

# The Use of the Internet by America's Newspapers



Prepared by The Bivings Group

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## Executive Summary

The Bivings Group conducted the following study to assess the degree to which newspapers are embracing the Internet. With the development of various Web 2.0 technologies, such as blogs, RSS, and podcasts, many former print newspaper readers are turning to alternate sources of news. This is shown in the steady decline in readership and circulation experienced by American newspapers, especially since 1990. The Web gives traditional newspapers the opportunity to combat declining readership by reaching a new and broader audience through aggressive online strategies.

We examined the websites of the 100 most circulated newspapers in the US and evaluated them based on several criteria in order to determine whether or not newspapers are taking advantage of new technologies. In order to further evaluate the penetration of Web tools among newspaper websites, we compared the top 10 newspaper websites with the bottom 10, and we also compared the top quartile with the bottom quartile.

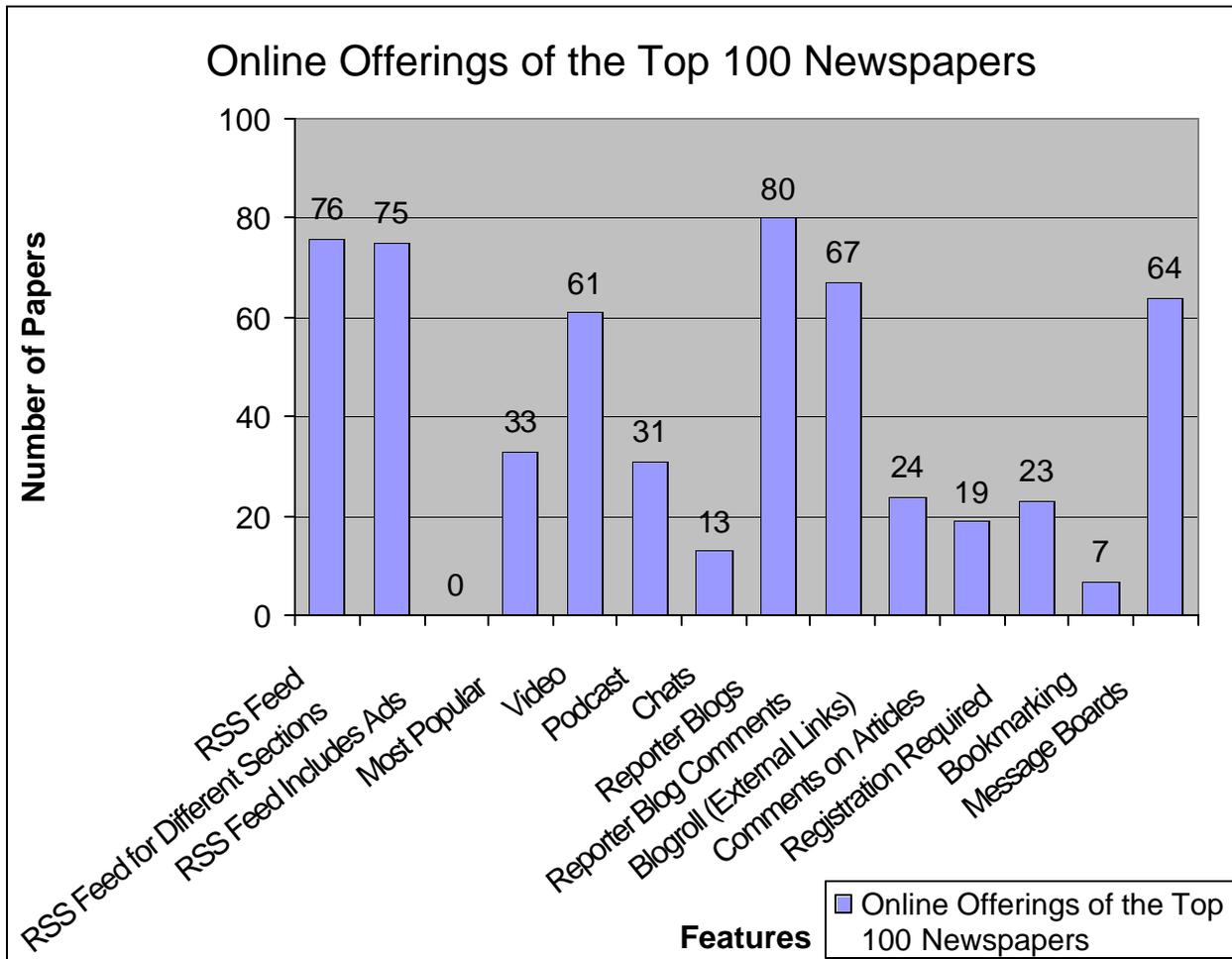
Overall, the study found that newspapers are taking advantage of online capabilities, and have expanded upon their traditional strategies to launch aggressive online programs that include many sophisticated elements.

### Key Findings:

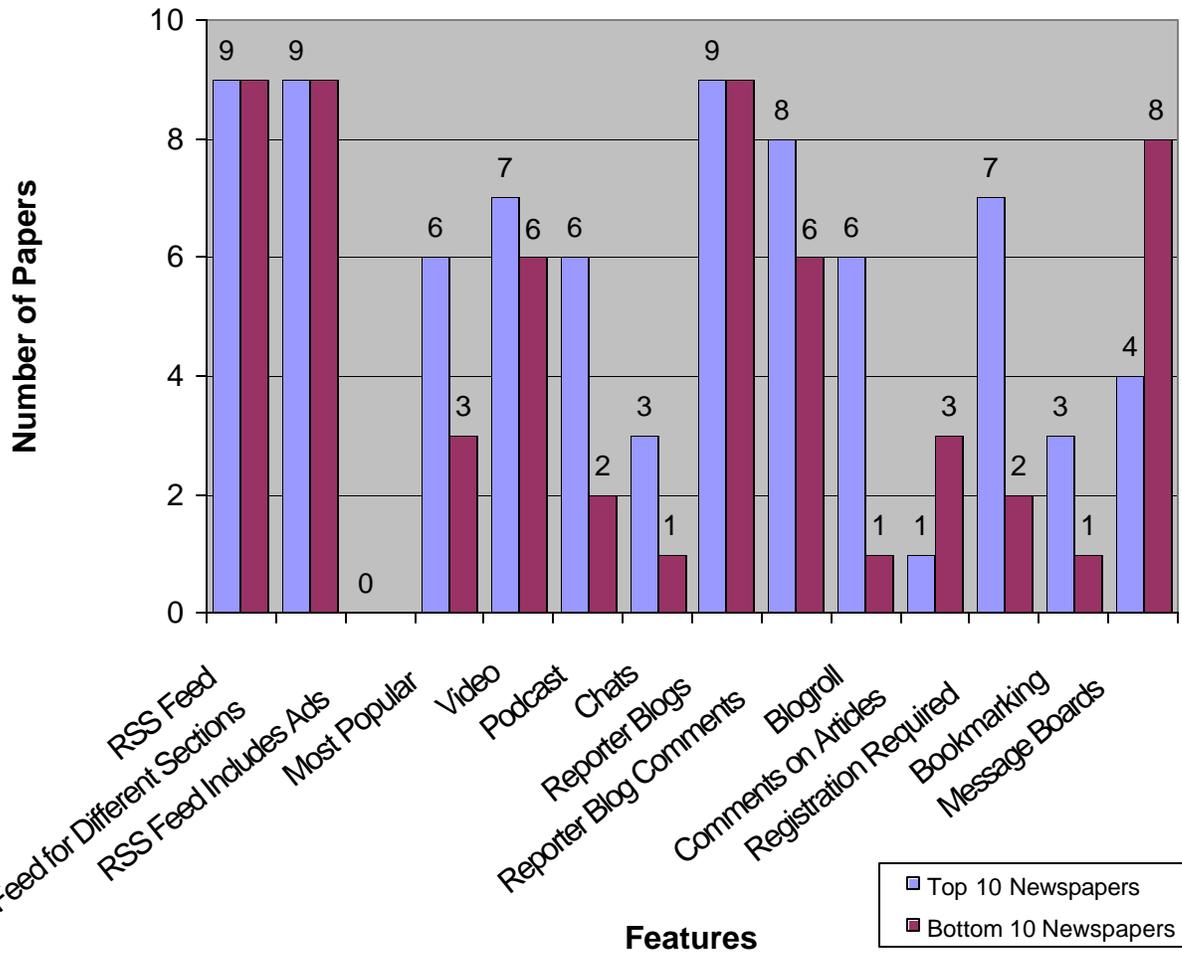
- **76 of the nation's top 100 newspapers offer RSS feeds on their websites.** All of these feeds were partial feeds. This means that the RSS feeds only include an excerpt from each headline, rather than full stories. In addition, none of these feeds included advertisements. Seventy-five of the papers offered RSS feeds for the paper's different sections.
- **Only 31 of the papers** offer podcasts on their websites.
- **80 of the papers** offer at least one, and often multiple, **reporter blogs**. On 67 of the newspaper websites (83 percent of the blogs), readers can comment on these reporter blog entries.
- It was uncommon for newspapers to employ more advanced Web tools. **Only 19 of the newspapers allowed readers to comment on articles**, while only 33 offered some sort of "Most Popular" function. Similarly, only 7 offered a bookmarking function.
- **Major Web tools penetrated both the most and least circulated papers.** In only a few cases were major papers much more likely to offer certain tools than smaller papers.
  - For example, when comparing the top 10 most circulated papers to the bottom 10 papers, 9 papers from each category offered RSS feeds for different sections.

