

**An Exploration of Factors That Inform and Influence the Cessation  
of Print Publication for Kansas Collegiate Student Newspapers**

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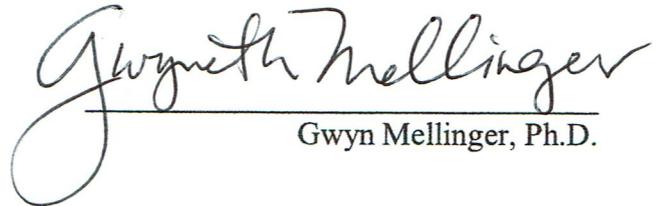
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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore factors that inform and influence the cessation of print publication for collegiate student newspapers in Kansas. An analysis of membership in Kansas Collegiate Media, which is the primary organization for the state's student newspapers, showed that 13 of the 29 schools on the 2004-05 membership list were no longer members in 2017-18. Based on these statistics, this study used a phenomenological approach and purposive sampling to collect interview responses from six veteran faculty advisers who were members of Kansas Collegiate Media. These advisers described changes in their newspaper programs, including reducing or eliminating print production and emphasizing online publication.

Four themes emerged from the research: 1) print newspapers have higher levels of credibility compared to online-only publishing; 2) Online-only publishing can create difficulties for long-term historical archiving; 3) Developing and maintaining audience awareness of online content requires extensive promotion, often through social media, but can increase students' skills in covering breaking news; 4) Administrative concerns about student journalism often focus on public relations and are usually unrelated to national political disputes and allegations of fake news. The findings from this research study can help operational leaders assess the sustainability of printed student newspapers on their campuses.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Don Bostwick, who was a farmer, a teacher, a high school principal, and a lifelong supporter of education. As I advanced in my professional career, he frequently asked me, “When are you going to start on your doctorate?”

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Background.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Purpose of the Study.....	7
Significance of the Study.....	8
Delimitations.....	9
Assumptions.....	10
Research Questions.....	10
Definition of Terms.....	10
Organization of the Study.....	12
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature.....	13
Consumer Habits and Attitudes.....	16
Political Implications.....	21
State of the Industry.....	24
Why Print Journalism Still Matters.....	31
The Shift to Digital.....	34

The Collegiate Reaction.....	40
The Public Relations Angle.....	45
Arguments for Journalism and Print Newspapers on Campus.....	49
Collegiate Journalism’s Purpose .....	51
The Situation in Kansas .....	55
Summary .....	60
Chapter Three: Methods .....	63
Research Design .....	63
Selection of Participants.....	64
Measurement .....	66
Data Collection Procedures.....	69
Analysis and Synthesis of Data .....	71
Researcher’s Role .....	72
Limitations .....	73
Summary .....	74
Chapter Four: Results.....	75
Credibility.....	76
Archiving.....	80
Audience Awareness.....	83
Concerns and Future Directions .....	88
Summary .....	95
Chapter Five: Interpretation and Recommendations.....	97
Study Summary .....	97

Overview of the Problem.....	97
Purpose Statement and Research Questions .....	98
Review of the Methodology .....	99
Major Findings.....	99
Findings Related to the Literature .....	100
Conclusions .....	108
Implications for Action.....	108
Recommendations for Future Research.....	110
Concluding Remarks .....	111
References.....	112
Appendices.....	145
Appendix A. IRB Request.....	145
Appendix B. IRB Letter of Approval .....	149
Appendix C. KCM Letter of Permission .....	150
Appendix D. Correspondence for Participant Consent.....	151

## **List of Tables**

Table 1. Worst Jobs List for 2017.....	28
Table 2. Participant List.....	66
Table 3. Key Information About Kansas Collegiate Media .....	71

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Associated Collegiate Press Facebook Post.....	16
Figure 2. President Trump’s Tweet on Dying Magazines and Newspapers.....	23
Figure 3. Typical Revisions in Student Newspapers.....	42
Figure 4. The Mission of Student Media.....	53
Figure 5. Kansas Associated Collegiate Press Membership List 2004-05 .....	59
Figure 6. Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research.....	64
Figure 7. Overview of Chapter 4 Themes and Sub-Categories .....	76
Figure 8. Daily Kansan Tweet for #SaveStudentNewsrooms .....	101
Figure 9. Baker Orange Example of Missing Video .....	104
Figure 10. President Trump’s Tweet on Fake News.....	107

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

On the same day in April of 2017 that the Campus Ledger at Johnson County Community College received honors from Kansas Collegiate Media (KCM) as the best two-year print student newspaper in Kansas, the College Media Matters website published a story detailing the newspaper's upcoming switch to an all-digital format (Lash, 2017). Staff members who were attending the awards banquet celebrated their achievement in winning the All-Kansas plaque, but they knew their product would no longer be printed on paper starting with the 2017-18 school year. This anecdote illustrates the fragile nature of printed collegiate newspapers today. Even the best publications face an uncertain future.

The Campus Ledger's situation is not unique. The steady decline of U.S. print newspaper circulation and revenue in the past 15 years has been a source of angst not only for those who work in the professional industry but also for faculty and administrators at colleges with student newspapers on their campuses. In the professional realm, circulation and revenues have continued to fall, and the newspaper workforce shrank by approximately 39% from 1996 to 2016 (Barthel, 2016, p. 9). DeRienzo (2017) compared this decline to death by a thousand paper cuts.

In the collegiate realm, journalism faculty and administrators have begun pondering whether print student newspapers are still an essential or relevant pedagogical opportunity for students. A survey of members of the Western Association of University Publications Managers (Beck, 2014) showed a decline in numbers of pages printed per issue and reader loyalty along with a corresponding increase in return rates, which is the

number of unused newspapers returned to the distribution point. Despite retaining the word “Daily” in their official names, some larger student newspapers, such as the OU Daily at the University of Oklahoma and the Daily Kansan at the University of Kansas, no longer publish daily editions, opting instead to distribute their print products twice weekly or semi-weekly (OU Daily Editorial Board, 2015; Kansan Editorial Board, 2015). For some colleges, such as Johnson County Community College in Kansas and Franklin & Marshall College in Pennsylvania, the presses have stopped altogether in favor of a digital-only approach to campus journalism (Reimold, 2014a; Lash, 2017). Other institutions, such as the University of Central Florida (Postal, 2016) and Friends University in Kansas, no longer offer a student newspaper program in digital or print as part of their curriculum. Amid this changing landscape, operational leaders of student newspapers in Kansas, specifically journalism faculty members and administrators, may wonder whether it is the right time to halt print production of the printed student newspaper on their own campuses, but they often lack valuable insight about the factors that can illuminate that decision.

## **Background**

Traditionally, many staff members at collegiate student newspapers have advanced to jobs in professional newspaper positions, so a brief examination of the commercial newspaper industry, looking at both consumer trends and the professional response to those trends, is a good starting point for understanding the difficulties faced by collegiate newspapers. U.S. consumer news-reading habits have shifted, which is especially evident among younger audiences. In a study published by the Pew Research Center in 2016, approximately 40% of Americans said they often get news from online

sources such as websites and social media, while only 20% often get news from print newspapers (Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel, and Shearer, 2016). Among Americans aged 18 to 29, which is a core demographic for most college student newspapers, those numbers shift to 50% for online and 5% for print newspapers.

Thompson (2016) described a “print apocalypse” caused by smaller professional newspapers going out of business, which can be compared to “a thousand local disappearances, with nobody left to report on what has gone away” (para. 9). In Kansas, for example, the small-market Baldwin City Signal ended both print and online publication in December of 2015, leaving behind only a digital archive, at least for now, at the newspaper’s web address (Staff report, 2015). The larger-market Kansas City Star, which serves readers in both Kansas and Missouri, has survived several rounds of layoffs and buyouts over the past 10 years. Perhaps due to the lack of print newspaper competition, a local public radio station, KCUR, has provided most of the detailed coverage of the Kansas City Star’s financial struggles (Margolies, 2016). The Hutchinson News in Hutchinson, Kansas, went through two rounds of cutbacks in the spring of 2017, including employees who were offered severance packages (Sylvester, 2017). The newspaper’s editor noted that these were “business decisions, based on finances of an industry that’s seen advertising revenue fall dramatically in the past 20 years” (Sylvester, 2017, para. 7).

Student-journalists often face additional obstacles on campuses where college administrators see a weakened newspaper as an opportunity to silence dissenting and unflattering viewpoints. For example, student-newspaper editors for the Equinox at Keene State College in New Hampshire said that interview requests with campus

administrators were routinely denied during the 2016-17 school year, and in April of 2017, they learned their budget would be cut by 45% for the 2017-18 school year (Equinox Staff, 2017). At Hutchinson Community College in Kansas, administrators shut down journalism classes before the 2017 semester had officially ended, and the faculty adviser claimed the action was in response to the student newspaper's coverage concerning campus policies for access to workstations (A. Stewart, 2017). Noting national trends, Frank LoMonte, the former executive director of the Student Press Law Center, said, "What we're seeing is the convergence of two worrisome trend lines: Colleges are more obsessed with 'protecting the brand' than they've ever been before, and journalism as an industry is weaker and less able to defend itself than ever before" (as cited in Wheeler, 2015, para. 3).

While most analyses of the print newspaper industry suggest that we have indeed entered a period resembling a print apocalypse, some critics have written that the demise of print newspapers at all levels has been exaggerated. Corrigan (2017) argued that "the dead tree media still prosper" (para. 23) and that in smaller communities, "print is holding its own and in many sectors is actually thriving" (para. 9). Krueger (2010) wrote that although students rely heavily on websites and social media for news outside of their campus, it is "far less likely that the wired generation, raised with iPods and smart phones, is checking out the news on the newspaper's website" (para. 3). Some student newspapers are still healthy and play a visible role on campus. As recently as 2014, revenues for Western Kentucky University's College Heights Herald, for example, were "up a healthy percentage year over year" (Clark, 2014, para. 5). In Kansas, the Baker Orange Editorial Staff (2017) at Baker University sustained its print circulation and

increased advertising revenue between 2013 and 2017 by switching from a larger broadsheet to a smaller tabloid format, printing more color pages, and using a higher-quality paper grade. Despite those gains, in February of 2019 the Baker Orange Editorial Board announced that it was ending print newspaper publication and distribution beginning in fall 2019 (Baker Orange Editorial Board, 2019).

Nationwide, some journalism students and educators have contended that writing, editing, and designing a college newspaper still provides educational value both for producers and campus consumers. “While a print-free world might not be in the immediate future, journalism students are still seeing value in reading print editions” (Tablante, 2013, para. 3). The faculty adviser at Western Kentucky University argued that “for some forms of journalism – some critical and extremely important, such as investigative and many types of enterprise that need a certain kind of depth and context to have impact – print is the most effective platform and likely will remain so for a very long time” (Clark, 2014, para. 10).

Sitting in the geographical middle of the United States, Kansas has not been immune to the upheaval among collegiate student newspapers. The state’s collegiate media organization changed its name from Kansas Associated Collegiate Press to Kansas Collegiate Media in 2012 (Kansas Collegiate Media, 2012). Many student editors and their faculty advisers in Kansas are grappling with how to define and reach their target audience most effectively. In some cases, they are even struggling to clarify the purpose of a printed student newspaper and whether it still serves the campus community in a meaningful way. Halting print publication offers the possibility of saving money and concentrating on digital-only delivery systems, or in some cases it can mean eliminating

the campus newspaper entirely both in print and online. Ascarelli (2014) wrote that “as budgets continue to tighten, what was unimaginable only a few years ago is now part of the conversation, especially for smaller newspapers that don’t bring in a lot of ad revenue and therefore depend on student fees to pay the bills” (para. 7).

Strong evidence suggests that operational leaders for collegiate newspapers now face difficult decisions about the future of news delivery on campus and whether printed student newspapers are still worth the financial investment in benefitting the students who produce them and the communities they cover. Some of these leaders may perceive that it is easier and less controversial to preserve the status quo by continuing a student journalism program focused on print publication, but Lynch (2015) argued that a status-quo approach may not be satisfactory. Describing the current state of collegiate journalism education, Lynch wrote, “Evidence is building that the ‘good enough’ approach is, in fact, not good enough” (section 1, para. 7).

One option is to halt print production, which can appeal to operational leaders who want to eliminate printing costs from their budgets. Printed collegiate newspapers are typically distributed for free or through student fees, so subscription revenue opportunities are limited. For the Campus Ledger at Johnson County Community College, the switch to an all-digital format initially received support from student editors. The newspaper’s editor-in-chief discussed the decision on the newspaper’s website: “One year shy of our 40th anniversary, we will be eliminating the print edition of the paper and will be transitioning to an online-only news source. This was not an easy decision to make, but it has slowly begun to feel like the right one” (Gross, 2017, para. 1).

On the other hand, operational leaders could study the example of the Buchtelite at Akron University. Print publication was suspended twice in a three-year period, with one faculty member noting, “Because general oversight (i.e., accounting) falls to UA’s Student Affairs, and the School of Communication hires and pays the adviser, neither entity is totally invested in the paper” (as cited in Morgan, 2016, para. 7). The Buchtelite resumed print distribution in the fall 2017 semester. In a staff-written article, the faculty-adviser said that continued print publication would help the newspaper maintain a connection with the campus community (as cited in Buchtelite Staff, 2017).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nielsen (2018a) argued that media research helps refute the claims of “media change deniers – pundits who, like climate change deniers, are doubling down on arguments that are directly contradicted by a growing consensus” (para. 2). Bwisa (2008) wrote that a relevant research problem describes “the gap in knowledge that needs to be filled” (p. 2). While numerous anecdotal reports have chronicled the reasons why individual student newspapers have ceased, reduced, or restarted print publication, most research is not holistic, and thus a gap in knowledge exists. Many factors that can influence and inform decisions concerning the future of printed student newspapers are not clearly delineated in the literature.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) wrote that in phenomenological research, “the researcher is concerned with clarifying the specific and recognizing phenomena through the eyes of the participants” (p. 90). The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry is to explore factors that inform and influence the decision of whether to continue or cease

production and distribution of printed student newspapers on collegiate campuses in Kansas. The study involved phenomenological reflection on data collected from interviews with a study group of faculty advisers for collegiate student newspapers in Kansas. These advisers have overseen changes to news-delivery methods related to the sustainability of the printed newspaper, including reducing the number of print issues, emphasizing online publication, and/or eliminating print production entirely. The interviews were used to identify factors that can help operational leaders for collegiate student newspapers in Kansas make informed decisions related to the sustainability of print publication and distribution.

### **Significance of the Study**

A research associate with the Oxford Internet Institute noted that because of the current popularity of academic studies focused on fake news, there may not be enough research on sustainable business models and how modern platforms have changed the “structural transformation of our media environments, for good, for ill, in all its nuance and complexity” (Nielsen, 2017, para. 14). This observation may apply to collegiate media as well. Reimold (2014b) described “the biggest shift in college media since campus newspapers appeared in modern form in the mid-to-late 1800s. Their move from print to digital mirrors what is occurring in the larger media industry, with many issues and questions sounding a familiar ring” (para. 6). This study attempts to add to the body of knowledge about trends in production and distribution among collegiate student newspapers. The significance of the study is to provide a better understanding of factors that may inform and influence the cessation of the publication and distribution of Kansas

collegiate student newspapers. While anecdotal evidence exists from individual student newspapers in Kansas, this study fulfills a need for more holistic research.

Wahl-Jorgensen (2017) argued that journalism research too often uses the “practice of studying up,” focusing on large, elite newsrooms (p. 252). This study provides insights from faculty advisers in Kansas collegiate newsrooms representing a variety of sizes. It does not solely focus on case studies of successes or failures at large, elite universities. Results of the study may be useful as a resource for journalism educators and higher education administrators in Kansas who are considering changes in production and distribution of the printed student newspaper on their campuses.

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations, or “self-imposed boundaries” (Lunenberg and Irby, 2008, p. 134), used in this study were guided by a desire to focus on Kansas collegiate newspapers and to gain perspective on how print operations have been reshaped. The study included the following delimitations:

1. The study focused only on faculty advisers who were members of Kansas Collegiate Media and who had been in that role for at least five years preceding this research study.
2. Interviews were limited to select faculty advisers who have overseen changes in their programs involving a reduction in the number of print issues per year, an increased emphasis in online publication, and/or elimination of print production entirely. Administrators and student-editors were not interviewed as part of this research study.

## **Assumptions**

While Kansas may not be a flawless barometer for the condition of collegiate newspapers in the entire nation, the study assumed that student newspapers in Kansas are typical of those in other states. The study included the following additional assumptions:

1. Newspaper programs at Kansas colleges and universities that have made a financial and academic investment in journalism education are almost always part of the KCM membership list.
2. Interview participants understood questions and answered questions honestly.
3. Interview participants' memory of events was accurate.

## **Research Question**

The following research question guided the study:

**RQ1.** What are factors that inform and influence the cessation of print publication for Kansas collegiate student newspapers?

## **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions may help the reader understand key terms used throughout the study:

**Faculty adviser.** According to the College Media Association, the role of the faculty adviser is “often undefinable” (n.d.). Nonetheless, some formal clarity is needed here. For this study, a collegiate student newspaper adviser is an employee of a higher education institution who provides instruction and support for student-staff members for their writing, editing, design and photography. The adviser’s role is to give advice, not to create content. The adviser also provides oversight and “holds the continuity keys for the

excellence and performance of the media entity year after year” (College Media Association, n.d., para. 10).

**Kansas Collegiate Media.** KCM is the professional organization for collegiate journalism educators in Kansas. Its stated purpose is “to enrich the quality of journalism education and student journalism” (Kansas Collegiate Media, 2012). Membership is open to any instructor of collegiate journalism in the state.

**Operational leaders.** Decision-making powers for collegiate student newspapers vary widely among campuses. For this study, operational leaders will be defined as journalism educators and collegiate administrators who have the authority to provide input into the student newspaper’s role in the curriculum and campus life as well as the printed newspaper’s publication and distribution.

**Print publication and distribution.** For this study, print publication will be defined as the mass production of paper copies of a student newspaper, and distribution will be defined as providing consumer access to physical copies on campus. Only student newspapers that publish and distribute physical copies are included in this study. The distinction may seem trivial, but in certain cases, student-editors or operational leaders could contract with a printing company to publish a newspaper as an in-class exercise but not actually distribute physical copies on campus. Likewise, a newspaper staff could use page-design software to create printer-friendly PDF pages of a student newspaper for online distribution only, thus requiring users to publish their own physical copies.

**Student Newspaper.** With the recent emphasis on digital media, the term collegiate student newspaper does not necessarily imply that content is published on

actual paper. It is possible for a collegiate student newspaper to publish solely online. For this study, the term student newspaper will refer to groups of students who, under the supervision of a faculty adviser, write news articles, take photos and design content for public consumption online and/or in print, either for academic credit or as an extracurricular activity.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is comprised of five chapters. The first chapter introduced the study by providing the background, problem statement, and purpose statement. Chapter one also included the significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, definitions of key terms, and the organization. The second chapter provides a review of literature focusing on factors that inform and influence the cessation of printed student newspapers on college campuses in Kansas, including current industry perspectives, the growing shift toward digital media in newspaper journalism, and an overview of the state of printed newspapers on college campuses. Chapter two ends with a brief analysis of membership trends for Kansas Collegiate Media, which is the organization that serves faculty and student-journalists who work with student newspapers in the state. Chapter three provides an outline of the phenomenological research methodology. The qualitative research findings are the focus of chapter four. The final chapter features a summary of this study along with recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

The goal of Chapter 2 is to provide research context for factors that inform and influence the cessation of printed collegiate student newspapers in Kansas. This chapter begins with a broad overview of research and trends in the professional news industry, especially focusing on consumer habits, political implications, and the shift from print to digital publishing. It also includes counter-arguments to the recent emphasis on digital news delivery, allowing the reader to ponder the potential consequences of an over-reliance on online news media to the exclusion of printed newspapers. Next, the chapter focuses specifically on the audience for campus newspapers and the reaction of collegiate newspaper operational leaders to the state of the professional industry, including an overview of public relations concerns and a discussion of a newspaper's role in collegiate journalism education programs. Finally, the focal point narrows to Kansas student newspapers, including an analysis of membership in the Kansas Collegiate Media (KCM) organization. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) wrote that a literature review should provide an argument that leads to the description of the study, with more general information discussed first, and information closely related to the research discussed last. Accordingly, this literature review begins with a macro view of the newspaper industry as a whole, including brief analyses of news audiences, consumer trends, the financial environment, and the job market. The chapter gradually tapers in focus to the concluding section on KCM and more specific circumstances for collegiate student newspapers in Kansas.

