

SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL STRATEGIES OF FIVE LARGE- AND
SMALL-CIRCULATION CITY MAGAZINES

A Professional Project
presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
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by
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Chapter 1: Introduction

I trained my sights on the Missouri School of Journalism over fifteen years ago. At ten years old, I was aware of two things professionally: I wanted to be a journalist, and MU was the best place to learn the trade.

In those days, my focus was on newspapers. I joined my first school paper staff in middle school, writing movie reviews on “throwbacks” like *Sixteen Candles* and editorials about treating everyone equally, people like my cousin with Down syndrome and my uncle who had HIV. Channel One, the news program where Anderson Cooper got his start, published the HIV piece online in 2003, awarding me my first big byline. By my senior year of high school, I was the editor of the monthly school newspaper and writing sports stories and occasional features for our small-town weekly.

Once at MU, I was assigned to the *Missourian* for my reporting semester. The night before my first general assignment shift, an EF-5 tornado hit my hometown of Joplin, and I rushed home to check on friends and family. John Schneller of the *Missourian* asked if I would be willing to write first-person dispatches from location, and I agreed, thus beginning a highly unusual and incredibly valuable reporting experience.

Despite my years in newspapers, I ultimately chose the magazine track. My first commitment was to writing, and I craved the creative freedom magazines could offer. I received a well-rounded education in the field: Magazine Editing with Jennifer Rowe, Magazine Design with Jan Colbert, Intermediate Writing with Nina Furstenau — all experts in their areas — and then capped it off with Magazine Staff, serving as a

department editor at *Vox Magazine*. I graduated in 2012 with a strong skillset, but I wanted to delve deeper, so I returned in 2014 to pursue my MA.

During those years outside of the university, I gained a new appreciation for city and regional magazines. I spent much of my free time reading long-form pieces, many of which were published in regional publications: Robert Sanchez's disaster journalism in *5280*, Skip Hollandsworth's investigations in *Texas Monthly*, Brooke Jarvis' work in *Seattle Met*. Not one for jetting off to New York City, I realized that top-notch journalism was being done all over the country at unique, locally focused magazines. This would be my new focus.

My graduate experience has been invaluable. In *Literature of Journalism*, I studied truly great writing; in *Covering Traumatic Events*, I learned how to interview trauma victims and report on difficult stories in good conscience; in *Qualitative Research Methods*, I reversed an inherent dislike for research. I worked as a sports editor at the *Missourian*, a teaching assistant for a documentary journalism course and editor-in-chief of *Vox*, all the while honing my leadership skills and work ethic. Perhaps my favorite part of being a graduate student has been attending conferences: Writers and Editors, Based on a True Story and the City and Regional Magazine Association Conference and Awards. At the CRMA conference, I had the privilege of meeting and learning from numerous city and regional magazine editors, writers and staff members. I walked away with several ideas for *Vox*, and further confidence that the world of city and regional magazines is an ideal place to work.

I believe these myriad experiences prepared me for success with this professional project. My years in newspapers taught me how to produce quality work under tight

deadlines; my summer as a department editor at *Vox* trained me for the fast-paced cycle of a weekly magazine; my coursework made me a smarter journalist and researcher; and my teaching assistantships showed me how to lead. I continued to improve in those areas and more during my time at *Vox* and as an outcome of my conversations with fellow editors throughout the course of my research. I could not have asked for a better graduate school experience, and I will always be grateful I took the leap to lead *Vox* for a semester. My project was a productive step on my path as a journalist, writer and thinker.

Chapter 2: Field Notes

Field Notes: Week 1

Orientation. *Vox* orientation week was full of meetings with various staff members as we prepared for the incoming students. It's been rather eye-opening to grasp just how many people have their hands in the publication of this city magazine. (I previously worked on a summer staff, which was much smaller.) Although a divide does exist between print and digital, there is also quite a bit of overlap and collaboration between the teams. Department editors are asked to pitch both print and digital components with their story ideas, and reporters carry out those assignments.

I'll be overseeing the Arts and Books departments this semester, and I meet with both the department editors and digital editors ("webbies") to discuss how we want our content to appear across all platforms. As editor-in-chief, my main responsibility is to getting the print edition on its feet, but I am also involved in a handful of digital aspects — for instance, proofreading the iPad edition for content and design and brainstorming how to present our feature stories on VoxMagazine.com. Particularly this week, I published a blog post for VoxTalk, as we are low on content during transition periods. This confirms findings in my literature review that editors at city magazines are often relied on for producing online-exclusive content.

I focused primarily on print during the last few years of my journalism education, so I am more inclined to think of how I want a story presented in the feature well rather than on the website or iPad. I'm looking forward to branching out throughout this project and considering all creative aspects of publishing a magazine.

Update on professional analysis. I'm still trying to nail down current numbers of city magazines in the U.S., specifically including non-CRMA members. I've scoured *Folio* and gone back through my research material, and I have an email out to Tracey Dowden with CRMA. Once I've wrapped that up, I will move on to finalizing the list of editors I'd like to reach out to, as well as firming up my interview questions.

Field Notes: Week 2

Cover art: from print to online. This week's *Vox* was "The Meat Issue," a graduate component from a Magazine Staff student. I thought it was a very interesting topic, and I enjoyed the mix of content: profiles, Q&A's, "newsy" pieces, infographics, etc. As the graduate student was the guest editor on this project, I was able to take a step back and let her make several of the editorial decisions while I guided the issue through production.

One of our main conversations during production focused on design. We had studio photos of raw meat (stacked on a plate, laid out in the shape of Missouri), but we didn't think those photos translated well to the cover. They were, frankly, a little off-putting. We eventually decided to go with an illustration on the cover and use one of the raw meat photos for the splash page.

Online, however, the illustration that worked so well for the cover would have fallen flat. The digital team chose to stick with a meat photo on the landing page for the feature. While very vivid on the screen, it's not as large and dominating as it would have been on the cover and, I think, appropriately sets the tone for the rest of the content. (I've included screenshots for reference.)

I'm sure this won't be the last time the print and digital teams choose different strategies for how to represent the cover online. Visually, the web is an entirely different playing field, so a "one-size-fits-all" approach will not do magazines any favors. It will be interesting to discuss this and more with editors at city and regional magazines in my professional analysis.

Update on professional analysis. In a continued effort to nail down an estimate of how many city and regional magazines currently exist in the U.S., I reached out to Dorothy Carner at the journalism library. Dorothy directed me to a couple of databases: Alliance for Audited Media (formerly the Audit Bureau of Circulation) and MRI+. The AAM turned up 55 results, 41 of which did not coincide with my list of CRMA members. The MRI+ database had 243 listings, which I combed through to remove duplicates with CRMA and IRMA, international listings and consumer publications (e.g. magazines put out by AAA). I created a spreadsheet with these initial results and decided to reach out to more experts to see what sort of numbers they were coming up with before settling on my estimate.

Field Notes: Week 3

The importance of images for digital. I can't speak highly enough of this week's feature. Written by current staffer Kendyl Kearly, the story follows an Iraqi family during their first 90 days in Columbia as they strive to reach "self-sufficiency" before government aid runs out.

Kendyl was working through an interpreter: the family's case manager, Nadeem. Unfortunately Nadeem was out of town for the entire month of August, so we were very behind on setting up a photo shoot with the family. In the end, after much back-and-forth, the photos fell through. Our design team moved forward with illustrations, text display and fair use photos. However, I was stubborn about getting a portrait of Nadeem, as he played a large part in the story. We were able to get a portrait and a photo of Nadeem's office on Monday afternoon before going to press on Wednesday. This was all the original art we had to work with, but it still turned out beautifully. Of course, I would have loved to see the family, but I wouldn't call the feature lacking in print.

I was very excited to see the feature in "full-width format" online. This means the text would get a nicer treatment than our typical department stories with a wider frame and larger images, as well as better text breaks and more delineated sections. I find full-width to be a much better online reading experience for long-form stories, and I wanted readers to stick with this story until the end.

Unfortunately, we weren't able to move forward with this plan due to the lack of visuals. Without strong images, our digital director decided the feature wasn't a strong choice for the full-width treatment. I agree and support the digital team's decision, but it's a further example of the visual differences between print and online, which factor into editors' choices every day.

Update on professional analysis. This week I reached out to a few professionals to determine if an official number of city and regional magazines in the U.S. existed

somewhere out of my reach, or, in the event of no such number, to see if their estimate matched the one I'd been generating from the CRMA, IRMA, Alliance for Audited Media and MRI+ listings. After several dead ends, I received a very helpful response from James Dowden, executive director of the CRMA, included for reference below.

The CRMA's estimate of 125 to 130 city and regional magazines in the U.S. is very close to the numbers I tallied from the CRMA, IRMA and AAM combined (137). I feel comfortable excluding the MRI+ listings as most were consumer, spinoff, or singular focused titles and would not match the CRMA's definition, which I find to be a logical one. I also find the CRMA, IRMA and AAM to be the most reliable sources.

Now that I have the last question from my proposal settled, I am ready to take a closer look at my interview questions and reach out to my first interviewee.

C JAMES DOWDEN <jdowden@prodigy.net>

Sep 2 (4 days ago) ☆



to me ▾

Eliza----- there are no "official" numbers.....you can try quoting an authoroitative source....me!

the first problem is you have to define what we are counting.....there are many definitions of city and regional magazines.....

the one we use is general interest consumer magazines, published on a city or regional basis. That means it cannot be a single focus such as Chicago Sports, or Indy's Child or St. Louis Home and Garden.

using our definition we estimate there are 125 - 130 in the US.

in order to be a member of CRMA they must meet that definition, have a circulation audit from a 3 party audit company and meet other membership guidelines cited on our website [City and Regional Magazine Association and Media Partners](#)

Field Notes: Week 4

Web analytics: Q&A's versus features. This week I read over our first two analytics reports for the web, which I found pretty fascinating. Having this class of students to focus on the website and social media outreach is a wonderful resource for us (and made me consider if typical lower-budget city magazines have the luxury of such a resource).

Perhaps the most surprising finding from the reports was the popularity of the Q&A's. Our ACW's (A Conversation With) with Clay Smith and Suzy Thompson were by far the most-read pages for their respective weeks. This is likely due to the subjects' local celebrity (especially if their friends and family passed along the story), but a contributing factor might be the formats of the Q&A's, which are particularly engaging for online readers (quick and easy, and a comfortable reading format). I would be interested to know the importance print readers place on the Q&A.

On the flip side of that coin, the features particularly under-performed on the web, which was disappointing from an editorial standpoint. A lot of hard work goes into those features, and I thought the refugee piece deserved a lot of attention. I'm sure much of that can be attributed to attention spans online. I think people are more likely to commit to a long-form story when they're sitting down with a print magazine in their hands. The website Longform, which curates nonfiction articles, has picked up on this trend. They have a great system in which they list the reading time at the top of each article so you know how much time you're committing before you begin.

At any rate, I predict next week's feature on the Golden Girls to do well on the web because we have so many great images (which the refugee feature was lacking), and visuals seem to be the going currency online. I'll also be interested to see how this week's Fall Preview comes out in the analytics — while I think it's a great service, I'm unsure if it will be a big traffic-driver on the web.

Update on professional analysis. I spent this week considering my selections for proposed interviews. My preliminary list is below. Most names are the editors-in-chief,

though I've also included the managing editor from Memphis and the editorial director for DMagazine.com. Depending on the depth and quality of interviews, I plan to speak to 4 to 6 editors. I've done my best to respect circulation and geographic divides, per my proposal, though I have fewer low-circulation magazines on the list.

Elizabeth Fenner, *Chicago*

Mary Melton, *Los Angeles*

Tom McGrath, *Philadelphia*

Jason Heid, DMagazine.com

Jarrett Medlin, *St. Louis*

Amanda Heckert, *Indianapolis Monthly*

Cindi Lash, *Pittsburgh*

Geoff van Dyke, *5280*

Katie Pollock Estes, *417*

Kenneth Neill or Frank Murtaugh, *Memphis*

Field Notes: Week 5

The tale of two timelines. This week's feature was a photo essay on the 50th anniversary of the Golden Girls. Department editor Adrienne Donica pitched this idea as a department story, and we decided to use it to fill a gap in our features lineup. Adrienne reported out the introduction and timeline and did a Q&A with Sandy Davidson, an original Golden Girl who inspired the infamous gold-sequined outfits. I was very impressed with Adrienne's work on such a quick turnaround and the aesthetics of the final print package.

As great as this story looked in print, this is a feature that worked even better online. The online production team took advantage of the full-width feature and used our first “ThingLink” of the semester (thus forcing me to learn what a ThingLink is). But the unlimited capacity of the web really made a difference with the use of an interactive timeline. We were able to publish even more of the great archive photos, and the quick titles and interactivity made for easy (and entertaining) readability. The only thing I would have done differently is found two more photos so each entry had a visual.

We already had someone reach out to us about how the interactive timeline was created (Coyote Hill is celebrating a 25th anniversary next year and would like to create something similar). I anticipate this story doing really well online as opposed to our last two features, but only the analytics report will tell.

Update on professional analysis. As I get closer to reaching out to editors, I spent some time this week reviewing my interview questions and drafting an email for an interview request. Please find both below — I welcome any and all feedback.

Interview Questions

1. How do you think of your web audience as compared to your print audience? How does it differ? How is it the same?
2. What do you see as the role of your website?
3. When and what are you posting online? (How frequent is your online production?)
4. What type of online content do you find to be the most strategically valuable?

5. What percentage of print content is repurposed for the web?
6. How many staff members are dedicated strictly to online publication?
 - 6a. *If there is a separation between staffs:* To what extent does your print staff and online staff collaborate?
 - 6b. *If no separation exists:* How are web responsibilities divided among your staff?
7. How much online-exclusive content are you producing, and who is responsible for creating that content?
8. What do the production processes look like of digital vs. print content?
 - 8a. What is the online exclusive content? (e.g. blogs, reviews)
 - 8b. What types of content are drivers online vs. drivers in print?
9. What gratifications do your web audience receive from reading digitally?
10. What's the incentive for subscribers to buy the print edition?
11. Do you find your website to have an effect on your print circulation?
12. What do you find to be the biggest challenges of online production?
13. Has your online content been profitable?
14. How do you envision the future of your website?

Prospective Editor Email

Dear [Editor],

I'm a graduate student at the Missouri School of Journalism and am currently the editor-in-chief of *Vox Magazine*. As part of my graduate project, I'm researching the online strategies of city and regional magazines. I'm hoping you might have time to speak with me regarding the strategies in place at [Magazine].

The phone interview would last 30 minutes to 1 hour and be scheduled at your convenience. I am not currently pursuing publication of my findings, though all graduate publications are housed in the university's online repository, MOspace, which can be accessed here.

I assure you that my intentions are not to reveal any trade secrets, but simply to facilitate a discussion about successful (and not so successful) web strategies and unique challenges that city and regional magazines face in producing online content. I was motivated to look into this topic after it came up frequently at the City and Regional Magazine Conference last May. It seems there is no "one size fits all" approach, so I'm interested to investigate the various approaches.

I'm happy to answer any questions you might have about the project.

Thanks for your time! I appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Eliza Smith

Field Notes: Week 6

Roots N Blues N Social Media. This week was our Roots N Blues N BBQ edition. The package came from Jen Rowe's Intermediate Writing class, and it was a very thorough

and interesting roundup of service journalism. It included profiles on several artists, information on food vendors, a tongue-in-cheek flowchart on how to select your barbecue, a timeline of the history of the blues, a piece on the yearlong efforts of the Roots N Blues N BBQ Foundation in schools, a fashion shoot, what to expect from the festival art team and several more online-exclusive pieces.

But we weren't done after Wednesday production; we were only ramping up for a weekend-long marathon of live Roots N Blues coverage.

Once again, I'm so grateful that *Vox* has the advantage of an entire class of digital staffers who can pull something like this off. Our RebelMouse feed (linked to the #RNBNNBBQ bar on the landing page) is constantly updating with videos, tweets and photos from webbies and community members. Our Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts are also churning out Roots N Blues coverage — things like ThingLinks of people's festival outfits, time-lapse videos, Pic Play collages that include both stills and videos. Our Snapchat account is up and running. We also have blogs posting to VoxTalk from the digital and multimedia classes, and we're continuously teasing back to our print coverage.

I'm very interested to see the level of outreach we had this weekend. Social media provides an ingenious way for city and regional magazines to connect to their communities, which my research shows is of the utmost importance to editors. But with smaller staffs and limited budgets, are city magazines able to pull off this sort of live coverage of events, or are their social media strategies limited to promoting content? If they do attempt this sort of "marathon outreach," who is responsible for it? Do staffs have digital teams (or interns), or are editors expected to roll up their sleeves and get tweeting

themselves? I took one four-hour shift to supervise live coverage this weekend, but whether or not print TAs would be contributing to digital efforts this weekend was a conversation in itself. Clearly, this week's activities have brought up questions that might be interesting to ask of city and regional magazine editors.

Update on professional analysis. I placed my professional analysis on hold this week as I shifted attention to my application for the BuzzFeed Emerging Writers Fellowship. I will pick my research back up this week with a focus on finalizing my interview questions.

Field Notes: Week 7

Consider the cover line. I'd like to take a break from focusing on digital strategies to touch on another important lesson I learned from the Kevin Hart cover story this week.

A contributing writer approached us about writing a feature on Kevin Hart before his comedy tour stopped at Mizzou Arena. We had a hole in the feature lineup and thought Hart would be a great profile. Unable to get access to Hart himself, the contrib did a write-around by watching Hart's videos, doing his research and interviewing Hart's mentor from Philadelphia. I thought it was a well-done piece, and the designer did a great job for having only a few Associated Press photos to work with.

For the cover, the designer used an effect to show multiple Kevin Harts, which we thought spoke to his famed work ethic and how he is known to be in a lot of places at once (on comedy tours, in movies, etc.). In an effort to touch on this and also his somewhat spastic standup nature, the editors came up with the cover line "Hart Attack." It was not my favorite in the history of cover lines, but unfortunately the nature of

deadlines means we sometimes have to send off the cover without slowing down and having the sort of in-depth conversations we'd like to have.

On Thursday, we received feedback from a reader who found our play on words to be insensitive, especially given the prevalence of heart problems in the black community. He expressed further concerns, but it was this critique that really stuck with me because I know those health statistics and the dual meaning never dawned on me. As an editor, I don't take mistakes lightly, but oversights regarding cultural insensitivity are especially humbling. We had a staff discussion about the matter, and if nothing else, it was a reminder that we really must question how our words are interpreted by all readers.

Field Notes: Week 8

Print vs. online standards. Amid all the action involved in producing the SEC Throwdown feature (which seemed to be popular online, especially given the timing with Homecoming weekend at Mizzou) we received some news: VoxMagazine.com will be getting a redesign — again.

The first time I was at *Vox* in 2012, we were using a content managing system called Django. We didn't have digital editors over the summer, so the department editors did online production every Wednesday, and I grew versed in the ways of Django. At the time, it seemed fairly user-friendly, but it didn't produce a great looking website. It also crashed fairly frequently. VoxTalk was housed separately on WordPress.

Around the time I was returning for graduate school, *Vox* said farewell to Django and moved wholly to WordPress. This was great for usability and appearance, and it was convenient to host all of the online content in one place.

Now *Vox* will be moving to Blox, which is the CMS used by the *Missourian*. I was a teaching assistant at the *Missourian* for two semesters — one semester on Django, one on Blox — so I'm pretty familiar with the interface. Again, it makes for a better looking website and it's more user friendly, though it does have its own quirks.

As we initially discussed this change, one of the biggest questions was about VoxTalk: Should we continue identifying the blog as a separate entity, or should we merge it with the regular print and online-exclusive content?

According to my research, blogs are a popular way for city magazines to connect with audiences and stay on top of timely news. *New York Magazine*, for instance, has been experimenting with “pop-up blogs,” which stay live only as long as it takes to cover a topic (like the Following, which covers internet culture and is running from Nov. 2 through Dec. 19). These limited-run URLs can also center on an event (think *Indianapolis Monthly's* Indy 500 coverage).

A further thought that came up from my research is the question of editorial standards — are there differences between print and digital content? At *Vox*, our print and online-exclusive content goes through a rigorous fact-checking process. Our blog content doesn't. I'm not entirely comfortable showcasing reported and fact-checked content next to a recap of *Scream Queens*, knowing the editorial standards aren't equal. Perhaps this isn't a distinction readers make — and maybe they would even prefer to see an amalgamation of content — but as an editor, I prefer the separation. If anything, it gives the blog more freedom to be as quirky as ever.

With that in mind, my two cents were to keep VoxTalk's identity in place as its own entity. We'll see how that shakes out through the redesign process.

Field Notes: Week 9

Paranormal multimedia. Our feature this week was a photo essay on a group of paranormal investigators who call themselves LIPS: Ladies Investigative Paranormal Society. Admittedly, it was not my favorite subject matter, though many of the photos were compelling. We received a healthy amount of feedback on this feature. The main criticism was that we were not skeptical enough of these paranormal elements, and we could have done a better job attributing some of the alleged paranormal activities back to the LIPS members who shared them, rather than repeating them in our own voice.

The problem likely arose in having too many cooks in the kitchen. The photographer took the photos, which told one narrative; a contributing writer wrote the introduction to the story, which told another; and the feature editor wrote captions for the photos, which told a third layer. The levels of skepticism and each person's "narrative agenda" were perhaps different for each contributor.

That being said, the digital editors on this piece were very involved from the get-go and put together an interesting, multipart multimedia presentation. They worked with the designer to create GIFs of pull-quotes, which flicker and set the mood of the piece. They incorporated audio that both the photographer collected and the LIPS members gave us, which lay over the text and can be played by the reader. (Screenshots included below for reference.) There's a slideshow of images at the top of the page, and they embedded a multimedia project from the photographer at the bottom.

According to our weekly analytics report, the story performed well. It was our third-most viewed page of the week behind only the homepage and calendar, so the most

popular editorial content. There were a total of 880 page-views, and users spent an average of 4 minutes, 23 seconds on the page, which speaks a lot to the interactive elements, as the story was light on text.

Looking at the digital presentation closer, I have a couple of critiques. The parameters of the slideshow forced the images to be fairly small, which is a shame given how great they look digitally (I was blown away by the cover photo on the iPad). The slideshow also switches from image to caption, rather than having the caption below or alongside the image, which I prefer personally as a reader. The slideshow also moves along at its own pace, which is really too quickly to read, but readers do have the ability to pause, resume and move on at their own pace — which is simultaneously a convenient feature while also requiring more “effort” than I worry some readers might be willing to give.

Finally, the editor’s note provided at the top of the page explains that the audio was both collected by the photographer and provided by LIPS. In regards to properly attributing alleged paranormal experiences, it would have been helpful if we could have found a way to identify each audio file as either from the photographer or LIPS (without slowing down the reader).

All in all, I’m pleased with the digital presentation of this story, and the entire feature was a valuable learning experience for everyone at *Vox*. It’s obvious the story was successful among our audience, and it’s important for us to experiment with multimedia elements to engage readers with our online content.

Field Notes: Week 10

Experiencing the iPad. I enjoyed reading our Citizen Jane coverage this week, written by Andrea Heiss' Intermediate Writing class. It's an unusual (and world-ranked) film festival that I hadn't yet had the opportunity to attend. I work over the weekends, but I managed to make it to the opening night film this year, co-directed by Mo Scarpelli, a Missouri School of Journalism graduate.

The digital components of a city magazine go well beyond the companion website. At *Vox*, part of our digital realm is the iPad edition, which I've had a part in editing this semester. Each Sunday after the print pages are designed, our iPad director, Morgan Purdy, does a preliminary design of the iPad. She sends this out to several people for feedback and does another round of design after the print pages are finalized on Wednesday. On Thursday, I sit down with her and the iPad, and we go through her design and feedback from the iPad assistants, tweaking things along the way.

This has been a valuable experience for me as I had next to no iPad experience coming into this semester. I don't own an iPad and had only played around on one a couple of times. True to my old-school roots, I prefer the print version of magazines, but I've found the interactivity of the iPad and the beauty of the images on screen to be improving my opinion of the medium.

Interactivity is key on the iPad, which makes Radar a fun page to translate. When we can with department and feature content, we incorporate pop-up text and place more emphasis on the images. Sometimes we run into particularly difficult things to recreate, such as the bracket of mascots in the SEC feature and the film matrix from the Citizen Jane package. In the end, I found the iPad version of the film matrix to be even more aesthetically pleasing than the print version (albeit a little more work for the reader).

Although award winning, our iPad edition hasn't taken off with users yet, usually accruing around 10 downloads for each issue. Our Fall Preview edition was most popular this semester with 20 downloads (Citizen Jane received only five so far). It's a lot of work for something that doesn't pull in much of an audience, which is fair game at a teaching publication but probably not worth the effort at a city magazine. I'll be interested to investigate if the iPad is working out for city magazines, or if it's a medium best suited for big-budget, national publications.

Field Notes: Week 11

The feature that never stopped scrolling. We worked with John Fennell's Intermediate Writing class for this week's feature on the rate of development in Columbia. The reporting was smart and thorough — it was our biggest feature yet this semester with 12 pages of print content and several more online-exclusive stories.

Per usual, I stayed focused on the print edition and didn't turn my attention to the digital presentation until I had the magazine in hand. I was really pleased with how the feature turned out in print, but for once I was underwhelmed by how it translated digitally. Originally, the stories were all thrown together onto one massive page that scrolled and scrolled and scrolled and scrolled (and scrolled). Headlines, bylines and occasional images intermittently broke up the text.

There were several issues with this approach. First, if someone unfamiliar to the content approached the page, they would likely assume it was one long-form story broken up by subheadings, rather than multiple stories that spoke to one larger issue. Frankly, I didn't think readers would have the attention spans to get from top to bottom. Secondly,

combining the content presented an URL issue. We could not, for instance, tweet out the Lucky's story specifically — the link would take the reader to the top of the package, which starts with the mayor profile, and they would have to scroll all the way to the bottom before landing on the appropriate story. Thinking about it from a writer's point of view, there would be no way of directing someone to his or her clip.

The first solution was to include a quasi table of contents at the top of the page with links that allowed the reader to jump to the specific story they wanted to read. But this presented another issue in that, once you were in your chosen story, you had a hard time getting out of it. The TOC also made the page even longer, which wasn't in our favor.

In the end, our digital managing editor created a landing page for the story, which allows each story to have its own URL. The individual stories are listed by headline beneath the feature image and package intro. The reader can then click on a link to go back to the list of stories or choose the related story link, which WordPress automatically generates, to continue perusing the content.

I do understand the digital editors' dilemma. The lack of images for this feature (we relied mostly on black-and-white landscape shots) made the concept of creating a landing page with "buttons" all but impossible. There also wasn't a clear categorization of content like we had for the Roots N Blues landing page (Music, Food & Brews, etc.).

However, the organizational problem was likely a lack of communication and advanced planning. Those of us on the print side hear very little of the digital planning for each feature. The digital editors and feature editors are expected to collaborate, but I think print presentation probably took precedence this time, and digital was left on the

back burner. Moreover, the digital editors are not as familiar with the print content as we are. Without reading all of the stories and examining how they fit together in print, plotting out the digital presentation isn't easy. This isn't to say the impetus is all on the digital side — the print side could do a better job of explaining how to navigate such a dense feature package.

There is an argument here for a more cohesive editorial staff (as opposed to two delineated staffs), but then again, it's useful to have experts on both sides who can ensure both the print issue and digital presentation are the best they can be. As city magazines continue to experiment with different methods of print and web production, open channels of communication will be key.

Field Notes: Week 12

The flip side of an untimely feature. This week featured our wine package, a fun and beautifully illustrated service piece targeted toward “wine novices” (which includes myself). In print, our biggest challenge was tying together multiple art plans. Our feature editors and photographers all had great ideas and wanted to execute each of them, which resulted in a surplus of art that didn't necessarily tie together. Fortunately our designer was quick and talented with illustrations, and our creative director was able to pull it all together in the final moments of production.

The wine package did not perform well online, likely due to the state of current events in Columbia at the time of publication (MU graduate student Jonathan Butler had embarked on a hunger strike earlier in the week, which would become national news over the following days). The landing page had only 505 page-views, and those who did

navigate to individual stories did not stick around for long. To put it into perspective, the *Missourian*'s timeline of racial incidents on campus — which was linked to from several national publications — had 271,405 page-views. It's not surprising that Columbia readers wanted to read about the contentious environment at MU. So did we.

As a staff, we decided to cool it on sharing the wine package on social media. There were more important stories to feature, and we made a special effort to share the *Missourian*'s reporting, which was excellent. Presumably, this also had an effect on the feature's readership. I have no problem with this social media strategy, especially during times of breaking news. It's a city magazine's responsibility to get the most important information into the hands of the reader, and sometimes that means sharing content that is not original. Presumably, there are followers of *Vox* who are not followers of the *Missourian*, so we served as the conduit of information. With small staffs and limited budgets, city magazines do not always have the resources to “hit the pavement” and cover every breaking news story. It's in their favor to share the best work from other news outlets in the area while committing resources to the “long-term story” (more on that next week).

The good news about the wine package is that it's *not* a timely topic, so it lives on online. When it came time to choose content to share on social media during the intersession, when *Vox* goes “dark” and doesn't produce new content, the wine feature was an excellent choice, especially for the holidays. It's a huge value to have sharable content that can fill gaps for city magazines when running low on new stories.

Field Notes: Week 13

Third editor's letter is the charm. This week was the most trying of my tenure as editor-in-chief. On Monday morning during our TA meeting, we crowded around my laptop to watch UM System President Tim Wolfe announce his resignation. We readjusted our mindset for the week. During our staff meeting later that afternoon, while discussing our social media outreach and strategies for staying on top of things, news broke that Chancellor Loftin was also effectively stepping down. We readjusted our mindset again.

Our feature on deck was the sweets issue, a gorgeously photographed package on the best desserts around town. Like the wine issue, it filled one of our fundamental missions as a city magazine to provide service for our readers. As a staff, we had been excited about this package, but given the state of affairs on campus, it suddenly felt flippant.

We continuously tossed ideas around. I have never been more in touch with my editorial director, Heather Lamb, throughout production as we determined our evolving game plan. We never stopped talking strategy, all the way up until Wednesday morning production — four hours before we typically go to press — when one of the department editors tentatively suggested that we scrap our dessert-centric cover. Ultimately, we followed through with our mission of service, albeit with a few tweaks.

In our Radar section, where we cover up-to-the-minute local and national news, the department editor crafted a timeline of the semester's events as told by social media. Due to a delay in the photo shoot, our Q&A with MSA President Payton Head was pushed back to this issue. Normally our Q&As run on the last page, but we asked ourselves what message we were sending with this hierarchy and decided to bump it up to Page 4.

We also published the Q&A online ahead of our regular Thursday production. We felt it was important to let our online audience access the story before the print issue hit stands. Our multimedia team created an accompanying video, which was a valuable addition. Users engaged with both components: The average amount of time on the page was 4 minutes, 38 seconds (the video lasted only 1 minute 38 seconds). We also used the unlimited space of the web to publish additional questions that didn't fit in print, another useful strategy for repurposing content.

A contributing writer crafted a story about the music of the movement on a tight turnaround. It was a unique take on the protests that we felt wouldn't appear in other outlets. It was important to us to not be repetitive in our coverage.

Throughout the production process, we were as sensitive as possible to the language we used, particularly in display type. We could have been more creative than “CoMo Confections” for a main cover line, but we decided straightforward language was key this week. We also broke our standard cover line format to tease the two current events stories more predominantly than usual.

On a personal note, I discovered how delicate it is to write the editor's letter during a tense time in the community. I wrote three different letters: The first, written Tuesday night, was completely tossed out. Rather than addressing race in Columbia, we (Heather, magazine chair Jen Rowe and I) decided to focus on the magazine's role in breaking news so as to clear up any confusion about the lighthearted direction of the cover. But my second letter was stiff and apologetic, as pointed out on Wednesday by *Vox's* writing coach, John Fennell. So — after the 1 p.m. print deadline had already come and gone — I locked myself in Heather's office and wrote a third letter. I spoke in my

own voice, as John suggested, and I stopped defending our choice to carry on with the sweets package. Rather, I explained the mission of city magazines and what we do well: provide in-depth, long-term analysis and reflection, something we already had in the works. I assured our readers those stories were coming. And in the meantime, they could look to our issue for the best place to find a salted macaroon. (Editor’s letter attached for reference.)

