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# Tampa welcomes fans to the, well, Subdued Bowl

## With a down economy and an unconventional matchup, the Super Bowl doesn't have quite as much hoopla this year.

**By Patrik Jonsson** / Staff writer of *The Christian Science Monitor* from the January 29, 2009 edition

Tampa, Fla. - Billboards across Tampa Bay, host of Super Bowl XLIII, show big smiling faces under the slogan: "Get your game face on." At a time of economic slump, and with an oddball matchup on the gridiron, that municipal appeal has suddenly taken on unintended meaning for residents like Leonard Johnson, hawking T-shirts to the empty streets of Tampa's Ybor City neighborhood Tuesday night. "I'm nervous," he said. "This place should have been a party by now, and it's not."

Coming only a few months after Tampa hosted the worst-rated World Series of all time, the lead-up to the Super Bowl has been noticeably subdued. That's testing not only the game faces of the area's boosters, but also a National Football League that, some critics say, has sacrificed fan passion for a 15-year effort to achieve competitive parity among the teams.

"Pressure on Tampa Bay is especially high for this Super Bowl, especially since they're still smarting from the World Series," says Robert Thompson, director of the Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture in Syracuse, N.Y. "And there's less of a sense of arrogance around the league this year."

Still, success at the Super Bowl level is relative. The NFL's national television contracts alone mean that all 32 teams are profitable before the regular season's first downs are even played. And no matter which teams are playing in the Super Bowl, or where it's held, Americans have long ago planned their parties for Sunday.

"I promise you: There's not going to be one cocktail shrimp left in America after this week," says Larry DeGaris, a sports marketing professor at the University of Indianapolis.

Tampa's attractions

Hosting the Super Bowl for the fourth time in 25 years, Tampa Bay's mix of historic streetcars, Cuban districts, and rowdy beaches is in many ways a perfect destination. The 78 degree heat



had frostbitten Pittsburgh Steelers players smiling on media day. And the city plies much of its trade around the young male demographic that has kept the Super Bowl one of the last enduring ratings successes in a deeply fractured television market.

Still, the firm PricewaterhouseCoopers shifted downward the revenue estimates for spending by visitors – from \$180 million to \$150 million. And StubHub, an online, secondary market for tickets, predicted that game-day tickets will be sold at about face value (which is \$1,000). As of last week, the average price on StubHub for a Super Bowl ticket was \$2,552, about 28 percent below last year's street price for the Patriots-Giants matchup.

Also, Playboy and Sports Illustrated have both canceled parties. And the much-anticipated "lingerie bowl" was also sacked due to lack of sponsorship. Even the commercials are expected to "be more Clydesdales than [potty humor]," says Professor DeGaris.

After revising its fundraising goal from \$8 million to \$7 million, the Tampa host committee met its final obligations last week. "This is actually a great year to host the game, in this economy," argues Reid Sigman, the host committee director. "There are a lot of cities around the US that would love this kind of boost right now."

So far, Mr. Sigman is holding to his prediction of 100,000 visitors. There's little doubt that Steeler Nation will travel and get some beach time in before waving their Terrible Towels. But despite the charge of excitement around the Arizona Cardinals, which are making their first Super Bowl appearance, their fans seemed more reluctant to leave the sunny Southwest.

"The notion that only one Cardinals fan is showing up isn't true," says Gary Williams, a mechanic in the Tampa area. "There's actually two."

For Mr. Johnson, the T-shirt hawker, Tampa Bay is showing its limits as a destination. "The fact is that this isn't Miami," he says. "This is an offshoot city."

Is parity a good thing?

But critics say the city didn't get much help from the NFL's focus on parity. In the past 10 years, seven teams (including the Cardinals) have made it to the Super Bowl that had never been there before.

That the Cardinals slipped through the regular season with a 9-7 record and then got hot in the playoffs shows a basic weakness in the NFL's attempts to level the playing field, in the opinion of Football Outsiders president Aaron Schatz. College football's arcane Bowl Championship Series selection, the argument goes, is better suited to make sure that a fluke isn't crowned champion.

"If the NFL has now arrived at a strange point where regular-season performance does nothing to predict playoff performance ... is that bad for the league?" Mr. Schatz asked in an exchange that appeared in an online column by Sports Illustrated's Peter King.

But that idea, argues San Francisco Chronicle columnist Ray Ratto, contradicts the very appeal of professional football – the unpredictability that gives, say, Philadelphia Eagles fans the pleasure of whining through the postseason.

"A lot of people are used to the college-football template, where the only teams that can win are from a field of four to six," Mr. Ratto says. "That's not what pro sports pretends to be. You can't have the thrill of surprise and a preordained verdict at the same time."

Even if the Super Bowl doesn't quite live up to its billing this year, at least Tampa will have helped give a troubled nation a brief reprieve on Sunday, says Sigman of the host committee.

"This is still something the whole country can take part in and give people a few hours to forget everything else and collectively be here," he says.

Find this article at:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0129/p01s04-ussc.html>

## 'Hartford Courant' Cuts Last Major League Sports Beat

By Joe Strupp

Published: January 22, 2009 11:22 AM ET

**NEW YORK** In a sign of what may become a trend for major newspapers seeking cost cuts, The Hartford Courant has dropped its last major sports beat writer position.

Jeff Otterbein, sports editor, said the paper will not send a reporter to cover the Boston Red Sox spring training, which begins next month, and will not staff a writer for their games.

"I just don't have a beat writer to cover it anymore," he said, noting last year's Sox scribe, Jeff Goldberg, took a buyout. "For the first time, we will not cover them home and away."

Goldberg's departure was part of a significant cut last September that reduced the paper's staffing by 25%. For sports, it marked the final cut in a beat coverage approach that had provided staff writers for the Red Sox, New England Patriots, New York Yankees and New York Giants in past years.

Given the Courant's geographic positioning, equally between New York and Boston, the paper had sought to provide independent coverage of teams in both markets.