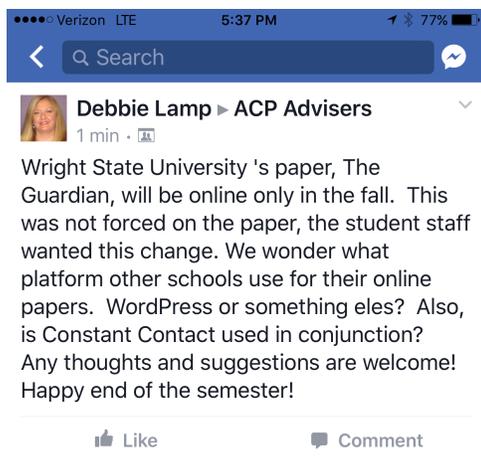
Student newspapers vary greatly in their dependence on institutional resources. On one end of the spectrum, a few student newspapers, such as the Independent Florida Alligator at the University of Florida, have complete editorial and financial independence from the institutions they cover. Typically, however, student newspapers rely on some institutional support. As a Kansas example, Baker University provides facilities, equipment and faculty-adviser salary for the Baker Orange, and some staff members receive academic credit, participation scholarships, and work-study pay. Even though student newspapers such as the Baker Orange may consider themselves independent in the sense that administrators exercise no editorial control, continued publication still depends on university resources. The 2017-18 KCM membership list contained no student newspapers that could be considered entirely independent. This research study assumes that readers are interested in the decision-making process for administrators and operational leaders who have some level of institutional control over the possible cessation of print publication for a collegiate student newspaper.

As readers study the following sections, they may want to consider these questions as a guide:

- Consumer Habits and Attitudes - Are readers, especially college-aged readers, still interested in print newspapers?
- Political Implications - As the public's perception of news becomes politically polarizing, can newspapers, including collegiate student newspapers, maintain the public's trust?
- State of the Industry - What is the job market for journalism graduates, especially as it relates to print newspapers?

- Why Print Journalism Still Matters – Is a digital-only newspaper operation financially sustainable? Will journalism suffer economically without a print platform?
- The Shift to Digital – Is there still a need for print newspapers, or is there now an over-reliance on digital media platforms that may lack long-term sustainability?
- The Collegiate Reaction – How have collegiate administrators and operational leaders for student newspapers responded to journalism’s changing landscape?
- The Public Relations Angle – Should student newspaper coverage that reflects negatively on an institution have an impact on any decisions to continue publication?
- Arguments for Journalism and Print Newspapers on Campus – Is it still economically judicious for a campus to support a student newspaper? Is a digital-only approach likely to be successful on campus?
- Collegiate Journalism’s Purpose – What are current trends and ideas related to pedagogy and curriculum in collegiate journalism education?
- The Situation in Kansas – What does membership data from Kansas Collegiate Media reveal about student newspapers in the state?

As a simple analogy for the newspaper industry, one editor compared the present-day dilemma with two houses; one house, the print newspaper, is on fire, and the other house, the digital news platform, has not been built yet (Jarvis, 2017). Figure 1 shows a Facebook post illustrating this dilemma at the collegiate level.



*Figure 1.* The Associated Collegiate Press gives faculty advisers a forum to express concerns and share ideas. This Facebook post was from April 26, 2017.

### **Consumer Habits and Attitudes**

To understand the current environment for collegiate newspapers, we should first look at how shifting consumer habits and attitudes have led to changes in the industry. Many studies suggest that Americans are consuming more news, but their trust in news media is declining. Citing a Gallup poll and relying heavily on a study conducted by the Media Insight Project, Wang (2017a) noted that many American news consumers claim that they do not trust news media in general, but they often place greater trust in their own selected news sources. This is much like voters who do not trust Congress in general but are still willing to vote for incumbent senators and representatives in their own states. Wang (2017a) used President Donald Trump as an example of the two-pronged view of the typical American as “both an avid consumer and a vicious antagonist” of news media.

A Pew Research Study showed Americans increasingly prefer getting their news on a screen, with television as the most popular type of screen, especially for older audiences (Mitchell et al., 2016). Americans who prefer to read rather than watch news

have migrated online, with mobile news sites collecting a growing portion of online news traffic. The same study reported that Americans aged 18 to 29 have the strongest preference for online news, getting 50% of their news from online sources, 27% from television, and only 5% from print newspapers (Mitchell et al., 2016). Although more Americans overall prefer watching news rather than reading or listening to news stories, among adults between the ages of 18 and 29, reading is more popular, with 42% preferring to read news, 38% preferring to watch news, and 19% preferring to listen to news (Mitchell, 2016). A more recent Pew study reported that the percentage of U.S. adults who often get news from online platforms increased from 38% in 2016 to 43% in 2017, while corresponding percentages for television, radio and print newspapers all decreased (Bialik and Matsa, 2017).

**Social media and mobile-friendly content.** The increase in online news consumption is heavily driven by social media and mobile devices. Newspaper websites have experienced consistent growth in mobile traffic in the past five years. One 2017 study showed that 45% of American adults said they often get news on a mobile device, which was an increase from 36% in 2016 and 21% in 2013 (Barthel and Mitchell, 2017). The same study showed that for consumers who get news on both a mobile device and a desktop computer, nearly two-thirds prefer mobile. Another study conducted by the Pew Research Center showed that two-thirds of U.S. adults get at least some news through social media, thanks partly to the growth of Twitter and Snapchat (“News Use,” 2017). In the not-too-distant future, news organizations will likely be formatting content not just for laptops and smartphones, but also for household appliances such as refrigerators and smartwatches (Wang, 2017b). Additionally, Barot (2017) predicted that voice-activated

devices based on artificial intelligence and machine learning – such as Apple’s Siri and Amazon’s Alexa – will be more impactful on news distribution than the iPhone, describing this technology as “the huge burning platform the news industry doesn’t even know it’s standing on” (para. 2).

As users engage with more electronic devices to access news, however, the distinctions between types of traditional media – newspapers, magazines television, and radio, for example – will blur. Some media textbooks refer to this trend as convergence (Campbell, Martin and Fabos, 2017). As part of this convergence, websites for television, newspaper and radio outlets increasingly resemble each other, with many newspaper websites now regularly incorporating audio and video, meaning that editorial staff members not only write but also may have additional duties related to multimedia content. To prepare students for a converged landscape, some colleges and universities have embraced backpack journalism. Washington State University offers the Murrow Backpack Journalism Program, in which “students equipped with the latest video, audio and web technology produce multimedia content for blog posts from abroad and final projects” (Washington State University, n.d.). As part of a similar course at Creighton University, students learned about backpack journalism during a trip to Nogales, Arizona, to make a film about the regional border between the United States and Mexico (Creighton University, n.d.).

**Defining a generation.** Most collegiate student newspapers are made by undergraduate editors and staff members aged 25 and younger who have grown up in an increasingly converged environment. Their target audience is often in the same age range. One psychology professor placed today’s traditional-aged college students under

the label of iGen, which is comprised of Americans born between 1995 and 2012 (Twenge, 2017). Members of this generation “are growing up with smartphones, have an Instagram account before they start high school, and do not remember a time before the internet” (Twenge, 2017, p. 59). Many other researchers, however, still use the term millennials to describe the age range of current undergraduates. According to a research project published in 2015 by the Media Insight Project, “Millennials consume news and information in strikingly different ways than previous generations” (“How millennials get news,” 2015, p. 1). The study showed that 85% of millennials say keeping up with the news is at least somewhat important to them, and 69% say they get news daily. Millennials rely heavily on social media, rather than loyalty to particular news brands or providers, as their primary news source. “Fully 88 percent of Millennials get news from Facebook regularly, for instance, and more than half of them do so daily” (“How millennials get news,” 2015, p. 4). Although college students typically indulge heavily in social media, that does not necessarily hinder their access to news. Fletcher and Nielsen (2017) conducted a study suggesting that social media usage actually leads to additional exposure to news, including politically diverse news. Thus, college students who use social media may still be regularly exposed to content from a student newspaper website even if they do not pick up the print edition of that newspaper.

For a college-aged audience, the definition of news itself may be changing. A Knight Foundation study titled “How Youth Navigate the News Landscape” (2017) found that for younger news audiences, aged 14 to 24, user-generated content, especially live video, is often more trusted than traditional news sources. “Because patterns of news consumption among teens and young adults are changing in such fundamental ways, the

concept of ‘following the news’ may no longer resonate broadly in these demographics” (Knight Foundation, 2017, p. 28). Additionally, Mutter (2013) argued that “the repudiation of the print delivery system by young people” is probably the most important factor in the decline of newspaper readership in the last 10 years (para. 6).

**The educational consequences of abandoning print.** On the other hand, a few researchers have argued that college readers still prefer printed text and that they often only scan digital text. “Textbook makers, bookstore owners and college student surveys all say millennials still strongly prefer print for pleasure and learning” (Rosenwald, 2015, para. 4). Baron (2014) wrote that educators often support the transition from print to digital because of convenience and reduced costs, noting that “academics are buying into the transition with little thought for educational consequences” (para. 8). Finally, before shifting from print to online platforms with an accompanying emphasis on social media and mobile-friendly platforms, administrators and operational leaders involved with collegiate student newspapers may want to consider the following warning published in the MIT Technology Review:

For all the great things mobile technology makes possible, a growing body of research suggests that the use of social networks including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter may have negative consequences, like increasing your chances of depression or social isolation. Indeed, simply having your phone around could lower your cognitive capacity. (Metz, 2017, para. 6)

Similarly, Manjoo (2018b) warned that most current concerns about news literacy are exacerbated by social media's emphasis on speed over depth and propaganda over facts. On a larger scale, the shift from print to social media has led to concerns that "the digital

age is now doing as much to us, as it is for us, quite beyond anyone's control" (Doctor, 2018b, para. 2).

### **Political Implications**

The 2016 presidential election and the U.S. political climate deserve at least a brief mention in any discussion of current consumer habits and attitudes toward the journalism industry. Operational leaders of student newspapers can get a large-scale sense of how politicized journalism has become by perusing a 2016 study conducted by the Pew Research Center. The study showed that approximately half of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents believed news media outlets have a positive impact on U.S. society. Among Republicans, however, approximately 85% believed news media outlets have a negative effect ("Sharp partisan divisions," 2017). The same study showed that a majority of Republicans thought colleges and universities in general have a negative effect on the United States, while 72% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents believed colleges and universities have a positive effect. Furthermore, results from a Politico poll published in October of 2017 showed that nearly half of Americans, including 76% of Republicans, believed news media outlets have fabricated stories about President Donald Trump (Shepard, 2017).

The open nature of web content creation has even opened opportunities for politicians to become pseudo-journalists. In the summer of 2017, Republican governors launched a web project, the Free Telegraph, that resembles a news site. Although the Republican Governors Association (RGA) described the website as political communication, the site's accompanying social media pages did not disclose the RGA connection (Barrow, 2017).

**President Trump's impact on the meaning of news.** One humorist in a national news magazine wrote that “President Trump spends more time on journalism criticism than Columbia’s graduate school” (Stein, 2017, para. 2). In one of his Twitter posts, Trump (2017c) encouraged the Senate Intelligence Committee to investigate fake news sites, which could potentially lead to government officials, not educators and professional journalists, defining journalism in the United States. In another post on Twitter, Trump suggested that some television network news licenses should be “challenged and, if appropriate, revoked” (2017a), although in fact it is individual stations and not networks that are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission.

The president specifically mentioned the newspaper industry when he tweeted about “So much Fake News being put in dying magazines and newspapers” (2017b). He has made frequent Twitter references about fake news being produced by the New York Times and the Washington Post, often using the word “failing” as an adjective for those two newspapers, and he has on several occasions labeled the news media as the enemy of the American people. Ironically, the president’s frequent criticism of news media has sparked an increase in paid subscriptions for online news outlets, a phenomenon that researchers have called “the Trump Bump” (Doctor, 2017c). LaMagna (2018) reported that the Trump bump has also led to an increase in the number of journalism majors at U.S. colleges, including premier schools such as the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California, Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism, and Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, Media, and Integrated Marketing Communications.



*Figure 2.* One tweet by President Donald Trump suggested that newspapers include fake news.

**A love-hate relationship.** According to a research study conducted by the Media Insight Project, this apparent consumer distrust for news media comes, ironically, at a time when Americans are consuming more news rather than less. The study suggested that “public attitudes about the news media are more complex and nuanced than many traditional studies indicate” and that Americans “generally trust the news they themselves rely on” (“My media’ versus ‘the media,’” 2017, para. 3 & 4). The study further suggested that Americans perceive a difference between the broad term “news media” and the media they personally use and trust. People who value information also like to complain, “and they are apt to react in anger when they think the media’s agenda differs from their own” (Foreman, 2016, p. 59). Foreman (2016) described the public’s relationship with news media as wavering between love and hate. Strong emotional responses can be expected when news outlets utilize social media platforms, especially Facebook, to increase readership. One early Facebook investor, Roger McNamee, noted that “the problem with Facebook’s whole position is that the algorithm exists to

maximize attention, and the best way to do that is to make people angry and afraid” (as cited in Dwoskin, 2018, para. 7).

Part of assessing the need for collegiate student journalism and print newspapers may be related to assessing the financial future of journalism itself and whether consumers in an increasingly politicized media landscape are willing to pay for news content generated by professional journalists. A study from the Reynolds Journalism Institute used 28 newsrooms across the United States to survey consumers about their trust in news sources (Joy, 2017). The study found that two-thirds of respondents regularly pay for content from at least one news organization. Respondents who were liberal were more likely to trust and pay for news than conservative consumers, and white respondents were more likely to pay for news compared to nonwhites. In addition, the study suggested that older respondents were more likely to pay for news content.

### **State of the Industry**

Beck (2014) asked a research question that directly applies to this dissertation: “Can college media thrive by borrowing the best practices from commercial media?” (p. 3). That question remains difficult to answer today because of rapid technological changes and the dilemma of whether to gauge success based on revenue or quality of journalism. Foreman (2016) asked a similarly relevant question about the industry in general: “If newspapers vanish or shrink to irrelevancy, who will cover the news?” (p. 177). Indeed, as commercial newspaper outlets struggle to survive, the future of journalism is in doubt. “If people aren’t willing to pay for it, like they pay for the Internet or cell-phone service, then it will surely disappear, sometimes right before your eyes” (Cohan, 2017, para. 10.)

**Gradual dissipation.** Pickard (2017) wrote that “few would dispute that the dominant model for American journalism over the last 150 years – advertising-dependent, paper-based newspapers – is in gradual dissipation” (p. 47). This dissipation gives some observers a morbid sense of inevitability, including one website, [newspaperdeathwatch.com](http://newspaperdeathwatch.com), that tracks newspaper closures. Although journalism is still supported primarily by legacy media such as printed newspapers and network television, that economic model is changing. Holcomb and Mitchell (2014) wrote that venture capital, individual philanthropy, and corporate investments are giving journalism a more tech-oriented focus, and some viral-content providers such as BuzzFeed are dabbling in investigative journalism. They analyzed a wide spectrum of financial data across all U.S. journalistic media outlets and then listed four main findings:

1. Advertising is still the primary revenue source.
2. Audience revenue, mostly through subscriptions, is the second-leading source.
3. While capital investment and philanthropy are growing sources, their portion of the revenue pie is still small.
4. Alternative revenue sources, such as web consulting, marketing, and event hosting, may become crucial to the future of journalism.

**Reliance on external platforms.** Foer (2017) wrote that the field of journalism has been swallowed by technology companies that have little connection to the history of printed newspapers. “The ascendant media companies of our era don’t think of themselves as heirs to a great ink-stained tradition” (Foer, 2017, para. 7). On the other hand, newspapers that abandon their ink-stained tradition will likely struggle to find a reliable long-term revenue model in technology. For example, a change made by

Facebook in early 2018 drastically altered the online landscape for news outlets that rely heavily on social media to generate audience and revenue. Facebook's new algorithm for its news feed began favoring posts made by friends and family over posts from news publishers. Owen (2018) wrote that this alteration “probably cancels the plans of anyone who’d somehow thought they were going to build a business on Facebook traffic” (para. 6). One researcher questioned whether Facebook users would bother to look for news at all (Benton, 2018a), while another referred to the algorithm change as “algo-pocalypse” and described an increasing state of “digital dystopia” (Haik, 2018, para. 2).

For printed newspapers, circulation has traditionally been a measure of health and success, but in online media, success is often measured by online clicks to content via Google search and social media. This can create a cycle in which “dependence generates desperation – a mad, shameless chase to gain clicks through Facebook, a relentless effort to game Google’s algorithms” (Foer, 2017, para. 8), ultimately leaving newspaper outlets at the mercy of Facebook and Google as editors attempt to generate audience and revenue. Incorporating Facebook-like buttons into a website typically accounts for 16% of a news website’s coding (Regenspan, 2017). Rutenberg (2017) observed that “newspapers that once delivered their journalism with their own trucks increasingly have to rely on these big online platforms to get their articles in front of people, fighting for attention alongside fake news, websites that lift their content, and cat videos” (para. 2). Complicating this issue further for collegiate student media outlets are allegations that, in an effort to lure advertisers, Facebook executives have greatly exaggerated the number of young adult users on the social media platform (Edmonds, 2017b). Not to be outdone, Twitter executives also acknowledged inflating some user statistics (Bray, 2017).

Another concern about social media surfaced nationally in March of 2018 with multiple news reports about data analytics firm Cambridge Analytica using private Facebook user data to target individual voters in the 2016 election. Facebook's critics, including those who organized a #DeleteFacebook movement, argued that the platform had become an advertising company that sells user data instead of a legitimate outlet for reliable news. The movement had little or no impact on Facebook's total reach. Facebook still reported an increase of 70 million total users during the first quarter of 2018, and the number of people who log in to Facebook at least once a month climbed to 2.2 billion (Guynn, 2018). Thus, news executives who delete Facebook from their strategies for audience expansion do so at great risk.

The extent to which fake news spreads through social media has been widely debated among journalists, researchers, and consumers. One survey showed that less than half of millennials were able to answer more than five of nine questions that gauged respondents' skills in identifying fake news (MindEdge, 2017). The same survey revealed that more than half of all respondents relied on social media for their news, and more than one-third said they have mistakenly shared inaccurate information through social media. Another concern with journalism's reliance on social media is that while casual users often feel comfortable expressing opinions and ideas on popular platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, limitations on the length of posts can prevent journalists from reporting details and context. Also, the abundance of competing posts from a wide variety of sources exercising their rights to free speech makes it harder for consumers to find and use content that is both accurate and relevant in their lives. "The most important

change in the expressive environment can be boiled down to one idea: it is no longer speech itself that is scarce, but the attention of listeners” (Wu, 2017, para. 2).