On Thursday, after our talk at the *Missourian* budget meeting, a reporter pulled me aside. She — like the rest of the journalism students covering this story for weeks — looked exhausted. She said she had opened a copy of *Vox* that morning at the J-Café, and it inspired her to buy a muffin. She felt a lot better after that, and she thanked me.

There are several missions of a city magazine, as I learned this week. You don’t have to abandon one of them to deliver on the other. You just have to choose your moments.



ELIZA SMITH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I’m going to break one of the cardinal rules of writing and start this letter with a question. In light of the events on MU’s campus this week, why are there desserts on the cover?

We asked ourselves the same question. In fact, during the final round of edits Wednesday morning — four hours before we’re scheduled to go to press — one of the editors balked. Should we change our cover story, a month in the making? We were all tense after a night of threats to our fellow students and confused by the lack of information about how those threats were being handled.

The truth is, magazines react differently to breaking news than 24/7 news outlets. Could we have scratched our issue and replaced it with breaking news? Probably. But that’s not our function. We left that job to our sister publication, the *Columbia Missourian*, which is providing phenomenal coverage.

Part of the purpose of city magazines is to provide useful information that helps readers know what to do and where to go. This week, that meant keeping our cover story about the best sweets in town while reworking our news coverage on Pages 4 and 5.

But telling our readers where to eat isn’t the only role of city magazines. Our mission statement also reminds us to “bring you an analysis and reflection of contemporary issues.” To that end, we’re planning additional stories for next week related to the unfolding events on campus and will continue work on an in-depth, semester-long project about race at MU, scheduled to run in December. Those stories will provide perspective on the campus climate that led to this week’s events, something magazines do well.

(Many thanks to Heather Lamb, Jen Rowe and John Fennell for their wisdom and three-pronged collaboration on this letter. Seeing all three of them hunched over my work at once gave me competing feelings of anxiety and gratitude. I will never forget it.)

Field Notes: Weeks 14 and 15

The adaptability of city magazines. Following our commitment to analysis and reflection of the events on MU's campus, an important part of our mission statement at *Vox*, we created a compact, six-story feature package in addition to our long-form and deeply reported scheduled feature about mental health issues among the millennial generation.

Coming from experience in newspapers, a weekly magazine seemed very civilized to me. We plan our issues three weeks out — our features sometimes an entire semester out — and, for the most part, follow our plans to the tee. This week was more of a fly-be-the-seat-of-your-pants scenario, and fly we did. The previous week as we produced our sweets package, we put out feelers among our contributing writers. We came with a handful of our own story ideas but encouraged pitches as well. Six writers volunteered for the task, and we thanked them by asking for first drafts within 48 hours.

During Monday night production, I put department editor Kendyl Kearly and art director Ben Kothe on the package. While our pages are normally designed over the weekend, we weren't sure what our writers would turn around, so Ben was starting from scratch. Kendyl made tough cuts to fit the stories within the three pages allotted and chose the outlying story that would appear online only, and Ben turned a text-heavy package into an engaging spread. I don't think any of our readers would have guessed how quickly we created this content, and it felt productive to do our part in the breaking news cycle.

To continue praising my staff, what made this week all the more challenging was that they simultaneously produced a second issue — the lighter, 16-page magazine that would go to press while we were away for Thanksgiving — while also having several in-depth ethical conversations about the mental health feature and the language we used. We pulled in experts whenever we could, including Earnest Perry, who teaches cross-cultural journalism, and Katherine Reed, who teaches a course on how to responsibly cover topics like mental health.

It was a heavy week for the staff emotionally, and submersing themselves in tough subject matter continued to weigh on them. In the staff meeting, we talked about the importance of taking care of ourselves physically and emotionally, and as editor, I kept a close eye on everyone and encouraged “breathers” often.

City magazines, as evidenced by this week, are adaptable. Although generally staffed by a small group of writers, editors and designers, they are highly committed to their communities and willing to pivot when necessary to get the most important stories to readers. While it is considerably easier to adapt to breaking news online, the print magazine (and the print magazine’s audience) deserve the same level of service. I truly believe we did our best this week by both our print and online audiences.

Field Notes: Week 16

The hazards of whitewashing. My research on the origins of city magazines briefly ran across a worrying history, that of city magazines excluding non-white, less affluent urban residents from their readership. This was a topic of discussion this week, prompted by the selection of our cover model.

Our feature was on plastic surgery in Columbia, and — given the fact that none of our sources who had undergone plastic surgery would go on the record with their full names or photographs — it was also about the stigma that still surrounds cosmetic plastic surgery, at least in this region of the country. I knew we were setting up a studio shoot for cover possibilities, but I wasn't aware of the identity of the model until I picked up galleys on Sunday night. The cover model was a young, attractive model of Asian ethnicity. Immediately, my red flags went up.

Nowhere in the story had we touched on the trend of “westernizing” surgery in Asian culture, nor mentioned that South Korea is currently the plastic surgery capital of the world. Some of the surgery marks were around the woman's eyes, and I worried about the message we were sending about Asian beauty. My editorial director brought up a further concern I hadn't yet considered: the model's age. Our story talked about cosmetic surgery such as abdominoplasty (tummy tucks) and Botox injections. What need did this young woman have for cosmetic surgery, specifically on her face?

I brought up the conversation repeatedly over the course of production with each of the editors, and we talked out our concerns and views. We brought in Cristina Mislán, who teaches cross-cultural journalism, and she asked an interesting question: Would whitewashing the cover be any better? No, we decided. It would not. The photo was beautiful, the cover eye-catching, and *Vox* — like all city magazines — has a responsibility to diversity. That doesn't mean throwing a non-white model on the cover once a year to meet some sort of “diversity quota,” but it does mean being aware of the effects of whitewashing in media.

We were mindful of the language we used on the cover, and we added more historical and cultural context about cosmetic plastic surgery in the narrative. Unfortunately, we did receive one email from a reader upset with our cover line (“Saving face”) given the cultural context surrounding standards of Asian beauty. I was regretful, as I always am when our language offends a reader, but I felt that as a staff we had done our due diligence in talking out the problems and possible solutions and made a decision in good conscience. Online, we used a different feature photo and an SEO-friendly headline. We didn’t want to perpetuate offensive language, but there is also the reality of searchability on the web and the necessity of straightforward display language. Repurposing content from print to online almost always constitutes changing the hed and dek. In this case, that step worked in our favor.

Field Notes: Week 17

Emotional stories: low investment, high returns. This week saw the highly anticipated race issue from Berkley Hudson’s Advanced Writing class come to life. The project was a semester-long result of immersion in diverse campus communities and honest conversations between members of the class. I worked one on one with AnDrea Jackson, a non-traditional student in the class, who had been assigned to write a first-person narrative about her experience as a black student on MU’s campus. AnDrea also wrote an essay for our earlier package in response to the semester’s events, so I knew her talent as a writer. The experience was understandably an emotional one for AnDrea, and we met with her feature editor to determine exactly what it was she wanted to say. Then I

assigned the editor to guard AnDrea's voice throughout production, during which a simple word change can alter the mood of a passage.

AnDrea's piece ran alongside Thomas Dixon's first-person narrative, which recounted his experience on campus from a white perspective. Thomas had gone to a diverse high school, but found himself self-segregating when he arrived at MU. The essays were both vulnerable and powerful, and we ran them side-by-side as the openers to the exceptionally thorough package, which included a timeline of events that dated all the way back to 1892, the international student experience, the psychology of race, the rise and fall of the One Mizzou movement and so on.

The print edition was met with praise and the package also performed well online. A week after publication, the landing page had 2,185 page views. But the stories with the best individual performances were Thomas and AnDrea's first-person narratives. A week after publication, Thomas' essay had 13,220 views; AnDrea's had 1,351. (While that number is much lower at first glance, it's a significant online readership for us, and I have no doubt the numbers continued to rise as AnDrea's friends and families shared the piece online. She told me weeks after the fact that she was still sharing and receiving feedback.)

These results reiterated something very important, which we touched on earlier in the semester: Emotional stories do well, especially online. When a piece evokes an emotional response from a reader, that reader is more likely to "share," retweet and spread the word to their network. AnDrea and Thomas performed a very difficult task: They were honest. On the internet. For everyone to see. Their narratives resounded with people, and the results showed.

Fortunately for city magazine editors, personal narratives are cheap to produce in comparison to reported pieces — but that doesn't mean they should be sought out for the sake of low cost and high numbers. Take this passage from my research:

Klinenberg (2005) found that editorial decisions are sometimes made according to what will flow most easily across platforms, which he warns could undermine the integrity of the publication and also fail to suit the needs of readers, which should be a city magazine's first priority.

Knowing that emotional stories perform well online, it would be all too easy for an editor planning the lineup to toss in a few essays for the sake of numbers. Low investment, high return. But just as writers should not be exploited for their personal stories, neither should content quality be compromised for the sake of the bottom line.

Of course, I found AnDrea's and Thomas' pieces to be of the highest quality. But they also had something important to say. It was our job to give them a platform from which to say it — and, as I wrote in my editor's letter, it was a privilege to do so.

Field Notes: Week 18

Semester in review. As we wrapped up our last week of *Vox*, our digital team was faced with an added challenge: transitioning to the new website, which would be launched in January. To that end, we had several conversations as a staff about our brand and what type of content worked well for us online.

Looking at the semester analytics, it should come as no surprise that our homepage is the top-ranked page. The takeaway? We better have an attractive and accessible landing page to draw in readers and direct them to our content. A hierarchy of stories had to be established, as well as a strategy for minimally invasive ad placement that would still appease our advertisers.

Our third most-viewed page is the calendar. This is an important service feature, especially for city magazines, which are highly attuned to their community. *Vox* prides itself on an extensive and user-friendly calendar. Along that vein of service, our restaurant guide is always in the top ten most-viewed pages. The restaurant guide is (I believe) unique to *Vox*, just as the dining scene is typically a niche of the city magazine. These are our sweet spots, and we must position them well on the new site.

The most-read story of the year was “The life and death of Renz prison” from April 2015 with 27.8 thousand page views. It’s a highly detailed feature story with multiple online components (photos, timeline, cutouts, illustrations) that pull readers in and keep them on the page. The takeaway: Good reporting is key — but online, so is presentation. Readers won’t stick with straight text; they expect to be entertained while they scroll. The second most-read story of the year was a *Scream Queens* recap that was picked up by a pop culture website and went viral. The takeaway: On-brand, online-only stories can be successful for city magazines in addition to print-based, reported features.

The digital team discovered an interesting quirk in social media: People often “like,” retweet and share articles online without actually reading them. While this doesn’t affect our readership numbers, it does extend the brand, which is always a good thing for city magazines. They also found that more than 50 percent of our views are coming from mobile users, so for a website to do well, it must be mobile responsive.

In the end, working as editor-in-chief of *Vox* was more than I ever expected it to be. Keeping an eye toward digital strategies through my research was helpful, as I tend to be print-focused. I came to learn and appreciate the magazine’s role in breaking news. I worked with an exceptional staff, many of whom I’ll stay in touch with throughout my

career — and three of whom are on the spring leadership team. I am indebted to my editorial director, Heather Lamb, and our writing coach, John Fennell, for their weekly guidance and wisdom. This project was certainly the highlight of my education.

Chapter 3: Evaluation

I came into the role of editor-in-chief somewhat unsure of my leadership abilities. I've always been comfortable in support roles, serving quietly and efficiently behind the scenes. In fact, I didn't even apply for the editor-in-chief position. Rather, I envisioned myself as managing editor, the right-hand woman who kept things in order. I'm so glad that during my first meeting with editorial director Heather Lamb, she asked if I might consider signing on as EIC.

I didn't accept the position right away but told Heather to see how the pieces fell into place. If she felt that I would make a good fit as EIC, I decided, I wouldn't turn down the opportunity. Although I originally struggled with imposter syndrome — the feeling that you have cheated or lucked into a position you are not qualified for, one many women experience during their careers — I thought of a column by Missouri graduate Ann Friedman in which she wrote that “the feeling of *Oh god, I'm in over my head*, is how you can tell a job is a good fit for you.” Accepting the role was a leap, but the imposter syndrome was only temporary.

Because I had worked at *Vox* as a department editor, I felt familiar with most of the protocols and confident that I would at least be able to commiserate with the new department editors, who would be spending the first three weeks just trying to figure out the production cycle. But a lot had changed in the two years since I'd last been at *Vox*, including having a much larger staff. The Radar section was entirely new to me, as was the print design and updated style guidelines. I was also unaccustomed to working with webbies, who were constantly thinking about and improving our online presence. There

was a huge learning curve to start, as our deputy editor and managing editor were also new to the print staff.

It didn't take long, however, until we got into the swing of things. Sunday night galley edits that originally took me hours to read — while constantly consulting the style guide, *Working with Words*, the AP Stylebook and Merriam Webster — began to fly by as I relearned everything Jen Rowe taught me in Magazine Editing. My attention to detail was hugely beneficial when it came to galley edits. It could also slow me down during Wednesday production, which was my favorite part of the week. The rush of deadline was invigorating, and seeing how far the issue had progressed from Sunday night to Wednesday morning was hugely satisfying. That being said, we missed deadline far more often than I would have liked, and I have to take responsibility for that as editor. Perhaps I did not push pages far enough on Monday nights, and I know we did not make enough time as a staff to talk about the cover until Wednesday, which caught up to us at the last minute. A large part of missing deadline also came down to having a large and lively staff, which was an asset when it came to brainstorming but a hindrance when it came to shipping off pages. Had I stayed at *Vox* another semester, consistently making deadline would have been a top priority for me.

Of course, making a magazine is only one part of being a TA at *Vox*. Teaching is the other part. I was very fortunate to have such a smart, hardworking and creative group of department editors on staff, and I felt that I had a hand in helping them grow as editors through pitch feedback, department meetings, galley edits and production. I didn't want to create an "us versus them" environment, so I made a point of frequently leaving the TA table during production and making the rounds to see how everyone was doing. I

found this to be really useful as it allowed me to get a jump on any issues the editors hadn't yet mentioned. My tactic with the department editors was to try to get them thinking critically and independently by asking for their opinions, rather than always making the call.

That isn't to say the editors took it easy on me. In the beginning, some were prone to push back and question my edits. Although trying at times, this ultimately allowed me to stretch my leadership skills. I found a balance between staying firm on my standards and giving them the agency to weigh in on editorial decisions. In the end, the anonymous TA evaluations completed by the department editors laid to rest any doubts I had about my ability to lead well.

Other growth areas for me were in design and digital elements. I think in words, and I'm also first and foremost dedicated to print, so I originally struggled thinking visually and with an eye toward the website. Fortunately I was working with an amazing creative director and digital editor, and I learned a lot from them. There was still room for improvement by the end of the semester — it was only sixteen weeks, after all — but I do feel I improved in those areas and became more decisive and creative.

Because I am a words person, my biggest strength was probably in writing editor's letters. This was a great experience to boil down what I had to say in 260 words, highlight features of the magazine and speak directly to our readers. It was also a useful exercise in that I got to be edited by Heather and the department editors, which reminded me how it feels to be on the receiving end of editing marks — particularly the dreaded “word choice.”

Of course, I can't discuss the semester without also discussing the unique circumstances involving breaking news on campus. The events brought up a lot of conversations on our role as a magazine in a breaking news situation, and it also opened conversations about how the news can affect journalists emotionally. Everyone on staff was impacted by the environment, which reached a peak when anonymous threats were made, leaving many feeling too unsafe to go to campus. As editor, I was simultaneously concerned with bringing a reflection and analysis of the news to our audience — as is *Vox's* mission statement — and also creating a space where the editors felt comfortable to air their thoughts or step away and take a few minutes to themselves. Although stressful, I think those experiences brought us closer as a team.

Looking back, I'm incredibly proud of the magazines we created during my tenure as editor-in-chief. *Vox* featured top-notch journalism and art, as evidenced by three of our issues winning Mark of Excellence awards from the Society of Professional Journalists. While I was initially hesitant to take on the role, I would do it again in a heartbeat.

Chapter 4: Physical Evidence

A. Editor's letters (17 total)

Writing an editor's letter each week was a great exercise in condensing my thoughts, relating to readers and highlighting parts of the issue in 260 words.

FROM THE EDITOR



ELIZA SMITH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

At times, social media can be an exhausting space. I find it even more alienating and inhospitable in the midst of debates and crises that bring out extreme differences of opinion, including the protests at MU last week and the tragedies — an insufficient term, but such is our limited language — in Paris, Beirut, Syria and across the globe.

When I expressed my frustrations with the misinformation and lack of empathy plastered all over the Internet and my social media feeds, my sister recommended that I turn it off for a while, a suggestion I ignored. But this compulsion to sift through the muck was all my own. I do not envy the job of our digital managing editor, Abby Holman, whose many tasks include keeping the discourse civil. Our online commenting policy forbids personal attacks, profanity and attacks on race, creed or religion — the sort of thing that has been in full supply of late.

This is not to say that social media breeds only hostility. In recent months, I've seen more young adults reach out online to share stories of their struggles with anxiety and depression. The matter of mental health on college campuses — how people are experiencing, discussing and managing it — is a conversation finally taking place, and this week, *Vox* looks beyond the bright veneer of millennials and into the darkness that sometimes lies in wait (Page 8).

Returning to my promise from last week, you will also find perspectives from the MU protests in a small package of stories starting on Page 5. I am indebted to our contributing writers for reaching out and sharing these voices, which I hope will inform our community as we move forward.

FROM THE EDITOR



ELIZA SMITH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Growing up in Kansas City, I remember feeling self-conscious about my pale skin. Unsatisfied with the neutral and peach-toned crayons I used to draw self-portraits, I was under the impression that God hadn't "colored me in yet." It's interesting that I was so aware of my whiteness as a 5-year-old because I spent the next 20 years of my life mostly forgetting about it. I recognize now that this unawareness is the foundation of my white privilege.

Our feature this week was put together by a writing class that spent the semester asking one another difficult questions about race on campus, in Columbia and in the country. They have journeyed a long way together, and it is evident from their work. We start with AnDrea Jackson, whose first-person narrative of being a black student on MU's campus (Page 8) gives me chills each time I read it. It's followed by a very different but compelling piece from Thomas Dixon (Page 9) about his move from a diverse Illinois community to MU. Reading their stories together reminds me that our narratives do not have to contradict or collide. We can attest to one another's diverse truths.

Alongside the feature is a timeline of racial tension at MU (Page 10), beginning in 1892 when the MU football team forfeited to the University of Nebraska because the school refused to take the field with Nebraska's black running back. The events recounted are both unsettling and familiar.

This investigation into the lived experience of race is essential to our growth as individuals and as a community. Being part of the process in sharing these stories is another sort of privilege — and a responsibility.

FROM THE EDITOR



ELIZA SMITH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Part of being a magazine editor means rapidly becoming a quasi-expert on an odd variety of topics. My areas of "expertise" now include the history of the MU Golden Girls, Kevin Hart's career, the rate of development in Columbia, how to pick a decent bottle of wine, and — after this week — the debate surrounding legalizing medical and recreational marijuana (Page 7). I feel closer to understanding racial tensions and the rise in mental health issues on campus thanks to the excellent reporting we've had the opportunity to publish. And I've never been more informed about the goings-on in Columbia, a city I appreciate more every year.

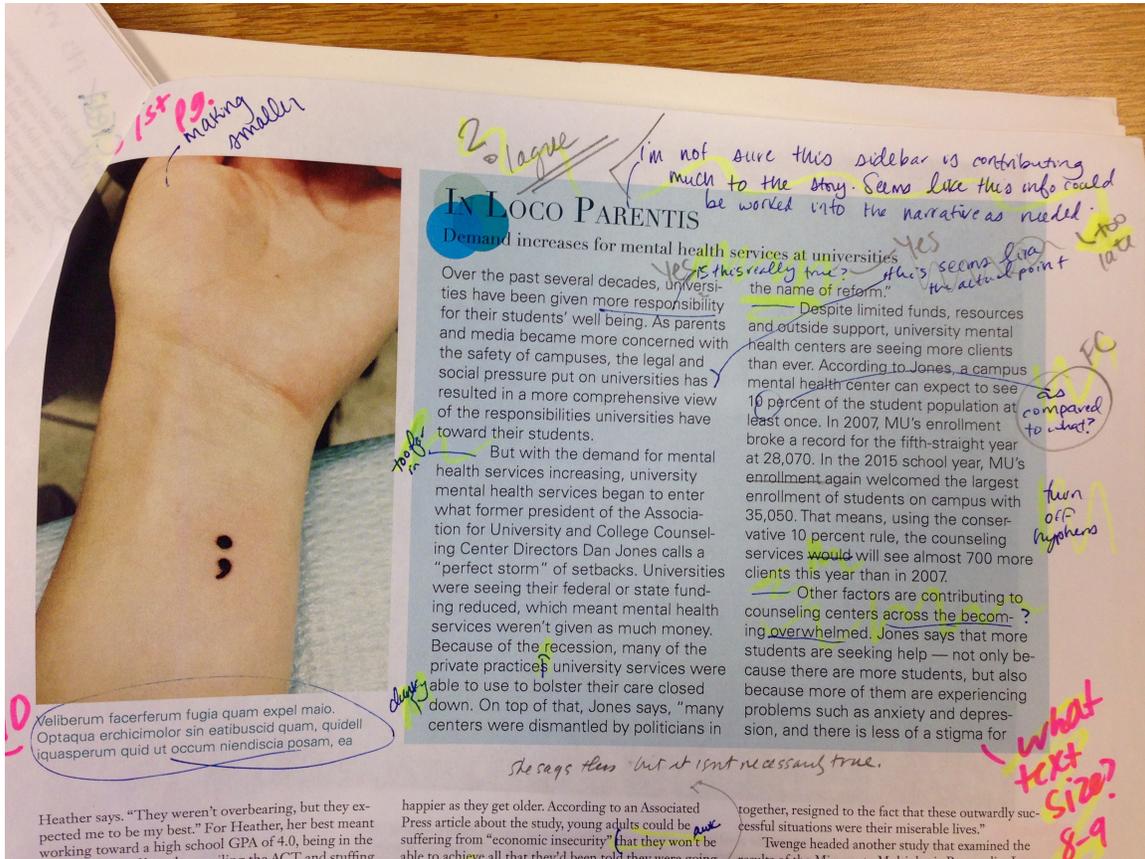
When I told my advisor I would be spending the semester as editor-in-chief of *Vox*, he said something along the lines of, "No one ever comes out of that the same person." At the time, the sentiment sounded cryptic and a little ominous. But 16 weeks later, it rings true.

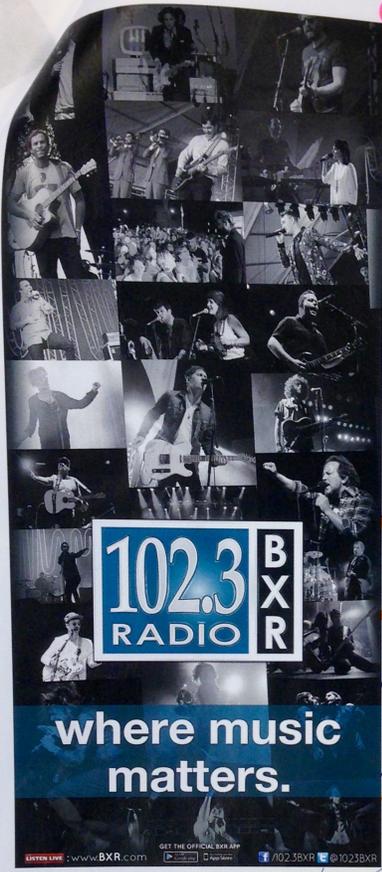
Pride isn't a word I throw around a lot, but I'm proud of the work we've done here. We've had our bumps in the road, and I felt each one keenly. On the occasions a mishap made it into print, I was quick to blame myself and did so in dramatic fashion. Then our creative director, Tracee Tibbitts, would jokingly (and truthfully) remind me that I don't put out the magazine by myself.

Of course, she's right. I was one part in the whirlwind that is *Vox* this semester, and I'm grateful to everyone who contributed to helping our beloved publication thrive. You made me a different — and dare I say better — person.

B. Galley edits

I read the entire issue each Sunday, which typically took three to five hours for issues that ranged from 16 to 24 pages. This was followed by multiple read-throughs during Monday night production and several more final reads on Wednesday leading up to deadline. I edited on a micro and macro level, considered how all the puzzle pieces of features fit together, if the story answered all questions and did so in *Vox* voice, kept an eye toward design elements and more.





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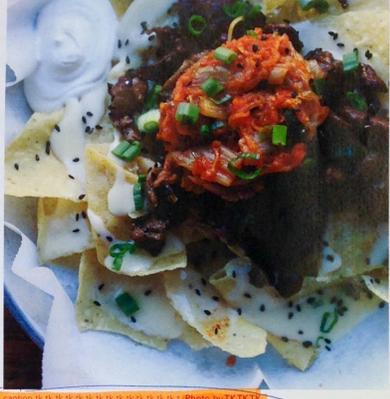
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FOOD

Nacho typical chip

Seoul Taco is changing up the late-night food game
BY DAVID SEAMAN *weight + leung*



Seoul Taco's nachos. Photo by TKTKTK

Nachos have always been fan favorites. Gooey cheese, crunchy chips. What's not to love? The spice, the savory meat and the cabbage? At Seoul Taco, your nachos come with a lick of Asian flavor.

The regular menu at Seoul Taco consists of tacos, quesadillas and burritos that add Seoul sauces and kimchi to the mix. Kimchi is a fermented cabbage dish with a variety of sauces and a slight spicy kick. Seoul Taco decided to add this Mexican-Korean mix to its menu permanently on Oct. 1. The launch in St. Louis a couple weeks before worked out the kinks and went really well, says Jack Setcher, general manager of the Columbia store. "I mean, who doesn't like nachos?"

With a dollop of sour cream on the side, the Korean meat, onions, sesame seeds and sauces top off the freshly made chips. The mound of chips is a bit less than, say, El Rancho's, but the quality outweighs the quantity. You have to dig deep to uncover the chips, but licking the delicious queso off your fingers is well worth the effort.

Seoul Taco's kimchi, with its signature spice, sets this dish apart from the ballgame variety. The crunchiness of both the vegetables and chips works and blends well with the rest of the dish. Manipulating techniques are the secret to Seoul Taco's distinctive nachos. The tortilla chips, melted cheese and kimchi are layered together in a bowl and left to sit for a day before cooking it all. The kimchi is made from scratch with a five-day fermentation process. Two kimchi options are used: an Americanized version for certain dishes and the affectionately named "OG kimchi," or original kimchi, which is used for the nachos.

He thinks the unconventional nachos will be a great late-night food option. "It's a lot of fun and a lot of love," he says.

KIMCHI NACHOS
Seoul Taco
1020 E Broadway
Sunday - 11 a.m. - 1 a.m.
Saturday, 11 a.m. - 1 a.m.
41-8226
stacoo.com

16 VOXMAGAZINE.COM | 11.19.15

caption? is giving name of dish + kimchi? says no

what does this quote mean?

what dishes? why are we changed for those? know where this info is from and only 1-2 other dishes even have kimchi

what does this quote mean? what did STL launch + how did it work out the nacho kinks? they happened the restaurant is an it, but maybe that is one of were talking about the chips

Sober cabbage? might clear up the crunchiness blends? (mg)

not Seoul Taco, the owners/managers?

Down: style sidebar (see next page)

Photo can be smaller

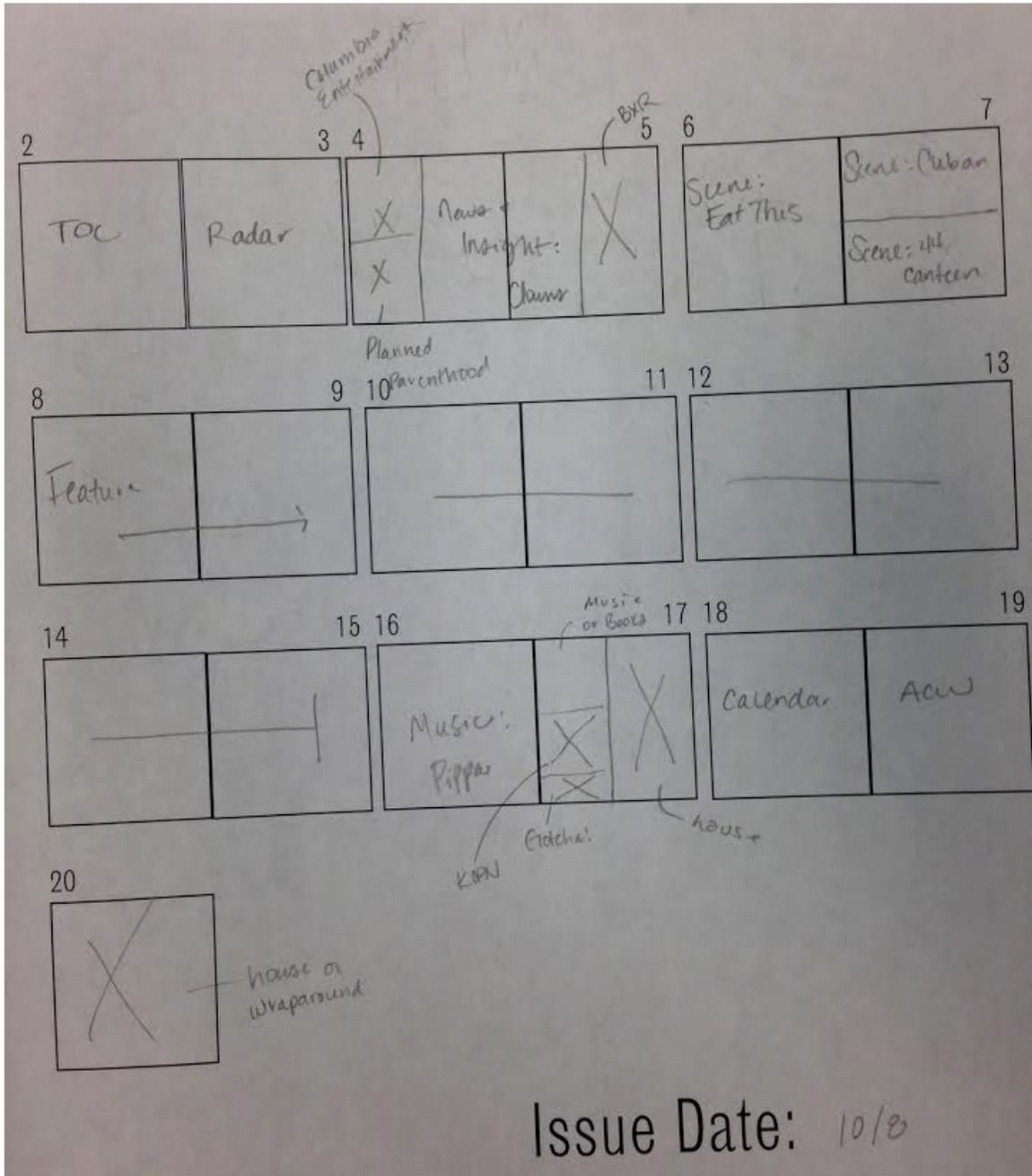
info box style

make 2 columns?

this quote doesn't really give w/ the set up

C. Weekly lineup

Each Friday I sat down with the ad manifest and weekly budget to create the issue lineup. Depending on how things shook out with design over the weekend, I would often need to juggle the lineup on Monday and sometimes continue tweaking throughout the week. Flexibility was always key.



D. Monday night notes

After Monday production, I sent an email to the leadership team to update them with where we stood in each department and how the editors performed. I sent out a similar email on Sundays after proofing the issue.

Cover: Looks great, but we'll continue to have discussions tomorrow on how we want to tease to current events. The group wrote cover lines for the Payton Head ACW and Utopia Catering story (not feeling that one since it's already such a food-heavy issue). I'm also not loving the cover line "CoMo Confections," but I'll say the editors had lengthy conversations about this all night. Everyone is trying to stay mindful of the tone of this week, as well as previous reader feedback.

TOC/Calendar: Veronica was on AME tonight. The ad on calendar is super awkward, but not sure what we can do about that. TOC looks pretty good. We'll probably want to discuss teasing to more online coverage of current events. TK: editor's letter and updated movie listings.

Radar: Adrienne worked her tail off on Radar tonight. It's really text heavy with the timeline right now, but I think this week is going to be a special case. We need some design help (noted a design hierarchy on the galley). We're also considering adding images to the timeline, but not sure if that will make the page too busy. The other unrelated blurbs weren't very conducive to images this week, so that was a bummer. Epecially this week, let's keep an eye out for things we'd like to add to Radar.

