

## THE 'A' SECTION

# Who Needs Newspapers?

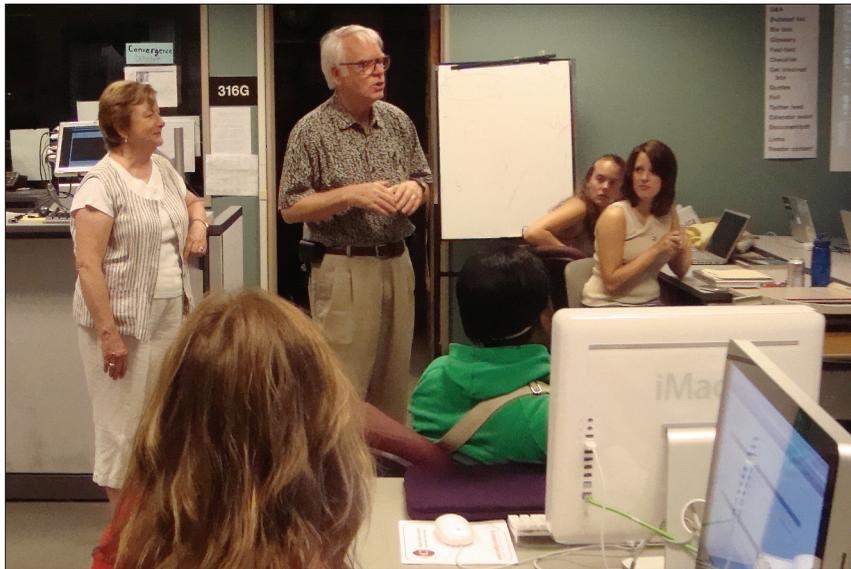
Project documents the state of the newsroom nationwide

BY TIM ROSINI

EVERYONE HEARS ABOUT *The New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribunes* of the world, but what about the *Jackson Citizen Patriot* in Jackson, Mich., or the *Mountain Eagle* in Whitesburg, Ky.? How have they adapted to new technology? What is their newsrooms' mind-set for the future?

In an effort to find out, the Who Needs Newspapers project is going state to state to document newspapers and find out how they're surviving.

Backed by a six-member nonprofit coalition called Valid Sources, Who Needs Newspapers is collecting a 50-state newsroom status report, offering insight as to how, and in what form, newspapers will serve their communities in the future. Leading this newsroom road



WNN reporter Sara Brown and WNN producer Paul Steinle, briefed the *Columbia Missourian* reporting staff at the University of Missouri on the Who Needs Newspapers project during their visit to Columbia, Mo., July 7, 2010.

trip are longtime media experts Paul Steinle and Sara Brown, two of the founding members of Valid Sources. Steinle and Brown —

along with Tallula, their Wheaten terrier — have been visiting different newsrooms and blogging their findings on [WhoNeedsNewspapers.org](http://WhoNeedsNewspapers.org).

"We really have noted that not everyone is caught up in the doom-and-gloom forecasts; people realize it is actually an exciting time for newspapers," said Steinle while on the road to Tupelo, Miss. "It's a redevelopment period for a lot of newspaper companies, and the culture of the newsroom has changed. You have younger and energized people coming in that understand the technology and are using it to their advantage."

Since the project's inception in September 2010, Steinle and Brown have visited and interviewed 29 newspapers. After each visit, they post a report on that particular paper on their website. Visitors can track the duo's progress through an interactive map and gain poignant insights on each newsroom they visit.

"What we have found in visiting so many different places, is actually more of the same. Even smaller local newspapers are understanding, and repositioning themselves with the use of multimedia technologies," Steinle said. "In this era of the

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## LEGAL BRIEFS

### Model Citizen

British tabloid the *Daily Mirror* has won a lengthy legal battle against supermodel Naomi Campbell. Campbell sued the *Mirror* in 2002 for allegedly violating her privacy. The judge in that initial case not only ruled in favor of Campbell but ordered the *Mirror* to pay her £3,500 in legal costs and £1 million in "success fees." The editors took their appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, which ruled that the fee was disproportionately high and a violation of freedom of expression laws. The paper is negotiating with the courts on a reduced fee.

### Copyrights Defended

The Italian antitrust authority has urged the country's parliament to reform its copyright laws in the wake of a settlement reached between the Italian Federation of Newspaper Editors and Google. The initial complaint was filed against Google in 2009, after Google announced that it would drop certain newspapers' stories from search results if they did not agree to appear in the Google News aggregation stream. This, of course, had an adverse effect on the Web traffic generated for those sites. Although a resolution was reached, the competition authority has suggested that Italy's government revise copyright legislation to take into account the economic impact of the Web.

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Internet, newspapers can once again compete in the breaking news department, something they got away from in the 1980s and 1990s with the dominance of TV. But the newsrooms are being educated on the digital world, and local dailies are realizing the important link they have with their community.”

Valid Sources and WNN are currently entirely self-funded. They

are in the process of applying for foundation grants to continue with future projects and to expand the reach of Valid Sources.

“In the long run we would like this project to eventually continue,” Brown said. “We are teaming up with the State Press Association to hopefully keep this project going in the future and keep producing high-quality journalism, not only for the people working in the news-

rooms today but for journalism students thinking about a career in newspapers or the publication business in general.”

Steinle said the future of newspapers is bright, despite reports to the contrary.

“We have met many bright minds on our trip so far, and newspapers should be proud of the kind of people that work on delivering high-quality journalism.” □

## Put Your Toons to Work

New syndication site offers animated cartoons for publishers' websites

**I**N THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2010, newspapers surpassed broadcasters in Web video streaming for the first time ever. With this increased dedication to video content, it seems only natural that political cartoons weren't far behind.

Nationally syndicated cartoonists Mike Shelton and Jocelyn Leger launched PoliticalBastards.com (also PoliticalBleep.com should your boss happen to monitor your Internet activity) as a platform for animated political cartoons. For two years, the site has been a dedicated gallery for Shelton's and Leger's work, but the duo recently launched an online syndication store as well.

“Animation is a difficult, time-consuming art with a two- to three- year learning curve,” Shelton said. “That is why animated editorial cartoons are so rare — yet, with the technology, it is the future for editorial cartoons. There are very few cartoonists at this time animating their work for this reason.”

The site offers publishers the opportunity to add a fresh element to their websites at low syndication prices and with no contracts required. And while the idea may sound brand-new, Shelton and



Leger have actually been animating their cartoons for 15 years.

“When we worked together for *The Orange County Register*, our animated political satire was often featured on their website,” Leger said. “The enthusiastic feedback and high interest from readers, colleagues, advertisers, and other media outlets signaled to us the potential popularity for the animated editorial cartoon.”

There's even an app for that: PoliticalBstrds is available in the iTunes store for 99 cents. Currently, the syndication store offers animated editorial cartoons, political illustrations, blog toons, and caricatures by Leger and Shelton, as well as doodle illustrations by artist Pam Jones. Shelton said they are in talks with other tal-



ented cartoonists and writers to add to the team.

“We just realize the need and desire that readers have for political cartoons; time has proven their popularity,” Shelton said. “Jocelyn and I have the passion and are lucky enough to have been involved with developing this for a while now. With the technology catching up we feel this can be a great and cheap idea for newspapers to use, while news continues to gravitate toward being digital.” —T.R. □