CHAPTER 2

How newsrooms work

Journalism isn't a solo effort. It takes talent, teamwork and training for any news outlet to succeed. Here's a look at the process in detail.

IN THIS CHAPTER:

What is news?

Editors, reporters and readers have debated that question for centuries.

In every newsroom, journalists constantly apply what's called *news judgment:* their ability to determine which stories are most interesting and important to readers.

But which readers? To a 13-year-old boy, the day's biggest story might be the city's new skateboarding ban. To a 70-year-old woman, it might be a new Medicare proposal. That teenager won't read about Medicare; the retiree doesn't care about skateboarding. So whose interests should prevail?

Take the page at left. How did those stories get there? Who decided that *those* were the topics most worthy of front-page prominence? Denis Finley, editor of The Virginian-Pilot, explains his choices:

1 The top of the page. We use this spot to sell single-copy papers, so we always want to have a "talker," something a lot of people are talking about and are probably going to want to read more about. In this case, the captain of a stricken cruise ship has been accused of abandoning his ship, but he claims he ended up on a lifeboat because he tripped and fell into it. Who wouldn't want to read that?

2 The lead story is about a city councilman owing back taxes. One of our main goals as a news organization is to be the community's watchdog and hold public officials accountable. A city official, who exists on the bounty of taxpayers, owes a quarter million in taxes? That's a lead story any day of the week.

3 Another example of our watchdog role. Lifting a ban on uranium mining is of critical importance both to those who fear the practice could harm the water supply and those who desire its economic benefits.

4 These "refers" send readers to other parts of the paper for stories that might interest them.

5 We survey our readers all the time. "News about transportation" is always one of the Top 10 subjects they want to read about, so this story — about a local Amtrak stop that will link us to Washington, D.C., and beyond — is a natural.

6 This story teaches readers the history of Virginia's ban on Sunday hunting. It's something many readers will talk about because hunting is part of Virginia's social fabric. And it watches out for the interests of those who care about this legislation.

So here you see the cold, hard truth for reporters: *They* do the research and *they* write the stories, but it's their *editors* who ultimately decide how successful they are — and where their stories run.

NEWS BY THE NUMBERS I

Percentage of Americans who say they prefer news about serious issues and major events: **63** Who say they prefer crime and celebrity news: **24**

Percentage who think the news media need to focus *more* on celebrities: **1**

Percentage who think the media are out of touch with average Americans: **70**

Percentage of stories in a typical newspaper about government or politics: **25**

Percentage of Americans under 30 who have little or no interest in politics: **42**

Percentage of journalists who say they often avoid running stories readers think are important, but dull: **77**

Who say they sometimes ignore stories because readers might find them too complex: **52**

Percentage of Americans who find the news depressing: **84**

Who find the news negative: **77** Who find the news sensational: **58**

— *See page 332 for sources*

NEWS BY THE NUMBERS II

"News Arithmetic," from a 1932 editing textbook by George C. Bastian and Leland D. Case:

1 ordinary man + 1 ordinary life = **0**
1 ordinary man + 1 extraordinary adventure = **NEWS**
1 ordinary husband + 1 ordinary wife = **0**
1 husband + 3 wives = **NEWS**
1 bank cashier + 1 wife + 7 children = **0**
1 bank cashier – $100,000 = **NEWS**
1 chorus girl + 1 bank president – $100,000 = **NEWS**
1 man + 1 auto + 1 gun + 1 six-pack = **NEWS**
1 man + 1 wife + 1 fight + 1 lawsuit = **NEWS**
1 ordinary man + 1 ordinary life of 79 years = **0**
1 ordinary man + 1 ordinary life of 100 years = **NEWS**

"QUOTED"

News is the first rough draft of history.
Philip Graham, *Washington Post* publisher

News is anything that makes a reader say "Gee whiz."
William Randolph Hearst, American newspaper tycoon

News is anything that will make people talk.
Charles Dana, *New York Sun* editor

News is anything you know now that you did not know 15 minutes ago – or 15 seconds ago.
Mario Garcia, news media designer

News is what somebody somewhere wants to suppress. All the rest is advertising.
Lord Northcliffe, British newspaper tycoon

When a dog bites a man, that is not news. But when a man bites a dog, that IS news.
Charles Dana, *New York Sun* editor

THIS JUST IN: MAN BITES DOG!

When Olavi Velkanmaa was attacked by a wolf, he bit back.

Velkanmaa, 33, was opening a workshop last week in a Finnish town north of Helsinki when he came upon a large male wolf. As the beast lunged at his throat, Velkanmaa grabbed its head. They wrestled for about 10 minutes.

"I was fighting for my life," Velkanmaa said. "I saw its throat and went for it with my teeth, but the wolf's paw got in the way and I bit it instead."

The wolf took off, leaving Velkanmaa with cuts, minor bites — and the taste of warm wolf blood in his mouth.

— *The Associated Press*

IS IT NEWS? THAT VARIES NEWSROOM TO NEWSROOM

The New York Times runs "All the News That's Fit to Print," but what's fit *there* may not quite fit where *you* are. Here's how three mythical Mudflap news outlets might decide which of these stories to run:

STORM WARNING: Dangerous winds and heavy rain are forecast here tonight.
COUNTY FAIR: Pigs! Pies! Polka! The Mudflap County Fair starts this weekend.
TUITION HIKE: Mudflap College will raise classroom fees 10 percent next year.
VOLLEYBALL BILL: Congress passes a bill making Friday National Volleyball Day.
FLU SHOTS: Flu season is coming. Vaccinations now available for senior citizens.
BOLIVIA BUS CRASH: 30 children are killed as a bus plunges off a cliff in La Paz.
GIRL SCOUT COOKIES: A Mudflap girl breaks the state's cookie sales record.
LOTTERY WINNER: A Mudflap grad student wins $50,000 in the state drawing.
JAY-Z SEX CHANGE: A celebrity-gossip website claims the rapper had surgery

KEY
YES, RUN IT
NO, DON'T
? POSSIBLY

THE 5 O'CLOCK TV NEWSCAST

We try to cover a wide range of topics, with a heavy emphasis on local news, sports and weather. Here's how our news director would usually vote:

THE STORY	👍	📣	?	COMMENTS
STORM WARNING	✓			Readers really eat up scary weather stories.
COUNTY FAIR	✓			Kids + cows + carnival rides = great video.
TUITION HIKE	✓			If time is tight, may only merit a brief mention.
VOLLEYBALL BILL		✓		Meaningless ceremonial baloney.
FLU SHOTS	✓			Good images; strong appeal for older viewers.
BOLIVIA BUS CRASH		✓		No. Let the network newscast deal with this.
GIRL SCOUT COOKIES	✓			Sure. Viewers find this stuff *irresistible.*
LOTTERY WINNER		✓		Jackpot's not big or juicy enough to be a story.
JAY-Z SEX CHANGE		✓		Untrustworthy. Unsavory. No local connection.

THE SMALL COMMUNITY WEEKLY

We have limited resources and a tight regional focus — local people, local sports, issues that affect our community. Here's how our editors would usually vote:

THE STORY	👍	📣	?	COMMENTS
STORM WARNING			✓	That depends; *yes,* if there's local damage.
COUNTY FAIR	✓			Let's go whole hog. Lots of extra photos, too.
TUITION HIKE			✓	Other media will cover it; do older readers care?
VOLLEYBALL BILL		✓		Cheesy public-relations stunt.
FLU SHOTS	✓			Good consumer story; possible Page One.
BOLIVIA BUS CRASH		✓		Sorry, we don't run international news.
GIRL SCOUT COOKIES	✓			This will make an adorable story, with photos.
LOTTERY WINNER		✓		People win bigger jackpots all the time.
JAY-Z SEX CHANGE		✓		Our readers have never *heard* of this guy.

THE ONLINE CAMPUS NEWSPAPER

Our website focuses exclusively on campus life, student sports and academics, with relevant local news tossed in. Here's how our editors would usually vote:

THE STORY	👍	📣	?	COMMENTS
STORM WARNING			✓	We'll wait and see if there's any local damage.
COUNTY FAIR		✓		No thanks, unless ag students are involved.
TUITION HIKE	✓			Strong student interest. Give this story big play.
VOLLEYBALL BILL		✓		Nobody cares, *not even volleyball players.*
FLU SHOTS			✓	How soon until shots are available to students?
BOLIVIA BUS CRASH		✓		Not even juicy enough for our "World Briefs."
GIRL SCOUT COOKIES		✓		Ugh. *Please.* This is SO not interesting.
LOTTERY WINNER	✓			Appealing campus human-interest feature.
JAY-Z SEX CHANGE		✓		Won't run it, but we'll email it to all our friends.

WHAT MAKES A STORY INTERESTING TO READERS?

Everybody's different — and what's fascinating to you might be *boooring* to me. Still, for a story to qualify as "news," it usually contains at least one of these values:

◆ **IMPACT:** Does the story *matter* to readers? Will it have an effect on their lives or their pocketbooks? The bigger the consequences, the bigger the story becomes.

◆ **IMMEDIACY:** Has this story just happened? Is it about to happen? Timeliness is crucial, especially when you're competing against other news outlets.

◆ **PROXIMITY:** How close is this story? Local events will matter more to readers than events in other cities, states or countries . . . . . *usually.*

◆ **PROMINENCE:** Does this story involve a well-known public figure or celebrity? The more recognizable the name, the more readers will be concerned or curious.

◆ **NOVELTY:** Is something new, odd or surprising going on? (Did a man bite a dog?) Readers enjoy news that's intriguing and unexpected.

◆ **CONFLICT:** Is there a clash of power? A political battle? A sports rivalry? Reporters and readers both enjoy dramatic confrontations.

◆ **EMOTIONS:** Does this story make us sad? Happy? Angry? We all respond emotionally to human-interest stories that are poignant, comical or inspiring.