ACW: The Q&A with Payton Head moved up to page 4. Christine worked on it and it's in good shape. We didn't hear back from Payton, but we updated the intro with one of his latest posts on Twitter and I think it works well. **We'll be ready to post this online tomorrow. Just make sure to add the add'l responses from the online galley.**

News & Insight: We got Jared's piece in tonight, Sarah D. will be the editor on this one. I had very tired eyes by the time I got to it, so let's pay special attention to it tomorrow. I think it will be a nice addition to our coverage though. TK: Different image?

Scene: I think the updated design helped this section a lot. Probably need to revisit the photo of the Utopia Catering owner — we went through several options but didn't love any of them. Both the catering and See This seem to be in pretty good shape (Casey and Abby's teamwork).

Arts/Ballet: Christine worked on this one tonight. We swapped out one of the photos but now they seem very similar, let's take another look tomorrow. Sidenote: We're not being consistent on our event infoboxes. For music events, we lead with the music venue; on arts pages, we lead with the show title. Which should we use? Are they interchangeable?

Arts/MU Theatre: Hannah had this one. Short sweet and to the point.

Music: Sara T and Rebecca teamed up on the music page. Several back and forth edits, but we eventually got it. The nine reasons are pretty text heavy, but people seem to love lists?

Feature: Kendyl and Scott worked really hard on the text, and Madison and Alex were here most of the night as well making the design even prettier. Biggest things:

- Need to land on a really good hed for the opening spread. Madison is designing that on her laptop, so there's nothing there at the moment.
- Several prices still need to be filled in tomorrow.
- Need to be consistent: Flat Branch Stout brownie sundae, or Flat Branch's Stout brownie sundae?
- Candy Factory page needs a little more design love. The pull quote looks a little awkward.
- By the Numbers needs to be finished up tomorrow (typography and illos, mostly — text is there).

E. iPad proofing

By mid-semester, proofing the iPad was one of my favorite tasks. Typically I sat down with Morgan on Thursdays, and we went through the iPad draft together looking for copyediting corrections, design tweaks, usability, etc. When we were unable to meet, I sent my notes by email.

Hey Morgan! Here's what I've got for you:

TOC:

- Extra space between dessert- and lovers.
- Maybe check out the One Directions link. My iPad won't go to it, but I've been having internet issues all night.

Radar:

- On the Canada blurb, the high-five break is weird. Can you try a soft return after 2015 and before We and see if that helps at all?
- Ditto Tracee, typo in Nov. 2 blurb
- Meteor blurb: Does the text change size or are my eyes playing tricks on me from the highlight?
- Let's do another spot color on the Starbucks blurb. Green maybe?

ACW:

- Let's move the intro box up a little bit. The last line (inclusion at MU) runs into the dark grey and looks off
- Space between intro and first question
- Might not need quite so much space before the online tease. If nothing else, let's align with the text.

News & Insight:

- Text feels a little close at the bottom. Can we give a little more breathing room?

Scene:

- Let's swap the Utopia Catering and Killing Them Safely stories. We need some breathing space between that headline and the protesters story.

Music:

- The arrow's kind of awkward. Maybe we can scoot the nine things over to the left (and get rid of that line) to make room for it?
- Weird spacing in Jarrod Turner blurb. Let's also do a soft return in the blue note URL
- Do we want the white space at the bottom of the page?

Feature:

- The popup text for the red velvet cupcake only appears (and goes away) when you click on the infobox. The plus sign also isn't super visible on this one so I thought it was just an image at first. Should we change the color of that? Maybe the yellow? Let's also make the text box cover the whole image, like the next one.
- Speaking of the info boxes, do you think we should link to the locations or nah? I'll let you make the call on that one.
- Goopy butter cake: Can't get the top one to pop up. Also not super visible at first.
- I think where we keep the same head (i.e. Sticky) on two pages, let's lose the deck on the second one.
- I agree that overall, we can pull in more color here. Madison originally had a lot of color and it was really pretty on screen, but we were afraid it wouldn't print well so we backed off a lot. We also get negative feedback from readers about reverse type in print, but maybe on iPad it looks OK. I'll let you make that call. If nothing else, we could add more to the background color I think.
- Speaking of reverse type: The readability on the Hotbox cookies page is soo much better than the Doughnuts page. The red Harold's vs. Strange really isn't coming out at all. Let's switch to white type on this page (could use yellow maybe for the Harold's/Strange).

Arts:

- Unwisht Work: Are we able to line up the text better? We're really close between the caption and the text as well. The show title in the infobox should be italicized.
- Ballet: We could probably tighten up the by the numbers box, lots of dead space.

That's it. Thanks Morgan! Looks great.

F. Pitch feedback

After reading galleys on Sunday night, I turned to pitches. I read these story ideas with an eye toward angle, sourcing, department goals, originality, visual possibilities and more. On Wednesday evenings I read repitches. I also lead the pitch meetings on Mondays and Thursdays, during which the leadership team would weigh in and choose the stories that would appear in *Vox*.

My idea is introduce the event and the artists and then have the photos of a few of the tigers (because there obviously is not enough room for all 10) and interview the artists about their designed tigers. I have four artists confirmed already, but I can get in touch with more if need be. I imagine it something like the chicken photography story from the Meat Issue, with the photo and then beneath it a caption with a short quote about the inspiration behind the design or a funny anecdote that happened when painting.

www.voxmagazine.com/2015/08/missouri-artist-matthew-hemminghaus-turns-his-chickens-into-art/
I like this idea, but how would we choose which tigers to photograph and which artists to interview about their designs? Since this is their third year, there's got to be some more information somewhere. How much do the tigers typically go for at auction? Which charities participate? How many people usually attend? It would be good to give some brief background (an intro) paragraph and then launch into the rest of the story, or make that info into a sidebar. HP

Cool angle just answer the questions about which artists we'll interview directly. I saw you have them confirmed (yay!) just explain why you chose these specific ones. If your answer is "they were the ones who agreed to it" that's not really the best fit for Vox. Find the best or most eclectic of the bunch - if that's who you picked, explain that in the pitch. BB

Nice job getting so many sources confirmed. I do think we need justification for who we're choosing. Also, since this event has been around for three years, I want to make sure we cover it in a unique way (and it doesn't just read like the Missourian story will — surely they'll take a different tack this year). Is there something interesting about the artistic process? Are these artists quirky and interesting somehow? Let's find the Vox angle. ES

Agree with Eliza that we have to come up with a unique way to cover what typically is a much-covered fundraiser. Is there a by the numbers approach? How much do those tigers weigh? How much time are

Story focus and angle: Everyone knows that Shyrock's is a go-to for some Fall fun, but who designs that corn maze and how do they do it? They've created some pretty crazy stuff in the past. Let's highlight the masterminds behind the mazes.

What have they created in the past? Where do they get their ideas? does the same person come up with the ideas every year? If this the only fall corn maze place around? I would like to see more background information on the maze and the people who work there and go there in addition to who designs the maze. I feel that there's a significant lack of pre-reporting here and it would be a stronger pitch with some of those questions answered. HP

This is cool as hell. You gotta get that courtesy art of past mazes. The pitch is just a little light. I'm so glad you got a confirmed source on this, just follow the above advice and grow the pitch. Pretend we don't know anything about Shyrock (I actually don't) and pitch to us from that perspective. Is there a science to designing mazes? How do they physically cut the maze? How do they photograph it? Do they have advice for succeeding at mazes? BB

I'm glad this is starting to pan out. Since it's in the arts section, let's really focus on how a corn maze is designed/made. Are there cornmaze designers/architects out there? Does Shyrock's outsource this? Who actually implements the design? Let's pay attention to the people in this story. ES

This pitch needs to contain the information about who DOES do it and how IS it done. Good topic, but other than knowing we want to go behind the scenes, we don't have a clear picture of what this story will be. -hl

Note: MU's Bradford Research Farm also has a corn maze, so look at them for information as well. There may be others in the area too. SSH

Cherie Rutter owns Cherie's Cake Boutique and Tea Room in Columbia and Amanda is a cake decorator at HyVee and studied at Le Cordon Bleu. Both have experience in cake decorating and are knowledgeable about the tools used to do so. Looks good to me. HP

If this is an In the Studio, will it focus on Cherie's place? SSH

Do we know how we want to present this visually? I think it would be more interesting to have all the tools in one shot somehow (maybe surrounding a cake?) than separate photos/cutouts. ES

I like the added details in this pitch and the added source, too. -hl

Where did this story idea come from? Brainstorming at department meeting

Vox and Missourian archive check? No.

Art: Trax request- we would most likely take photos of each of these tools, but we could also use courtesy photos from the Internet. Let's shoot. -TT

Per Eliza's comment above. Talk with art about how to present this. Would love to come up with a pretty concept. We will also want photos of these two. -hl

Chapter 5: Analysis

For decades, city and regional magazines have provided service and investigative journalism in the communities they serve, all while fostering and maintaining close ties to their print magazine’s audience. But the digital revolution brought with it a wave of challenges. Were city magazine staffs — typically small and operating on tighter resources than their national, general interest counterparts — equipped to keep a website populated and appealing, on top of strict and ever-revolving print deadlines? Would placing the print content online for free cannibalize print sales? Who was this new digital audience, and what exactly were they looking for?

While many of the initial “kinks” of the digital revolution have smoothed out, questions still remain about best strategies on the web, particularly in the city and regional magazine world, where it’s become evident that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. In the 2015 City and Regional Magazine Association panel “Making Digital Work for You,” editors Emma Sullivan of *Chicago*, Amanda Heckert of *Indianapolis Monthly* and Jason Heid of *DMagazine.com* discussed their strategies, successes and limitations. This analysis expands on that conversation. By conducting interviews with five city magazine editors from across the country and encompassing diverse makeups — including audience reach, staff size and resources — I sought to answer the following questions: How do city and regional magazine editors strategize to meet the needs of both their print and online audiences? What unique challenges do city and regional magazines face in the digital realm? And what are the best strategies for success at this time?

The editors who participated in this project include Jason Heid of DMagazine.com, Tom McGrath of *Philadelphia*, Amanda Heckert of *Indianapolis Monthly*, Katie Pollock Estes of *417* and Zach Dundas of *Portland Monthly*. These leaders were candid and thoughtful about the challenges their staffs face and offered insights that counter the traditional thinking about city magazines and their print and digital audiences. They discussed strategy changes and continued efforts to translate the best of their respective publications to the digital sphere. Their collective knowledge made clear that while there is still much to learn, there is also reason to celebrate how far city magazines have come and to remain hopeful about their future, both in print and on the web.

The Role of a City Magazine Website

Deciding the role of one's website, presumably, will affect an editor's approach to that website. First, a quick sample of how each editor views the purpose of their publication's digital operation:

DMagazine.com. Heid says the purpose of DMagazine.com is to build an audience of its own separate from the print magazine's audience. "We don't think of it as just an extension — as *just* an extension — of the print titles we publish. We think of it as its own entity, so we work hard to keep it populated and to speak to its own audience, because it has its own audience."

Philadelphia. McGrath says the role of the website is basically the same as print, "in the sense that it's a vehicle for doing journalism, and from a business standpoint, it's a way to make money."

Indianapolis Monthly. Heckert says she looks at the website as a way to extend the brand. “It’s extending the publication of course, but it’s the overall brand. We are seeing that it brings in, in many cases, a new audience.”

417. Estes says *417*’s website has always had two functions: “One is a place to connect with our readers month-to-month with our monthly content that comes in the magazine, but also to stay in touch with them throughout the month as well so ... we’re reaching them as often as we can.”

Portland Monthly. Dundas says the website’s role is always evolving, but right now he sees it as a place to provide hourly and daily coverage and translate the print content to a more “elastic” audience. “We’re working conceptually to make less and less a distinction between (print and digital),” Dundas says.

A Younger, More Diverse Audience

It should come as no surprise that all five editors reported having a younger audience online. The degrees to those age differences varied. Heid and Heckert both reported an estimated 10-year difference at their publications, with *D* having the youngest readers (print readers average 35–45 while online readers average 25–35; at *Indianapolis Monthly*, it’s closer to 55 in print and 45 online). A larger divide exists at *Philadelphia*, with the average age of the print subscriber in their early fifties and the digital reader in their twenties and thirties.

In addition to age, the editors pointed out further interesting distinctions. Dundas said *Portland Monthly*’s digital audience skews notably more female the further you get from the subscriber core, reaching its peak online. McGrath noted that *Philadelphia*’s print audience is more suburban-based (about 70 percent), while the younger, online

audience is more city-based. This makes sense, he says, as the website content tends to be more city-focused.

According to Heid, *D*'s print magazine is more focused on affluent readers, while online he believes there are more “aspirational” readers — those who want to be the affluent people in Dallas someday. Heid says the website’s focus on local events also ensures a more inclusive demographic: “Because such a high percentage of what we do is based around being a guide to the city, I feel like our website is a little bit more inclusive of a broader cross-section of the city.”

Similarly, Heckert says *Indianapolis Monthly*'s online audience is more aspirational than the print subscribers: “There may be readers who, depending on where they are in their lives, may not be ready to be a print subscriber, but through the website, we can still prompt them to appreciate our content.”

A critique of city and regional magazines — made by Katherine Fry in 1995, during the still burgeoning years of the internet — revolves around the exclusion of non-white, less affluent urban residents. Perhaps companion websites can serve as a way to break down some of those race and class barriers, particularly if acted on intentionally. As Dundas says of *Portland Monthly*'s online audience, it's “more of a mosaic than a monolith.”

A Sense of Immediacy

Of course, it's not just demographics that separate the print audience from its digital counterpart — it's also what both groups are after. For Heid, the “standbys of service journalism, food and ‘stuff to do,’” are the basis for both audiences. Other editors spoke to the importance of service journalism online as well. Dundas says service content

attracts digital readers, and those pieces can live on and be re-pushed when the appropriate time comes around, such as a roundup of Portland's most popular swimming holes when the weather warms up.

For Estes, she thinks that while both *417* audiences are looking for the same content (hyper-local, service), online readers want more immediate content: "Our print readership is getting the June magazine at the end of May, and they're looking ahead toward June, whereas our online audience is a lot more immediate. ... I feel like our online audience is coming to us to find something to do and to use right in this moment."

Estes mentioned a four-part poverty series in the print magazine that got a lot of reader feedback, but she didn't hear as much from online readers. "Whereas something that's like, '5 places to get weird waffles' ... those kinds of things get more." She proposed two reasons for this: a sense of immediacy and shareability. "Those are things that may be more fun and exciting, and you can go act on it right now, or you can share it with your friends."

This need for immediacy online can be a challenge for small city and regional magazine staffs. *417* is in the process of hiring two new writers who can fill the gap between "lagging" print content and up-to-the-minute current events. Meanwhile, Heid says he is still figuring out DMagazine.com's role in breaking news coverage:

"With the print deadlines, as much as they might like to break news sometimes ... it's really online where being part of the daily conversation of what's going on in the city is so important. The difficulty we have competing in that space is we're not set up to be a news organization. There's a much larger newsroom right on the other side of downtown from us that is much better equipped to that, so we have to sort of think about what's our role? What's our space there?"

Heid says he tells his writers that where DMagazine.com can make a difference is by bringing commentary and analysis of the news. “I think that’s what we do best, when we do it best.”

For *Philadelphia*, news is one of the top traffic drivers to the website, along with daily coverage of the Philadelphia Eagles. These topics place the magazine in competition with larger staffed daily newspapers, but *Philadelphia* is holding its own. “We’re really trying to position ourselves as the dominant media brand in the city of Philadelphia, which means that we’re competing with the daily newspapers at this point,” McGrath says. “Now they still have larger staffs than we do, particularly when it comes to daily journalism, but that’s really what we’re focused on. Let’s compete in that arena because there’s an audience there.”

Strategic Rollout and the Cannibalization Effect

Perhaps the most crucial decision in online planning is determining how and when to strategically roll out the content repurposed from the print magazine. Release it online at the same time the magazine hits newsstands, and you might hurt newsstand sales. Wait too long and you risk readers not being able to find what they’re looking for online — or worse, finding outdated content instead. There’s also the matter of keeping the website populated, be it with unique or repurposed content. If the homepage is updated only once a month, what is the incentive for readers to visit?

There are enough considerations to make your head spin, but each editor has carefully observed their publication, taken a pulse on both its print and digital audiences and landed on a solution that feels comfortable for them. Of course, experimentation and

the freedom to occasionally “break the rules” is important. Here, a quick rundown of each magazine’s strategy and the thought process behind it:

DMagazine.com. For now, all of the print content is posted online at once. Originally, the content was posted the day subscriber copies went out, but a concern was raised from the circulation team and publisher about the possibility of damaging newsstand sales. Because the biggest chunk of newsstand sales happens during the first weekend, the group came to a mutual decision to hold back the print content until the Monday after the first weekend of newsstand sales.

Heid says he isn’t sure he believes in the cannibalization effect — the traditional thinking that to post print content online will deter readers from buying the magazine. They don’t have good data on their digital efforts cannibalizing the newsstand, he says, but they do see one strong correlation:

“...if something does well online, it does well on the newsstand. And if it doesn’t do well on the newsstand, it often doesn’t do well online. ... Now yes, you could argue that if we hadn’t put it online it would have done even better on the newsstand, but I find that difficult to believe. Most of the people who are only going to read it online and then see it on the newsstand and not buy it on the newsstand — they were never going to buy it on the newsstand to begin with.”

DMagazine.com will undergo a redesign in the near future, which will follow a more feed-based approach. Due to the nature of a feed-based website, Heid says they’ll move to filtering the print content out over the course of two or three weeks. Otherwise, the daily web exclusive content would be “crowded out” by the print stories.

Philadelphia. The largest of the sampled magazines, *Philadelphia* meters out the print content over the course of the month. In a unique way of giving the content new life online, they launched a weekend product about 18 months ago called Philadelphia Sunday. Essentially, it’s a weekly newsletter with its own cover image. When you click

on the digital cover image, it navigates to an online table of contents with the selections of print stories that are published online that week. Philadelphia Sunday goes out to about 25,000 digital users who have opted in.

Although McGrath acknowledges an industry-wide decrease in newsstand sales, which is without a doubt tied to the digital revolution, he also points out that the website in some ways has promoted a greater awareness of the print product:

“There’s no question that we have seen a softening of newsstand sales in the print product. I mean us and I think every other magazine in America, which is no doubt due to the fact that people are just spending more time online, on their phone or online, and just buying fewer magazines. And now it could also be because yes, we are taking some print content and putting it online and therefore people are just not spending the money to buy the actual magazine. But from an overall brand standpoint, the fact that you’re reaching a much larger audience online than we ever did in print, I think has raised awareness of everything that we do, including print.”

Indianapolis Monthly. Heckert and her digital media manager also employ a strategic rollout of the print content over the course of the month. This strategy, she says, is a response to the traditional thinking that publishing everything online at the top of the month would cannibalize the newsstand — but Heckert is beginning to notice that might not be the case. “What we’re starting to see is those audiences may be more different than we originally thought, and we may not be cannibalizing the newsstand if we release some things earlier,” she says.

While they determine if the traditional thinking still holds true, they’re experimenting with releasing content on a different timeline with different issues:

“Usually we roll out the features throughout the month, but sometimes we’ll release the cover story earlier in the month. Again we try not to do that because of newsstand, because that is something we’re still measured by, but if it’s a topic where we’re not sure how newsstand’s going to do, or if there’s a timely reason for releasing it earlier, we have done it and not seen a huge cut into the newsstand

because of that. So again this is part of an ongoing debate that we're having right now. Does it matter, essentially?"

One example of this is April's Best Restaurants issue, traditionally one of their bestsellers. Per usual, the issue went to subscribers and the newsstand first. There was also an event tied to the results, so Heckert and her digital media manager didn't want to release the winners online before the event. But they knew if they didn't, someone else would, and they would lose those page-views to another publication. As a compromise, they created a landing page that lists the top winners and prompts readers to find the full write-ups and rankings on newsstands before they are released online later in the month. "That's something where we're experimenting with, trying to have our cake and eat it, too," Heckert says. "As editor, I'm willing to experiment and work with our digital media manager to try to balance those things."

417. With their current operation, Estes says, the web team follows a calendar and budgets the month's content over the course of the month. The thinking behind this strategy was not based on fear of the cannibalization effect, Estes says, but in keeping the website consistently populated. But living by that calendar has its problems, especially in Southwest Missouri when the weather changes on a dime:

"Because we work on print so far ahead, and we don't necessarily know, for example, what the weather's going to be in Southwest Missouri on a particular day, we were running into things where we were just really sticking to our schedule. So maybe we had a 'five best sledding hills' story coming out in the January issue. And so at some point in January, that's scheduled to go up on the website. People love those kinds of stories, so that would get a lot of hits. But if we get a random 70-degree day in January, what we really need to be doing is not putting up the sledding story and instead having people on the web team who can go do like, 'six parks you need to visit today while the weather's beautiful before it snows again,' or something like that."

To expand their flexibility, *417* is adding two full-time staffers who will write both for print and web and be on-hand to cover current events and breaking news for the website as needed. “When things happen and we just need a body at a place so we can write about something before it becomes old news, we’ll actually have the manpower to do that,” Estes says.

Like McGrath, Estes thinks the website is extending the brand of *417*, which curbs concerns over the cannibalization effect. “I definitely think if anything, we have more people following us now than we would have before,” Estes says. “I don’t think we’ve ever felt like circulation has gone down while our online readership has gone up.”

Portland Monthly. At this midsized magazine, the print content goes online all at once when the magazine hits newsstands, a strategy Dundas says they have “wrestled with.” The exception to this is if there’s a callout in the print magazine to a digital feature, in which case that feature goes live before the magazine reaches subscribers. Originally, Dundas says, they waited until the first of the month to release print content, but they caught a trend that made them adjust their strategy:

“I think the decisive factor was every April we do a real estate issue. We produce a huge batch of market stats. I think it was last year, maybe the year before, we saw that the day it was on newsstands, the previous year’s articles became our most visited articles. I would almost say it was sickening because it was just this realization, and it had never been quite so clear before, that there’s a readership that sees something on the newsstand, and whether they buy the magazine or not, ... they see what we’re doing based off what they see in print, and they immediately go look for it on the website. I’m not saying that’s everything, it’s not even most things, but it’s enough significant projects we noticed that about that we decided we would just go live when the magazine goes out to the world.”

Dundas sees the print and digital products as separate units, so he’s not concerned with the website cannibalizing newsstand sales. Rather, he points to the cover as a better indicator of whether the magazine will do well on newsstands or not. He says he’s seen

the newsstands “hold together fairly well” for the past five years, despite industry struggles. *Portland Monthly* even saw a modest increase in newsstand sales last year.

Like McGrath and Estes, he also thinks the website has the power to attract new readers to the brand. “Hopefully the digital world is a whole new avenue to sell subscriptions and get people interested in the brand in general,” he says. “I don’t know how many digital readers we’re converting to print readers, I don’t imagine a ton, but there doesn’t have to be a lot for it to make a difference.”

Strategizing for Separate Audiences

To varying degrees, the editors view their print audiences and online audiences as separate groups, with some amount of overlap. How then do they balance retaining the value of the print magazine (when most of the print content can be found online for free) with offering their online readers unique benefits for visiting the website? The editors weighed in on the perceived benefits for their print and digital readers, while ultimately advising that each medium be used for its particular strengths. “I think it comes down to trying to embrace what each medium is good at,” McGrath says. “And also trying to understand that people may want to consume your content in multiple ways.”

Perceived benefits for print readers.

A whole experience. The print magazine, McGrath says, is still a better way to read long-form stories, and it’s the more beautiful medium — a sentiment that several of the editors echoed. Heid says the print magazine staff actually tries to create content he can’t replicate online, and he’s all for that: “That’s what a printed magazine should try to do. It should try to be an experience that’s just much more enjoyable to read on a page spread than it is in a digital format.” Heckert also referred to the print magazine as an

experience: “We package it that way: the visuals, the reporting, the print, the writing. It’s all a part of a package and experience.”

A forward look. As Estes mentioned, print subscribers are getting the June magazine in the middle of May, which allows them to see what the city has to offer in the upcoming month and plan ahead. For some publications, these readers are getting a sneak peek of content that won’t be available to digital readers for several weeks, in some cases. Heckert says that in addition to being cautious about the cannibalization effect, this is a valuable perk for print subscribers, which she wants them to maintain: “While I feel that a lot of magazine readers are coming for that whole experience, we don’t want them to feel like, ‘Oh, I can just go (to the website) at the top of the month and read everything and get it that way.’”

Perceived benefits for online readers.

Niche content. McGrath pointed out that online is where the publication has the space to provide more niche content, such as the Philadelphia Eagles coverage. “We will write maybe one or two feature stories a year in print about the Eagles, but the ability to really dive deep on the Eagles every single day, for Eagles fans, is a huge benefit,” he says. “We’d never be able to do that in print, but we obviously do it online.” Readers of DMagazine.com have access to archive issues all the way back to 1974, and Heid and his staff will sometimes unearth those stories and give them new life.

Up-to-the-minute. Digital, McGrath says, is faster-paced — a “snapshot” of what’s happening in the city right now. This goes back to Estes’ view of a sense of immediacy, which the website is able to satisfy with stories that readers can act on right

away. Online is where readers find breaking news coverage, which advanced print deadlines do not typically allow.

Audience engagement. Estes says *417* has a lot of connection with their online readers in the form of contests and promotions, and participation is high. Readers have an opportunity to vote for upcoming issues, such as “Best of 417” or “20 Under 30,” and those web readers are “making their voices heard.” *Indianapolis Monthly* prompts audience engagement with a poll on their home page that typically relates to a recent print story. Many of the editors also mentioned live events in their communities, which both print and digital audiences have an opportunity to join. Photo galleries from those events also feature prominently on several of the sites, featuring readers.

Readers choose level of interaction. Heckert and Dundas both mentioned that they’re seeing different audiences interacting with different parts of their websites — in other words, the readers are picking and choosing what interests them. Digital readers also assert their agency through the newsletters they subscribe to. “I know there are some readers who only get one of our email newsletters that might be about food or the culture scene or style and shopping, and they only engage with us through that,” Dundas says. “There aren’t very many, but there are a few that that is our only presence in their lives.” Of course, print readers can also take and leave the content that interests them, but websites and newsletters have the added benefit of customization.

Unique Challenges of City and Regional Magazines

There’s no denying that with small staffs and limited resources, city and regional magazine editors face multiple challenges when strategizing their publication’s digital

operation. A sampling of challenges were discussed in the interviews, most of which derived from those staffing and budgetary issues.

“A never-ending news hole.” All of the editors pointed to the “volume-driven” nature of the internet as a cause of concern, as opposed to the finite amount of space in the print magazine. “If you wanted to strip it down and be very unromantic about it, it’s a volume-driven business,” Dundas says. “Individual blog posts and stories may not get huge traffic, but if you put them all together they add up to the audience.”

Heid refers to this challenge as “a never-ending news hole.” He also says it’s difficult to know when your approach is the right one. “There are so many unknowns,” he says. “We can get a feel for how many posts a day should this channel have, or this channel have, or this channel have. But it’s difficult to know for sure that this is the right thing to do.”

Dundas thinks they’ve found a good balance at *Portland Monthly*. They don’t demand a certain daily quota or evaluate staffers by the traffic his or her posts generate: “What we do is say, this area of coverage exists, this blog exists, it has an associated email newsletter. In order to be a viable thing, it needs to have this many posts per week. Beyond that, whatever you can do is great.”

A further element of this never-ending news hole is staying in touch with your audience in a constantly updating media environment. Like Estes says, if you’re not staying in touch with your readers, they’ll go elsewhere. “With all of the digital content, if you are lazy about it and things aren’t going up often enough, you’re going to lose people,” she says. “They’re going to find something else to read and something else to do if you’re not constantly pinging them with things to pay attention to.”

Potential for burnout. Of course, a volume-driven website puts pressure on the editorial staffers, many of whom — and in these publications’ cases, *most* of whom — also have print responsibilities. *Philadelphia* has the largest print editorial staff at 28, about two-thirds of whom also have a role with the website, which publishes about 50 pieces of online-exclusive content per day. “There’s probably too much work for too few people at this point,” McGrath says. “Because you’re asking people to post a large amount of content on a daily basis, and for a fair number of them also still pay attention to what’s happening monthly in print, and it’s just a lot of work. So we have a tired staff at this point.”

Heckert admits this is the way the magazine business works now, but mentioned that it can be an added challenge for those staffers who didn’t always have digital responsibilities:

“Frankly, when you go to apply at a magazine like mine, I think it’s just part of the job description. You’re going to be working on digital. But a lot of my staff, and this is probably true for a lot of magazines, were here before the digital revolution came. So they’ve had to integrate that into their job descriptions. I’m already asking a lot of them. It’s finding that balance. And certainly as their manager I’m always trying to be cognizant of that workload, trying to find financial resources so that they can outsource those online duties.”

As *417* works to ramp up their online coverage, Estes said they’ll be asking for more and more from the editorial staff, and she knows that change will be difficult. But fortunately she has a team of “yes people,” she says, who are excited to make a change.

Social media. Heid was the lone editor to mention social media as a challenge. As the editorial director of *DMagazine.com*, social media strategy presumably weighs more predominantly on his mind. Heid says not all of their online audience is coming directly to the website, so they have to reach out to them via Facebook or other social media

channels — but those channels are constantly in flux, which makes it difficult to know where to allocate resources.

“It seems like every week, there’s some new social media platform that we’re supposed to care about. And then increasingly, social media platforms as they gain power, like Facebook, are trying to get publishers to publish articles directly to Facebook. And that creates a challenge because that’s a manpower issue. How do we create the same amount of content, but then also sort of tailor it for five different channels, or six different channels, and which are the channels that we should really care about? ... You know how these platforms come and go all the time. They wax and they wane. Snapchat is up right now and Twitter is down. But does that mean we shouldn’t care about Twitter anymore? I don’t know. We’re just trying to figure out this game.”

Translating features online. Many limitations come down to a lack of resources, such as the ability to translate a large feature online in a beautiful and complex way, a challenge that Heckert pinpointed:

“Going back to a magazine being an experience, we design it that way. It’s got all of these little bits and pieces that make a package fun. When you go to try to translate that online, unless you take that extra step of really developing the kind of landing page that maybe some of the bigger magazines are doing ... you have all these little bits and bobs that make up a package, and sometimes they seem out of context when they’re not part of that whole. So that’s what we’re debating now, because in the meantime we don’t have the resources to every month blow out a big digital presentation of these packages. ... But absolutely I think that we as a magazine need to have a way that we can present those packages that we’re working so hard on so that they sing digitally just as well as they do in print. And that again just goes back to resources.”

Estes reiterated these feelings. She says that most of what goes in the front of book translates easily to web, but features are an added challenge: “The web team tries to make those things look as nice as they can online, but they’re never going to be as beautiful as they are in a magazine.” Part of this goes back to embracing the medium, and most of the editors are in agreement that a feature is going to be more attractive in print, which is a perk for those readers. Even Heid, a digital editorial director, says the print magazine should try to create a unique experience that can’t be replicated. Regardless,

beautiful features can be created — and features that make sense as part of a whole — if the staffing and financial resources are available.

Analytics. One factor that did not come up in detail is how the editors assess reader response to the print and digital products, be it via analytics tools, social media activity, focus groups, surveys or otherwise. But as a whole, the toughest question to answer was in measuring the overlap between their print and online audiences. None were able to give a definitive answer. It seems likely that national, general interest magazines have more resources to analyze their audiences and respond accordingly in order to constantly increase page-views and print sales.

Strategies for Success

Perhaps the most comprehensive strategy for success is to follow the editors' earlier advice of embracing the medium you're working with. In the case of a city magazine website, that means identifying and providing niche content of interest to your particular regional audience; providing up-to-the-minute coverage of breaking news and quirky weather patterns; and engaging your audience through digital tools such as contests, promotions, polls and social media. In addition to these approaches, the editors identified several more strategies for success.

Newsletters. All five magazines use newsletters to engage with their audiences and promote content, and each reported seeing high open rates on these digital elements. To varying degrees, responsibilities for the individual newsletters rely on the editor who heads the corresponding section in the print magazine. According to Estes, newsletters are particularly useful because they're "low impact in the effort it takes to create them" but "dense" in terms of usefulness.

