

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI BULLETIN

VOLUME 26, NUMBER 36

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JOURNALISM SERIES, NO. 38

ROBERT S. MANN, *Editor*

The Circulation of the Small-City Daily

BY ORLAND KAY ARMSTRONG, B. J., A. M.

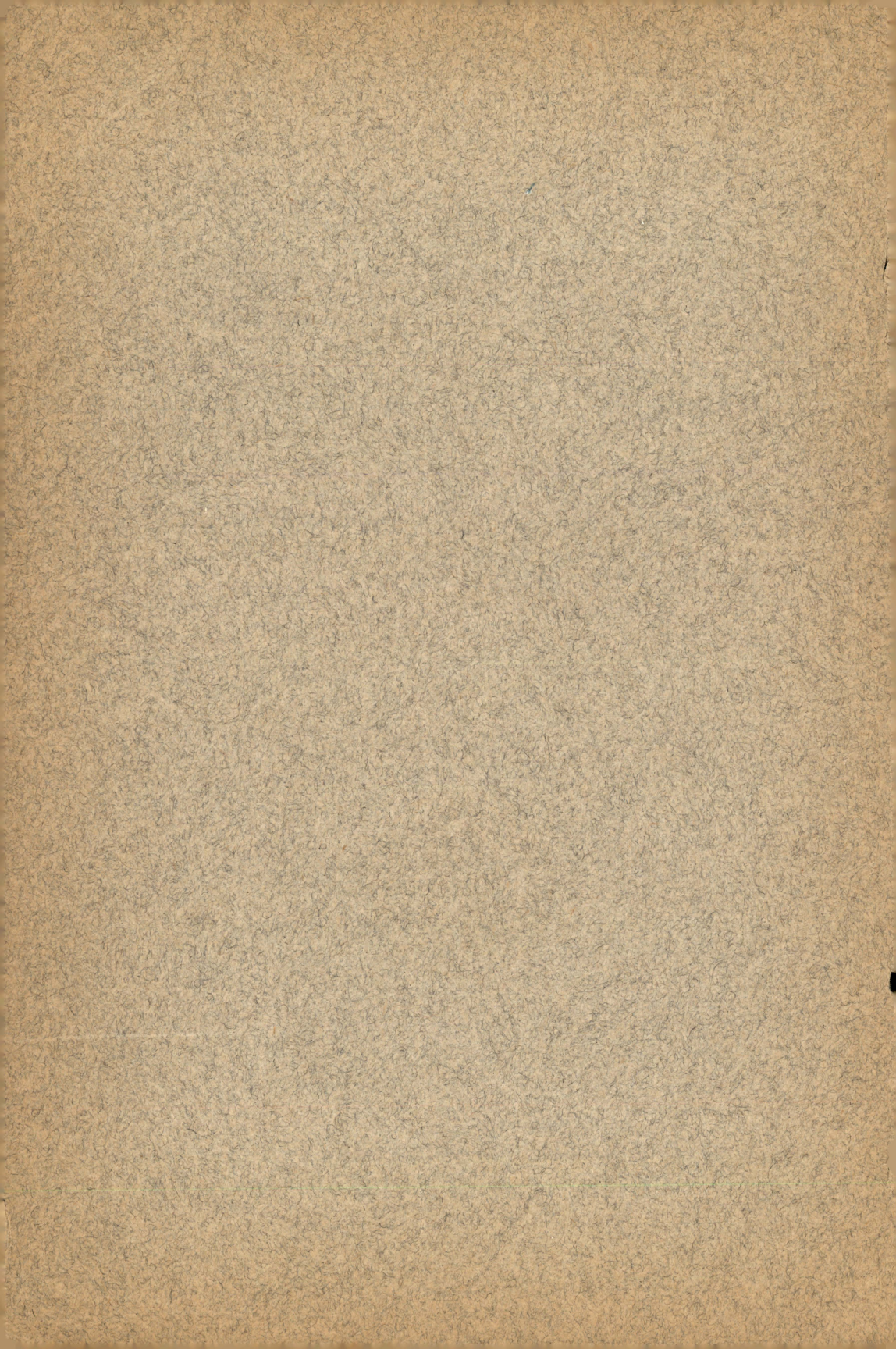


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ISSUED THREE TIMES MONTHLY; ENTERED AS SECOND-CLASS MATTER AT THE  
POSTOFFICE AT COLUMBIA, MISSOURI—2,500

DECEMBER 20, 1925





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*EDITOR'S NOTE: This bulletin is based on the author's experience as circulation manager of a daily newspaper in a city of about 15,000 population. It was prepared as part of his graduate study in journalism at the University of Missouri while he was a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts.*



# The Circulation of the Small-City Daily

## *What Circulation Means to the Newspaper*

The circulation of a newspaper among its readers is to the paper what the circulation of the blood is to the body—the very source of its life. A newspaper without readers is no newspaper at all. A newspaper reaching the homes wherein are men, women and children who eagerly wait to read it is vibrant with health and life.

The newspaper's reason for existence is to convey news—"intelligence," the press of a century ago called it—to those most interested in the particular news presented. The small-city daily must proceed on the assumption that its readers desire primarily the news of its locality, together with as much news from distant sources as will form a proper balance and proportion, and enough feature matter and expression of opinion to increase interest and supplement the value of the news presented.

Circulation is now—and always has been—important to the newspaper as representing the value of that newspaper to the public. While it is not an absolute criterion, it may be accepted that a newspaper with a circulation of 2,000 in a town of 10,000 is twice as valuable as a newspaper in the same town with the circulation of 1,000.

But it is in the business side of the newspaper that circulation means most today. It is the advertiser who demands, "How many readers will my advertisement in your newspaper reach? How many subscribers have you?"