WANT TO TRY A SIMILAR NEWS JUDGMENT EXERCISE? TEST YOURSELF ▶ 34

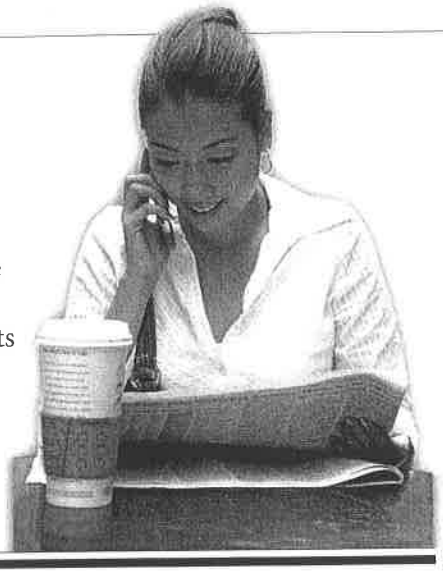
What readers read

Delivering news and information effectively is part art, part science.

We all consume the news in different ways. Different news media even give consumers different names: TV *viewers.* Radio *listeners.* Newspaper *readers.* And websites, which are used for viewing, listening and reading, call their users . . . . . *users.*

Since this is a book on news*writing,* we'll focus primarily on readers. And as journalists have done for centuries, we'll relentlessly ask: What do readers want? Serious issues or light gossip? Long narratives or short summaries? Words or pictures? Meat or fluff?

Smart journalists tailor their material to the reading habits and news appetites of their audience. And as new media transform the news media, it's essential to monitor how effectively you're communicating. What good is a story if nobody *reads* it?



SO HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT READERS READ?

- **WE ASK THEM.**
- **WE WATCH THEM.**

If you produce a print publication or website, it's essential to understand: *Who are our readers? What topics attract them? How much do they read? What more do they need?* The best way to get reliable answers is to conduct market research, which means surveying your audience, analyzing the statistics and drawing conclusions based on facts — not assumptions or speculations. Media companies often hire consultants (or employ their own research staffs) to monitor readers through:

FOCUS GROUPS: Readers convene in small groups to critique a publication or react to new prototypes. A moderator guides the discussion while editors eavesdrop via camera or one-way mirror.
Advantages: Ordinary folks offer unfiltered opinions about what you're doing right and wrong; it's a good way to test new ideas and revise strategies.
Disadvantages: A handful of people may not accurately reflect the majority view. Worse, one or two loudmouths can sway everyone else's opinions.

PHONE, MAIL AND WEB SURVEYS: Researchers compile a series of questions — *How often do you read this publication? Which topics are most important to you?* — then distribute questionnaires or conduct phone interviews with respondents who have been selected and screened to ensure the survey's accuracy.
Advantages: Surveys provide detailed data; the more questions are asked, the more comprehensive the findings. Results are generally reliable and accurate.
Disadvantages: Respondents lie ("Yes, I always read editorials"). And editors often don't know what to do with statistical results. Suppose 30 percent of your readers want more crime coverage. Is that a mandate? Or a minority?

MONITORING DEVICES: Cameras embedded in computer screens track users' eye movements as they read Web pages (above). Cameras can monitor readers' eyes as they scan newspaper pages, too.
Advantages: The eyes don't lie. We can see where people actually *look.*
Disadvantages: Testing occurs in unnatural conditions, pressuring users to behave differently than they might if they were outside the lab.

OTHER WAYS TO GAUGE READER RESPONSE:

- **Sales/Web views.** It's simple math: Track which papers sell more than others, or which Web pages generate the most traffic.
- **Reader response.** Monitor phone calls, emails and letters to the editor in response to topics and stories (both pro and con).
- **Anecdotal feedback.** It's not always trustworthy, but reporters rely on word of mouth to gauge which stories strike a chord with sources, friends and colleagues.
- **Ethnography.** Acting much like anthropologists, researchers study the habits and rituals of media consumers (often observing them in the field) to learn what, where, when and especially *why* readers read what they read.

HOW TO CONDUCT A QUICK, CHEAP, SEMI-SCIENTIFIC READER SURVEY

STEP 1 Recruit a dozen volunteers. (The more people you enlist, the more reliable your survey will be.) Aim for a representative mix of readers by age, gender, lifestyle, etc.

STEP 2 Ask your volunteers to read the next issue of your paper as they typically do — but tell them to circle everything they read with a dark felt-tip pen as they go through the paper. That may mean just a headline, a photo caption or the first two paragraphs of a story. (By "reading," we mean *processing words in a meaningful way,* not just *glancing.)*

STEP 3 Ask your recruits to do this for several issues of the paper. If you're a daily, ask them to read for a week; if you're a weekly, have them read two or three issues. Collect the papers from them when they're done.

STEP 4 Mark each pile so you know who's who (i.e., "25-year-old male grad student"). Then ask: What did they consistently read? What *didn't* they read? What topics or story treatments had the most (or least) success? Identify patterns and problems. Make changes. Then try another survey.

FASHION CORNER

Update Spring Wardrobe on Budget

A revealing page from a reader survey at an Omaha paper, showing how people often skip over text to view user-friendly bullet items instead.

1 READERS ARE IN A HURRY

In the past, people devoted a big block of time — say, half an hour — to reading a newspaper or viewing a newscast. But in today's sped-up, plugged-in world, we often absorb news in chunks throughout the day, in a steady series of upgrades rather than one big download.

"Readers use a wide variety of media, and there is a finite amount of time in their day," says Mary Nesbitt, managing director of the Readership Institute, a media research center at Northwestern University. "There is no dearth of news and information, but there is a dearth of time.

"You are competing for their attention, so stories need to be clear, focused and to the point."

2 READERS HAVE SHORT ATTENTION SPANS

"Nine times out of 10, readers prefer short stories to long stories," Nesbitt says.

Why? They're impatient. They're swamped by a sea of information, much of it meaningless.

They're distracted, too: 44 percent of Americans admit they watch TV *and* read magazines or newspapers at the same time.

It's frustrating to admit it, but many readers just can't seem to process long, complicated stories. So what's a reporter to do?

"Start with the idea that the story will be short, then think about whether something longer is needed," says Michele McLellan, director of Tomorrow's Workforce, a newsroom training center. "Journalists often get this backward."

3 READERS WANT STORIES THAT PERSONALLY CONNECT

"Readers want to see themselves in the newspaper," McLellan says. Unfortunately, though, "newspapers focus heavily on the power structure and that means middle-aged, white, male, official perspectives dominate."

That's why successful reporters craft stories that focus on *you,* the reader, instead of *them,* those politicians and strangers *over there.*

"Institutional stories — stories about the actions of city council, the planning commission or the school board, for instance — are ignored," Nesbitt says, "unless the reporter makes it clear why it really matters.

"People like to feel smarter about things that matter to them. Understand what people really care about, then in your work help them to smarten up."

IS GOOGLE MAKING US STOOPID?

An excerpt from tech pundit Nicholas Carr's 2008 essay in The Atlantic:

For more than a decade now, I've been spending a lot of time online.... And what the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski.

Bruce Friedman, who blogs about the use of computers in medicine, has described how the Internet has altered his mental habits. "I now have almost totally lost the ability to read and absorb a longish article on the Web or in print," he wrote. "I can't read *War and Peace* anymore. Even a blog post of more than three or four paragraphs is too much to absorb. I skim it."

4 READERS WANT STORIES TOLD IN A COMPELLING WAY

Dry, detailed summaries of news events are a staple of journalism, but if that's all you give readers — an endless parade of facts, paragraph after paragraph after paragraph — you'll sap their stamina.

Given a choice, readers generally prefer *stories:* real narrative dramas starring real people. Research shows that feature-style writing — with more personality, more *why should I care* attitude — often has more appeal than standard, "inverted pyramid"-style newswriting.▼

Readers will always want solid, accessible facts. If you're smart, though, you'll develop a versatile repertoire of reporting approaches.

"Readers respond to a variety of story forms," Nesbitt says. "If a story can be more effectively told with a bulleted list, a series of photos, a Q-and-A format or a graphic, so be it."

5 THERE'S MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF READER

Some readers are hard-core news junkies. Others are casual browsers. Some love long, in-depth profiles. Others hate them. Some read the paper simply out of fear that they'll miss something and feel left out of conversations. (Researchers call them "anxiety-driven" readers.)

Can you satisfy everyone? No. But keep your ideas fresh. Keep your topics diverse. Stay out of ruts.

And remember, readers who call or write to say your story offended or enthralled them *do not necessarily* speak for the majority. Don't let random criticism intimidate you, but don't let flattering fan mail steer you into a dull, predictable rut, either.