Interestingly, Heckert drew a possible connection between the popularity of their top newsletter, The Dish, with how well their dining content does online. Unlike most of their other newsletters, The Dish is weekly, so readers are more frequently being pushed to that content. It's hard to tell if the newsletter is the reason behind the increased views; food tends to be a traffic-driver for most city and regional magazine websites.

Maintaining authority. The same could perhaps be said of any publication, but maintaining authority — and similarly, credibility — is paramount to a city or regional magazine's success. This is the overlap Heckert sees between the print audience and the web audience: a trust in *Indianapolis Monthly*.

“...what is allowing us to be successful and continuing to grow those numbers, the binding thread is our authority. And that's an authority we've built through the investment of time and resources, both financial and just building it out. Many city magazines rely on their authority. It's something that we've cultivated over the decades, that people trust what we're saying. I think that is something that is common between what does well online and what does well in print. It's that authority we bring to it.”

Similarly, Heid brought up maintaining credibility, particularly when it comes to product-based revenue streams on the web. “You have to balance the potential for revenue and things like that against maintaining your integrity and your authority,” Heid says. “If the reader starts to detect that you're anything like a pay-for-play, or you're only putting something up because the company's going to make money on it, then you've undermined your credibility and the value of both the journalism and the service journalism that you do.”

Heid added that it's important for magazines to continue to explore different revenue channels, but they must make sure, as they do in print, that they are transparent with readers about what is sponsored and unsponsored content.

Digital gatekeeper. Most of the magazines involved have a point person in charge of the magazine's digital operation, though all serve under different titles: digital media manager, digital director, digital editor. Heid is the editorial director over DMagazine.com. The editors spoke highly of these staffers — Heckert used the term “gatekeeper” — and they are clearly an important element of keeping a city magazine website up and running.

Particularly at *Indianapolis Monthly*, the digital media manager is one staffer who has a foot both in editorial and advertising. Heckert says he manages the divide well:

“The impetus is really on him, and I think he does a very good job of this, of really keeping on one side of the fence and not letting there be crossover. So he's really great about going on sales calls and being an advocate for editorial on the website and helping them come up with advertising packages, but also is a huge support system for the editorial side and does all of our social and that sort of stuff.”

As part of *417*'s revamping process, the digital director, who has a background in journalism, will be generating a lot of the online-exclusive content. Dundas says *Portland*'s digital editor isn't “off on her own internet island” but stays highly involved with print and even writes for the magazine occasionally. “We have the digital editor because it has proven to be really useful to have one person at the nexus of content and social media and all the things that bring it together,” Dundas says.

“Taking it that extra magazine step.” Heckert says she knows online readers aren't coming to *Indianapolis Monthly* for their daily news; they still rely on their local newspaper for that information. So when the time comes for the magazine to cover a story the newspaper is already on top of, they have to go a step further:

“When we do original content on the web, we think about, how can we present this in such a way that it brings our editorial voice to what we're doing, that there's an angle we're taking? That's something we think about a lot because we

want it to not just be, OK we're covering something that's the news of the day, but we're taking it that extra magazine step and bringing something more to it, whether it's a particular angle or more reporting, that sort of thing."

Bringing it that "extra magazine step" is what separates a city magazine's news coverage from the traditional newspaper take. As Heid says, editors must ask what their publication's role is in each breaking news situation.

Experimenting with audio and visual. The internet is an ideal platform for visual and audio storytelling. Dundas says *Portland Monthly* recently (and quietly) launched a podcast with low-budget techniques: using an office for a recording studio, buying inexpensive microphones and interviewing people who, for the most part, they're talking to for print stories. Dundas says they launched the podcast simply because the editorial staff wanted to give it a go. It's so new that they didn't develop a sales plan behind it; rather, the sales team is just now being briefed in case the endeavor goes well.

Dundas and his staff are unsure about the podcast's success, but experimentation is key toward finding the digital elements that do work. "What I don't know, and which I think people have had some mixed experiences with in the city magazine world, is how big a local audience there is," Dundas says. "Obviously if you get something like Serial or The Believer, anything that has a national audience, you can hit a number that makes a lot of sense. What I don't know is if there are enough *Portland Monthly* readers who are also podcast listeners to make a very big audience for it — but we'll find out."

Learning from others. As evidenced from the 2015 CRMA panel, "Making Digital Work for You," which was the impetus for this research, city magazine staffs are still learning from one another in order to optimize their digital operations.

Heckert credits being part of Emmis Communications as a crucial factor in *Indianapolis Monthly*'s success. "There's a lot of idea-sharing between entities," she says. "The digital media managers have a call every month where they're sharing ideas. Our digital media manager is having a meeting every week with our corporate digital person. So there's a resource there and some shared expenses that make it easier for us to work with our smaller budget to do what we do with our website."

Dundas says this idea sharing will remain a critical part of creating successful online strategies: "Honestly, I'm sure that we'll all just be figuring it out forever."

Conclusion

If there is one conclusion that emerged from this research, it's that city and regional magazine staffs are adaptable and resilient in the face of unique challenges and tough industry struggles. With each roadblock, editors are quick to develop strategies to steer their publication in the right direction.

By first determining the role of their websites, editors can then strategize the rollout of content to reach larger and more elastic audiences while simultaneously keeping an eye on an unpredictable newsstand. They continue to embrace the medium in order to deliver a sense of immediacy, fulfill the needs of dual audiences and interact with readers. They experiment with digital elements, learn from likeminded publications and rely on their digital gatekeepers. They are invested in their communities and in providing in-depth service and investigative journalism to those communities with a voice of authority.

While remaining cautious and realistic about the magazine industry as a whole, the editors I spoke to all seemed to be optimistic about their publication's print and digital endeavors.

"I would say, and I say this with a major knock-on-wood feeling because I don't want to be cavalier, but I think so far (the website) has only done good things for us," Dundas says. "I feel really lucky that I can say that right now because obviously the industry as a whole has been very challenged by the adaptation to the digital world. I also say that as someone who loves print and is very committed to making a great print magazine. I don't think those two have to be in conflict."

Possibilities for future research. Throughout the course of my interviews, national magazines rarely made an appearance, save for a quick mention of *New York Magazine's* impressive branding strategies. This was, of course, a discussion of city and regional magazines — but as city magazine editors learn from one another, one can assume they are also taking note of national magazines' digital strategies in order to inform their own decisions and innovations. In what ways and to what extent national magazines influence (and even inspire) the digital strategies of city magazines would be an interesting topic for further exploration. Finally, a survey of the analytical tools city publications are using to assess reader response would fill a gap in this research.

APPENDIX A: PROJECT PROPOSAL

I trained my sights on the Missouri School of Journalism fifteen years ago. At ten years old, I was aware of two things professionally: I wanted to be a journalist, and MU was the best place to learn the trade.

In those days, my focus was on newspapers. I joined my first school paper staff in middle school, writing movie reviews on “throwbacks” like *Sixteen Candles* and editorials about treating everyone equally, people like my cousin with Down syndrome and my uncle who had HIV. Channel One, the news program where Anderson Cooper got his start, published the HIV piece online in 2003, awarding me my first big byline. By my senior year of high school, I was the editor of the monthly school newspaper and writing sports stories and occasional features for our small-town weekly.

Once at MU, I was assigned to the *Missourian* for my reporting semester. The night before my first general assignment shift, an EF-5 tornado hit my hometown of Joplin, and I rushed home to check on friends and family. John Schneller of the *Missourian* asked if I would be willing to write first-person dispatches from location, and I agreed, thus beginning a highly unusual and incredibly valuable reporting experience.

Despite years in newspapers, I chose the magazine track. My first commitment was to writing, and I craved the creative freedom magazines could offer. I received a well-rounded education in the field: Magazine Editing with Jennifer Rowe, Magazine Design with Jan Colbert, Intermediate Writing with Nina Furstenaus — all experts in their areas — and then capped it off with Magazine Staff, serving as a department editor at *Vox Magazine*. I graduated in 2012 with a strong skillset, but I wanted to delve deeper, so I returned in 2014 to pursue my MA.

During those years outside of the university, I gained a new appreciation for city and regional magazines. I spent much of my free time reading long-form pieces, many of which were published in regional publications: Robert Sanchez's disaster journalism in *5280*, Skip Hollandsworth's investigations in *Texas Monthly*, Brooke Jarvis' work in *Seattle Met*. Not one for jetting off to New York City, I realized that top-notch journalism was being done all over the country at unique, locally focused magazines. This would be my new focus.

My graduate experience has been invaluable. In *Literature of Journalism*, I studied truly great writing; in *Covering Traumatic Events*, I learned how to interview trauma victims and report on difficult stories in good conscience; in *Qualitative Research Methods*, I reversed an inherent dislike for research. I worked as a sports editor at the *Missourian* and a teaching assistant for a documentary journalism course, all the while honing my leadership skills and work ethic. Perhaps my favorite part of being a graduate student has been attending conferences: Writers and Editors, Based on a True Story and the City and Regional Magazine Association Conference and Awards. At the CRMA conference, I had the privilege of meeting and learning from numerous city and regional magazine editors, writers and staff members. I walked away with several ideas for *Vox*, and further confidence that the world of city and regional magazines is an ideal place to work.

I believe my experiences have prepared me for success as I endeavor on this professional project. My years in newspapers have taught me how to produce quality work under tight deadlines; my summer as a department editor at *Vox* trained me for the fast-paced cycle of a weekly magazine; my coursework made me a smarter journalist and

researcher; and my teaching assistantships have showed me how to lead. I look forward to continuing to improve in these areas and more during my time at *Vox* and as an outcome of my conversations with fellow editors throughout the course of my research. I'm confident that my project will be a productive step on my path to a career in city and regional magazines.

Professional Component

I will complete my professional component as editor-in-chief of *Vox Magazine*. This position will be a culmination of several years of journalism studies and hands-on training at the Missouri School of Journalism, and I cannot think of a better way to conclude my graduate experience.

I first worked at *Vox* as a department editor in the summer semester of 2012, when I was introduced to the exhausting and exhilarating cycle of a weekly magazine. I quickly grew accustomed to the mad rush of production — the constant juggling of pitching, encouraging writers, fact checking, posting online content, competing for cleverest cover line or calendar entry, circling galleys on Wednesday mornings like a pack of wolves.

The leadership team under which I worked that summer maintained high standards. They were uncompromising but gracious with their constructive feedback, two traits that I hope to emulate during my tenure as editor-in-chief. I look forward to working with a large and diverse team of creative minds, including students, faculty and fellow teaching assistants in roles encompassing the editorial, art, multimedia and digital aspects of *Vox*. I will be leading an editorial team that includes several new teaching

assistants, which will be both a challenge and an opportunity for fresh ideas and newfound enthusiasm.

My professional component will begin August 17, when the fall editorial team will merge with the summer editorial team for a weeklong transition period. As of August 24, I will take over the reins as editor-in-chief until the fall semester concludes on December 18. I will work at least 30 hours a week for those 17 weeks to satisfy the professional project requirements.

My position entails myriad responsibilities, including but not limited to guiding and approving pitches from Magazine Staff students, editing magazine content on macro and micro levels, writing a weekly editor's letter, supervising and participating in production shifts, approving all print designs, proofreading the iPad edition, developing feature ideas, organizing the weekly print lineup, collaborating with Intermediate and Advanced Writing classes and attending several weekly staff, TA and department meetings.

A typical week will resemble the following:

Sunday: Edit galleys for the week's issue and give design feedback

Monday: Attend TA meeting and staff class, guide and approve pitches concurrently with leadership team, lead full staff meeting and department meeting, supervise and participate in evening production

Tuesday: Turn in editor's letter, attend evening production if needed

Wednesday: Arrive early for last round of production (1 p.m. deadline), proofread iPad draft

Thursday: Attend TA meeting, *Missourian* budget meeting, guide and approve

second round pitches

Friday: Attend feature meeting and print critique, organize print lineup

Instructor and editorial director Heather Lamb will oversee my work. Physical evidence of my professional component will be provided to my committee in the form of weekly field notes detailing my work, including editorial and leadership challenges I encountered. Weekly editions of *Vox* and copies of my editor's letters will also be retained.

I'm confident that my coursework at the Missouri School of Journalism has prepared me for the role of editor-in-chief at *Vox*. The knowledge I gained from Magazine Editing, Magazine Staff, Intermediate and Editorial Writing provided solid groundwork, and the work ethic I've honed as a reporter and sports editor at the *Missourian* and department editor at *Vox* have equipped me for the weighty task ahead. Even my seemingly unrelated experience at Veterans United prior to graduate school instilled in me a strong sense of professionalism and a revitalized appreciation for the magazine world, as did my recent experience at the City and Regional Magazine Conference and Awards. I look forward to the challenge and to growing personally, professionally and as a leader.

Analysis Component

At the 2015 City and Regional Magazine Association conference in Dallas, Mary Melton, editor-in-chief of *Los Angeles Magazine* and editorial director of Emmis Publishing, said on a panel that all new hires at *LA* must be able to add to the magazine's website. Instinctively, my eyebrows rose. *All new hires? Los Angeles* — an award-

winning city magazine — did not hire digital-only staff? I knew the importance of web content, and I've produced web content for both the *Columbia Missourian* and *Vox* on two content management systems. But was I really prepared to walk into the offices of *Los Angeles* or any other city magazine and start pumping content online? I wasn't sure.

Several conversations about online production arose over the course of the conference, particularly in the panel “Making Digital Work for You,” led by editors Emma Sullivan of *Chicago*, Amanda Heckert of *Indianapolis Monthly* and Jason Heid of *D*. It was clear that online strategy was on editors' minds, and for good reason: There does not appear to be a “one size fits all” approach to city and regional magazine websites. With small budgets and few online-only staff members, editors must consider how they want to “divvy out” content for their online audience while still “rewarding” their print audience for subscribing. They must make a choice between publishing everything online at once or posting content strategically and periodically over the course of the monthly production cycle. I am interested in how editors come to these decisions and how they simultaneously address the needs of their print and online audiences.

Utilizing the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews, I will investigate these challenges and attempt to discern successful strategies for differing publications. This topic is relevant to the magazine field because city magazines are significant conduits to their communities, and the internet is an increasing concern to magazine editors as they strategize content. Furthermore, city magazines face unique challenges as compared to their general interest, mass-market counterparts and are therefore in need of unique solutions. It is relevant to my own career because, as made apparent by Melton's comment at the CRMA conference, I must be capable in online production if I hope to be

hired at a city publication. Further, it is applicable to my professional skills component, serving as editor-in-chief of *Vox Magazine*, as I can apply what I learn from other editors to *Vox*'s online strategies.

Theoretical framework

As Frith (2012) asserts, community-based magazine editors put an enormous amount of effort into getting to know their local, niche audiences, more so, perhaps, than is required of their general interest magazine counterparts: "Editors and writers for such magazines spend most of their professional lives getting to know the communities they serve and ensuring their content addresses readers' ever-changing ideals and information needs" (p. 224). As those perceived needs are at the forefront of editors' minds when strategizing their online content, the uses and gratification theory of mass communication will serve as an appropriate backdrop for my analysis.

The concept that audience engagement with media depends on the satisfactions and needs of the consumer has been understood since the beginning of media research (McQuail, 2005). McQuail offers several acknowledged needs of an audience: relaxation, companionship, diversion or "escape" (p. 423). Berger (1982) refines this list with a few additions: amusement, experience of the beautiful, shared experiences with others, curiosity, identity-formation and participation in history (p. 99). There are several factors that might play into the needs of a particular audience member: personal attributes, such as age and gender; social background, including class and religion; media-related needs, as outlined above; personal tastes and preferences; media awareness; and general habits of media use, such as where it is consumed and with whom (McQuail, 2005, p. 430).

The school known as the “uses and gratifications approach” got its start in the early 1940s with research on the appeal of radio soap operas and daily newspapers; it was rediscovered and further developed in the 1960s and 1970s (McQuail, 2005). Despite its dated history, uses and gratifications theory remains relevant today, especially with the advents of new technologies. Ruggiero (2000) reasons that the theory has an important role in 21st century research, as the internet has significantly impacted the needs and uses of media users and promotes higher interactivity than can be accessed in traditional media. Indeed, online tools such as discussion boards and blogs provide magazine journalists with “more ways than ever to make direct connections with readers and tailor content to their niche audiences” (Frith, 2012, p. 224).

It is important to acknowledge that not all researchers value the theory of uses and gratifications. Criticisms have included the heavy reliance on self-reports, lack of sophistication regarding the social origins of audiences’ needs and a lack of internal consistency (Ruggiero, 2000). Regardless, uses and gratifications can be a useful approach to guide researchers in understanding audience consumption of media, including city and regional magazines.

This theoretical framework asks two main questions: Why do people use a particular type of media, and what gratifications do they receive from that media? (Ruggiero, 2000) U&G is appropriate to my analysis because magazine editors ask the same inquiries when planning online strategies. City magazine editors are especially attuned to their audiences, and many decisions they make about online production will be influenced by the perceived needs and opinions of their readers. While I will not be surveying the publications’ online audiences directly, throughout my interviews I will

attempt to determine how each editor views the uses of their companion website, how editors perceive the gratifications their readers receive and the evidence for that and to what extent these factors shape the editors' online strategies.

Literature Review

Even as far back as 1888, the power and influence of city and regional magazines was evident. King David Kalakaua, then the reigning monarch of Hawaii, commissioned a magazine to be Hawaii's connection to the world (Johnson & Prijatel, 2007). The publication promoted tourism for nearly a century before becoming the better-known *Honolulu Magazine* in 1966, a decade when locally focused magazines began to multiply across the United States (Hynds, 1995). But it wasn't only the name of the publication that changed: When *Paradise of the Pacific* became *Honolulu*, its editorial focus was no longer pinned on drawing outsiders in. Rather, it transformed into a magazine for the residents of Hawaii.

Post-World War II demographic shifts are traditionally credited with the growth of urban specific magazines (Riley & Selnow, 1991). Urban areas were growing with increasing numbers of affluent and educated citizens, a population advertisers wanted to reach — and what better way to reach them than with city-oriented publications? As the magazine industry made a shift from mass-marketed general-interest publications to “niche” lifestyle titles (Greenberg, 2000), over 60 American city and regional titles were launched in the 1960s, decades behind the already established *Philadelphia* (1909) and *New Yorker* (1925) but in the race nonetheless.

It would be remiss to recount the origins of city and regional magazines without giving consideration to Fry's (1995) critique of the genre, one that was born on (and perhaps continues to) exclude non-white, less affluent urban residents. Fry also warns against reinforcing regional stereotypes. These are both important considerations for editors and publishers in the city magazine world.

Characteristics of city and regional magazines. City and regional magazines are classified by several characteristics. First and foremost, they are publications that dedicate their content to a city or group of cities (Riley, 1982). They offer substantial reporting in the form of service features, investigative pieces, editorials and other unique content (Johnson & Pritajel, 2007). O'Grady (2004) identifies one further characteristic in addition to a local focus and blend of both service and feature journalism: "a format of enduring quality" (p. 3). According to Hynds (1995), most city magazines are privately owned, publish on a monthly cycle and depend on subscriptions over newsstand sales for their revenue.

This reliance on the reader is repaid by an editorial staff that is especially attuned to its audience's needs. In a survey of online editors at city and regional magazines, Jenkins (2014) found that a majority of respondents named community needs as a priority for their publications. City publications meet these needs by not only "taking a stand" on local issues (p. 2) and encouraging community involvement but through carefully constructed service packages full of region-specific information. Local reports on dining, lifestyle and entertainment are just part of city magazines' efforts to go beyond typical newspaper coverage and provide a fresh perspective in a distinctive voice (Hynds, 1979). Fletcher and VandenBergh (1982) quoted one magazine editor who argued that city

magazines “provide the only medium which has the capability of establishing the ‘identity and flavor’ of a market...to capture the true ‘picture’ of the market it serves” (p. 314).

Editors attribute the popularity of their city magazines to one or more of four main reasons: (1) local pride (2) failure of daily newspapers to fulfill needs (3) affluent readers who attract advertising revenue and (4) increased leisure time and money, which leads to interest in service stories that recommend where readers should spend their resources (Hayes, 1981).

A focus on service — a theme that continually emerges in research on urban focused magazines — should not distract from the serious, investigative journalism featured in such publications. Hynds’ (1995) survey of city magazine editors revealed a commitment to civic issues, including government reform and corruption, human rights and city planning. The editors cited numerous letters to the editor as proof of their publication’s ability to rouse citizens into action.

Today, city and regional magazines are published widely across the United States. Although no official numbers exist, the City and Regional Magazine Association (CRMA) and International Regional Magazine Association (IRMA) are a good place to start in developing an estimate. At the time of writing, the CRMA lists 70 member magazines in its directory. The association reports an audience outreach of 21 million among its publications (CRMA, 2010). The IRMA, founded in 1960 by *Down East* and *Vermont Life*, currently encompasses 31 regional titles.

Other publications with a city and regional focus certainly exist. The Alliance for Audited Media lists 55 titles, 41 of which are not CRMA members. In addition to annual

dues that might be restrictive for magazines, the CRMA requires a circulation audit from a third party audit company to confirm readership figures, which might deter publications.

Defining what one means by a “city and regional magazine” is essential to coming up with a comprehensive tally. C. James Dowden, executive director of the CRMA, says the association only includes “general interest consumer magazines, published on a city or regional basis” (personal communication, September 2, 2015). This would exclude singular-focused magazines or spinoff publications, such as *Chicago Sports* or *Atlanta Home*. Based on this definition, the CRMA estimates there are 125–130 city and regional magazines in the U.S.

City and regional magazines on the web. Although they still rely heavily on print revenue (Rondon, 2014), city and regional magazines are continuously optimizing their companion websites. How each magazine strategizes their online publication varies. In her recent study of city magazine online editors, Jenkins (2014) found that most sites were updated daily: 20 percent received updates multiple times throughout the day, 15 percent weekly and 10 percent monthly. Nearly all editors published “repurposed” content from print: 55 percent published half of the print content while 30 percent published all of the content found in the print edition. In addition to moving content across mediums, city magazines are also offering online-exclusive content: 85 percent of surveyed online editors reported publishing articles written exclusively for the web. Blogs, photo galleries and videos were also cited as online additions.

A magazine’s companion website can serve multiple functions. Editors in Jenkins’ (2014) survey listed being “a part of our readers’ lives more than once a month”

(p. 6), building on brand awareness, and reflecting the print magazine as their foremost objectives. Digital editions also offer a wider audience for local magazines. While monthly magazines “traditionally lived in (their) own time zone,” they can now be accessed internationally by people interested in visiting the area, or former residents who want to stay informed about the community (Sivek, 2010).

Folio's 2014 City and Regional Magazine Survey (Rondon, 2014) found that print is still the main revenue source for local magazines. Print accounts for 93 percent of city/regional magazine revenue, which is only a few points off from where those numbers stood ten years ago. And yet, several publishers projected a shift toward alternative revenue in 2015, including online and digital media. *Folio* also found a divide between magazines by size: Those generating more than \$5 million in annual revenue rely on print advertising for only 65 percent of their portfolio; meanwhile, print ads account for more than 80 percent of revenue for smaller publications.

Reich (2009) states that the key to success in an era when “information wants to be free” (p. 15) is to create must-read content for online editions, a sentiment that has remain unchanged despite technological advances. Reich's prediction — “there is no doubt that must-read content, embedded in a community experience, will be a critical element for all who achieve success” — bodes well for city and regional magazines, who are already significantly invested in their surrounding communities. However, generating a niche, locally focused audience (as opposed to mass market audiences attracted by national, general interest magazines) can be a roadblock for city magazines looking to attract online advertising.

Of course, social media is an additional device that city magazines can use to gain traction for their online content. “Social media” is used as an umbrella term and includes multiple communication methods, such as blogs, social networking sites and message boards with an emphasis on user-generated content (Bernoff & Li, 2008). Magazine professionals have been diligent in exploring tactics to attract and connect with audiences via social media, though this is easier said than done at smaller publications without robust budgets that allow for investing in digital innovation and teams dedicated purely to online audience engagement (Sivek, 2010). While social media is a wide enough topic to warrant its own research, it is worth being included in the study of online strategies of city and regional magazines in order to better understand how editors are drawing readers to their online content.

Pressures on city/regional magazine editors in a digital world. City and regional magazines face many challenges when it comes to online publishing, several of which are unique to smaller, regionally focused magazines as opposed to their national, general interest counterparts. For starters, city magazines generally have small staffs and limited resources; they are beholden to their advertisers; and online editors might have less experience than print editors (Jenkins, 2014). The web is a beast unto itself and must be updated more frequently than the print edition. Editors must create websites that are not only attractive to readers but also functional (Jenkins, 2014).

Moving content from the print edition to the web is not as simple as it might seem. As Klinenberg (2005) found, the more professionals work with different media platforms, the clearer it becomes that content is not fluid, and procedures must be developed to translate stories from one medium to another. Due to this logic, Klinenberg

found that editorial decisions are sometimes made according to what will flow most easily across platforms, which he warns could undermine the integrity of the publication and also fail to suit the needs of readers, which should be a city magazine's first priority.

A further challenge for city magazines publishing both in print and online is “a proverbial case of too many cooks in the kitchen” (Duffy, 2012). “Of course,” Duffy writes, “this is not entirely new ... what *is* new are the nature and extent of influence from a different generation of stakeholders, namely members of the digital team” (p. 20). In her study of women's magazine producers, Duffy (2012) observed noteworthy competition between print and web editorial members:

Rather than see the magazine and its extensions as a cohesive brand entity, as executives often describe, there is self-preservation, especially when it is economically incentivized. That is, while managers may be willing to recalibrate notions of their business to fit within a new technological paradigm, individual media workers may still cling to the practices and values woven into the culture of a particular medium. (p. 21)

Duffy ultimately concluded that bringing in new members who have not been immersed in print culture and therefore work toward different organizational goals will likely cause mounting tension among magazine staffs as opposing sides attempt to determine editorial control, identify the audience and agree on brand definition. Perhaps this is a good argument for all staff members being trained in both print and web, rather than fostering a “church and state” dynamic.

Not all journalists, however, would agree with that sentiment. Mitchelstein and Bockowski (2009) discuss the added pressures that online news has created for journalists, who are now expected to multitask across several media platforms — a method Bromley (1997) calls “multiskilling.” In his study of news production in the U.S., Klinenberg (2005) recorded several complaints from journalists who argued that added

labor and digital pressures undermined their craft. Whether magazine editors choose to employ specialized staff members or separate their online and print production teams, each strategy has its challenges.

A further practical concern of city magazines is their specialized audiences. While these dedicated, niche markets have kept city magazines afloat in print, they can be a detriment to online editions. Unable to draw in large numbers of readers online — as compared to national, general interest magazines — city magazines struggle drawing in online advertisers for revenue. James Dowden, executive director of the CRMA, said the association struggles to bring in national experts on digital matters. “It doesn’t translate,” he said. “You can’t get millions of hits in Des Moines when you’re writing about Des Moines” (Sivek, 2015).

Perhaps the largest concern city and regional magazine editors face when planning their online strategies is the issue of “cannibalization.” Simon and Kadiyali (2007) studied U.S. consumer magazines’ print and web editions between the years 1990 to 2001 and determined that digital content did in fact reduce the demand for the print magazine. The researchers were able to go a step further, specifically observing content overlap between the companion products. They determined that if limited overlap existed, print sales were reduced by 2 to 4 percent; if the magazine placed their entire print content online, print sales were reduced by about 9 percent.

These are significant numbers that should be taken into consideration. However, some studies have found no effect on print sales (Kaiser, 2006), and others have determined that website visits actually increased print circulation (Kaiser & Kongsted, 2005). This latter phenomenon might be attributed to what Kaiser (2006) calls

“awareness,” one of two positive effects companion websites can have on print demand, the second being “additional service.” Digital editions create awareness for the print version by allowing readers to sample the content. Additional service includes community activities like online discussion groups and the ability to enroll online for a print subscription. Kaiser (2006) also found that while competing outlet channels had initial negative effects on print revenue, these effects flattened out over time as publishers adjusted their online strategies.

While cannibalization is certainly a factor to consider when planning and generating content for companion websites, the majority of readers do not consider the internet to be a substitute for print: Over 90 percent continue to purchase the print edition of their favorite magazine despite the same content being available online, sans subscription fees (Simon & Kadiyali, 2007).

New York Magazine and the future of city/regionals. In December 2013, *New York Magazine* moved from weekly to bimonthly publication. They promised 20 percent more content in each issue and shifted resources — including the \$3.5 million saved by printing fewer magazines — to online and digital efforts (Levy, 2015). The gamble, according to *New York*’s general manager of digital, Michael Silberman, has paid off when it comes to cohesiveness between the print and digital staffs: “When you’re putting out a weekly magazine with a relatively small staff and also updating the website 50, 70 times a day, neither team truly has enough time to collaborate” (Levy).

With more resources and additional staff, *New York* has boosted coverage for their satellite websites, Vulture and The Cut, launched a social science blog and experimented with “pop-up” blogs and audio content. Publisher Larry Burstein is seeing

tangible results: a new online traffic record and a shift toward digital advertising, which now makes up 50–55 percent of all advertising revenue (Levy, 2014). Burstein says the new strategy is a reflection of how today’s audience is getting information and interacting with magazines and is pleased with the frequency of updates to the website. *New York* is still experimenting with their online production, particularly in how to translate longer features from print to web in a “smart” and “repeatable” way (Levy).

Considering that *New York* has “set the standard” and “put into practice the ideas (that) influenced the development of the modern city magazine” (Marmarelli, 1991, p. 220), it’s possible that this shift in focus is a harbinger of things to come for city and regional publications — if successful online strategies can be found (and afforded by publishers and online advertising revenue).

In his prediction of the future of magazines, Abrahamson (2009) anticipates that while the print version will remain essential for the branding of magazines, print and online efforts will eventually be operated as separate business models. But some elements of magazines, he says, will remain the same: “rigorous and enterprising reporting; thoughtful and well-rounded conceptual analysis; compelling, eloquent and informative writing; and engaging and beautiful art direction” (p. 3). It is an exciting time for city and regional magazines: a period for merging traditional journalistic elements with adaptable online strategies in order to reach ever-changing audiences.

Research Questions

This qualitative research seeks to examine how city and regional magazine editors strategize their online content for optimal success, as well as discover the specific

challenges these niche, locally focused publications are facing in the current climate. This study will use two research questions to identify and analyze both strategies and shortcomings of online production at city and regional magazines:

RQ1: How do city and regional magazine editors strategize online production so as to meet the needs of both print and online audiences?

RQ2: What unique challenges do city and regional magazines face in online production, and what are the best strategies for success at this time?

Methodology

In order to form a thorough representation of the online strategies of city and regional magazines, I will interview four to six city/regional magazine editors across the country. Editors will be selected from City and Regional Magazine Association members due to the association's third-party audit guidelines required for membership. So as to gather results that are as relevant as possible to the entire group of city and regional magazines, I will not be selecting strictly from CRMA award winners. Rather, magazines will be divided by circulation and geographic region. High circulation will be considered above 60,000; middle between 30,000–60,000; low below 30,000. A geographic split will also be respected in order to gather a representative sample.

The interview is a popular research method, especially for journalists, as we tend to be comfortable with the format. Berger presents four types of interviews: informal, unstructured, semi-structured, and structured (2013). For the purpose of my interview with city and regional magazine editors, I will be utilizing the semi-structured method. The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to prepare a list of questions to ask

the subject, but also allows for a free-flowing conversation and follow-up inquiries, as opposed to the rigidity of the structured interview, in which the researcher cannot deviate from his or her list of predetermined questions (Berger, 2013).

I plan to conduct phone interviews that will last from 30 minutes to 1 hour, according to the availability of my interviewees. I will prepare a list of several questions, approximately half of which will be assigned top priority; the others, while chosen carefully, will be optional in order to give me the freedom to follow the natural flow of conversation and ask follow-up questions.

I will record the interviews, utilizing a backup device. Immediately following the interview, I will transcribe the recording so as to compare the conversations and appropriately conclude my findings for the final report. The interview transcripts will be included for submission to my committee. In addition, editors' responses will be categorized by similar answers and thematic content in the final report in order to provide a logical narrative.

My first choice of interview subjects will be the editors-in-chief of their respective magazines, as I believe they will have the most knowledge of both the print and online sides of their publications. However, if an EIC requests that I speak with the chief online editor, that option will be considered.

