 600,449 | -8.67%
5. Washington Post 545,345 | -6.43%
6. New York Daily News 512,520 | -5.82%
7. New York Post 501,501 | -1.29%
8. San Jose Mercury News 477,592 | N/A
9. Chicago Tribune 441,508 | -5.23%
10. Houston Chronicle 343,952 | -10.53%
11. Philadelphia Inquirer 342,361 | -5.29%
12. New York Newsday 314,848 | -11.84%
13. Denver Post 309,863 | -9.12%
14. Arizona Republic 308,973 | -2.49%
15. Minneapolis Star Tribune 297,478 | -2.32%
16. Dallas Morning News 264,459 | 0.25%
17. Cleveland Plain Dealer 252,608 | -6.85%
18. Seattle Times 251,697 | -4.51%
19. Chicago Sun-Times 250,747 | -9.03%
20. Detroit Free Press 245,326 | -9.05%
21. St. Petersburg Times 239,684 | -0.19%
22. Oregonian 239,071 | -4.05%
23. San Diego Union-Tribune 224,761 | -7.39%
24. San Francisco Chronicle 223,549 | -11.21%
25. Newark Star-Ledger 223,037 | -9.34%

\* Percentage change, year-over-year

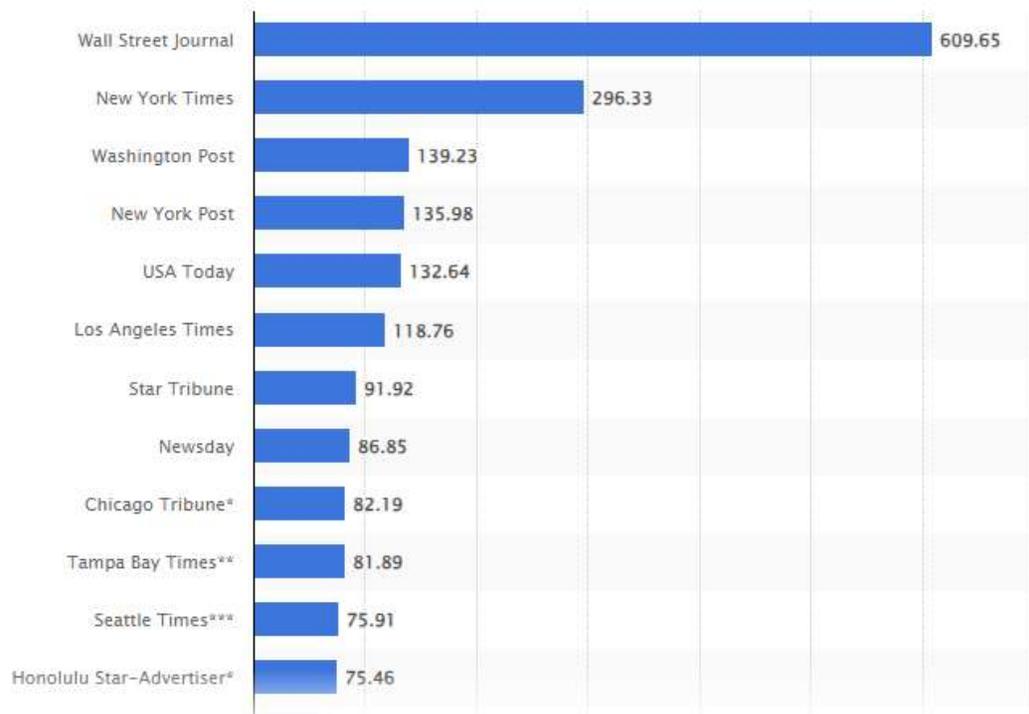
[Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations]

# IN 2023 THE TRIBUNE HAD 82,190

Media > Books & Publishing

## Largest daily newspapers in the United States in the six months to March 2023, by average print circulation

(in thousands)



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### Sources

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- [Use Ask Statista Research Service](#)