- Nine papers from each category offered blogs. Results were also even when analyzing video offerings. Seven of the top 10 papers offer video on their sites, while 6 of the bottom 10 papers also include online video content.
- Despite this parity, there was a clear divide when considering podcasts and registration. Four of the top quartile of papers offer podcasts, as do 6 of the 10 most circulated papers. In contrast, only 2 of the bottom quartile and the bottom 10 papers offer this feature. Similarly, 7 of the 10 most widely circulated papers require registration to read articles online. Compared to only 2 of the bottom 10 papers that require registration, it becomes clear that the websites of the most popular papers are much less open to non-subscribers than are less popular papers.

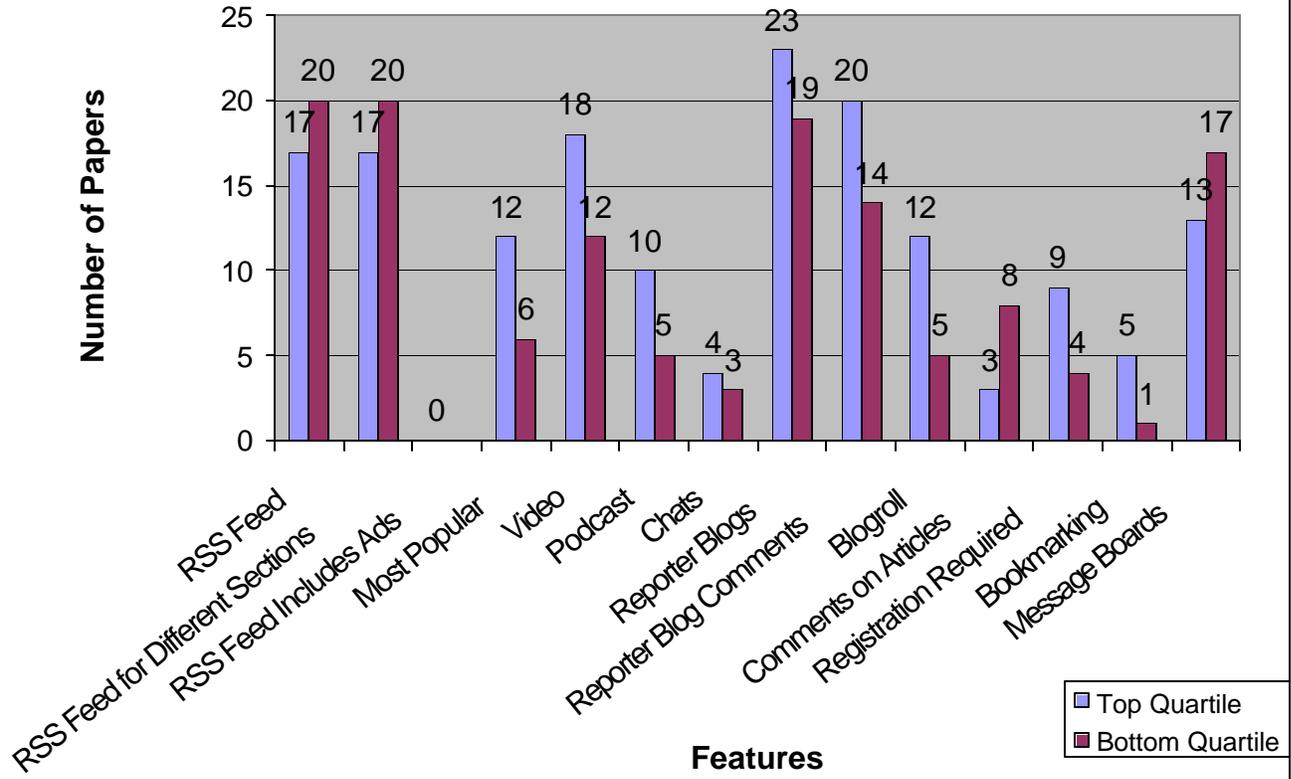
The following graphs summarize these results. More information follows.



### Offerings of the Top 10 Newspapers vs. the Bottom 10 Newspapers



### Top Quartile vs. Bottom Quartile



## Methodology

We researched and analyzed the websites of the top 100 most widely circulated newspapers in the United States. In order to determine the degree to which these newspapers have embraced the Internet and Web 2.0 tools, we evaluated them based on the presence or lack of the following elements:

- **RSS Feed:** Does the website offer an RSS Feed? If yes, is it a full or partial feed? *Note that this does not consider RSS feeds for reporter blogs, only for the newspaper's content.*
- **RSS Feed for Different Sections:** If the website offers RSS, does it divide the feeds into different sections?
- **RSS Feed Includes Ads:** If the website offers RSS, do the feeds include ads?
- **Most Popular:** Does the website offer a “Most Popular” function? This can be any feature that keeps track of and displays the “most popular”, “most read”, or “most emailed” articles of the day.
- **Video:** Does the website offer video content?
- **Podcast:** Does the website offer podcasts?
- **Chats:** Does the website offer live chats or chatrooms?
- **Reporter Blogs:** Does the website offer reporter blogs?
- **Reporter Blog Comments:** If the website has reporter blogs, can readers comment on the blogs?
- **Blogroll:** If the website has reporter blogs, do the blogs contain links to external blogs?
- **Comments on Articles:** Can users post comments on articles?
- **Registration Required:** Is registration required to view articles?
- **Bookmarking:** Does the website offer a bookmarking function? Is it internal or external?
- **Message Boards:** Does the website offer message boards or forums?

We used [RefDesk's list of the 100 most circulated newspapers](#) in order to determine what websites would be included in the study.<sup>1</sup>

The research was conducted between May 23 and June 23, and thus represents a snapshot in time rather than evolving trends. When analyzing the websites of these newspapers, we spent a reasonable amount of time exploring each website, and attempted to view at least one article from every section offered. There were a number of websites that were difficult to navigate, with cumbersome navigation and thus, hidden content. The [Albuquerque Journal](#) (number 98 on our list) is an example of such a website. Its homepage is disorganized and navigation is less than intuitive. It was very difficult to locate specific content on this website. The [News Journal](#) from New Castle, Delaware (number 92) also provided a difficult to navigate website. An example from the top of the circulation list is the [Daily News](#), (number 6) while [The Buffalo](#)

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<sup>1</sup> A list of the newspapers we examined, as well as their circulation statistics, can be found in the appendix of this study.

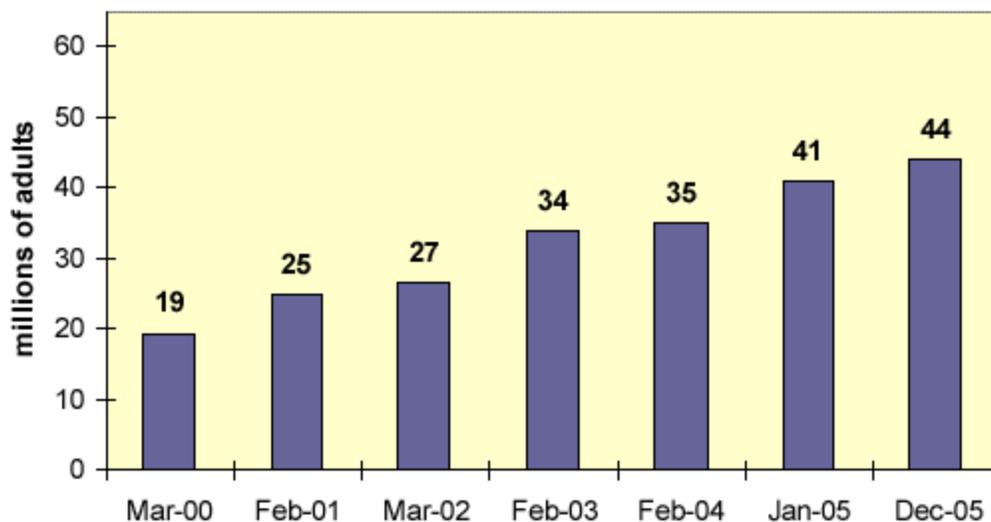
[News](#) (number 52) provides a middle-of-the-pack example. If our researchers could not find the content we were looking for, we counted the website as failing to offer that particular tool.

## Introduction

The Internet is rapidly becoming an important source of news and information for Americans. Because an increasing number of Americans have the ability to access the Internet on a regular basis, the Web now rivals more traditional media sources, such as print media and television, as a source for daily news. The evolution of the Internet as a news source is so dramatic that it is partly responsible for the significant decline in circulation and audience experienced by print media. While it is true that some of the top papers in the nation, such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* have experienced increases in circulation in the past few years, the industry overall is suffering from a decline.<sup>2</sup>

In a March 2006 study conducted by the *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, John B. Horrigan reported that Internet penetration in the United States has increased from 58 percent to 70 percent over the past four years. As a result, some 44 million American adults get news from the Internet every day, an increase from 2002, when only 27 million people used the Internet as a source of news. The graph below from *Pew* shows the increase in people using the Web as a news source from 2000 to 2005:<sup>3</sup>

**Getting news on the internet on the average day**



<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A and Appendix B for individual circulation figures from 2005 and 1996.