Modern advertising has become, through a growth of leaps and bounds in the last two or three decades, the powerful ally of the press, furnishing its financial foundation. This is true not only of the small-city daily but of all other newspapers and publications, industrial, trade, fiction, feature, or otherwise. Most publications disregard circulation receipts as representing assets. The money which comes in from subscribers "to pay for the paper" does not pay for it at all. Often it does not buy the print-paper and the ink which make up the physical substance of the publication. Yet circulation is the great aim of the business department, because circulation means service to the advertisers, who willingly pay for that service in proportion to its reach.

Several national magazines now issue from one to three million copies each. Figures charged for advertising space in their pages are staggering in comparison to advertising figures commonly thought of and dealt with a score of years ago, in any publications. The growth of the importance of advertising to journalism as well as the growth of advertising itself is well illustrated in a comparison of the small block-shaped advertisements appearing in newspapers of 1875 with the display advertisements of a present-day newspaper, half a century later.

Circulation figures constitute one of the strongest talking points in favor of advertising. "Our paper reaches 2,000 paid subscribers in our city—your business territory. We reach 800 more in the county—also your business territory. Here are 2,800 subscribers, most of them heads of families. Counting only five readers to a paper—and in many instances one paper is read by several families—there are 14,000 readers. They represent 14,000 potential buyers of your food—clothing—insurance—furniture—services—entertain-

ment. What would it cost you to get a personal letter to each of these potential buyers compared to space in our paper at 30 cents an inch?"

Thus the very magnet by which advertising is drawn is circulation. It is a department of newspaper management requiring skill, tact, and energy in production and maintenance.

### *The Circulation System: The Field*

1. **THE IMMEDIATE TERRITORY:** Obviously the most important field for the circulation of the small-city daily is the town or city in which it is located—the community of which it is a part.

A large daily in the nearest metropolis might furnish more state-wide, nation-wide and world-wide news, and serve it better than the small-city daily possibly can do it. The large daily, up to three or four hours distant, might bring general news as far down to date, for all practical purposes, as the small daily can. But *local* news,—news of the town in which it is published—is the very heart of the small daily publication, and its very reason for appearing.

Then every person in the town is a prospective reader of the local paper; every family a potential subscriber. The "home town" is the field that the publisher of a small daily should work to the very limit. If his paper—which his fellow-citizens are going to call "our paper"—does not go into the homes of his own neighbors, it indicates he is not tapping his most important resources.

The city limits need not mark the limits of circulation. Carriers need not even know where the city limits are. The only limits to the town territory of the small daily are the green pastures beyond.

2. **SUBURBAN TOWNS:** Another important field for circulation of the small daily is made up of the small towns, or settlements, near by. To be classed as "suburban towns" in the language of newspaper circulation they should be (1) large enough to warrant a carrier and (2) near enough to be reached by motorcycle, car, or train within a few hours—preferably within a few minutes—after publication.

There can be no rule as to how large a settlement must be to warrant a local carrier. The interest which the paper itself has created and the vigor with which subscriptions are sought may be more important factors than mere numbers of population. Of course there is a minimum of persons below which it would not pay to maintain a local carrier—perhaps a settlement of fewer than twenty families. But even with twenty families, one-half of them might be interested sufficiently to subscribe to the paper, and this would warrant finding a boy who would deliver the papers daily.

Distance from point of publication must be measured in *time*, and not in miles. Towns served by a fast train which leaves a few minutes after publication may be nearer than towns closer in miles but inaccessible for quick delivery by rail or road.

Most towns large enough to support a daily are served by one or more railroads, with one or more trains that can be utilized shortly after press-time. Arrangements should be made with the railroad officials to receive the bundles and to drop them off (even if the train does not stop) at the proper points.

An ideal and not unusual situation is one in which an afternoon daily goes to press at 4 o'clock; makes a 4:15 train, which delivers bundles of papers to six or eight smaller towns from five to thirty-five miles distant, the papers reaching many of the suburban readers before carriers in the town of publication have completed their rounds, and reaching the farthest point by 6 o'clock—in good time for evening reading. Perhaps another train leaves in another direction within an hour, with other bundles.

Additional centers may be supplied by motorcycle. A daily of 3,000 circulation or more should have a motorcycle carrier for suburban work.

3. **THE COUNTY:** The entire county is "legitimate territory" for the small-city daily, particularly if the paper issues from a county seat. News of the county seat is news for the county, just as Washington news is news for the nation.

When the county seat is the metropolis of the county (which is usually the case), the news of county officials, court proceedings, fairs and the like is strengthened by news which naturally comes from the largest town in the territory.

The farmer looks to the county seat or the county metropolis to furnish most of his news, along with his merchandise. It is the clearing house for county activities.

4. **DISTANT SUBSCRIBERS:** All subscribers who must be supplied by mail may be classified as "distant." They include country subscribers in the county, and persons out of the county, city or country, who receive their papers through the mail.

Here is a field not to be overlooked. A small-city daily having a circulation of about 3,000 should have at least 200 distant subscribers. Among them will be former residents and persons with business interests which make it desirable for them to keep in touch with news from the city of publication.

### *The Circulation System: The Personnel*

Organization of the circulation system of a small-city daily follows closely that of the larger dailies, except that the larger the paper—or in circulation terms the greater the number of subscribers to be served—the greater the force necessary to distribute the publication. The large daily has a circulation manager, ranking high in the staff of employes; as many assistant circulation managers as necessary; a large force of carriers for the city routes; substation managers; news stand representatives; street salesmen; squads of mailers; truck men and haulers; and many other employes, all engaged in receiving the paper from the press and delivering it to the readers. There are, of course, representatives in small towns and cities in a wide reach of territory about every large city for the dailies from that city.

The small daily has the same needs—proportionately less, but the same—as the larger daily. It must be delivered by carrier or by mail. Therefore the personnel of the small-city daily must include (1) a circulation manager; (2) carriers or delivery boys, city and suburban; (3) a mailer; and (4) special representatives, which include street salesmen, news stand dealers, and special salesmen.