QUOTED

"People don't actually read newspapers — they get into them every morning like a hot bath."
Marshall McLuhan, media theorist

"Real journalists don't want to write — they want to be read. Without readers, what's the point?"
Christine Urban, newspaper research consultant

"News is newsier the closer it is to the reader."
Frank Denton, former editor, *Wisconsin State Journal*

"People want complete news coverage, but they don't want to have to spend too much time with the paper. They want in-depth stories, but they want jumps avoided at all costs. They want the important news, but it has to be personally relevant. They want substantial newspapers, but they don't want bulky newspapers that pile up unread."
Kris McGrath, newspaper researcher, on contradictory reader preferences

"This business of giving people what they want is a dope pusher's argument. News is something people don't know they're interested in until they hear about it. The job of a journalist is to take what's important and make it interesting."
Reuven Frank, former president of NBC News

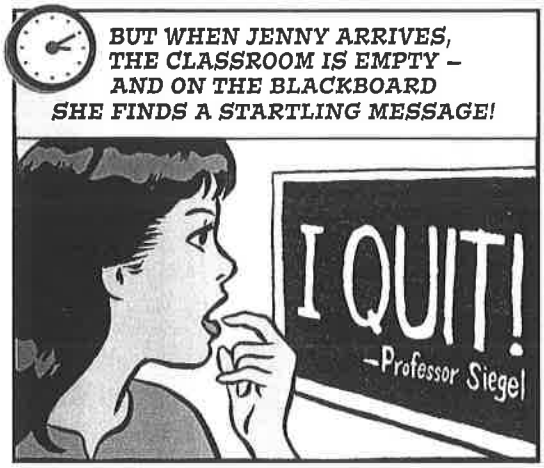
"We think people want SERIOUS, and they do, but they only want about 3 inches of serious on most things. USA Today got it wrong . . . they didn't go far enough. I'm getting more and more convinced people want a smattering of everything but just a smattering, and you'd better tell them the nut graf quick. I call it "drive-through journalism": filling and fast. And don't forget to give them a side of fries or an apple pie along with it."
Dawn Dressler, executive editor, *Amarillo Globe-News*

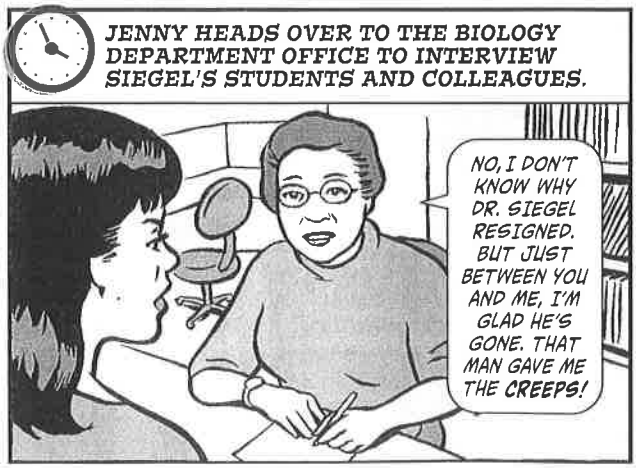
"Innovate or die."
Richard Curtis, managing editor, *USA Today*

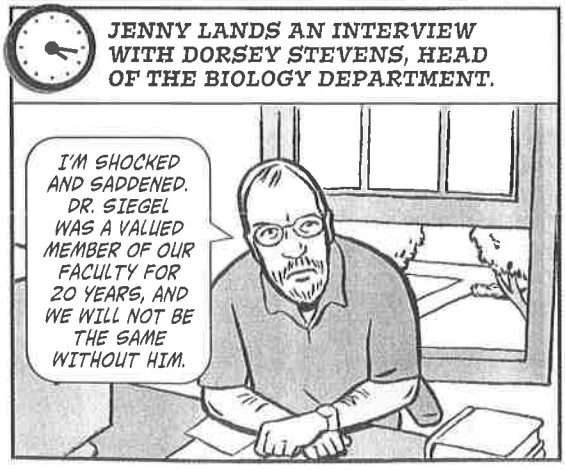
MORE ON WRITING FOR THE WEB ▶ 168
MORE ON THE INVERTED PYRAMID ▶ 40
MORE ON FEATURE AND NARRATIVE WRITING ▶ 122

How a story gets written

News events can occur suddenly and unexpectedly — and when they do, you can't always predict where they'll lead. Here's an example of one such story, another thrilling newsroom adventure from the files of . . .







By JENNY DEADLINE
Epitaph staff reporter

After two decades in biology classrooms, Dr. Harris Siegel ended his campus career today with two words scrawled on a blackboard: "I QUIT."

Siegel's sudden resignation caught both students and colleagues by surprise.

"I'm shocked and saddened," said Dorsey Stevens, head of the biology department. "Dr. Siegel was a valued member of our faculty for 20 years, and we will not be the same without him."

In a letter sent to Stevens Monday morning, Siegel explained that "for personal reasons, I shall resign effective immediately, in order to spend more time with my family."

Contacted by The Epitaph Monday afternoon, Siegel refused further comment, ~~leaving some students to speculate that he had quit to avoid facing a sexual harassment complaint.~~

Students say they'll miss Siegel. "He was the best teacher I ever had," said graduate student Heather Lewis. "I wouldn't be going to med school if it weren't for Dr. Siegel."

Dr. Hugh Lyon Sack will step in to teach Siegel's classes the rest of the term. "I'll do my best to fill his big shoes," Sack said.

SO WHAT DID JENNY LEARN TODAY?

1. YOU OFTEN SPEND 90 PERCENT OF YOUR TIME CHASING A STORY, AND JUST 10 PERCENT WRITING IT.
2. NOT EVERYTHING A REPORTER HEARS MAKES IT INTO THE FINISHED STORY.
3. NOT EVERYTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS. IN THIS CASE, IT TURNS OUT DR. SIEGEL ACTUALLY QUIT BECAUSE

HE'D JUST WON $5,000,000 IN THE LOTTERY!

COULD DR. SIEGEL HAVE SUED THE PAPER FOR PRINTING THOSE RUMORS? SHOULD JENNY HAVE DONE ANYTHING DIFFERENTLY?

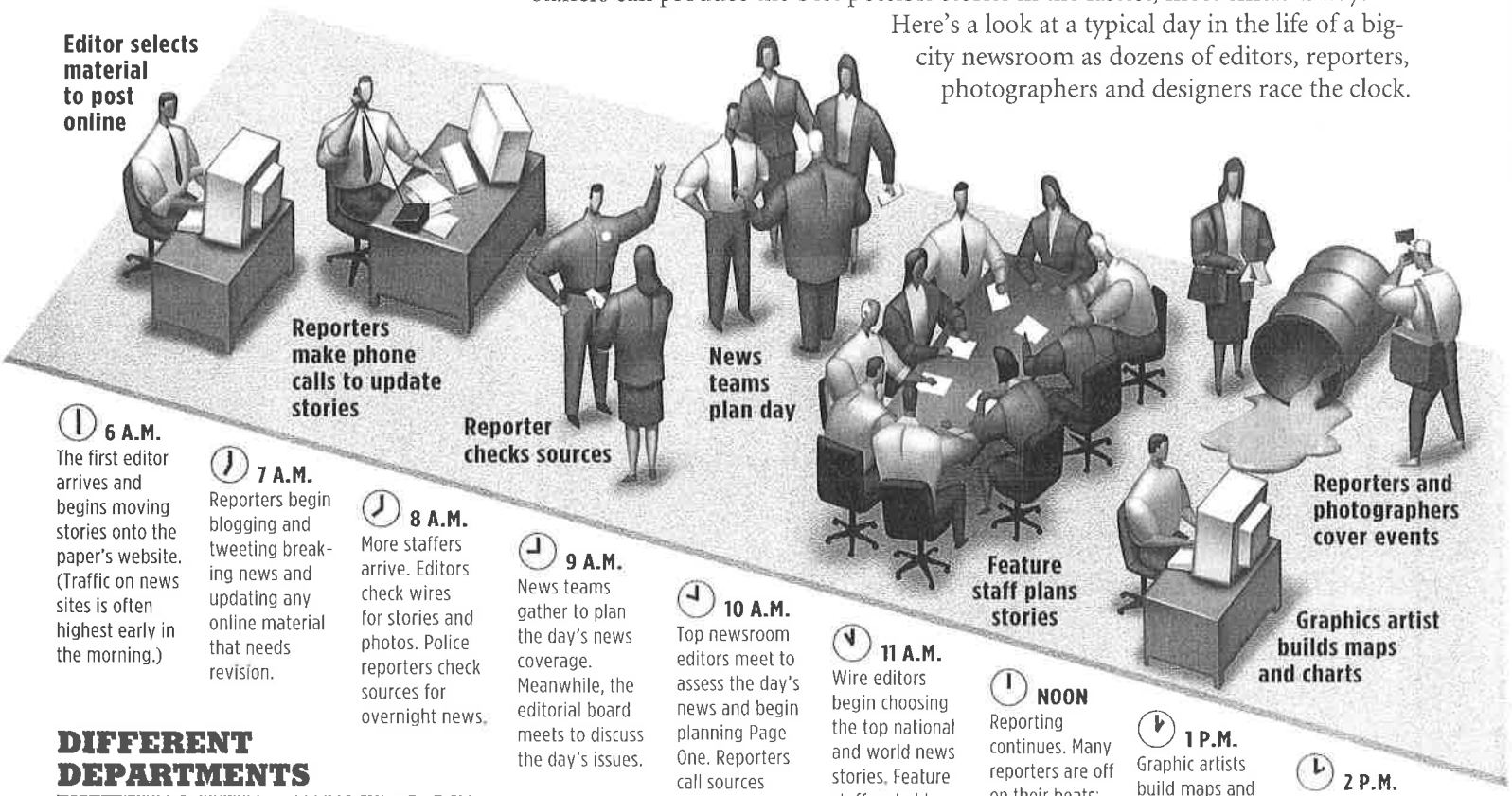
How the news comes together

It's like an assembly line where workers race the clock to produce a new product each day.

Editors call it "the daily miracle." And it *does* seem miraculous that despite blizzards, computer meltdowns, power outages and press jams, the newspaper gets printed and delivered day after day, year after year — sometimes century after century.

Large newsrooms operate like clockwork, and the key word is *clock.* Timing is everything in news production, whether you're posting stories online or prepping them for print. Newsrooms streamline the work flow so staffers can produce the best possible stories in the fastest, most efficient way.

Here's a look at a typical day in the life of a big-city newsroom as dozens of editors, reporters, photographers and designers race the clock.



6 A.M. The first editor arrives and begins moving stories onto the paper's website. (Traffic on news sites is often highest early in the morning.)

7 A.M. Reporters begin blogging and tweeting breaking news and updating any online material that needs revision.

8 A.M. More staffers arrive. Editors check wires for stories and photos. Police reporters check sources for overnight news.

9 A.M. News teams gather to plan the day's news coverage. Meanwhile, the editorial board meets to discuss the day's issues.

10 A.M. Top newsroom editors meet to assess the day's news and begin planning Page One. Reporters call sources and head out into the field to cover stories.

