



Planting New Ideas:

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What do you think?

MPA staff has been publishing Planting New Ideas for some time now and we'd like find out from our members how it's working.

Please email us at readership@michiganpress.org and let us know what you think. What were some of the good ideas? What ideas could you have lived without?

We are also looking for other ideas to help newspapers all over the state grow their readership. If you've seen anything interesting in your travels, or have been doing something innovative at your paper forward the idea to us and we'll get the word out.

Don't forget to visit our Web site www.michiganpress.org to find out what's new at Michigan's newspapers.

Keeping it local

In 2001 the Readership Institute issued a study entitled "The Power to Grow Readership." This study stressed the importance of intensely local, people-based news including community announcements, obituaries and stories about ordinary people.

The study also found that the readers' desire for more localness operated at another level as well. Newspapers that have more content written in a feature-style approach are perceived as being more local than those in which a straight-news approach dominates. In this way, the fact that a newspaper covers more "local" news does not necessarily result in a local feel.

As newspapers move into more Web-based content it is easier to create a local feel. A number of newspapers have focused fresh attention on increasing the amount of breaking news online. The *Montgomery Advertiser (AL)* assigned a reporter to an early shift to help readers get their day started. The reporter focuses on traffic issues, weather, school closings, agendas of morning meetings and an overnight crime report; all content that helps readers live their lives. Others have focused on Web-only content. *The News-Star* in Monroe, LA, added a searchable calendar and plans to add Web-only high-school sports content. The *Asbury Park Press (NJ)* changed its weekly planning meeting and implemented a new enterprise planning process designed

to better integrate local content principles and planning for Web bonus content in every section. The *Journal and Courier*, Lafayette, IN, plans to develop a Web-only youth sports section with an emphasis on content related to Little League and youth soccer.

One of the concepts that has emerged from providing more local coverage is "third place" research. *The Journal News* in Westchester, NY, uses the "third place" concept introduced in the original rollout of the Real Life, Real News program—third places being the additional places in our lives where we spend a good amount of time—our children's school, our church, our health club.

In a fresh look at "third places," the newspaper identified the 35 "main streets" in its circulation area. "The intent of 'third places' is for reporters to find places where people gather and talk about what interests them," said Editor Henry Freeman. "Some reporters turn back to these sources every day; you can see it in their reporting."

Local content is one of the qualities that keep newspapers above the competition in providing news coverage. Continuing to do a good job and moving the local content to new technologies will help bring new readers into the fold.

Comprehensive, interesting studies on this subject can be found at <http://www.gannett.com/go/newswatch/2006/february/nw0203-1.htm> and <http://www.readership.org/consumers/building/imperatives/main.htm>.



Technology — the next wave

Newspapers around the country have begun to embrace podcasting as a way to get their product into the hands (and ears) of readers.

A podcast can be thought of as an audio subscription, in that a subscriber receives regular programs without having to remember to go get them. It enables people to listen to music or other audio-based content anywhere and at any time. The system most commonly involves audio files in MP3 format, but other formats and other types of files, such as video, can also be podcasted. The word “podcasting” is a combination of iPod and broadcasting. However, podcasts are not limited to the iPod, but can be downloaded to any MP3 player.

Between October 2001 and January 2005, Apple sold more than 10 million iPod MP3 players worldwide. That is only

65 percent of the portable music player market, or a total of more than 15 million MP3 players in circulation today, according to Apple Chief Executive Officer Steve Jobs. These numbers do not reflect the millions of MP3-capable mobile phones worldwide.

The website of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, SFGate.com, has begun offering podcast channels from its Datebook, Food, and Opinion sections. Business podcasts have been offered for a few months. According to an announcement on SFGate and published in the newspaper, new podcasts include: “Back Story,” in which *Chronicle* reporters and editors offer a behind-the-scenes audio glimpse of stories appearing in the paper.

Offering this source of delivery to the younger generation is a new and innovative way to grab their attention and engage them.

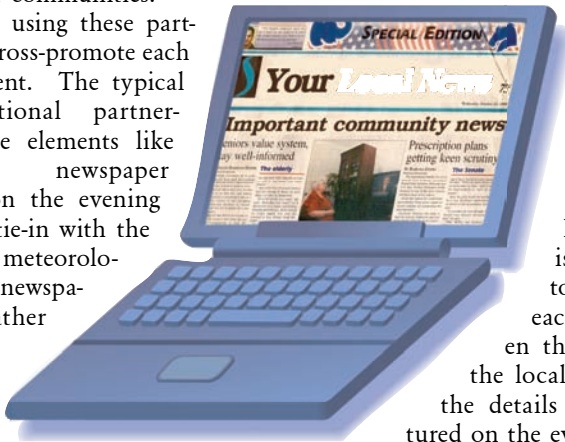
Multi-Media exposure

It is becoming more and more common for newspapers and TV stations to form partnerships to further the brand of both in their communities.

Many are using these partnerships to cross-promote each other's content. The typical cross-promotional partnerships include elements like “tomorrow's newspaper headlines” on the evening news and a tie-in with the TV station's meteorologist on the newspaper's weather page.

In the recent election cycle,

the *Lansing State Journal* worked with Michigan Government TV to put their editorial-board interviews on the air. Mickey Hirten, Managing Editor of the *LSJ* said, “it builds our brand among the key political readers that we consider part of our franchise.”



Some newspapers go so far as to have TV cameras in their newsrooms. A common result of this is “talkbacks” which are appearances of print journalists on the air talking about stories they are covering.

The advantage of these partnerships can be numerous. However, the biggest is probably the ability to use the advantages of each medium to strengthen the other. For example, the local paper can delve into the details of a short story featured on the evening news.

There are several studies on the Web that further explore these partnerships. For more information check out <http://www.rtnda.org/communicator/showarticle.asp?id=329>, or <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/business/1068686368.php>.

Michigan Ideas

Hey, that's my kid!

The *Ann Arbor News* is anchoring page 2 of its local section every Monday with Student Life, featuring stories about the lives of students, their parents and their teachers. Editors said the page will showcase innovative teaching strategies, “fascinating personalities” and unique classroom experiences.

A recent centerpiece took readers into Dexter High School's award-winning newspaper program, <http://www.mlive.com/search/index.ssf?/base/news19/115919535237990.xml?aa-news&coll=2>

“The Kids Next Door” column highlights three students from area schools, while the “School Gallery” showcases school submitted photos. The goal, according to *Ann Arbor News* editors, is “to capture the depth and breadth of the classroom educational experience.” The page is being helmed by Assistant Metro Editor Cindy Heflin, cheflin@annarbornews.com, 734.994.6875.