CHANGING TIMES IN RURAL ALASKA

Ryan Schuessler
Dr. Fritz Cropp, Professional Project Chair

ABSTRACT

In rural Alaska, bush pilots play a vital role – transporting people, cargo, and goods from cities to far-flung villages. In the past, they’ve also taken newspapers. But that all changed when the Internet came to town, in ways not always beneficial to local media outlets. Villagers near the town of Kodiak discuss how the Internet transformed how – and from where – they get their news. In general, villagers report that the Internet allows them to bypass Kodiak’s local media for state, national, and international news. They also use the Internet to create village-level information forums. The Internet provides a service that local media did not, and gives villagers the ability to choose alternative information sources they feel are more relevant to their lives, as they say they cannot rely on Kodiak’s local news outlets for information about their communities. The end of this analysis offers recommendations for local news outlets to better use the Internet to grow their audience in the market’s outlying communities.