

## Research Sheds Light on What Teens Want from Online News Sites

New research sponsored by the [Newspaper Association of America Foundation](#) finds that teens have a strong desire to be knowledgeable about the news, but their tendencies to feel "time-starved" and overloaded with information options drive them more toward the "quick news fix" such as search engines or generic portals and less toward newspaper Web sites.

The study, which was conducted by the Media Management Center at Northwestern University, used 90-minute focus groups with 96 teens ages 13-18. Participants were asked to comment on various prototype news site home pages and individual story pages. The participants identified three approaches they typically look for in news Web sites:

- A site that encourages interest in the news by focusing attention on a few important stories that are accompanied by photos.
- A home page that provides a general sense of the day's relevant news with simple but enticing pitches for individual stories.
- Individual story pages that supplement stories with background and related information, illustration and multiple entry points – all broken into manageable sizes.

"In our focus groups, it was clear that teens were not looking for a 'youth news site' that focuses mostly on lifestyle and entertainment content," said Jeanne Fox-Alston, vice president of the NAA Foundation. "What they really want are news sites that do news well – not dumb the news down or pretend that the writers of the site are experts in teen culture."

The 12 focus groups were held in six U.S. cities: Denver; Philadelphia; Fort Lauderdale; Fresno, Calif.; Springfield, Ill.; and Orangeburg, S.C. Responses from the teens were similar to those of adults who are light readers, according to the researchers. Therefore, the report recommends creating a new type of site – not just for teens, but for all people who lack experience with news and have a limited amount of time to get engaged in it. This approach not only would serve teens better, but also would attract a larger underserved adult audience.

The study – "[Teens Know What They Want From Online News: Do You?](#)" – builds on previous studies of young people conducted in 2008 by the Media Management Center. It was released during NAA's annual meeting.

### FreeWebinar

[What Teens Want From Online News Sites](#), a free webinar from the NAA Foundation and the Media Management Center, will run from 2-3 p.m. (Eastern) Thursday, April 23. In this one-hour webinar, learn what kind of news Web site would attract and interest teenagers. Researchers who developed and tested Web prototypes with teens in focus groups around the country will outline not only what teens want, but also how current news sites actively repel teen readers. The results will surprise you.

Reserve your webinar space now at: <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/494192519>.

SNPA eBulletin 4-9-09