

Crafting the cake beneath the frosting: The editor's role in city magazine redesigns

This research explored reasons that city and regional magazines opt to redesign today, and what editors hope to accomplish as they re-envision content. It also examined what the redesign process entails and trends that emerged between publications. The researcher first conducted a textual analysis of five city magazines (*Birmingham, D, Philadelphia, San Antonio, The Washingtonian*) that were the top five entries for the 2013 City Regional Magazine Association awards for a consistent sampling. Then, she interviewed one high-level editor from each magazine who was involved with the redesign using semi-structured questions. The research revealed that city magazines choose to redesign every few years to create a fresh look, and that others are prompted by a change in ownership. The interviews demonstrated redesigns present the opportunity to better serve a magazine's city and readership, appeal to a new demographic, create new branding strategies, and re-evaluate the relationship between a publication's multiple platforms. Overall, the research indicates there are both advantages and disadvantages to hiring an outside firm to assist with all or some elements of the redesign, and that the most effective overhauls are the ones in which editors dig deep into the purpose of the magazine's content and the city they serve.