11 A.M. Wire editors begin choosing the top national and world news stories. Feature staffers hold planning sessions to develop future projects. ▼

NOON Reporting continues. Many reporters are off on their beats; others remain in the newsroom to make phone calls or finish writing stories they've previously researched.

1 P.M. Graphic artists build maps and charts for both news stories and special projects. In the features section, page designers are working days in advance on section fronts.

2 P.M. Reporters update their editors and team leaders, who compile summaries (called "budgets") of stories planned for the website and tomorrow morning's paper.

DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS WITHIN THE NEWSROOM

Running a big news organization might require hundreds of reporters, a hundred editors, dozens of photographers, designers, online producers and clerks. Journalists usually work in one main newsroom, although some also operate from small suburban bureaus — or file photos and stories from the field.

Traditionally, newsroom staffers have been grouped into these general categories:

REPORTERS AND EDITORS

Reporters are assigned to beats. In big newsrooms, beats are organized into teams, such as:

Business	*Family & Education*
Sports	*Crime & Justice*
Living	*City Life*

A Crime & Justice editor, for instance, might supervise a variety of beats: prisons, night cops, federal and municipal courts.

When a reporter files a story, it first goes to an editor on his or her team, who checks it for accuracy, organization and fairness.

COPY EDITORS AND PAGE DESIGNERS

Once stories are edited, they're sent on to copy editors and designers. Copy editors check stories for grammar, spelling and punctuation, add headlines, and then send everything to the presentation team, where designers have laid out the stories on each page, along with any additional photos, captions and graphics.

EDITORIAL BOARD

The editorial department usually works independently of the newsroom — often in a separate wing of the building — to produce the paper's opinion pages. The editorial staff writes editorials that reflect the newspaper's views on current events, selects letters to the editor and edits guest opinion columns. Papers often employ an editorial cartoonist, too.

PHOTO AND GRAPHICS

After returning from their assignments, photographers review their work, then select and process the best images for the newspaper. These are digitally sent to the presentation team for layout. Breaking news photos or videos are immediately posted online.

Meanwhile, graphic artists receive information from editors and reporters with which they build charts, graphs, maps and other graphic elements to accompany stories (like the illustrations on this page).

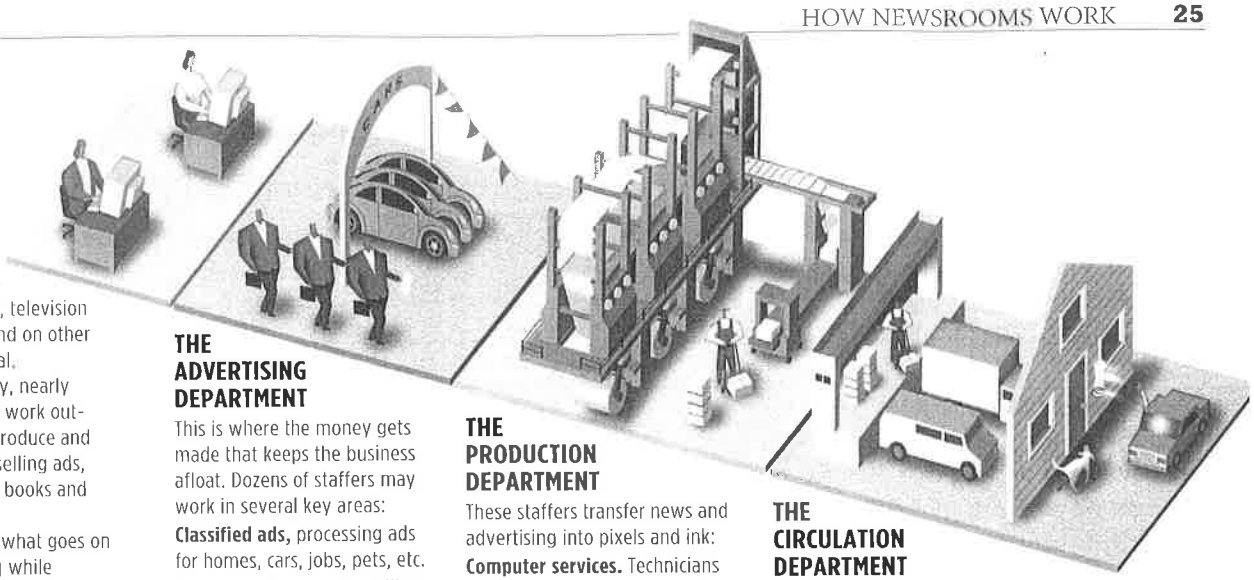
MORE ON PLANNING SPECIAL STORIES ▶130

WHO'S WHO BEYOND THE NEWSROOM

Like reporters always do, we've focused all our attention on the *newsroom.* But all news organizations — whether they're newspapers, television stations or websites — depend on other departments for their survival.

At a typical media company, nearly two-thirds of the employees work outside the newsroom to help produce and deliver the paper each day, selling ads, driving trucks, balancing the books and running the press.

Here's a quick rundown of what goes on in other parts of the building while journalists are busy producing stories.



THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

This is where the money gets made that keeps the business afloat. Dozens of staffers may work in several key areas:

Classified ads, processing ads for homes, cars, jobs, pets, etc.

Retail and display ads, selling the ads that run below and beside news stories.

Advertising services, helping clients write, edit and design their ads.

THE PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

These staffers transfer news and advertising into pixels and ink:

Computer services. Technicians help maintain the newsroom's hardware, software and servers.

Camera and composing. These workers prepare pages for printing, turning them first into negatives, then into plates that are mounted on the press.

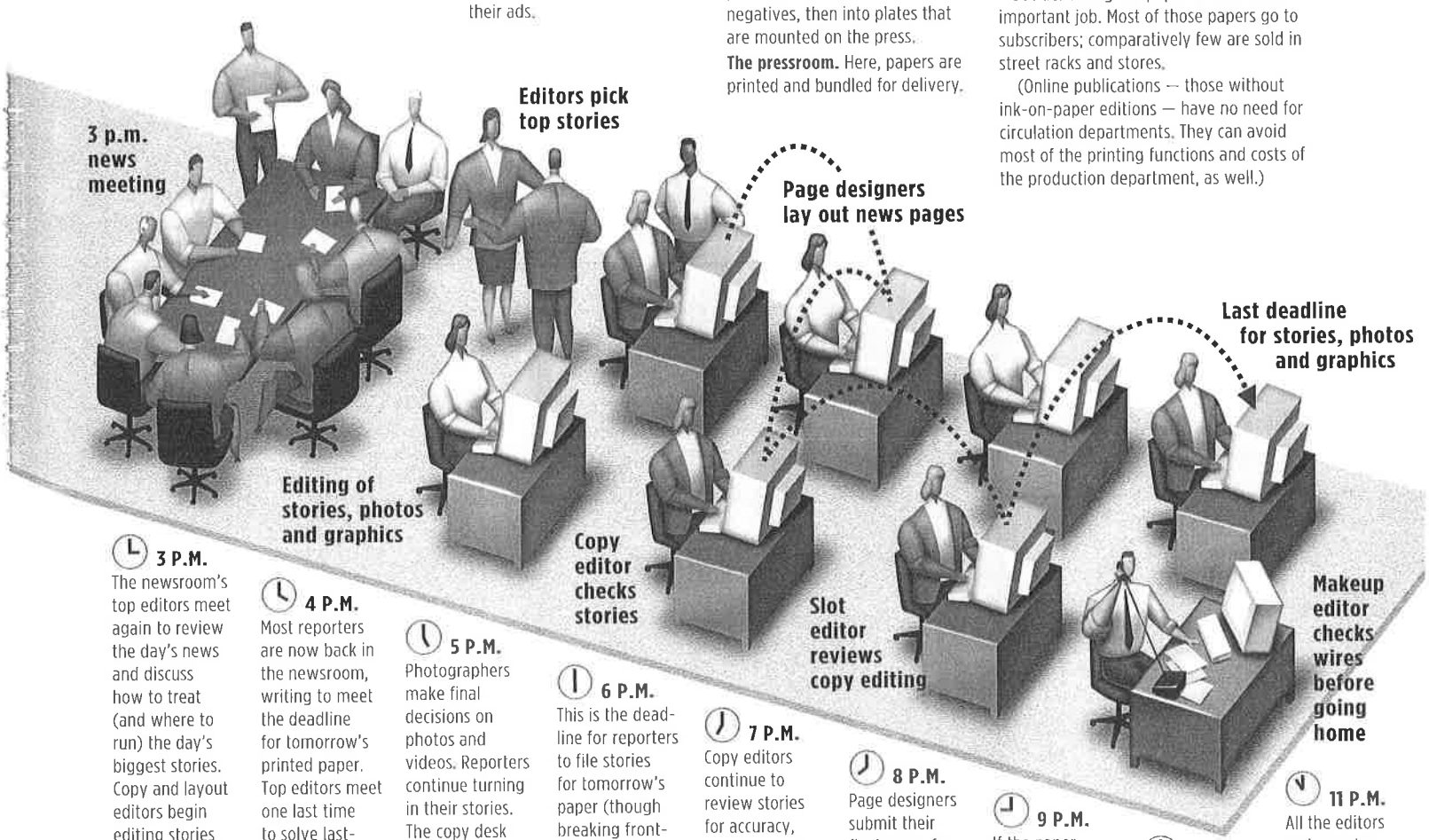
The pressroom. Here, papers are printed and bundled for delivery.

THE CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT

It often takes scores of employees working night and day to distribute the newspaper, recruit new subscribers and respond to calls from customers.

But delivering the paper is their most important job. Most of those papers go to subscribers; comparatively few are sold in street racks and stores.

(Online publications — those without ink-on-paper editions — have no need for circulation departments. They can avoid most of the printing functions and costs of the production department, as well.)



3 P.M.
The newsroom's top editors meet again to review the day's news and discuss how to treat (and where to run) the day's biggest stories. Copy and layout editors begin editing stories and designing news pages.