**The job market and the profession.** While collegiate newsrooms have traditionally provided a springboard for staff members to begin a career in print journalism, students’ chances of finding a steady newsroom job after graduation have decreased. Career Cast’s 2017 Jobs Rated report ranked newspaper reporter number one on its list of worst jobs, with a median salary of \$37,820 and a negative growth rate through the year 2022 (Career Cast, 2017). Two-hundred jobs were listed in the Career Cast survey.

Table 1

Worst Jobs List for 2017

<b>CAREER CAST’S WORST JOBS OF 2017</b>		
<b>Job</b>	<b>Median Salary</b>	<b>Projected Growth</b>
1. Newspaper Reporter	\$37,820	-8%
2. Broadcaster	\$38,870	-9%
3. Logger	\$37,590	-4%
4. Enlisted Military Personnel	\$27,936	0%
5. Pest Control Worker	\$33,040	-1%
6. Disc Jockey	\$30,830	-11%
7. Advertising Sales Person	\$50,380	-3%
8. Firefighter	\$48,030	-5%
9. Retail Sales Person	\$22,900	-7%
10. Taxi Driver	\$24,300	-13%

*Note.* This list from Career Cast takes into account factors such as median income, job conditions, growth outlook, and stress, Career Cast (2017) ranked 200 jobs from a variety of sectors.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook (2015), which does not separate print and broadcast careers, projected a 5% decline in job opportunities for editors through 2024 and a 9% decline in job opportunities for reporters,

correspondents and analysts across all traditional media platforms. Although the American Society of News Editors no longer provides annual job statistics, the organization's 2014 survey showed that the industry lost 3,800 newsroom jobs nationwide in that year (Edmonds, 2015).

Slightly more than one-third of large U.S. newspapers suffered layoffs between January 2017 and April 2018 (Greco, Sumida, and Fedili, 2018). One particularly high-profile example of the fragility of newspaper industry jobs came in July 2018 when the New York Daily News laid off 50 percent of its editorial staff. In a broader view, the number of newsroom employees at U.S. newspapers decreased by 45% between 2008 and 2017, from approximately 71,000 to 39,000 (Grieco, 2018). Statistics for the actual distribution of U.S. printed newspapers reflect similar trends, as weekday circulation decreased 11% from 2016 to 2017, while Sunday circulation decreased 10% (Newspapers Fact Sheet, 2018). Kansas newsrooms have not been immune to this trend. The Hutchinson News went through two rounds of newsroom cuts in one month, and the editor wrote, "These kinds of cuts have become commonplace in this business" (Sylvester, 2017, para. 3).

Picard (2009) argued that "well-paying employment requires that workers possess unique skills, abilities, and knowledge," but journalism has become too "commoditized" (para. 21). Additionally, consumers' access to the same technology used by journalists has made journalistic skills less valuable, and thus journalists perhaps deserve low pay (Picard, 2009). Further complicating the plight of professional journalists is the emerging field of algorithm-based news stories, often called robo-journalism. The trend-setting company Narrative Science, for example, is able to publish data-related narratives, such

as financial and sports stories, more quickly than human reporters (Levy, 2017). The Washington Post began using its own automated storytelling platform, Heliograf, to cover high school football games (WashPostPR, 2017). One research report on artificial intelligence in journalism suggested that smaller professional newsrooms with limited resources should consider partnering with academic institutions on data-based projects (Hansen, Roca-Sales, Keegan, and King, 2017).

Three primary factors – an increasing reliance on citizen journalism in social media, the decreasing value of journalistic skills in the job market, and the increasing number of newspaper closures – have left residents of some geographic areas in the United States with no professional media coverage of their communities. A community overlooked or ignored by professional media can be called a news desert (Farhi, 2017). “Since 2004, more than 50 dailies have been closed or merged and several hundred weeklies have ceased publication” (Center for Innovation, 2017, p. 11). The emergence of news deserts has limited opportunities for journalism graduates to find entry-level positions. Furthermore, aspiring journalists may perceive that they should not rely on a traditional print newspaper to gain an audience or be paid. For example, in 2017 the publishing site Medium began placing most content behind a paywall and paid writers partly based on the number of claps they received (Kastrenakes, 2017). Medium readers could click on a clap button much like Facebook users click on a like button. Exemplifying the transient nature of online-only publishing, though, in 2018 writers with online publications relying on Medium’s membership program were notified that those memberships would not be renewed due to struggles with the revenue model (Wang, 2018).

Some larger newspapers have added philanthropy to their revenue model. The Guardian has set up a non-profit strategy in the United States to seek support for news coverage related to specific issues such as climate change (Tsang, 2017). The New York Times, meanwhile, has started a philanthropic venture to fund larger stories and investigations (“A New Role,” 2017). One stated goal for the Times’ project is to “work with philanthropies and universities to launch ventures that will help the wider world of journalism, not just The Times” (“A New Role,” 2017, para. 4). In an initiative that loosely imitates Teach for America, several prominent journalism-related organizations, including Google News Lab and the Center for Investigative Journalism, announced plans to launch Report for America in 2018. The public service program helps pay the salaries of new journalists in local news organizations, but instead of government funding, it relies on donors (“Our Vision,” n.d.). In February of 2018, Report for America identified nine initial host organizations, including the Dallas Morning News and Mississippi Public Broadcasting (The GroundTruth Project, 2018).

### **Why Print Journalism Still Matters**

For academic research, Yin (2011) advocated rival thinking that incorporates “a continual sense of skepticism” to be sure that “events and actions are as they appear to be” (p. 80). With that in mind, it is appropriate to consider reasons why printed newspapers may still have relevance and economic purpose. Based on a long-term view of media history, digital news delivery is in its infancy, which prompts skeptics to ponder the wisdom of abandoning the centuries-old tradition of print media. Gutenberg is credited with inventing the printing press in 1440, while Twitter was only founded in 2006. News executives who emphasize Facebook, Twitter, and other social media

platforms to the exclusion of print may merely be craving instant gratification instead of generating a long-term solution.

While the current online headlines in most analyses of the U.S. newspaper industry suggest that print is either dying or already dead, Corrigan (2017) borrowed from select sources to create a summary counter-argument that, in fact, it is digital delivery that is “dying on the electronic vine” (para. 4). Community newspapers, especially weeklies, are often under-represented when pundits discuss the imminent death of newspapers, and some of these smaller newspapers remain healthy and profitable. Masters (2017) wrote that “large media outlets could learn from small town newspapers about being authentic and winning the trust of readers” (para. 2). Corrigan (2017) recommended that those who advocate for print newspapers need to do a better job of educating the public about the continued success of community newspapers, “because the drumbeat about the demise of print can become a self-fulfilling prophecy if not countered” (para. 12).

**Print revenue persists.** Edmonds (2017a) argued that digital news revenue has clearly not yet supplanted the importance of a print product. At the New York Times, for example, more than half of circulation revenue is still connected to print, although the profit margin for digital content is greater due to reduced production costs compared to print (Edmonds, 2017a). Also, one historically well-known newspaper chain, Hearst, saw an increase in newspaper profits, leading to the acquisition of more newspaper outlets across the country (Doctor, 2017b).

Some industry observers believe that newspaper executives, by targeting online revenue and ignoring metrics that suggest millennials prefer printed text for deep reading,

have made a mistake (Rosenwald, 2016). “The traditional advertising model, in which news coverage attracts an audience that is then rented out to advertisers, is not adapting well to digital” (Foreman, 2016, p. 177). Online consumers can use ad blockers in their web browsers, thus consistently reducing potential profit for digital news content providers. This helps explain why, despite a rapidly increasing online audience, newspapers still get most of their revenue from print (Rosenwald, 2016). The decline in print readership may be caused more by the newspaper industry’s lack of quality than by consumers’ lack of interest because “publisher have communicated that print really is only useful for lining the bottoms of bird cages” (Rosenwald, 2016, para. 16). If one applies the preceding arguments to a campus setting, a high-quality print student newspaper that concentrates on serving the audience in its local community could renew interest in print journalism.

**Print as a reliable archive.** A final counterargument for print involves archiving. Widespread adoption of digital journalism to the exclusion of print comes with the risk of losing historical archives of valuable information. Bustillos (2018) wrote that “in the 21st century, more and more information is ‘born digital’ and will stay that way, prone to decay or disappearance as servers, software, Web technologies, and computer languages break down” (para. 8). One cautionary tale involves a largescale online project by the Rocky Mountain News that was originally published in 2007 (LaFrance, 2015). Kevin Vaughan earned a Pulitzer nomination for his feature-writing work on a 34-part series looking back on a bus-train collision that killed 20 children in 1961. Less than a decade after its 2007 publication, the project was no longer publicly available, partly because the technology used to create it had already become outdated.

“If a sprawling Pulitzer Prize-nominated feature in one of the nation’s oldest newspapers can disappear from the web, anything can” (LaFrance, 2015, para. 25). Wang (2017c) noted that the increased emphasis on data-based stories and news apps has exacerbated the challenge of archiving content to survive beyond current media platforms. “So many pioneering works of digital journalism no longer exist online, or exist only as a shadow of their former selves” (Wang, 2017c, para. 1). LaFrance (2015) argued that web architecture was originally designed to be a messaging system and not an archival library.

An alternative to maintaining a print archive involves curating web links. One online archiving platform may especially interest those who work in collegiate academics. Bunk, a website created at the University of Richmond, can be used to curate digital, mobile-friendly archival links for courses such as American History (Owen, 2017). Thus, a website using Bunk can serve as a patchwork online textbook. Similarly, Bunk could be used to preserve the history of a college through the maintenance of relevant links from a variety of sources, including a student newspaper website. A potential problem, however, would be the reliability and availability of web links over time as well as the long-term sustainability of the Bunk platform itself. Other projects have attempted to create a repository for vulnerable websites. For example, the Freedom of the Press Foundation focuses on protecting vulnerable news websites before their archives are deleted or manipulated, sometimes to prevent wealthy buyers from purchasing a news site’s archives and then deleting or altering content (Higgins, 2018).

### **The Shift to Digital**

Despite the alternative viewpoints mentioned in the previous section, the newspaper industry as a whole continues to shift toward digital delivery. The

Washington Post, for example, has seen an increase in digital subscriptions and revenue, and the newspaper hired additional reporters and editors in 2017 (J. B. Stewart, 2017).

The 2017 revenue reports from the New York Times are informative as well. In its first-quarter earnings for 2017, the New York Times reported a 19% increase in digital advertising revenue and an increase of 308,000 digital-only paid subscriptions; however, print advertising revenue decreased 18% in the same quarter (Ember, 2017). In the fourth quarter of 2017, the New York Times added 157,000 digital-only subscriptions to help the company reach over \$1 billion in total revenue for the year (Ember, 2018).

Nationwide, the percentage of U.S. newspapers' revenue that came from digital advertising increased from 17% in 2011 to 31% in 2017 (Newspapers Fact Sheet, 2018).

**Digital paywalls as revenue.** Manjoo (2018a) wrote that the best way for news outlets to generate revenue from online content may be to shun advertising and ask readers to pay for access to content, typically \$5 to \$10 per month. In Kansas, the Shawnee Mission Post implemented a paywall to online content and hit its one-year target for subscribers within one month, charging \$5.95 per month or \$64.95 per year (Schmidt, 2017). The Washington Post's executive editor, Marty Baron, said that today's news consumers are still willing to pay for journalism in the current digital environment:

The people who are subscribing clearly want us to do investigative reporting. They want us to hold powerful individuals and powerful institutions to account, including their government – at the federal level, state level, local level – they want us to do it all. That's something they are willing to pay for. I think there's a direct connection between investigative reporting and subscriptions. I think what you're seeing in a number of news organizations is that they are investing more in

investigative reporting because they know readers will support that with subscriptions. (as cited in Steigrad, 2017, para. 26)

Paywalls have been largely unexplored among collegiate newspapers. In 2011, the O’Colly at Oklahoma State University experimented with a paywall for its off-campus online audience. The cost was \$10 per annually for off-campus readers to access more than three articles per month, and after a year the newspaper had 177 subscribers (Reimold, 2012). Today, however, the O’Colly website no longer limits off-campus visitors’ access to content. Among professional media, Moses (2018) warned that “the number of publishers that can pull off a scaled subscription business is likely to be small,” and for most smaller news outlets that incorporate a paywall, the effort will end in tears (para. 2). Focusing specifically on student media, Reimold (2012) wrote that collegiate press outlets “are simply not ready to provide the content and creativity paying readers will demand” (para. 10).

Beyond paywalls, one academic study about the news landscape in Chicago yielded reader survey results that could inform future proposals for the collegiate realm. One of the study’s conclusions was that "respondents are more likely to donate \$10 to a free news site than pay a fee of \$10 to access news" (Van Duyn, Jennings, and Stroud, 2018, para. 9). Donations directly to student newspapers could provide a revenue stream that is much less complicated and more fruitful than a paywall.

Although partial paywalls are gaining in industry popularity, they can have unintended consequences. If a collegiate newspaper website were to implement a paywall, it could cut off free public access to important news information during times of crises. The New York Times, for example, suspended its paywall during the summer of

2017 for content related to hurricane coverage (Tumin, 2017). Student newspaper editors and advisers, however, may lack the technical expertise and infrastructure to set up and effectively administrate a paywall. Furthermore, paywalls may not save the industry. Columbia Journalism Review's analysis of major daily newspaper websites found that 40% of the outlets used no paywalls, and most others allowed visitors to access at least some content for free (Stulberg, 2017). Based on this analysis, Stulberg observed, "No matter the format, the prospect of news organizations relying on paywalls as primary drivers of revenue still seems remote" (para. 5).

**More multimedia.** The argument for strengthening digital journalism to the exclusion of print centers on the extreme changes in the journalistic landscape since the turn of the century. Bell (2014) wrote that "there is no way to preserve or restore the shape of journalism as it has been practiced for the past 50 years" (para.10). Multimedia content, especially audio and video, has gradually supplanted much of the paper in the newspaper business. The New York Times, in an effort to sharpen its digital focus, eliminated traditional newsroom positions in order to hire additional journalists with digital skills (Victor, 2017). The Dallas Morning News, meanwhile, required all news staff members to reapply for their jobs as part of an emphasis on digital skills (World News Publishing Focus, 2017). The McClatchy Company launched audio podcasts at its regional newspapers (Hare, 2017). Haik (2017) described a visual revolution in which video has become increasingly popular in delivering news content. The Washington Post even began producing scripted comedy videos intended to increase readership for its more serious stories (Bilton, 2017). Another example comes from Norway, where a

leading daily newspaper, VG, now collects more monthly advertising revenue from its video operation, VGTV, than it does from its print product (Doctor, 2017a).

An emerging trend in digital journalism at the professional and collegiate level is an emphasis on data. One research project conducted by the Northeastern University School of Journalism involved three years of interviews with data journalists, web developers, and editors (Howe, Bakaj, Kraft and Wiley, 2017). The study suggested that a mobile-first philosophy has redefined the news production process and the way that progressive journalists think about stories. However, due to a shortage of journalists who are adequately prepared to work with data, some news organizations, especially in smaller communities, have difficulties keeping up with the mobile-first trend and the accompanying emphasis on data. “The process of gathering meaningful data, analyzing it, then developing this output into a compelling editorial product requires extensive labor resources and specialized, often scarce, intellectual capital (Howe, et. al., 2017, para. 3). At the collegiate level, administrators must consider the increasing cost of hiring qualified faculty to teach digital journalism courses that include data-based reporting and mobile-friendly design.

**Opportunities and pitfalls of social media.** For journalism, one of the dangers of reliance on digital content is that social media platforms can control the content that readers receive. Among journalists, Facebook is sometimes called a walled garden. For example, Wong (2017) reported that Facebook initially deleted posts by a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist who was covering corruption in Malta because the posts violated Facebook’s community standards policy. Investigative journalist Matthew Caruana Galizia was temporarily locked out of his account for posting information about

allegations of misconduct by Malta's prime minister (Wong, 2017). Additionally, one of Twitter's founders suggested that internet as a whole is broken because it rewards extremes, including, for Facebook, the live broadcast of suicides, and for Twitter, "a hive of trolling and abuse that it seems unable to stop" (as cited in Streitfeld, 2017).

Conversely, however, social media may provide opportunities for campus newspapers. During the fall 2017 semester, for example, the social media platform Snapchat began using content from select student newspapers in its Discover tab and sharing advertising revenue with campus publishers (Mullin, 2017).

**Bad ads and bad design.** Concerns about digital platforms are not all related to social media. A former managing editor for BuzzFeed suggested that two trends – overly simplified mobile designs created for news platforms and advertising content disguised to look like news – have allowed advertisers to trick consumers, which has eroded public trust in journalism (Edge, 2017). Moses (2017) argued that social media's takeover of consumers' paths to news content has been a self-inflicted wound for many news websites. "Publishers haven't helped themselves by slapping bad ads on sites and allowing ad-tech companies to collect data on their visitors" (Moses, 2017, para. 5). Operational leaders for collegiate newspapers also must consider how qualified and prepared student-editors are to monitor online comments on digital news sites. In the professional realm, Hutchins (2017) made the following observation:

Countless newsrooms rely on comments sections and social media to foster community engagement and drive traffic to their sites, but those platforms are too frequently hosts to hate, bigotry, threats and damaging content. Many of those

newsrooms lack the resources required to clean up comments or scrub offensive material from such platforms. (para. 4)

Higher education administrators and operational leaders may want to evaluate whether they can effectively implement consistent policies for monitoring comments on their student newspaper website and related social media platforms.

### **The Collegiate Reaction**

Research into the purpose and evolution of college newspapers is certainly not new. For example, Noah (1980) attempted to describe the relevance of student newspapers in the late 1970s by analyzing content. Current readers may appreciate the historical context that the study now provides. The author sought to measure student newspapers “with respect to sensitivity to the needs and issues of concern to their readerships and host institutions” (p. 10) and to use student development theories as part of that measurement. The analysis, which relied heavily on members of the Western Association of University Publications Managers, included formal measurement of the types of stories that appeared in student newspapers, such as sports coverage, campus news, political analysis, local business news, and entertainment reviews. Student publications in the study were from Arizona, California, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. The author concluded that coverage of events beyond campus borders, especially in the surrounding community, was an area for potential growth in student newspapers. The conclusion included an emphasis on the need for ongoing research in defining the purpose of the student press (Noah, 1980).

Almost 35 years later, Beck (2014) conducted a research study that, like Noah, included responses from general managers in the Western Association of University

Publication Managers. Beck primarily focused on student newspapers that required limited funding and resources from their host universities. Survey results showed declines in newspaper size as measured by the number of pages per issue and reader loyalty, along with an increase in return rates for unused newspaper copies. Following an analysis of survey data, Beck used Duke University's Chronicle newspaper as a case study for a college newsroom transformation based on emerging digital strategies. The new norm for the Chronicle "would be a state of constant change and development because technological advances were altering news consumption at a breathtaking pace" (Beck, 2014, p. 27). Thus, 35 years after Noah's initial research, the purpose and breadth of collegiate student newspapers still seem difficult to define.