1. **THE CIRCULATION MANAGER:** It is most important that the responsibility for the circulation of the newspaper be lodged in one person. He may

have other duties. He may be the business manager of the newspaper, with circulation duties included. He may be advertising manager and circulation manager combined. His clerical duties, such as the keeping of records, may be shared with an office girl or helper. But the duties involved in distributing a newspaper are clearly defined and are necessary to the success of any publication. The one assuming those duties is the circulation manager.

A circulation manager may combine his duties with those of advertising solicitor to advantage on dailies with from 2,000 to 4,000 circulation.

The clerical duties of circulation may well be performed by an office girl. But the oversight of carriers, with the necessity for strenuous and sometimes disciplinary administrative action, requires ordinarily that the place be filled by a man.

The circulation manager is in charge of all carriers, mailers, street salesmen, and special distributing representatives. His word on matters of circulation should be authoritative, subject of course to decision of the business manager, to whom he is directly responsible. To make the circulation manager simply a keeper of records with no power of enforcing his policies and no opportunity to display his initiative in this important department of the business side of a newspaper, is to rob him—and the paper—of an invaluable asset.

The closest possible co-operation should exist between the business manager and his circulation manager. The latter should report to the business head at regular intervals on both routine and special matters. Campaigns for increased circulation should be outlined together. Daily circulation reports should come to the attention of the business manager at least once each week. Circulation records should be ready for inspection by the business manager at all times.

The circulation manager is responsible for placing daily in the hands of the city carriers the right number of papers for each route. The number of papers each boy carries is entered on a chart. The circulation manager is responsible for placing in the hands of the mailer the right number of papers, and for seeing that the bundles going to the suburban points reach the trains or other conveyances properly counted, wrapped, and labeled. He has oversight of the papers reaching the street salesmen, the news stands, and the office counter. Records of all sales are carefully kept, checked, and entered on the daily report sheet.

As important as are the duties involved in distributing the paper, equally important are those which affect the circulation expansion in every possible avenue. Here the initiative and salesmanship of the circulation manager finds full play. He should make a study of the methods in use in other newspaper offices, and put into effect new ideas thus gained that are of value to him. He should study the particular field of his paper, and adapt every policy to that field. He should employ tact and common sense at all times.

2. THE CARRIERS: (a) City Carriers: The city carriers take the papers as they come from the press and distribute them directly to the offices and homes (principally the latter) of the subscribers.

Here is the newspaper's direct personal contact with its subscription patrons. Even though carrier boys merely throw the paper on the porches and rarely see the subscribers, they should be impressed with the fact that they are the personal representatives of the paper they carry. They should be



accurate in delivery, for omitting to deliver to a subscriber means a loss of good will. Carelessness resulting in several omissions in one day produces enough misunderstanding and irritation measurably to affect the reputation of the paper.

A typical small-city daily, having a city circulation of about 2,000 in a town of 10,000 to 12,000 population, should have about ten carrier boys, carrying an average of about 200 papers each. This number is sufficient to warrant hard work on the part of the carrier to keep his route built up, collections made, and the patrons satisfied; yet not large enough to require "farming out" to helpers—the cause of much circulation inefficiency.

Carriers should be boys or young men from 14 years of age up. Age is important only in assuring that the carrier is mature enough to carry the papers through fair and foul weather. It is equally important that the carrier be accurate, careful, polite, and punctual. If these traits have not developed in a young man he is not fit to be a carrier, whatever his age. Generally speaking, of course, the older the boy the more he has learned dependability.

(b) Suburban Carriers: The same qualifications apply to suburban or rural carriers as to the city carriers. Boys who have the confidence of the people in general in their communities and who have reputations for honesty and industry constitute the only boys worth considering. A "bad boy" who runs with the wrong gang and who has a reputation for mischief will seriously injure the paper he carries, in his locality.

Suburban carriers should be on hand punctually every day to receive the bundles of papers from the train, automobile, or motorcycle. They should keep as accurate and complete records of subscriptions, renewals, casual sales, and dropped subscribers as the city carriers.

3. THE MAILER: This factor in the circulation personnel is responsible for sending out all papers that go through the mail. He should not have to wait until all the carriers have received their papers before starting to work, but he should be given enough papers from the time the press starts to keep him busy.

The mailer takes a bundle of papers to his table, and with an addressing machine pastes a small printed label with the name and address of a subscriber on each paper. The label has also the time of expiration of the subscription. Papers are tied together in bundles according to destination and routing through the mails. The local postoffice furnishes instructions as to how papers should be bundled and routed.

The mailer should exercise the greatest care that his list is complete and up to date every day. New subscriptions should be started upon the day received. Prompt receipt of a paper subscribed for creates a favorable impression, valuable in good will; while neglect of several days or a week to start a subscription may bring inquiries and disappointment in the paper with attendant loss of good will.

4. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES: (a) Street Salesmen: Some small-city dailies employ street newsboys regularly. It cannot be expected that the number of papers sold on the streets in a small city can run high. Large cities have a downtown constituency which demands news in paying quantities as rapidly and frequently as it can be put into editions.

Most persons in a small city are content to wait until they reach home to read the news, in the case of evening papers, or have read the morning papers

before leaving home. If local conditions demand, however, as many as a dozen papers daily from newsboys, the demand should be met.

On special occasions, such as football games if the town is a college center, widely known speakers, calamities, and the like, street sales and sales at news stands may mount into the hundreds. At such times the edition should be run out early if greater service can thus be given and greater sales result.

Street salesmen should not be chosen promiscuously. The circulation manager should check up carefully as to their character and reputation for honesty, courtesy and efficiency.

(b) News Stand Dealers: In the usual small city there will be one or more news stands, selling magazines and probably the dailies of the nearest large cities. They can and should handle the local daily. Drug stores form convenient news stands.

(c) Special Salesmen: This group may include train newsboys, and any other part-time or full-time representatives selling the paper.