4 P.M.
Most reporters are now back in the newsroom, writing to meet the deadline for tomorrow's printed paper. Top editors meet one last time to solve last-minute problems and make their final front-page story selections.

5 P.M.
Photographers make final decisions on photos and videos. Reporters continue turning in their stories. The copy desk edits all stories and either posts them online or forwards them to layout editors.

6 P.M.
This is the deadline for reporters to file stories for tomorrow's paper (though breaking front-page news may wait another hour). It's also the deadline for sending photos to page designers for layout.

7 P.M.
Copy editors continue to review stories for accuracy, grammar and style,▼ then add headlines and cutlines. Except for last-minute stories, most editing is finished by 7:45.

8 P.M.
Page designers submit their final pages for the morning's first edition. The presses start rolling at 8:30. Big metro dailies may print later editions, as well.

9 P.M.
If the paper prints a second or third edition, reporters and editors will be scrambling to update and rework that material now.

10 P.M.
Most reporters are done for the day, though a few remain to update their blogs or file stories online.

11 P.M.
All the editors and reporters have headed home. One makeup editor remains until 1 a.m., checking the wires for late-breaking news.

Information adapted from a timeline prepared by The Oregonian and illustrated by Steve Cowden.

MORE ON EDITING ▶ 54 AND STYLE ▶ 56

Who's who in the newsroom

Like armies, news organizations need clear lines of authority to avoid chaos.

Like armies, they have powerful generals who call the shots (editors and publishers) while the ground troops (reporters and photographers) rush onto the battlefield. And like armies, news organizations rely on teamwork for their survival. Assigning, writing, editing and publishing stories is a group effort.

So who does what? Journalistic job descriptions vary from newsroom to newsroom. Small publications often require a broader range of responsibilities. Reporters might find themselves interviewing the mayor one minute, shooting his photo the next, and then posting that material online. In larger newsrooms, jobs are more specialized. You might spend years writing only fashion stories, while down the hall someone does nothing but cover the state legislature.

Still, it all begins with reporters tracking down news. At most papers, writers are either:

- ***General assignment reporters*** who cover an unpredictable variety of topics, depending on what news events occur from day to day; or
- ***Beat reporters*** who cover a specific topic: politics, crime, education, sports, movies. Most reporters at most publications are assigned to beats, because that's the most efficient way to ensure coverage of all major news events and build expertise.

This organizational chart shows the hierarchy in a typical newspaper newsroom. The actual number of desks may vary, but the overall system is one that's worked for decades at publications big and small.

The ultimate boss. Presides over all departments to ensure profitability.

Oversees the staff and equipment that get the publication produced on time.

Supervises the distribution of the paper for subscribers and street sales.

Coordinates the sales and production of classified and display ads.

Runs the newsroom. Has the final say in story selection and news philosophy.

Outside the newsroom, these three departments ensure that a print publication is produced and profitable. The ad staff, in particular, generates the revenue that pays the bills. Usually, these managers all have equal clout and report directly to the publisher.

Oversees the day-to-day operation of the newsroom; resolves staffing issues.

All of these editors have equal clout in the newsroom and usually report to the managing editor.

Works with other editors and reporters to develop material for the website.

Coordinates photo assignments and chooses images to run in the paper.

Oversees the editing (and at many papers, the layout) of all stories in the paper.

Assigns and edits all the stories running in the paper's feature section.

Assigns and edits all the stories running in the paper's sports section.

Assigns and edits most of the paper's local "hard news" stories.

These staffers have equal status in the newsroom and report to their department editors.

ONLINE CONTENT PRODUCERS
Enhance or adapt news stories for online presentation.

PHOTOGRAPHERS, GRAPHIC ARTISTS
Photographers shoot photos; artists create graphics or design pages.

COPY EDITORS
Edit text of stories; write headlines and photo captions; lay out pages.

FEATURE WRITERS & REVIEWERS
Write stories about lifestyles and entertainment; critics write reviews.

SPORTS REPORTERS
Write stories about local teams; at big dailies, they cover national events.

NEWS REPORTERS
Write stories about government, crime, local people, regional events.

WHEN IT COMES TO WEB CONTENT, news organizations are still trying to find the most efficient way to produce material, simultaneously, for two different platforms: a newspaper *and* the Web. A radio station *and* the Web. Or sometimes, even, the Web *and* radio *and* TV — *and* the iPad edition.

In many newsrooms, different teams craft material for each separate platform. Once reporters finish their stories, an online production team reworks them for the organization's website. There's a logic to that work flow, but there's a downside, too. Simply shoveling stories online doesn't provide extra value for Web visitors. And it doesn't give Web producers time to plan interactive, multimedia extras. Instead of thinking *online first,* reporters often treat the Web as an afterthought. Or a nuisance.

As a result, many newsrooms now try to integrate their online staffing into the daily work flow as much as possible. Rather than operating a separate Web Desk in a corner of the newsroom (or on a separate floor), online producers work within each department. This makes it easier for reporters to generate extra online content — audio, video, slide shows and Web links — as they prepare their stories.

MORE ON **COVERING BEATS** ▶ 94 AN AMUSING LIST OF **UNUSUAL BEATS** ▶ 31 MORE ON **NEWSROOM CONVERGENCE** ▶ 176 HOW NEWSROOMS WORK FOR **BROADCAST JOURNALISTS** ▶ 182

LIFE AT A SMALL WEEKLY

Scott Byers, *The N'West Iowa Review*

Scott Byers is sports editor of the N'West Iowa Review (circulation 6,000). Byers is one of seven staffers in a newsroom that produces the Review, a sports magazine and several other weekly publications.

So what do you do each week?

Primarily writing, quite a bit of editing, contributing to the layout and design. I do the headline writing. I've done photography before, but really, I only do that in a pinch.

How many stories a week do you write?

During peak season — I counted it up one week this summer, when we were doing baseball and softball — I did 106 game stories.

QUESTION & ANSWER

WHAT?? How's that possible?

Organization. *(Laughs.)*

Does it bother you that journalists at weeklies get less respect than, say, journalists at The New York Times?

Absolutely. My assumption is that a lot of them have never been in this situation, so they can't really understand how much work there is, and how much you're on your own. Whereas *there*, it seems you get a lot more help and a lot more time per story

I would argue that, if it's done right, a small-town paper offers you the opportunity to write better stories than you would at a big paper because you have more freedom — you're not restricted by any corporation that tells you "this has to look *this* way," or "this is the formula for how we write things." You're really allowed to use all of your skills.

What's the best thing about working at a small paper?

Total control. I have absolute and total control over everything that goes on in sports, basically. The owners know me and trust me, and they know I know what I'm doing, so pretty much anything I want to do, I can do.

And there's no one looking over my shoulder. I make my own hours; I'm here when I wanna be, I'm gone when I wanna be. As long as it gets done before deadline, it doesn't seem to matter to anyone.

What's the downside to working at a small paper?

You have to do it all yourself. There'll be weeks where you have to write 106 stories. *(Laughs.)* I mean, I *can* do it, but nobody likes to be that busy.

What's the most fun part of your job?

I get to sit around and talk to people about sports all day and get paid for it. I absolutely love sports.

LIFE AT A BIG DAILY

Susan Page, *USA Today*

Susan Page first started covering the White House and national politics in 1980. She is now the Washington bureau chief for USA Today (circulation 1.8 million).

How often do your stories run in the newspaper?

If I'm on a news event like we just had — the Republican national convention — I'll write three or four stories a week. But as a general rule, I don't write that often. I might write one or two stories a week, and sometimes I'll work on a story that'll take several weeks to do. But I can say with confidence that there's never been a week when I wrote 106 stories.

USA Today is a huge operation. Do you like working in a newsroom that big?

I do. I like working for a newspaper that has a lot of impact. When you write a story, it gets read across the country. I like that I write for a newspaper that's delivered every day to the driveway of my mother's home outside Wichita, Kansas.

My whole career, I've covered the White House and national politics, where hundreds of reporters cover the same stories I do. And at USA Today, I can cover that area in a way that's different from what everyone else is doing. I try to do stories that connect the dots in a way that other people haven't, or that challenge the conventional wisdom. And to do those stories requires time and resources. Many times, I do stories that involve polling, and our polling editor knows more about that than I do. Or database manipulation — our database editor does that better than I can. Or presentation, so a story makes a big splash on the front page, which graphic artists are able to do. It's a collaboration that makes the whole greater than any one of us could do by ourselves. It takes a big paper to support that kind of journalism.

Is your job fun?

Yeah, it's great. I really love everything about it. I love going out to see events. I love interviewing people — man-on-the-street kinds of interviews. I love coming back and trying to write in a way that conveys to a reader everything I saw, that's engaging and accurate. And I like going to headquarters and seeing the paper put together at night: the people doing the layout, choosing the pictures. I really feel so fortunate to do something that I like so much. There's just not another thing I'd rather do.

The PRESS ROOM POLL

Results from a survey of more than 100 reporters on our Press Room panel:

39% say that reporters generally work harder than anyone else in their newsroom.

72% say that reporters generally work the hardest at small daily papers.

- **20%** said reporters work hardest at weeklies;
- **8%** said reporters work hardest at big dailies.

64% say that in most newsrooms, writing feature stories or sports gets less respect than writing "real" news stories.

66% say that copy editors get the least respect of all newsroom staffers.

16% believe that most editors are just failed reporters.

28% hope to become an editor someday.

72% don't ever want to become an editor.

17% want the publisher to get more involved in the newsroom.

83% want the publisher to stay *out* of the newsroom.

87% say they can tolerate loud, ugly ads surrounding their stories because they know newspapers need to make money, but:

80% say they'd rather poke out their own eye with a stick than to write or sell advertising for a living.

80% say that if they had it to do all over again, they'd still become newspaper reporters.

MORE ON COVERING SPORTS▶ 112 MORE ON COVERING POLITICS▶ 110 WHAT DO REPORTERS CONSIDER THE BEST AND WORST NEWSROOM JOBS?▶ 32

What it's called

Want to sound like a reporter? Talk the talk.