**Rapid change.** Basing research on survey data from Associated Collegiate Press media advisers, Kopenhaver (2015) noted that "at no time in the evolution of college student media has change been so rapid or provided so many questions and challenges as today" (p. 38). The survey included analysis of adviser responses to questions concerning advertising revenue, frequency of publication, and channels for news delivery. Responses in 2014 were compared to adviser responses to the same questions in 2009. Although many college newspapers are decreasing the number of issues printed per year, partly to concentrate on online media, the survey results showed that online revenue has not increased. Half of newspapers that ran online advertising in 2014 generated \$2,000 or less annually from that source (Kopenhaver, 2015). Despite the unsettled climate among student media, Kopenhaver concluded with a warning to faculty advisers that change for change's sake will usually not be as effective as carefully planned program revisions. Also, a digital-first mentality can have unintended

consequences. One collegiate editor noted that without the deadline pressure of a daily print issue, the number and length of stories along with the quality of journalism may decline (Kramer, 2016).

Subscription revenue opportunities on campus are typically more limited than those for the professional press because collegiate printed newspapers are distributed and provided to students at no cost to the students or through student fees. While administrators and operational leaders cannot increase the product cost for consumers in order to fix financial problems, they have experimented in other ways. As shown in Figure 3, Reimold (2014b) provided an overview of program revisions that have been incorporated at collegiate newspapers nationwide.

<b>Revisions Related to Budget</b>	<b>Revisions Related to Content</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cutting number of print issues</li> <li>■ Trimming paper sizes</li> <li>■ Reducing number of pages</li> <li>■ Reducing number of copies</li> <li>■ Experimenting with non-content revenue streams such as production services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Adding special magazine editions</li> <li>■ Publishing special issues</li> <li>■ Creating mobile apps</li> <li>■ Shifting focus to online platforms and social media</li> </ul>

*Figure 3.* A list of typical revisions in collegiate student newspaper programs as discussed by Reimold (2014b).

At Oklahoma State University, the student newspaper's name changed from the Daily O'Collegian to the O'Colly in 2014 with an emphasis on promoting mobile-friendly content, while print production was reduced to three days per week in a smaller tabloid-sized paper format (Reimold, 2014b). A more extreme example comes from the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania, which abandoned print and became an online-only publication (Hall, 2017). The student newspapers at Franklin & Marshall College in

Pennsylvania and Morgan State University in Maryland are two more examples of online-only student newspapers that have been in the collegiate media spotlight (Ascarelli, 2014). Reimold (2014b) wrote that depending on perspective, “the evolution from print to digital is either a rebirth or a bloodletting. In both camps, though, there is agreement that print is the victim” (para. 7). For programs that are experimenting with special print editions and magazine-style formatting, Clark (2014) warned that renovated print products “must be both exceptional and kick-ass. Too many of the experiments we're seeing today in professional newsrooms that focus on reduced print schedules and increased emphasis on digital have resulted in hollowed out newspapers that truly are not worth the cheap paper they're printed on” (para. 9).

**Financial challenges.** Preston (2013) described how decreasing ad revenue and changing reading habits threaten the stability of some collegiate newspapers that have deep journalistic tradition, including the Hatchet at George Washington University, the Daily Texan at the University of Texas, the Red and Black at the University of Georgia, and the Daily Illini at the University of Illinois. Meanwhile, the University of Missouri-St. Louis forgave \$40,000 of debt for its student newspaper, the Current (Hare, 2014). In Kentucky, internal promotions from the University of Louisville accounted for 50% of advertising, approximately \$50,000 per year, in the campus student newspaper, the Louisville Cardinal, until the university stopped purchasing ads in 2017 due to campus-wide budget cuts (Novelly, 2017). Alumni responded with a short-term fix by purchasing a full-page ad for more than \$1,000 to provide a testimonial on the importance of student newspapers for young writers (Novelly, 2017).

Collegiate newspapers, especially those at smaller colleges, have faced difficulties in replacing print advertising revenue and maintaining readership with online-only publishing, so eliminating print production can be tricky. Gordon (2017) wrote about the *Muleskinner* at the University of Central Missouri switching to online only for the 2017-18 school year with a guarantee from administrators that the print edition would return in 2018-19. Newspaper staff members and other sources believed the suspension of the printed *Muleskinner* was due to budget and staffing cuts, but some administrators and faculty members said that a year of planning was needed to outline the newspaper's future (Gordon, 2017).

Operational leaders for collegiate journalism programs may not be overwhelmed by the number of incoming freshmen who have experience with a high school student newspaper and are eager to join the collegiate staff. Hu (2013) reported on the decline in participants for newspaper programs at the high school level. Healey (2015) wrote that “some journalism advisers and school administrators argue that students' waning interest in reporting on school affairs is a troubling trend at a time when social media allows students to publish their own thoughts and ideas more easily than ever” (para. 6). Due to funding and curricular changes, many high schools no longer require or even offer journalism courses. For example, in 2018 the Arkansas Department of Education Board voted to abolish a requirement that all Arkansas high schools offer elective courses in journalism (Sitek, 2018). Decreased participation in high school journalism programs is sometimes budget-related as well. In one of the more publicized examples of efforts to rescue high school journalism, Playboy founder Hugh Hefner agreed to pay five years of printing costs for a public-school newspaper in Chicago (Healey, 2015). Decreasing

newspaper participation in high schools could create a future audience problem for the professional industry because “students raised on a diet of Internet posts and instant messages may be unlikely to be future newspaper readers” (Hu, 2013).

**Print’s role in academia.** Journalism faculty members have been affected by the shift to digital in a related realm: academic research. It seems either ironic or appropriate that College Media Review, the academic journal of College Media Association, has switched to an online format, with its Research Annual now the organization’s only remaining print publication. Bergland (2013) wrote that the change has not affected the journal’s research quality. Critics of online news argue that the pursuit of large numbers in online audience analytics has increasingly led journalists to manufacture controversy via computer clicks. Similarly, Roelofs and Gallien (2017) observed that academia is replicating mass media by emphasizing citation rankings, online impact and other metrics for scholarly publishing, and thus research writing has evolved “from marketisation, to impact, to the promotion of artificially adversarial debate” (para. 6).

One notable exception deserves a brief mention here. Instead of withdrawing from print in favor of online-only publishing, editors at the MIT Technology Review planned to rebrand and redesign their product with the goal of creating a distinctive print publication at a subscription of \$29.95 per year. The updated version of the 119-year-old publication would feature heavier paper and more graphic design, and “the marriage of art and data will be emphasized throughout the magazine” (Baldrige, 2018, para. 6).

### **The Public Relations Angle**

Rooksby (2011) wrote that electronic distribution “heralds a new era in the relationship between colleges and student newspapers, a time that is not likely to be any

freer of controversy than was the print era” (para. 10). Some collegiate administrators now pay more immediate attention to cultivating a positive image for their institution through websites and social media. Student newspapers, on the other hand, may publish news stories that reflect negatively on an institution or opinion pieces that criticize school policies. Administrators are now more likely to discipline staff and faculty members when they believe the institution’s reputation is at stake (“Threats to the Independence,” 2016, p. 3). Also, due to budgets cuts and staff reductions at professional newspapers, the only news outlets reporting negative campus news, such as sexual assault investigations, may be student newspapers (Marcus, 2017). Concerning both print and online content, Wheeler (2015) asked, “In an era of tight budgets, dwindling enrollments, and heightened brand consciousness, are administrators more afraid than ever to leave students in charge of the student newspaper?” (para. 10). Rooksby (2011) questioned the extent to which administrators can exercise oversight of any digital news content created by students: “Can college administrators claim authority over any Web site run by one or more students that provides news content related to the institution?” (para. 9).

**Freedom of expression vs. institutional image.** Butler University in Indianapolis temporarily assigned a public relations employee as the adviser for its student newspaper before widespread criticism of that decision prompted a switch to a faculty member (Wheeler, 2015). At Fairmont State University in West Virginia, the student newspaper published two stories about mold found in a residential dorm. Administrators then removed the faculty adviser and “explicitly told student editors that they wanted a less controversial newspaper with more positive stories” (“Threats to the Independence,” p. 4). The newspaper adviser at Muscatine Community College in Iowa was removed by

college administrators after being told to censor students (“Threats to the Independence,” p. 5). In perhaps the most extreme example, the University of Kentucky sued its own student newspaper in a case involving documents that detailed an investigation into sexual misconduct by a faculty member (March, 2016).

Frank LoMonte, the former director of the Student Press Law Center, said that college officials are increasingly concerned with protecting their brand name, and student journalists along with their faculty-advisers have become less able to defend against this trend (as cited in Wheeler, 2015). In some instances, the threat to journalism involves student government. The Daily Nebraskan at the University of Nebraska faced a \$20,000 budget cut that editors believed was connected to publishing the name of a student government committee member in the newspaper’s crime roundup (Mitchell, 2017). At the University of Central Florida, a judge ordered university officials to release student government financial documents to the student newspaper after the university lost a legal case in which it argued that those records contained private student names and information (Russon, 2016).

**Code of ethics.** The College Media Association’s Code of Ethical Behavior emphasizes the need for freedom of expression, including the following rationale:

Freedom of expression and debate by means of a free and vigorous student media are essential to the effectiveness of an educational community in a democratic society. This implies the obligation of the student media to provide a forum for the expression of opinion – not only those opinions differing from established university or administrative policy, but those at odds with the media staff beliefs or opinions as well. (College Media Association, n.d.)

The CMA code also cites specific actions that infringe on students' freedom of expression in campus media outlets:

Student media must be free from all forms of external interference designed to regulate its content, including confiscation of its products or broadcasts; suspension of publication or transmission; academic personal or budgetary sanctions; arbitrary removal of staff members or faculty; or threats to the existence of student publications or broadcast outlets. (College Media Association, n.d.)

The code stresses that for public institutions, students are legally guaranteed "broad freedom of expression."

In a qualitative study of faculty advisers, Steelman (2016) noted that interviewees said they often must explain and defend the need for freedom of expression in student media to their colleagues and administrators. Some interviewees said they had been "fired or forced to resign from previous universities because administration felt they were not 'controlling' their organizations and the content being produced" (Steeleman, 2016, p. 67). In an extreme example of non-journalism faculty's lack of support for student media, Gluckman (2017) wrote about a Duke University professor in economics whose syllabus for a class about hedge funds stated that staff members of the campus student newspaper were not allowed to take the class.

CMA has also worked with other organizations to advocate for student press freedom. A joint statement from representatives of CMA, the American Association of University Professors, the National Coalition Against Censorship, and the Student Press Law center included the following: "The knowledge that continued financial support for a

journalism program, adviser, or publication may be contingent on pleasing campus authorities imposes a chill on the independence of journalistic coverage that invariably will produce more timid journalism that ill serves the public interest” (“Threats to the Independence,” 2016, p. 7).

### **Arguments for Journalism and Print Newspapers on Campus**

Given the trend of decreasing readership and distribution for collegiate newspapers, administrators and operational leaders may be tempted to reduce expenses and avoid potential public relations problems by dropping print production or eliminating newspaper operations entirely. Before taking action, though, they should consider arguments in favor of sustaining journalism on campus, including through a printed student newspaper. In a survey of U.S. college newspapers, Tennant and Chyi concluded that, based on financial data, reducing the number of printed issues typically did not save money but instead led to significant losses in advertising revenue (Tennant and Chyi, 2014). Clark (2014) argued that a print newspaper is still the best platform for delivering long-form investigative journalism to readers. For community contributions, collegiate journalists “are uniquely positioned to cover emerging social movements and to translate what young people are thinking to an older audience” (Anderson, 2017, para. 6).

**Student viewpoints.** Student journalists have provided perspectives on journalism’s role on their own campuses. One student journalist at Chadron State College in Nebraska acknowledged that “maybe nobody reads my school newspaper,” but added that the newspaper exists so that “in the event that if something were to happen, or if a huge story were to break out, the people would be informed” (Winowitch, 2017, para. 24). An investigative reporter for the Review at the University of Delaware

described the newsroom as “a place of trial and error, curiosity, creativity and teamwork” (McNamara, 2017, para. 5) and then added the following explanation:

It’s about capturing the identity of this community, this university and the student experience in a way the administrators can’t and won’t. It’s about telling the underrepresented student’s story with more than just numbers, talking to the faculty member about why they love their research, listening to the local musician and hearing out the student activist. Student media is about finding where the outside world hits our four-year home. There’s a person, a business, an office on campus that’s affected by federal policies and global issues. There is someone here that is creating change and someone else deterring it. It’s about understanding that our college bubble is microcosmic. (para. 7)

In 2016, the editorial staff of the Baker Orange wrote that continuing a print edition is “an annual decision that grows more difficult each year. Our editors all want to participate in publishing print editions because of the learning experience and simply for the love of it” (Baker Orange Editorial Board, 2016, para. 8). In February of 2019, however, the newspaper’s editors announced plans to halt print publication starting in fall 2019 to concentrate on their digital presence (Baker Orange Editorial Board, 2019).

Some printed newspapers have attempted to re-establish their print identity. For example, at the University of California-Davis, staff members of the California Aggie initiated a “Save the Aggie” campaign that led to an increase in student fees to help pay for printing costs (Kanigel, 2017). A staff editorial emphasized the printed newspaper’s role in “keeping an official record of UC Davis history” (The Editorial Board, 2017). Another publicized example is the Buchtelite at the University of Akron. The Buchtelite

classifies itself as an independent newspaper with no direct institutional oversight, but it has relied on financial support from UA Student Affairs and advising support from the School of Communication (Morgan, 2016). After suspending print and online publication twice in less than three years (Morgan, 2016), the Buchtelite relaunched in fall 2017 primarily as an online outlet with printed special editions planned throughout the year (Dennison, 2017).

**The value of print.** Krueger (2010) interviewed faculty advisers who reported that although student newspaper websites are popular with alumni and community members, students are still more likely to pick up a print issue on campus than visit the newspaper website regularly. One student publications director said that because campus newspapers are niche publications, students “like to pick it up, read it over lunch. It's still a community newspaper” (as cited in Krueger, 2010, para. 19).

Tablante (2013) wrote that while journalism programs are changing curriculum to emphasize multimedia skills, college audiences and journalism students still see value in printed newspapers. Changing to an online-first curriculum can potentially hinder students’ work portfolios when they graduate and start searching for a job. One student journalist noted that preserving a portfolio of online work samples can be difficult because web addresses often change after publication, but with a physical newspaper, “I know that as long as I’m careful with it, it will always physically be where I put it” (as cited in Tablante, 2013, para. 8.).

### **Collegiate Journalism’s Purpose**

While weighing the pros and cons of halting print production, administrators and operational leaders of student newspaper programs may want to consider current ideas

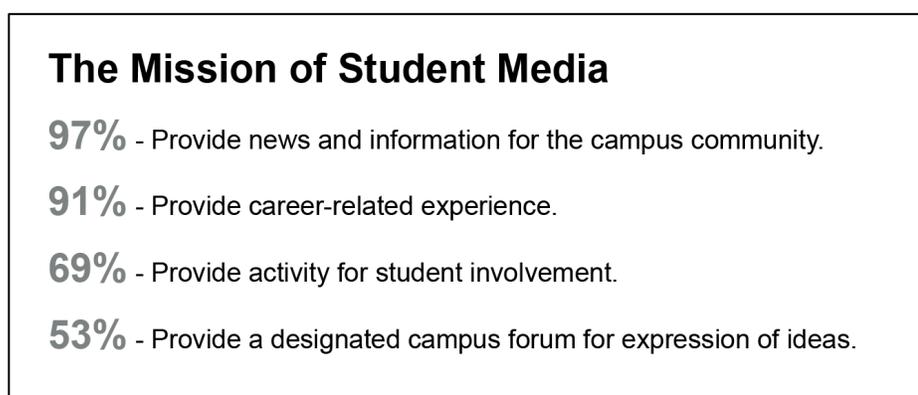
related to pedagogy and curriculum in collegiate journalism. One collegiate journalism instructor described “two sides of journalism education, which is basically a mash-up of a liberal arts university and a trade school,” with the liberal arts side emphasizing critical thinking and the trade school side emphasizing the hands-on craft of journalism (Shontz, 2017, para. 7). A student newspaper emphasizes hands-on craft and provides opportunities for applied learning. “Students learn by doing: by reporting and writing, by photographing, or by making video or audio recordings. They should be in charge of editing, designing, managing, and leading their organizations, for this is the essence of experiential learning” (“Threats to the Independence,” 2016, p. 4). The staff of the Daily Egyptian student newspaper at Southern Illinois University, for example, had an opportunity for experiential learning about journalism’s traditional watchdog role over government affairs. The newspaper published a story about a new SIU chancellor who provided unadvertised campus jobs for his daughter and son-in-law while proposing cuts in several campus departments (Spoerre, 2018b). The story led to two ethics inquiries being referred to the Illinois Office of the Executive Inspector General (Spoerre, 2018a).

**Defining a collegiate newspaper’s mission.** For educators who value experiential learning in real-world settings, a curricular debate pits those who value the ideals of liberal arts and the traditional role of journalism in American society, as seen in the SIU example, against those who emphasize hands-on digital skills to increase students’ future employability. Part of this debate concerns whether journalism can be considered a profession. Folkerts, Hamilton and Lemann (2013) argued that “digital skills, while necessary, do not constitute professional journalism” (p. 64). They also wrote that journalists and academics are fully aware of the quasi-professional status of

journalists. Papacharissi (2017) argued that journalism is better described and taught “as an approach to storytelling and not as a profession” (p. 147). In short, collegiate journalism schools and departments have been forced to consider whether students’ acquisition of digital media skills should trump their broader understanding of journalism’s traditional role in democracy, or vice versa.

One pedagogical argument for sustaining a printed student newspaper on campus involves providing educational opportunities for students without regard for the newspaper’s circulation and readership statistics. Instructional designers emphasize opportunities for learners to encounter job-relevant situations, which can be called problem-based learning, case-based learning, or scenario-based learning (Clark and Mayer, 2016). Similarly, producing a printed newspaper lets student-journalists immerse themselves in real-life news gathering scenarios while they work as a team, both in-person and through collaborative digital tools.

A survey of 150 College Media Association members yielded the results shown in Figure 4 about the academic mission of all collegiate media (“CMA Benchmarking Survey,” 2017).



*Figure 4.* A 2017 survey of 150 College Media Association members asked respondents to identify the mission of student media. Respondents were allowed to select more than one mission.

In addition to the results shown in Figure 4, 86.3% of respondents said their schools house an academic program related to journalism, while 92.5% said their schools have online student media and a student newspaper.

**Making sense of the mess.** In a report written for the Knight Foundation, Lynch (2015) argued that “journalism education is not keeping pace with the news-and-information industry it is dedicated to serve” (section 4, para. 9). Lewis and Zamith (2017) wrote about the difficulty of defining journalism “at a time when technology has made a mess of what we thought we know about a profession and practice intended to provide a first-draft accounting of public life” (p. 112). Journalism educators are tasked with making sense of this mess, and their ideas and proposals vary. In traditional student newspaper newsrooms, students work independently from faculty and receive some guidance and feedback from a faculty adviser. Webb (2015), however, envisioned a newsroom co-op in which students and professors would work full-time for two semesters. Wahl-Jorgensen (2017) wrote about “the failure of the analytical category of the newsroom” and proposed that newsrooms become less specialized and more networked across multiple platforms (p. 262). Two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Paul Salopek created a course titled “Slow Journalism in a Fast World” that puts students into local communities and emphasizes narrative writing skills (Pulitzer Center, 2017).

Defining journalism is difficult, and finding a job in the field is becoming equally difficult. Aspiring journalists “need to be aware of the unsettled nature of media economics” (Foreman, 2016, p. 178), which applies both to company profit margins and the overall job market. Students who are successful on their student newspaper staff are

not necessarily entering the journalistic profession after graduation. Rifkin (2017) reported that of the past 11 winners in a writing contest sponsored by the National Society of Newspaper Columnists, more than half did not go on to jobs in professional journalism; winners who sought work outside of journalism cited lack of job opportunities and low-paying jobs as primary reasons. Managers for news outlets are increasingly seeking applicants with knowledge in computer science and data science, while “a journalism degree does not impact their decisions about hiring new employees” (Webb, 2015, p. 36). Lewis and Zamith (2017) wrote that journalistic employees who have mastered technological skills are “the beneficiaries of elevated status” (p. 121). Royal (2017) argued that journalism educators must “move more urgently toward meaningful curriculum redesign” in order to offer more relevant and innovative degrees focusing on a shift toward digital content and multimedia skills (para. 13).