But, in 2007 the cuts began when the paper stopped staffing beat writers for both the Giants and Yankees. This past football season, the Patriots were not covered by a Courant beat writer for the first time. The Red Sox cutback will mean no major league beats are staffed by the paper.

"Now we will go to occasional games," Otterbein said about the Red Sox. "but not all of them. I am in the process of figuring it all out." He said he may simply use AP stories or try to work with other newspapers, but stressed nothing had been decided.

He noted that the paper sent three people to the Super Bowl last year because it was the Giants and the Patriots, two of its local teams.

Otterbein said the cutback in travel alone for a baseball beat is about \$60,000, on top of the writer's salary. He will still have a staff of 10 writers and editors and will continue focusing on local college sports and high school athletics.

"We put a lot of resources into UConn football and basketball," he said. "That is a major part of our coverage."

At least one other New England newspaper has also pulled back Red Sox coverage this year, the Portland (Maine) Press Herald. Interim sports editor Mike Lowe said the paper will not send anyone to spring training for the first time in many years. "We would always go to opening day and I don't think they will this year," he said. "It is the travel and overnight costs, just a way to save money."

Lowe had also served as a Patriots beat writer for nine years, but said that beat will be gone as well. "I would go down to Foxboro once a week and cover all the home games and quite a few road games," he said. "I was told we were not going to do that this year."

Ironically, at least one paper that had already cut Red Sox and Patriots coverage, is planning to restore those beats this year. The Telegraph of Nashua, N.H., did not cover the two popular New England teams in 2008, but cut other areas -- including sports pages and production positions -- to restore the funding for this year.

"We are retooling the section to get more toward content-gathering," said Alan Greenwood, sports editor. "We did not do it in 2008, we will in 2009."

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## Incomplete Passes? Fewer Requests for Super Bowl Media Credentials This Year

By Joe Strupp

Published: January 28, 2009 11:00 AM ET

**NEW YORK** The number of media credentials issued for the Super Bowl is down for the first time in recent memory, according to the National Football League, which revealed there were simply fewer requests.

Although there are more media outlets receiving credentials than ever before -- 633 this year compared to 576 last year -- the number of specific credentials requested dropped from 4,786 for last year's game in Phoenix, Ariz., to 4,589 for Sunday's game in Tampa, Fla.

"The reason there are fewer individuals credentialed than last year -- though still the second-greatest number in Super Bowl history -- can be attributed to the staffing decisions of the individual organizations," Michael Signora, NFL spokesman, stated in an e-mail.

NFL officials said they did not keep records of credentials for all 42 previous Super Bowls, but believed this was the first time the credential demand had dropped.

Several newspapers that regularly send numerous staffers to the game admitted they had cut back due to economics. At least two major newspapers, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and the Hartford Courant, are not sending any journalists to the game for the first time ever.

"Financial considerations and without a [local] team in it, we decided not to go," said Chris Vivlamore, Journal-Constitution pro sports editor. "Part of it is the cost and we want to do more local stories."

Courant sports editor Jeff Otterbein, whose paper stopped staffing the New England Patriots for the first time this past fall, offered similar reasons: "There are certainly plenty of Super Bowl stories out there," he said, citing wire options. "Without a team from our area involved, the decision was made not to go."

This year's game has the Pittsburgh Steelers playing the Arizona Cardinals.

Other newspapers from markets outside Pittsburgh and Arizona that routinely send several staffers to the big game said they have cut back the number this year for financial and other reasons.

The Los Angeles Times, which sent four people to last year's game in Arizona between the Patriots and New York Giants, is sending only two this year, according to Sports Editor Randy Harvey.

"Part of it is economics," he said, adding that other Tribune papers can provide some coverage as well. "There has been more of an effort not to do a lot of duplication."

Harvey estimated it costs his paper about \$3,500 to send someone to the game for a week.

The Chicago Tribune, which sent four people to the 2008 game, is cutting back to three according to Sports Editor Mike Kellams, while the Dallas Morning News is also down one, from five to four.

"It is an expense and that is a lot of the consideration," said the Tribune's Kellams. "But it has not become one person, yet."

Morning News Sports Editor Garry Leavell said he might have cut his staffing even further but wanted to have an extra writer there in case Dallas Cowboys' legend Bob Hayes is among those chosen for the Pro Football Hall of Fame, an announcement that will occur this week.

"It certainly bolsters the reasons for us to have our own folks there," he said.

But not everyone is cutting back. Editors from The New York Times and USA Today said their coverage will include the same

credentialing, with the Times revealing it has 11 such game passes. "If there are fewer credentials being issued, it is just a reflection of the industry," said Times Sport Editor Tom Jolly.

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## AJR Features

From AJR, **December/January 2009** issue

# Is There Life After Newspapers?

*FEBRUARY/MARCH PREVIEW » Thousands upon thousands of newspaper journalists have lost their jobs in recent years in endless rounds of layoffs and buyouts. What happens in the next act?*

**Related reading:** [The MBA Option](#)

By **Robert Hodierne**

Erica Smith has a job as a graphics designer for the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#). At least for now. There are few journalists in America who know as well as Smith how tenuous a steady newspaper job is these days. For the last year and a half, she has spent 10 or 12 hours a week at an old oak table in her sixth-floor loft with her Mac laptop, a bottle of Pepsi and her cat, tallying the fallen: 18 more jobs cut at the [Tallahassee Democrat](#), 15 at the [Desert Sun](#), 13 at the [Jackson Sun](#). And the list goes on and on. Eight at the [Visalia Times-Delta](#), 12 at the [Statesman Journal](#), 125 at the [Virginian-Pilot](#), 60 at the [Asheville Citizen-Times](#).

Smith tallied 15,554 newspaper job cuts for 2008, and she was still updating in January. Her research is artfully rendered on a Web page called "[paper cuts](#)" and appears to be the only such comprehensive list.

"I started out because I was curious about the number of cuts. Now it's because I have too many friends who've been laid off," says Smith, 32, who got into the newspaper business right after graduating from Northwest Missouri State University.