When you start writing for a publication, it might be a daily (printed every morning), a weekly (printed, say, every Wednesday) or a newsletter published once a month.

It might be a mainstream broadsheet (The New York Times), an alternative tabloid (The Village Voice) or some specialty publication (Fur & Feather Magazine).

If you're a reporter, your stories will be *spiked* or *killed* if they're unpublishable. If they're too long — if you've written a *thumbsucker* or a *goat-choker* — an editor may *cut* or *trim* a few *grafs* (paragraphs). If a sloppy editor ruins your story, you can moan that it's been *butchered;* if it runs way back on page 17, you can groan that it's been *buried.*

Here's a roundup of other, less grisly terms you'll find in the world of print. Later in this book, we'll learn the lingo used by radio, TV and online journalists. ▼

American news consumers relax at home by reading a broadsheet newspaper.

American news consumers relax at home by reading a tabloid newspaper.

Broadsheets are large-format papers, roughly 12 by 22 inches — though in recent years, publishers have gradually shrunk paper sizes to reduce printing costs. Tabloid pages are generally half the size of broadsheets.

THE PARTS OF A STORY

Not all publications use the same jargon, but there's agreement on most terms. Here are some common elements found in a typical story.

BYLINE
The reporter's name, often followed by credentials. Many papers require that stories be a certain length — or written by a staffer — to warrant a byline.

DATELINE
The location of a story, especially if it's written outside the paper's usual coverage area.

LEAD
(also spelled *lede).* The opening of a story. Here, this news lead condenses the key facts of the event into the first paragraph.

QUOTE
Someone's exact words, usually spoken to the reporter during an interview.

ATTRIBUTION
A phrase that tells readers the source of a quote OR the source of information used in the story.

Freeway closed as ornery oinker hogs traffic

A pig named Mama falls onto the freeway, causing hours of commuter chaos

By SUSAN PAYSENO
Staff reporter

PORTLAND — Westbound traffic on Interstate 84 was backed up for nearly five miles early Monday when "Mama," a 600-pound hog on the way to slaughter, fell from the back of a truck.

For two frustrating hours, the sow refused to budge.

Fred Mickelson told police that he was taking six sows and a boar from his farm in Lyle, Wash., to a slaughterhouse in Carlton when Mama escaped.

"I heard the tailgate fall off, and I looked back and saw her standing in the road," Mickelson said with a sigh. "I thought: 'Oh, no. We've got some real trouble now.' "

Mama was "pretty lively and loud" when she hit the ground, Mickelson said, lumbering between cars and causing havoc on a foggy day.

There were no accidents, police said.

After about an hour of chasing the pig with the help of police, Mickelson began mulling over his options, which included having a veterinarian tranquilize the hog.

About 10 a.m., a crew of highway workers arrived and decided to use a front-end loader to pick up the sow and load her back into the truck.

"That pig was in no hurry to move," said Wally Benson, the highway crew chief. "I think she knew where she was being taken, and she was in no hurry to get there."

Even the police were sympathetic to the pig's plight.

"That pig really honked off a lot of commuters," said trooper Tracy Collins — a vegetarian. "But I was sad to see her go."

Sue Payseno covers traffic and transportation issues in Oregon and Washington. She can be reached at suepayseno@news.com.

Photo by KRAIG SCARFARELLA

Highway workers use a loader to lift Mama, a 600-pound sow, onto a truck Monday on Interstate 84. The pig fell from the truck on the way to slaughter.

"That pig really honked off a lot of commuters."
— TRACY COLLINS, Oregon state police trooper

HEADLINE
The big type, written by copy editors, that summarizes the story.

PHOTO
Photos are usually shot by staff photographers, free-lancers, or wire services like The Associated Press. Most newspaper photos run in black-and-white, since color printing is expensive; online, most photos run in color.

PHOTO CREDIT
A line stating the photographer's name (often adding the organization he or she works for.)

LIFTOUT QUOTE
(also called a *pullquote).* A quotation from the story that's given special graphic emphasis.

TAGLINE
Contact information for the reporter, enabling readers to provide feedback.

A DIAGRAM OF A WEB PAGE ▶ 159 TERMINOLOGY USED IN RADIO NEWS ▶ 186 AND TELEVISION NEWS ▶ 188

THE PARTS OF A PAGE

Join stories together and you create a full page. And at most newspapers, no page is more important than Page One, which showcases the day's most compelling stories and images. Here's a look at the components you might find on a typical front page:

FLAG This is the one front-page element that never changes: the name of the paper set in special type.

EDITION Daily papers often print one edition for street sales, another for home-delivery to subscribers.

INFOGRAPHIC Informational graphics — maps, charts, lists, diagrams, timelines — display key facts from the story in a visual way. At big publications, they're created by artists.

DECK A subheadline, written by copy editors, that supplements information in the main headline.

TEXT The story itself. When text is set into columns of type, it's measured in inches. This story runs for about seven inches before it jumps.

JUMP LINE When a long story is continued on another page, editors run this line to tell readers where the story continues, or *jumps*.

CUTLINE (also called a *caption*). Information about the photo is often collected by photographers but written by copy editors or reporters.

TEASER (also called a *promo* or *skybox*). This is designed to grab readers' attention so they'll pick up the paper and read this story in the sports section.

REFER This alerts readers that there's another story on the same topic in another part of the newspaper.

WIRE STORY A story written for another publication or a national news service, then sent (by telegraph wire, in the old days) nationwide.

MUG SHOT A close-up photo of someone's face. These usually run small — just an inch or two wide.

CENTERPIECE (also called a *lead story*). Editors decided that this was the top story of the day — either because of newsworthiness or reader appeal — so it gets the best play and the biggest headline on Page One. Notice how this story isn't about a current event; it's a type of feature story called a *follow-up*.

INDEX One of the last page elements that copy editors produce before sending the paper off to the press.

LOGO A small, specially designed title (often with art) used for labeling special stories or series.

NEWS WEB PAGES use many of these same terms but add a few of their own. For a closer look ▶159

Tools, talent and temperament

A career in journalism can be rewarding and fun, but it's not for everybody.

As a reporter for the New York Herald Tribune put it years ago: "The newspaper business is the only enterprise in the world where a man is supposed to become an expert on any conceivable subject between 1 o'clock in the afternoon and a 6 p.m. deadline."

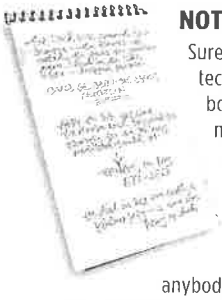
That's the downside of journalism — but that's its appeal, too. Every day, you learn something new. You meet fascinating people. You get a front-row seat to history, and you never have to dress up, get a license, sell anything or even *know* anything. Just ask a lot of questions and the stories write themselves.

Well..... almost.

What does it take to be a reporter? First, let's go shopping.

THE BASIC HARDWARE: TOOLS EVERY REPORTER NEEDS

In the old days, all you needed was a card stuck in your hatband that said *PRESS*, and *presto!* You were a reporter. Nowadays, the standards are higher and the technology is smarter. To be a modern journalist, you need:



NOTEBOOK

Sure, it's the most low-tech tool in your toolbox, but it's also the most essential: cheap, portable, nothing to break, no batteries to fail. Just add a pencil and you're ready to interview anybody, anywhere.

Smart tip: Use spiral-bound pads. They give you better control when you flip pages while scribbling notes.

Best bet: Learn speedwriting or shorthand so you can quote fast talkers more accurately.

COMPUTER

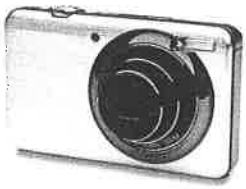
A fast, reliable computer — and fast, reliable computer skills — are essential. As a reporter, you'll be plugged in constantly to work the Web, send email, store your notes and write your stories. (To file reports from the field, you'll need a laptop or tablet.)

Smart tip: Take a typing class. Build up speed and you'll be able to type as fast as you can think — which is *always* handy.

Best bet: Want extra job security? Become adept at a variety of software so you can do page layout, image processing, podcasts, Web design and video editing. (See below.)

CAMERA

At most publications, there aren't enough photographs because there aren't enough photographers. So if you want to make your stories more appealing, sharpen your skill with a digital camera. (Besides, in many newsrooms, reporters are required to shoot their own photos).



Smart tip: Carry extra batteries and a spare memory card — just in case.

Best bet: Make sure your camera shoots high-resolution video, too, so you can post movies on your publication's website.

DIGITAL VOICE RECORDER

Recording interviews helps you quote people more accurately, especially when fast-talking sources outpace your note-taking ability. And audio from digital recorders (or smartphone apps) can be used in online podcasts and multimedia stories.

Smart tip: Learn the laws in your state regulating the taping of conversations.

Best bet: With the right speech-recognition software, you can convert voices to text as you transfer files to your computer.

TELEPHONE

This may seem ridiculously obvious. But telephones are often the most effective way to pester people for information — especially cellphones, if you're working a beat that takes you out of the newsroom.

And with a smartphone, you can tweet, blog, search the Web and file stories from nearly anywhere.

Smart tip: An external headset frees your hands so you can write, type or drive while you talk.

Best bet: Get a phone that can shoot photos, record audio and capture high-quality video. With the right multimedia apps, you might not even need all the other gear on this page.

AND IF YOU REALLY WANT TO IMPRESS YOUR BOSS . . .

"The people who can shoot video, write stories, do radio on the side, basically do it all — these are the journalists of the future," says John Schidlovsky, director of the Pew Fellowship in International Journalism. So why wait? Start training yourself *today* to be the multimedia reporter of tomorrow. That means becoming adept in both print and video.

Smart tip: Shooting video is easy; *editing* it is trickier, but just as essential. Learn to narrate, overdub, edit and upload video projects singlehandedly.

Best bet: Keep abreast of new advances in multimedia storytelling. If you can produce audio, video, animated graphics and text, you can get a job anywhere.

