

NINA

NORTHERN ILLINOIS NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

**REPORTERS:
REASONS TO
TAKE YOUR
KID TO WORK**
SEE PAGE 3



Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.



Thomas Jefferson

New ways to tell big stories

DeKalb – NINA's Oct. 24 Fall Conference features two top-flight speakers, along with our annual awards luncheon.

New media remains a heavy focus for NINA, with the day's topics centering on new ways to cover big stories, along with steps journalists can take to retrain themselves for an uncertain future.

Steve Buttry, editor of the Gazette and GazetteOnline of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, will talk about "Covering Disaster in the Digital Age." Buttry was brand-new to the Gazette this June when floods ravaged Cedar Rapids. Running on generator power, the paper and Web site heroically continued to publish despite flood waters being just outside the office door.

Buttry will talk about how the Gazette took advantage of new media to provide comprehensive coverage of the disaster.

Our second speaker, Curt Chandler of Penn State University, makes a return visit to DeKalb,

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Curt Chandler



Steve Buttry

➤ **More about our speakers on Page 3**

2008 FALL CONFERENCE

When: Friday, Oct. 24, 2008

Schedule:

8:30:	Registration / refreshments
9-10:	Steve Buttry
10-10:15:	Break
10:15-11:30:	Curt Chandler
11:30-11:50:	Q&A with speakers
Noon:	Awards luncheon and keynote

Sessions venue: Campus Life Building, Room 100, NIU-DeKalb

Awards Luncheon venue: Duke Ellington Ballroom, Holmes Student Center, NIU-DeKalb

Cost: \$60 for the first attendee from each newspaper; \$30 for each additional person; \$20 if attending the workshops only.

Parking: Use the Newman Center lot, just north of the Campus Life Building on Newman Lane. Parking pass available at www.ninaonline.org. If the Newman lot is full, use the NIU visitor lot (follow signs off Lincoln Highway).

Registration deadline: Friday, Oct. 17. Return the enclosed form or print one from our Web site. Questions? Contact Valerie Clawson at 815-753-1564, or vclawson@niu.edu.

**'DIGITAL INK'
BLOG**

www.ninaonline.org

Vol. 46, No. 3

Route to:

- ___ Publisher
- ___ Managing Ed.
- ___ Newsroom
- ___ Advertising
- ___ Circulation

Troublesome trends land close to home

I dance maniacally when the checkbook balances, so it's troublesome when somebody like me sounds an alarm on news numbers.

We already know most measures of the print news business paint a gloomy picture, but a new national study (while surely confirming the gloom) also indicates opportunity.

According to "Audience Segments in a Changing News Environment," released by The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press on Aug. 18, print newspaper readership is hemorrhaging.

"This year for the first time in roughly 15 years of asking the question, fewer than half of all Americans report reading a daily newspaper on a regular basis. Only 46% say they read the paper regularly - this number is down from 52% in 2006 and was as high as 71% in 1992," the report said, adding that the readership decline between 2006 and 2008 happened across all demographic strata.

The report emphasizes that age continues to correlate strongly with newspaper readership: young people are much less likely to read a daily newspaper. Only 15 percent of people under 25 read a newspaper "yesterday." In the 25-34 age group, 24 percent read a newspaper yesterday, the report said.

However, online newspaper audiences have grown modestly since 2006. "About 13 percent of survey respondents said they read the Web version of a newspaper yesterday, or both the print and online versions, up from 9% two years ago," the report said. "The increase has not made up for the steep loss in print readership (from 34% to 25%)."

The "ah hah!" datum: "Still, online newspapers are gaining readers, especially among people ages 25 to 34," the report said. "The proportion of this age group reporting it read an online newspaper yesterday has doubled — from 9% in 2006 to 19% in 2008."

This report is new, but the trend data is not. Let's shorthand, because here's where the rubber meets the road for NINA and our profession:

- Print is down
- Online is up
- Young people don't read print, but more are starting to read online versions of newspapers.

So even as we fight today's fires, it seems clear that in order to have tomorrow, we have to do better about getting and keeping young readers, and delivering news the way they like. I'm sure we all get that, but ...

Based on other new numbers with which I'm familiar, NINA member efforts in attracting young readers and improving online content are faltering.