Her tally, which she builds from news releases, wire reports, blogs and tips from colleagues, includes all newspaper jobs, not just those in the newsroom. But she estimates half of those 15,000 cuts were journalists. And that means the newsroom population of American papers shrank by about 15 percent last year, down from 52,000 at the start of the year. That's three times larger than the single greatest annual newsroom employment decrease since 1978, when the American Society of Newspaper Editors began making estimates of the editorial workforce.

But it's worse than that. Smith cautions that her count actually understates the total because many newspapers don't announce layoffs. What's more, her total does not include jobs lost through attrition.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' count for all newspaper jobs – from reporter to delivery truck driver – shows the payroll shrinking from 336,000 at the start of the year to 313,600 through October, a drop of 22,400 positions.

Smith, a cheerful woman who laughs easily, finds this all a bit depressing. "I can only update so many at a time without wanting to jump off the ninth floor of the building I live in," she says, with not a trace of a laugh. The 2,000 layoffs that [Gannett](#) announced during the holiday season did nothing to improve her mood and kept her swamped for a week.

All of which raises a question: What happens to all of those laid-off and bought-out journalists? Is there life after newspapers? To find out, I posted a questionnaire about the fate of those who have lost their newspaper jobs.

A word of caution here: This was not a scientific poll, because there is no comprehensive list of those who've been laid off from which to draw a random sample. Instead, AJR posted a link to the questionnaire on its [homepage](#). I advertised on [Journalismjobs.com](#) and posted word on every online venue I could find aimed at journalists, including Jim Romanesko's popular [Web site](#).

In the end, 595 people who say they left newspaper editorial jobs in the last decade under circumstances that were not totally voluntary filled out the questionnaire. Since this wasn't a random sample but rather a self-selected group, there's no way to know whether this group accurately represents the entire universe of people who have been forced out of news-papering. But it offers some interesting insights.

Many of the respondents have found new jobs. It's too early to tell about those who lost their jobs within the past year, but for those who did so between 1999 and 2007:

- Just under 36 percent said they found a new job in less than three months. Add those who say they freelance full time, and the total jumps to 53 percent.
- Less than 10 percent say it took them longer than a year.
- Only a handful – 6 percent – found other newspaper jobs. The rest are doing everything from public relations to teaching to driving a bus and clerking in a liquor store.

While they've found work, many of the people with new jobs are making less money. The midpoint salary range for their old jobs was \$50,000 to \$59,000. Those who listed salaries for their new jobs were a full salary band lower – \$40,000 to \$49,000.

Of the people who volunteered their old newspaper salary, only 2 percent made less than \$20,000 a year. Of the people who gave me their new salaries, that number shot up to 17 percent. The age of

those at the bottom of the salary scale has changed surprisingly as well. The median age of those who made less than \$20,000 at their old newspaper job was 24. The median age of those now making less than \$20,000 is 48.

Here's another surprise: While the overwhelming majority – 85 percent – say they miss working at a paper, they are often happier in their new jobs. Sixty-two percent tell us they had been satisfied in their old newspaper jobs; 78 percent report being satisfied in their new jobs. (The bus driver and liquor store clerk are not finding much job satisfaction, however.)

So it's safe to say there is life after newspapers. But it's not always the life the journalists had expected.

Take, for instance, Theresa Conroy.

Conroy, 46, wanted to be a reporter from the get-go. "At 12 years old I can remember saying to my mother that I wanted to be a newspaper reporter," she says. "I was nosy, and I always wanted to know everything first."

Conroy estimates that 90 percent of the journalists of her generation felt the same way she did about the field: "I don't think I ever considered anything else."

For the last five years of her career, Conroy covered cops and criminal courts for the [Philadelphia Daily News](#), inevitably described as a scrappy tabloid living in the shadow of its larger sibling, the [Inquirer](#). In all, she worked 12 years at the Daily News. A former Knight Ridder paper, the Daily News, along with the Inquirer, was purchased by a group of local investors in 2006.

Conroy says her stint at the paper was great fun – the colorful characters, the scoops, the deadline pressure, the colleagues. But toward the end, with a shrinking staff and a shrinking paper, "most of the time we felt beaten down," she says.

"I was profoundly heartbroken by journalism," she says. "It became less and less, and I started to love it less and less."

To deal with the stress in her life and to help her quit smoking, Conroy took up yoga. She became a part-time yoga instructor, shaking the "stink off" from her grim day job by teaching clients how to relax.

In January 2007, Conroy volunteered to be laid off; she took the 31 weeks of pay and walked away. For the past nine months she's had her own yoga studio in Philadelphia's Roxborough section called Yoga on the Ridge, and she's "doing pretty well." She says the satisfaction she got from breaking a big story isn't nearly as great as the satisfaction she gets now helping an elderly patient with Parkinson's disease do something simple, like stand up.

But, she adds, "I can't quite shake the crime reporter persona. I may be the only yoga teacher who says 'fuck' in class."

As for journalism, she says, "I have to say, overwhelmingly and surprisingly, I don't miss it... I'm very happy at what I'm doing."

**B**ut for every Conroy, who doesn't miss it and has found meaningful work, there is a Joseph Demma. Demma, 65, is purely old school in the tough-talking, hard-living New York tradition.

"I first wanted to be a reporter in high school," he says. "I watched a TV show called 'Night Beat.' There was a reporter who'd sit over his typewriter with a fedora hat and a cigarette in his mouth, and he'd go around helping people by writing about them."

Demma started as a copy boy at [Newsday](#) in 1965. He had a good run. He ended up working on the investigative team run by the legendary Bob Greene, who gave the young Demma this advice as he went on his first out-of-town trip for Newsday: "You're going to be judged by how much money you spend." It was the good old days. Greene wasn't telling Demma to scrimp.