### **The Situation in Kansas**

As the focus of this literature review narrows to Kansas, much evidence suggests that conditions for student newspapers in Kansas mirror the national trends. Conflicts between a newspaper’s free speech rights and an institution’s public relations image have arisen on some campuses. For example, administrators at Hutchinson Community College had a well-publicized dispute with the student newspaper editors and their faculty adviser over content that gave an unfavorable view of the college president, and a campus security officer confiscated copies of one issue soon after they had been distributed on campus (Hegeman, 2017). More recently, staff members of the Lantern at Butler Community College discovered that approximately 400 copies of their Jan. 31 issue were stolen from campus newspaper racks. One front-page story in that issue was

about a football player who had been arrested and charged with murder in connection with a drug-related robbery (Greschler, 2018b).

**Controversy at Wichita State.** A proposal to cut as much as \$50,000 of annual funding to the Sunflower, the student newspaper at Wichita State University, drew state and national attention early in 2018. The Pittsburg Morning Sun published an editorial referring to the proposed funding cut as censorship in retaliation for the Sunflower's criticism of university leaders.

Student newspapers like The Sunflower provide coverage of university life like no other publication. Their job is to shine a light on the goings on at WSU which would otherwise stay in the dark. Universities must be a place where ideas can be freely discussed and student papers are key to ensuring the free exchange of ideas.

(“Budget cut naked censorship,” 2018, para. 8-9)

Greschler (2018a), writing nationally for the Student Press Law Center, described the chain of events that may have led to the proposed funding cut, including a Sunflower article showing that administrators had released exaggerated enrollment figures. Lash (2018) suggested that university administrators were encouraging the student senate to punish the newspaper for unfavorable coverage. When journalists and others were banned from a subsequent student government meeting to set student fees, the Kansas Senate entered the fray and advanced a bill requiring student fees committees to meet openly as part of the state's open meetings laws (Shorman, 2018).

The Sunflower's faculty adviser linked the problems at WSU to anti-press rhetoric from the President Donald Trump (Wolf, 2018). Although the Sunflower staff members may not have been applauded by local university administrators, they did receive some

national recognition. The Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia awarded the Sunflower and its editor with the 2018 Betty Gage Holland Award for excellence in college journalism (Moreno, 2018).

**Reduction in print frequency.** Beyond conflicts about unflattering coverage, content distribution changes among Kansas collegiate student newspapers reflect national trends as well. Several newspapers, including the Kansas State Collegian and the Daily Kansan at the University of Kansas have reduced their frequency of print publication, while others, such as the Crimson Chronicle at Friends University and the Conquistador at Dodge City Community College, have disappeared both online and in print. Meanwhile, the Campus Ledger at Johnson County Community College switched to an online-only format for the fall 2017 semester, and the Baker Orange at Baker University planned to halt print publication beginning in the fall 2019 semester. It's not just printed student newspapers that are suffering on campus. At Kansas State University, the Student Government Association voted to end funding for a newspaper readership program that provided free print copies of local and national newspapers such as the Manhattan Mercury, the New York Times, and USA Today (Kirkland, 2017).

**The role of Kansas Collegiate Media.** Kansas Collegiate Media (KCM) is the primary organization for collegiate journalism educators and student media outlets in Kansas. The KCM Constitution lists the organization's support for the following groups:

- students who participate in student media
- collegiate media advisers
- collegiate administrators at schools with student media

The organization changed its name from Kansas Associated Collegiate Press (KACP) to Kansas Collegiate Media (KCM) in 2012. The KCM Constitution states that the organization's mission is "to enrich the quality of journalism education and student journalism in Kansas" (Kansas Collegiate Media, 2012).

KCM works toward high academic and professional standards in student media and defends First Amendment rights for student journalists (Kansas Collegiate Media, 2012). KCM also hosts annual conferences and contests for student journalists. Kansas colleges and universities that have made a significant financial and academic investment in student media almost always participate in KCM. Despite the name change from Kansas Associated Collegiate Press to Kansas Collegiate Media, the 2017-18 membership list was comprised entirely of collegiate newspapers, magazines and yearbooks. Student media outlets for radio and television have traditionally been supported by the Kansas Association of Broadcasters, which annually hosts a seminar and broadcast awards for students.

**Analysis of KCM membership.** Although membership data is not available for all years, it is enlightening to compare the archived organizational membership list from 2004-05 (KACP) with the list from 2017-18 (KCM). These are two school years for which accurate data is available. Figure 5 shows that 29 colleges and universities were KACP members in 2004-05. Thirteen of those 29 schools were no longer members of KCM in 2017-18.

<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>NEWSPAPER</u>
Baker University	The Baker Orange
<del>Barton County Community College</del>	<del>Interrobang</del>
Benedictine College	The Circuit
<del>Bethany College</del>	<del>Messenger</del>
<del>Bethel College</del>	<del>The Bethel Collegian</del>
Butler County Community College	The Lantern
<del>Cloud County Community College</del>	<del>T-Bird Times</del>
Cowley County Community College	The Cowley Press
<del>Dodge City Community College</del>	<del>The Conquistador</del>
Emporia State University	The Bulletin
<del>Fort Hays State University</del>	<del>The University Leader</del>
<del>Fort Scott Community College</del>	<del>The Greyhound Express</del>
<del>Friends University</del>	<del>The Crimson Chronicle</del>
Garden City Community College	The Silhouette
Hutchinson Community College	The Collegian
<del>Independence Community College</del>	<del>The Buccaneer</del>
Johnson County Community College	The Campus Ledger
University of Kansas	The Daily Kansan
<del>Kansas City Kansas Community College</del>	<del>The Advocate</del>
Kansas State University	The Collegian
<del>Kansas State - Salina</del>	<del>On the Record</del>
McPherson College	The Spectator
Pittsburg State University	The Collegio
<del>Pratt Community College</del>	<del>The Beaver Tale</del>
Seward County Community College	Crusader
Southwestern College	The Collegian
<del>Sterling College</del>	<del>Sterling Stir</del>
Washburn University	The Washburn Review
Wichita State University	The Sunflower

*Figure 5.* The 2004-05 membership list for Kansas Associated Collegiate Press, which changed its name to Kansas Collegiate Media in 2012. Strikethrough text indicates schools that were no longer members of Kansas Collegiate Media in 2017-18.

More than half of the departing schools were two-year public colleges. Only two four-year public schools – Kansas State-Salina (now Kansas State Polytechnic) and Fort Hays State – were on the list of 13 departing schools. Two private universities – Kansas Wesleyan and Newman – were not KACP members in 2004-05 but were KCM members in 2017-18, bringing the total 2017-18 membership to 18 schools.

During their fall retreat in September of 2017, KCM advisers began discussing long-range options for their annual contest and conference that could best be described as downsizing. The agenda included a suggestion to eliminate competitions for overall awards and merge all individual awards into a single pool combining student newspapers, magazines, online sites and yearbooks (Kansas Collegiate Media, 2017). These four types of student media have traditionally been separated for KCM contests. During the same retreat, advisers discussed reducing the number of days for the spring conference from two days to one.

### **Summary**

Is it time for the news industry, including student newspapers, to pivot away from the printing press? Jon Landis, a U.S. Development Executive for Apple Education, told faculty members at the University of Arkansas that, because mobile tablets and smartphones now generate more online traffic than traditional digital devices such as desktop and laptop computers, we have reached a tipping point for historic change in the delivery of information similar to the years that followed the widespread adoption of the printing press (J. Landis, personal communication, September 13, 2017). He suggested that we “are sitting at this Gutenberg moment” in the history of the knowledge economy, with an increase in the supply of information thanks to online media but a subsequent challenge for consumers, including students, to verify reliable information.

Based on this assessment, administrators and operational leaders for student newspapers face a dilemma in deciding whether a printed student newspaper provides sufficient value for the students who produce it and the campus community that reads it.

Reimold (2014b) wrote about the nearly impossible task for student press outlets to develop a sustainable model that caters to all constituencies:

As much as they are viewed as the ultimate student niche media, campus newspapers answer to a variety of groups. Besides their core student audience, there are faculty, staff, alumni and nearby community readers to please. They also serve affiliated journalism schools and programs; the university as a whole; advertisers; professional staff or boards overseeing the budget; employers seeking a new generation of journalists; and, of course, the student journalists themselves.

(para. 19)

Collegiate administrators may perceive current popular criticisms of journalism and fake news as an opportunity to control content in student media, including printed newspapers. Supporters of student journalism, however, argue that “the oversight of campus-based media should be structured to prevent those outside the student editor’s office from overruling editorial judgments or retaliating for journalistic choices” (“Threats to the Independence,” 2016, p. 8).

On-campus readership may decline to the point that the printed product seems like a luxury and not a necessity. For upper-level administrators, cutting print production can potentially save money and eliminate headaches caused by unflattering coverage. In addition, the print newspaper’s practical value has diminished because students who work on campus newspapers are increasingly less likely to take a job in print journalism after they graduate. On the other hand, many educators, administrators and students still see the printed newspaper as an opportunity for students to learn the craft of journalism and develop project management skills in a group setting. Also, the printed newspaper can

play an important role in archiving the history of a campus, primarily because today's technology for delivering and archiving online-only digital content may become obsolete within a decade or two.

In the coming years, more administrators and operational leaders are likely to face the difficult decision of whether to pull the plug on the printing press of a student newspaper. "In the upcoming decade, flexibility and a willingness to experiment with new methods will likely be the factors that determine whether a newspaper survives or falters" (Saperstein, 2017, para. 24). Based on an overview of KCM membership data, Kansas is fertile ground to study factors that inform and influence the cessation of printed student newspapers. Faculty advisers for student newspapers in Kansas may be valuable sources to provide insights about that decision.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that inform and influence the cessation of print publication for Kansas collegiate student newspapers. The study was conducted to help explain the phenomenon of collegiate newspapers in Kansas that are reducing or eliminating print production. This chapter explains the research design, selection of participants, measurement, and data collection procedures used for this qualitative study. The chapter also includes an explanation of the process for analysis and synthesis of data. To prevent any misinterpretation of the findings for this study, the chapter concludes with a description of the researcher's role and an acknowledgement of the study's limitations.

#### **Research Design**

Yin (2011) compared research designs to "logical blueprints" (p. 75). With only 18 schools as members of Kansas Collegiate Media in 2017-18, a quantitative study involving printed collegiate newspapers in Kansas will be limited by a small sample size and thus may not provide an ideal environment for a research blueprint. The more logical choice, then, is a qualitative design. Content generated from qualitative research "can represent the meanings given to real-life events by the people who live them, not the values, preconceptions, or meanings held by researchers" (Yin, 2011, p. 8). Lunenburg and Irby (2008) wrote that qualitative design "emphasizes understanding by closely examining people's words, actions and records" without relying on mathematical significance (p. 89). The qualitative research in this study can potentially fill a void by

collecting and analyzing Kansas faculty-advisers' perceptions of factors that inform and influence the cessation of printed collegiate newspapers.

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Rich, in-depth detail is possible. For example, participants can elaborate on personal experiences and what they mean.</li> <li>■ Perceptions of participants themselves can be considered, giving research a human factor.</li> <li>■ Appropriate for situations in which detailed understanding is required.</li> <li>■ Events can be seen more holistically in their proper context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Results are not always generalizable due to small sample sizes and the subjective nature of the research.</li> <li>■ Conclusions need to be carefully hedged.</li> <li>■ Accusations of unreliability are common. Different results may be achieved on a different day or with different people</li> </ul>

*Figure 6.* This list from Lahore University (2016) provides an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research.

This study uses a phenomenological approach. “In a phenomenological research design, the researcher is concerned with clarifying the specific and recognizing phenomena through the eyes of the participants” (Lunenburg and Irby, 2008, p. 90). Yin (2011) wrote that phenomenological research “studies human events as they are immediately experienced in real-world settings, resisting prior categories and concepts that might distort the experiential basis for understanding the events” (p. 17). The landscape for printed collegiate student newspapers in Kansas has changed dramatically, and this research study attempts to recognize the phenomenon through the eyes of faculty-advisers.

### **Selection of Participants**

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) wrote that purposive sampling “involves selecting a sample based on the researcher’s experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled”

(p. 175). Yin (2011) added that the goal of purposive sampling in qualitative studies is to select participants who will “yield the most relevant and plentiful data” (p. 88). For this research study, the pool for potential participants was limited to faculty advisers whose schools were members of Kansas Collegiate Media and who had overseen changes to news-delivery methods, including reducing the number of print issues, emphasizing online publication, and/or eliminating print production entirely. Furthermore, the participants selected for this study were all current or former KCM officers who had been in their faculty roles for at least five years. Because officers are not paid, these advisers personally invested their time in directing and assisting KCM efforts to promote print and online journalism, including conferences, contests, recruitment, and adviser retreats.

The researcher identified six faculty advisers who, because of their job experience and their involvement with KCM, seemed highly qualified to identify factors that inform and influence the cessation of printed collegiate newspapers in Kansas. KCM divides its membership into three categories: two-year public, four-year private, and four-year public. Two faculty advisers were selected from each category for a total of six participants. Following is a brief description of each participant:

Adviser 1 helped staff members at a two-year college through the transition from print to online-only publication beginning with the 2017-18 school year.

Adviser 2 led a two-year college newspaper in reducing the frequency of issues published and the number of pages per issue, mainly due to concerns about accuracy and staffing.

Adviser 3 supervised staff members at a 4-year private college as they reduced print publication frequency while focusing on development of a converged media site. The

newspaper suspended print publication in the spring 2018 semester but planned to renew limited print production in fall of 2018.

Adviser 4, who serves as a department chair at a four-year private college, assisted newspaper staff members as they reduced their print publication frequency to once per semester and then, due to criticism from key stakeholders, reversed course and increased print distribution to a monthly format.

Adviser 5 helped staff members at a 4-year public university through the process of reducing the number of print issues per year and placing more resources into online publishing.

Adviser 6 oversaw staff members who switched to a smaller tabloid-sized paper format but later changed back to a more traditional broadsheet-sized newspaper that has had more critical success.

Table 2

*Participant List*

<b>Interview Participant</b>	<b>Institution Category</b>	<b>Printed Newspaper</b>	<b>Undergraduate Enrollment</b>
Adviser 1	2-year public	no	19,000
Adviser 2	2-year public	yes	9,000
Adviser 3	4-year private	TBD	1,200
Adviser 4	4-year private	yes	2,200
Adviser 5	4-year public	yes	3,700
Adviser 6	4-year public	yes	5,800

*Note.* Approximate undergraduate enrollment figures are from the National Center for Education Statistics.

**Measurement**

The research for this study was guided by a grand tour question. Brenner (2006) defined a grand tour question as an open-ended question used at the start of a qualitative

interview to provide a broad base for the inquiry. The grand tour question serves as “the beginning of the interview journey and is followed by a variety of questions that probe deeper into the domains uncovered through the grand tour initiation” (Brenner, 2006, p. 358). Interview subjects in this study were initially asked to describe changes to print production and distribution that they have supervised. After participants responded to the initial grand tour question, the researcher asked appropriate follow-up questions that were developed based on content in the literature review. Yin (2008) suggested that prepared questions in qualitative research should be referred to more broadly as protocols instead of being classified as instruments. A protocol for a research study “only consists of a stated set of topics,” and it is not intended to serve as an interview script (Yin, 2008, p. 103). Following is an overview of topics with protocol questions for this research study:

#### Grand Tour Question

What events and discussions have led to changes in the production and distribution of your printed student newspaper?

#### Follow-Up Questions (listed by topic)

1. *Print Frequency and Cost* - Ask how the frequency of print publication has changed. What is the total annual cost for printing and distributing the physical newspaper? Has the overall operating budget changed?
2. *Online Publication and Social Media* - Ask if the newspaper publishes regularly online. If so, ask about the publishing process. Is some content published online in print or only online? Is common content typically published online first then published in print, or vice versa? What has changed? Ask which, if any, social

media accounts have been created to promote the newspaper. Ask about multimedia online content beyond text and photos.

3. *Readership* - Ask about circulation trends and metrics for online and print audiences. What, if any, trends have surfaced?
4. *Resources, Revenue and Financial Sustainability* - Ask what support for facilities, finances and other resources the newspaper receives from the university. How much does the newspaper rely on advertising for its operating expenses? Ask for an explanation of whether newspaper operations could be sustainable in an online-only format. Is any revenue generated from social media platforms?
5. *Public Relations* - Ask for a description of any situations in which administrators have attempted to discourage or forbid content that might reflect negatively on the school as a whole. If applicable, ask whether administrators' concern for reducing negative publicity threatens the long-term viability of student-produced journalism on campus.
6. *Politics* - Ask for a description of any changes to campus perception of the student newspaper resulting from the 2016 election and President Trump's criticism of news media.
7. *Staff Size and Participation* - Ask how many students are currently on staff. Ask about trends in student participation.
8. *Job Market for Student Journalists* - Ask about jobs that student newspaper staff members have found after graduation and how closely those jobs connect to their newsroom experience.

9. *Historical Record* - Ask in what ways student newspaper content is used as a resource to chronicle campus history. Is a system in place to archive content over a long-term basis? If a system is in place, does it rely on a single content management system?
10. *Newspaper as a Curriculum Tool* - Ask in what ways the student newspaper supports the journalism curriculum. How might the curriculum be affected if the newspaper switched to an online-only format?
11. *Mission and Vision* – In what ways does the printed student newspaper contribute to the mission and vision of the institution? What would change if the newspaper were in a digital-only format?
12. *The Future of Your Student Newspaper* - Do you envision that your school will still have a printed student newspaper in 10 years? Upon what factors do you base your response?
13. *Anything Else* - Give each interviewee an opportunity to contribute additional information or perspective that may not be specifically included in the protocol.

Prior to collecting actual research responses from participants for this study, the researcher tested the grand tour question and follow-up protocol by interviewing a collegiate media manager for a student publication outside of Kansas. Feedback from this mock interview was used to make revisions and improvements.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Yin (2011) suggested that researchers should “clarify the potential complexity in data collection units and their levels” (p. 83). Following Yin’s advice, here is an overview of the two levels of data collection for this study:

Main topic - Sustainability of printed collegiate student newspapers

Broader level data collection - Kansas Collegiate Media

Narrower level data collection - Faculty-advisers who met the following criteria:

- supervised changes to news-delivery methods in the five years preceding this research study.
- had been in their faculty position for at least five years prior to the start of this research study.
- served as a current or former KCM officer.

The researcher initially notified Kansas Collegiate Media officers concerning the proposed research project. Before collecting any data, the researcher submitted a request to the Baker University Office of Institutional Research. The formal request included a letter from KCM President Stacy Sparks confirming that KCM faculty-advisers had given their approval for this research study. Once the Baker University Office of Institutional Research had approved the request, the researcher contacted the six selected participants by phone and/or email to ask their permission to be interviewed. All six gave their consent.

Interviews were conducted in April of 2018 during the KCM spring conference. A portable audio recorder and a laptop computer were used to record the interviews so that the researcher could concentrate on listening to interviewees' responses and taking notes. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes, and interviewees were encouraged to speak freely about changes in their student newspaper programs.