### *The Circulation System: The Records*

The financial importance of circulation lies chiefly in the fact that advertising rates follow circulation figures, up or down. A newspaper to be successful from the money standpoint must have enough readers to justify advertisers in buying space. The resulting importance of accurate, complete and up-to-date figures is obvious.

The day of "padded" circulation reports, and "estimated distribution" (based often on the enthusiasm of the publisher and not on circulation records) is passed. Both advertisers and the public demand that circulation figures be given honestly and accurately. The Audit Bureau of Circulations, an organization which checks up annually the circulation of its members, guarantees the advertisers that the reports are as accurate as can be obtained by expert auditors.

There is only one way in which a newspaper of whatever size can give its advertisers honest circulation reports: It is the keeping of complete, correct and up-to-date records, daily.

Upon the circulation manager falls the chief duty of keeping circulation figures. He may be relieved of much of the purely clerical detail work, but should be thoroughly familiar with every record used and with the minutest detail connected with accounting for the distribution of his paper.

1. THE DAILY REPORT: Members of the Audit Bureau of Circulations have uniform daily circulation reports, which might well furnish a guide for daily records for all newspapers. A copy of the daily circulation report is shown on the opposite page.

This record sheet provides for these important groups of circulation factors: (1) The paid and the unpaid. This division is most important of all, for "circulation" now means *paid* circulation unless otherwise stated. (2) In the paid circulation: (a) City and (b) suburban and country. The city circulation is found by putting down the number of papers delivered on each route for that day (paid for), and totaling the amount (twelve routes are provided for in this example); street sales, counter sales, and the number of city subscriptions served through the local postoffice are added. This accounts

## DAILY CIRCULATION REPORT

Day..... Date....., 192.....

	Yesterday	Increase	Decrease	Today
<b>CITY PAID—CARRIERS</b>				
1..... 7.....				
2..... 8.....				
3..... 9.....				
4..... 10.....				
5..... 11.....				
6..... 12.....				
Street Sales.....				
Counter Sales.....				
Mail.....				
<b>TOTAL CITY PAID.....</b>				
<b>SUBURBAN PAID</b>				
Suburban Ind. Carriers.....				
Mail Subscribers.....				
<b>TOTAL SUBURBAN PAID.....</b>				
<b>TOTAL CITY AND SUBURBAN PAID</b>				
<b>COUNTRY PAID</b>				
Mail Subscribers.....				
<b>BULK SALES.....</b>				
<b>TOTAL PAID GROSS.....</b>				
<b>SERVICE COPIES</b>				
Advertisers.....				
Office Employees.....				
<b>TOTAL SERVICE COPIES.....</b>				
<b>UNPAID COPIES</b>				
Adv. Agents.....				
Exchanges.....				
Comp. by carriers.....				
Comp. by mail.....				
Samples.....				
Office use and files.....				
<b>TOTAL UNPAID.....</b>				
<b>TOTAL DISTRIBUTION.....</b>				
Leftovers and spoiled after printing.....				
<b>TOTAL NET PRESS RUN.....</b>				

Copies spoiled in Printing.....

Gross Press Run.....

No. Pages.....



for all the paid city circulation. Papers carried by suburban carriers and the number that go to suburban points by mail are next added. All others, except "bulk sales" are included in the "country paid" list, delivered by mail. Bulk sales occur at times, and must be accounted for separately. For example: a shoestore runs an advertisement and buys 600 copies of that day's paper for free distribution among prospective shoe buyers.

The total of all these items will be the paid circulation for that day.

"Service copies" are accounted for. "Unpaid copies" follow, and include copies sent to advertising agents, the exchanges, complimentary copies by carrier and by mail, samples and papers for office use. These items total the unpaid copies. The sum of the paid and unpaid copies gives the total distribution. Copies left over or spoiled during printing and after printing are accounted for, and added to the distribution figures to total the gross press run. Every paper that has felt the imprint of type is thus accounted for.

From these daily reports are made up averages by weeks, months, seasons, years, or periods as desired.

2. **CARRIERS' RECORDS:** As each carrier receives his paper the circulation manager or his assistant marks down the number of paid copies, the number of complimentary copies, the samples and extras, and finds the total carried.

Figures from this record are copied directly upon the daily circulation report.

From these records also the circulation manager makes out the carriers' bills. For example: Carrier A has carried a total of 1200 papers during the six days of the week, an average of 200 papers a day. A rate of 4 cents for each subscriber has been established. The carrier would owe the paper \$8 for that week. His profit comes, of course, from the amount of the subscription price he collects from the subscriber above the amount he must remit to the paper. For example, the subscription price is 10 cents per week. He remits 4 cents to the publisher and keeps 6 cents for carrying the paper.

Some small dailies use a "double system" of paying carriers. For example: The year's subscription price is \$4. If the subscriber cares to pay \$1 for three months, \$2 for six months, \$3 for nine months or \$4 for one year, the carrier may turn in this amount at the office. He will be paid for carrying this paper by the office directly and not from his collections. A card will be made out with the subscriber's name, address, when paid, and for how long paid. All of Carrier A's cards would be counted weekly, and multiplied by the rate given for carrying paid-up subscribers—say, 5 cents. The paper would subtract this amount, due the carrier, from the amount the carrier owes the paper. Some dailies find it most satisfactory to encourage paid-up subscriptions in this way. Others encourage subscriptions to be paid up for several months or a year, but allow the carrier to keep what is collected and pay for the papers as received. There is no doubt that simply selling the papers to the carrier eliminates a great amount of the bookkeeping necessary to the "double system."

Each carrier should keep a route book, with the name and address of each subscriber, when paid, the amount, and for how long. Route books should be carefully inspected regularly by the circulation manager.