As an investigative reporter and later editor, he had a hand in three Pulitzer Prize-winning projects. But hard living caught up with him, and in 1998 he left Newsday and went to Reno, Nevada, which is not at the top of everyone's list of places to go to straighten out your life. But he did. In Reno he taught at the University of Nevada and did freelance reporting and investigating. After stints in California at papers in Modesto and Sacramento, he moved to Florida to be near his elderly mother. In 2004 he took over as investigative editor of the Tribune Co.-owned [South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#) in Fort Lauderdale. "FEMA, Legacy of Waste," a series he oversaw, was a Pulitzer finalist in 2006.

Then on July 18, 2008, the day before he was to start vacation, Demma was laid off. Seven weeks' pay, health insurance until October, and that was it. He's been without full-time work ever since.

"It's tough to get a job when you're 65," he says. "And there are fewer and fewer jobs out there."

When he's not riding his silver Yamaha V-Star Silverado motorcycle, he does some part-time investigative work for lawyers. But he'd really like to get some newspaper work; three days a week on a copy desk would be fine. Otherwise, he says, "I may have to become a greeter at Wal-Mart."

But he has no desire to go back to newspapering full time. "If you were to ask me to go back into that pit again, I'd say, 'No thanks,'" he says. "I thank God I'm not 40 years old with two kids in high school that I have to put through college."

On the brighter side, a year ago his heart was in such rotten shape doctors had to put in a stent. Now, he says, "My health has never been better. My blood pressure is down 25 points. I exercise."

**G**enerally, journalists Demma's age have a harder time finding work than their younger colleagues. For those laid off between 1999 and 2007 who responded to the questionnaire, journalists who needed more than a year to find a job averaged 51 years old. Those who found work in less than three months averaged 46.

But try telling that to Chris Jackson.

Jackson, 30, graduated in 2000 from the University of Arizona as a journalism major. After a stint at the [Arizona Daily Star](#) in Tucson, he took a job at the [Daily Breeze](#) in Torrance, California. Jackson remembers that February 28, 2008, was an especially busy day, so he was surprised to be called to the paper's human resources office. There he found his editor and the head of HR for the Los Angeles Newspaper Group, which includes the Daily Breeze.

"'We're sorry,' they told me," Jackson recalls. He was one of six let go that day, the Leap Year Six, they call themselves. He was given four weeks' pay and health insurance for three months. Jackson went back to work and finished his shift.

When he didn't find work right away, Jackson had to move back in with his parents in Albuquerque. He has applied for sports information jobs at several universities. One person he interviewed with told him, "Frankly, I don't think newspaper people have the skills to do what we do."

Jackson has applied to be a substitute teacher while he figures out "what I want to do."

Another young casualty of the collapse of the American newspaper business is A. Dominic Efferson, 29, a 2007 graduate of Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. He majored in visual journalism, "the journalism of the future," Efferson says.

In January 2008, he got a job at California's Eureka Reporter, an upstart daily in a town that already had a daily. For a time, the town of about 26,000 was on the short list of places with two daily newspapers. But it wasn't to last. In November, the paper closed, throwing Efferson and 20 other journalists out of work.

"It had its ups and downs, but I totally loved it," Efferson says. But now he's "kicking the idea around whether I need to be in a newsroom right now. I've been kicking the idea around of joining the Peace Corps.

"I guess," he concludes, "it was the wrong time to get into the newspaper industry."

**S**ometimes companies that lay people off provide the services of an outplacement firm to help the newly jobless find new work. John Challenger is chief executive officer of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, the oldest outplacement company in the country.

"Everyone hopes there's an agent out there who will find a job for them," Challenger says. "One of the first key hurdles to get over is there is no agent who'll find them a job. They have to find it themselves... The world doesn't call you, you've got to call it."

Not surprisingly, Challenger points journalists toward jobs that require strong writing skills. "Journalists are good at writing," he says. "That might mean writing books, it might mean writing for company publications of one kind or another, it might be communications more broadly – marketing communications." He also thinks journalists are "generally more intellectual" than most people. That's on the plus side. The downside Challenger sees in journalists is "a lot of time journalists are more internally focused." He tells clients to "connect with lots and lots of your brethren, because the

best way to find a new position is to follow your compatriots to their places." And get out in the community. "Go to lunches," he says.

Challenger advises out-of-work newspaper people to "get a fast start. Don't think about it too long. A lot of people spend a lot of time thinking about what they want to do next instead of getting started. They're waiting for an epiphany about what to do next."

And he says he tells journalists weighing a new career to think hard about that. "I want him or her to think whether he really was sick and tired of journalism," he says. "If they get into a new field, they're competing against 22-year-olds."

But when they do change fields, some find it a good thing. "Sometimes you've been wishing to do something new for a long time, and the status quo is hard to break out of," he says. "It can be a release, liberation."

In the survey I asked the former newspaper staffers if being laid off was an opportunity they'd been looking for. About 40 percent said that wasn't true at all, but for the rest, it was either absolutely true or had at least some ring of truth.

**F**or 18 years, Joe Grimm was the recruiter for the [Detroit Free Press](#). Talk about a job with a limited future these days. Grimm, 54, accepted a buyout last July and left the paper the following month. With his two boys grown, Grimm says, "I had the luxury of making less money."

Grimm says journalists must "become much better entrepreneurs."

As he has.

Grimm supports himself working as a visiting editor in residence at Michigan State University; editing at a Web site for Native Americans ([reznnews.org](#)); editing teaching guides for the Wall Street Journal classroom edition; and writing the "Ask the Recruiter" column on the Poynter site. He put together a collection of those columns in a self-published book.

His advice to people who still have newspaper jobs: "I would use my working hours to prepare myself" for the uncertain future that lies ahead. And, he suggests, devote nights and weekends to learning new skills – database management, say, or PhotoShop.

Like Challenger, he sees writing as one of the strengths journalists bring to their next life. But he also says they're good at "analyzing and synthesizing and making pretty quick decisions about what can and should be done." He says he knows former journalists who now work for foundations to help establish whether their money is being well spent.