Following the initial selection of my preferred magazines, I will send an inquiry email to the editor-in-chief to request participation in my analysis. If accepted, an interview time will be scheduled and the questions will be provided. This provision will allow the subject to be fully prepared and to flag unwanted questions that might reveal competitive trade secrets.

Prior to the interviews, I will carefully review both the print and online versions of the magazine as well as the media kit of each publication so that I may tailor my questions accordingly. Committee members will be informed of my subjects prior to the interview, and the standard list of questions will be submitted for approval. Several inquiries relating to online strategies will be made, including but not limited to: perspectives of the most important online content; timing and frequency of online production; the perceived differences between print and online audiences; the percentage of print content repurposed for web; strategies for online-exclusive content; staff sizes, responsibilities and available resources; and incentives for buying the print edition.

Rationale. Professionals in the magazine industry have concluded that magazines are both “under-taught” and “under-researched,” despite their importance to the study of American culture (Fosdick, 2008, p. 2). As Sivek (2013) contends, “because of their local significance and claim to local authority, it is worth taking a closer look at what city magazines actually do” both in print and for their online readers (p. 3). Journalism research encompassing both magazines and the internet is limited — the majority is found in trade publications such as *Folio* — but if one narrows his or her scope to city and regional magazines, the findings become even scarcer. The closest study to my own is Jenkins’ (2014) survey of 24 online editors at city and regional magazines in order to determine characteristics of such professionals. However, despite several insightful responses to a group of open-ended questions, I believe the qualitative nature of in-depth interviews will be a valuable addition to the existing research on city and regionals. Furthermore, the focus on online strategies, a topic of concern among magazine editors as

evidenced by panel discussions at the 2015 CRMA conference, is an important area of investigation.

Publication Possibilities

I believe my professional analysis will be significant to those invested in city and regional magazines and hope it will be useful for editors as they continue to adjust and optimize their online strategies. With my interviewees' permission, I would consider pitching the final product to an industry publication such as *Folio* or a journalism publication such as the Nieman Reports. Additionally, if IRB approval is obtained, I could compose my findings into a journal article and submit to *Journal of Magazine and New Media Research*.

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Proposal Appendix: Interview Questions

1. How do you think of your web audience as compared to your print audience? How does it differ? How is it the same?
2. When and what are you posting online? (How frequent is your online production?)
3. What type of online content do you find to be the most strategically valuable?
4. What percentage of print content is repurposed for the web?
5. How much online-exclusive content are you producing, and who is responsible for creating that content?
 - 5a. What do the production processes look like of digital vs. print?
 - 5b. What *is* the online exclusive content? (e.g. blogs, reviews)
 - 5c. What are the types of content that are drivers online vs. drivers in print?
6. What is the role of your website?
7. What gratifications does your web audience receive from reading digitally?
8. What's the incentive for subscribers to buy the print edition?
9. Do you find your website to have an effect on your print circulation?
10. How many staff members are dedicated strictly to online publication?
 - 10a. *If there is a separation between staffs:* To what extent does your print staff and online staff collaborate?
 - 10b. *If no separation exists:* How are web responsibilities divided among your staff?
11. What do you find to be the biggest challenges of online content?
12. Has your online content been profitable?
13. How do you envision the future of your website?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Interview with Jason Heid, DMagazine.com March 8, 2016

ES: What do you see as the role of DMagazine.com?

JH: To be awesome. It's to build an audience of its own. We're a little different than other city and regionals. We really treat the website as sort of its own title. We don't think of it as just an extension — as *just* an extension — of the print titles we publish. We think of it as its own entity, so we work hard to keep it populated and to speak to its own audience, because it has its own audience. You know, a certain portion of what we do online inevitably is presenting that stuff that was initially created for print. But we do a fair amount of web exclusive content, and our concern is speaking to that audience, not thinking about bringing the print audience to the web, but speaking to the audience that is on the web already, and is unlikely or will rarely buy a print magazine.

ES: What do you think differs between those two audiences?

JH: Our web audience is maybe an average of ten years younger. The print audience is average 35 to 45, we're 25 to 35. So that obviously makes a difference as far as who we're speaking to. Our print titles are very much focused on affluent readers, and it's not that we don't have affluent readers online, it's just that I think we have a larger percentage of "aspirational" readers. Readers who want to be the affluent people in town later on but aren't quite. We online speak to a much larger swath of audience than does the print title. Because such a high percentage of what we do is based around being a guide to the city, I feel like our website is a little bit more inclusive of a broader cross-section of the city.

ES: That makes sense. Do you know how much of your audience uses both print and online?

JH: No, I don't think I do. We've had some survey where we've seen that in the past, but I'm always really skeptical of those surveys because — for one, the only ones we've ever ended up with are very self-selective surveys, so you already have the bias of people who are willing to fill out an online survey. I can't even remember the last time I saw some of those numbers, but a fair number of those people say they do occasionally read the magazine, and some of them are subscribers. So it's not that there are no subscribers who also visit the website regularly. But I've never felt like we've had truly reliable numbers on that.

ES: Do you think that your web audience is looking for a different type of content than your print audience is?

JH: I think for both print and online, you know, the old standbys of service journalism, food and “stuff to do,” are important. That’s sort of the basis I think of for both audiences. Now online, we have to be a lot more immediate and more reactive. We also have the added pressure of trying to be newsy. With the print deadlines, as much as they might like to break news sometimes — and every once in a while, [the print magazine] will have a story that’s a true scoop — it’s really online where being part of the daily conversation of what’s going on in the city is so important. The difficulty we have competing in that space is we’re not set up to be a news organization. There’s a much larger newsroom right on the other side of downtown from us that is much better equipped to that, so we have to sort of think about what’s our role? What’s our space there? If we can’t afford an army of reporters to be out covering a ton of things, how can we at least be a part of that conversation? The play I always tell our writers for online is the space where we can actually make a difference is bringing commentary on the news or analysis of the news. That’s where I think we can actually play. I think that’s what we do best when we do it best.

ES: Yeah. You probably heard about everything going on on Mizzou’s campus this fall. I was the editor of our magazine, and basically what you said was one of my editor’s letters. We were trying to figure out — when news broke, the daily newspaper is in the same building as us, they could handle that reporting. And it felt strange to not cover it, but we had to figure out what our role was and where we could add to the conversation best.

JH: Yeah, for sure.

ES: So how often are you guys posting content online?

JH: Every day. We don’t do a lot of stuff on the weekends. That’s just a staffing matter. But we also have found that when we do have stuff on the weekends, it rarely does really well. Our audience is really office workers who are reading us on the sly all day — that’s an oversimplification — but it’s such a large swath it, we don’t really try to do anything too substantial over the weekend. Where our weekend traffic does come, and we don’t lose it entirely, is people looking for restaurants or stuff to do. And we maintain pretty solid lists of restaurants we think our readers want to know about and all the events we think are most important going on in the city. We work hard to maintain those and to keep those up to date. So that’s where our weekend readership really comes from.

ES: Got it. So you guys do a lot of online exclusive content. What percentage do you think is online exclusive versus repurposed from print?

JH: That’s a really good question, I haven’t figured out the math. My best guess would be — I mean it depends on how you figure it. Is it pure number of articles, or is it words generated? It’s at least 50% web exclusive stuff. We have, depending on how you figure it, 10 to 12 different blogs and various other little channels of the site that are all generating content, most of them on a daily basis, most of them several times a day, a few of them weekly or less than that. But our web exclusive stuff accounts for a much larger

overall percentage of the traffic than does any of the print content. The print content tends to spike as soon as we put it up and reach a pretty tall high, but then drop off pretty quickly. We have some exceptions to that. But if we just took the magazine content and put it up on a monthly basis, we would have a tiny audience.

ES: Right. So who is responsible for creating that online exclusive content?

JH: Well we have my staff that I told you about. And then, to varying degrees, other members of the print editorial staff do a good job of helping out and contributing to some of our various blogs. We have a general news blog for the city that is still an important portal to the site for us. We have a food blog, which we have an online editor that primarily maintains it, but our print editors contribute regularly to that. And then we have a home blog that we have an editor dedicated to that. I have a couple other editors who are generating content and creating listings and coming up with recommendations.

ES: Blogs seem to be working really well for you. When we were redesigning *Vox*, we were discussing — do we want to have a separate blog? Or is it all just online content? You guys have a lot of blogs going. Can you talk about how those are working for you?

JH: You know, we're really just talking about a matter of terminology here. The word "blog" got really trendy for a while. And so that's sort of the way we termed it and thought about it. But it's all the same thing. It's all just content going to various channels of the site. And we're about to do a redesign that sort of collapses that separation even more. It's less important that someone come to read our food blog specifically as it's branded than that they have a page where they can read all of our food content, whether that originated as a print article or as a blog post that our editor thought up this morning. The reader doesn't really care. It doesn't really matter to them. So we're sort of reducing the barriers and the distinction between what is online content and what is print. We're actually going to — that word blog is going to be less prominent on our site. And we're really only going to have one — we still have our primary blog, which is called Front Burner, which is just our most general news and commentary blog, that's probably our only one that's still going to maintain that traditional blog format of a reverse chronological feed of what's going on and have content created specifically for it as its own channel. Even though it's a general community. All the others are essentially going to become feeds.

ES: That makes sense. So are you repurposing 100% of print content for web?

JH: Ninety to 95 percent. The stuff that we won't put up online is stuff that I can tell isn't going to play well because it was designed for a magazine page, and it would either look really stupid online or very underwhelming. So an example would be when our home magazine has a page that is just showing one great product, and it's just like, "Look at this dinner plate, look at this beautiful dinner plate." Well if I put that up as an article on its own, it's just a page with one picture of a plate on it. It's not even worth putting up, and if anyone even happens upon that page, they're really going to be confused and underwhelmed. So to my mind there's no reason to put that up. Now the strategy that we

actually try to employ with things like that, well, you know, nobody wants to look at one plate, let's have our online editor go and find the 20 prettiest plates we've ever run in the magazine over the last five years, put all those into a gallery together, and suddenly you're able to make use of that content, but you're putting it into a format that's actually sort of worth the reader's time. It seems like a waste of a reader's time to send them a link to a picture of one plate, right? But if you can give them a gallery of the 20 prettiest plates *D Home* as ever run, that's actually maybe an enjoyable experience. So that's the kind of stuff that we just don't bother putting up. It's usually very visual. And our magazine has actually tried to come up with designs and spreads that are actually difficult for me to figure out how to put up. And that's what a printed magazine should try to do. It should try to be an experience that's just much more enjoyable to read on a page spread than it is in a digital format. We usually figure out a way to do almost everything that they do in print. *D Home*'s probably the biggest challenge for me in trying to decide how we're going to post stuff digitally because they are so very spread-based, and that stuff doesn't always translate over well to digital.

ES: Right. What is your timing strategy for posting print content? Do you do it all at once when the magazine comes out, or do you spread it out over the month?

JH: Right now we do it all at once. We've had a lot of discussions about it. When I first started in this job, we were posting it as soon as subscriber copies were mailed. So the same day subscriber copies were mailed, we would have it up by the end of that day. The thinking being, the subscriber reads the magazine, they want to tell some out-of-town relative about it. It's going to seem weird if they go to our website and the stuff isn't already there to see and share. There's been some concern, I mean it's been an ongoing discussion between our circulation folks and our publisher about whether we're hurting newsstand sales by giving away the stuff for free before people even have a chance to read it. Does it hurt things if you see our list of 10 best new restaurants in town, if that gets shared on your Facebook feed before you even have a chance to be at the grocery store and see it in the checkout lane? Does knowing that you've already seen that online keep you from buying that magazine? Well, I don't know. And we don't have good data either way. We actually see a much stronger — the correlation we see is if something does well online, it does well on the newsstand. And if it doesn't do well on the newsstand, it often doesn't do well online. That's the relationship we generally see. Now yes, you could argue that if we hadn't put it online it would have done even better on the newsstand, but I find that difficult to believe. I think most of the people who are only going to read it online and then see it on the newsstand and not buy it on the newsstand, they were never going to buy it on the newsstand to begin with. That's my thinking. So we've gone back and forth on it, and sort of the compromise we came up with is because the first weekend of newsstand sales is so important, and accounts for such a disproportionate chunk of what they sell on the newsstand, we actually decided a fair compromise is to wait to put it online until after the first weekend of newsstand sales. So that's what we do now. First it gets mailed to subscribers, they have it for a couple days, then it starts hitting the newsstands. We wait until after that first weekend that it's on newsstands before we have anything on the site that even acknowledges that we have a new issue. So it'll be that Monday after that first newsstand sale that we put it up. And

then we put it up all at once. Now with the new site design, because we're going to a much more feed-based approach, we actually are likely changing that to filter out the content over the course of a couple weeks, or two or three weeks. The reason for that isn't really a strategic choice, it's a pragmatic choice because if we were in this format to spill it out all at once, it would clog up our feeds, so our daily blog content would get crowded out by this flood of the magazine content all at once.

ES: That makes sense. What type of online content do you find to be particularly valuable? And is that different from what's valuable in print?

JH: I don't think it's that different from what the print reader is looking for. Food is important to the print magazine, and it's extremely important to us. Places to eat and things to do are always going to be the foundation of what we can do. Online we have a lot more challengers to that kingdom than the print magazine does, because they have the added bit of just having beautiful full-page photography that people just want to thumb through the magazine and just look at the beautiful pictures. And we can have big, beautiful pictures on our website, but it's not always the same experience in terms of looking at that. Every lifestyle website in town has put out a list of the best burgers, so it's not like that's exclusive territory for us, so we just have to come up with interesting ways of packaging that stuff our own unique way, and really try to keep ourselves as a trusted authority so that people prefer our best burger list to some random blogger's best burger list.

ES: When I was looking over your website, I found I wasn't overwhelmed by ads at all. It seemed very low key. How does DMagazine.com's advertising strategy differ from the print magazine?

JH: I think the big difference with online advertising is so much of the substantial revenue is sponsorship-based. It's easy to wrap your head around what you're buying in a print magazine — you're buying a page of the magazine, and you can put whatever you want on it, or a half-page or whatever. But display advertising is not really the greatest thing for us because the CPMs are so low that it doesn't help us make our money online. So what we do much better at is creating sponsorship opportunities where we'll put together a big package of something that maybe involves not just having display ads on the feature but also road-blocking some section of the site entirely, or maybe they'll even throw an event in with it that we're going to throw, and give them sponsorship of that. So it all becomes much more part of a package. The other really strong revenue source for us online is our enhanced directory listings, particularly our doctor directory, which we have great placement for. So our sales team is able to sell doctors on enhancing their listing on our site. We put up a doctor directory that's every doctor in town, but all it generally includes is whether or not this is one of our D Best winners, and then address and phone number, and that's about it. So if they want to put their own blurb about themselves on their listing, put their picture on their listing, et cetera, they can pay X dollars and they get to enhance that. That's actually been a very strong revenue source for us. Obviously not something that the print mag — well the print magazine sort of replicates it when

they have doctor profiles that they put in the book, but it's a very different experience online.

ES: So using things like that, have you found that your online platform has been profitable?

JH: Yes. We've had years where we've turned a profit. I'm not going to say it's been every year, but it's not because we don't have strong revenue and growing revenue, it's that our company has really been smart about putting resources into it. We spend a lot more on our digital operation than most city magazines our size do.

ES: Earlier we were talking about the "cannibalization effect" — when online has an effect on print circulation. You guys found that compromise to not release online until the Monday after the issue hits newsstands. Are there any other ways the print magazine has found to retain the value of the print magazine for subscribers?

JH: Yeah, they're trying different things. I can't really speak to what they consider successful. They try to create special opportunities for subscribers, special deals. There have been various attempts at trying to create sort of a "club" that creates benefits for the subscribers. I don't know that any of those have really taken off in a big way. But that's the sort of things that they've tried to do.

ES: On the flip side of that, are there benefits for the readers who are just accessing the magazine online?

JH: No. [Laughter] They don't give us any money directly, so we don't really. We have a lot of cool stuff for them, and we want them to share. I think the only thing in that respect would maybe be when we try to gather data on the readers. We'll have a contest or a sweepstakes or something, and people will have to share their Facebook information or whatever, and their email addresses. That gives us an opportunity to sign them up for newsletter s, and if we can do that, we get some benefit. We gave away a trip to Fiji once, which I think is the biggest thing we ever gave away. In smaller ways, we've done various sort of social media contests that the benefit to us ultimately was gathering information on our readers that we could use later.

ES: That makes sense. We've talked a little bit about how the print staff contributes to DMagazine.com. So are you guys pretty collaborative, those two teams? Do you work together a lot?

JH: Not as much as I'd like to. I think it would benefit us both. But yes. You know how it is, people have their own work that they need to do. So if the print magazine gets into their shipping period where they've got to get the book out the door and there's a lot to do, it's easy to understand why they're not going to give a thought to, "Oh, our blog doesn't have much on it today. Maybe I should find something." Ultimately something has to give, and digital tends to be where that happens because we're not directly making

our money there, and we're not up against as hard and fast a deadline. But we try to keep that communication open. I stay aware of what's coming on their calendar so I can plan, not just how we're going to present that print stuff online, but also I like to carve out areas for the right time to do various web exclusive stuff.

ES: What do you find to be the biggest challenges for you guys, keeping up with online?

JH: The biggest challenges ...

ES: Do you *have* challenges?

JH: We have no challenges at all.

ES: That's amazing.

JH: The biggest challenge is just it's a never-ending news hole. And there are so many unknowns. We can get a feel for how many posts a day should this channel have, or this channel have, or this channel have. But it's difficult to know for sure that this is the right thing to do. And then we have to reckon with the fact that not all of our audience online is coming to our website. So we have to speak to them on Facebook or try to touch them on Twitter. It seems like every week, there's some new social media platform that we're supposed to care about. And then increasingly, social media platforms as they gain power, like Facebook, are trying to get publishers to publish articles directly to Facebook. And that creates a challenge because that's a manpower issue. How do we create the same amount of content, but then also sort of tailor it for five different channels, or six different channels, and which are the channels that we should really care about? I still can't wrap my brain around Snapchat. I don't know why anybody likes it or what it's for, really. I kind of understand what it's for on a personal basis, one person to one person, but as far as a brand, what the benefit of that is, and what is the content that would work well there? It seems obvious to me, we're not just going to take a magazine article and throw it up in some basic Snapchat format. I also don't know for sure that we should even care about Snapchat at this point. You know how these platforms come and go all the time. They wax and they wane. Snapchat is up right now and Twitter is down. But does that mean we shouldn't care about Twitter anymore? I don't know. We're just trying to figure out this game. And ultimately, revenues have to pick up for digital. Because that's sort of where the future audience is going to be reading. But I don't think there's any magazine that's been able to pull in as much money digitally as they used to be able to in print. So can we continue to finance the sort of journalism and the sort of lifestyle content that we've been able to afford? Because a print ad costs X thousands of dollars, when they're paying substantially less for a display ad on a webpage. And I'm just speaking about the whole industry, this is obviously not just about us. And we're such a relatively small fish in this vast ocean that it's hard for us to really be the drivers to make it what we need it to be. I feel like we're still sort of waiting for the winners and the losers to be determined in a lot of these areas.

ES: Yeah, I see what you mean. Off topic, but when I was looking at the website last night, are you in charge of the iPad edition?

JH: No, our production department takes care of it. The reason I'm not really involved is we don't really do anything special for it. It's more than just a flipbook, but we haven't really taken steps to create exclusive content for that beyond some very, very basic things. Really the production department just sort of takes the print issue and reformats it for that version.

ES: Gotcha. One of the coolest things for me was being able to go back and look at your issues all the way to 1974, which was so much fun. I think you guys talked about that last summer, when you were putting that stuff online. Are you seeing that people are going back and looking at that stuff?

JH: Yeah. I really think with a lot of print magazines, their archives are untapped resources for them. We are fortunate that we have almost everything back to '74 online. There's some missing issues, and there's a lot of missing stories. And a lot of it is really "ugily" formatted. We put it up by — it was scanned from print magazines. And the scanning did pretty well, but it's imperfect. So there's a city north of here called Plano, and in almost every instance in our old articles, it's called Piano because the scanner couldn't tell the difference between the L and the I. It couldn't tell the difference between a lowercase L and a capital I, so it just became Piano. But it would come cost prohibitive for us really to devote somebody to be sitting there and just be going through copyediting all those old articles, so instead what we've done — every once in a while, we'll see somebody will end up on some old article, and I'll see it pop up on Chartbeat for some reason. And if I see that I'll try to jump over to it and at least clean it up a little bit to make it readable so it's not embarrassing. And then we did our 40 greatest stories project a couple of years ago for our 40th anniversary, and we cleaned those up and created new art for them and did some updating on the stories. So that was a lot of fun. And that resulted in — I think I mentioned this at the CRMAs — there was this family of wrestlers in the 80s that were really big locally, and it was one of our 40 greatest stories, and we put it up on Facebook, and it was like a nostalgia bomb or something. Its reach went to like 250,000, which is unbelievable. And then at the end of the year, we were sort of recapping the most popular things of the year, and we put it up on Facebook again, and it did it all over again. It was just huge traffic to it. In February we put up a dating guide, we're sort of creating a new channel on the site that's all sort of dating based, and some of what we put into that channel was repurposed stuff that we'd already run. The two most popular things we've done in the dating guide so far have just been re-sharing stories from 2011 and 2012 that were just old things that all of a sudden got new life. Because they were new to a significant portion of the audience. They didn't care it was from four years ago. They were still interested in it. That worked really well. And it surprises me how few magazines like us have much of their archives, if any, online. I don't think we're at a point where we could like charge people for access to it. We're a long way off from that. But it does give us more content to share with our readers. And it does give us a way to make sure we never run out of content to share across social media, because we could always go back to some of that old stuff and make it new again.

ES: That's true. We talked a little bit about the redesign and about the way the industry is going, but do you have any other ideas about how you envision the future of DMagazine.com?

JH: I think the industry as a whole is going to have to find a way to get readers to pay for content at some point. I'm not saying, I mean we're not going to lead the way. We need some big boys to sort of band together and come up with a system that makes it feasible. Otherwise I think you're going to see fewer publications [phone cut out for several seconds]. As great as it is for everybody to have a printing press, everybody has a printing press. It means that it splits so many different ways that it becomes difficult to purely make money from advertising. So yeah, we have to go into things like — they called it native advertising, but it's the same old advertising stuff that magazines have done forever. We have to do some of that. We've done some linking — do you know Rewards Style?

ES: No.

JH: It was actually set up by this Dallas woman. It was intended for individual fashion bloggers to have a way of making money — I hate using business speak, so I try to avoid words like “monetize” — as a way of making money from the audiences. So a woman has a blog where she every day publishes some outfit she wears. Well she could do that, and then she could provide links to stores where the reader could buy the same things that she's wearing. So this one blogger created this system whereby the bloggers are able to get a commission if an item is purchased via the link that is provided on their site. So we've done that a little bit on our site as well. It's not massive revenue or anything, but it's something. The danger there is you don't want to start compromising your site by becoming a glorified catalogue, right? You don't want to start putting up products just because the company can make a little money off of them. Because ultimately you don't want to undercut the authority of your brand. You have to balance the potential for revenue and things like that against maintaining your integrity and your authority. If the reader starts to detect that you're anything like a pay for play, or you're only putting something up because the company's going to make money on it, then you've undermined your credibility and the value of both the journalism and the service journalism that you do. But it's important that we explore these different revenue channels, and I understand why we do it. We just have to make sure, as always, as in print, that we are very upfront with readers and aren't shady about what's sponsored and what's legitimate content.

*Interview with Tom McGrath, Philadelphia Magazine
March 18, 2016*

ES: What do you see as the role of your website?

TM: Well, I think basically the role is the same as print in the sense that it's a vehicle for doing journalism, and from a business standpoint, it's a way to make money.

ES: So you do see it as a profitable channel.

TM: Yeah.

ES: Great. How do you think of your web audience as compared to your print audience?

TM: They're different. Our print audience is older and more suburban-based, and more affluent. And the digital audience is younger. So just to get more specific, I think the average age of our print subscriber is in the early fifties, and I think suburbs versus city is probably about 70 percent in the suburbs, 30 percent in the city. Online the audience, the biggest group we're hitting online is the Millennial audience, so it's about 25 to 30-year-olds that's our biggest online. They tend to be more city-based than suburban-based.

ES: So is age the only difference you see? Do you think they're looking for different things?

TM: Yeah, I think they're looking for different things in the sense that the coverage we do online tends to be a little bit more city-focused. And also because they're younger I think there's just a natural generational shift or division in terms of what they're paying attention to. I would also say by the way that I think there's a fair amount of overlap. I mean if you drew a Venn diagram here, there's a hefty chunk that's kind of in the middle.

ES: Yeah, that was my next question. Do you have any idea how big that overlap might be that's using both print and online?

TM: We haven't looked at that in the last few years so I don't really have any definitive numbers on it. I mean there is definitely some overlap, and I think interestingly in a lot of ways, the website in some ways has promoted greater awareness of the print product.

ES: That's interesting. That was something I was going to touch on later. My research showed that a lot of people are worried about the opposite effect — that online would have a negative effect on circulation. So you're actually maybe seeing the opposite?

TM: Well I think there's probably a difference between awareness and circulation. There's no question that we have seen a softening of newsstand sales in the print product. I mean us and I think every other magazine in America. Which is no doubt due to the fact that people are just spending more time online, on their phone or online, and just buying fewer magazines. And now it could also be because yes, we are taking some print content

and putting it online and therefore people are just not spending the money to buy the actual magazine. But from an overall brand standpoint, the fact that you're reaching a much larger audience online than we ever did in print, I think has raised awareness of everything that we do, including print.

ES: That makes sense. How often are you posting content online?

TM: We post probably 50 pieces of original content every day.

ES: Wow. That's a lot.

TM: Yeah. Basically our web presence is as big if not more time-consuming than the print product is at this point.

ES: And you said that was original content, not repurposed from print?

TM: Right.

ES: What percentage do you think is online-exclusive versus what's repurposed from print? It sounds like you're doing a lot more online.

TM: In terms of actual numbers of stories, it's not even close. I would guess in the course of the month, ninety percent of what we post online is exclusive to online, and the rest has just been repurposed from print.

ES: Okay. So you said about two-thirds of staffers have some role on the website, out of 28 total. Can you touch on that — you said it was a little complicated?

TM: Yeah, in the sense that you can kind of divide this into three groups. There's a handful of people who are focused solely on print, and that tends to be the art department, the production department, and we use a lot of contracted freelance writers, and most of their stuff — that's actually not even included in the 28 headcount — they're pretty much exclusively on the print side of things. There are a handful of people who focus almost exclusively on the digital side of things. And then there's a whole bunch of people in the middle who have a foot in both worlds. So one example of that would be our food editor, who oversees our food section in print but also oversees our daily food blog, which is called Foobooz. So there's sort of that equivalency in a bunch of different places.

ES: Okay, that makes sense. So are you repurposing 100 percent of print content for the website, or do you hold some of it back?

TM: I'd say we probably put up 85 percent of it. There are some things that just feel like they don't work online, they're just sort of print-oriented. But all of the main features and departments certainly get put up online.

ES: What's your timing strategy for posting it? Do you put it up all at once when the magazine goes out, or do you spread it out?

TM: We spread it out. About a year and a half ago, we started a weekend product we call Philadelphia Sunday. It's basically a newsletter, although — I can send you a copy of this — what we do is we basically create an actual cover for this thing called Philadelphia Sunday, which looks like a magazine cover. And that's what gets sent out in email. And then you click through, and it takes you to a TOC for that week's issue. And that's the way we've generally been posting our print stuff, under the guise of this Philadelphia Sunday thing. So it gets sort of spread out over the course of the four weeks of a month.

ES: Okay. That's interesting. Do you have a pretty big audience for that? Who do you send it to?

TM: We send it to people who have opted in digitally. So I think it goes out to a list of about 25,000 at this point.

ES: Got it. So what kind of content do you find online to be the most strategically valuable? I'm wondering if that's different from what's valuable in print.

TM: Strategically valuable meaning just what gets the most traffic?

ES: In any way —revenue, audience building, brand building. Whichever strategy you're focused on.

TM: Well there are probably a number of them. So just from a pure traffic standpoint, the things that have done the best for us is you know, just news, daily news, what's happening in Philadelphia today. Whether it's a crime that's been committed or some major political movement, whatever's kind of the news of the day. That's really popular stuff. The other thing we've had enormous success with is a whole channel devoted to the Philadelphia Eagles. So, sports. Those two are generally our most trafficked part of the site. And then some of the lifestyle channels have really solid numbers, but they're not as big as the news thing or the Eagles thing. In terms of revenue, it's a little bit harder to say because different things get monetized in different ways. One of the things that's done well for us in terms of revenue is our health and wellness channel, which is called Be Well Philly. It's not to say the others haven't done well, but that one has done sort of particularly well, in part because what we're doing with advertisers — and this is true of a lot of different areas of the company — advertisers are sort of buying integrated packages. So they would get a page of the magazine, they would get a certain number of impressions online, and even in some cases we do events around things, so they get some presence at events as well.

ES: Right, okay. So news and sports, that's what's doing really well online, and I assume that doesn't appear in print quite as much, at least not with the quick turnaround on news.

TM: Yeah, really none of that stuff shows up in print.

ES: So what is most valuable in print?

TM: Value is a hard thing to judge. We generally do sort of typical city magazine service packages in print, which are still a key part of what we do. We do a fair number of profiles and just traditional long-form magazine kind of pieces, narrative and those kinds of things. So that's kind of our editorial mix in print. All of that stuff as I said before does get put online, and it generates decent traffic depending on the specific story.

ES: That makes sense. You said the percentage of 2015 revenue generated by the website was 25 percent, so you're finding the website to be profitable. How are you generating profit there?

TM: That comes almost exclusively from advertising and sponsorship revenue. There's no question that that's growing much more quickly than print is.

ES: So advertisers are wanting to go online. Because I'm hearing that it's a little more difficult to negotiate what they're going to get online versus what they're going to get in print. So those integrated packages are working well for you?

TM: Yeah, there's plenty of packages where there's both print and online. But we're also doing a lot of stuff that's just digital-only ad sales. We've had a lot of success really in the last year with native advertising on our website, so us writing sponsored blog posts for advertising clients.

ES: Are you able to mark those in a way to show they're sponsored?

TM: Yep. Yeah, they're all pretty clear.

ES: Cool. So you have some overlap in staffs. I'm wondering to what extent those two staffs collaborate. It sounds like you only have a few people who aren't dealing with online.

TM: That's correct.

ES: So it's not so much collaboration as all hands on deck?

TM: Yeah, it's a very integrated team. We don't make a whole lot of distinction between that's a digital person and that's a print person. It's one very integrated team. Some people's jobs tend to focus more on print and some people's jobs tend to focus more on digitally, but we don't consider them separate staffs.

ES: So when you're talking story ideas, do you ever decide that some stories are going to work better in print than online, or vice versa? I'm just wondering, when you're brainstorming together, if that decision ever comes into play.

TM: Yeah, I mean I think people are generally — there are some things where it's very clear. You know, if there's a breaking news piece, obviously that tends to go online. If somebody's pitching a 5,000-word crime narrative, that tends to be the kind of thing we're going to do in print. And then there are some things that definitely fall in the middle, where you have to make a call between, oh that's an interesting story, should we just do it online, does it actually fit in print? We've had a fair number of examples where we have published something online first and then said to ourselves, you know that piece would also work well in print, and sort of pulled that piece back from digital and into print.

ES: Oh, interesting. So do you take it offline when you do that? When you say you pull it back, is it still in the works?

TM: No. But yeah, pulled back is probably the wrong phrase. But as opposed to the normal schedule where stuff, for I think most magazines, gets published in print first and then goes online, we've had plenty of things we've published online first, and then subsequently put in print.

ES: Is that because it was so popular online that you wanted to get it to your print readers also? Or was it visually, you thought it would work well in print?

TM: It's happened a couple different ways. So one example of one that was very popular was we did a story on a mall here in Center City, Philadelphia, about a year ago that was conceived of as a digital-only piece, did really well traffic-wise and it was a really good story, so the next issue I said let's just put this in print, and it worked really well. There are others that it was not so much based on the traffic numbers per say, it was just this is a good story, and there's no reason not to include it in print.

ES: Okay. So part of my research is focusing on how editors retain the value for both their online readers and their print readers. What are the benefits for readers who are accessing the magazine online, and then how do you retain the value of the print edition for your subscribers? How do you keep them subscribing when everything else is online?