<sup>3</sup> John B. Horrigan, "Online News", *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, March 22, 2006, 1. Available at: [http://207.21.232.103/PPF/r/178/report\\_display.asp](http://207.21.232.103/PPF/r/178/report_display.asp)

The study also noted that 43 percent of respondents with regular access to a broadband connection turn to the Web for daily news. In contrast, just 23 percent of total respondents, including people with various levels of Internet access, consulted the Internet for news. Therefore, the penetration of high-speed Internet has been a powerful force behind the growth of the Internet as a news source.

In another *Pew* study, Deborah Fallows and Lee Rainie note, “Significant numbers of Americans are turning to the Internet for news coverage and images they cannot find in the mainstream media.”<sup>4</sup> In addition to increased broadband penetration, the ability to find unique and unusual news is another contributing factor to the increasing popularity of news on the Internet.

As more Americans turn to the Web for news, the circulation of and audience for print news has decreased dramatically in recent years. A study conducted by *Journalism.org* explains that the number of newspapers in America remained steady at around 1,750 newspapers in the years between World War II and 1980. After 1980, however, the number of newspapers began to decrease rapidly. From 1980 to 2002, the number of newspapers in the US decreased from 1,745 to 1,457. That equates to a decline of 17 percent. The number of newspapers in the United States has been dropping almost one percent per year for two decades.<sup>5</sup>

In 2004, just over half (53 percent) of Americans read a newspaper during the week, accounting for some 55 million newspapers being sold each day. This number is dropping, however, and had decreased to 52 percent by the end of 2005.<sup>6</sup> This results from the development of alternate media sources such as cable television and the Internet, states the *Journalism.org* study. Further, in 1950, the average household bought 1.23 newspapers per day. “By 1990, only 67 percent of households bought a newspaper. By 2000, it was 53 percent.”<sup>7</sup>

<b>U.S. Daily and Sunday Newspaper Readership Audience</b>		
Year	Weekday Readers Percent of Total Adult Population	Sunday Readers Percent of Total Adult Population
1998	58.6	68.2
1999	56.9	66.9
2000	55.1	65.1
2001	54.3	63.7
2002	55.4	63.6
2003	54.1	62.5
2004	52.8	61.2
2005	51.6	59.6

Source: National Association of Newspapers, page 7

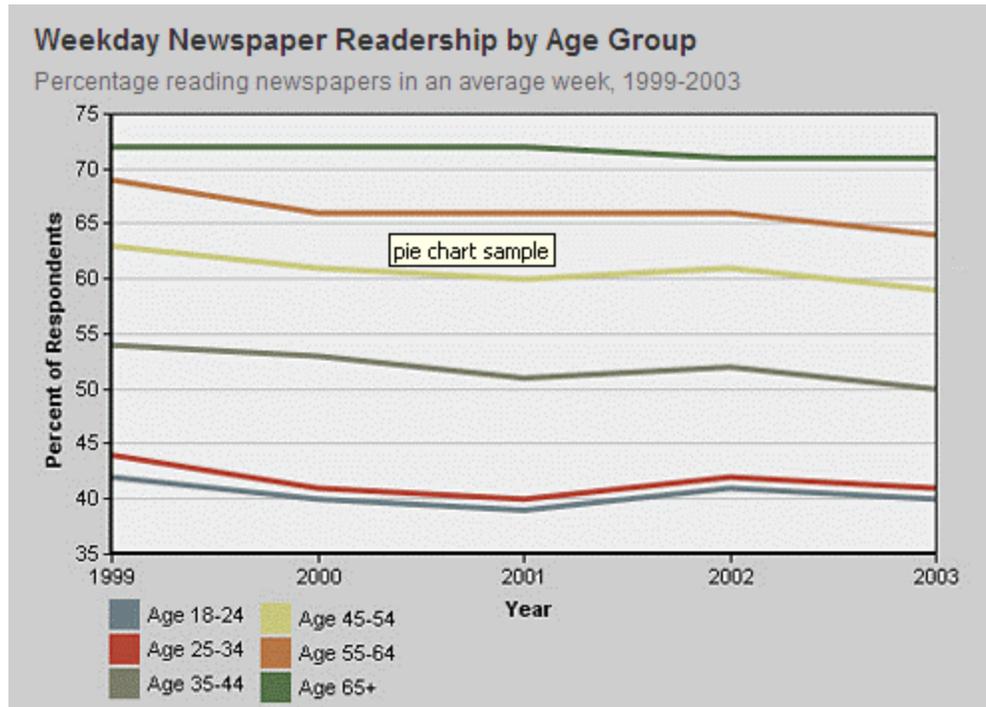
<sup>4</sup> Deborah Fallows and Lee Rainie, “The Internet as a Unique News Source”, *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, July 8, 2004, Page 1 of study summary. Available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/130/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/130/report_display.asp)

<sup>5</sup> “The State of the News Media 2004”, *Journalism.org*, available at: [http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/narrative\\_newspapers\\_audience.asp?cat=3&media=2](http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/narrative_newspapers_audience.asp?cat=3&media=2)

<sup>6</sup> “The Source: Newspapers by the Numbers 2005”, *National Newspaper Association of America*. Available at: <http://www.naa.org/thesource/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

The study also reports that young people seem to read newspapers less than their parents and grandparents. In 2003, only 40 percent of people aged 18 to 24 read a newspaper during the week, while 41 percent of those 25-34 read a daily newspaper. This data can be seen in the graph below from [Journalism.org](http://Journalism.org):<sup>8</sup>



This study notes that while it is not unusual for younger people to read the news less often than older adults, the declining readership among people aged 34-64 is highly unusual. At first, researchers believed this was a problem of people not developing the newspaper habit, a trend often seen among young adults. However, declining readership numbers are actually the result of a greater problem: people who formerly read printed news have simply stopped buying newspapers.<sup>9</sup>

*Journalism.org*'s survey data reveals that while people still turn to print newspapers for local news and opinion, the public's trust in newspapers and journalists is declining. The survey reported that people trust newspapers less than other mediums, and believe that journalists are "out of touch and motivated by commercial imperatives."<sup>10</sup>

These attitudes, coupled with the development of alternate news sources, has spelled bad news for print media, as Americans can now go elsewhere for their news. The *Wall Street Journal* noted in a May 2, 2005 article that Americans "have many news outlets that didn't exist 20 years

<sup>8</sup> "The State of the News Media 2004", *Journalism.org*

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

ago, including cable television news channels and Internet sites, as well as email and cell phone alerts.”<sup>11</sup> These sources have hurt newspaper sales, as did the 2003 do-not-call law, which eliminated telemarketing as a method of acquiring new subscribers. Before this law, newspapers gained up to 60 percent of new customers via cold calling.<sup>12</sup> Without this method of gaining business, newspaper publishers are faced with difficult decisions to make about marketing strategies.

The Internet, a major competitor for print newspapers, gives newspapers a unique opportunity to expand their business. As online news becomes a regular part of the daily routines of average Americans, newspapers are expanding their reach to the Web and rapidly developing new products and tools especially for their websites. These tools help newspapers retain their audiences in today’s state of declining print circulation. In this way, the Web helps level the field for newspaper publishers. By offering unique and sophisticated Web features, even small newspapers can establish an online presence among local communities. Even though local papers may be losing print readership, they can maintain customers by encouraging them to visit their websites.

In the 2005 *Pew* study, researchers concluded that people who use the Internet for news turn to a variety of online sources. The following data shows that both national and local news sites are popular among Internet users. According to this research, even small local papers hold a significant portion of online Internet news readers, as 10 percent of all Internet users get their news on the website of a local paper.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Julia Angwin and Joseph T. Hallinan, “Newspaper Circulation Continues Decline, Forcing Tough Decisions, *The Wall Street Journal Online*, May 2, 2005. Available at:

[http://online.wsj.com/public/article/SB111499919608621875-72vA7sUkzSQ76dPiTXytqgOMS5A\\_20050601.html?mod=blogs](http://online.wsj.com/public/article/SB111499919608621875-72vA7sUkzSQ76dPiTXytqgOMS5A_20050601.html?mod=blogs)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Horrigan, 11.

Where users get news online on the typical day			
Percent in each group who YESTERDAY went to these sites	All internet users	Dial-up internet users	Broadband internet users
National TV news site (CNN or MSNBC)	16%	13%	21%
Portal (Google, Yahoo)	14	9	17
Local daily paper	9	6	11
Local TV news site	8	6	10
National daily paper	6	4	8
International news sites (BBC or al Jazeera)	3	2	3
News blogs	3	2	5
Site of radio news organization	2	2	3
Alternative news organizations	2	1	2
Online listservs	2	2	2
Have gone to at least <b>one</b> of these sites	35%	26%	43%
Have gone to at least <b>two</b> of these sites	28	20	34
Have gone to at least <b>three</b> of these sites	23	17	27
Have gone to at least <b>four</b> of these sites	21	16	25
Source: Pew Internet Project December 2005 survey.			

