

Robbins says good-bye to Post-Dispatch

Arnie Robbins resigned as editor of the Post-Dispatch last week.

His resignation followed years of hard financial times that included a structured bankruptcy. The most recent circulation figures showed the Post-Dispatch losing circulation both week

day and Sundays. Robbins will be replaced by Gilbert Bailión, the editorial editor. Here are Robbins remarks to the newsroom:

After hiking through New Zealand earlier this year, after thinking about life and work and balance in my life, I have decided that it is time for me to embark on the next chapter of my life. I've been in this business for 37 years, my Post-Dispatch career began 15 years ago Monday, on April 30, and I have a big round-numbered birthday coming up early next year. As a friend recently wrote: It's time to see more, do more, live more.

My last day here will be Friday, May 18.

I have been Editor for more than six years and was Managing Editor for nearly seven years—since February, 1999. I have loved it—the work, the journalism, this newsroom, this company. It's been rewarding. Sometimes it's even been wonderful! But the past few years also have been a difficult and challenging time to lead a newsroom as you all know so very well.

I have a lot of mixed emotions right now. I'll miss walking around the newsroom. I won't miss waking up at 3 a.m. and worrying about the newsroom. We've been through a lot together. I'm happy—but I'm sad. I'm excited. I'm anxious.

In many ways, it really is pretty simple: It's time, it is just time, for me personally and professionally. And, yes, this was entirely my decision.

I will be an absolute ambassador for the Post-Dispatch, for Lee, for all of you. I promise that I won't ever call you to discuss the good old days and about how you are doing it all wrong!

Even with a smaller staff, I believe, as Adam says, that pound for pound we deliver more consistent and better public service journalism, high-impact journalism, and investigative journalism than ever before. That's absolutely what you have to continue to do. That's what makes us vital.

I'm really proud of our body of work. In particular, our investigative work, our breaking news work, our coverage of big events, and our digital growth.

—Our investigation into the firefighter disability pension system in St. Louis showed it has been made so lucrative and received so little oversight that more than half of retired firefighters are on disability.

—An investigation that drew national and state attention last year showed that the vast majority of deaths of 45 infants in child care in Missouri occurred in unregulated and illegal day cares.

—Also last year, the taxpayer-supported St. Louis Science Center made significant changes after our reporting showed a generous bonus system and payroll loaded with high-end positions.

—In 2010, we revealed that the Missouri Board of Healing Arts allowed doctors to continue working despite serious violations such as operating on the wrong organ and lying on medical records to cover up the mistake.

–We also changed the conversation about economic development in the region through our series, “Can St. Louis Compete,” resulting in scrutiny on the use of tax incentives.

–We have been a finalist three times for a Pulitzer in the past four years. We have won five Lee president awards in the past six years.

I’m really proud that we are up and running on four platforms—print, desktops and laptops, tablets, and smart phones. Clearly, that’s the future. Clearly, making our content even more valuable and then getting paid for that content, is a significant part of our industry’s future.

Our digital growth is impressive. We averaged about 45 million page views a month in 2007; we average nearly 61 million page views a month now. We averaged about 2.3 million unique visitors a month in 2007; we average about 4.5 million unique visitors a month now.

I want to thank our publisher, Kevin Mowbray, who has always supported our newsroom and been there for me. I want to thank every division in the company, too. Truly, it takes a team—a skilled team of people proud to work here, proud of what we do, proud of what we stand for.

And I want to thank all of you, in this newsroom. I am really proud to have worked with you. You’re talented, you’re smart, you’re hard-working, you’re passionate, you’re a little crazy. You care about our community, about St. Louis. You care about our readers and viewers. You care about each other.

I appreciate all of that more than you can imagine. I appreciate all you have done for me, both personally and professionally. You’ve touched my life. You’ve made me better.

So thank you for day-in and day-out terrific work, for the pride we took in doing it, for making a real difference in our community. Thanks for the too-many-to-count great memories.

It's been an incredible privilege.