TM: I think it comes down to trying to embrace what each medium is good at, and also trying to understand that people may want to consume your content in multiple ways. So digital obviously is a much faster-paced, give me a snapshot of what's happening right now kind of thing, whereas print I think, there's a little bit more — I think the reason that print still is a vital form is that at least with a monthly magazine, print is still a better way to consume long-form stories. I think people would rather hold a magazine in their hand than scroll through 5,000 words on their phone. Print is actually I think a more beautiful medium. I mean you can do much more with design and photography in print than you can typically do online. And so I think there are still reasons that people want the print product. And with the exception of that softening in newsstand sales, we're not seeing any softening in demand for our print product. So for whatever reason, people still tend to value print. At the same time, we're seeing a lot of growth on our digital side, so people

are also responding to what we're doing there even though it's different kinds of stuff than we're doing in print.

ES: So what are the unique benefits for readers who are going online? In this case, it's obviously a lot more content, and it's more timely content. Is there anything else for why a reader should specifically go online?

TM: Yeah, I think there's more content, it's timely content, it's probably also more — there's more niche content would be the best way to put this. So, the Eagles channel was a really good example. We will write maybe one or two feature stories a year in print about the Eagles, but the ability to really dive deep on the Eagles every single day, for Eagles fans, is a huge benefit. We'd never be able to do that in print, but we obviously do it online.

ES: Yeah, that looked like some of your most popular content. I'm curious — I used to work in the sports department of our newspaper. I don't see city magazines covering sports very much. Are you finding that you're holding up against the competition online in your sports channel?

TM: Yeah, I mean I think we actually have done some groundbreaking stuff when it comes to covering the Eagles. What we noticed after the first year of launching this was a lot of other media outlets began to copy some of the stuff that we were doing. And you're right, I think it's still fairly unusual for a city magazine to get into sports. But to some extent we thought this was worth a try, and we sort of got lucky.

ES: Yeah. When did you start that coverage?

TM: It started about three years ago.

ES: Okay. How do you envision the future of your website? Do you have any plans?

TM: We can see it continuing to grow and evolve. We're really trying to position ourselves as the dominant media brand in the city of Philadelphia, which means that we're competing with the daily newspapers at this point. Now they still have larger staffs than we do, particularly when it comes to daily journalism, but that's really what we're focused on — let's compete in that arena because there's an audience there.

ES: How do you think — you've mentioned softening of newsstand sales — do you think that's going to continue over time and we're going to be migrating more and more to digital?

TM: I think it will be interesting to see. I think, as I mentioned before, we're not the only magazine to see softening on the newsstands. So I don't know whether it will just continue to soften so much that newsstand is no longer a reliable distribution method for magazines, or whether it will hit some point and that's kind of where it just levels out. I don't really know the answer to that.

ES: Okay. I noticed online that several sections of the magazine overlap into online channels. For instance, Shopping & Style in the print magazine is the Shoppist online. I'm curious how you rebrand content online.

TM: There's some crossover of brands, but it's not across the board, and it's not consistent. And that's something honestly I struggle with sometimes. Should this be called exactly the same thing in print and online? That's probably stuff that we have to focus on a little bit more and be a little more consistent about.

ES: Okay, so still figuring that out. Last question — what do you find to be the biggest challenge of your digital production?

TM: Can you be more specific?

ES: I've found a lot of magazines have challenges because they have smaller staffs, or maybe it's a timing issue or revenue building.

TM: I think that the biggest challenge is in staffing. There's probably too much work for too few people at this point. Because you're asking people to post a large amount of content on a daily basis, and for a fair number of them, also still pay attention to what's happening monthly in print, and it's just a lot of work. So we have a tired staff at this point.

ES: How are they handling that?

TM: I think everybody's been excited by the success. That certainly helps. That said we know that hopefully as we grow, we'll be able to invest in more resources here in various things, and hopefully make people's workloads a little more reasonable than they are right now.

***Interview with Amanda Heckert, Indianapolis Monthly
March 22, 2016***

AH: Well I've been through your questions, and I brought my digital media manager (Jared Hay) in to talk through some of them with me, too. Do you want me to just start at the top with the questions you sent by email? [Went over the numbers questions, found in the summary document.]

Just to digress on that question for a minute, we have obviously, like all magazines or city magazines, or I should say ASNE magazines, we have a very thick line between advertising and editorial. That's one position, the digital media manager, is one position where that person has to sort of straddle that fence. He's supporting us on the edit site, but also supporting the advertising side, coming up with ideas for them. The impetus is really on him, and I think he does a very good job of this, of really keeping on one side of the fence and not letting there be crossover. So he's really great about going on sales calls and being an advocate for editorial on the website and helping them come up with advertising packages, that sort of thing, but also is a huge support system for the editorial side and does all of our social and that sort of stuff.

ES: Right. OK.

AH: Percentage of revenue generated by website, our publisher estimated probably around 5 percent of the revenue. And even though that's not very much, that's actually grown in the last couple of years for us.

ES: Any profit is good profit.

AH: Right. So, what do you see as the role of your website? I really look at it as a way to extend the brand. It's extending the publication of course, but it's the overall brand. We are seeing that it brings in, in many cases, a new audience. Our magazine in some ways is aspirational. There may be readers who, depending on where they are in their lives, may not be ready to be a print subscriber, but through the website, we can still prompt them to appreciate our content. So when I talk about extending the brand, that's certainly a part of it, too.

ES: Right. When I talked to *D Magazine*, he also said their online audience was more aspirational. And that seems like a nice way to kind of break down some class barriers that my research showed in city magazines.

AH: Yeah. And I think that dovetails into the next question, how the web audience compares to the print audience. This is an estimate, we have not been able to quantify this, but we could guess that the overlap between the print and the digital audience is maybe between 20 and 30 percent. That's totally an estimate. There are certain things that we're able to measure, but other things we're sort of guessing on.

ES: Everyone else, too.

AH: OK, that makes me feel better. It's a younger audience, but it's not incredibly younger. Our average for the magazine itself, let's say it's around 55. The average is around 45-years-old. That's our insiders, that's what we're able to measure. So those are people whose email we've captured through what we call our insider program. So those are the people signing up for newsletters or to access some of the things on our website. That's not everyone, and we certainly see younger people coming for different things, but at least our insider group is around 45.

ES: So is it just an age difference? Do you think they're looking for different content at all?

AH: What we're seeing is there's a timelier component to the things we're putting on the web, the art-to-print-to-web pieces. We really think hard. You heard our digital conversation (at the 2015 CRMA conference). We don't have a lot of digital resources here. We know that people aren't coming to us for their daily news like they are to the *Indy Star*. So when we do do original content on the web, we think about, how can we present this in such a way that it brings our editorial voice to what we're doing, that there's an angle we're taking. That's something we think about a lot because we want it to not just be, OK we're covering something that's the news of the day, but we're taking it that extra magazine step and bringing something more to it, whether it's a particular angle or more reporting, that sort of thing.

I think that, this is sort of jumping ahead, but it goes with that question. You had asked what sort of online content do you find to be most strategically valuable. What we see sometimes with that web audience is that — our subscriber base is very loyal. I think this might still be correct, but we have the highest percentage of renewals of any of the Emmis magazines, which is wonderful. And our print base is very stable. But what's interesting is that when it comes to the web — that print audience may not be changing a whole lot year to year, but we see different groups of people coming to the website based on the content. There are new audiences based on what we're putting up there, is something we've sort of gleaned. So if we're putting up a dining package, we see one sort of audience. And I'm sure there's some overlap there, but my digital media manager says this is something he sees, too. Our March issue was a downtown issue. And that's doing really well online. But he's seeing a different subset of people engaging with that. When we think about the magazine, it's very much an experience. We package it that way: the visuals, the reporting, the print, the writing. It's all a part of a package and experience. With the website, we see that being more topic-driven, is what's going to determine who the audience is for that particular thing. Which of course makes complete sense.

But going back to that question about most strategically valuable, I think what is a common thread between our print readers and our web readers, what is allowing us to be successful and continuing to grow those numbers, the binding thread is our authority. And that's an authority we've built through the investment of time and resources, both financial and just building it out. Many city magazines rely on their authority. It's something that we've cultivated over the decades, that people trust what we're saying. I

think that is something that is common between what that does well online and what does well in print. It's that authority we bring to it.

ES: That makes sense.

AH: Let's see...

ES: We can jump to No. 4. How often are you all posting content online?

AH: We're posting about two to three pieces a day online, which is modest, but it seems to work for us. And that's a combination of original and print-to-web pieces. And Jared, our digital media manager, is our gatekeeper for all of that. Everyone on the staff is responsible in some way for contributing to the website. If you're the editor of the piece in the print magazine, then usually you're going to be the person who's responsible for uploading it to the website. We also, and I may have mentioned that in this panel too, just to give it some sort of editorial filter, when people pitch original stories for the web, that idea goes first to the editor who would normally edit that type of story in the print magazine. So they kind of make the call along with the digital media manager of is this going to be valuable for us? Who's the right person for this? It just brought more organization to it. But in the end, Jared is the person who's the last gatekeeper and posting all of that content and making sure it's looking right and that sort of thing.

And then percentage of print content repurposed for the web, I would say that around 95 percent of the print content goes up. The timing strategy, that is a strategic rollout over the course of the month. We don't put up that many things at the beginning of the month. This is something that we are starting to experiment with more. The traditional thinking has been, "Don't put everything up at the top of the month because you may cannibalize your newsstand." What we're starting to see is those audiences may be more different than we originally thought, and we may not be cannibalizing the newsstand if we release some things earlier. But, for now, our typical approach is I sit down with Jared once a month after we ship an issue, and we plot out the month to come. Sometimes we're releasing pieces based on if there's something timely happening with that piece, or to feed our regular web pieces. When I say editors are responsible for web-original posts too, sometimes that's very defined. Like we know we're going to have The Swoon List, which is dining, and The Feed, which is dining, and we know those things are coming out on Monday because that's when our dining newsletter comes out, Tuesday morning. So we have some people who are responsible for very regimented things every single week, and then some people are responsible for hitting some of that more timely stuff. So maybe they don't have a specific thing they're responsible for every single week, but they're looking for those other pieces to fill in.

Usually we roll out the features throughout the month, but sometimes we'll release the cover story earlier in the month. Again we try not to do that because of newsstand, because that is something we're still measured by, but if it's a topic where we're not sure how newsstand's going to do, or if there's a timely reason for releasing it earlier, we have

done it and not seen a huge cut into the newsstand because of that. So again this is part of an ongoing debate that we're having right now. Does it matter, essentially?

Percentage of content online-exclusive, I would say probably about 30 percent. And like I said, who's responsible for creating that content, it's the staffers here. And sometimes they'll write things, sometimes they'll freelance it out. Again, we don't have a huge budget, but we've tried to make that a little better this year. And then interns also get writing opportunities both on the web and in the print edition.

ES: Okay. So jumping down to No. 8, you said that the website does generate a small percentage of your revenue. So you would call it profitable?

AH: Yeah, you know it depends on how you measure it honestly because, you know, our salaries aren't broken out into, "OK I spent two hours on digital this week." When we look at that revenue line for digital or our custom publications or anything that isn't the main magazine, it looks great. It's going up. But if you were to actually factor in staff salaries and that sort of thing, *Indianapolis Monthly* is bearing the brunt of the cost, which makes it easy to say something like digital is profitable or whatever is profitable because a lot of those costs aren't factored into that particular category. Does that make sense?

ES: I think so. You're taking away from the print resources to work on digital?

AH: Well, not that exactly, although I'm sure there have been times when editors have thought, "Oh, I should be working on something for the print instead of doing this." But I mean more so like, because it's a part of their job description, but their salaries are all hitting *Indianapolis Monthly*, the print edition, that means that resource isn't hitting the profit, isn't nicking the profit of the digital. If you were to factor in a percentage of all our salaries, our staffers' salaries, depending on how much they contributed to digital, I think our profits would look much smaller. But if you're talking just digital media manager and what it takes to keep the website up, then yes, it would be profitable. Does that make sense?

ES: Yes, I'm on the same page now. So we talked about the extent to which your print staff and online staff collaborate. It sounds like a pretty integrated team.

AH: It really is. Like I said, we have a small staff. It's impossible not to communicate with each other. It's very collaborative, there's constant communication between Jared, what he needs, and the staff here. It's a day-to-day collaboration for sure.

ES: Gotcha. So part of my research is trying to see how editors are both retaining the value of the print magazine for those subscribers and also providing unique benefits for the readers who are accessing the website. Can you touch on that a little bit?

AH: Yeah, part of that goes back to the discussion about what to release when online. It isn't just, will this hurt the newsstand? While I feel that a lot of magazine readers are

coming for that whole experience, we don't want them to feel like, "Oh, I can just go (to the website) at the top of the month and read everything and get it that way." So that's been a part of our strategic rollout, is that our subscribers get that magazine about a week before the top of that issue's month, and we don't start rolling out until the top of that month, and then it's over the course of the month. So to get everything in an issue, it's at least the end of the cycle and maybe even into the next one because sometimes everything doesn't go up within that first month. Sometimes we've run into particular stories where because of timely reasons we'll release it earlier. Our February tech issue is a good example. That was our cover story. Indianapolis has a budding tech scene. So we talked about when do we release the tech stories? We decided to wait a little longer. Well you know, people who are interested in tech are online. So they're like, "Where are the tech stories? They're not online." So we kind of had to say it's on newsstands right now, we'll release it. That's sort of the debate we have, too. Well this is a tech issue. Shouldn't it be online? But as editor, I sort of have to ride that fence between making it make sense, the decisions we make for the web, and also still making it feel special for the people who are subscribing or buying it on the newsstand.

We do a lot of extra content and online-exclusives, so from the web side of it, we'll post longer Q&As, photo galleries, your typical pieces that are enhancing, really, what we're doing in print. There are some technical things that as an online reader are nice. We just moved over to a WordPress site, I guess it's been a year and some change now, but that was a big move for us because sadly we did not have a mobile-responsive site before than. Just even having things like a restaurant guide that's searchable and that you can navigate to with maps on your phone, even technical things like that have made the web experience a lot better. I mean I didn't want to read our website on my phone until we got our WordPress site. It was just unbearable. That's a little technical thing, but it certainly is nice.

ES: So we've talked about the cannibalization effect a little bit. It sounds like you're still feeling that out?

AH: Yeah, in some of the experiments we've done — we experimented with our Best of Indy issue, which was December — we're doing a different experiment now — but we didn't see a big hit on our Best Of issue on newsstand when we released that content earlier. One experiment we're doing now is our Best Restaurants issue is coming out in April. It's on newsstands now and subscribers have it. But we're also having an event, there's an event tied to it at the end of this month that we want to promote. This is one of our best-selling issues of the year traditionally, so we don't wait to put up all of the content at the top of the month, but we still want to be able to call out the winners. This is a total page-view thing. If we don't do it, someone will, and why should those page-views go to someone else? So what've done is created a sort of landing page with the winners, and it says the full write-ups and rankings are available on newsstands now, it's sort of directing people to the print version, and that the full version is not up yet. That's something where we're experimenting with trying to have our cake and eat it too. To be the ones with the news of what our top 25 restaurants are, but to not give everything away

at the same time. As editor, I'm willing to experiment and work with our digital media manager to try to balance those things.

ES: Yeah. That's great. So biggest challenges of your digital side?

AH: I would say just resources, and that's time and financial. We have a small staff. I ask a lot of them on the print side. They are all juggling a lot. They all work extremely hard. And I'm also asking them to do things for digital. Frankly, when you go to apply at a magazine like mine, I think it's just part of the job description. You're going to be working on digital. But a lot of my staff, and this is probably true for a lot of magazines, were here before the digital revolution came. So they've had to integrate that into their job descriptions. I'm already asking a lot of them. It's finding that balance. And certainly as their manager I'm always trying to be cognizant of that workload, trying to find financial resources so that they can outsource those online duties and that sort of thing. And financially it is growing with the revenue, but at the same time it's still a small percentage of our overall revenue, so it's continuing to feed that budget so we are able to grow the web, but also to balance that against the fact that it's not a huge revenue generator at this point. So resources are completely the biggest challenge.

ES: Okay. How do you envision the future of your website?

AH: This maybe gets a little more on the technical side, I don't know if that's exactly what you're looking for.

ES: That's OK.

AH: From a broad strokes, absolutely continue to grow the amount of original content that we're putting up there. But one thing we're struggling with now, or maybe struggling isn't the right word, but a challenge we see that we'd like to address in the near future is we put so much time and energy and resources into doing these really beautiful packages. Service packages or non-service packages, our tech issue, our Best Of. We just did a coffee package. Going back to a magazine being an experience, we design it that way. It's got all of these little bits and pieces that make a package fun. When you go to try to translate that online, unless you take that extra step of really developing the kind of landing page that maybe some of the bigger magazines are doing or bigger media sites are doing, where it creates that sort of package feel online, you have all these little bits and bobs that make up a package, and sometimes they seem out of context when they're not part of that whole. So that's what we're debating now, because in the meantime we don't have the resources to every month blow out a big digital presentation of these packages. Maybe we need to be more thoughtful about the parts of those packages that we're putting up, or being more thoughtful about the way we present those pieces so it's clear this is a small part of a bigger whole. Because you know, we have really good homepage traffic, but a lot of people are coming to those specific pages. So if you're coming to a specific page, and you don't have that context, you don't know that this was a part of a bigger story. We're trying to be more thoughtful about that in the meantime. But absolutely I think that we as a magazine need to have a way that we can present those

packages that we're working so hard on so that they sing digitally just as well as they do in print. And that again just goes back to resources.

I think making it even more mobile-friendly, working on load times, that's really technical stuff. Working on some of our branded content, sort of crossed with the redesign where we're cross-branding a little more between rubrics we have in print and rubrics we have in digital, and making sure those are really harmonizing well and creating some branded people or branded topics so that it's driving people to the website and vice versa. Looking at avenues for social, finding new audiences. I think we see that through some of the social sites that we push out to, those are even sometimes different audiences that are coming for different things. So continuing to try to hone that strategy to reach new audiences. It all goes back to extending our brand, and really ultimately making the website an extension of that brand that can sustain itself. This is far off for us again going back to resources, but you think about *New York Magazine*, and the print version and the web version. The brands that they've attached to their website, they really sustain themselves as standalone pieces, that at the same time really support the *New York Magazine* brand.

ES: Definitely. I wrote down a few more questions last night when I was looking over the website. Do you mind if I ask a few more?

AH: Yeah.

ES: It seems like you all are able to bookmark the content beneath each issue. I saw this like with Tech City and The New Downtown. Do you find that that makes the content more accessible for readers rather than feeding it into the sections that are already there?

AH: I hope I'm speaking correctly, but a lot of ours is cross-tagged, so it will go in those magazine issues, but it also goes in its appropriate, you know Food & Drink or Arts & Culture. So if you're looking for things that are specific to an issue, you can go and find it that way, but you can also just go to Arts & Culture and see everything that we've done. That's something we're still experimenting with too. I know that we're wanting to clean up some of these guiding bars that we have here and make them sort of a little more intuitive. I think sometimes we're like, oh this makes sense, but it makes sense to us because we know what the things mean, but someone coming to the website the first time, they may not know what May Madness means. So how do we make this a little more intuitive? That's a project we're going to dive into this year.

ES: Gotcha. I noticed that you have a lot of newsletter options, too. I was wondering who's in charge of those and what that process looks like.

AH: So that's Jared, too, he wears many hats. The editors are responsible for sort of getting together the content for those newsletters, though or dining team, like I said, they have certain online-only rubrics they're doing every week, or we'll make sure we're uploading some print-to-web dine stuff so it can be fed into the dining newsletter, which comes out weekly. We have a Ticket newsletter, so that editor's responsible for

uploading those stories every month. And various other newsletters. We have a Buzz that goes out, sometimes it's top of the month, sometimes it's weekly. And then Jared is also working with the sellers. Is there someone who would like to sponsor the Ticket newsletter this month? While the editors are responsible for getting together that content and uploading the newsletter, Jared is the one on the backend making sure it all comes together and gets sent out, that sort of thing.

ES: Do you have a big audience for the newsletters?

AH: Yeah. I can't remember the numbers off the top of my head, but it's been consistent. I think our top, I hope I'm remembering this correctly, I believe it's The Dish, our dining newsletter. And typically Dining does really, really well for us online. Again that's weekly too, so you're pushing people toward that content. I believe that's our top one, but I think just the general Buzz, which sometimes we'll put some top-of-month fresh issue stuff out, but we'll also use the Buzz sometimes just to send out the web-original stuff we've done that week or promote some long-form stories that we've done and released during the course of the month. I can't remember the exact open rate, but our newsletter open rate has been very good.

ES: Newsletters seem to be a really great way of pushing content. That's something I'm picking up on from talking to editors. It sounds like people maybe aren't going to homepages as much anymore, so it's a nice way to pull them back in.

AH: Yeah, or just remind them that here's the content. Even if they don't click it right then, just keeping it in the back of their mind is nice.

ES: I was wondering if the Higher Education listings on the website were purely a service feature or if that was a revenue source.

AH: That is—let's see, I'm trying to find them, I'm looking now.

ES: Down at the very bottom. Higher education, private schools.

AH: Yes, okay I'm looking at this now. So this is all like a special section. They don't have to pay to be in this, though. It's service, but it's put together by the custom team. It's not something my staff has put together.

ES: Okay. I also noticed the poll on your page, and I hadn't seen that elsewhere. I was wondering if you were able to cultivate a lot of audience interaction.

AH: You know, sometimes. It depends on the question. This is something that we use on our Chatter page, which is like our Letters page, every month. We try to tie the poll to the main story that people have written letters about. So this one for instance, this Letters page will be in our May issue, but it had to do with our January feature that we wrote about Indiana's brand, it was our Bicentennial issue, of how has Indiana's brand changed, and we had some great reader feedback from that. So that's the main piece on our Chatter

page. So we use this poll as a graphic to bring in some reader interaction to that page. Certainly the new Twitter poll feature has helped with this. Sometimes, depending on the question, we don't get a ton of response, but it's a nice small thing.

ES: Right. Well, I think that's all I have. Thank you so much. I remember when you were talking at CRMA, you mentioned how few resources you all have, but you do so much with it.

AH: And you know, if I'm being honest, a big part of that, that we are able to do as much as we are with our resources, is the fact I think that we are owned by Emmis. They have people on a corporate level who are working on digital things. So they're working out the stuff that feeds our whole magazine group, so our WordPress developers. They're working on a lot of that backend, SEO, WordPress development stuff. There's a lot of idea sharing between entities. The digital media managers have a call every month where they're sharing ideas. Our digital media manager is having a meeting every week with our corporate digital person. So there's a resource there, and some shared expenses that make it easier for us to work with our smaller budget to do what we do with our website. I think that's certainly a part of it.

*Interview with Katie Pollock Estes, 417 Magazine
March 25, 2016*

ES: What do you see as the role of your website?

KPE: I think I mentioned in my email to you that we're kind of changing everything up on our site, so I'll sort of try and talk to what's going on right now, but some of it will be what we were doing and some of it will be what we will be doing. Our website has always had two functions for us. One is a place to connect with our readers month-to-month with our monthly content that comes in the magazine, but also to stay in touch with them throughout the month as well, so we aren't just reaching our readers one time a month, we're reaching them as often as we can. I think our readership is not exactly the same online as it is in print. We have different people, and a lot of people overlap, but a lot of people just do one or the other. So we try to reach both of those audiences. We're updating the website every month with the magazine's content, and you can probably gather from our staffing numbers that the web team is very separate from the editorial department. We don't necessarily have a lot of people overlapping. I don't know all the details of this, but basically the web team has a calendar every month and they're updating the website throughout the month with our editorial content. One thing that we noticed is that we would be putting up all of the stories — and not all of them, but a lot of the stories from print — on a schedule so that they're hitting throughout the month and not all at once. But because we work on print so far ahead, and we don't necessarily know, for example, what the weather's going to be in Southwest Missouri on a particular day, we were running into things where we were just really sticking to our schedule. So maybe we had a five best sledding hills story coming out in the January issue. And so at some point in January, that's scheduled to go up on the website. People love those kinds of stories, so that would get a lot of hits. But if we get a random 70-degree day in January, what we really need to be doing is not putting up the sledding story and instead having people on the web team who can go do like, "six parks you need to visit today while the weather's beautiful before it snows again," or something like that. What we're working toward really is we're in the process of beefing up our online presence to be more current instead of just kind of lagging behind like the print magazine is. So we're adding some staff to accommodate that. We added somebody to the web team recently. She's already counted in that number I just gave you. And then we have a full-time writer who's starting in May. She was also counted in that too, but she's not here just yet, but she's hired. And she will be mostly writing for *417*, but also a large part of her role will be to be on-hand. So when things happen and we just need a body at a place so we can write about something before it becomes old news, we'll actually have the manpower to do that, because before we just didn't have the bodies to do it. So we're kind of working on that stuff right now, making it more relevant day-to-day.

ES: So you mentioned a little but that you think of those audiences as having some differences, and that was my next question. I'm wondering how you think of your web audience as compared to your print audience, and what their differences and similarities are.

KPE: I think what we've noticed is a lot of what they want is similar, in terms of the types of things we're covering, they're just not necessarily the same people. That was something that was determined through audits and reader surveys and things like that, so I don't have numbers for you or know all the details necessarily, but I think our web audience is a little bit younger. They're still coming to us for the same types of things that we do in print. All of the hyper-local lifestyle coverage. We're not going to cover anything that isn't completely Southwest Missouri, that's all we do. And so people are really coming to us for stuff to do, what they need to be doing this weekend or right now. Our print readership is getting the June magazine at the end of May, and they're looking ahead toward June, whereas our online audience is a lot more immediate. We have newsletters that we send out constantly. One of the ones that goes out on Fridays is Weekend Pass, and it's just a handful of things that you need to be doing this weekend. I feel like our online audience is coming to us to find something to do and to use right in this moment. So really the same kinds of things, just on a different timeline, and a little bit different age group as well.

ES: OK, that makes sense. Do you have any idea how much of your audience uses both print and online?

KPE: I don't know, but I could probably find that out for you.

ES: OK, sounds good. It seems like that's a tough one to measure.

KPE: Yeah. I know that we pretty recently did a survey that told us some of that stuff, but I don't know the specifics of it. I can try to find out as much of that as I can for you and send it your way.

ES: OK, great. Thank you. How often are you posting content online and what does that process look like?

KPE: Before we started changing things up, the process for keeping our website — Facebook's a little bit different, we post to Facebook pretty frequently, pay for posts when we need to, all that kind of stuff — on our website, we were mostly just updating monthly and on a schedule where we were getting things from the issue out throughout the month so it was constantly updating, but really we were mostly publishing stuff from print back online. We would do things like have additional content, but I think people are not reading a story and then just jumping online to read an extended Q&A, as opposed to finding unique things online. What we're moving toward is being able to post additional content every single day, whether that's planned stories. So, Valentine's Day is coming up and we're going to do a little roundup of unexpected Valentine's dinner events that are in town or something like that. A lot of those will be planned by our digital editor who will look at the month ahead and slate those so they're coming out at just the right moment throughout the month. But then also having people on staff understand that they — and that's really the news writer positions — understanding that they're kind of on-call for those sorts of things, too. I don't know the exact number that Dayle (Korn) —

she's the web editor — is planning to post, but it will be throughout the day daily as opposed to just regurgitating magazine content. A lot more unique content.

ES: Right, OK. So digital stuff goes through Dayle, it sounds like. She's kind of your gatekeeper?

KPE: Yeah, she really is.

ES: OK, great. So are you guys repurposing 100 percent of print content for web, or do you hold some of that back?

KPE: I would say the vast majority of it. I don't know, maybe more like 90 percent. There are little things, like short, tiny little tidbitty things that don't necessarily translate well or wouldn't be necessary. But the majority of the real stories do end up online.

ES: OK. So right now, are you doing much online-exclusive content, or is that what's to come?

KPE: That's what to come. We're starting right now — I wouldn't say it's completely to come because we're starting it right now. There were a couple things we were talking about today that we're going to try and hit this weekend, like new things that are opening up. There's like this big, gigantic climbing gym that's been hotly anticipated lately because it's beautiful, it's like the prettiest climbing gym you've ever seen. They're opening up in a couple of weeks, so they're having, they're calling it a super soft opening, before their soft opening, and they just invited a few people. So we're going to go check that out before most people would be able to get in and see it. Little things like that, we're making sure we're getting ahead of those. So we're already starting. There are several things happening this weekend that we're going to roll out as quickly as we can. We're easing into it for sure because we're not fully staffed yet to be handling the last-minute stuff.

ES: Right. So I've been asking editors what percentage of their digital content is online-exclusive. What ideally do you think you'll be shooting for?

KPE: That would be a Dayle question, too, especially because we're still working it out. I'm writing down a bunch of Dayle questions for you so I can get those answers.

ES: Great, I'll follow up. And so the people who are going to be responsible for creating that content will be those three people on digital, or will you have some of your print people working online as well?

KPE: It's going to be a lot of back and forth between the two departments. The three people who are on digital, one is very much backend-type stuff. One specializes in production, and she does a lot of the keeping track of our numbers and all of that stuff, and she writes a couple of newsletters for us, but she's not really out there doing a bunch of reporting. The digital director slash digital editor, we've kind of been calling her both,

I think digital director is her official title — but she will be doing a lot of writing and reporting. She has a journalism background. She will also be doing a lot of the assigning, and that's where I'll be working with her to have my staff on-hand to help out so we have editors and writers who are contributing as well. So as far as the three digital-exclusive people, only one of them has a journalism background and is really focusing on content. But we're really pulling in people from the editorial staff to create that.

ES: Right. OK. So what do you think in broad strokes — you've said the print audience and web audience are looking for the same stuff — but I'm wondering if you find one type of content more valuable strategically in print versus what's most valuable online. And that could be building revenue or audience building or brand building, whatever's most important to you.

KPE: We definitely focus on brand-building a lot more online, and really just having a lot of connection with our readers. We have contests and promotions and things like that in addition to the stories. So far I've been mostly referring to the editorial content online, but we have a ton of other stuff going on, and there's really a lot of engagement. We have a pretty active readership online. They participate in a lot of this stuff with a lot of enthusiasm. In our print magazine, some of the things that will get a lot of attention — we did a poverty series last year. It was a four-part series. Each of the four parts had a different topic relating to poverty in Green County and the Springfield area, not so much all of Southwest Missouri, but right around Springfield. We hadn't done a series quite like that before, and that got a lot of positive attention. People were glad to see we were sort of digging into that topic. Then earlier this year we did a story about — we have sort of a storm water emergency going on in Springfield right now, some flooding issues and things like that, so we did a story about that. It was about the environmental impact and all of that. And so those sort of issue stories, I feel like we get more feedback from those in print. Those do end up going online, but we're not necessarily, at least I don't see a ton of feedback online about those. Whereas something that's like five places to get weird waffles, which is a story we're working on now, we haven't done it yet, but those kinds of things get more. People will share those a lot online where we don't necessarily see them sharing the poverty series. So those are things that may be more fun and exciting and you can go act on it right now, or you can share it with your friends. Those kinds of things I definitely see a lot more attention being paid to online than the other stories.

ES: You mentioned shareability with that one. In page-views, do you see your long-form and investigative pieces online getting as many online as those quick-hitters and fun stories?

KPE: I would say so. It's really strange the things that end up being big hits. Sometimes it surprises us. We had one story that we published a couple years ago, it was how to make snow ice cream. It was something we put up on a whim. We had a snow day, and one of our staffers — we were all home because nobody could get into the office, it was a big snow day — and she was home with her kids and made snow ice cream, and she snapped a little picture and posted the recipe. And that got shared, that and the sledding hills, got shared a ton that winter. That was kind of expected. People were like, hey it's

snowing, and I could do this snow recipe today, and oh I forgot about this thing I had when I was kid, and sharing it around. The sledding hills wasn't surprising, but the snow ice cream kind of was. It was like oh, I didn't realize people were going to care about that. But then also, sometimes it's just things that are somewhat inexplicable. There was a local kid who won a Gerber baby competition or something like that, and we posted about the winner. We did just a little tidbit about them. And we started getting an insane amount of comments and posts from people who weren't even from around here being like, "My kid should have won this contest!" We really actually got some very nasty stuff. Page-views went up quite a bit related to that, and they just continued. Every time the Gerber baby contest rolls around each year, it happens again. People are Googling Gerber baby and finding their way to our site, then we get a whole bunch more stuff. So things like that kind of pop up. But definitely, anything with a contest, like a people-related contest ends up getting a lot of attention. Like if we're doing a cutest baby competition or 20 under 30. Well actually that's not an online competition, but anything that involves online voting, especially voting for people, that ends up bringing a ton of people to our site. Like Best of 417, or things like that. People are sharing it around and making their voices heard.