Table 3

*Key Information about Kansas Collegiate Media.*

<b>KANSAS COLLEGIATE MEDIA QUICK FACTS</b>	
Founded in 1967	Kansas Association of Two-Year Media Advisers
Organizational name change - 1979	Kansas Association of Journalism Advisers
Organizational name change - 1988	Kansas Associated Collegiate Press
Organizational name change - 2012	Kansas Collegiate Media
2003-04 Number of member institutions	29
2017-18 Number of member institutions	18
Organizational Mission	To enrich the quality of journalism education and student journalism in Kansas
Primary Activities	Fall Advisers Retreat Spring Conference Student Journalism Contests

### **Analysis and Synthesis of Data**

Yin (2011) described a five-phase cycle for analyzing qualitative data comprised of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding.

For this research study, the first phase of compiling involved transcribing recordings for each interview. Participants then reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy. The second phase of disassembling involved the researcher initially coding and categorizing within individual interviews to find repetition of words, phrases and described experiences. In the third phase of reassembling, the researcher identified ways that interviews connected with each other in content, including repetitions of words, phrases and described experiences. In the fourth phase of interpreting, the researcher identified themes that emerged from the data.

Yin (2011) wrote that the fifth and concluding phase can provide lessons learned, implications of the research, and practical takeaways. In the final phase of this study, the researcher used the interpretation from the fourth phase to provide readers with an analysis of factors that inform and influence the cessation of printed newspapers in Kansas. The concluding phase was intended to provide some sense of clarity and unity to the analysis of the phenomenon. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings, two full-time administrative leaders from the University of Arkansas student-media program read the research results and confirmed that quotes and other supporting information collected from interview participants were placed in appropriate categories. One of these administrators was the Director of Student Media, while the other was the Student Media Business Manager.

### **Researcher's Role**

Yin (2011) wrote that “the field researcher in effect serves as the main research instrument for collecting data in a qualitative study” (p. 13, para. 1). Thus, for professional transparency, qualitative researchers should disclose their background and acknowledge any potential prejudices or biases. Before becoming an educator, my professional career began as a print reporter and editor. Beginning in 1997, I spent 20 years as a faculty-adviser for collegiate newspapers. Most of my advising duties in that span involved advising both online and print publication. I have advised newspaper staffs that have won national awards from Associated Collegiate Press for both online and print. Because of my previous job experience as a faculty-adviser for student newspapers in Kansas, I was acquainted with KCM faculty-advisers prior to the start of this research study, and I served as KCM treasurer for more than 10 years. At the time

the research study was conducted, I was an instructor and administrator for online journalism classes at a public university outside of Kansas, and my duties were not related to advising student media. I had no vested interest in the outcome of this research. My primary goal was to conduct an honest, credible qualitative study that yielded meaningful insights for administrators and operational leaders who work with collegiate student newspapers.

### **Limitations**

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) recommended that researchers state the limitations of a study so that readers will not misinterpret the findings. This research study was limited by the following conditions:

1. A Kansas college may have a printed student newspaper but not be a member of KCM in a given year. For example, a smaller school may have withdrawn from KCM and dropped its newspaper program only to restart the program at a later date without immediately rejoining KCM.
2. Among Kansas schools that have made changes to their print newspaper distribution model in the past five years, some have hired new advisers during that time. These schools will not be represented in Chapter 4 of this dissertation because the research focuses on collecting qualitative data from faculty advisers who have actually overseen changes at their schools across a span of at least five years.
3. Classifying a print publication as a newspaper or news magazine has become more difficult as some schools decrease the frequency of publication. This study used KCM member schools that self-identified their publications as

newspapers. During KCM adviser meetings, faculty-advisers have debated whether a monthly publication printed on a thicker paper stock should by its nature be classified as a magazine instead of a newspaper, but no consensus has been reached.

4. Since 2000, little or no formal research has been conducted that is specific to collegiate student newspapers in Kansas.

### **Summary**

Using a phenomenological approach, this study attempts to explicate the experiences of faculty-advisers for collegiate newspapers in Kansas who have overseen changes to news delivery methods, including reducing the frequency of print issues or eliminating print production to concentrate on online platforms. Purposive sampling led to six participant interviews. All participants were former or current officers for Kansas Collegiate Media, an organization that supports collegiate student journalism. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed into text. Results from the subsequent data analysis are presented in the next chapter along with the study's findings.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

The results of the qualitative research study are presented in this chapter. The purpose of the study was to identify factors that inform and influence the cessation of printed student newspapers on college campuses in Kansas. Six faculty advisers of collegiate newspapers were selected for the study – two each from two-year public, four-year private, and four-year public schools. All six interview participants were current or former officers in Kansas Collegiate Media who had been faculty members at their institutions for at least five years prior to this research study. Interviews were based on a phenomenological approach, with participants initially explaining significant changes in their programs related to the sustainability of the printed newspaper. Follow-up questions covered related topics such as social media usage, archiving practices, budget concerns, and readership trends. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim into text that was used for coding and categorizing the qualitative data. Four themes emerged from the data analysis along with more general observations about the future of printed collegiate newspapers. For operational leaders in Kansas who are considering the future sustainability of printed newspapers on their college campuses, following are themes that became apparent in the research interviews:

- Credibility
- Archiving
- Audience Awareness
- Concerns and Future Directions

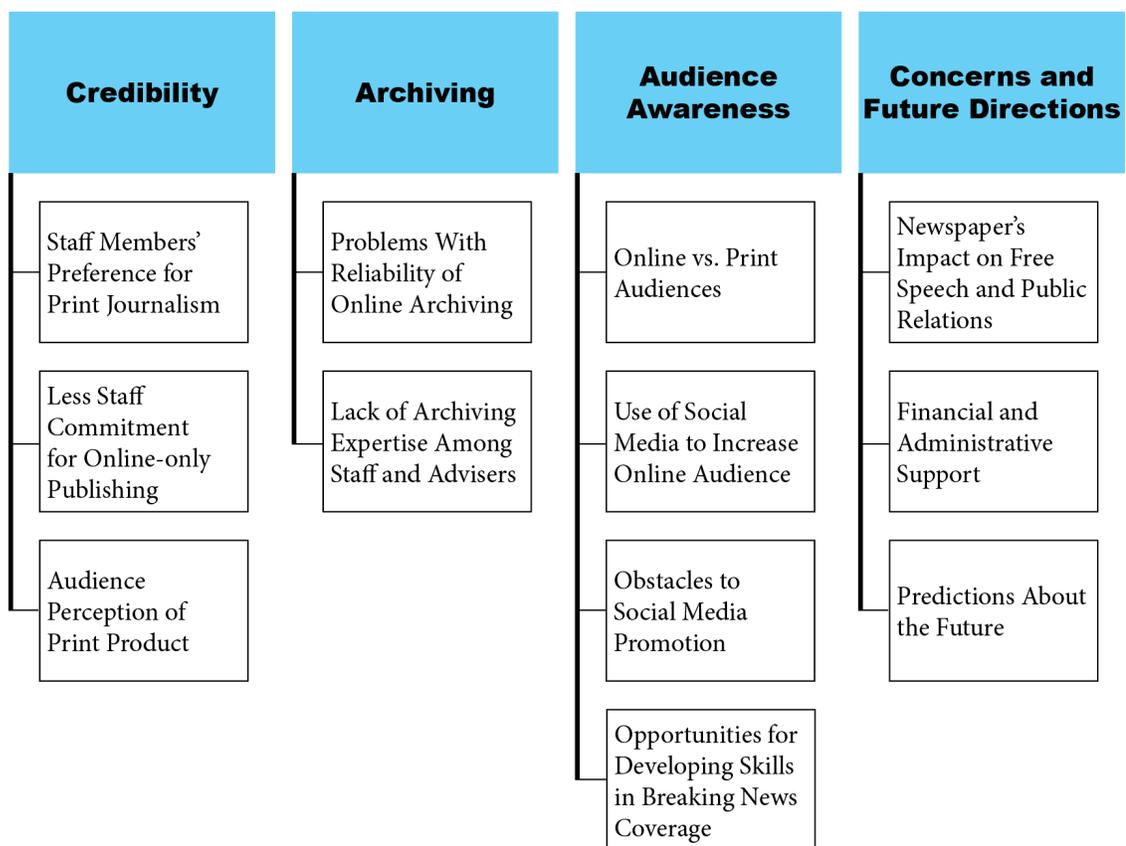


Figure 7. An overview of the themes and sub-categories in this chapter.

### Theme 1: Credibility

Printed newspapers are still perceived as having more credibility than online content among newspaper staff members, faculty, alumni, and the general student population. This theme emerged even though print credibility was not specifically incorporated into the list of questions in the interview protocol.

**Staff members' preference for print journalism.** All participants discussed the priority that student editors and staff members place on their printed product compared to online content for websites and social media. For example, Adviser 1, whose institution no longer publishes a printed student newspaper, cited staff members' affinity for print

journalism even though they don't read other printed newspapers as part of their daily or weekly routine:

They still don't see their public work appearing on a website, not in print form, as real, which I find hugely ironic. They know that there is worth and legitimacy in your work being published in a newspaper, even though they don't read it.

Adviser 6 also noted the irony of supposedly tech-savvy staff members preferring the printed edition of the newspaper, even if the print edition has a smaller potential audience. "I don't think that we would be able to recruit quality students to the publication if they didn't have something tangible to touch, which is so ironic considering who these kids are," Adviser 6 said.

Three participants observed that staff writers still value seeing a byline for their work and are disappointed when their stories appear only on a newspaper website. Adviser 6 noted, "Even though I can prove to students that their work gets more views and reads online, they still feel personally that we have hurt their feelings if we put their stuff online and not in print." Additionally, Adviser 6 described writers' perceptions that "if it doesn't appear in print, it's not as good."

Adviser 5 mentioned that new staff members sometimes grow to appreciate the value of the print edition when they conduct historical research. "They understand the reason why the printed edition is important," Adviser 5 said, "and it usually takes them going back through the bound volumes to research a story they're working on."

**Less staff commitment for online-only publishing.** Four participants discussed how staff members did not always apply areas of classroom emphasis to their work on the student newspaper. Faculty members typically lecture journalism students about the

importance of meeting deadlines, checking facts, and avoiding errors in grammar and style, but these lessons did not always carry over to the student newsroom. Adviser 3 said that despite clear protocol and guidelines for online publishing, staff members were inconsistent in meeting online deadlines and completing assignments not clearly connected to print. Adviser 2 discussed the curricular importance of the print newspaper as an “applied learning experience” that can help staff members understand the commitment required to meet absolute deadlines. Three participants noted that because of the transient nature of online deadlines, students are sometimes less likely to complete their online commitments.

Adviser 4 said that student staff members usually aren't as concerned about errors that appear online:

Online, they just don't give it as much credibility from our experiences ... I have noticed that since we've gone back to print, now they scour over the print edition quite heavily and do a lot more copy editing. In many cases, where we've taken those stories offline and have run them in the newspaper, they've actually copy edited them heavier and have found errors and gone back to the online edition and updated the story.

Similarly, Adviser 1 said editors sometimes use the phrase “throw it online,” which makes stories that are not used in the print edition seem like leftovers that require less staff commitment to editing and fact-checking.

**Audience perception of print product.** This perception of the print edition as more credible than online content was not restricted to staff members. Five participants discussed ways in which external audiences perceive greater value in print. Adviser 1

said campus surveys, which were distributed prior to the elimination of the print edition, indicated that faculty members still read the printed paper regularly.

Adviser 5 used feedback from three focus groups to determine the value of the printed newspaper for campus readers. Adviser 5 expected the survey results to show that the newspaper's student audience preferred online content, especially through social media. Instead, students in the focus group expressed their preference for the printed newspaper. Adviser 5 said that credibility was included in responses from focus groups:

One of the things that came up in the focus groups was how hard it is for students to identify original sources of news on social media, and that the average student is not really a savvy consumer of news. It is sometimes difficult for them to evaluate where posts are coming from, whether it's just reposted, whether it's outsourced or credible. They like having the actual print edition because it's easy for them to identify this as "Yes, this is campus news that is produced by other students."

At Adviser 6's publication, staff members use Issuu to provide their online audience with access to the print newspaper in screen-friendly PDF displays. Adviser 6 said that even though news stories are also available as individual articles on the website, the Issuu online display of the printed newspaper has proven popular because many site visitors prefer the print version of the newspaper, even in an online format. Adviser 6 suggested that those readers still like to see multiple stories compiled together on designed print pages rather than clicking on one headline at a time on a news website. Adviser 3 noted that audience engagement is stronger in print compared to online. "There's a certain kind of engagement when you pick something up and turn the pages

and as you read or look than there is if you are looking at it purely online,” Adviser 3 said.

Adviser 1 said that when students were still publishing a printed newspaper, administrators seemed more concerned about critical stories that appeared in print. “I just have always felt that we're not being followed by administration or faculty as closely as we were in the print edition,” Adviser 1 said. For Adviser 4, audience perception of credibility extended to some alumni who complained when the student newspaper temporarily reduced the number of print issues per year. Adviser 4 said faculty and alumni placed greater significance on printed newspaper issues compared to online-only publishing.

**Overview:** Operational leaders should consider the potential loss of credibility for student newspapers that adopt an online-only format. Participants in this research study shared numerous examples of how staff members, external students, faculty, alumni, and administrators perceive the printed product as more credible than online publishing.

## **Theme 2: Archiving**

Printed student newspapers often serve as an archiving tool for campus history, a role that may not be as feasible or reliable if a publication changes to an online-only format. Collegiate newspapers can provide a record of the evolution of an educational institution, especially the history of students’ perceptions of campus events. This theme became apparent as interview participants discussed obstacles for long-term online archiving and a lack of expertise among faculty and staff members.

**Problems with reliability of online archiving.** Although their anecdotes differed in specific details, all six interview participants discussed challenges and concerns related to maintaining a sustainable online archive of student newspaper content. Veteran print newspaper journalists refer to “the morgue” as the place where old issues of printed newspapers are kept, frequently bound in annual volumes for purposes of historical archiving. Adviser 5 said online archives too often yield gaps, and thus a printed newspaper morgue is still a more reliable means of preserving campus history. “Those printed, bound volumes are consistently a rich historic record,” Adviser 5 said. “I worry about the digital record now.”

Adviser 4 described how a political science professor, who was also an alumnus, campaigned for a continued print newspaper presence because of the need for a reliable record of campus events. Adviser 4 said the professor argued that without a print newspaper, “you lose all of the history, the student historical perspective of the college – how the students perceived the college and what they thought was important and what they reported on.” Then more stakeholders, including alumni, began making the same argument, advocating for a print presence to preserve history and questioning the viability of online-only archiving. Adviser 4 said the total number of people voicing their displeasure was approximately 20, but to the newspaper staff members, the response was “pretty monumental.”

One of the challenges of online-only news is maintaining an archive of published work that is sustainable beyond changes in technology and readily available for research. Adviser 1, whose school has already adopted an online-only approach, summarized those challenges:

Every print edition that we ever put together was scanned by our library and kept in their digital archives. They have every print edition that we put out for the past 40 years. Now that we're only online, I do worry about that access.

Merely relying on an external online web provider to maintain archives is not a realistic long-term solution. Because web hosts sometimes go out of business, schools may not have a choice about changing online content service providers. Also, institutional budget cuts or price increases for online services may force student newspaper leaders to seek less expensive options. Adviser 5 discussed the loss of digital content that has accompanied two changes in online content management systems, including content that is now “unrecoverable.” For example, photos and videos were often unlinked from the stories they originally accompanied. “I worry about that gap in the record,” Adviser 5 said. “In future years, how will people find those streaming videos that we've done in those meetings? How are they going to find the video commentaries?”

Adviser 6 had similar experiences with news stories that were lost when switching content management systems:

We've switched twice before, and each time we just lost volumes and volumes.

It's all there theoretically. You could go back and spend years and years and

hours and hours fixing all the broken things, but who's going to do that?

Adviser 6 noted that PDF versions of printed newspapers are available online through a service provided by Issuu. Because the service is free, however, Issuu is under no obligation to maintain or guarantee a long-term archive. “They owe us nothing,” Adviser 6 said.

**Lack of archiving expertise among staff and advisers.** Four participants said they have limited understanding of the process for digital archiving. “I wouldn't even know where to start in terms of finding other ways to archive, and I'm sure there's a way,” Adviser 1 said. “I don't have the time at this point in my career to explore those options.” Because of a limited understanding of how content management systems work, Adviser 6 said that student newspaper leaders are sometimes reluctant to make any changes to the current online setup. “I don't know what exists (or) how to take all of that content from a web provider and get it transferred into a format that is workable,” Adviser 6 said.

Adviser 5 said that future editors may be asked to consult state library experts to collect advice about digital archiving, partly because of lack of expertise among journalism faculty. “This is something that I never had a class on in journalism school,” Adviser 5 said. “I've never heard it talked much about at any conferences.”

**Overview:** Operational leaders should consider to what extent the institution relies on the printed student newspaper as a historical record of campus events. Also, before ceasing print publication, they may want to begin work toward establishing a reliable historical archive not focused on print. Doing so may involve ensuring that faculty and student-editors receive training in best practices for online archiving.

### **Theme 3: Audience Awareness**

A physically printed newspaper distributed on campus can give a student publication staff a visible identity. Without a print newspaper, staff members might be more diligent in establishing and maintaining a consistent audience for online content on websites and through social media. Websites and social media platforms do not attract the same specifically targeted campus audience as a printed newspaper.

**Online vs. print audiences.** All participants recounted challenges in establishing and maintaining an online presence. Although in theory the potential audience for an online site is much larger because of worldwide access for anyone with a connected device, in practice campus audiences are sometimes unaware of the student newspaper's online existence. Adviser 2 said, "I would be afraid that if it switched to an online format, even though we do have Facebook and Twitter, not many people would know about it." Adviser 4 reported that various alumni, faculty and non-journalism students have said that they didn't know the student newspaper had a website, even though the campus newspaper website has been active for 15 years. "I don't think we're getting very many people from the XXXX community who are looking at our website," Adviser 4 said.

Adviser 1, whose school no longer publishes a print newspaper, recounted how staff members posted printed promotional materials to grow an online audience:

When we distributed our last audience survey, respondents indicated that they still looked at posters on the walls and the hallways of our buildings. We're printing out posters to promote the fact that we're online. The irony is just delicious. In an effort to increase the campus audience's awareness of the student newspaper's online content, Adviser 1 began working with campus administrators to add links to student media content on the college's home page. Adviser 1 acknowledged that the audience response was slow following the elimination of the print newspaper on campus. "People are still trying to find their way around to us," Adviser 1 said.

**Use of social media to increase audience awareness.** All participants described how staff members use Facebook and Twitter to boost audience awareness of online

content. As many collegiate student newspapers reduce the frequency of print publication and place increased emphasis on online publication, operational leaders and staff members may need to rely on social media promotion to attract a consistent online audience. Interview participants spent far more time discussing Facebook. Adviser 5 said Facebook generates more web traffic and audience interaction compared to other social media outlets. Adviser 4 said a large percentage of the student newspaper's target audience uses Facebook, so it has become a logical tool to attract website traffic. Four research participants mentioned the use of video as part of social media content. For example, Adviser 5's staff members have begun using Facebook video and are also live-streaming some events, including campus protests. Adviser 5 said as many as 1,200 viewers watched livestream coverage on Facebook as it was happening, while more were able to watch after the event.

Adviser 6 was the only participant who discussed staff members arranging for paid story promotion within Facebook. Adviser 6 said students occasionally request paid Facebook promotion, which requires use of the adviser's credit card, for stories they think can generate a large audience.

