

A New Perspective

I know a journalist freshly graduated from a midwestern University who, in these times of a somewhat floundering media world, eagerly accepted a position as a reporter at a small five-day daily paper in Missouri.

Given, it is a small publication. With few exceptions, this equals a small staff and almost non-existent budget, so accepting a position as a reporter actually means reporter/photographer/copy editor/designer, which is what she does.

Along with writing a couple of stories a day, she is also responsible for her own photos and designing the pages her stories appear on in the paper.

Juggling the jobs of four people is something that she, along with many other journalists, is learning to handle.

However, I was appalled when she told me the state of the publication's website, which might as well be non-existent. Not enough emphasis is placed on the Web when stories are published to the website days after they were published in the print edition.

The website also lacks blogs and Web-only features. It is unsettling to hear the Web being treated as a secondary news source.

The way news is released is changing. With the use of websites, blogs, Facebook and Twitter news can be, and is, reported on as fast as people can type and click "submit."

With these tools – most of which are free – along with all the competition, how is it that a publication can afford to couch stories that lose their relevancy, only after the print edition has been circulated?

A product of an accredited journalism program, this journalist was prepared to apply her new media knowledge. But she is discouraged from doing so.

She is slowly earning the trust of her editor so her suggestions are considered and not dismissed right away.

Of course, the situation might be different had she more time to pave the way by doing Web-exclusive features and blog posts herself.

But being one on a regular staff of five doesn't leave a lot of time for extras, which is how Web is viewed in this small town of less than 5,000 residents.

As a student of journalism, it is disturbing to witness young journalists paying their dues at smaller newspapers in dire need of a face-lift where few to none of their newly acquired skills are not being utilized, much less exploited.