### Release date

June 2023

### Region

United States

### Survey time period

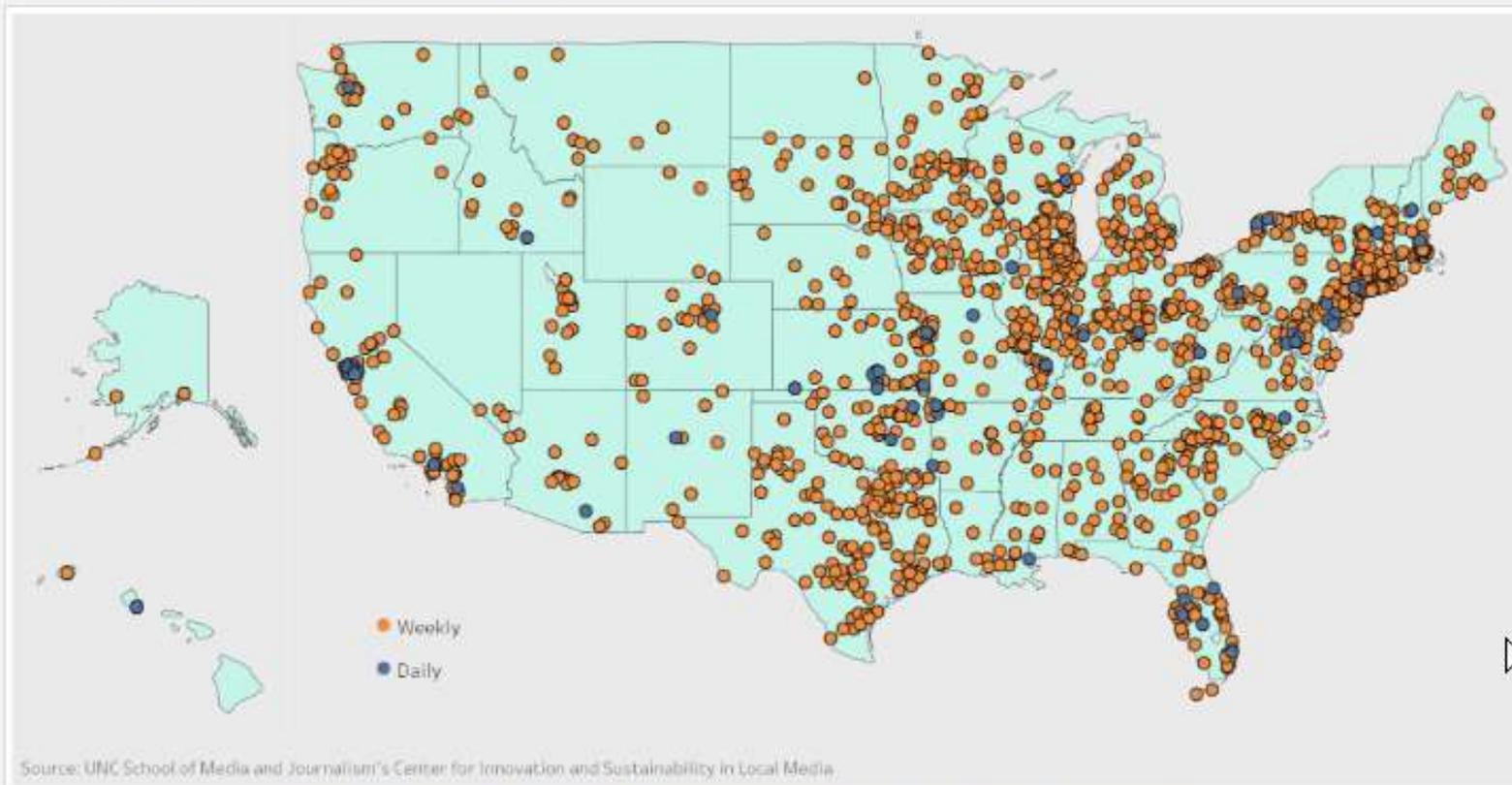
March 2023

### Supplementary notes

The source noted that the majority of figures given were average Monday-Friday figures for the six months to March 2023.