3. **MAIL RECORDS:** Mail subscriptions are recorded on the "mailing galley" sheet, which is nothing more than a proof sheet of the names and addresses of those to whom the papers are mailed. It is compiled and kept

## SMITHTON, MO.

Brown, Wm. J. 5608 W. Fulton Ave.	3-5-26
Carpenter and Co. 435 N. Mich. Ave.	(Adv.)
Jones, Leslie 6620 Greenwood Ave.	12-23-25
Smith, Herbert 6131 Woodlawn Ave. Jackson Park Station	7-16-26
Spencer, Roy, Inc. 23 E. 26th St.	Adv.
Thomas, L. J. School of Business Smithton University	8-29-25
Trenton, Oscar E. Room 1601 165 Broadway	Comp.

*How the Mailing Galley Looks*

up-to-date as the following example will illustrate: John Doe, a country subscriber, sends \$3 for a year's subscription to the paper. The circulation manager writes his name and address on the margin of the galley sheet, which together with the "key," or date of expiration, are set up by the linotype operator at the close of each day, or whenever enough names have been added to justify. The new names are inserted in their proper places in the galleys from which the mailer runs off the address slips, which fit into a machine by which he stamps each paper with the small printed tab showing the name, address and expiration date. Proofs of the complete mailing galleys show a complete list of mail subscribers.

A card index of mail subscribers may be kept, by which the mailing galleys may be checked, thus forming a double record. However, if the card index record is not kept strictly up-to-date it has little value. It eliminates the necessity of looking up all mail records from the galley sheets and for this reason is considered worth while by many newspaper offices.

4. ORIGINAL ORDERS: John Doe's letter ordering the paper is filed by the circulation manager. Thus mistakes on his part, or on the part of the subscriber, as to amounts paid, time of subscription or expiration, and the like, may be corrected.

But the order must be saved for another reason. It is the tangible evidence that the subscription is a *bona fide paid* order. Members of the Audit Bureau of Circulations are required to produce the original orders of all subscribers on demand of the auditor. The carrier's route books showing names, addresses, dates, and amounts paid are accepted as records of the original orders of city subscribers, as are also the suburban carriers' books.

Richard Roe comes to the office and without a written order lays down \$1.50 for a six-month subscription. He is given a receipt. The office keeps a duplicate and this duplicate stands as an original order.

The entry in the cash book of the amount of money received for counter sales, street sales, and bulk sales is accepted in each instance as indicating "original orders" for these paid copies. Thus all paid circulation is recorded.

5. FINANCIAL RECORDS: Corresponding to each original order should be an entry on the cashbook. John Doe's \$3 which came through the mail; Richard Roe's \$1.50 which he paid at the office window; Carrier A's \$8 paid for his route Saturday night; the 60 cents received for the sale of 12 papers at 5 cents each over the office counter; and the \$12 received for the shoe company's purchase of 600 copies in bulk are all entered on the cash journal, on the date the money was received. The circulation manager should be as strict as a bank teller in accounting for all money that comes into his hands.

### *Circulation Building Through the Paper Itself*

The greatest aid to circulation building is service on the part of the newspaper itself. It should serve its readers in such a way that it will be continually and increasingly in demand. There is no artificial circulation boosting that can compare with this for creating good will for the paper and an ever growing list of subscribers.

Jason Rogers, former publisher of the New York Globe, says in his book "Building the Newspaper": "Better and more satisfactory results in circulation can be gotten for the paper by spending more money through the editorial department than by many times the amount spent in trying to force a sale for an inferior product."

Circulation building through the paper itself steps out somewhat from the duties which fall strictly to the circulation manager and his force and touches matters in which everyone connected with the paper, in all departments, may co-operate.

Why do some dailies grow steadily in popularity, moving persistently up the scale of circulation figures year after year, apparently limited only by the number of families in the territory? The answer may be found partly in the energy and initiative displayed by the circulation force in soliciting subscriptions; but will be found to a greater extent in the merits of the newspaper itself,—in the service it gives. Does it present the news fairly, accurately, as completely as space will allow, with a diversity of news and with enough feature material to give the whole a background of interest and value? If so, it will be read.

1. GENERAL NEWS CONTENT OF THE SMALL DAILY: There can be no hard and fast rule as to the number of inches of this or that type of news the paper must carry each day. This must be governed to a great extent by the impor-



tance of each day's news as it occurs. Timeliness, nearness, the extent of interest resulting from the prominence of persons involved in the news, and many other factors, must be taken into account. But in general there are a few rules as to the news content which should be consistently followed.

(a) Local News: The greatest amount of space should be regularly given to the local news. Citizens of a town are continually interested in the doings of their city council, for this affects their civic welfare and touches their pocketbooks; in the court proceedings—circuit, probate and lesser courts, for here the law in its direction of the public good and of public safety comes above the surface; in all events that have a public importance.

Religion has a deep and constant hold on the interests of the majority of persons. Religious news is, therefore, eagerly read: reports of sermons of unusual interest; news of the many meetings and activities of organizations within the churches. Some small dailies run condensed sermons once each week on the "church page" or with the church news. The small daily, in which local news must be emphasized in much greater proportion than in the large-city daily, cannot afford to neglect it.

Enough families have children in grade or high schools to make school news important. The remainder of the citizens have a share in paying taxes for the support of education and hence have an interest in school news.

News of business deals which involve leading merchants, bankers or financiers of the town is eagerly read. Political news is important, particularly when local citizens are involved either in elections or as public officials.

While less space should be given to general news than to local news, the "broader reach" of news service on the small daily must not be overlooked. The small city is no longer isolated—if it ever was. It is in touch with the world by telephone, radio, automobile, and outside newspapers. The small daily must put in its front columns, with the news of local interest, the news of state and national importance, if it is to build up an increasing interest among its subscribers. Doings of Congress and other public officials; calamities and disasters by fire, flood, storm, wrecks and the like; a limited amount of crime news, without exploitation; the state government and state institutional news, are but examples of the wide field of general news from which the small daily may select.

Constructive news should not be overlooked by the small daily: news presented with a definite policy in view. Of course the policy should have in view the public good, and bear no taint of selfishness on the part of the newspaper. Examples of good constructive news may be found in series of news stories on the work and value of the city-manager plan of government in other cities (where interest in this should be aroused in the local city); on Boy Scout work; news emphasizing public and civic welfare; and the like.