ES: Right. Do you consider your website to be profitable at this point?

KPE: I think that's a hard one to answer because everything is all rolled in together here. That might be an easier one for me to ask when I ask about the revenue for the website, because to be completely honest with you, the editors aren't really thinking about profitability at all. But the sales team may have something to say on that. I don't think right now it's something where we're selling a ton of stuff and it's a gigantic moneymaker by any means. But I do know every year there's a little bit more stuff to go around, and they're selling different parts of the site or different parts of the newsletters or things like that.

ES: Gotcha. So right now, what extent does your print staff and digital staff collaborate, and then what is that going to look like in the future?

KPE: Right now we don't collaborate a ton. The editors will edit something that they're working on or we'll collaborate every so often when there's something that feels like it's crossing over, like a contest or something. But up until recently when we made some changes, they really were very separate. So that's why a lot of what we're doing right now is trying to bridge that gap and create better unique and immediate content that's created by editors and writers and the people who should be writing that stuff.

ES: Do your print editors have any responsibilities?

KPE: Not right now. The writers do, but the editors won't.

ES: Are your writers on staff?

KPE: Yes, we don't have any freelancers really working on our website. We'll have two staff writers. One's already in place and the other's coming in May. They'll each have different responsibilities for web. One will be doing more of the assigned stuff, when we look at the month and say, right around Easter we should do this kind of thing. Stuff that will be web-exclusive but sort of planned. She'll be working more on that, and then the other writer who's coming in will do more of the breaking news, like this restaurant opened up and we want to be the first to try it. And they are both fulltime writers for all of our publications, and the majority of what they do will be for print, but they'll each have a specific percentage of their week basically that will be digital exclusive.

ES: That makes sense. So part of my research is about how editors balance retaining the value of the print magazine for subscribers while also offering unique benefits to readers who are just coming to the website. I'm wondering what your thoughts are on that, and how you balance that.

KPE: We're always thinking about that, how we can add something extra that's valuable that people would want to see if they are just on the site. We used to do a lot of stories where we would be adding an additional Q&A or an additional recipe that you could find online. Recipes seem to be more popular than something like just read more about this person, which is not that useful or interesting at all. But any time we can get a video, something that's more interactive and more interesting, and if all I saw was the video that would still be a cool story, more stuff like that. Anytime we send our writers out to work on something, we deputize them to look for those types of opportunities and identify them and try to get that while they're out reporting so A we don't have to do it twice and B they're thinking about online in addition to print. We're just trying to slowly become less separated than we have been in the past. But also just being careful about which of those things we provide, making sure they're not super boring.

ES: And what about print subscribers? How do you kind of retain the value of the print magazine when everything goes up online?

KPE: Well I think the print magazine is where we're able to do some really beautiful things that don't always translate well online, like a lot of our style features. And also just the features in general. A lot of what goes in front of book translates very well to the website, but a lot of times the features don't necessarily. The web team tries to make those things look as nice as they can online, but they're never going to be as beautiful as they are in a magazine. We have a lot of people who really seem to appreciate that kind of stuff. I think that's one of the big things is just the aesthetics. I also just really think there are different people who want to hold the magazine in their hand versus those who want to scroll through their phone and look at something. We want everything we do to be easy to access on your phone and your tablet and not looking weird when the website is changing size or whatever, and really thinking about that, but there are certain things that are just never going to look or feel quite the same. But honestly I think more of the stuff that people are interested in in the print magazine or these in-depth things, I think people are reading them online, but I don't think they're reading them quite as much as they are when they're holding the magazine in their hands.

ES: Do you think your website is having an effect on your web circulation, either negatively — like the traditional thinking that putting content online cannibalizes newsstand sales — or maybe positively, as in the website extends the awareness of the print product?

KPE: I think it's definitely more positive for us. I don't think we've ever felt like it's cannibalizing it all. I think part of that is maybe the fact that whatever research they did that found that they're not exactly the same people in both situations. For one thing, that makes me at least realize that we're talking about the same things, but not necessarily every single time to the same people. What the website does a lot, when we talk about the brand, our Facebook page feels like *417*. And our website can feel like *417*. We can constantly be putting stuff out there that is our brand and finding people that way. I definitely think if anything we have more people following us now than we would have before. I don't think we've ever felt like circulation has gone down while our online readership has gone up. At least we haven't noticed that trend.

ES: That's good. So the rollout of content coming out over the month, was the thought of cannibalizing newsstand sales part of that decision? Or was it part of retaining value for print, or is it just about keeping the website going?

KPE: I think it's just about keeping the website fresh so that we aren't putting it all out there and then we don't put anything out there again for weeks.

ES: The biggest challenges of digital for *417*?

KPE: I think for us the biggest thing is being relevant all the time, or not necessarily relevant, but being active all the time. Everybody's kind of wearing different hats around here, doing different things. We just haven't had the manpower to be as present as we probably should be all day long every day. So that's really a large part of what we're trying to move toward with the new staffers that we've hired and sort of the new web plan, is just to be more out there and in front of people constantly, more so than we have been in the past. I think that's a challenge when you are used to doing it another way and you really want to sort of beef up that content, making sure that everybody is onboard and everybody knows what their responsibilities are and completely changing the way we do things in that department. It's always tough to make a transition like that, but luckily around here we have a staff full of yes people, and everybody is excited about change and doing things better and think we're headed in the right direction, and everyone is fully onboard with it, which is the good thing. It's always hard to change what you're doing.

ES: Right. You talked about breaking down some of those barriers between the print staff and the web staff. What all do you think are the benefits of that? We talked about having a bigger web presence, but do you think it'll benefit your staff as well?

KPE: I don't know necessarily that there's a huge benefit of our staff. We're usually thinking of it more for the readers and what the benefit is for them and what they're

going to get out of it. Just like anybody else, we want as many people as we can have on our website, reading our magazine. With all of the digital content, if you are lazy about it and things aren't going up often enough, you're going to lose people. They're going to find something else to read and something else to do if you're not constantly pinging them with things to pay attention to. For us the benefit really is just the increased interaction with our audience, an increased number of people in our audience.

ES: You mentioned newsletters. Who's in charge of those? What does that process look like?

KPE: The digital team is in charge of it. Our old digital director before Dayle moved into the position coordinated all of that. We have a bunch of different people on staff writing it. The editor of the bridal magazine writes our bridal newsletter. We have a food-centric one that comes out on Tuesdays, that one's super popular. We have a nightlife slash music one that comes out on Mondays, which is extremely popular. That one's new and it's just going crazy. So those are probably the two biggest ones. There's Best of the Week which comes out on Sunday, and that's one thing to do each day of the weekend. Weekend Pass is stuff to do over the weekend. The bridal one comes out every other week. We have a home one that comes out every other week, and then a shopping one that's every other week, so those ones aren't weekly. I think that's all of them.

ES: So it's mainly the editors of those departments or publications who are doing them?

KPE: Yeah, editors write some of them and digital folks write some of them. They definitely have been good for us. We have a pretty high open rate on those. It kind of depends on which one you're talking about, but Table Talk, the food one, and then the music one both have really high open rates. People seem to be super into it, which is nice. They've definitely been good for us, and they're pretty low impact in the effort it takes to create them. You can put a lot of content without doing super deep reporting on each one. We can find all of these cool things and just really quickly roll this out for people, but all of them are pretty dense in terms of everything in there is useful, which people seem to really like.

ES: That seems to be a great way to ping people, like you said. So last question, we've talked a lot about the future of your website, but anything else we haven't mentioned on how you envision the future of your website?

KPE: No, I think we've hit on everything. We just want it to be useful and current and constant. So that's really what we're working toward, is making sure we have the staff to be able to do that they way we want to. Constantly. Because that's the thing, when you're used to the monthly cycle and then all of a sudden things are coming up daily, we have to do that, we just have to be relevant. So we're constantly working on improving that, and it's exciting more than anything else. Everybody's kind of jazzed to see the new stuff take shape.

*Interview with Zach Dundas, Portland Monthly
April 5, 2016*

ES: What do you see as the role of your website?

ZD: That's an interesting question because it's always kind of evolving. I would say that in my mind it has a couple of roles. One is it is our daily and hourly coverage channel, on a number of beats in particular and just in general. We have five subject-driven blogs that are updated — maybe not every single one of them gets a daily update, but there's constant stream of daily content coming through those — and then there's a certain amount of content we create that doesn't fit those blogs that goes live on the site anyway. For example, we just launched a podcast, and the second episode of it went live this morning. So that's one — I don't know quite how to divide these in terms of their priority, I'd say they're equally important. It's our constant and ever moving content, and it's also where what we do in print translates to a different and more — I would say not necessarily larger in every case — but a more elastic audience than the print audience. Those are the two things. We try to maintain some brand consistency across the print and digital media. I'm sure that our voice is a little different on the website than it is in print. We're working conceptually to make less and less a distinction between the two. Print has certain craft and logistical demands that are different than what the site demands, but we're trying to integrate the planning and conceiving of the two as much as we can.

ES: Right. And so how do you think of your web audience as compared to your print audience?

ZD: They are interestingly a little bit different. They are younger. They are more female.

ES: Online, we're talking?

ZD: Online. Many of the other differences one might expect. Along the lines of being younger, their household income is just a little bit lower, but they're more likely to be engaged consumers in some ways. They're more engaged in a lot of parts of the consumer economy that we cover.

ES: That's the first I've heard of an online audience being more female.

ZD: It's kind of interesting. It's notable. We have a very female audience in general, and it kind of becomes more female the further you get from our subscriber core. Our subscribers are a majority female but more reasonably split. The newsstand buyers are very female, and the web audience is likewise tilted very heavily female. So yeah, the web audience is very distinct. We definitely see that we are reaching very different people through the site in general, and actually different people through different digital avenues. We have a number of pretty successful email newsletters, many of which are tailored to specific beats and reflect those blogs that we do. And each of those has its own audience. The site audiences are more of a mosaic than a monolith, because different things get more or less traction depending on their subject matter, how they hit readers at

the moment. I have come to think of them as being very different but related audiences, coming to us for many of the same reasons but in a different way, and responding to different parts of our coverage and different aspects of our brand and voice. We're much chattier on the website. The headlines are written in a completely different way. There's a different tone I would say. It's related and isn't contradictory to what we're doing in print, but it's distinct for sure.

ES: Do you know how much of your audience is using both print and online?

ZD: I don't know what the overlap is. I don't know if there's any way I could tell you.

ES: It's a hard question.

ZD: It is. It may be a question we haven't even asked. I'm just looking through the materials I've got here. I don't see it right now.

ES: From what I've heard, it seems there's some overlap, but it's difficult to quantify that.

ZD: Yeah, there's definitely overlap, but I don't worry about — if something has been on the website and we want to use it in the magazine, I don't worry at all about doing that. Or vice versa. In terms of our thinking, we basically assume that we're speaking to different people in the two different media.

ES: OK. How often are you posting content online, and what does that process look like?

ZD: How often are we posting? I mean, all the time. Constantly. Hourly, pretty much. I don't even know to break it down, there's a constant stream. Some days are more than others, but certainly multiple times a day. The process differs depending on whether the piece of content originated with the print magazine, in which case there's a couple steps in which the digital editor and web producer adapt what we've done in print and recreate the article into a digital article. We have a little bit of a process for reviewing headlines and subheads. They're almost always different. If it's a piece of daily content, most of which are blog posts on one of those five blogs that I mentioned, not all of which but most of which, the writer writes a piece, the editor who is responsible for that blog edits it — and in many cases that's the same person, but just to go step-by-step — writes the headline and the deck, pulls together the art as best as he or she can, creates a draft in our CMS, and our best practice marching orders are to make sure someone else reads it before it goes live. I don't think that happens in every single case, but that's the standard operating procedure.

ES: And is that the digital editor?

ZD: In many cases, yes. We've decided that to mandate that she read every single one would be cruel and unusual. So she is often the person who provides that second set of eyes, but if she is too busy or doing other things, peer editing is fine 99 percent of the

time. And then the individual editor is empowered to publish it if that's what's most efficient. There are cases when, if Rebecca (Jacobson), the digital editor, is the one who gives it that second read, she goes ahead and publishes it when she's made some changes and run those by the original editor. At this point, we've tried to create a little bit of a process around it without stultifying it. It's obviously a medium built around volume and a pretty free-flowing approach to putting stuff out in the world. There's no comparison between the print process in terms of its multiple steps, which goes through copy editing and fact-checking and multiple rounds of proofs and all the things that are required to produce a high quality print publication. They don't really have equivalence. Not every one of those steps has an equivalent with blog posts. And nor should it, I don't think. I've wrestled with it over the years, but I've come to understand that speed and liveliness are of the essence. If anyone's writing something that's particularly sensitive or reportorially complicated, we slow it down and do the fact checking that kind of reporting demands, which is what every piece that goes into print goes through. So there are exceptions to the rule, but generally speaking, we don't do that for blog posts.

ES: That makes sense. What percentage of print content are you repurposing for the web?

ZD: Almost all of it. I would say ninety percent of it. The only exception is occasionally there are small, tiny little nuggets of writing that are created solely to — well, they're basically created to help build the magazine into an attractive and engaging reading experience, and they don't hold up well. They're too short. They're not digitally native. They're not adapted for the medium. So there are a few things we hold off on, but not very much. Most of it goes on.

ES: Right. And what's your timing strategy for posting it online?

ZD: It all goes up when the magazine is on newsstands. We have wrestled with that a lot. We finally landed on the strategy of doing the newsstand date because our subscribers have already had the magazine for a while, five or six days typically. So our subscribers get an advanced look at everything. If there are pieces of content that are specifically linked to something in print, in other words there's a callout in the print magazine to an extra feature that is digital, that stuff will go live when the subscribers get it. Everything else goes live on the newsstand date. For a while we didn't do that. For a while we waited for the first of the month. In other words the December content would go live on December 1 instead of November 17, whenever the magazine would hit the newsstand. But we found that people were actually searching for stuff as soon as they saw it on newsstands. Particularly with service packages that we do annually, it was really frustrating to see all that traffic going to a year-old piece. I think the decisive factor was every April we do a real estate issue. We produce a huge batch of market stats. I think it was last year, maybe the year before, we saw that the day it was on newsstands, the previous year's articles became our most visited articles. I would almost say it was sickening because it was just this realization, and it had never been quite so clear before, that there's a readership that sees something on the newsstand, and whether they buy the magazine or not, responds — or maybe they're subscribers, too, I don't know — they see what we're doing based off what they see in print, and they immediately go look for it on

the website. I'm not saying that's everything, it's not even most things, but it's enough significant projects we noticed that about that we decided we would just go live when the magazine goes out to the world.

ES: That makes sense. This might be a tough one, but I'm wondering what percentage of your online content is online-exclusive, versus what percentage is coming from print.

ZD: It's hard to say. I can kind of figure it out. Rough count, one issue of the magazine has about 35 stories. Some big, some little, that go online. And I would guess that's about what we do in a week on the website, give or take. In terms of our overall production of stuff going into the world, the vast majority of it is digital.

ES: Who's responsible for that content?

ZD: The editing responsibilities are divided up much like the editing responsibilities for print are divided up. They're as closely aligned as we can make them. There are few that just have to do with workload and who's available, if someone's part-time, et cetera et cetera. But each of those five blogs, which are the source of most of our ongoing everyday coverage, has an editor. In every case, that same editor also works on related content for print. Like, the person who's responsible for "eat beat," our restaurant and food blog, is one of the editors who works in the print section that's about dining and cooking. The two editors who work on Look Book, which is our design and style blog, also contribute substantially to the coverage of Design & Style in print. And so on down the line. So each beat has its editors who work on it, and for the most part they're doing both the print and digital coverage. That doesn't mean there's not come crossover and the occasional oddity of someone writing for the culture blog who doesn't ordinarily write for the culture section in the magazine, but the structure responsibilities are as integrated as we can make it. So our arts editor edits the arts blog and writes a lot of it. Our travel editor does the travel blog. Everyone works on the thing that makes sense with their larger responsibilities.

ES: When you say that they work on it, are they writing the content for it? Or do you have online writers?

ZD: A little bit of both. For the most part, they're writing it. We don't have a dedicated freelance budget to pay for outside writers to contribute to the website that often. It does happen, but it's not part of our usual operations. For the most part, the blog posts and other stuff that's created for the website is created in-house. So they're writing, editing, generally orchestrating. The resources are in-house. Our interns contribute a lot. Every intern, we have four or five editorial interns at a time, each one of them is assigned to one of those blogs and serves as a de facto staff writer for that blog for the three months they're here. But the staff editor who's handling a similar coverage portfolio in print also edits the corresponding area of the website.

ES: What content do you find to be the most valuable online?

ZD: It's a weird combination of pretty obvious service appeals. There are a certain number of subjects that are recurrently interesting to people, based on what they want to do or check out or experience or consume in Portland. For example, every summer when the weather gets hot, we have articles, which in some cases are years old, about local swimming holes that are our most popular items for the day.

ES: Are you re-pushing those old articles, or are they just finding them?

ZD: In some cases there's a little bit of repackaging happening. In other cases we'll just give them a look and say these places still exist. Here's this piece. A weekly post about great places to eat this week always does really well. Restaurant news does really well. Design, kind of consumerish design coverage, does pretty well. Like right now the number four article on our site is something called "You can buy the Hobbit house built by Oregon's most famous mime." We have some health and beauty coverage that is online that's pretty different from most of what we do in print that does really well. So there's a lot of service stuff that does well, and then anything that hits one of the local or national hot button topics tends to soar. A random but telling example I can think of is anytime we cover something about the Portland International Airport, it's very popular. For some reason, people here are obsessed with the airport. Any time we write about tiny houses or designs for small living, it gets a very big response because that's something people are very interested in in Portland. And then if we have something that hits a national or international social or political thing in some way, that tends to do well. So those get big traffic, and then everything else is — I don't know how to describe it — there's sort of a constant background hum of traffic going to other things.

ES: Is your print content doing as well online as your online content?

ZD: It really varies, and it seems to be driven mostly by subject rather than whether it appeared in print or not. We did an interview that was conceived and executed for the print magazine with this woman who has established herself as a very popular and profitable cyber dominatrix, who lives here in town, and we completely put that in motion to fit it into the print magazine, but then it did really well online. Some of our more substantial features, like longer narrative features, have done well, and others have done not well, and it's been entirely dependent on what they are about. We did a profile of Ursula Le Guin, a legendary Portland-based science fiction author, which was a 3,000 word, sort of long for us, narrative feature, that got terrific traffic online. Sometimes those longer stories that are conceived of initially at first as a print reading experience don't do as well online, which is fine with me. I don't really evaluate stories strictly on how well they're going to do on the internet. Some things are created for different reasons: to enhance the print reading experience or tell a great story or make the brand look good, some combination of those things. I'm kind of joking on that last one, but it is of course a concern. So the performance of the print stuff, I don't really see a distinction between how well those stories do and how well any story does. If it's a subject that people on the internet respond to, it'll do well. Most of our traffic is driven either by social media or organic search. Those are the two things that get us the most traffic. If it's

something that resonates on social media, it will do well. If it's something that people are searching for, like best Portland swimming holes, it will do well.

ES: That makes sense. You might not be able to answer this one, but has your website been profitable?

ZD: Yes. I can't give specifics, but I can say yes.

ES: I was going to ask how your print staff and online staff collaborate, but it sounds like you have just one digital person?

ZD: Yeah, we have digital person and she's very immersed in everything that we're doing. She's very aware of what we're doing in print. She also writes occasionally for the print magazine. She has a background that includes a lot of print work. She's not off on her own internet island by any means. She's very immersed in what we're doing, and everyone's working for the website all the time, so I would say it's as integrated as we can make it. We have the digital editor because it has proven to be really useful to have one person at the nexus of content and social media and all the things that bring it together.

ES: Yeah, that seems to be a great resource for everybody. So part of my research is about how editors balance retaining the value of the print magazine for subscribers while also making sure the website has its own unique benefits. How do you balance that?

ZD: You know the experiences are so different I think, sort of like experiential and consumer thing to engage with. Our newsstand sales are pretty good. They have held up better than industry average for sure. We were slightly up last year on newsstand sales. Our subscriber base is pretty solid. The subscriber base has been pretty much the same in the five years I have worked here, with a really good retention rate over the last couple of years. So what we're doing in print is totally working as a product. And meanwhile the website has grown substantially. Exponentially would be an overstatement, but substantially. I mean a lot. The web audience is way bigger now than it was three or four years ago. And we've had some big months on the website in terms of traffic. We might have a big month and then it'll regress to a certain mean, but it's always heading upward. So I don't know, they're just very different. I think the web audience by its nature is more episodic. I know there are some readers who only get one of our email newsletters that might be about food or the culture scene or style and shopping, and they only engage with us through that. There aren't very many, but there are a few that that is our only presence in their lives. And meanwhile there are people who only read the magazine and never look at the website. And then there are people who do both. So it's kind of hard for me to give a comprehensive answer to your question. They're serving very different roles in people's lives I think.

ES: So it's not so much of a concern because they are such different products?

ZD: Yeah, I'm not really worried about it. I used to be. But I've seen things do really well in the magazine — and I judge that by how well the magazine sells if it's on the cover, or how much I hear about it if it's not on the cover but it's in the magazine — and then not really perform well online. And then on the other hand, I haven't seen the website cutting into our print readership, and I don't see what we're doing in print as contrary at all to the values we're trying to uphold online either. The voice is maybe a little faster and looser, but we're not trying to do any kind of reporting on the website that we're not doing in print.

ES: So that was my next question. The traditional thinking is that having the content online would cannibalize newsstand sales. But I'm finding that might not be such a big concern now. And some have actually said that the website is having maybe a positive effect on the print magazine because it's extending the brand.

ZD: I would like to think so. I haven't seen any evidence of it cannibalizing print. Print seems to go up and down depending on — I mean, industry-wide, newsstand sales aren't headed in a great direction. We don't sell as many magazines on the newsstand as we would have ten years ago. But on the other hand, over the last five years, it's held together fairly well. And like I said, we were up just a tiny bit last year, which is exciting. And we've had some good months so far this year. But we've also had some bad months. And the subscribers remain very loyal, so that's good. That's kind of the thing that no one remembers to talk about is the subscribers, who are the most important audience. So they're very solid and have a good retention rate and all that. Print magazines seem to sell or not sell depending on how we luck into a cover every month. If it's something that turns out to have a huge consumer appeal, we'll sell a lot of copies. But I don't think that anything we're doing online is hurting any of that. And hopefully the digital world is a whole new avenue to sell subscriptions and get people interested in the brand in general. I don't know how many digital readers we're converting to print readers, I don't imagine a ton, but there doesn't have to be a lot for it to make a difference.

ES: What do you find to be the biggest challenge in producing your online content?

ZD: The medium demands a lot of volume. If you wanted to strip it down and be very unromantic about it, it's a volume-driven business. Individual blog posts and stories may not get huge traffic, but if you put them all together they add up to the audience. So maintaining that and managing that in a way that suits everything else we're doing and keeps crushing workloads at bay, all of that has been challenging. I think we're at a pretty good place. I think we've figured out how not to try to overproduce for the website. Everyone has a fairly realizable knowledge of — people have expectations and they know and are realistic. We're not, unlike many daily papers who have gone down the route of demanding a certain quota and evaluating people by the traffic their posts generate, we don't do any of that. What we do is say, this area of coverage exists, this blog exists, it has an associated email newsletter. In order to be a viable thing, it needs to have this many posts per week. Beyond that, whatever you can do is great. It's not easy. I don't mean to understate it. It's not easy to keep up the level of sheer volume and pace,

but I also don't think we're trying to do a crazy BuzzFeed-style or Gawker-style operation that's just churning out so much stuff.

ES: Right. I mean city magazines are traditionally small staffs.

ZD: Yeah. I would say our staff is pretty much right where it needs to be. We have enough people to split up the different beats, distribute reporting and editing responsibilities fairly evenly, and while we all do a lot, I don't think there's anyone who's been asked to do a crazy amount of things. That makes no sense.

ES: Right. Can you talk about the podcast you mentioned earlier?

ZD: Yeah, we just started it, so it's very early in its life. We have two episodes up. And it's a little bit of an experiment. I have heard semi-discouraging words about podcasts from my fellow city magazine editors in terms of the audiences that they can attract, but we're going to see how it goes. We basically started it just because we wanted to. It's not part of any grand, strategic thinking. And as is very rare with us, or probably anyone, we've started it with no sales program behind it. The sales staff is just now getting briefed on the plan so they can see how it goes, see if it's something that's going to be appealing. But we basically just started it because the edit staff wants to. We used an empty office as a studio, we rented two mics for a while, then we bought some cheap mics. We're forcing — I say that jokingly — we've recruited the digital editor to learn some audio editing. In terms of content, we're pretty much just doing interviews. Mostly just interviewing people we would talk to anyway. Mayoral candidates, for example, people we're writing about one way or another.

ES: So you are writing about them for print or web?

ZD: For the most part, yeah. I think if I look at the first six that we've got planned, yeah, they all relate to something that's in print. That's not going to be true of every single one.

ES: So is whoever who is responsible for that episode the person who's responsible for that story for print?

ZD: Yeah. And I would say this is early days yet, but what we're tentatively doing is we're going to have a quarterly meeting where everyone's going to come, all the editors who are responsible for significant departments in the print and website coverage, will come with a couple of ideas of people they want to interview for the podcast. We'll put all that together in a calendar that makes sense, and then they coordinate with the digital editor to do the recording. And that's it. We're hoping to make it pretty low-key.

ES: That's pretty cool. I work with Andrew Leland here in Columbia. He does The Believer podcast. So I'm just now getting into the podcast world, but it seems to be having a huge upswing lately.

ZD: Yeah, it is overall. What I don't know, and which I think people have had some mixed experiences with in the city magazine world, is how big a local audience there is. Obviously if you get something like Serial or The Believer, anything that has a national audience, you can hit a number that makes a lot of sense. What I don't know is if there are enough Portland Monthly readers who are also podcast listeners to make a very big audience for it, but we'll find out. That's one of the reasons we're doing it kind of on the quiet and cheap to see how viable it is.

ES: Last question: How do you envision the future of your website?

ZD: I think that we're going to continue to try to do some new stuff like the podcast as opportunity arises. We have done some video production in the past. We don't currently have particularly ambitious video plans. The payoff in terms of views just turned out to not really be there. But obviously that's part of what the medium of the internet lends itself to, so I'm sure we'll be doing more audio and video as time goes by. We also are preparing to — it's kind of in a developmental phase — we're working on some apps that will integrate with some of the service content on the site. The first of those is going to roll out this year for sure. So that's important. That doesn't really change the website itself. The website will be the content backbone for whatever apps we develop. And you know, I don't know. We'll constantly be reorganizing, optimizing, and messing with it I'm sure. But there are no plans for any grand overhaul at the moment.

ES: Just some experiments.

ZD: Yeah, things that are fun and enhance what we're doing for readers and enhance the way we're coming across and the coverage we're able to do of the city.

ES: It sounds like you're trying things that your staff enjoys, too.

ZD: Yeah. To a certain extent, it's great to do things that make sense in all those ways. It's good for readers, it's good for the magazine, it's good for the staff. That's ideal. We also are part of a group of magazines that includes magazines in Houston and Seattle and Sarasota, Florida, and we're going to keep our eyes on what they do and see. They do some things that we don't do. Seattle has a politics blog for example. So we're kind of watching to see what works and what makes sense.

ES: Yeah, it seems like from last summer's CRMA conference that everyone is learning from each other.

ZD: Yeah, and I don't expect that'll change. Honestly I'm sure that we'll all just be figuring it out forever. I would say, and I say this with a major knock on wood feeling because I don't want to be cavalier, but I think so far it's only done good things for us. I feel really lucky that I can say that right now because obviously the industry as a whole has been very challenged by the adaptation to the digital world. I also say that as someone who loves print and is very committed to making a great print magazine. I don't think those two have to be in conflict.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

DMagazine.com: Summary

Print magazine circulation: 59,492

Average monthly unique visitors to website: 1.1 million

Average time on site: 1 minute, 50 seconds

Number of editorial staffers for print: 6 full-time (in the process of hiring two more)

Number of editorial staffers that are exclusively or primarily website: 5

Percentage of 2015 revenue generated from website: 14 percent

Themes from interview:

Print + digital are treated as separate titles. Heid says the purpose of DMagazine.com is to build an audience of its own separate from the print magazine's audience: "We don't think of it as just an extension — as *just* an extension — of the print titles we publish. We think of it as its own entity, so we work hard to keep it populated and to speak to its own audience, because it has its own audience." Of course, part of the website's role is to present the print content, but Heid says they are mainly concerned with speaking to the website's unique audience.

Age is a big difference between the print and online audiences. While the print magazine averages readers ages 35–45, DMagazine.com's readers are 25–35. The print magazine, Heid says, is also more focused on affluent readers, while online Heid believes there are more "aspirational" readers — those who want to be the affluent people in Dallas someday. Heid says the website's focus on local events also ensures a more inclusive demographic: "Because such a high percentage of what we do is based around being a guide to the city, I feel like our website is a little bit more inclusive of a broader cross-section of the city."

Everyone wants service. Heid thinks the tenets of service journalism — food and "stuff to do" — are what both print and online readers are looking for.

DMagazine.com has added pressure of being "newsy" — but what's their role? Much like I discovered during the breaking news on MU's campus last semester, Heid and the digital staff has to find their role in breaking news coverage, where they have an added pressure to stay on top of current events: "With the print deadlines, as much as they might like to break news sometimes ... it's really online where being part of the daily conversation of what's going on in the city is so important. The difficulty we have competing in that space is we're not set up to be a news organization. There's a much

larger newsroom right on the other side of downtown from us that is much better equipped to that, so we have to sort of think about what's our role? What's our space there?"

Heid says he tells his writers that where DMagazine.com can make a difference is by bringing commentary and analysis of the news. "I think that's what we do best, when we do it best."

Repurposing print content wouldn't be enough. Heid says his staff publishes on DMagazine.com every weekday. Of the 10–12 different blogs and other channels of the site, he says most are updated daily, most multiple times a day, a few weekly or less than that. He thinks about 50 percent of what goes online is web exclusive. However, the web-exclusive content accounts for a much larger percentage of site traffic than the repurposed print content: "The print content tends to spike as soon as we put it up and reach a pretty tall high, but then drop off pretty quickly. We have some exceptions to that. But if we just took the magazine content and put it up on a monthly basis, we would have a tiny audience."

Blogs are just a matter of terminology — and they're being phased out. I was curious that DMagazine.com is home to so many blogs, especially in a time when publications seem to be phasing out blogs and calling it all online content (*Vox* included). Heid thinks readers aren't making a distinction between the two, and in the upcoming redesign, those barriers will be broken down more: "It's less important that someone come to read our food blog specifically as it's branded than that they have a page where they can read all of our food content, whether that originated as a print article or as a blog post that our editor thought up this morning. The reader doesn't really care."

DMag.com will maintain Front Burner, their primary blog for general news and commentary, as its own channel. The rest, Heid says, will essentially become feeds.

Print magazines should try to create experiences that can't be replicated. Heid says DMag.com repurposes 90–95 percent of the print content for online. Exceptions are visual, spread-based content, like featured products seen in *D Home*. In those cases, however, an effort is generally made to add to the story online so it's not underwhelming to the reader. Heid says the print magazine actually tries to create content he can't replicate, and he's all for that: "That's what a printed magazine should try to do. It should try to be an experience that's just much more enjoyable to read on a page spread than it is in a digital format."

"Cannibalization" of print sales was a concern, so they struck a compromise. Heid says right now, all of the print content is posted online at once. Originally, the content was posted the day the subscriber copies went out, but the circulation team and publisher were concerned that would hurt newsstand sales. Because the biggest chunk of newsstand sales happens during the first weekend, they decided to hold the print content back until the Monday after the first weekend of newsstand sales.

Heid isn't sure he believes in the cannibalization effect — they don't have good data on it either way — but they do see one strong correlation: "...if something does well online, it does well on the newsstand. And if it doesn't do well on the newsstand, it often doesn't do well online. ... Now yes, you could argue that if we hadn't put it online it would have done even better on the newsstand, but I find that difficult to believe. I think most of the people who are only going to read it online and then see it on the newsstand and not buy it on the newsstand, they were never going to buy it on the newsstand to begin with."