But at some point, Grimm says, you have to have a pretty serious conversation with yourself. "What is it you like to do? What are you best at?" One top editor he knows "finally did something really different. He bought a franchise for an after-school golf program. He really loved golf."

Sam Amico wasn't forced out of his newspaper job at Ohio's [Sandusky Register](#). He decided on his own that it was time to make a move. "In February, I turned 40, and I just didn't feel I had a future in newspapers," he says. "I saw what was going on around me, seeing friends taking buyouts or flat-out laid off."

He did what advice columns are always telling people to do: Find your passion and turn it into a job. In his case, the passion was the National Basketball Association. In 2001, while working as sports editor at Wheeling, West Virginia's [Intelligencer](#), he started a weekly, electronic NBA newsletter that he e-mailed to friends and contacts in the NBA.

"I'd come home after work each Tuesday and write it, and it'd be in people's mailboxes Wednesday," he says. The newsletter caught on. People started posting it on their blogs and passing it around. By 2005, he says, "I had so much information I thought I could do a Web site and write every day." He also had enough credibility with the NBA that he has credentials to cover all its games.

About that time he divorced and moved to Sandusky to stay near his four-year-old son. He voluntarily went from full time to part time at the Register and then quit altogether in May 2008 to see if he could make a living off his site, [probasketballnews.com](#).

He says advertising income from the site, which he built himself, "is very inconsistent," but he's making a living he describes as "decent." And though he loves what he's doing, like a lot of former newspaper people he misses the newsroom, the "smell of the ink and the paper. I felt more comfortable there than in my daily life."

Jay Westcott, 36, came to journalism a little later than most. He did a hitch in the Navy, then sold cars for awhile. But photography was his love. He worked his way through the Corcoran College of Art and Design by working on the picture desk at the [Washington Post](#) and later as a staff photographer at the [Washington Examiner](#). He was "churning out" three photo assignments a day. "You're not going to get the best work that way," he says. "I felt like I was stalling in my career a bit."

On January 25, 2007, he was laid off. He went to work almost immediately for the International Medical News Group but kept getting calls for freelance work. "You need to know what you like to do, what you want to do, and own it," he says. For him that was editorial portraiture. In August 2007, he quit his job and started freelancing full time.

"Sometimes it's stressful, waiting for the checks to come in," he says, echoing the lament of freelancers everywhere. But he's getting a steady stream of assignments. He shoots an average of six days a month for [Washingtonian magazine](#). In July, he had 22 shooting days altogether.

"For the most part I'm much happier," he says. "Honestly, looking back, [getting laid off] was the best thing that ever happened to me."

Joanne Cleaver, 50, spent the first 23 years of her career freelancing as a business writer in Chicago. During that time she did research for Working Woman magazine on the top 25 companies for women

executives. But she felt she needed to work as an editor at a newspaper. In 2004, she and her family moved to Milwaukee, where she became a deputy business editor of the [Journal Sentinel](#).

When she accepted a buyout, leaving the paper in August 2008, she says, "I was really well positioned... I never let go of my freelancing." Her advice to others still working at papers is a variation on Grimm's: "Trade on the position and title while you have it."

**W**hile Cleaver, Grimm, Amico and Westcott are all still in journalism after leaving newspapers, Patrick O'Driscoll and Mike Peluso took another popular escape route. They went into media relations. Both are happier men for it, and not because they're making a pile of money. They were both better paid in their newspaper jobs.

O'Driscoll, 56, had the kind of career young journalists dream about. After graduating from the University of Nevada, Reno in 1975, he went to work for Gannett's Reno Evening Gazette and Nevada State Journal. In 1983, Gannett was plucking reporters from its smaller papers across the country to staff its high-profile start-up, [USA Today](#). O'Driscoll was one of them. "It was a pretty good gig," he recalls. "Quite a lot of travel."

The six-month temporary assignment at USA Today lasted six years, but O'Driscoll missed the West and the mountains. In 1989, he became the roaming Western regional reporter for the [Denver Post](#). "They gave me \$500 more a year and a company car," he says.

Eight years later he was back with USA Today, opening the paper's Denver bureau. He covered the Columbine school shooting, the JonBenet Ramsey murder investigation, the Kobe Bryant saga, the Salt Lake City Olympics, Hurricane Katrina.

But about five years ago, O'Driscoll felt the paper's "philosophy and story focus" at the time didn't leave him the opportunity "to tell the stories I wanted to tell." On December 21, 2007, he took a buyout that included 48 weeks' pay. Days before, he had covered shootings at two Colorado churches that left five people dead.

"That was the last media herd thing I had to cover," he says, remembering the 12-degree weather as he stood outside waiting for a press conference. "All of that told me, 'Yeah, another reason I'm not going to miss this job.' "

In April 2008, four months after taking the USA Today buyout, he went to work as a public affairs specialist for the Intermountain Regional Headquarters of the National Park Service in Denver. "They were looking for a veteran journalist who could write and was adaptable," he says. In his new job he handles media relations and writes news releases and the employee newsletter as well as speeches.

"I thought I would have a period of mourning having left the newspaper business," he says. "I didn't." He adds, "There's something to be said for dialing it back. It's not as all-consuming as newspapering."

O'Driscoll says he has learned this overarching lesson: "Second and third acts can start in your mid-

50s."

Peluso, 59, started his second or third act in 2002 when he was laid off by the online division of the [St. Paul Pioneer Press](#), then owned by now-defunct Knight Ridder, where he'd worked in a variety of editing jobs since 1980, including, at one point, news editor. "That was the toughest job I ever had," he says. "Twelve hours a day without even a coffee break. Any meal I ate, I ate at my desk. It was brutal."

He got almost a year's severance pay and within a month was working as a writer and editor at the University of Minnesota Foundation, where he's now director of marketing analytics and technology. "It's a terrific place to work, and it's very stable," he says.

"I miss the newsroom that I left," Peluso adds. "I don't miss what I'm certain it became." He describes newspapers today as "continually reining in ambitions."