It must be remembered that the editorial page is for the expression of opinion, and that the public is quick to detect any selfish motives behind news coloring and to punish it with indifference—if not with antagonism. But a sure field of sympathy and support may be found in the fostering of any project for the public good.

(b) Personal News: "Anyone likes to see his name in print" illustrates the great value that lies in personal news and is so uniformly true as to constitute a rule with few exceptions. Now the newspaper is not published to gratify the reader's desire to see his name in print; but there is ample justi-

fication for the small daily in searching out all real and bona fide news and features of persons in the town and community served, whether subscribers or not.

Good examples of personal news are: A business man receives a promotion; local business men are hosts to a convention; high-school boy wins gold medal; farmer takes first prize on hogs at a fair; local minister—lawyer—editor— goes to address state association; county farm agent makes report; pioneer citizen dies; births and other vital statistics. Besides these suggestive stories, which might be used as front-page matter if of sufficient news strength, there are innumerable smaller personal stories, covering the whole field of activities,—social, religious, educational, business, political, and general, which make interesting reading to the persons involve and to a wider circle of kindred and acquaintances than may be apparent on the surface.

Country correspondence is, for the most part, personal news. It should be published regularly, not in haphazard fashion when there is need for space fillers.

(c) National News Service: The small-city daily should have a national news service, such as the Associated Press or the United Press, and should select every day the most important dispatches for front-page matter, on a par in headings with the most important local news, except in cases of special importance in home news. Where eight columns of large headings are given at least two should be outside news; three and even four may be employed without destroying proper balance.

Washington news is a constant source; citizens are interested in government and politics. International news, particularly as it affects the United States and the peace or industry of the world, is a close second in importance. News of prominent persons; crime news; industrial news; disasters, particularly with loss of human life; notable achievements—all these come in over the wires to be sifted, weighed and given proper balance with local news.

2. DEPARTMENTS AND FEATURES: Large-city dailies are built up around departments, both for convenience to the readers, and from necessity in newspaper production. The small-city daily can and should departmentalize for the same reasons.

An eight-page paper may well devote at least half a page to sport; an eighth of a page to society; an eighth to radio; half a page to editorials and other opinion; one-fourth page to country correspondence; one-fourth page to markets and business news; one-half page to features and humor—leaving two and three-quarters pages for local and general news outside of the departmental news thus taken care of, and three pages of advertisements of all kinds.

Quoting Jason Rogers again: "I am satisfied that as a rule a newspaper can secure more satisfactory growth out of specialties than by the extravagant exploitation of general news. In a competitive field a newspaper either succeeds or fails, according to its features and individuality."

Allowing that Mr. Rogers refers more directly to the large-city dailies, the force of the remark, coming from a circulation expert, must be felt also in the field of the small-city daily.

The farmer wants market reports; the small daily should supply him—regularly, accurately and fully. The housewife—city, town or country—wants household and domestic hints, fashions and some social news; radio will have, apparently, a perpetual interest; fiction has its constant appeal;

children's needs should not be overlooked; occasional book reviews and literary comment will find a wide appeal among a few readers. These are but suggestions of the wide field of departmental and feature material. Not all of it can be exploited in one edition. Some may occur weekly, on regular days. Many small dailies have a church page on Saturday for news and opinion on social service and religious subjects, local and general. Some group the country correspondence for the week in one edition. Society, sport, radio and market news cannot well be omitted from a single issue.

Humor is embedded in human nature. The newspaper should supply it in clean comic strips, cartoons, columns of spicy comment, and in "exchanges" of paragraph humor. A daily newspaper, however small, without both a daily cartoon and a comic strip is missing a tremendous pulling power to circulation increase.

Fads come and go, and cannot be taken too seriously by the small-city daily. The crossword puzzle reached a high tide recently and began declining, as did the numerous fads before it. But unquestionably many newspapers capitalized profitably by presenting crossword puzzles as daily features.

3. EDITORIALS AND OPINION: Editorials and other expressions of opinion are sometimes worth more to the small daily than may appear on the surface. Terse, well-written editorials, with a definite aim, stripped of extra verbal baggage and written naturally but forcefully, will be read, and will influence opinion.

An "open column" should be run on the editorial page, wherein letters may be published. It should be made plain, however, that the opinion expressed is that of the writer and not necessarily that of the newspaper; also that letters will be published at the discretion of the paper. In this connection it must be remembered that a newspaper is just as liable for libelous statements published in its open column as though they were written by a member of its staff.

Clipped editorials and opinion may be used sparingly.

4. APPEARANCE AND MAKE-UP: A word should be said for appearance and make-up as circulation builders. A paper may lose much of the value of good news, features and editorials through blurred printing, too-small type and faulty make-up. A clean, clear, easily read page is positively inviting; the opposite is equally repellent.

### *Circulation Expansion in the City*

Since the local city is the primary field for the circulation of the small daily, every effort should be made to cover that field for subscriptions, frequently, systematically, and persistently. It is never-ending work, but one that pays dividends to the paper.

The small daily that once establishes itself with a good reputation for accuracy and service, with a good list of subscribers, has won a place in the journalistic sun. But if its vigilance in matters of accuracy, service, and circulation relaxes, some other paper can—and most likely will—put it into eclipse.

The chief factors in circulation expansion in the city are the carriers, advertising the newspaper in various ways, and special solicitors.



1. **THE CARRIERS:** The carriers are the keys to a large share of the city expansion. They are the closest points of contact between the publisher and the subscribers. If they are properly instructed and trained, and if there is developed among them that spirit of loyalty which every newspaper should give every employe from managing editor to office boy, the carriers can mean the difference between circulation failure and success.