I'm coordinating NINA contest judging and the awards luncheon this year. NINA members submitted 615 contest entries. I wasn't sure what to expect, but those numbers felt pretty solid to me; however, NINA long-timers say entries are low.

Regardless, it's the subset of contest entries that worries me. In the two contest categories I hoped EVERYBODY would submit something — "Best Effort to Attract Young Readers" and "Best Web Site" — the numbers are dismal.

The Web site category drew seven entries, and the young reader recruitment category drew eight.



Jason Akst is a journalism instructor at Northern Illinois University. Contact him at jakst@niu.edu, or 815-753-7009.

View the Pew report at <http://people-press.org/report/444/news-media>

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Take your kid to work; benefits are many

By Dirk Johnson

When my children were younger, I would often bring along a “young apprentice” on a story I was reporting for The New York Times. It was a good way to spend time with a kid. It was also a good way to humanize myself with the people I was covering.

On plenty of these feature stories, the presence of my daughter or son served to break the ice with people I had come to interview. It was especially useful for stories that involved families. It provided common ground, and served to remind people that reporters are people too.

Over the years, my children have played with other kids at housing projects and trailer parks, sat on the laps of Utah polygamist wives and sat at a kitchen table listening to a gay man describe how his own family disowned him as a “sinner.”

Being a parent in action, and making a bond with people, it was my experience, typically opened the way for better quotes and more honest, freewheeling discussions. One of my

editors at The Times, John Darnton, a Pulitzer Prize winner, once told me he used to take along a child while reporting stories in Eastern Europe during the reign of the old Soviet Union. Even the most hardened Communist party members, he said, tended to soften around kids.

There are stories in which this approach wouldn't work as well, I suppose, such as interviews with a major politician (although I have taken a child along to many of these, too, including Mayor Richard Daley). Interviews that might turn antagonistic, or involve investigation of wrong-doing, might not be the best place to bring along a kid.

• • •

But journalism is more of an art than a science, so it's impossible to say precisely when it's a good idea to bring along a kid, and when it's not. In doing some reporting that got her fired, television reporter Amy Jacobson brought kids along to a pool party hosted by the family of a man being

investigated for the disappearance of his wife. Jacobson was wearing a swimsuit, and, after a rival station taped the reporter at work, there was a lot of clucking that she was dressed in an inappropriate way that showed her getting too cozy to sources. I don't see it that way. Seems to me it makes sense to wear a swimming suit to a pool party. I doubt a male reporter would have been subject to the same scrutiny.

In the end, she was judged guilty of being inappropriate for wearing the bikini to cover the source. But it did seem to help her case, at least with me, that she had brought along her children.



Dirk Johnson is NINA's executive director. He has spent the past 25 years writing for The New York Times, Newsweek and the Chicago Sun-Times. Currently, he also teaches in the NIU Communication Department. Contact him at sycamoredirk@aol.com.

Conference

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after leading our spring conference on new media. Chandler will continue that conversation with “Five Things That Will Make You a Better Online Journalist.” He will focus on reporting, social networking and interacting with readers.

Here are some of the attendees' comments from Chandler's NINA presentation in April:

- “This guy was great. This workshop helped me start to think about reporting the news in different ways depending on the story.”

- “Best, most informative NINA event I have attended.”

Curt Chandler is senior lecturer specializing in multimedia reporting at Penn State University. Before entering the academic world last summer, he



was the editor for online innovation at the post-gazette.com in Pittsburgh. Curt has a degree in newspaper writing from Northwestern University and

more than 25 years of newspaper experience as a visual journalist, manager and online editor. He also worked for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the Ogden (Utah) Standard-Examiner and the Pueblo (Colo.) Chieftan. He has conducted multimedia training in newsroom and seminars for working journalists in addition to working in the classroom with students who aspire to be journalists.

Our Oct. 24 speakers

Steve Buttry joined The (Cedar Rapids) Gazette and GazetteOnline as editor this year. He has spent 37 years in journalism, starting his senior year of high school as a sports writer at The Evening Sentinel in Shenandoah, Iowa. He has



been a reporter, editor and writing coach for the Des Moines Register, Kansas City Star and Times, Minot Daily News and Omaha World-Herald. Steve has been training journalists and newspaper executives for more than 11 years. He

has trained and consulted at more than 200 newspapers, conferences and seminars in 40 states, eight Canadian provinces, Mexico, Japan, Germany, Saudi Arabia and Ecuador. Before joining The Gazette, he spent three years with the American Press Institute, focusing mostly on teaching and research in the Newspaper Next innovation project. He remains affiliated with API, conducting the Upholding and Updating Ethical Standards seminar series.