At newspapers today, "there's no other way to feel other than beat down, and I'm glad I'm not there to be beat down," he says. "My blood pressure is at least 20 points better than when I was in the newsroom. That's no lie," he says, adding, "Getting laid off six years ago was the best thing that ever happened to me."

"We were there at the top, the best time to be in it," he says. "The '80s were a blast, the '90s were a bit more stressful, but the last few years – who'd want to be there?"

Robert Hodieme ([robert@hodieme.com](mailto:robert@hodieme.com)) is an associate professor of journalism at the University of Richmond. He worked for 35 years at newspapers, wire services, radio and television news operations and on the Internet.

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Jan

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# [The Death of Journalism or the Death of Print?](#)

January 27, 2009 | by T.J. Donegan | Categories [Newspapers](#) |

That's not a distinction that should be easily pushed aside. I just read another interesting treatise from Owen Good [over at Kotaku.com](#), a video-game blog. Consider the source, you may say, but let the man's words stand on their own:

I feel keenly the distress of the [Rocky Mountain] News' editorial staff; I'm out of work, and few have harsher words for ownership and executives when their lack of vision, their quarter-to-quarter myopia or their fear cost working people their jobs. Over the News' decline you've seen all three in play. But I wish journalists would face up to the fact that the newspaper industry in its present form is not sustainable, and quit writing so many hand-wringing odes to it, which seem only to chastise an already disaffected readership that views journalism's public service as more message than mission.

...

Now, the writers and the photographers and the line editors are the only ones left to make the pitch. Instead, they're lecturing a constituency whose maximum possible contribution would be a daily 50 cent purchase. It's like trying to get to the moon with a bake sale.

The reality, and he's right on this, is that print journalism is dead. But all the harsh words Owen reserves for the journalism business should be directed solely at the print side of operations. Defending the future of daily journalism and print newspapers is perhaps an untenable position because we don't live in a society that works on a day-to-day schedule. The sun is always setting and rising across this planet so the mission never ends. Journalism has become a second-to-second game — a game for which print is a horribly outdated medium.

The “quarter-to-quarter myopia” accelerated the demise of the newspaper business, but it didn't ensure it. The growth of telecommunications and the Internet—coupled with the thirst for constant information that makes the news business possible in the first place—was what did it in. But that doesn't mean we should continue that short-sightedness and associate the death of our newspapers with the death of our journalism — or the death of our need for it.

I won't go on and on about the mission or the need for journalists in this world, but I won't say that the game will be any different or the journalism any less effective solely for the reason that the words get sent online and not on trucks. I don't think Owen feels quite that way, especially since he writes for a blog, but I don't think we should turn a deaf ear to those who don't exactly look at blogs and most web-only operations and see an Eden of journalistic integrity.

The sports media world has already begun to figure how to survive in this electronic age to some degree and the transition from a primarily print-oriented world to one where sites like Yahoo Sports, ESPN, and Fox Sports dominate the national news coverage in ways that USA Today, the NY Times, and LA Times never really could has been smooth.

Maybe it's because sports retain such a provincial nature in their fandom in ways other beats don't, but I don't exactly look at the future of this business and see too wild a change. The difference between good journalism and bad journalism has never been what the words are printed on, but the ideals and integrity of the person writing them. There are a lot of people who hold themselves to an extremely high journalistic standard—people far too talented to not find someone to pay for them to cover the news.

While they may be the people most loudly lamenting the state of the news business, they're also the same people that are going to wake up in 15 years, drive to work and find themselves in something eerily similar to our newsrooms now—just maybe without the 50 trucks and the warehouse-sized press in the back room.

Like I said, the sun's always rising somewhere.

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## Online **Metrics** INSIDER THE INSIDE LINE ON WEB MEASUREMENT AND METRICS

### The Metrics Of Social Bookmarking

Jodi McDermott, Jan 23, 2009 11:15 AM

Almost every Web site you go to these days has some sort of social sharing functionality implemented. So what is sharing or social bookmarking? According to Wikipedia, [social bookmarking](#) is a method for Internet users to store, organize, search, and manage bookmarks of Web pages on the Internet with the help of metadata.

That is a nice definition in the abstract, but to Web site publishers, sharing tools allow ALL of their content to travel freely versus selecting specific elements of content for further development into Web widgets (although investing in a Web widget strategy can reap benefits as well).

Most social bookmarking tools are displayed as buttons -- or what I like to refer to as "chicklets" on Web pages. A user goes to a Web site, chooses to share or bookmark the content and then clicks on the sharing icon to begin the process. Sharing might include posting the link to your Facebook or Twitter feed. This results in others seeing the posted link, which may include your comments as to why the link is important. Bookmarking the page to a social bookmarking destination of your choice allows you to retrieve the data at a later point in time and also assign meta data to the content for easy search and retrieval.

For the Web analyst, measuring the impact of social bookmarking can be challenging. Most of the social bookmarking tools provide analytics for the code that is placed on the publisher's Web site. In this case the analytics are self-contained in the sharing tool's portal and completely segregated from a site's Web analytics implementation. Specific metrics reported may include:

- Button views - the number of times the sharing icon (button) was viewed on the site.
- Bookmarks - the number of bookmark events.
- Bookmark rate - the number of bookmarks divided by button views.
- Emails - the number of times the content was shared via email.

The dimension of data that analysts should care about most is the actual content that is being shared and the staying power of that content. Is the content being shared and retrieved on the day it is shared -- or does it have longevity, continuing to be retrieved over a long period of time? Optimizing the implementation to drive bookmarks is also important -- does the placement of the sharing button on the page impact the number of bookmarks generated by users?

Web analytics tools, although not closely integrated with sharing platforms just yet, also provide the Web analyst with the ability to segment traffic by referrer. You may need to work with your

Web analytics provider to help create a custom visitor or session segment that isolates referrers like Digg, Delicious and others. Differentiating among traffic from sites that have bookmarking functionality, social applications and widgets poses additional challenges when trying to sub-segment which functionality is driving the traffic.