"QUOTED"

"Journalists should be people in whom there is at least a flicker of hope."
Sen. Paul Simon

"The only qualities essential for real success in journalism are rat-like cunning, a plausible manner and a little literary ability."
Nicholas Tomalin, *London Sunday Times* writer

"As I look back over a misspent life, I find myself more and more convinced that I had more fun doing news reporting than in any other enterprise. It really is the life of kings."
H.L. Mencken, legendary journalist

"A good journalist is a rewarding sight. He must have a zest for events. He must have a dedication to facts and a scent of humbug. He must cultivate skepticism while avoiding cynicism. He must learn to cover causes for which he can have sympathy but must not display loyalty. He must be incorruptible. He must go where he is not wanted, and be resistant to those who are too welcoming. And for all of this, his hours will be long, his pay inadequate, and his standing in the community not particularly high."
Thomas Griffith, Time magazine editor

"Any idiot can pick up a pen and a notebook and call himself a journalist — and many of them do."
Sean Scully, freelance journalist

"You go out and meet someone new every day, in a new situation, and they tell you something you've never known before, in a place you've never been. What keeps you alive is the daily surprise. It's a (expletive) joy."
Jimmy Breslin, columnist

MORE ON TAKING NOTES AND TAPING INTERVIEWS ▶ 76

TEST YOUR NEW-MEDIA TECHNICAL SKILLS ▶ 180

GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A REPORTER?

Right about now, you may be wondering: *What have I gotten myself into?* Stay calm. Self-doubt (bordering on panic) is common among beginning reporters.

TEST YOURSELF

To find out if you have the right stuff to be a journalist — the talent to turn facts into stories *and* the temperament to shove a microphone into some stranger's face — take this test and rate your reporter-osity. Check the boxes in the left-hand column which are most true for you, then total up your points to see how you scored.

CHECK THE BOX THAT'S MOST TRUE: **TALENT**	HOW TO SCORE YOUR ANSWER	SCORE
1. I enjoy reading. I consume a lot of books and magazines. ☐YES ☐NO	To be a serious writer, you first need to be a serious reader and a student of the craft. *Score 2 pts. if you said* **YES.**	
2. Writing is fun and rewarding. And I'm confident that people genuinely enjoy the stuff I write. ☐YES ☐NO	The best journalism is a form of creative writing. The most successful reporters enjoy expressing themselves and connecting with readers. *Score 3 pts. for* **YES.**	
3. I am lousy at spelling. My grammar and punctuations ain't so hot, neither. ☐YES ☐NO	True, some terrific journalists are sloppy spellers (especially TV reporters). But the cleaner your copy, the more reliable and independent you'll be. *Score 1 pt. for* **NO.**	
4. I'm technologically skilled enough to shoot video, download files from the Web, post photos online, etc. ☐YES ☐NO	Every journalist is expected to be computer-savvy. And the more versatile you are, the more successfully you'll be able to adapt and evolve. *Score 2 pts. for* **YES.**	
5. I can organize my ideas and write quickly when I need to. ☐YES ☐NO	If writing is a slow, laborious chore for you, you might consider a career as a tortured poet instead. *Score 3 pts. for* **YES.**	
6. I'd make a good game-show contestant because I'm good at remembering facts and trivia. ☐YES ☐NO	Journalism isn't just about writing — it's about gathering and processing lots of information. Not everyone has the knack (or a good memory). *Score 2 pts. for* **YES.**	
7. I'm efficient and self-sufficient when it comes to doing tedious library or Web research. ☐YES ☐NO	If you become a reporter, you'll spend *years* of your life doing detective work, searching for files, records and obscure data. It helps if you're good at it. *Score 2 pts. for* **YES.**	

CHECK THE BOX THAT'S MOST TRUE: **TEMPERAMENT**	HOW TO SCORE YOUR ANSWER	SCORE
8. I'm generally more curious than most people I know. ☐YES ☐NO	The best reporters have an insatiable curiosity and a wide range of interests. *Score 3 pts. for* **YES.**	
9. In public situations, I'm pretty shy. I avoid asking questions in class, for instance. ☐YES ☐NO	Reporters need to be bold, aggressive — sometimes even fearless. If you're shy, you can work to overcome it, but the job may be uncomfortable for you. *Score 2 pts. for* **NO.**	
10. I think it's unpatriotic to dispute or criticize government officials. ☐YES ☐NO	It's nice to respect authority, but if you're a journalist, it's better to be skeptical. Remember, politicians lie. It's their job. Your job is to catch them at it. Score 1 pt. for ***NO.***	
11. When I choose a career, I'll need a stable, 9-to-5 job where my workday is routine and I make big money. ☐YES ☐NO	Uh-oh. This could be a deal-breaker for you. Reporters work long hours (often at night and on weekends), and the pay's good only at the bigger newsrooms. *Score 3 pts. for* **NO.**	
12. If I really want something, I'm tenacious until I get it. ☐YES ☐NO	If you lack patience and persistence, your reporting career could be very short-lived. *Score 3 pts. for* **YES.**	
13. When I'm under pressure, I'm able to stay calm and focused without losing my temper. ☐YES ☐NO	Journalism is a constant battle against the clock. You're often juggling stories right up until the last minute. You need quick wits and grace under pressure. *Score 1 pt. for* **YES.**	
14. Whenever people criticize what I say or do, it really annoys me. Who do these people think they are? ☐YES ☐NO	Being a reporter means rewriting stories to make editors happy, and being polite when readers call you a moron. You'll need patience and a thick skin to survive. *Score 2 pts. for* **NO.**	
	YOUR TOTAL SCORE	

SCORING YOURSELF

30 points: *Congratulations! You were destined to be a journalist. (Or else you lied, which is a heinous thing for a reporter to do.)*
25-30 points: *You're a solid contender for a journalism career. You've got the personality and ability a successful reporter needs.*
20-25 points: *Reporting is a good fit for you, mostly — but it may require you to change your attitude or improve some skills.*
Less than 20 points: *Think this quiz is rigged? Well, there's a strong possibility you won't be happy working in a newsroom.*

AND THE BEAT GOES ON AND ON AND ON...

Not every reporter is cut out to cover hard news. For some of you, covering cops, courts and car crashes may be a real *downer.*

Luckily, though, lots of reporting jobs allow you to write about the things you enjoy. At The San Francisco Chronicle for instance, you could cover the sex beat. Get a job in Orlando, and you can work the Disney World beat.

Here's a list of other unusual, intriguing beats created at newspapers throughout the United States:

Shopping malls
Pets
Pro wrestling
Boating
Beer
Wine
Cars and automotive news
Auto racing
Computer games
The porn industry
Death and dying
Golf
Children's books
Book clubs
Weather
Hunting and fishing
Hiking and biking
Gardening
Recreational vehicles
Religion
The environment
Rock music
Classical music
Technology
Children and families
Senior issues
Traffic
Travel
The state fair
Culture, race and diversity
Celebrities and gossip
Military affairs
Gaming
(covering local casinos)
Wal-Mart
(at a paper in Arkansas near Wal-Mart's headquarters)
Olympics
(at a paper in Colorado Springs, home of the U.S. Olympic Committee)

MORE ON **NEWSROOM BEATS** ▶ 94

The PRESS ROOM

ADVICE ON REPORTING AND WRITING FROM VETERAN JOURNALISTS

Welcome to the Press Room, where we turn the tables on veteran journalists from around the country by asking THEM the questions.

WHAT'S THE BEST JOB IN THE NEWSROOM — YOUR DREAM JOB?

Travel writer: Get paid to see, feel, taste, smell and write about the world's most beautiful and interesting places? Sign me up.

Katy Muldoon, *The Oregonian*

The one I have now: converged reporter, covering a beat for print, TV and online. I get to do everything, except manage. Quite a deal.

Mark Fagan, *Journal-World* (Lawrence, Kan.)

Sports columnist. Are you kidding me? The guys make bank, put their opinion in the paper twice a week and lounge the rest of the time. Plus, they cover all the major sporting events. It doesn't get any easier than that.

Tripp Mickle, *Tahoe World*

I am fairly certain that my job — Metro columnist — is a better fit than OJ's glove. But it is, of course, a living hell of constant, Sisyphean deadlines, irate reader calls and column-idea panic. Be careful with your dreams.

Laura Berman, *The Detroit News*

Full-time outdoor writer. Not only would you get paid to play — fish, hike, hunt, ski, etc. — but there are plenty of opportunities to wade into hard news from public-policy angles and tons of great feature stories related to the tragedy and triumph of the human spirit. Maybe it shows my bias toward outdoor play, but I think you could do everything with this beat.

Kyle Henley, *The Gazette* (Colorado Springs, Colo.)

International reporter for a massive and rich newspaper, able to pick and choose the best stories from all over the world.

Rachel Stassen-Berger, *Pioneer Press* (St. Paul)

Investigative reporter. I enjoy having the freedom to pursue a topic that requires extra effort and expertise. It's also rewarding to be the driving force in making change in people's lives.

Heather Ratcliffe, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

Editor, of course. I'd have fewer Federal Reserve and city council stories on 1A; I'd tell my reporters to get out and find quirky, compelling stories about how people *really* live.

John Reinan, *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minn.)

Most will say feature writer. But I say it is the police/courts reporter. I'm fortunate to be doing what I love. You get breaking news, features, meetings/trials, investigative series, excitement and more — all rolled into one beat.

Kimberly Morava, *The Shawnee News-Star* (Shawnee, Okla.)

Special project reporters have the opportunity to dig deep into a story and reflect, outside the pressure of a daily deadline, which makes it the best job in the newsroom by far. Any job that takes you off the treadmill and offers you a chance to think has to be the greatest blessing the gods of journalism can bestow.

Deborah L. Shelton, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB IN THE NEWSROOM?

I'd hate working on the copy desk because those folks are stuck in the newsroom all day and never meet interesting people.