Continued effort at circulation building should be encouraged among the carriers. By all means there should be a carriers' meeting at least once a week, at night or from fifteen minutes to half an hour before press time, with the circulation manager in charge. He should tell the carriers plainly and frankly the aims of the paper so far as circulation is concerned, and as openly and frankly discuss any problems with which the paper is confronted in which the circulation department is involved.

The circulation manager should put it squarely before the carriers that the conditions of their routes lie in their hands.

Each carrier is responsible for renewals of subscriptions. His route book shows the dates of expirations. He should be required to solicit the subscriber a few days before the subscription expires. Experience has shown that (1) it is much easier to collect the renewal before the time or right on the date of expiration than afterward, and (2) a class of subscribers will take advantage of the time in which they have received the paper without paying for it, to stop the paper.

Circulation managers should never allow the city routes to deteriorate from neglect to collect renewals. New carriers should replace those who are persistently careless in keeping up the routes.

Initiative should be encouraged in the matter of reporting new prospects and soliciting for new subscribers. Few routes are "100 per cent" solicited. New residents move in continually, and each one is a potential subscriber. The carrier should be given an extra copy for the new resident in the city as soon as the prospect is discovered moving in, and should give it to him personally with the compliments of the paper and the information that the paper will be delivered for a week free, as a welcome to the city. At the end of the week a subscription should be unhesitatingly solicited. Such attention to prospects rarely fails to pay high dividends both in circulation figures and in good will.

Carriers should be required to report regularly the standing of their routes as to gains and losses. A reason should be ascertained for the loss of any subscriber, and a written report made.

Contests among carriers may be engaged in under proper supervision. A plan used successfully by one newspaper was as follows: Announcement was made that a contest among carriers for circulation would begin one week from that date. The announcement, signed by both the circulation manager and the business manager, as were all notices throughout the campaign, stated that the contest would be decided on the basis of points. A weekly subscription which continued for three months would count two points, as would also monthly subscriptions which continued three months, and paid-up three-month subscriptions; a six-month subscription would count three points; a yearly subscription four points.

A prize of \$10 was given the winner of this contest, and prizes of \$7.50 and \$5 given for second and third places respectively. All carriers received a commission of 10 per cent on all new subscriptions.

About 100 new subscribers were added during the six weeks of the contest. Care must be taken that there is no "padding" of the lists, but that all subscriptions are bona fide.

Each carrier should keep a route book, as mentioned in connection with the circulation records. The books should be examined regularly by the circulation manager, and should be in shape for presentation to the auditor upon demand.

2. ADVERTISING THE PAPER: The newspaper that devotes no space to advertising itself would hardly be consistent in urging the advantages of advertising upon other business enterprises. A newspaper's advertising of itself is a species of *self-advertising*; hence can be overdone; but properly directed it creates no unfavorable reactions.

A. Advertising in the newspaper: This may take the form of (a) display advertising, (b) readers and (c) correspondence.

(a) A certain space on a certain page of the paper day after day with no change of copy is the poorest kind of display advertising, for the newspaper itself or for other business firms. The day of the "yearly copy" advertisement, which declared day after day with no variety that "a full line of goods" could be purchased at Jones' Store has passed into ancient advertising history.

"Read the Bugle" makes a fair-sounding slogan, but it is poor advertising copy. What has the Bugle to offer tomorrow by way of news and features? What special news? What feature matter will be outstanding in interest? When will there be a special edition? The opportunities for advertising copy are as limitless for the newspaper as for other businesses that offer services to the public.

Space for display advertisements for the newspaper should of course be determined by daily conditions, as should also the location of the advertisement.

(b) "Readers" may be employed, although there is a difference of opinion as to whether or not there is appreciable value in the repetition of a slogan; it tends to become monotonous to the reader and to do more harm than good. The best results seem to follow the sparing use of readers that are varied in wording, and that point to specific news and features of tomorrow's edition or the near future editions rather than those that give general admonitions.

(c) Correspondence from subscribers who commend the paper should be carefully selected and published at the time—and in the space—where it will do the most good. The better known the subscriber, the more effective his commendation of the news, opinion, or features of the paper. A short letter set up in a box on the front page is often used.

B. Advertising Outside the Newspaper: This will usually take the form of (a) billboards, (b) in theaters, (c) cards and posters, and (d) direct advertising.

(a) Billboards are in use by some small dailies, especially to emphasize permanent outstanding features of the paper.

(b) The drop-curtains of theaters that offer a medium of advertising may be used to announce permanent features of the newspaper.

(c) Cards and posters, to be tacked on bulletin boards and telephone poles, and placed in windows of business houses, should be used to announce only special and current features of the paper, at times such as fairs, old

settlers' reunions, conventions and the like, when a special and unusual group may be appealed to.

(d) Direct advertising in the form of circular letters may be employed for city expansion. But it should be borne in mind that no amount of printed advertising can take the place of personal contact and solicitation by the carriers or other representatives.

C. Special Solicitors: Special circulation solicitors should be employed for city work whenever the need arises.

A concentrated drive on a section of the town may be made, in which a special solicitor will canvass every house thoroughly for new subscribers.

Special solicitors may be used in helping carriers build up the routes.

On extraordinary occasions, such as county or state fairs, college home-comings, old settlers' meetings, large conventions, and the like, numbers of new subscribers may be found by special agents of the paper.

### *Circulation Expansion Outside the City*

These three divisions may be made of the territory outside the city, in considering circulation expansion: (1) Suburban towns, (2) the rural county, and (3) outside the county.

1. THE SUBURBAN TOWNS: The discussion of the city carrier applies almost in whole also to the suburban carrier. His suburban route is merely a city route farther removed. The same relations should exist between him and the subscribers in his territory, and the same duties should be expected of him in regard to renewals and new subscribers.

The circulation manager should visit the suburban points regularly. He should go around with the suburban carrier at least once every few weeks to see that all reports on the route book are bona fide and correct, and to give suggestions as to collections and new subscribers.