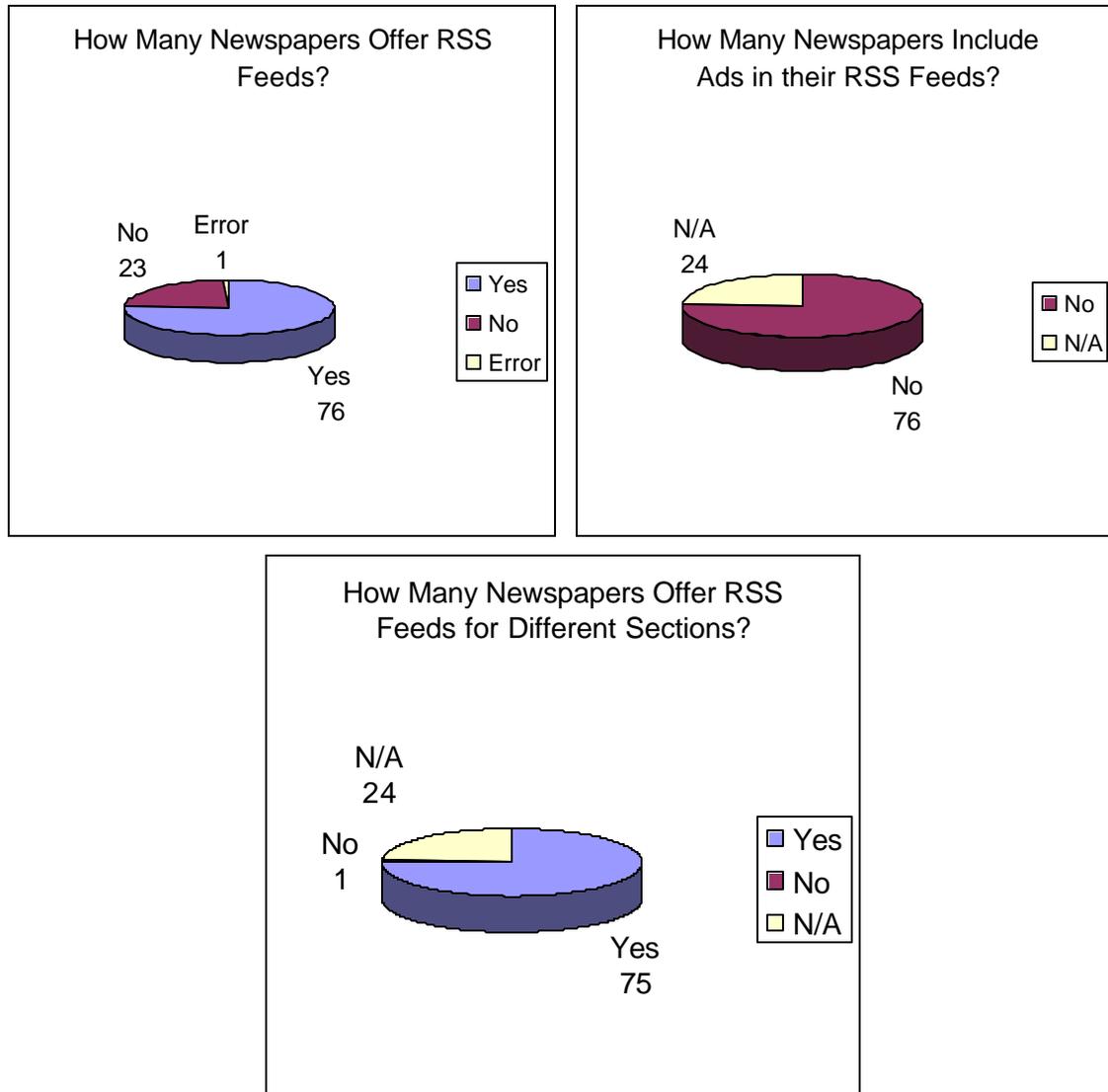
Despite the leveling factor presented by the Internet, competition among newspapers remains stiff. According to *Journalism.org*, in 2004, “7 percent of the nation’s newspapers (105 out of 1,457) command[ed] 55 percent of total circulations.”<sup>14</sup>

To assess the degree to which these newspapers are taking advantage of the Internet and offering various Web tools on their websites, we analyzed the websites of the top 100 most circulated newspapers in the country and evaluated them based on a series of 14 criteria. After reviewing the data we collected, we determined that all of the nation’s top 100 newspapers are using various Web tools to a high degree. It is evident that newspapers value tools such as RSS and blogs as methods of gaining new Web-focused readers and also as a method of retaining former readers whose daily habits have changed to include the Internet, as opposed to print news.

<sup>14</sup> “State of the News Media 2004”.

## Results

### 1. RSS



As shown by the charts above, 76 of the nation's top 100 most circulated newspapers offer RSS feeds for news content on their websites. This result is in tune with the growing popularity of RSS technology, blogs, and external bookmarking websites such as [de.lic.iou.s](http://del.icio.us).

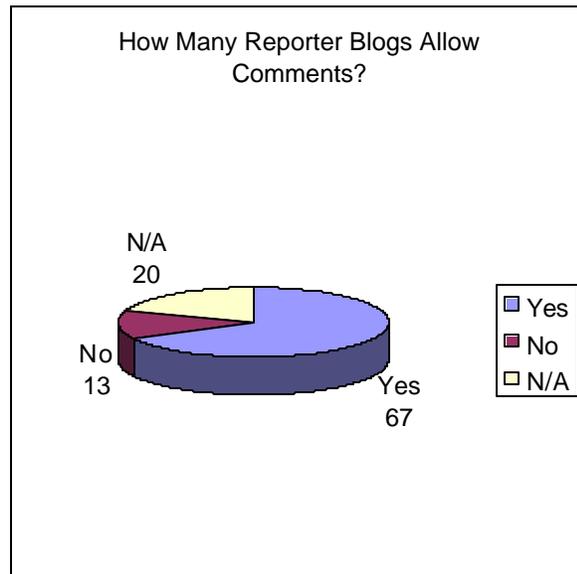
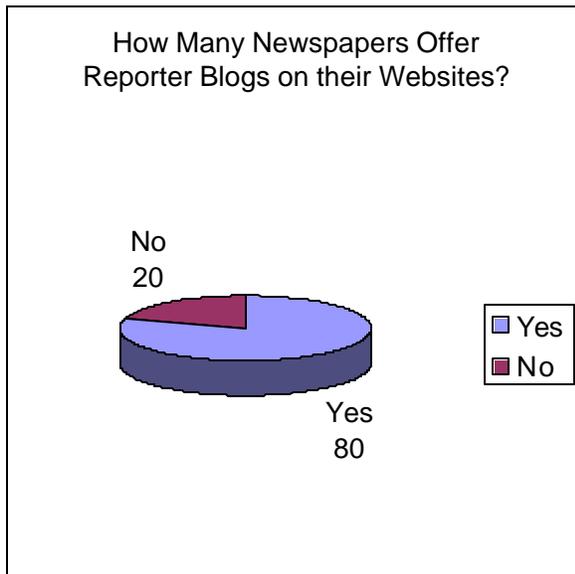
RSS, or Really Simple Syndication, is a Web feed format that allows the syndication of material found on the Internet, such as news articles, blog entries, and podcasts. RSS feeds allow avid news and blog readers to condense material located on any number of different sites onto one website, by subscribing to a feed. The RSS technology then delivers articles in which a user is interested directly to his or her personal website, blog, or email address. In addition to providing a condensed aggregation of news stories, RSS is often used to obtain real-time sports scores,

auction items on websites such as [Ebay](#), airline delays, and many other types of announcements that appear on the Web.

RSS feeds require no additional software, are free, and make a user's content available from any computer. This technology has dramatically changed the way avid Internet users read the news. The fact that newspaper websites are including this technology is an indication that they are keeping up with the times and are successfully incorporating sophisticated Web strategies into their online offerings.

It was surprising, however, that none of the websites we researched included advertisements in their RSS feeds, as this would be an effective way to increase ad space on a website. It is also surprising that none of the newspapers offered full text versions of their RSS feeds. These two facts show that while newspapers are embracing RSS, they are doing so to increase page views on their own websites. They are essentially using RSS like an email alert system: letting people know something new has been posted but still trying to push users to their own websites. Thus, while newspapers are using RSS, they are not yet allowing readers to read full text of their in their own RSS readers without visiting the newspaper's site online. Perhaps newspapers fear that by using full RSS feeds and allowing people to read entire newspaper articles via this technology, fewer people will visit their websites. Because page views play a major role in soliciting advertisers, a decrease in page views would have negative implications for revenues accrued from advertisements.