Sharing is just a preview of what distributing content across the Web will evolve to in the next few years. With the infrastructure in place, content can flow... well, just about anywhere.

January 27, 2009

## What Life Asks of Us

By [DAVID BROOKS](#)

A few years ago, a faculty committee at Harvard produced a report on the purpose of education. “The aim of a liberal education” the report declared, “is to unsettle presumptions, to defamiliarize the familiar, to reveal what is going on beneath and behind appearances, to disorient young people and to help them to find ways to reorient themselves.”

The report implied an entire way of living. Individuals should learn to think for themselves. They should be skeptical of pre-existing arrangements. They should break free from the way they were raised, examine life from the outside and discover their own values.

This approach is deeply consistent with the individualism of modern culture, with its emphasis on personal inquiry, personal self-discovery and personal happiness. But there is another, older way of living, and it was discussed in a neglected book that came out last summer called “On Thinking Institutionally” by the political scientist Hugh Heclo.

In this way of living, to borrow an old phrase, we are not defined by what we ask of life. We are defined by what life asks of us. As we go through life, we travel through institutions — first family and school, then the institutions of a profession or a craft.

Each of these institutions comes with certain rules and obligations that tell us how to do what we’re supposed to do. Journalism imposes habits that help reporters keep a mental distance from those they cover. Scientists have obligations to the community of researchers. In the process of absorbing the rules of the institutions we inhabit, we become who we are.

New generations don’t invent institutional practices. These practices are passed down and evolve. So the institutionalist has a deep reverence for those who came before and built up the rules that he has temporarily taken delivery of. “In taking delivery,” Heclo writes, “institutionalists see themselves as debtors who owe something, not creditors to whom something is owed.”

The rules of a profession or an institution are not like traffic regulations. They are deeply woven into the identity of the people who practice them. A teacher’s relationship to the craft of teaching, an athlete’s relationship to her sport, a farmer’s relation to her land is not an individual choice that can be easily reversed when psychic losses exceed psychic profits. Her social function defines who she is. The connection is more like a covenant. There will be many long periods when you put more into your institutions than you get out.

In 2005, Ryne Sandberg was inducted into the baseball Hall of Fame. Heclo cites his speech as an example of how people talk when they are defined by their devotion to an institution:

“I was in awe every time I walked onto the field. That’s respect. I was taught you never, ever disrespect your opponents or your teammates or your organization or your manager and never, ever your uniform. You make a great play, act like you’ve done it before; get a big hit, look for the third base coach and get ready to run the bases.”

Sandberg motioned to those inducted before him, “These guys sitting up here did not pave the way for the rest of us so that players could swing for the fences every time up and forget how to move a runner over to third. It’s disrespectful to them, to you and to the game of baseball that we all played growing up.

“Respect. A lot of people say this honor validates my career, but I didn’t work hard for validation. I didn’t play the game right because I saw a reward at the end of the tunnel. I played it right because that’s what you’re supposed to do, play it right and with respect ... . If this validates anything, it’s that guys who taught me the game ... did what they were supposed to do, and I did what I was supposed to do.”

I thought it worth devoting a column to institutional thinking because I try to keep a list of the people in public life I admire most. Invariably, the people who make that list have subjugated themselves to their profession, social function or institution.

Second, institutional thinking is eroding. Faith in all institutions, including charities, has declined precipitously over the past generation, not only in the U.S. but around the world. Lack of institutional awareness has bred cynicism and undermined habits of behavior. Bankers, for example, used to have a code that made them a bit stodgy and which held them up for ridicule in movies like “Mary Poppins.” But the banker’s code has eroded, and the result was not liberation but self-destruction.

Institutions do all the things that are supposed to be bad. They impede personal exploration. They enforce conformity.

But they often save us from our weaknesses and give meaning to life.

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## *PR Tactics and The Strategist Online*

### **Bonus online article -- Tweeting up with @THE\_REAL\_SHAQ: Phoenix Suns PR pros embrace Twitter, social media Jan.23, 2009**

By Ryan Zuk, APR

On Friday, Jan.16, the Phoenix Suns played the Minnesota Timberwolves before a crowd of nearly 20,000 at the US Airways Center in downtown Phoenix. Though this may seem standard for a regular season basketball game, there were 125 Suns fans in the crowd who participated in an NBA experience unlike any other, courtesy of the team's Tweetup promotion.

The Suns' PR and digital media personnel developed this idea based on their use of [Twitter](#) to communicate directly with fans. And the team's All-Star center, Shaquille O'Neil, also uses Twitter (@THE\_REAL\_SHAQ), amassing over 30,000 followers in just a few months.

An entire lexicon has grown within the Twitter community: messages are "Tweets," friends are "Tweeps" and organized events are known as "Tweetups." The list goes on. (*Tactics* covered Twitter extensively in its October 2008 issue.)

Amy Martin (@PhoenixSunsGirl), director of digital media and research for the Suns, saw the potential of Twitter as a communication tool. "As more Suns employees [began] signing up for Twitter, we started noticing the connections and conversations we were developing with fans of the team," she explains. "We also saw fans connecting with each other, and realized we were becoming part of an active online community that deserved some recognition."

Press coverage of Shaq's Twitter activity advanced Martin's focus on Twitter, and she began brainstorming ideas with colleagues including Suns PR manager Krystal Temple (@sunsprgirl).

Their Tweetup idea — the first organized Twitter event of its kind for an NBA franchise — developed quickly and was promoted on Twitter and PlanetOrange.net, the team's online fan community about a month in advance of the Jan. 16 Timberwolves game. It played out as follows:

**4 p.m.** Twitter fans who purchased discounted game tickets meet at Majerle's Sports Grill (named for former Suns star Dan Majerle) for appetizer and drinks specials.

**5 p.m.** Twitter fans walk two blocks to the US Airways Center for front-row seating to watch players warm up while socializing with each other and Suns personnel. Upon entry, fans receive a Suns/Twitter T-shirt and a Suns cinch sack.