**Obstacles to social media promotion.** Four participants reported that staff members are sometimes erratic in the effort they invest into social media. "The ideal schedule is that after something is uploaded to the online site, that is then posted on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram," Adviser 3 said, "but that is only as reliable as the student who was assigned to do it that particular day or for that particular story." Adviser 1 noted that staff members tend to spend more time with the publication website than on

social media. “I've seen that they've had quite a difficult time treating the social media pages as equals to the website,” Adviser 1 said.

Lack of staff and adviser expertise in social media was a concern for four participants. For example, Adviser 4 and Adviser 6 admitted they did not understand Instagram, with Adviser 4 going so far as to use the adjective “clueless.” Also, Adviser 4 said staff members don’t adequately measure web visitors generated by social media. “What we're not doing right now that we need to start doing is the analytics to find out whether they're coming back to the website based on those social media posts,” Adviser 4 said. Adviser 6 cited a personal lack of professional experience outside of print journalism. “I’ve certainly learned some things, but it's really challenging when you've never actually practiced those things as a professional,” Adviser 6 said.

**Opportunities for developing skills in breaking news coverage.** One potential advantage of a focus on online publishing rather than a printed product is an emphasis on breaking news. Today’s media professionals increase audience awareness of their work by delivering information on a right-now basis via websites and social media. Similarly, covering breaking news can be an important way for collegiate student newspapers to increase audience awareness of their online content. Staff members of a student newspaper that stresses web publishing have an opportunity to learn online-first skills and strategies in an applied setting. Five participants discussed how their staff members used website and social media content to provide more immediate coverage of campus events and increase audience awareness.

In the early days of online news sites, content was often published in print first and then shoveled into the newspaper website. When the frequency of print publication

is decreased, this process can be reversed. Adviser 4 noted that when student editors prepare for a print edition, they take content that has already been published online and “either update it or maybe expand on it a little bit.”

Adviser 3 described general guidelines for an online-first approach to covering breaking news at a small four-year private college:

Anyone who's covering an event is supposed to have it published 12 hours after the curtain goes down or the whistle blows, and a preview is supposed to be 72 hours before the event happens, but it's not like every day or twice a day or once a week. It's based on whatever event we're covering.

The student newspaper staff at Adviser 3's college published solely online content in the spring 2018 semester but tentatively planned to publish some print editions in fall of 2018.

The emphasis on breaking news coverage extends beyond website content to social media, with staff members at student newspapers posting breaking news directly to Facebook and Twitter. When staff members plan breaking news content, Adviser 1 said, “I encourage the (student newspaper) employees to consider social media just as important, if not more important, than the static website itself.”

Adviser 2 recounted how online coverage involving a theft on campus led to a marked increase in web traffic. “I would say when it comes to breaking news, we obviously have much more traffic,” Adviser 2 said. Adviser 2 acknowledged, however, that for smaller institutions, there may be limited opportunities for covering breaking news compared to larger campuses that hold more events. Conversely, Adviser 5, who works at a four-year public campus, said at one point during the 2017-18 school year,

staff members were able to post breaking news coverage of campus protests “a couple times every day for about two weeks.”

**Overview:** Operational leaders who are considering the cessation of printed student newspapers in favor of online-only publishing should begin devising strategies to attract an online audience that includes members of the campus community. Participants in this research study described how some stakeholders were unaware of online content. Social media promotion can be an important factor in generating online traffic, although staff members need to be consistent in efforts to cultivate and engage their audience. Finally, online-only publishing may provide valuable opportunity for students who seek a career in professional media because they have an increased opportunity to develop skills in covering breaking news and broadening audience awareness of their work.

#### **Theme 4: Concerns and Future Directions**

Current concerns with funding and public relations (PR) have made the future of printed collegiate student newspapers in Kansas tenuous. Campus leaders who are focused on maintaining a positive public image for their institutions sometimes perceive that the student newspaper hinders their public relations efforts. Eliminating the printed newspaper, even if online publishing continues, may reduce the number of PR headaches caused by student media coverage that reflects negatively on an institution’s image. Participants in this research study shared examples of how administrators and student government leaders have felt empowered to cut funding or attempted to redefine the mission of the student newspaper.

**Newspaper’s impact on free speech and public relations.** All six participants described at least one example in which student newspaper coverage did not present a

favorable image of their institution. Adviser 1, whose school no longer produces a print product, said that administrators seemed more concerned with controversial content when the school still had a print edition. “Administration doesn't seem to be so concerned with, in the rare times when we do cover something controversial, that it's published online,” Adviser 1 said.

As a courtesy, Adviser 2 sometimes alerts a dean in advance concerning potentially controversial stories but does not allow administrators to review any content prior to publication. One story about a former student who was arrested on a murder charge led to some printed newspapers being stolen before campus students could see them. Adviser 2 said a few disgruntled students, who were friends of the former student, labeled the newspaper as “fake news” and reflexively argued that the story contained factual errors. Off-campus media outlets, including the Student Press Law Center, reported on the stolen newspapers as potential censorship.

Adviser 6 said administrators were not pleased with coverage of campus enrollment trends, deeming the stories too negative. Also, a story about a professor who had dated students led to some administrative criticism. Two other participants also noted that student newspaper stories about alleged misbehavior by professors had been criticized by campus administrators. Adviser 2 said that student newspaper advisers and editors must remind administrators that “we're not public relations or marketing.”

Adviser 4 described a student newspaper story about a yoga class that was renamed because the word “yoga” in the course title suggested an eastern influence that might conflict with the campus’s conservative values. Adviser 4 said the institution’s president was not happy about the ensuing publicity that the student newspaper story

received, but the president understood that the story itself was merely reporting the course name change.

Ultimately, interviewees said that administrative concerns about student journalism are more focused on public relations and seem unrelated to national disputes about fake news. Adviser 5 said that administrators occasionally “have pressured me to lean on the students to curb what they perceived as negative coverage. Most of those were before I had tenure. I don't think that's a coincidence.” Adviser 4 said that terminating the newspaper might eliminate some campus PR concerns:

Our administration is very, very keen on creating a persona for the college of who they are and what they are and what they do and that sort of thing. If anything, I think they'd like to be able to do away with the newspaper so that they wouldn't have that antagonistic thing out there every now and then.

**Financial and administrative support.** All participants reported concerns related to administrative support and/or future funding. If the printed newspaper is eliminated, Adviser 4 suggested it will likely be because of funding. “The institution has been willing to cover our overruns, but as those numbers continue to climb, I wouldn't be surprised at some point if they said it's just too expensive to do a print publication,” Adviser 4 said.

Adviser 5 has noticed a trend in campus leaders using budget concerns as grounds for silencing the student newspaper. “It is much easier for administrations and student governments to withhold funding based on fiscal necessity,” Adviser 5 said. The student newspaper on Adviser 5's campus is facing a long-term 50 percent reduction in funding from student government even though staff members had no input before the decision.

The cuts come following a year in which the student newspaper reported on a tenured professor who was accused of sexual assault by an undergraduate student. Adviser 5 compared this to a similar situation at Wichita State University. “Both schools have aggressive student newspapers, and the cuts are coming on the heels of aggressive coverage,” Adviser 5 said.

Two participants mentioned student government leaders who questioned the need for the student newspaper or attempted to redirect its future purpose and funding. Adviser 1 spoke about a student senate president who told the dean of student life and the student newspaper editor that the print newspaper should “rebrand and repurpose itself as a newsletter for the campus.” Despite the student senate president’s proposal, the dean of student life later assured Adviser 1 that no changes were planned. Adviser 6 described how the student government president, who formerly worked with student government finances, reviewed constitutional bylaws and then wanted to conduct an audit of the student newspaper. “Now we're having these conversations about the structure of the student media fee, and we're going to have to justify why we need the money,” Adviser 6 said.

Adviser 5 compared funding cuts to censorship. “Rarely, at least in my experience, do you get those direct attacks anymore, but a more insidious form of censorship is ‘We're going to cut your funding and say it's for other reasons,’” Adviser 5 said. Student government meetings at regent institutions are not necessarily subject to the Kansas Open Meetings Act, so, depending on campus policy, discussions about college newspaper funding may not have to be held in public.

Beyond funding, administrators can stifle the student newspaper simply by refusing to be interviewed for stories. Adviser 3 described such a situation:

The particular administration that we're working with right now, they simply don't make themselves available to answer questions about anything that's going on.

They just don't schedule time for reporters, so it prevents (reporters) from covering all sides of any issues that are controversial because they're not allowed to print if they don't have all sides covered.

Because objective news reporting for collegiate journalists often requires multiple sources with balanced viewpoints, administrators, who may be the only qualified sources to provide an institution's point of view, can effectively kill a controversial story simply by refusing to be interviewed.

**Predictions about the future.** All participants were asked to assess the sustainability of printed student newspapers. Three of them provided illustrative examples of how tenuous collegiate print newspapers have become, suggesting that future concerns can be immediate concerns as well. Staff members working with Adviser 1 stopped publishing a printed newspaper in 2017 with no plans to restore the printed product in the future. At Adviser 4's college, the frequency of print production was dramatically decreased but has now returned to its previous rate as a response to complaints from faculty, students, and alumni. Adviser 3 oversees a student newspaper staff that suspended print publication in spring of 2018 but planned to restart it in the future. Furthermore, this study does not include Kansas collegiate institutions that have entirely dropped their student newspaper program, both print and online.

Adviser 2 expects to face questions about the viability of the printed edition within the next decade: “I hope and I think we'll be there, but I do think eventually questions will come up with funding.” Adviser 2 predicted that stakeholders will begin to ask, “Why not move online rather than having a printed copy and wasting paper?”

Conversely, Adviser 4 was more optimistic that printed student newspapers will survive, especially on smaller campuses where students are more likely to pick up a printed newspaper between classes and read it. Adviser 5 was optimistic as well. “I'm going to guess that the print edition is going to last longer than I could predict,” Adviser 5 said, adding, “We do have a reduced production schedule, but it's been surprising that it has lasted and has remained popular with students.” Adviser 5 attributed the survival of the print edition to students' increased interest in watchdog journalism and popular movies such as *Spotlight* that prominently feature professional journalists.

Adviser 6 noted that predictions about the death of printed student newspapers have perhaps been premature because campus audiences still see credibility in print and prefer that form. “I think newspapers were supposed to die 50 years ago. It feels like we've been on the way out forever.” Adviser 1 described stakeholders' sentimental attitude toward print newspapers as a reason they may survive longer than is widely expected. “I think as a society, we're still not past the romantic view of print,” Adviser 1 said. “We like having it in our hands. We like being able to see a tangible product that we've put together.”

Another challenge for operational leaders of student newspapers will be anticipating future needs, both in developing curricular objectives for staff members and assessing a newspaper's contribution to the overall campus mission and vision. For

example, many colleges nationwide have begun emphasizing media literacy as an important skill for graduates. The perceived credibility of print newspapers could become valuable in helping students learn to evaluate media content and develop media literacy. Adviser 5 reflected on this possibility:

I'm not sure anyone could have predicted the influence that manufactured news or fake news would have on the American consciousness. This is significant and this is one of the things that our students fight against every day – trying to convince their fellow students to be better consumers of news. Not advocating a particular point of view, but saying, “Look, facts are non-partisan and you need to be able to evaluate a news story, for your very survival.” This is one of the key aspects, I think, to being a rational human being in the 21st century.

Two participants discussed limited availability of commercial printing services as a future concern. As the number of commercial newspapers nationwide dwindles, so too does the number of printing businesses that can deliver physical newspapers to Kansas collegiate campuses in a timely, affordable and feasible manner. Adviser 6 said, “It's increasingly challenging to find a printer who will deliver what you want.” Adviser 5 and Adviser 6 both described being forced to find a commercial printer located farther from campus because a local printing service went out of business.

**Overview:** Research participants provided examples of student newspaper coverage, such as reporting on sexual assaults, that did not portray campus events in a positive light. When printed newspapers are distributed free on campus, operational leaders may need to measure their willingness to support free speech even if content does not always reflect favorably on the institution. Interview participants also cited their

concerns about maintaining consistent funds for printed student newspapers and shared experiences involving administrators and student government leaders who had attempted to reduce or re-evaluate newspaper budgets. Perhaps the best adjective to describe the future of printed collegiate student newspapers in Kansas: tenuous.

### **Summary**

Six faculty advisers for collegiate student newspapers in Kansas were interviewed for this qualitative study. Analysis of the data collected from the interviews yielded insights into factors that inform and influence the cessation of printed student newspapers on college campuses in Kansas. This chapter explained four themes emerging from data analysis along with additional participant observations and insights. These themes can be valuable for operational leaders who are pondering the sustainability of printed student newspapers on their campuses.

- **Credibility** – Interview participants said that audiences consider the printed version of the newspaper more credible than website content or social media coverage.
- **Archiving** – Interview participants said they had faced challenges in maintaining a reliable digital-only archive of student newspaper content that can provide a long-term replacement for the print newspaper morgue.
- **Audience Awareness** – Interview participants said that campus audiences are often unaware of student newspaper online websites, while a printed newspaper has a more visible and physical presence on campus. Staff members use social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter, to increase audience awareness of online content, but their commitment to social media promotion is

inconsistent. Interview participants said an online-first approach to publication can have a positive effect by helping students gain valuable skills in generating a large audience for coverage of breaking news, something that is not always possible if staff members are focused on a print production schedule.

- **Concerns and Future Directions** – In assessing the future sustainability of printed student newspapers on Kansas college campuses, interview participants said their primary concerns related to budget cuts and administrative reaction to coverage of events that do not reflect positively on the public’s perception of an institution.

The next chapter will make connections from this research study to relevant literature, discuss implications of the research results, and provide recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 5

### Interpretation and Recommendations

This chapter is divided into three sections. It begins with a study summary that reviews the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research question, the research methodology, and major findings. The next section connects the study's findings to current literature. The final section includes a discussion of implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

#### Study Summary

This study explores the sustainability of printed collegiate student newspapers in Kansas. The purpose statement and research question are restated to describe the intent of the study. A review of the methodology reiterates the study's design and data collection procedures. The results of the current research study are provided in the major findings.

**Overview of the problem.** Despite a few protestations by print newspaper traditionalists, most metrics suggest that the print newspaper industry in general has experienced an unprecedented decline in the past 20 years. For example, David Chavern, the President and Chief Executive Officer of News Media Alliance, said that since the year 2000, demand for print newspapers in North America has decreased by 75 percent (as cited in Steed, 2018). In general, print newspapers have been reduced with “smaller newsroom, smaller budgets, smaller print runs, smaller page counts — year after year after year” (Benton, 2018b, para. 1). Doctor (2018a) wrote that “as the daily printed newspaper era fades rapidly into history, everything about it is getting tougher” (para. 7). This trend extends to Kansas collegiate student newspapers.

Archived membership lists show that 29 colleges and universities were members of Kansas Associated Collegiate Press in 2004-05. During the 2017-18 school year, only 16 of those 29 schools remained as members of the organization, which has been renamed Kansas Collegiate Media (Kansas Collegiate Media, 2018). Although the organizational name has changed to encompass more than print media, the 2004-05 and 2017-18 membership lists were comprised entirely of schools that included newspapers in their student media programs. Nationally, on college campuses where a printed student newspaper is still distributed, student journalists “have felt the pressure of tightening budgets and hostile university administrations” (Anderson 2018, para. 5). Operational leaders may want to consider whether a digital-only format would accomplish the same objectives as a printed newspaper and reach a similar audience at a reduced cost. Although anecdotal reports about individual college newspapers that have ended print publication are plentiful, research is more limited in identifying key factors related to trends and future viability of student newspapers on college campuses in specific regions or states.

**Purpose statement and research questions.** The purpose of this study was to explore factors that can assist operational leaders in assessing the sustainability of printed student newspapers on college campuses in Kansas. Nielsen (2018b) suggested that current journalism research could improve by “supplementing research on the actions and output of journalists with attention to the institutions that sustain and constrain journalism” (para. 20). This study attempted to identify factors that sustain and constrain student newspaper programs in Kansas, placing specific emphasis on factors that affect print publication. Interviews allowed the research participants, who were all experienced

faculty advisers, to share their experiences and perceptions about changes in production and distribution of their printed student newspaper. The following research question was used to guide this study:

RQ1. What are factors that inform and influence the cessation of print publication for Kansas collegiate student newspapers?

**Review of the methodology.** Using a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach, the researcher interviewed six veteran faculty-advisers who were members of Kansas Collegiate Media and had overseen changes in producing and distributing printed newspapers on their campuses. The interviews were recorded, and responses were transcribed using Temi speech-to-text software. The researcher verified the accuracy of the transcriptions and then generated codes based on commonalities in participant responses. Four primary themes emerged.

**Major findings.** Data collected from interviews generated the following themes:

1. Stakeholders – including staff members, external students, faculty, administrators, and alumni – perceive the printed newspaper as having more credibility than online content.
2. Maintaining a reliable and sustainable archive of campus history can be more difficult without a printed student newspaper.
3. Eliminating the printed newspaper requires staff members to be more diligent in establishing and maintaining a consistent audience for online content on websites and through social media. Emphasizing online publishing can help staff members concentrate on developing skills in covering breaking news.

4. Some administrators and student government leaders have begun questioning the role and funding of the student newspaper on their campuses, making the future of printed collegiate student newspapers tenuous. Participants had mixed predictions in forecasting the future; some cited continued enthusiasm for print journalism among both staff members and audience, while others envisioned struggles in justifying increased printing costs.

### **Findings Related to the Literature**

Research participants in this study generally characterized the printed student newspaper on their campus in positive terms. Interviewees said the printed newspaper was perceived as more credible than online publishing by both audiences and staff members, and it was more likely to reach its on-campus target audience than the newspaper's website or social media content. In addition, the printed newspaper served as a valued means of archiving campus history. This positive characterization did not, however, mean that the future of the printed newspaper was assured on all campuses. One participant's school had already eliminated the printed newspaper in favor of online-only publishing, and another participant's school had suspended print publication for a semester. Other interviewees described reducing the frequency of print publication.

Research participants in this study discussed the uncertain future of printed newspapers, which is consistent with national trends. Operational leaders on college campuses across the country are reflecting on factors that inform and influence the cessation of their printed student newspaper. In April of 2018, multiple collegiate newsrooms nationwide participated in the Save Student Newsrooms movement, which was "a campaign combating some of the same forces that have battered newspapers

across the country as digital media has imperiled print” (Villarreal, 2018, para. 1). Figure 8 shows an example of how this campaign was promoted on Twitter. In an opinion piece for the Sunflower student newspaper at Wichita State University in Kansas, the editor wrote that the problem is not unique to Kansas as student newsrooms nationwide face increased threats “at a time when student newspapers are more important than ever to the communities they serve” (Swaim, 2018, para. 6).



*Figure 8.* The University Daily Kansan used Twitter to participate in the Save Student Newspapers campaign.

Some student newspaper editors want to save their newsroom but not their print edition. For example, the editor-in-chief of the State Hornet at Sacramento State University described a long-term plan for “eradication of our print product” beginning with a reduction in the number of issues so that the staff can concentrate on online content and a weekly email newsletter (Morgan, 2018, para. 3).

**Credibility.** Participants in this study reported that audiences on their campuses regard printed newspapers as more credible than online content. Descriptions of this perception came from staff members, student readers, faculty, administrators, and alumni.

Participants also reported that staff members spend more time on the print edition and are more careful during the editing process for printed content. Interviews suggested that staff members feel more pride when their byline appears on a printed page. When staff members' reporting projects appear only online and not in print, they often consider their work as inferior and not worthy of print publication. Participants expressed concerns that eliminating printed newspapers may reduce the credibility of a college's student media program and have an adverse effect on recruiting.

