

design tips

Bad News. Good News.

By Ed Henninger

Sometimes, news comes along that requires a departure from design discussion to address a different topic. This is one of those times.

Much has been reported during the past year about problems with metro newspapers. But the bad news for the “big boys” isn’t shared by community newspapers. Metros have been taking their lumps but small newspapers are doing well – even during troubled economic times.

According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations, for 395 newspapers reporting this spring, daily circulation fell 7 percent to 34,439,713 copies, compared with the same March period in 2008.

On Sunday, for 557 newspapers, circulation was down 5.3 percent to 42,082,707.

Daily circulation at The New York Times dropped 3.5 percent to 1,039,031. The Times’ Sunday circ was down 1.7 percent to 1,451,233.

USA Today lost 7.4 percent of its daily circulation to 2,113,725 due to a decline in hotel copies.

Daily circulation at The Boston Globe skidded 13.6 percent to 302,638 copies. Sunday decreased 11.2 percent.

Daily circulation at The Miami Herald fell 15.8 percent to 202,122. Sunday is down 13.1 percent to 270,166.

But at community newspapers, the outlook is bright, according to a panel of community newspaper leaders who spoke during a recent discussion.

“You read about the struggles that newspapers are having in larger markets,” said one. “And we don’t really find that to be the case in our community markets.”

The panel, sponsored by the National Newspaper Association also drew these comments:

- “My entire career I’ve spent working at community, family-owned newspapers. We are really under the radar when it comes to some of the issues facing the metro markets.”
- “I think it underscores the unique connection the community newspaper has with its readers.”

In November of 2008, NNA-sponsored research reported:

- 86 percent of adults over the age of 18 read a newspaper every week.
- 75 percent of those readers read most or all of their paper.

“Just about all of the research and news reports on the ‘struggling’ newspaper industry have been based on what’s happening at the top 100 major metropolitan newspapers, maybe the top 250,” said Brian Steffens, NNA executive director.

“That doesn’t tell the story of the remaining 1,200 daily newspapers or 8,000 community weekly papers in America.”

Bad news? Good news? It depends on who you are.

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