# NEWSPAPERS GONE, NOT COUNTING GHOST PAPERS

## WHO LOST THE MOST?



Since 2004, one-fifth of all U.S. newspapers have been closed or merged.

# A GHOST PAPER

## LA Times on the Ghost of a California Newspaper

BY ERIC JOHNSON PUBLISHED MAR 28, 2023 5:17 P.M.

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Historic downtown Salinas, California, capital of Monterey County, and the hub of "America's Salad Bowl." PHOTO BY MATT GUSH, SHUTTERSTOCK

James Rainey, staff writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, reports that the Salinas *Californian*, the daily newspaper serving the capital of Monterey County, has completely emptied its newsroom.

# A GHOST PAPER WITH ONE JOURNALIST, NOW NONE

Rainey points out that the paper did not write one article about the disastrous flooding that occurred when the Salinas River jumped its banks in January. He goes on to report that the 152-year-old newspaper did not cover last November's mayoral race, nor a crippling police staffing shortage.

“The Salinas Californian missed those stories, understandably, because it employed only one journalist until December,” Rainey writes. “That’s when the paper’s last reporter quit to take a job in TV.”

The Californian is owned by Gannett, the nation’s largest newspaper publisher, which now fills its pages with copy from the chain-owned USA Today and its other California papers.

“The only original content from Salinas comes in the form of paid obituaries,” Rainey writes, “making death virtually the only sign of life at an institution once considered a must-read by many Salinans.”

Rainey offers some crucial context in the form of these two related facts.

***The only original content from Salinas comes in the form of paid obituaries, making death virtually the only sign of life.***

# EMPLOYMENT IN NEWSPAPERS

## Newsroom investment

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, 30,820 people worked as reporters, editors, photographers, or film and video editors and operators in the newspaper industry in 2020. That is down 12% from 2019 and 57% from 2004. Median wages for editors in 2020 were about \$50,000, while for reporters, the figure was about \$36,000.

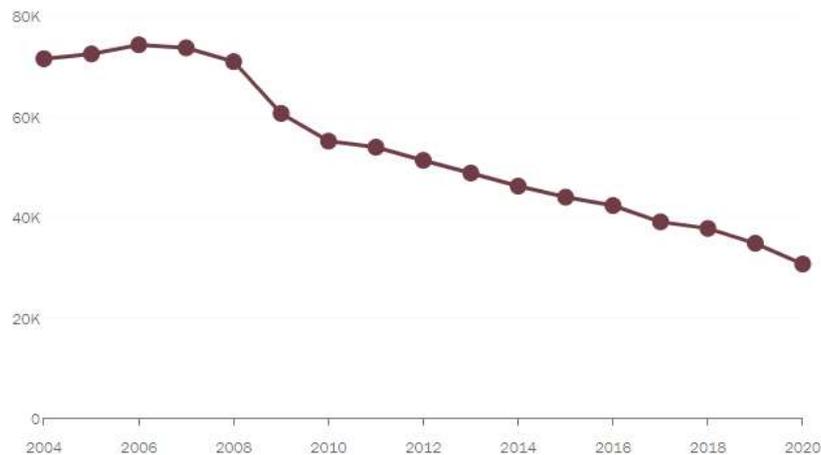
## Employment in newspaper newsrooms

Employees

Wages

## Employment in newspaper newsrooms

Total number of newsroom employees in the newspaper sector



Note: The OEWS survey is designed to produce estimates by combining data collected over a three-year period. Newsroom employees include news analysts, reporters and journalists; editors; photographers; and television, video, and film camera operators and editors.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics data.