Special solicitors may be used to good advantage in suburban towns, making a regular canvass, with the assistance of the local representative or carrier, of every prospect at the most favorable time each year. As in the country, the best time for such drives is in the late summer or early fall.

One newspaper added about 200 subscribers to the suburban lists, in addition to obtaining good news features for publication, in the following manner: Two representatives, who understood both circulation and photography, went to suburban towns being served by the newspaper and took pictures of the places of business, usually with the proprietors standing in the foreground. Pictures of stores, garages, mills, and the like were taken.

Special sections of the newspaper carried news and feature stories illustrated by the photographs. The business men and other residents were solicited for a year's paid-in-advance subscription. In many instances the subscription was granted.

2. THE RURAL COUNTY: Any small-city daily should consider the county in which it is located as a legitimate field for expansion and should make the most of its opportunities there. If there are no overshadowing large cities and if the small city is a county seat, the way is open for expansion to the limits of the county.

Subscribers outside the reach of city or suburban carriers must of course receive their papers by mail. The mail, therefore, furnishes a convenient method with which to reach subscribers whose time has nearly expired.

Here is a most important duty of the circulation manager and his helpers. From the mailing sheet it will be seen that John Smith's subscription expires September 1. About August 20 a notice is sent Mr. Smith, courteously notifying him of the expiration, and, what is most important of all, making it easy for him to renew at once by using a renewal blank with a minimum of writing necessary to complete it. A return envelope may be used (some include stamped envelope; for renewals it is quite probable that prompter returns warrant the expense; for solicitation of new subscribers it is doubtful.) The notice to the subscriber may also include printed announcements of special features coming; breezy, informal words from the editor to the subscriber (more frequent with weeklies than with small-city daily papers); and announcement of any discounts or special offers for immediate renewal.

If the subscription is not returned at once, a follow-up notice should be sent.

While it is important to hold old subscribers, circulation expansion must take into account the winning of new subscribers. These methods have proved successful:

(a) Sample Copies: Sometimes names are selected at random from directories and telephone books, and samples sent out. But this is wasteful. From the names on the directory or telephone list the most likely should be selected and free-offer cards sent. Those who tear off and mail the return card are obviously the best prospects—because they indicate an interest.

The card promises them the paper for one month free. A few days before the month is up a special-offer letter is sent the prospect, which offers the paper for seven months for the regular six months' price. A blank check may be sent, and any other special matter desired.

Experience has proved that this method gets gratifying results in county expansion.

(b) Special Resident Solicitors: Country correspondents make good special representatives of the paper not only in the matter of news, but also in getting new subscribers. They know their neighbors intimately. They should be instructed to act continually as subscription agents, and should be given a commission (20 per cent to 30 per cent is reasonable) on each new subscriber, with a smaller commission for renewals.

Rural school children may be used as special solicitors, particularly for their own families and close neighbors. A prize may be given for the most subscribers gained in a particular school district. But the circulation manager or his assistants should be personally in charge of such a contest, to visit the school district and give out instructions; limit it to a short period of time; and check up carefully on all returns, leaving nothing to the hazards of correspondence.

(c) Canvassers: Personal solicitation is, after all, the most effective manner of winning new subscribers. Especially is this true of country residents. Merits of the paper should be pointed out to them by reputable representatives of the publication in personal visits.

A country resident *may* subscribe for the small-city daily at any time he feels a particular need for it; as when court is in session transacting business which affects him or his family. But the time of year when he is *most likely* to subscribe is in the fall.

Autumn, beginning with the season of county and state fairs, and continuing until Thanksgiving, is the "period of prosperity" the country over, so far as farming communities are concerned. Crops have been harvested. The nights are getting longer. There is less to do in the daytime and more time for reading at night.

No small-city daily should miss this opportunity to send out solicitors who will make a house-to-house and farm-to-farm canvass of the entire rural territory, which should include the entire county. Mail and sample-copy solicitations should also be worked to the fullest at this season.

(d) Subscription Contests. Such contests have sometimes been carried on with successful results; but in general they are so unsuccessful, taking the ultimate good of the paper into consideration, that they must be looked upon with disfavor. They have been in vogue among country weeklies and among some small-city dailies for many years, but have proved sources of disaster for both types of papers.

The case against the subscription contest, in which a prize of considerable value is given for the greatest number of subscriptions to the paper, is made up of this indictment and evidence: The contest boosts the number of subscriptions, but not because the paper itself merits the increase by its own service and value to the readers; the contestants get subscriptions, but the subscribers are not as interested in the paper as in winning the prize for themselves or for a friend. Therefore most of them feel after the contest that they have been cheated.

Subscription contests sometimes work a fraud upon the advertisers by padding the circulation lists with subscribers who may not care for the paper, may not read it, and are likely to be disgusted with having spent money on it in hope of winning a prize. Subscribers who do not read the paper are valueless to the advertiser.

Much ill feeling among contestants and consequent ill will toward the newspaper are generated in circulation contests. On the whole, contests should be confined to carriers and other employes of the paper, and must be given most careful supervision.

3. OUTSIDE THE COUNTY: The county need not be an arbitrary boundary for circulation expansion. Many small-city dailies establish carrier routes in suburban towns outside the county. If there is no city of size or importance within one hundred or more miles, the county line may well be ignored altogether. Each small daily must meet its own conditions and opportunities in this respect.

There are always special classes of persons who will subscribe for the "home town" newspaper, although it may now be distant. Examples are: (a) The old resident, who may have moved to a distant state, but who wants the news of the former place of residence; (b) the alumnus of a school, college or university located in the city, to whom sport, society, educational and general news of the school center still have an appeal; (c) the non-resident person with business interests in the city or community. Other classifications may be made in various localities.

The circulation department should maintain a file of past subscribers who have moved away. Of course an effort should be made to retain their subscriptions when they leave the city. Likely prospects in the file of old subscribers should be solicited for subscriptions at a time when the local news will have the greatest appeal.



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Edited by

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