2 freebies can make online publishing easier

By Denise Renckens

Do you love the word “free”? I do, too — especially when it’s in the same sentence as “software.”

As an editor, I’m also a big fan of software that help me execute ideas without having to ask for help from programmers. They’re great people, but they usually have full plates, and I don’t have the patience to wait for my turn in line.

So, for all of you frugal non-programmers with big online ideas and the courage to poke around at unfamiliar software, here are two products that I’ve recently found useful:

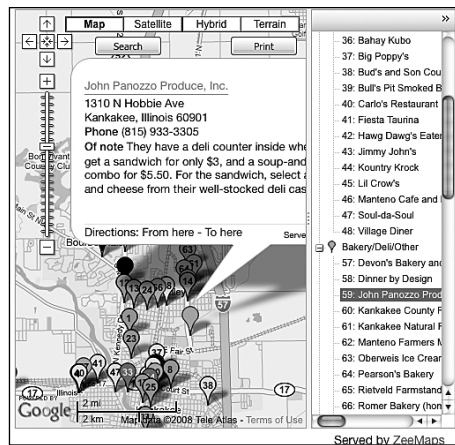
ZEE MAPS

(ZEE MAPS.COM)

This software allows you to build a custom online map and publish it on your Web site. I used ZeeMaps to create a map to accompany a weekly dining column that I write. I used color-coded tacks to indicate the type of business, such as restaurant, bar or coffee shop, and I included custom fields to indicate a business’ hours and specials.

If you already have the addresses and information in a spreadsheet, creating your custom map is even easier. Save it to a CSV file and ZeeMaps can import the data. (CSV stands for “comma-separated values,” and it should be an export option in your spreadsheet application.) ZeeMaps can also export the data, so your data isn’t trapped in the software.

When you are ready to share your creation with the rest of the world, review some settings (such as if you want a legend to appear at the bottom of the map, and what location the map should be centered on) and the HTML code will be generated for you. That



An example of a ZeeMaps project.



The Sprout interface.

code can then be pasted into a Web page. When you add markers or update entries, your changes will appear automatically on any sites using the original HTML.

I’ve been happy with ZeeMaps and haven’t had a reason to try alternatives, but there are other options. One is mapbuilder.net, and Google and Yahoo both give the public access to their mapping engine. However, in the latter cases, the need for a custom API key deterred me from going further.

SPROUT BUILDER (SPROUTBUILDER.COM)

A few months ago I was looking for a way to build a simple Web site. I didn’t own a Web development application

like Dreamweaver, nor did I have the time to learn to use it.

Sprout Builder saved the day. The Web-based software lets you “build, publish, and manage widgets, mini-sites, mashups, banners and more. Any size, any number of pages. Include video, audio, images and newsfeeds and choose from dozens of pre-built components and web services.”

To start a project, choose from numerous Web-standard sizes or indicate a custom size. A handful of templates are available to help you get started. I found them useful as practice projects while learning how the software works. Once a project is created, add and manipulate elements using the various palettes. Insert media, including photos, audio and video. There are also “services” that allow you to insert special functions such as an RSS feed or a Yahoo map.

When you’re done, clicking the “Publish” button will generate the initial HTML code or update the code if it’s already been published. That means you only have to worry about the HTML once, which is a big plus. After the HTML is embedded somewhere (like a Web site or Facebook page), you can update all instances of your Sprout just by making a change in the Sprout Builder interface and selecting the “publish” button again. To my knowledge, the only change that requires fresh HTML is if you modify the size of your Sprout.



Denise Renckens is vice president of Audience Development for the Small Newspaper Group’s SNG Internet Innovations. Contact her at drenckens@daily-journal.com, or 815-937-3374.

CALENDAR

Thursday, Oct. 23

NINA Board meeting and dinner, 6:30 p.m., Carl’s Fargo Restaurant, Sycamore.

Friday, Oct. 24

NINA Fall Conference and Awards Luncheon, NIU-DeKalb.

Tuesday, Nov. 4

Election Day

Friday, Dec. 5

NINA Board meeting. Committees at 9 a.m., full board at 10 a.m. Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.