After the redesign, which will follow a more feed-based approach, they'll start filtering the content out over the course of two or three weeks. Otherwise, the daily web exclusive content would be "crowded out" by the print stories.

Getting creative in revenue building. Contrary to the print magazine, display advertising isn't a moneymaker on the web. Rather, they've tried sponsorship-based advertising, in which a whole section of the site will be "road-blocked" for a sponsor, or they can sponsor a special event. Another good revenue source is the doctor listings, which have great placement on the site. The directory lists every doctor in Dallas, but doctors can pay to enhance their listing with a photo or blurb.

DMag.com has experimented with other product-based revenue streams, but Heid says you have to be careful that you don't sacrifice your brand's integrity: "The danger there is you don't want to start compromising your site by becoming a glorified catalogue, right? ... If the reader starts to detect that you're anything like a pay for play, or you're only putting something up because the company's going to make money on it, then you've undermined your credibility and the value of both the journalism and the service journalism that you do."

They've turned a profit — just not consistently. "I'm not going to say it's been every year, but it's not because we don't have strong revenue and growing revenue, it's that our company has really been smart about putting resources into it. We spend a lot more on our digital operation than most city magazines our size do."

The print staff contributes (when deadlines allow). Heid said he's satisfied with the contributions the print staff makes to DMag.com, but admitted he'd like more collaboration. And when something has to give, it's usually digital: "You know how it is, people have their own work that they need to do. So if the print magazine gets into their shipping period where they've got to get the book out the door and there's a lot to do, it's easy to understand why they're not going to give a thought to, 'Oh, our blog doesn't have much on it today. Maybe I should find something.' Ultimately something has to give, and digital tends to be where that happens because we're not directly making our money there, and we're not up against as hard and fast a deadline."

What should we care about? Heid listed a few challenges in running the digital side of a city magazine — namely that it's a "never-ending news hole," and it's difficult to know if their approach is the right one. But he spent a lot of time talking about the struggle of juggling multiple social media channels (which magazines have to do, when no one is

coming to your homepage anymore): “It seems like every week, there’s some new social media platform that we’re supposed to care about. ... I still can’t wrap my brain around Snapchat. I don’t know why anybody likes it or what it’s for, really. I kind of understand what it’s for on a personal basis, one person to one person, but as far as a brand, what the benefit of that is, and what is the content that would work well there? ... I also don’t know for sure that we should even care about Snapchat at this point. We’re sort of seeing — you know how these platforms come and go all the time. They wax and they wane. Snapchat is up right now and Twitter is down. But does that mean we shouldn’t care about Twitter anymore? I don’t know. We’re just trying to figure out this game.”

City magazines aren’t going to lead the way. Heid also delved into the big industry problem of making readers pay for online content, but says DMag doesn’t have the capabilities of leading that charge: “We’re such a relatively small fish in this vast ocean that it’s hard for us to really be the drivers to make it what we need it to be. I feel like we’re still sort of waiting for the winners and the losers to be determined in a lot of these areas.”

Archives are an untapped resource. DMag.com houses most issues back through 1974 (though many stories are missing, and the scanning process wasn’t always perfect). But these stories do well online — the older stories that bring out nostalgia, and even the not-so-old stories: “In February we put up a dating guide. We’re sort of creating a new channel on the site that’s all sort of dating based, and some of what we put into that channel was repurposed stuff that we’d already run. The two most popular things we’ve done in the dating guide so far have just been re-sharing stories from 2011 and 2012 that were just old things that all of a sudden got new life. Because they were new to a significant portion of the audience. They didn’t care it was from four years ago.”

Philadelphia Magazine: Summary

Print magazine circulation: 100,000

Average monthly unique visitors to website: 1.8 million

Average time on-site: About 3 minutes

Number of editorial staffers for print: 28

Number of editorial staffers that are exclusively or primarily website: 2/3 have at least some role on the website

Percentage of 2015 revenue generated from website: 25 percent

Themes from interviews:

PhillyMag.com is considered a profitable endeavor. In 2015, the website generated 25 percent of the overall revenue. McGrath says its purpose is two-fold: "...it's a vehicle for doing journalism, and from a business standpoint, it's a way to make money."

The website's audience is younger — and more city-based. It shouldn't come as a surprise that, like DMagazine.com, *Philadelphia's* website has a younger audience than its print magazine. Specifically, the average age of the print subscriber is early fifties, while the digital audience is 20 to 30-year-olds. But McGrath made a further interesting distinction: The print audience is more suburban-based (about 70 percent), while the younger, online audience is more city-based. This makes sense, as McGrath says the website content tends to be more city-focused. Although there aren't current numbers, McGrath says there is definitely an overlap of readers who use both print and online.

The website serves as a brand-building tool. McGrath says that in some ways, the website has promoted greater awareness of the print product. As he pointed out, awareness doesn't necessarily translate to circulation, and there's still been a softening in newsstand sales. "But from an overall brand standpoint, the fact that you're reaching a much larger audience online than we ever did in print, I think has raised awareness of everything that we do, including print," McGrath says.

They're posting a lot of online-exclusive content. McGrath estimates the staff is posting about 50 pieces of original content every day. He thinks about 90 percent of what goes online is web-exclusive. "Basically our web presence is as big if not more time-consuming than the print product is at this point," he says.

Very few staffers are uninvolved with web. McGrath says there are three categories of staff: those who are focused solely on print (the art department, production department and core of contracted freelance writers), those who focus almost exclusively on digital, and many who "have a foot in both worlds," such as *Philadelphia's* food editor who also

oversees Foobooz online. “We don’t make a whole lot of distinction between that’s a digital person and that’s a print person,” he says. “It’s one very integrated team.”

Content is spread out over the month. McGrath says they post about 85 percent of print content for web, excluding, like DMag, more print-oriented pieces. But they have a very interesting way of metering out the print content, using a weekend product they launched about a year and a half ago called Philadelphia Sunday. It’s essentially a weekly newsletter that has its own cover image and TOC, with the selections of print stories that are published online that week. Philadelphia Sunday goes out to about 25,000 digital users who have opted in. This is a great way of promoting stories; rather than the print content going up online all at once and somewhat silently, the content gets new life with the newsletter.

News and sports are online drivers, while service journalism remains a staple in print. From a traffic standpoint, daily news and Philadelphia Eagles coverage does best for Philadelphia online. Print, McGrath says, relies on the standbys of city magazines: service journalism and long-form narratives.

Online advertising is growing faster than print advertising. This came as a surprise to me, given Jason’s thoughts about how digital advertising can be tricky to nail down. They’ve had luck with integrated advertising packages in which advertisers get placement in print, online and sometimes at special events, but digital-only advertising is doing well on its own. (That makes sense when you’re getting 1.8 million unique visitors who stick around for three minutes or more.) They’re also having a lot of success with native advertising, in which they write sponsored blog posts for advertising clients. That raised a red flag for me, but McGrath said they mark those posts to make it clear they’re sponsored.

Digital is on all hands on deck. McGrath says the editorial staff is integrated, and while some people’s jobs might focus more on print than digital or vice versa, they aren’t considered separate staffs. This bodes well for workflow but can be a possible cause of burnout. When asked about the greatest challenge of producing their website, McGrath cited a small staff. “There’s probably too much work for too few people at this point. Because you’re asking people to post a large amount of content on a daily basis, and for a fair number of them also still pay attention to what’s happening monthly in print, and it’s just a lot of work. So we have a tired staff at this point.”

They sometimes move stories from online to print. Typically stories start out in print and move to online, but when you’re producing so much online-exclusive content, the opposite can be true as well. I asked if this happens because a story is so popular online, and McGrath said sometimes it’s purely because it’s a good story, “and there’s no reason not to include it in print.”

Embrace the medium. I asked McGrath how he retains the value of the print magazine for subscribers while also adding unique benefits for online readers. “I think it comes down to trying to embrace what each medium is good at, and also trying to understand that

people may want to consume your content in multiple ways.” Digital, he says, is faster-paced — a “snapshot” of what’s happening in the city right now. But the print magazine is still a better way to read long-form stories, and to McGrath, it’s the more beautiful medium. He says excepting the softening in newsstand sales, there’s no other softening in demand for the print product. Meanwhile, the digital side continues to grow. And online is where the publication has the space to provide more niche content, like the Eagles coverage. “We will write maybe one or two feature stories a year in print about the Eagles, but the ability to really dive deep on the Eagles every single day, for Eagles fans, is a huge benefit. We’d never be able to do that in print, but we obviously do it online.”

Confusion remains about where to plug content online. I noticed that several sections of the magazine overlap into online channels. For instance, Shopping & Style in the print magazine is the Shoppist online. I asked McGrath if print content is intentionally repurposed when it moves to web and how that distinction is made: “There’s some crossover of brands, but it’s not across the board, and it’s not consistent,” he says. “And that’s something honestly I struggle with sometimes. Should this be called exactly the same thing in print and online? That’s probably stuff that we have to focus on a little bit more and be a little more consistent about.”

Indianapolis Monthly: Summary

Print magazine circulation: 40,137

Average monthly unique visitors to website: 91,000

Average time on site: 1 minute, 49 seconds

Number of editorial staffers for print: 8 editors, 3 art staffers

Number of editorial staffers that are exclusively or primarily website: 1

Percentage of 2015 revenue generated from website: 5 percent

Themes from interview:

Having a digital leader is good for business. Heckert leads a small editorial staff of eight, who all have a hand in the print and web operations. Included in that headcount is Jared Hay, a digital media manager, whom Heckert calls the “gatekeeper” for the website and handles a myriad of other responsibilities, including managing their social media presence and newsletters and providing support to the advertising team. Heckert was very upfront about Hay’s role “straddling the fence” between the editorial and advertising departments. His is the only position to do so, and she says he manages the divide well: “The impetus is really on him, and I think he does a very good job of this, of really keeping on one side of the fence and not letting there be crossover. So he’s really great about going on sales calls and being an advocate for editorial on the website and helping them come up with advertising packages, but also is a huge support system for the editorial side and does all of our social and that sort of stuff.”

Profitable or not, websites build brands. Indy’s website generates a modest amount of revenue (5% of the total revenue in 2015), but Heckert says what it does really well is extend awareness of the brand. “It’s extending the publication of course, but it’s the overall brand. We are seeing that it brings in, in many cases, a new audience.”

Online audiences are young, aspirational. Like *D Magazine* and *Philadelphia, Indianapolis Monthly*’s online audience is a younger demographic — but per their research, the divide isn’t as large at the other two publications. While the print magazine age average is 55, Heckert says the online audience averages about 45 years old. (That figure is captured from the website’s “insider” program — people who voluntarily submitted their email for newsletters and access to parts of the site.) Like Heid said of *DMagazine.com*, Heckert says their online audience is more aspirational than the print subscribers: “There may be readers who, depending on where they are in their lives, may not be ready to be a print subscriber, but through the website, we can still prompt them to appreciate our content.” My research pointed out problematic class barriers in city magazines; companion websites might be a good way to break down some of those barriers.

Take it “that extra magazine step.” When you can’t compete with the daily newspaper, what you *can* do is bring your magazine’s unique voice and a new angle to the story. “We know that people aren’t coming to us for their daily news like they are to the *Indy Star*,” Heckert says. “So when we do do original content on the web, we think about, how can we present this in such a way that it brings our editorial voice to what we’re doing, that there’s an angle we’re taking. That’s something we think about a lot because we want it to not just be, OK we’re covering something that’s the news of the day, but we’re taking it that extra magazine step and bringing something more to it, whether it’s a particular angle or more reporting, that sort of thing.”

Different web content brings in different audiences. Heckert says their print audience is loyal — *Indianapolis Monthly* has the highest renewals of the Emmis publications. But what she finds interesting is that different content brings different audiences to the website. “Our March issue was a downtown issue. And that’s doing really well online. But (Jared’s) seeing a different subset of people engaging with that. ... With the website, we see that being more topic-driven, is what’s going to determine who the audience is for that particular thing.” So while the print audience is stable and somewhat predictable, the digital audience is constantly influx. This creates both a challenge for predicting what will do well online, but also presents an opportunity for increasing that brand awareness.

Authority is crucial. This is the overlap Heckert sees between the print audience and the web audience — a trust in *Indianapolis Monthly*: “...I think what is a common thread between our print readers and our web readers, what is allowing us to be successful and continuing to grow those numbers, the binding thread is our authority ... it’s something that we’ve cultivated over the decades, that people trust what we’re saying. I think that is something that is common between what that does well online and what that does well in print. It’s that authority we bring to it.”

Small staffs means all hands on deck. The editorial team is posting about two to three pieces a day online, including online-exclusive and repurposed print content. While Jared, the digital media manager, is the “gatekeeper” for the website and all content ultimately passes through him, all editors pitch and generate stories for web. “If you’re the editor of the piece in the print magazine, then usually you’re going to be the person who’s responsible for uploading it to the website ... just to give it some sort of editorial filter, when people pitch original stories for the web, that idea goes first to the editor who would normally edit that type of story in the print magazine.”

Strategic rollout responds to traditional thinking about cannibalization of newsstand sales. Heckert says they repurpose about 95 percent of the print content for web, which seems to be a typical percentage. They employ a “strategic rollout” of the print content over the course of the month. “The traditional thinking has been, ‘Don’t put everything up at the top of the month because you may cannibalize your newsstand.’ What we’re starting to see is those audiences may be more different than we originally thought, and we may not be cannibalizing the newsstand if we release some things earlier.” While they figure out if the traditional thinking still holds true, they’re experimenting with releasing

content on a different timeline with different issues. “Usually we roll out the features throughout the month, but sometimes we’ll release the cover story earlier in the month. Again we try not to do that because of newsstand, because that is something we’re still measured by, but if it’s a topic where we’re not sure how newsstand’s going to do, or if there’s a timely reason for releasing it earlier, we have done it and not seen a huge cut into the newsstand because of that. So again this is part of an ongoing debate that we’re having right now. Does it matter, essentially?”

But rolling out the content over the course of the month is also tied into maintaining the value of the print magazine for subscribers. “While I feel that a lot of magazine readers are coming for that whole experience, we don’t want them to feel like, ‘Oh, I can just go (to the website) at the top of the month and read everything and get it that way.’” Subscribers receive the magazine a week before the top of the issue’s month, and content doesn’t start rolling out until the top of the month, and then slowly over the course of the month — possibly into the next production cycle.

Slowly rolling out content means someone else could get your page-views. Heckert says they’re experimenting now with their Best Restaurants issue, which is traditionally one of their best-selling issues. The issue is with subscribers now, but there’s also an event tied to the results, so they don’t want to release the winners early. But Heckert knows if they don’t, someone else will, “and why should those page-views go to someone else?” As a compromise, they’ve created a landing page with the top winners, which says the full write-ups and rankings are available on newsstands now. “That’s something where we’re experimenting with trying to have our cake and eat it too. ... As editor, I’m willing to experiment and work with our digital media manager to try to balance those things.”

A large part of being a city magazine EIC is making sure your staff isn’t overworked. More so than my discussions with other editors, I felt a real awareness from Heckert about keeping her staff happy. This is likely because she has a small staff and low resources, so they have a lot of work to go around. Heckert concedes that this is just the way the magazine business is now: “Frankly, when you go to apply at a magazine like mine, I think it’s just part of the job description. You’re going to be working on digital. But a lot of my staff, and this is probably true for a lot of magazines, were here before the digital revolution came. So they’ve had to integrate that into their job descriptions. I’m already asking a lot of them. It’s finding that balance. And certainly as their manager I’m always trying to be cognizant of that workload, trying to find financial resources so that they can outsource those online duties and that sort of thing.”

It’s tough to calculate profit. While I naively assumed that a 5 percent revenue meant the website would be considered profitable, Heckert pointed out that the editorial staffers’ salaries are based only on their print work. The digital responsibilities are just tossed in. If they were to calculate in a percentage of each staffer’s salary, the website might not be seen as profitable after all.

Translating a complex print package to the web is a challenge. Like Tom at *Philadelphia*, Heckert believes that print is the more beautiful, complex medium. But

translating those complexities to the web with proper context can be difficult. “Going back to a magazine being an experience, we design it that way. It’s got all of these little bits and pieces that make a package fun. When you go to try to translate that online, unless you take that extra step of really developing the kind of landing page that maybe some of the bigger magazines are doing or bigger media sites are doing, where it creates that sort of package feel online, you have all these little bits and bobs that make up a package, and sometimes they seem out of context when they’re not part of that whole. So that’s what we’re debating now, because in the meantime we don’t have the resources to every month blow out a big digital presentation of these packages. Maybe we need to be more thoughtful about the parts of those packages that we’re putting up, or being more thoughtful about the way we present those pieces so it’s clear this is a small part of a bigger whole. ... But absolutely I think that we as a magazine need to have a way that we can present those packages that we’re working so hard on so that they sing digitally just as well as they do in print.”

A user-friendly website means embracing intuitive thinking. Indy’s website has a lot of content teased on its homepage. It took me a while to understand that some section headers (e.g. Cool Beans!) were actually print features. “I know that we’re wanting to clean up some of these guiding bars that we have here and make them sort of a little more intuitive,” Heckert says. “I think sometimes we’re like, oh this makes sense, but it makes sense to us because we know what the things mean, but someone coming to the website the first time, they may not know what May Madness means. So how do we make this a little more intuitive? That’s a project we’re going to dive into this year.”

Newsletters keep the content on readers’ minds. Newsletters are across the board an online strategy for these publications so far. Heckert says their open rate is very good. She perhaps sees a connection between how popular the website’s dining content is with the frequency of the weekly dining newsletter as compared to the other monthly newsletters. Of course, food is a staple of all city magazines, so the newsletter might not necessarily play into that.

Being connected to a company like Emmis makes up for a lack of resources. I complimented Heckert on *Indianapolis Monthly*’s ability to do a lot with a little, and she credited Emmis for their success, which made a lot of sense. “And you know, if I’m being honest, a big part of that, that we are able to do as much as we are with our resources, is the fact that we are owned by Emmis. They have people on a corporate level who are working on digital things. So they’re working out the stuff that feeds our whole magazine group, so our WordPress developers. They’re working on a lot of that backend, SEO, WordPress development stuff. There’s a lot of idea sharing between entities. The digital media managers have a call every month where they’re sharing ideas. Our digital media manager is having a meeting every week with our corporate digital person. So there’s a resource there, and some shared expenses that make it easier for us to work with our smaller budget to do what we do with our website. I think that’s certainly a part of it.”

417: Summary

Print magazine circulation: 20,011

Average monthly unique visitors to website: 50,000

Average time on site: 2 minutes, 15 seconds

Number of editorial staffers for print: 6 editorial, 5 art, 1 floater

Number of editorial staffers that are exclusively or primarily website: 3 (not included in the above count)

Percentage of 2015 revenue generated from website: Unknown

Themes from interview:

The digital audience is looking for more immediate content. Most editors have pointed out an age difference between the print and digital audiences — and while Estes does think 417’s web audience is younger — she pointed out an interesting, further distinction: While both audiences are looking for the same content (hyper-local, service), the web audience is looking for more immediate content. “Our print readership is getting the June magazine at the end of May, and they’re looking ahead toward June, whereas our online audience is a lot more immediate. ... I feel like our online audience is coming to us to find something to do and to use right in this moment.”

You can’t always stick to the calendar. With their current operation, the web staff makes a calendar and budgets the month’s content out over the course of the entire month. But being married to that calendar became tricky sometimes, especially in Southwest Missouri when the weather changes on a dime: “Because we work on print so far ahead, and we don’t necessarily know, for example, what the weather’s going to be in Southwest Missouri on a particular day, we were running into things where we were just really sticking to our schedule. So maybe we had a five best sledding hills story coming out in the January issue. And so at some point in January, that’s scheduled to go up on the website. People love those kinds of stories, so that would get a lot of hits. But if we get a random 70-degree day in January, what we really need to be doing is not putting up the sledding story and instead having people on the web team who can go do like, ‘six parks you need to visit today while the weather’s beautiful before it snows again,’ or something like that.” To accommodate things like changes in the weather and breaking news, Estes is adding two full-time writers to the staff who will write both for print and web and be on-hand to write for the website as needed. “When things happen and we just need a body at a place so we can write about something before it becomes old news, we’ll actually have the manpower to do that,” Estes said, which will make the website more “relevant day-to-day.”

Unique content is a top priority. Right now, *417* is mostly posting print content to web, which is slated over the course of the month so the website is constantly populated. But with the new writer positions, the plan is to be posting unique content to the web every day. “We would do things like have additional content, but I think people are not reading a story and then just jumping online to read an extended Q&A, as opposed to finding unique things online. What we’re moving toward is being able to post additional content every single day ... I don’t know the exact number that Dayle — she’s the web editor — is planning to post, but it will be throughout the day daily as opposed to just regurgitating magazine content.”

The digital director will be writing, too. I found this interesting because at larger magazines, it sounds like the digital director is more of the “gatekeeper” and isn’t creating that much content for the web. But with a small staff like *417*’s, the digital director — who has a background in journalism — will be generating a lot of that unique content for the website.

Shareability is a factor online. Estes said *417* has an active online readership and sees a lot of engagement, but what does well in print is not always what does well online. She mentioned a four-part poverty series in the print magazine that got a lot of reader feedback, but she didn’t hear as much from online readers. “Whereas something that’s like, ‘5 places to get weird waffles’ ... those kinds of things get more. People will share those a lot online where we don’t necessarily see them sharing the poverty series. Those are things that may be more fun and exciting, and you can go act on it right now, or you can share it with your friends.” It was interesting to hear Estes mention immediacy and shareability as factors in this. Previously, I had just assumed people didn’t enjoy reading long-form stories online for comfort and attention span reasons.

Readers want their voices heard. Speaking of engagement and shareability, Estes said any contest or things involving voting (20 under 30, Best of 417) do particularly well. “People are sharing it around and making their voices heard.”

If you’re going to expand on content, make sure it’s interesting. This might sound like a no-brainer, but Estes twice mentioned that she doesn’t think simply extending a Q&A when it goes online is interesting or helpful for the reader. When I started at *Vox*, I tended to think in that way: “Well, we can always add the extra content online.” I think we only wound up doing that once with Payton Head’s Q&A, which did seem to have valuable additional content. The rest of the time, we found that chopping a piece down for print actually made it better, and to go back in and add the cut content online wasn’t a service for anyone. Adding additional stories that didn’t fit in the print package, or a video or interactive timeline — those things added value. You can tell Estes is an MU graduate because she’s always telling her staff to look for those extra opportunities when they’re out reporting: “Anytime we send our writers out to work on something, we deputize them to look for those types of opportunities and identify them and try to get that while they’re out reporting, so A) we don’t have to do it twice and B) they’re thinking about online in addition to print.”

The website can't match the aesthetics of print. Like Tom McGrath and Amanda Heckert, Estes thinks the print magazine is more beautiful visually, which is the “gratification” that print readers get from subscribing. She also admits that it’s difficult to translate those beautiful features online: “A lot of what goes in front of book translates very well to the website, but a lot of times the features don’t necessarily. The web team tries to make those things look as nice as they can online, but they’re never going to be as beautiful as they are in a magazine.” Estes said it’s different people who want to read a long story in a magazine versus on their phone, and while they try to make sure everything works just as well on a phone or tablet, “there are certain things that are just never going to look or feel quite the same.”

The website isn't cannibalizing the print product — if anything, it's extending the brand. Like Heckert, Estes isn’t too worried about cannibalization because she thinks the website is extending the whole brand of *417*. “...our Facebook page feels like *417*. And our website can feel like *417*. We can constantly be putting stuff out there that is our brand and finding people that way. I definitely think if anything we have more people following us now than we would have before. I don’t think we’ve ever felt like circulation has gone down while our online readership has gone up.”

Change is always difficult. Estes knows that becoming more active online and vamping up that unique online content is going to be hard on her staff, but she also says she has a team of “yes people” who are excited to make a change: “Everybody’s wearing different hats around here, doing different things. We just haven’t had the manpower to be as present as we probably should be all day long, every day. So that’s really a large part of what we’re trying to move toward with the new staffers we’ve hired and the new web plan, is to be more out there and in front of people constantly, more so than we have been in the past. ... It’s always hard to change what you’re doing.”

If your readers aren't hearing from you, they'll go elsewhere. In our current media environment, Estes thinks that staying in touch with readers is crucial. “With all of the digital content, if you are lazy about it and things aren’t going up often enough, you’re going to lose people. They’re going to find something else to read and something else to do if you’re not constantly pinging them with things to pay attention to.” Again, newsletters come into play here. *417* has several, and they have a high open rate. Estes mentioned that newsletters are great because they’re “low impact in the effort it takes to create them,” but “dense” in terms of usefulness.

Portland Monthly: Summary

Print magazine circulation: 51,558

Average monthly unique visitors to website: 354,914 (2015)

Average time on site: 2 minutes, 25 seconds

Number of editorial staffers for print: 12 (2 art directors)

Number of editorial staffers that are exclusively or primarily website: 1 (digital editor)

Percentage of 2015 revenue generated from website: Unable to disclose

Themes from interviews:

A website has evolving roles. Dundas said the role of *Portland Monthly's* website is always evolving, but right now he sees the website as a place to provide hourly and daily coverage and translate the print content to a more “elastic” audience. The site has five blogs through which most of the content filters, but not necessarily all of it. Dundas said they’re posting content multiple times a day, some more than others, around 35 pieces a week (which is the number of pieces in a standard print issue). “We’re working conceptually to make less and less a distinction between (print and digital),” Dundas says. “Print has certain craft and logistical demands that are different than what the site demands, but we’re trying to integrate the planning and conceiving of the two as much as we can.”

Voice may change from medium to medium. Dundas said *Portland Monthly* has a distinct voice online that differs somewhat from the tone used in print. They’re much “chattier” online, he says, and the headlines are written in a completely different way. Like the other city magazines I spoke to, the online audience is younger and less affluent than the print audience, and, for some reason, more female: “We have a very female audience in general, and it kind of becomes more female the further you get from our subscriber core. Our subscribers are a majority female but more reasonably split. The newsstand buyers are very female, and the web audience is likewise tilted very heavily female.” It’s another chicken or egg scenario — is *Portland's* “chattier” online voice attracting a different audience, or are they responding to a different digital audience with a chattier voice?

“More of a mosaic than a monolith.” Dundas sees the web audience as its own, distinct group apart from the print audience. But he points out that they’re reaching even different audiences through different avenues of the site. Some, for example, interact through only one of the blog-centric email newsletters (such as food or style): “We have a number of pretty successful email newsletters, many of which are tailored to specific beats and reflect those blogs that we do. And each of those has its own audience. The site audiences are more of a mosaic than a monolith, because different things get more or less traction

depending on their subject matter, how they hit readers at the moment. I have come to think of them as being very different but related audiences, coming to us for many of the same reasons but in a different way...”

“Speed and liveliness are of the essence.” Dundas walked me through the online posting process, which is typically spearheaded by the editor who’s in charge of the corresponding print section. Like *Indianapolis Monthly* (and others), there’s not a budget for freelance web writers, so the print editors (and interns) take on the bulk of that responsibility. Editors are “empowered” to post articles themselves, but peer editing is standard when the digital editor is not available to look over a particular post. Dundas said it’s no equivalent to the thorough copy editing, fact checking and proofing process the print content goes through — nor, he thinks, should it be. “I’ve wrestled with it over the years, but I’ve come to understand that speed and liveliness are of the essence. If anyone’s writing something that’s particularly sensitive or reportorially complicated, we slow it down and do the fact checking that kind of reporting demands, which is what every piece that goes into print goes through.”

90 percent goes print-to-web. Ninety percent seems to be the sweet spot for editors as far as the amount of print content that is repurposed for web. The rest of the content, Dundas says, simply doesn’t adapt to the medium, such as small pieces created to “build the magazine into an attractive and engaging reading experience.”

A tricky readership changed their online timing strategy. About a year or two ago when *Portland Monthly*’s annual April real estate issue hit newsstands in mid-March (before the content went live online on April 1), the staff noticed something troubling: The most-read articles were all of the previous year’s real estate stories. “I would almost say it was sickening because it was just this realization — and it had never been quite so clear before — that there’s a readership that sees something on the newsstand, and whether they buy the magazine or not ... they immediately go look for it on the website.” This didn’t happen with every issue, Dundas said, but it happened with enough projects that they decided to release the online content when the issue hit newsstands, rather than the first of the month.

Service, news do well online. Like all city magazines, service content attracts readers, and those pieces can live on and be re-pushed when the appropriate time comes around — like warm weather and a roundup of Portland’s most popular swimming holes. News, both local and national, also “soars,” which means that many Portland readers are accessing the magazine’s website, rather than their daily newspaper’s website, to stay current on events. Everything else, Dundas said, generates a “constant background hum of traffic.”

The web is topic-driven. Like Amanda Heckert at *Indianapolis Monthly*, Dundas finds that what will do well online is topic-driven and has less to do with whether it was originally conceived of as a print or digital piece. And he doesn’t lose any sleep when a print story doesn’t perform well online: “I don’t really evaluate stories strictly on how well they’re going to do on the internet,” he says. “Some things are created for different

reasons: to enhance the print reading experience or tell a great story or make the brand look good, some combination of those things. I'm kind of joking on that last one, but it is of course a concern."

Social media and organic searches drive traffic. Dundas also reiterated something that Tom McGrath of *Philadelphia* mentioned when I asked if print content performs well online: Most of the website's traffic is driven either by social media or organic searches. If a story resonates on social media, or if it's something people are searching for (such as the best cheeseburger in Philly, for example, or swimming holes in Portland), it will perform well online.

A digital point person is key. This is something all the city magazines I spoke with employ, whether or not they have many digital resources. *Portland*'s digital editor, Dundas says, isn't "off on her own internet island," but stays involved with print and even writes for the magazine occasionally: "She's very immersed in what we're doing, and everyone's working for the website all the time, so I would say it's as integrated as we can make it. We have the digital editor because it has proven to be really useful to have one person at the nexus of content and social media and all the things that bring it together."

No signs of cannibalization. Like he views the print and web audience as separate groups, Dundas also sees the print and digital products as separate entities — so he's not concerned with the website cannibalizing newsstand sales. Rather, he points to the cover as a better indicator of whether print will do well or not, and he's seen the newsstands "hold together fairly well" for the past five years, despite industry struggles. He also thinks that if the website is attracting new readers to the brand, it's worth it: "Hopefully the digital world is a whole new avenue to sell subscriptions and get people interested in the brand in general. I don't know how many digital readers we're converting to print readers, I don't imagine a ton, but there doesn't have to be a lot for it to make a difference."

Keeping up with a volume-driven medium. When it comes to *Portland Monthly*'s biggest digital challenge, Dundas says it's keeping up with a fast-paced, demanding medium while not overworking his staff. "If you wanted to strip it down and be very unromantic about it, it's a volume-driven business. Individual blog posts and stories may not get huge traffic, but if you put them all together they add up to the audience. So maintaining that and managing that in a way that suits everything else we're doing and keeps crushing workloads at bay, all of that has been challenging." Dundas thinks they've found a good balance. They don't demand a certain daily quota or evaluate staffers by the traffic his or her posts generate: "What we do is say, this area of coverage exists, this blog exists, it has an associated email newsletter. In order to be a viable thing, it needs to have this many posts per week. Beyond that, whatever you can do is great." Dundas admits that it isn't easy to keep up, but they're operating within their means to produce the amount of coverage they feel good about.

Experimenting (and learning from other magazines) is key. The editorial staff just launched a new podcast, simply because they wanted to give it a go. They're doing it cheaply — using an empty room for a recording studio, buying a couple of inexpensive microphones, and interviewing people they're talking to for print stories anyway — and there's currently no sales plan behind it until they gauge audience interest. It remains to be seen how many *Portland Monthly* readers are also podcast fans, but Dundas thinks they'll continue to experiment with audio and visual elements on the website as time goes on. He said they keep an eye on the other magazines in their group to see what's working well for them.

Whatever happens, Dundas is hopeful for the future: “I would say, and I say this with a major knock-on-wood feeling because I don't want to be cavalier, but I think so far (the website) has only done good things for us. I feel really lucky that I can say that right now because obviously the industry as a whole has been very challenged by the adaptation to the digital world. I also say that as someone who loves print and is very committed to making a great print magazine. I don't think those two have to be in conflict.”