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# JOBS LOSSES IN MEDIA

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Jun 13, 2023 - Economy & Business

## Record number of media job cuts so far in 2023

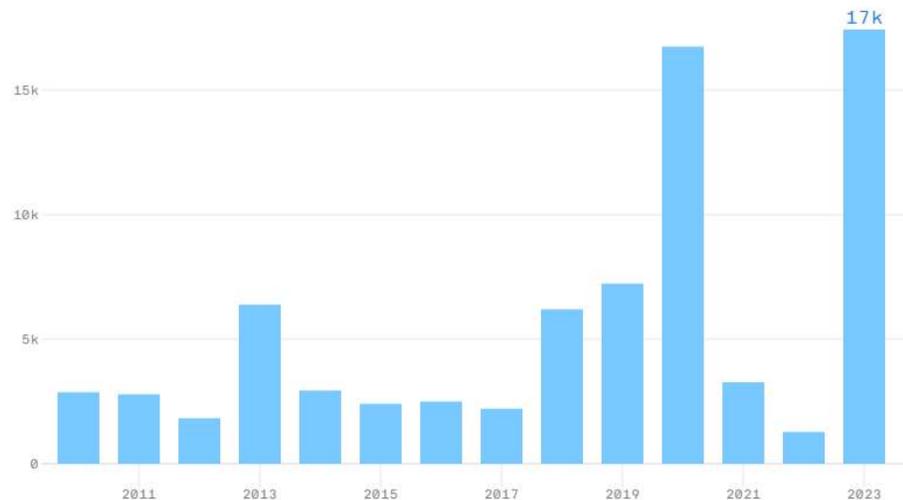


Sara Fischer, author of [Axios Media Trends](#)



### Announced media job cuts

Year-to-date, as of June 1, 2023



# WHY CAN'T TELEVISION AND RADIO MAKE UP FOR THE LOSS OF REPORTING BY NEWSPAPERS?

- The number of television stations producing local news of their own is steadily shrinking. Some stations, such as KDNL, the ABC affiliate in St. Louis, and WYOU, serving Scranton and Wilkes-Barre in Pennsylvania, have dropped local news altogether.
- At 205 stations around the country, newscasts are now produced by other stations in the same cities

\*From "The Reconstruction of American Journalism" - 2009

# WHY CAN'T TELEVISION AND RADIO MAKE UP FOR THE LOSS OF REPORTING BY NEWSPAPERS?

- On radio, with the exception of all-news stations in some large cities, most commercial stations do little or no local news reporting. A growing number of listeners have turned to public radio stations for national and international news provided by National Public Radio. But only a relatively small number of those public radio stations also offer their listeners a significant amount of local news reporting. And even fewer public television stations provide local news coverage.
- \*From “The Reconstruction of American Journalism”  
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- From “The Reconstruction of American Journalism” - 2009

# SO WHO OWNS THE NEWS NOW?



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## The Future of Media Project

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### US MEDIA OWNERSHIP

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## Index of US Mainstream Media Ownership

Our goal is to provide radical transparency and a better grasp of the U.S. Mainstream Media by listing publishers (owners, majority voting shareholders, and donors of titles) considered major US daily news sources. We have time-stamped this index – May 11, 2021.

▪ <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/futureofmedia/index-us-mainstream-media-ownership>

# SO WHO OWNS THE NEWS NOW?

HOME / US MEDIA OWNERSHIP /

## Index of Seven Big Owners of Dailies

News Media Alliance counts 672 major daily newspapers in the US today and more than half of them (382) are owned by a few major parent companies. These seven largest owners of daily newspapers in America today include:

1. **Advance Local Publications** (22 dailies)
2. **Alden Global Capital Venture Capital** owns Digital First Media (56 dailies).
3. **Chatham Asset Management** owns the McClatchy newspapers (30 dailies) and Canada's Post Media.
4. **Gannett Co., Inc. (250 dailies).**
5. **Hearst** (23 dailies).
6. **Lee Enterprises** (90 dailies).
7. **Tribune Company** (10 dailies).