## II. Blogs



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As evident from these charts, 80 of the nation's top 100 newspaper websites offer at least one reporter blog. In most cases, these websites offered several blogs, including one for each section of the newspaper. Politics, sports, and lifestyle blogs were particularly common on these websites. [The Boston Globe](#) is an example of a newspaper that offers a particularly [robust network of blogs](#). There are individual [Boston Globe](#) blogs dedicated to each area sports team, several news categories, business, travel, arts and entertainment, and even the job market. In addition to offering this wide array of [Boston Globe](#) reporter blogs, the website provides links to the most popular external blogs read by people in the Boston area. A blog network like this encourages reader participation and interaction between reporters, journalists, and everyday citizens.

Blogs are an easy way for newspapers to expand their "opinion" sections, as they are free and give reporters freedom to discuss a large variety of issues. It also removes the formality of editorials and other articles that commonly appear in newspapers. Blogs are an effective way for reporters and newspaper publishers to speak directly to the newspaper's audience, as they remove media filters and allow reporters to write freely. In addition, blogs increase the interactivity and stickiness of newspaper websites, as features such as "comments" encourage readers to visit the website on a consistent and regular basis. On 67 of the websites, readers could comment on reporter blog posts, allowing them to develop some what of a rapport with reporters and to communicate their ideas directly to media personnel. Thus, 83 percent of reporter blogs allowed readers to post comments on blog entries.

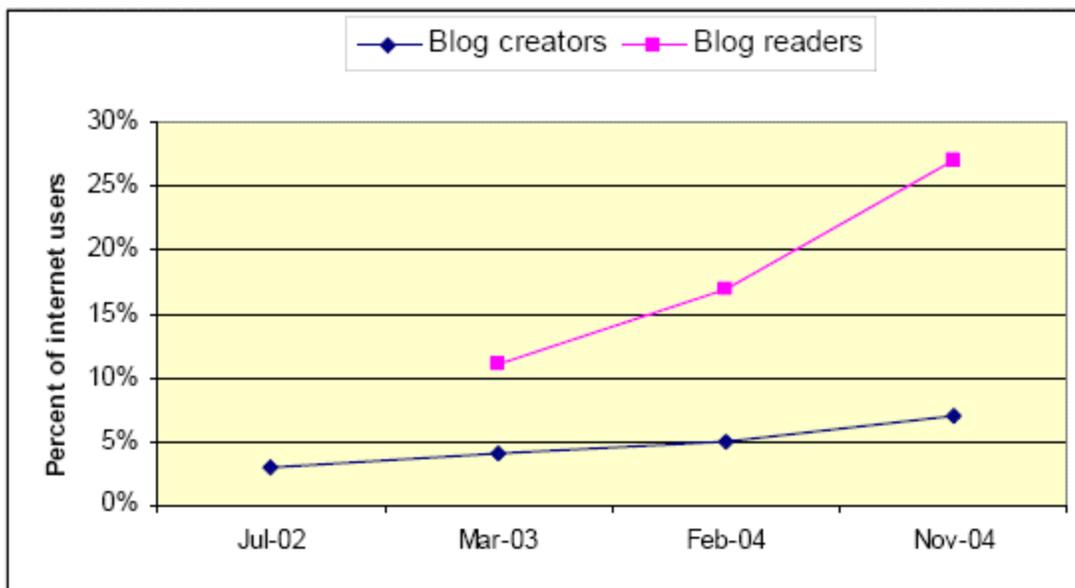
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<sup>15</sup> Category "N/A" refers to those websites that did not offer blogs, and thus do not have a "blog commenting" function.

Much like the popularity of RSS feeds, the common presence of blogs on newspaper websites is a sign that newspaper publishers are paying attention to changing technologies and readership. Studies conducted by the *Pew Internet & American Life Project* show that blogs are growing in popularity. By the end of 2004, 7 percent of Internet users, about 8 million people, in the US maintained blogs.<sup>16</sup> A study released this month shows that this number has increased to approximately 12 million people, or about 8 percent of American Internet users.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in 2004, 27 percent of Internet users read the blogs of others.<sup>18</sup> This number has increased to 39 percent of Internet users, or about 57 million American adults.<sup>19</sup>

The trend of increasing blog popularity can be seen in the graph below from *Pew*.<sup>20</sup>

### 1 - The growth of the blogosphere



In addition, it is interesting to note that in our research, blogs were just as common in the ten most circulated newspapers as they were in the bottom ten newspapers. Nine papers in both the top 10 and bottom 10 categories included reporter blogs on their websites.

Because of the growing popularity of blogs, offering reporter blogs is a key component of a newspaper's online strategy. Especially among the generations of younger adults, Web users

<sup>16</sup> Lee Rainie, "The State of Blogging", *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, January 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Amanda Lenhart and Susannah Fox, "Bloggers: A Portrait of the Internet's new Storytellers", *The Pew Internet & American Life Project*, July 19, 2006. Available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Bloggers\\_Report\\_July\\_19\\_2006.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Bloggers_Report_July_19_2006.pdf)

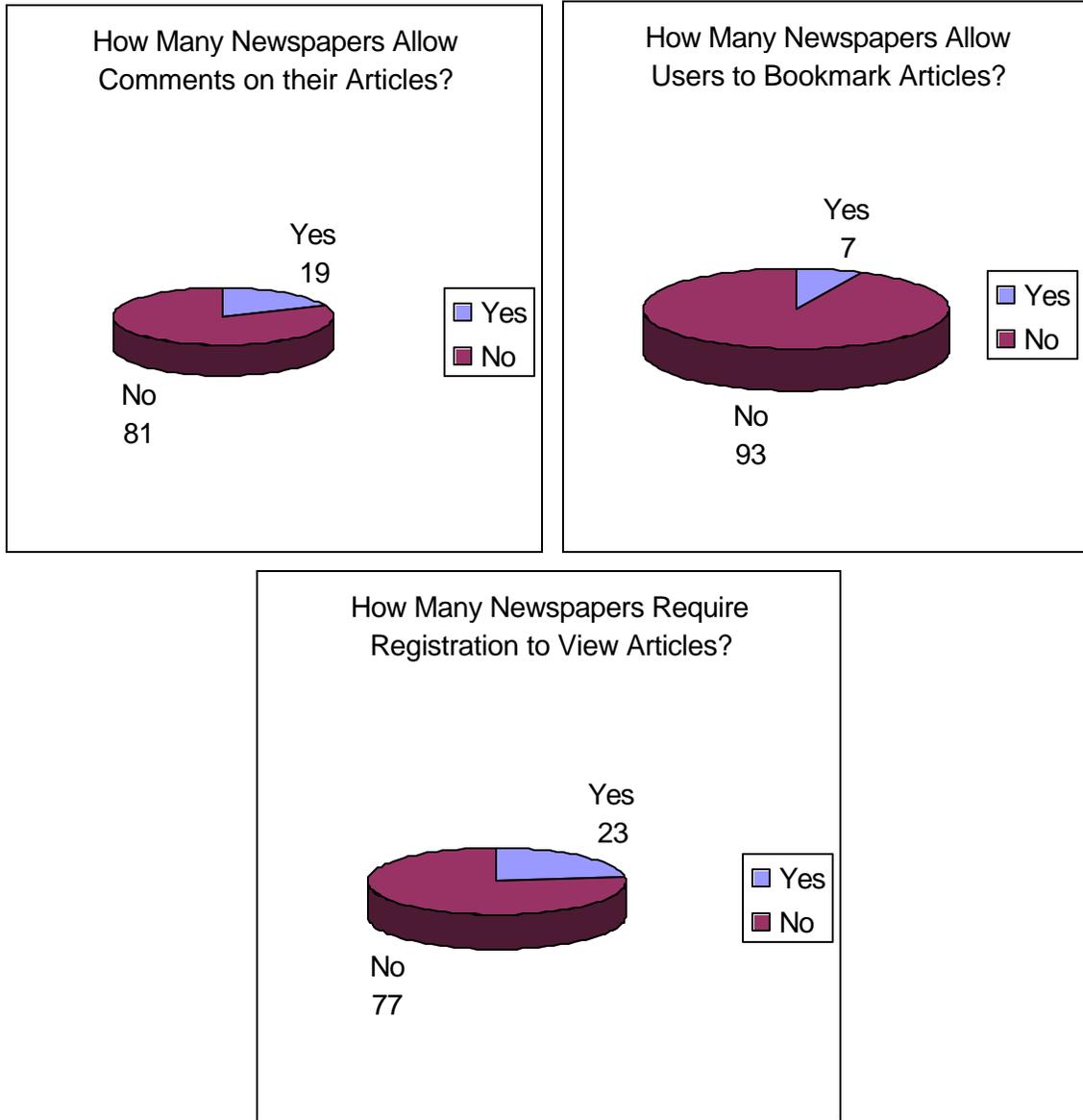
<sup>18</sup> Lee Rainie, "The State of Blogging".

<sup>19</sup> Lenhart and Fox, "Bloggers: A Portrait of the Internet's new Storytellers".

<sup>20</sup> Rainie, January 2005.

come to expect interactivity from websites. Thus, omitting reporter blogs from their websites would be a costly mistake on the part of newspapers.