Heather Ratcliffe, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

I think an assistant city editor on a political or city hall beat would suck. In fact, I did it and it did suck. Too much pressure from the top and bottom, no time to reflect and generally bad writers who think they're the Second Coming.

Kim Severson, *San Francisco Chronicle*

The job I'd least like to have is crime reporter, which I've already done, thank you very much. It's an extremely important job, obviously. But those cops treat you like crap. You have to have a thick skin.

Deborah L. Shelton, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

Writing obituaries. Get one name wrong (sometimes the family member or the funeral home screws up), and you'll hear about it for days.

Michael Becker, *Journal-Advocate* (Sterling, Colo.)

Overnight editor on the local desk. Horrible hours and numbing routine broken by the terror of huge stories breaking out without anyone at hand to help.

Jerry Schwartz, The Associated Press

Editor. It's all tasks, "goal-settings," meetings. You imitate but do not create. You give off heat and light . . . but so does a trash fire.

Roy Wenzl, *The Wichita Eagle*

Covering courts for a big paper with neurotic editors. No fun getting pulled in a dozen different directions by morons who can't make up their minds.

Judd Slivka, *The Arizona Republic*

Because it's the most difficult job, I vote for city editor. Constant interruptions from reporters and other editors, the need to make quick decisions on coverage and the daily barrage of calls from unhappy or just weird readers make this the toughest task in any newsroom.

Leah Beth Ward, *Yakima Herald-Republic*

Covering the state legislature, because it tends to be the most scrutinized job with the least creative freedom, because editors love taking the trivia of government and forcing it down readers' throats.

Ron Sylvester, *The Wichita Eagle*

The guy who cleans around and under my desk. It really is a landfill of half-used notebooks, old documents and dust-gathering reference books. A mess.

Mark Fagan, *Journal-World* (Lawrence, Kan.)

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A REPORTER?

My uncle used to tell me these amazing, compelling, engrossing stories around the campfire. I thought he was the coolest guy ever. Now I get paid to do that every day.

Kevin Pang, *Chicago Tribune*

I never planned on it. In college, I majored in history and even dropped a newswriting course because it was boring. But I still wrote for the college paper and loved seeing *my* written words in print. When I found I could combine the thrill of writing with the ability to ask anyone almost anything, anywhere, I was sold.

Leah Beth Ward, *Yakima Herald-Republic*

I was inspired by the Vietnam War. I believe the American public would have opposed that war from the outset if media had put out better information. That still guides me — giving people information to make decisions about their future.

Rick Bella, *The Oregonian*

I can't do math. I'm horrible, terrible, a disaster with numbers. Journalism seemed to be the only major that didn't require four years of math.

Judd Slivka, *The Arizona Republic*

As a young girl, I watched my grandmother read the morning and afternoon newspapers. I asked, why both? Her answer became my goal: "I want to see who tells the better story."

Connie Sexton, *The Arizona Republic*

Here was what was cool about it right away: I, a shy person, had a reason to ask anybody anything. And they would answer!

Jeff Mapes, *The Oregonian*

I decided to become a reporter when I was in the fourth grade. Perhaps it's because I loved writing and grew up on newspapers; my father bought the *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Chicago Tribune* daily. My career plans began to gel when I was in high school. I subscribed to several teen-oriented and women's publications. I never saw people who looked like me, a black woman, in these publications. They didn't speak to my issues and I decided to change that. I settled on newspapering because of Watergate. I just loved the government-watchdog role journalists play and decided I needed to be a part of that.

Toni Coleman, *Pioneer Press* (St. Paul, Minn.)

I'll never forget my reporter father, while covering a coal mine disaster, talking with women making tissue paper funeral flowers. Ever since I was a tag-along toddler, he's been inspiring me.

Bob Batz Jr., *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*
(His father, Bob Batz, is also a feature writer, at the *Dayton Daily News)*

I was selected to be editor of our Girl Scout Newspaper, a project for some career badge. I was 10, and I loved it. I was much better at that than I was selling cookies.

Jill Barrall, *Hutchinson (Minn.) Leader*

My dad, Jack Kennedy, is a high school journalism teacher and ever since I can remember, I wanted to be just like his student editors. They just seemed so cool to my grade school eyes – there was the gothic girl with the huge black hair and tons of eyeliner, the popular jock, the studious student body president, the freaks, the weirdos and everyone in between. They all flocked to my dad's class, and I did, too.

It must be in the blood: my grandfather was a journalism major, my dad a teacher, my sister and I working journalists. Choosing a different occupation never crossed my mind. And now, at 31, I still look to my dad for advice.

Lesley Kennedy,
Rocky Mountain News (Denver, Colo.)

WHO'S YOUR JOURNALISTIC HERO?

Edna Buchanan of the Miami Herald. She brought humanity to cop stories in an accessible way that inspired me to do the same. Following is my favorite lead of hers, about a man shot while in line at a McDonald's:

"Gary Robinson died hungry."

Erin Barnett, *The Oregonian*

Mike Royko. He was funny, fearless and looked out for the powerless. Through his writing, readers learned that the newspaper was on their side. I hope they still feel that way, but I wonder.

Ken Fuson, *The Des Moines Register*

Mike Royko. For humor, grace, outrage, intelligence and his simple, elegant and direct prose.

Don Hamilton, *The Columbian*

Thomas Jefferson, who said that if given a choice between government and no newspapers, and newspapers and no government, he would prefer the latter. His point was that an informed citizenry is more important to a vital democracy than the exact structure of its institutions.

Michael Becker, *Journal-Advocate (Sterling, Colo.)*

Seymour M. Hersh, who fearlessly roots out the worst, the hardest stories about the American experience and makes us face the reality. From Vietnam to Iraq, he has been a voice that refuses to be silent when all others are cowed.

Peter Sleeth, *The Oregonian*

David Broder, because in an era of talking-head gas-bag pundits, he remains the political writer that everyone looks to for balanced, insightful coverage.

Jim Camden, *The Spokesman-Review*
(Spokane, Wash.)

Don't laugh. My hero is Carl Kolchak, the television character on the 1974-75 show "The Night Stalker."

Kolchak chased down the most wonderful and wild news stories about vampires, werewolves and mummies. I always wanted to do those stories, but unless the mayor sucks some councilman's blood during a city council meeting, or the president of the park district suddenly is seized by the mummy's curse, it ain't going to happen for me.

Here's the clincher: Not one of Carl Kolchak's news stories was ever published. His editor always tore them up at the end of the show and told Carl to go cover something real for a change.

Carl just kept doing what he did without fear or fail. That's the kind of news reporter I want to be when I grow up.

Kevin Harden, *Valley Times* (Beaverton, Ore.)

TEST YOURSELF

Answers to these exercises are on page 306.

1 WHICH STORY IS MORE NEWSWORTHY?

Choose the word or phrase that makes each story most newsworthy to local readers, and explain your reasoning.

1. An earthquake struck _____ today, killing at least 50.
a) Malaysia b) San Diego

2. The office of _____ was evacuated today after a clerk opened a letter believed to contain anthrax.
a) Oprah Winfrey b) the British ambassador to Egypt

3. Police arrested 20 suspected terrorists in downtown Toronto today _____.
a) after intercepting suspicious email messages b) after a three-hour gun battle

4. _____ is being treated at a local hospital.
a) The governor's son b) An ebola victim

5. A local policeman died last weekend after _____.
a) his plane crashed in the Alaska wilderness b) he tried to rescue a young boy from drowning

6. A drunk driver was killed after his car hit a tree _____.
a) on New Year's Eve b) on the way to his 100th birthday party

7. Convicted double murderer Arthur Itis escaped from prison _____.
a) one year ago today b) last night

8. _____ takes effect at midnight tonight.
a) A pay hike for state legislators b) A new local pooper-scooper law

2 WHERE SHOULD THESE STORIES RUN?

We're here in Springfield — a typical American city — but not every story is right for every Springfield news outlet. Choose from **A, B, C** *and* **D** *to decide where you'd expect each of these stories to run. Remember, each story might fit in more than one of these news outlets:*

A = SDT.com (the Springfield Daily Tribune website)
B = Springfield University's student radio station
C = The weekly Springfield Community Crier
D = The Weekly World Enquirer (below)

_____ **1.** Former Yankee legend and baseball Hall-of-Famer Bo Linball died last night in a Brooklyn nursing home at age 103.

_____ **2.** Rhoda Rooter, a local botanist, stunned the state flower show last weekend by unveiling Sapphire Serenity, the world's first naturally hybridized blue rose.

_____ **3.** A Springfield College professor resigned Tuesday after winning $5 million in the state lottery.

_____ **4.** A man claims that a prostitute he hired in a Springfield hotel turned out to be an alien who tried to suck his brain.

_____ **5.** A new fad on Canadian college campuses: "pumping," where students stick bicycle pump nozzles up their sphincters to give themselves a rush of air.

_____ **6.** A tsunami struck Borneo this morning, killing more than 800 and leaving thousands homeless.

_____ **7.** The Springfield County commissioners approved permits for a new waste-disposal site yesterday.

_____ **8.** A doctoral psychology student at Springfield College believes that tattoos lower your IQ.

3 WHAT'S IT CALLED?

1. _____
A sentence or paragraph that provides descriptive information about a photograph.

2. _____
A phrase that identifies the source of a fact, opinion or quote in a story.

3. _____
The area or subject that a reporter is responsible for covering.

4. _____
Words in large type running above or beside a story to summarize its content.

5. _____
The reporter's name, usually printed at the beginning of a story.

6. _____
According to William Randolph Hearst, it's anything that makes a reader say "Gee whiz."

7. _____
The first sentence or paragraph of a story.

8. _____
A graphic treatment of a quotation taken from a story, often using big bold or italic type and a photo.

9. _____
Words appearing at the very beginning of a news story that identify the city where the story was filed.

10. _____
To continue a story on another page.

Want to try more reporting exercises online? Visit the ONLINE LEARNING CENTER at www.mhhe.com/harrower3e