 [seven\\_big\\_holding\\_companies\\_of\\_daily\\_newspapers\\_april\\_2021.pdf](#)

169 KB

# SO WHO OWNS THE LOCAL BROADCAST NEWS?

## TVNewsCheck's Top 30 TV Station Groups

Data courtesy of BIA Advisory Services

	<i>Group</i>	<i>Markets</i>	<i>Actual Coverage</i>	<i>FCC Coverage</i>	<i>2022 Ad Rev. (add 000,000)</i>	<i>2022 Retrans Rev. (add 000,000)</i>	<i>Total Rev. (add 000,000)</i>
1.	Nexstar	116	68%	39%	\$2,589	\$2,571	<b>\$5,160</b>
2.	Gray	113	36	24	2,011	1,496	<b>3,507</b>
3.	Tegna	52	39	32	1,704	1,530	<b>3,234</b>
4.	Sinclair	85	38	24	1,572	1,660	<b>3,232</b>
5.	Fox	18	39	26	1,637	1,206	<b>2,843</b>
6.	Paramount/CBS	18	38	24	1,605	994	<b>2,599</b>
7.	Comcast/NBC	31	38	20	1,438	899	<b>2,338</b>
8.	Disney/ABC	8	22	20	1,050	637	<b>1,687</b>
9.	Hearst	27	19	14	966	575	<b>1,541</b>
10.	Scripps	76	72	39	825	655	<b>1,480</b>
11.	TelevisaUnivision	25	45	24	594	742	<b>1,336</b>
12.	Cox	9	11	5	485	309	<b>794</b>
13.	Graham	6	7	4	406	197	<b>603</b>
14.	Allen	21	5	3	212	130	<b>342</b>
15.	Sunbeam	2	4	2	173	49	<b>223</b>

# Growing Threats: More Disinformation and Dark Money

- Not point of view or partisan problem
- Not transparent about financing
- Cult-like
- Fantasy embedded
- Profit driven

# EPOCH TIMES

## *How The Epoch Times Created a Giant Influence Machine*

Since 2016, the Falun Gong-backed newspaper has used aggressive Facebook tactics and right-wing misinformation to create an anti-China, pro-Trump media empire.

The publication has been one of the most prominent promoters of “Spygate,” a baseless conspiracy theory involving claims that Obama administration officials illegally spied on Mr. Trump’s 2016 campaign. Publications and shows linked to The Epoch Times have promoted the QAnon conspiracy theory and spread distorted claims about voter fraud and the Black Lives Matter movement. More recently, they have promoted the unfounded theory that the coronavirus — which the publication calls the “CCP Virus,” in an attempt to link it to the Chinese Communist Party — was created as a bioweapon in a Chinese military lab.

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/technology/epoch-times-influence-falun-gong.html>

# RADIO SPUTNIK

MEDIA

## A radio station in Missouri continues broadcasting Kremlin-funded Radio Sputnik

March 22, 2022 · 4:51 PM ET

Heard on All Things Considered

By Kavahn Mansouri



**3-Minute Listen**

+ PLAYLIST



A Missouri radio station is airing Russian state-funded broadcasts. In a rare move, the National Association of Broadcasters called for stations to cease airing state-sponsored programming.

# RADIO SPUTNIK

MANSOURI: Twice a day, "Fault Lines" and other Radio Sputnik shows take over KCXL's airwaves for a three-hour block. In return, the radio station has earned more than \$160,000 since 2020. Before getting that money from Radio Sputnik, owner Pete Schartel says he was struggling and considered shutting down the station.

PETE SCHARTEL: It struck me as being something we could live with, especially if they would pay us and help keep the rest of the station on the air.

MANSOURI: The money comes from Rossiya Segodnya, a media arm of the Kremlin that critics say spreads Russian propaganda. The programming airs daily on KCXL and a handful of stations around the country. Since the invasion of Ukraine, Schartel has faced backlash.

# Next class: The new ways

- New ways emerged through blogs, digital start-ups, and the rise of nonprofit newsrooms. New owners and investors entered the scene with new revenue streams and business models.