**6:40 p.m.** Twitter fans and passers-by gather outside the arena at the Bud Light Paseo stage to watch the live pre-game broadcast. Martin is interviewed with Twitter fans surrounding her for a segment of the show highlighting the Tweetup.

**7 p.m.** Twitter fans are seated in a special section to watch the game.

**9:30 p.m.** Game concludes. (The Suns unfortunately lose to the Timberwolves 103-105.) Twitter fans are then escorted to the Suns' practice court for a lengthy and interactive Q-and-A with the team's president of basketball operations, general manager and five-time NBA champion Steve Kerr.

**10:30 p.m.** Twitter fans assemble with Kerr for a group photo, and then... "The Big Cactus" himself, [Shaquille O'Neil](#), walks quietly into the room. Cheers erupt as Tweeps notice Shaq, who takes his time shaking hands, high-fiving kids signing autographs, and taking pictures. This concludes the event, although some fans keep the camaraderie going after Shaq leaves by having drinks across the street at Alice Cooperstown restaurant.

The Suns Tweetup is an interesting case study in turning virtual connections into real ones, and the Suns, by most accounts, scored a slam dunk.

The team's social media presence beyond Twitter, upon cursory review of other pro teams, also earns leadership recognition. The Suns can be found on their own [YouTube channel](#), [Facebook page](#) and [Planet](#)

[Orange community](#) where fans can post videos and photos, comment on blogs and, of course, connect with one another.

“Interacting with fans across these online communities has opened up opportunities to do much more than just share scores and stats,” says Martin. “Fans are getting to know us personally as the people behind the brand, and everyone seems to be enjoying themselves in the process.”

The conversational approach also aids Temple with her local and national press relationships.

“I’ve found that a lot of my Twitter followers are reporters and broadcast partners,” she explains. “When I post a message about what I’m working on, I usually get replies expressing interest or offering additional sources and ideas. Twitter provides a nice, informal way to poll the masses and connect our stories with press who prefer this format of communication.”

Greg Esposito (@akaespo), senior content director for [Fanster](#), a local Phoenix sports entity, was among the press and bloggers that Martin and Temple invited to attend the Tweetup.

“I’m thoroughly impressed with the PR staff,” he says. “They rolled out the red carpet for a bunch of fans, and this event was one of the most impressive things I’ve ever seen a sports organization do.”

A good number of Suns fans are on Twitter, and to see the Suns PR team recognize, embrace and participate says a lot about their organization. They’re much further ahead of the social media curve as far as pro sports franchises go, and it really showed Friday night.”

Agreed. And as @PhoenixSunsGirl always says, “Go Suns!”

*Ryan Zuk, APR, is a media and analyst relations professional and Phoenix PRSA Chapter member. Zuk can be reached at [ryanzuk@gmail.com](mailto:ryanzuk@gmail.com) and @ryanzuk on Twitter. He also blogs at [criticalmasspr.com](http://criticalmasspr.com).*

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## Currently viewing and reading

### Long-Range Vision and Leadership Leads to Long-Term Clients

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Posted by [tgable](#) in January 27th 2009

The public relations profession faces many challenges in these hardscrabble times. Clients are holding tight, cutting their public relations budgets or simply saying goodbye. Competitors swoop in, looking for hints of weakness in a client-agency relationship, sometimes followed by business consulting and marketing firms that promote their tool kits as a means of surviving, if not growing, in the recession. What steps can an agency take to ensure that clients are incredibly pleased with the work being done, the results generated on their behalf and the agency relationship?

Based on results from working through three previous recessions (some better than others!), I've come to realize that success in client service and retention requires a manic sense of urgency to deliver short-term results combined with a disciplined approach to creativity and long-range planning. Smart agencies provide clients with ideas that will be generating results six, nine and twelve months into the future. We call this "horizon management." We want the client to envision us sailing together toward new and beneficial destinations.

Agencies can make this happen with an interactive team process. One approach is to hold regular meetings every Monday to update on all client activities. For long-term impact, use the meeting to brainstorm new ideas for each client on a rotating basis. Choose one client or two as the subjects for the next meeting. Have the team leader or account manager review background information in advance of the session, including client calendars, milestones, known events and activities, conference schedules, editorial calendars and focus editions. □

Then, to make it easy for everyone to visualize the flow of activities and critical deadlines, plot your plan on an Excel spreadsheet. List activities in the first column, months in the subsequent columns over the next year or two and put in check marks to note when activities or events are expected to take place. (For a sample spreadsheet, [e-mail me](#).) During the creative session, analyze each opportunity and see what result might be generated to advance the client's business, marketing or capital plans, or all of the above. Envision media relations, community relations, investor relations, social media activities, trade relations and public affairs opportunities unfolding across time.

Agency teams can brainstorm on the tactical approaches within each area, set priorities and also get creative in looking at what we call "the flip side" — what's there and, more importantly, what's not there? The initial road map gives the agency a simple planning document to track, and makes it easy to take detours and add new side trips while still keeping the original destinations in mind as the program unfolds.

With good team attention, the agency has now created a master plan for the year, with a series of new ideas it can present to the client, then implement and keep updating with creative sessions that point to a new horizon. Clients get excited. They see the agency as creative, intuitive and pro-active and worth keeping!

The flip side is waiting for the order or the client call that asks one of the worst questions on earth for an agency: "What have you done for me lately?"

Every firm's mission should be to do something both lately and long-term, generating results that go beyond the ordinary and expected for every client, building agency reputation and creating relationships that endure to perpetuity (well, maybe not quite that long, but potentially for decades).

**Tom Gable, APR, Fellow PRSA**, chief executive officer, [Gable PR](#) [in San Diego, which represents clients from startups to Fortune 100 companies] writes and speaks frequently on managing for results, turning CEOs into gurus, trends in public relations, crisis communications and reputation management. He is completing the fifth edition of his popular book on agency and program management, "[The PR Client Service Manual](#)."

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