### III. Articles



Just as Web users have come to expect interactivity from blogs, they have also come to expect interactivity from news articles in general. Thus, it was surprising to find that only 19 of the nation's top 100 most circulated newspapers allowed users to make comments directly on articles they read online. This function would be a useful tool for creating productive discussion around topical issues, as it would allow articles to inspire people to share their thoughts about an issue. Despite the value of this feature, the large majority of the nation's newspapers have failed to make this service available to their readers.

The [Washington Post](#) struggled with this Web feature earlier this year. In January, 2006, the *Washington Post* had to turn off comments on its blog, [Post.blog](#), after an article written by Deborah Howell spurred a massive commenting war on the Post's website. According to Jim

Brady, executive editor for the *Washington Post*, “The move [to turn off comments] came after several comments containing personal attacks, profanity and hate speech were posted on an item about Washington Post ombudsman Deborah Howell's recent column about the Abramoff scandal: [Getting the Story on Jack Abramoff](#).” Brady continued in an [entry he posted on the newspaper's blog](#), “Transparency and reasoned debate are crucial parts of the Web culture, and it's a disappointment to us that we have not been able to maintain a civil conversation, especially about issues that people feel strongly (and differently) about. We're not giving up on the concept of having a healthy public dialogue with our readers, but this experience shows that we need to think more carefully about how we do it.”<sup>21</sup>

This anecdote from the *Washington Post* provides a partial explanation for why newspapers may be reluctant to allow open commenting on articles. In this particular case, a controversial column caused profanity and personal attacks to be printed on the newspaper's website. While the paper took responsibility for editing these comments, they became so overwhelming that the only solution was to turn commenting off all together. For many papers, it is understandable that they do not want to run the risk of having obscene or offensive material appear on their website, or have the inconvenience of monitoring thousands of reader comments for such unacceptable language and unproductive and offensive discussion. Losing control of paper content and the material appearing on a newspaper's website is a factor discouraging papers from allowing full interactivity, and the experience of the *Washington Post* in January of 2006 provides an example of what can happen when irresponsible reader comments and opinions go unchecked.

In order to encourage reader participation without running the risk of receiving inappropriate commentary directly on their website, the Washington Post began using a unique tool. By working with [Technorati](#), a popular blog search engine, the Washington Post provides links to blogs that discuss the Washington Post and articles featured on its website. In this way, readers can still publish their opinions and discuss various articles, while the Washington Post stays “safe”: newspaper staff do not have to monitor blog posts about articles that appear on the Post's website, as these blogs operate independent of the newspaper and its staff.

Another surprising result is that only 7 newspaper websites offer a bookmarking function. This is a tool that allows readers to save an article either on the newspaper's website, or to export it to an external bookmarking site, such as [del.icio.us](#). Sites like [del.icio.us](#) make it easy for Internet users to keep and share news articles with others, and also can contribute to the popularity of an article. Including bookmarking tools not only encourages the viral dissemination of information, but it also helps increase the stickiness of a website. Thus, it was surprising that more newspapers did not take advantage of this tool. [USA Today](#), [The New York Times](#), and the [East Valley Tribune](#) from Mesa, Arizona, were the only papers to offer internal bookmarking (allowing users to save articles on the newspaper's website), while the [Washington Post](#), [The San Diego Union-Tribune](#), [The Denver Post](#), and the [South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#) were the sole providers of external bookmarking tools.

External bookmarking sites such as [del.icio.us](#), [digg.com](#) others are still relatively new websites that are just beginning to catch on in circles of tech-savvy people who avidly read news on the

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<sup>21</sup> Jim Brady, *AskPost.com*, Transcript, January 20, 2006. Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2006/01/20/DI2006012000566.html>.

Web. Perhaps newspapers are waiting to see if these sites can cement themselves into Web culture before they incorporate these external bookmarking tools on their websites. The lack of bookmarking on newspaper sites may be the result of skeptical newspaper staff avoiding a transient fad. If, however, these “user driven social content websites” (as [digg.com](http://digg.com) describes itself) continue to grow in popularity, these tools might become more common on newspaper websites.

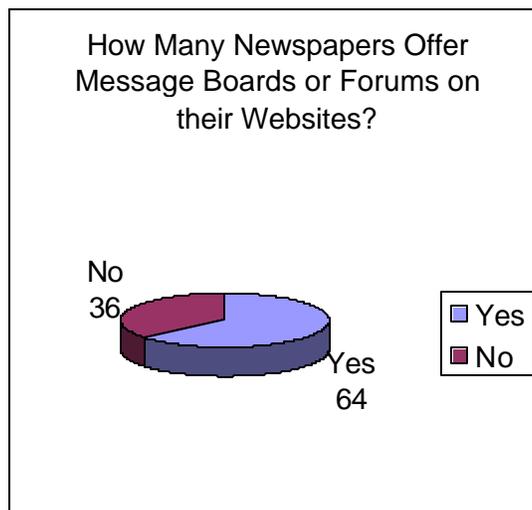
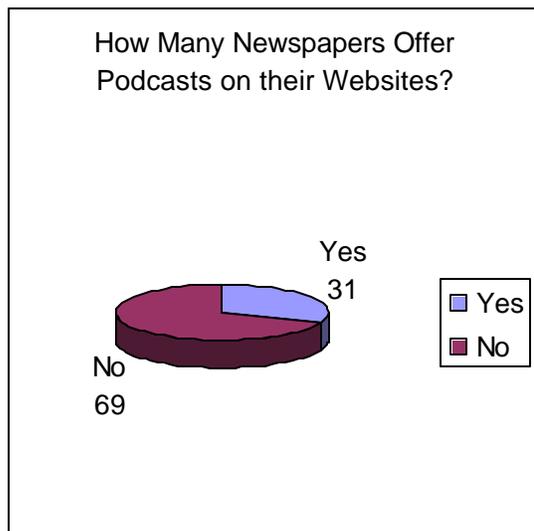
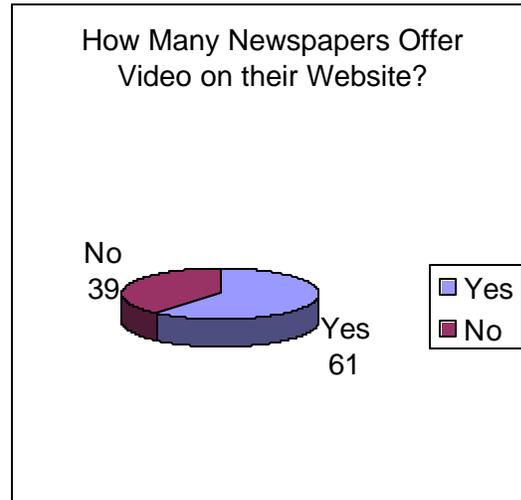
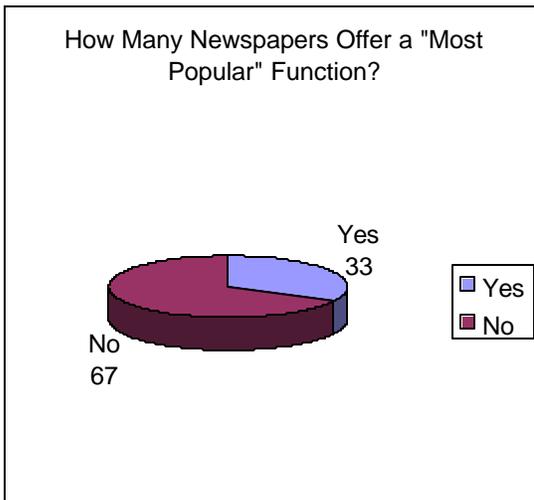
An encouraging statistic from our research is that only 23 of the top 100 newspaper websites required registration to view articles online. In most cases where users were required to register, signing up was free of charge. It should be noted, however, that on the websites of some major newspapers, such as [The Wall Street Journal](http://www.wsj.com), registration is not free, and certain articles are available only with a paid online subscription. This may be a reflection of declining readership among newspapers, representing publishers’ desire to keep their audiences, encourage readers who have deserted print media to continue reading online, or perhaps an effort to prevent losing readership to national and more comprehensive news sites such as [CNN.com](http://www.cnn.com), [MSNBC.com](http://www.msnbc.com), [Google](http://www.google.com), [Yahoo!](http://www.yahoo.com), or others.

Further, Wayne Ezell, author of a July 2006 article regarding the [Florida Times Union’s](http://www.floridatimesunion.com) website, 54 percent of Internet users surveyed by *Pew* said they have “never registered at a Web site in order to obtain news or information.” While online registration provides valuable demographic information for newspaper publishers as well as for advertisers, this information can be acquired through secondary methods, such as site surveys. It seems that by not requiring users to register on their websites, newspapers are responding to the online habits of their readers.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Wayne Ezell, “Easier Access to Our Website”, [Jacksonville.com](http://www.jacksonville.com), website of the Florida Times-Union, July 2, 2006. Available at: [http://www.jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/070206/ope\\_3702444.shtml](http://www.jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/070206/ope_3702444.shtml).

## IV. Tech



This portion of our research shows us that newspaper websites are employing a variety of different technologies. Video and message boards/forums are the most common of these technologies, being offered by 61 and 64 of newspaper websites, respectively. The popularity of forums coincides with a growing desire for Web interactivity discussed earlier, while the popularity of video is consistent with the use of new video technologies and video sharing websites.