Participant observations about print-newspaper credibility echo previous literature. A survey conducted by the marketing research firm Toluna found that "U.S. consumers believe print media is a safer, more secure and more trusted medium than its digital counterpart in virtually every way" (Gingerich, 2017, para. 1). More than half of respondents said they trust what they read in printed news stories, while only 34% said they trust news stories they find on social media (Gingerich, 2017). Other research suggests good reasons for audiences to be skeptical of digital content. On Twitter, for example, approximately two-thirds of content links to popular websites are posted by automated accounts and not human users (Wojcik, Messing, Smith, Rainie, and Hitlin, 2018). Other literature questions the long-term impact and credibility of online content. Lenz (2018) described the "publish now, amend later style of the internet" (para. 39). This creates a publishing environment in which staff members of student newspapers assume they can correct or even delete erroneous information after it is published, which can harm credibility. Operational leaders who eliminate the print newspaper on a college campus may force the student newspaper into a less credible online identity that decreases the impact of student-produced news.

**Archiving.** Interview participants shared their views on how student newspapers serve a role to record campus history. Some interviewees noted that, partly because their own training and professional experience came in print-focused newsrooms, they lack the technical expertise and proficiency needed to ensure the long-term viability of a sustainable digital archive. Participants also discussed how lack of expertise and limited resources prevent them from locating and rescuing lost stories, images, and videos so that they can become publicly available again. Participants described changes in online content management systems that have led to published stories becoming irretrievable. Additionally, they noted that multimedia content such as video and audio can effectively disappear by becoming separated from related text. Accuracy of archived online content was also a concern.

Responses from the study are consistent with previous literature. Bustillos (2018) observed that digital content is more prone to decay and disappearance due to changes in online technology. For example, in the early 2000s, Adobe Flash became a popular means for creating interactive online content, allowing online news sites to evolve beyond text and still images. In 2017, Adobe announced that it will only support Flash through 2020, with no apparent long-term means for users to access Flash content (Bright, 2017, para. 5). For online publishers, including student newspaper programs that had previously created content using Flash, the content will likely disappear from public view. Lenz (2018) described the short-lived characteristic of online publishing:

The writing that happens in this space is quickly dissipating ephemera; it punches us in the gut, changes the world, changes nothing, and disappears, sometimes for good, sometimes just from our collective consciousness. (Lenz, 2018, para. 6)



*Figure 9.* This screenshot is from the website for the Baker Orange student newspaper. It shows how multimedia content such as videos can be separated from accompanying explanatory text. Although the headline suggests the web page includes a video interview, the embedded video was no longer accessible through standard search functions after the Baker Orange switched content management systems in 2017. Readers can only view the text introduction.

Figure 9 shows an example of a video that has been separated from text and is unavailable to current online viewers. Operational leaders may want to consider how important a role the printed newspaper plays in contributing to a reliable, physical archive of campus history.

**Audience Awareness.** Participants in this research discussed how students, faculty and alumni were accustomed to reading a printed student newspaper, sometimes unaware that the student newspaper program maintained a website. One participant described having to use printed promotional posters in campus hallways to make students aware of the student newspaper website. As was the case for historical archiving,

interview participants in this study did not claim to be technical experts and said they lacked skills in some areas – such as search engine optimization, online analytics, and social media promotion – needed to increase audience awareness of online content.

Conversely, however, interview participants suggested that reducing print production created a more fertile opportunity for students to experience breaking news reporting and thereby grow their online audience. Participants described campus events that could be covered more immediately through the newspaper website and social media platforms, including student protests, sexual assault cases, faculty misconduct, the controversial renaming of a yoga class and, ironically, the theft of printed newspapers.

The interview participants' observations about increasing audience awareness is consistent with published literature suggesting that focusing on online publishing can be educationally and occupationally beneficial for staff members of collegiate student newspapers. News consumption on mobile devices has changed the journalistic storytelling approach (Howe et al, 2017), and two-thirds of Americans get at least some news through social media ("News Use," 2017). Thus, major metropolitan newspapers have increased their emphasis on hiring reporters who possess digital reporting skills (World News Publishing Focus, 2017; Victor, 2017). Students who want professional newsroom jobs should be prepared to provide more than just text on paper when covering breaking news. Lynch (2015) argued that collegiate journalism lags behind the professional industry, which has developed more of an emphasis on breaking news coverage via website content and social media.

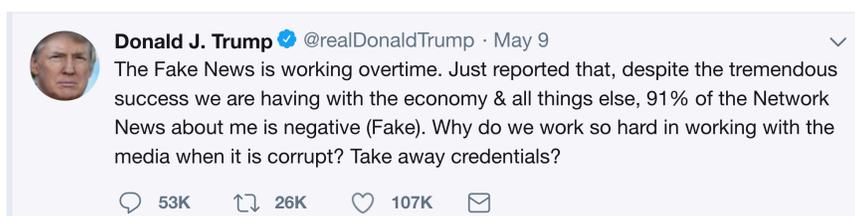
Operational leaders may want to consider whether reducing or eliminating print publication could actually have a positive impact on students' ability to report breaking

news on shorter deadlines and thereby increase audience awareness of the online student newspaper content. One challenge to an online-only approach is that some campus students, employees, and alumni do not use social media or view websites regularly, which means that some the newspaper's intended audience will be unaware of its content.

**Concerns and Future Directions.** Research participants for this study did not provide examples of administrators overtly attempting to censor student media. The selected faculty advisers said that upper-level administrators were more often concerned about student newspaper content that negatively affected the public relations image of the institution. This included administrators' ability to squash some potentially controversial content by refusing to be interviewed, thus preventing campus reporters from providing the balanced perspective needed to execute stories according to journalistic principles. The participants did, however, provide examples of funding cuts to the printed student newspaper, which in some cases seemed tied to coverage that reflected negatively on the campus image. Among the participants still supervising production of a print newspaper, there was no consensus about how long the printed product would survive. Research participants suggested that the sustainability of the printed newspaper would be determined partly by printing costs.

The research from this study was not entirely consistent with the current literature on journalism and censorship. President Donald Trump's frequent criticism of news media, such as his complaint that journalists are "dishonest, terrible people" (Cassidy, 2018), has triggered worldwide studies on global trends in journalism, with much of the literature indicating an increase in authoritarian attempts to control content. Figure 10 provides an example of Trump threatening to curb journalists' credentials. Literature

suggests a trickle-down effect to student media and journalism education. The Student Press Law Center (2018) described a nationwide trend among private and public schools “where the role of journalists is disrespected and student journalists are ordered to only present their schools in the most positive light” (para. 7). Participants in this study did not provide anecdotes of administrators’ blatant disrespect for journalism becoming a threat to the sustainability of the printed newspaper. They did, however, concur with the view that college administrators are increasingly likely to explore ways to discourage or suppress content that does not present campus in a favorable light.



*Figure 10.* A tweet by President Donald Trump suggested that news media coverage is corrupt.

The participants’ uncertainty on how long printed newspapers can survive was consistent with much recent literature from the professional realm. This uncertainty is often tied to funding.

Even the most pro-print publishers will tell you that, someday, the ‘cost of print’ and ‘revenue from print’ lines will intersect on an accountant’s projection and it’ll be time to stop the presses for good. The only question is when: Two years? Five? Ten? Thirty? (Benton, 2018b, para. 2)

Operational leaders and upper-level administrators may want to evaluate whether their campus can support printed student newspaper coverage that does not always provide a favorable view of administrative decisions and public relations efforts. Upper-

level administrators may also want to consider whether criticism of news media in general and refusals to be interviewed for student newspaper coverage wind up undermining the sustainability of the program.

### **Conclusions**

The current study presented information on the experiences of faculty-advisers at collegiate student newspapers in Kansas. Interviews yielded data about factors that may inform and influence the cessation of printed student newspapers. Existing research suggests that the newspaper industry as a whole is at a crossroads, with arguments being made that both favor and oppose the perpetuation of a printed product. The current study was designed to explore this phenomenon at the collegiate level in Kansas and add to existing research about the role of student newspapers. The experiences described in the current study may provide insight to operational leaders of student newspapers as they assess the sustainability of the printing and distribution of physical newspapers on their campuses.

**Implications for action.** Based on themes that emerged from this research study, the following are possible implications for factors that inform and influence the cessation of printed collegiate newspapers in Kansas:

*Credibility* - Responses in this study suggest that key stakeholders and audiences value the credibility of a print product. If the credibility of the student media program is a priority, printing costs may be worth the investment even as advertising revenue and readership numbers decline. If the print newspaper is no longer financially feasible, faculty may need to develop strategies to improve staff members' commitment to producing and editing high-quality online content that boosts credibility.

*Archiving* - Interviewees discussed how printed student newspapers provide an archived history of campus events. If operational leaders discontinue the print newspaper, alternatives for curating and archiving content from other student-media outlets could be established.

Research participants said their technical expertise in areas related to digital archiving was limited. Operational leaders may want to ensure that designated faculty members and newspaper editors possess necessary skills to maintain long-term digital archives, especially if there is no print product.

*Audience Awareness* - Participants described how emphasizing timely online publishing can provide academic benefits. Reducing or eliminating print production can potentially help staff members develop employable skills in covering breaking news and promoting social media content, which could also lead to a larger total audience for the newspaper.

Participants said they lacked technical expertise in generating audience engagement through social media and assessing audience trends through digital analytics. Operational leaders can assess whether training sessions and workshop opportunities would benefit faculty members and newspaper editors.

*Concerns and Future Directions* - Research participants in this study cited examples of administrators who sought to discourage student newspaper content that reflected negatively on the institution's public image. This problem appears frequently in published literature as well. A cooperative initiative among all key stakeholders might identify strategies by which the printed student newspaper can contribute to the mission and vision of the institution without sacrificing journalistic independence or integrity.

This cooperative effort might also help upper-level administrators evaluate their own willingness to allow or even support dissenting viewpoints that are freely distributed on campus.

**Recommendations for future research.** Findings from this research study suggest opportunities for additional research that may be valuable to student media operational leaders. For example, the historical archiving of campus events emerged as a concern for student newspapers that cease print production. Future studies could focus solely on institutions that have already eliminated print production of student newspapers and whether they have a long-term digital archiving plan in place beyond the student newspaper's content management system. Such a study could identify best practices for student newspapers that want to switch to an online-only format without losing valuable historical artifacts.

Also, because this study focused on current faculty-advisers who supervise existing student newspaper operations, it contains no specific research or feedback about institutions that have dropped student newspaper operations entirely, both in print and online. Based on KCM membership data, more than half of the Kansas institutions fitting this description since 2004-2005 are two-year public colleges. Future research could study the consequences of completely eliminating student newspaper operations on these campuses.

Finally, future research could focus on non-print student media outlets that potentially fill a void left by the absence of a printed student newspaper. For example, the increasing popularity of public relations within many collegiate media programs has led to the creation of student-led PR and advertising agencies. These agencies can

provide staff members with opportunities to design and distribute printed materials.

Also, for institutions that publish a yearbook or magazine as part of their student media opportunities, future research could concentrate on how those publications fulfill campus archival needs and provide hands-on training in print production.

**Concluding remarks.** The experiences of veteran faculty-advisers of collegiate student newspapers in Kansas were examined in this study. Six interview participants, representing two-year public, four-year private, and four-year public institutions, described changes in the production and distribution of printed student newspapers on their campuses. They also described stakeholders' attitudes toward the print newspaper and student newspaper operations. Participants expressed concerns about the credibility and public awareness of student newspapers that adopt an online-only format, and they had questions about how effectively a reliable archive of campus history can be sustained without print production. Those observations were echoed in a review of existing literature. According to interviewees, increasing emphasis on online publishing and social media platforms had a positive impact in helping students gain valuable skills in covering breaking news. Although the selected research participants thought printed student newspapers can contribute to the curriculum and mission of an institution, they generally acknowledged that the future of print distribution on Kansas campuses is tenuous.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: IRB Request



#### IRB Request

Date Feb. 15, 2018

IRB Protocol Number \_\_\_\_\_  
(IRB use only)

#### I. Research Investigator(s) (students must list faculty sponsor)

Department(s) Education

	Name	Signature	
1.	<u>Dave Bostwick</u>	<u><i>Dave Bostwick</i></u>	Principal Investigator
2.	<u>Dr. Marc Childress</u>	<u><i>Marcus Childress</i></u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor
3.	<u>Dr. Li Chen-Bouck</u>	<u><i>Li Chen-Bouck</i></u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor
4.	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor

Principal investigator contact information

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Email	<u>DavidABostwick@stu.bakeru.edu</u>
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Faculty sponsor contact information

Phone	<u>913-344-1235</u>
Email	<u>marcus.childress@bakeru.edu</u>

Expected Category of Review:  Exempt  Expedited  Full  Renewal

#### II. Protocol Title

An Exploration of Factors That Inform and Influence the Cessation of Print Publication

for Kansas Collegiate Student Newspapers

### III. Summary:

The following questions must be answered. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience and about the protections that have been included to safeguard participants from harm.

A. In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry is to explore factors that inform and influence the decision of whether to continue or cease production and distribution of printed student newspapers on collegiate campuses in Kansas. The qualitative study will involve phenomenological reflection on data collected from interviews with a study group of faculty advisers for collegiate student newspapers in Kansas.

B. Briefly describe each condition, manipulation, or archival data set to be included within the study.

To support the need for this qualitative study, Kansas Collegiate Media (KCM) membership data from 2003-04 and 2016-17 will be compared in the conclusion of the literature review. This membership data was publicly available on the KCM website and has been archived as well. The data shows that of the 32 colleges and universities that were members in 2003-04, only 16 of those schools remain members today. My primary research will involve qualitative interviews with selected Kansas Collegiate Media advisers.

### IV. Protocol Details

A. What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

The research for this study will be guided by a grand tour question; interview subjects will initially be asked to describe changes to print delivery methods that they have overseen in the past five years. Based on participants' responses to this initial grand tour question, I will follow up with semi-open ended questions from the protocol topics and questions included with this request. The protocol is comprised of 12 topics related to the sustainability of printed collegiate newspapers.

B. Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical, or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

No risks will be associated with the study.

C. Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

No stress to subjects will be involved.

D. Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

Subjects will not be deceived or misled in any way.

E. Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

No personal or sensitive information will be used.

F. Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

No offensive, threatening or degrading materials will be used.

G. Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

Each participant interview will last approximately one hour.

H. Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

For this research study, the pool for potential participants will be limited to faculty advisers whose schools are members of Kansas Collegiate Media (KCM) and who have overseen changes to news-delivery methods in the five years preceding this research study, including reducing the number of print issues or eliminating print production entirely to focus on online publication. Furthermore, the advisers selected for this study are all current or former KCM officers. KCM advisers approved participation during their fall 2017 retreat. I have included a letter from KCM President Stacy Sparks as documentation of the organization's support for my research. I have also included the text of an email that will be sent to potential participants.

I. What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

Selected advisers have the option to decline participation and are under no pressure to consent to interviews. I have agreed to share highlights of portions of my research, especially the literature review, as part of a future KCM conference. No inducements will be offered to participants.

J. How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

Selected participants are all officers in the KCM organization, which provided unanimous support for this research project during the fall 2017 adviser retreat. I have included the text that I will send to selected advisers via email to formally request their participation. Potential participants are under no obligation to participate. I will be sure that I have an individual participant's consent before I set up an interview.

K. Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

So that individual faculty advisers will not be readily identifiable, individual names will be changed to Adviser 1, Adviser 2, Adviser 3, etc.

L. Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer? If so, explain.

No

M. What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with the data after the study is completed?

Because the study involves journalism, which is public by nature, it is not likely to yield confidential data. To ensure confidentiality in any possible scenario, however, all data files related to interviews and identification of subjects will be password protected. Data will be stored on a laptop computer along with an external backup drive for a minimum of three years after publication. Participants and schools will not be identified by name. Participant names will be changed to Adviser 1, Adviser 2, Adviser 3, etc.

N. If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

No risks are associated with the study.

O. Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

(Repeated from answer III B)

To support the need for this qualitative study, Kansas Collegiate Media (KCM) membership data from 2003-04 and 2016-17 will be compared at the conclusion of the literature review. This membership data was publicly available on the KCM website and has been archived as well. The data shows that of the 32 colleges and universities that were members in 2003-04, only 16 of those schools remain members today. My primary research will involve qualitative interviews with Kansas Collegiate Media advisers.

## Appendix B: IRB Letter of Approval



### *Baker University Institutional Review Board*

March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Dear David Bostwick and Marc Childress,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.

Please inform this Committee or myself when this project is terminated or completed. As noted above, you must also provide IRB with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If you have any questions, please contact me at [npoell@bakeru.edu](mailto:npoell@bakeru.edu) or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nathan D. Poell".

*Nathan Poell, MA*  
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee  
Scott Crenshaw  
Jamin Perry, PhD  
Susan Rogers, PhD  
Joe Watson, PhD

## Appendix C: KCM Letter of Permission



SOUTHWESTERN  
COLLEGE

November 3, 2017

Dave Bostwick  
1661 Affirmed Lane  
Prairie Grove, AR 72753

Dave,

The members of Kansas Collegiate Media have agreed to participate in your research project: "Exploration of Factors That Inform and Influence the Cessation of Print Publication for Kansas Collegiate Student Newspapers."

Your research project, which is part of your thesis for your Doctor of Education in Leadership in Higher Education degree, was discussed during our advisers retreat on Sept. 23, 2017. The members of our organization understand that this is a qualitative study and that it is your plan to interview selected KCM advisers about recent changes they have made to their newspaper operations, especially related to print publishing and distribution.

Our membership is committed to participating in the interview process during our spring conference April 8 and 9 in Wichita. We valued your contributions as a member of our organization from 1996 to 2017, and we look forward to contributing to your research project and reading the report after you have analyzed the data.

Sincerely,

Stacy Sparks  
[stacy.sparks@sckans.edu](mailto:stacy.sparks@sckans.edu)  
Associate professor of journalism  
Southwestern College  
100 College St.  
Winfield, KS 67156  
620.229.6320

President, **Kansas Collegiate Media**

## Appendix D: Correspondence for Participant Consent

Dear ???????,

I am a former Kansas Collegiate Media member. I now teach at the University of Arkansas and serve as the primary administrator for online journalism courses. I am working toward completing a doctoral degree in higher education leadership from Baker University.

During their fall 2017 retreat, advisers for Kansas Collegiate Media voiced support for a research study I am conducting on the long-term sustainability of collegiate print newspapers in Kansas. I have also informally discussed with you the possibility of your participation in the study. Now I am sending you a more formal request.

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry is to explore factors that inform and influence the decision of whether to continue or cease production and distribution of printed student newspapers on collegiate campuses in Kansas. The qualitative study will involve phenomenological reflection on data collected from interviews with a study group of KCM faculty advisers.

For this research study, the pool for potential participants will be limited to faculty advisers whose schools are members of Kansas Collegiate Media (KCM) and who have overseen changes to news-delivery methods in the five years preceding this research study, including reducing the number of print issues or eliminating print production entirely to focus on online publication. Furthermore, the advisers selected for this study are all current or former KCM officers. So that individual faculty advisers will not be readily identifiable, individual names will be changed to Adviser 1, Adviser 2, Adviser 3, etc.

You have the option to decline participation and are under no pressure to consent to be interviewed.

I plan to conduct most interviews during the upcoming KCM Spring Conference on April 8-9 in Wichita. I have agreed to share highlights of portions of my research as part of a future KCM conference.

At your earliest convenience, please respond to this email and let me know whether you consent to participate in the study.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dave Bostwick  
Baker University Graduate Student