Forums differ from blogs in that they are designed to provide a platform for users to initiate discussions with one another, while blogs are intended to elicit responses to posts and articles from readers. Of all the newspaper websites we researched, [The Star Ledger](#) from New Jersey presented one of the most extensive networks of [forums](#). These forums revolve heavily around high school sports, and are very popular among players, coaches, and parents of high school athletes. The [Syracuse Post-Standard](#) also has a highly developed series of [message boards](#), which range in topic from high school sports, to health, news, and even wedding planning.

In addition to forums, newspaper websites have begun to incorporate video on their websites to highlight both local and national news. This seems to be an effective strategy for involving the type of people who have left newspapers and traditional print media for more technologically advanced sources of news. Web videos are rapidly gaining popularity, among both major websites and personal pages. By offering video content on their websites, newspapers are incorporating the hugely popular capabilities of websites like [YouTube](#) into their online strategies. [YouTube](#) has been cited by [Alexa](#) as the 19th most popular website in the United States and the 18<sup>th</sup> most popular website in the United Kingdom. Websites such as [YouTube](#) enable everyday people to post their homemade videos on the Web, and then to spread them virally via email and RSS.

Podcasts are another popular feature, appearing on 31 newspaper websites. The presence of this feature on newspaper websites provides more evidence toward the conclusion that newspapers are embracing Web 2.0 technologies. According to *Pew*, by April of 2005, more than 6 million adults had tried listening to podcasts, and, of the 22 million people who own MP3 players or iPods, 29 percent have listened to podcasts.<sup>23</sup> Podcasts that have become particularly popular are those by politicians, or those that discuss politics. Using this type of political podcasts enables newspapers to reach a different audience than they would normally reach simply through their printed newspaper.

One trend was clear when it came to podcasting. Unlike video content, there was a large dichotomy between the use of podcasts by popular newspapers and less popular newspapers. Six of the top ten circulated newspapers offered podcasts on their websites, compared to just 2 of the bottom ten newspapers. Similarly, 4 of the top 25 newspapers used podcasting, while just 2 of the bottom quartile employed this feature. Judging from these results, podcasting has not yet become an essential feature to a Web strategy, as have blogs and online video content. Seven of the top ten papers offered online videos, compared to six of the bottom ten papers; 18 (72 percent) of the top quartile papers offered Web videos, compared to 12 (48 percent) of the bottom quartile newspaper websites. It will be interesting to see how the further evolution of podcasts affects these figures.

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<sup>23</sup> Lee Rainie and Mary Madden, "Podcasting Catches on", *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, April 3, 2005.

## **V. Conclusion**

It has become clear from our research on the top 100 most circulated newspapers in the United States that newspaper publishers are responding to decreasing print circulation and audiences by developing more aggressive and extensive Web strategies. We found that most newspapers were embracing a variety of Web 2.0 tools, including RSS feeds, online videos, podcasts, blogs, and others in an effort to maintain current audiences, as well as to reach out to new groups of people via the Internet.

Due to the growing popularity of the Internet among Americans, it seems that newspaper publishers have decided to embrace the Internet rather than attempt to compete with it. By including interactive features on their websites, and by making content available via RSS, many of America's newspapers have made a powerful effort to reach Web-focused audiences with mediums that are relevant to today's virtual society.

## Appendix A

List of Newspapers we researched. Available via RefDesk,  
<http://www.refdesk.com/top100pap.html>.

This is a list of the top 100 newspapers in the United States by circulation, including daily and Sunday circulation, respectively. These figures are for a six-month period ending on March 31, 2005.

<a href="#">1. USA Today (2,281,831; None)</a>
<a href="#">2. The Wall Street Journal (2,070,498; None)</a>
<a href="#">3. The New York Times (1,121,623; 1,680,582)</a>
<a href="#">4. Los Angeles Times (907,997; 200,065)</a>
<a href="#">5. Washington Post (740,947; 1,000,565)</a>
<a href="#">6. The Daily News (708,773); 835,121)</a>
<a href="#">7. New York Post (643,086; 427,039)</a>
<a href="#">8. Chicago Tribune (565,679; 953,814)</a>
<a href="#">9. Houston Chronicle (527,744; 720,711)</a>
<a href="#">10. Dallas Morning News (477,493; 655,809)</a>
<a href="#">11. San Francisco Chronicle (468,739; 510,844)</a>
<a href="#">12. Newsday - New York (459,305; 521,498)</a>
<a href="#">13. The Arizona Republic (452,016; 574,798)</a>
<a href="#">14. Chicago Sun-Times (432,230; 359,123)</a>
<a href="#">15. The Boston Globe (429,552; 672,882)</a>
<a href="#">16. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (396,888; 610,338)</a>
<a href="#">17. The Star-Ledger - New Jersey (382,055; 591,272)</a>
<a href="#">18. Star Tribune - Minneapolis (378,316; 655,198)</a>
<a href="#">19. Detroit Free Press (370,875; 682,798)</a>
<a href="#">20. Philadelphia Inquirer (364,974; 744,242)</a>
<a href="#">21. The Plain Dealer - Cleveland (348,416; 463,482)</a>
<a href="#">22. St. Petersburg Times - Florida (337,515; 432,231)</a>
<a href="#">23. The Oregonian - Portland (332,829; 398,694)</a>
<a href="#">24. The San Diego Union-Tribune (332,273; 363,907)</a>
<a href="#">25. The Denver Post (321,405; 735,621)</a>
<a href="#">26. Rocky Mountain News - Denver - (320,345; 735,621)</a>
<a href="#">27. The Miami Herald (312,811; 429,697)</a>
<a href="#">28. The Sacramento Bee (305,394; 341,157)</a>
<a href="#">29. The Orange County Register - Calif. (300,972; 363,907)</a>
<a href="#">30. St. Louis Post-Dispatch (284,473; 445,713)</a>
<a href="#">31. The Kansas City Star (278,937; 383,123)</a>
<a href="#">32. San Jose Mercury News (276,166; 310,520)</a>
<a href="#">33. The Detroit News (263,703; 682,798)</a>
<a href="#">34. The Times-Picayune - New Orleans (261,573; 288,706)</a>
<a href="#">35. South Florida Sun-Sentinel (260,316; 359,772)</a>
<a href="#">36. The Indianapolis Star (254,437; 357,284)</a>
<a href="#">37. The Orlando Sentinel (251,998; 368,562)</a>

<a href="#">38. The Sun - Baltimore (246,584; 430,675)</a>
<a href="#">39. San Antonio Express-News (245,034; 352,974)</a>
<a href="#">40. The Columbus Dispatch (244,280; 357,839)</a>
<a href="#">41. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (241,556; 411,749)</a>
<a href="#">42. Tampa Tribune (238,743; 315,407)</a>
<a href="#">43. The Boston Herald (238,569; 150,352)</a>
<a href="#">44. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (237,867; 401,380)</a>
<a href="#">45. Fort Worth Star-Telegram (237,554; 333,933)</a>
<a href="#">46. The Charlotte Observer (230,901; 282,990)</a>
<a href="#">47. The Seattle Times (229,584; 457,010)</a>
<a href="#">48. The Oklahoman (219,350; 294,686)</a>
<a href="#">49. The Courier-Journal - Louisville (215,734; 276,032)</a>
<a href="#">50. The Virginian-Pilot (198,273; 232,256)</a>
<a href="#">51. The Cincinnati Enquirer (195,449; 296,989)</a>
<a href="#">52. The Buffalo News (194,225; 277,921)</a>
<a href="#">53. Omaha World-Herald (194,222; 240,026)</a>
<a href="#">54. The Hartford Courant (190,572; 265,249)</a>
<a href="#">55. Saint Paul Pioneer Press (190,374; 247,495)</a>
<a href="#">56. Richmond Times-Dispatch (188,893; 226,134)</a>
<a href="#">57. The Press-Enterprise - Riverside, CA (188,228; 185,060)</a>
<a href="#">58. Contra Costa (CA) Times (187,042; 197,423)</a>
<a href="#">59. Arkansas Democrat-Gazette - Little Rock (184,659; 279,485)</a>
<a href="#">60. Austin American-Statesman (184,398; 230,229)</a>
<a href="#">61. The Palm Beach (FL) Post (181,626; 217,634)</a>
<a href="#">62. The Record - Hackensack, NJ (179,538; 213,289)</a>
<a href="#">63. Daily News - Woodland Hills, CA (176,548; 200,065)</a>
<a href="#">64. The News &amp; Observer - Raleigh, NC (176,025; 211,231)</a>
<a href="#">65. The Tennessean - Nashville (175,834; 234,957)</a>
<a href="#">66. The Commercial Appeal - Memphis, TN (172,195; 228,761)</a>
<a href="#">67. The Florida Times-Union - Jacksonville (168,014; 227,391)</a>
<a href="#">68. Democrat and Chronicle - Rochester, NY (167,696; 223,718)</a>
<a href="#">69. Las Vegas Review-Journal (167,586; 220,723)</a>
<a href="#">70. The Fresno Bee (166,554; 192,203)</a>
<a href="#">71. The Providence Journal (164,980; 231,117)</a>
<a href="#">72. Asbury Park Press - Neptune, NJ (153,557; 206,182)</a>
<a href="#">73. The Birmingham News (153,378; 185,484)</a>
<a href="#">74. The Des Moines Register (150,907; 239,367)</a>
<a href="#">75. Daily Herald - Arlington Heights, IL (149,595; 149,179)</a>
<a href="#">76. Tulsa World (148,000; 198,000)</a>
<a href="#">77. The Honolulu Advertiser (145,197; 163,446)</a>
<a href="#">78. The Akron Beacon Journal (143,799; 184,825)</a>
<a href="#">79. Seattle Post-Intelligencer (141,744; 457,010)</a>
<a href="#">80. The Grand Rapids Press (139,100; 184,848)</a>
<a href="#">81. The Journal News - White Plains, NY (138,539; 156,566)</a>
<a href="#">82. Dayton Daily News (135,936; 180,944)</a>
<a href="#">83. The Blade - Toledo, OH (134,037; 176,823)</a>
<a href="#">84. The Salt Lake Tribune (130,351; 150,852)</a>

<a href="#">85. The News Tribune - Tacoma, WA (128,937; 143,937)</a>
<a href="#">86. Sarasota Herald-Tribune (123,231; 145,084)</a>
<a href="#">87. The Knoxville News-Sentinel (121,917; 153,779)</a>
<a href="#">88. La Opinion - Los Angeles, CA (119,735; 66,973)</a>
<a href="#">89. Philadelphia Daily News (118,822; None)</a>
<a href="#">90. Post-Standard - Syracuse, NY (118,605; 171,967)</a>
<a href="#">91. Morning Call - Allentown, PA (117,717; 159,383)</a>
<a href="#">92. The News Journal - New Castle, DE (117,389; 137,849)</a>
<a href="#">93. Lexington (KY) Herald-Leader (116,894; 147,208)</a>
<a href="#">94. The State Columbia, SC (116,254; 148,610)</a>
<a href="#">95. The Arizona Daily Star - Tucson (113,296; 174,427)</a>
<a href="#">96. The Daytona Beach News-Journal (112,278; 128,312)</a>
<a href="#">97. East Valley Tribune - Mesa, AZ (109,637; 88,115)</a>
<a href="#">98. Albuquerque Journal (108,177; 150,787)</a>
<a href="#">99. The Patriot News - Harrisburg, PA (102,710; 151,583)</a>
<a href="#">100. News-Press - Fort Myers, FL(100,770; 121,163)</a>

## Appendix B

This is a list of the nation's top 100 newspapers by daily circulation from the six month period ending September 30, 1996. Data courtesy of *The Detroit Free Press* and is available here : [http://www.freep.com/legacy/jobspage/links/top100\\_96.htm](http://www.freep.com/legacy/jobspage/links/top100_96.htm)

	Newspaper & link	Sept. 30, 1996 daily circ.
1	<a href="#">Wall Street Journal</a>	1,783,532
2	<a href="#">USA Today</a>	1,591,629
3	<a href="#">New York Times</a>	1,071,120
4	<a href="#">Los Angeles Times</a>	1,029,073
5	<a href="#">Washington Post</a>	789,198
6	<a href="#">New York Daily News</a>	734,277
7	<a href="#">Chicago Tribune</a>	680,535
8	<a href="#">Newsday</a>	564,754
9	<a href="#">Houston Chronicle</a>	545,348
10	<a href="#">Chicago Sun-Times</a>	496,030
11	<a href="#">San Francisco Chronicle</a>	486,977
12	<a href="#">Dallas Morning News</a>	478,181
13	<a href="#">Boston Globe</a>	471,024
14	<a href="#">New York Post</a>	429,642
15	<a href="#">Philadelphia Inquirer</a>	427,175
16	<a href="#">Newark Star-Ledger</a>	405,869
17	<a href="#">Minneapolis Star Tribune</a>	393,740
18	<a href="#">Cleveland Plain Dealer</a>	386,256
19	<a href="#">Arizona Republic</a>	382,122
20	<a href="#">San Diego Union-Tribune</a>	372,081

21	<a href="#">Detroit Free Press</a>	363,385
22	<a href="#">Miami Herald</a>	361,279
23	<a href="#">Orange County Register</a>	353,812
24	<a href="#">St. Petersburg Times</a>	340,878
25	<a href="#">Portland Oregonian</a>	338,586
26	<a href="#">Denver Post</a>	334,436
27	<a href="#">St. Louis Post-Dispatch</a>	321,461
28	<a href="#">Rocky Mountain News</a>	316,910
29	<a href="#">Atlanta Constitution</a>	308,301
30	<a href="#">Baltimore Sun</a>	304,412
31	<a href="#">Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</a>	287,673
32	<a href="#">San Jose Mercury News</a>	285,735
33	<a href="#">Boston Herald</a>	284,794
34	<a href="#">Kansas City Star</a>	279,305
35	<a href="#">Sacramento Bee</a>	276,758
36	<a href="#">Orlando Sentinel</a>	262,802
37	<a href="#">Buffalo News</a>	262,045
38	<a href="#">New Orleans Times-Picayune</a>	259,577
39	<a href="#">Tampa Tribune</a>	255,142
40	<a href="#">Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel</a>	255,050
41	<a href="#">Columbus Dispatch</a>	253,549
42	<a href="#">Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</a>	240,992
43	<a href="#">Detroit News</a>	237,917
44	<a href="#">Charlotte Observer</a>	236,050
45	<a href="#">Louisville Courier-Journal</a>	232,539
46	<a href="#">Indianapolis Star</a>	230,095
47	<a href="#">Omaha World-Herald</a>	227,721
48	<a href="#">Seattle Times</a>	226,287
49	<a href="#">LA Investor's Business Daily</a>	222,972
50	<a href="#">Fort Worth Star-Telegram</a>	221,860
51	<a href="#">San Antonio Express-News</a>	215,593
52	<a href="#">Hartford Courant</a>	208,844
53	<a href="#">Richmond Times-Dispatch</a>	208,632
54	<a href="#">Cincinnati Enquirer</a>	205,233
55	<a href="#">Daily Oklahoman</a>	203,705
56	<a href="#">St. Paul Pioneer Press</a>	203,601
57	<a href="#">Norfolk Virginian-Pilot</a>	201,683
58	Los Angeles Daily News	200,655
59	<a href="#">Seattle Post-Intelligencer</a>	198,385
60	<a href="#">Florida Times-Union</a>	187,207
61	<a href="#">Austin American-Statesman</a>	181,272
62	<a href="#">Palm Beach Post</a>	175,003
63	<a href="#">Philadelphia Daily News</a>	174,595
64	<a href="#">Little Rock Democrat-Gazette</a>	172,223
65	<a href="#">Providence Journal</a>	171,824
66	<a href="#">Memphis Commercial Appeal</a>	170,952
67	<a href="#">Des Moines Register</a>	169,898

68	<a href="#">Birmingham News</a>	167,865
69	<a href="#">Riverside Press-Enterprise</a>	160,004
70	<a href="#">Tulsa World</a>	158,610
71	<a href="#">Dayton Daily News</a>	158,295
72	<a href="#">Asbury Park Press</a>	156,473
73	<a href="#">Fresno Bee</a>	152,591
74	<a href="#">Raleigh News &amp; Observer</a>	150,951
75	<a href="#">Hackensack Record</a>	150,122
76	<a href="#">Akron Beacon Journal</a>	148,914
77	<a href="#">Las Vegas Review-Journal</a>	147,927
78	<a href="#">Toledo Blade</a>	147,365
79	<a href="#">Nashville Tennessean</a>	146,788
80	<a href="#">Rochester Democrat and Chronicle</a>	142,572
81	<a href="#">Grand Rapids Press</a>	139,978
82	<a href="#">Allentown Morning Call</a>	130,317
83	<a href="#">Arlington Heights (Ill.) Daily Herald</a>	129,202
84	<a href="#">Tacoma News Tribune</a>	128,432
85	<a href="#">Salt Lake City Tribune</a>	127,978
86	<a href="#">Wilmington News Journal</a>	125,637
87	<a href="#">Columbia (S.C.) State</a>	122,053
88	<a href="#">Spokane Spokesman-Review</a>	118,555
89	<a href="#">Atlanta Journal</a>	118,260
90	<a href="#">Knoxville (Tenn.) News-Sentinel</a>	115,636
91	<a href="#">Albuquerque Journal</a>	113,253
92	<a href="#">Worcester Telegram &amp; Gazette</a>	112,976
93	<a href="#">San Francisco Examiner</a>	112,382
94	<a href="#">Lexington Herald-Leader</a>	111,623
95	<a href="#">Sarasota Herald-Tribune</a>	110,179
96	<a href="#">Charleston (S.C.) Post &amp; Courier</a>	108,162
97	<a href="#">Roanoke (Va.) Times</a>	106,902
98	<a href="#">Jackson Clarion-Ledger</a>	105,571
99	<a href="#">Colorado Springs Gazette</a>	103,553
100	<a href="#">Honolulu Advertiser</a>	103,522

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