



# Iowa Newspaper Association Bulletin

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## CALENDAR of EVENTS

### WEBINARS

Five in 24: Ideas to grow  
your business  
Thursday, November 8

## About 1,300 U.S. communities have totally lost news coverage, UNC news desert study finds

BY TOM STITES

FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, BANYAN PROJECT

It's hardly a secret that news deserts are spreading, but just how bad is it?

A comprehensive new study released by the University of North Carolina's School of Media and Journalism shows that far more U.S. communities have totally lost news coverage — more than 1,300 — than previously known.

### TOP FINDINGS:

About 20 percent of all metro and community newspapers in the United States — about 1,800 — have gone out of business or merged since 2004, when about 9,000 were being published.

Hundreds more have scaled back coverage so much that they've become what the researchers call "ghost newspapers." Almost all other newspapers still publishing have also scaled back, just less drastically.

Online news sites, as well as some TV newsrooms and cable access channels, are working hard to keep local reporting alive, but these are taking root far more slowly than newspapers are dying. Hence the 1,300 communities that have lost all local coverage.

"The stakes are high," the researchers say in their report. "Our sense of community and our trust in democracy at all levels suffer when journalism is lost or diminished. In an age of fake news and divisive politics, the fate of communities across the country — and of grassroots democracy itself — is linked to the vitality of local journalism."

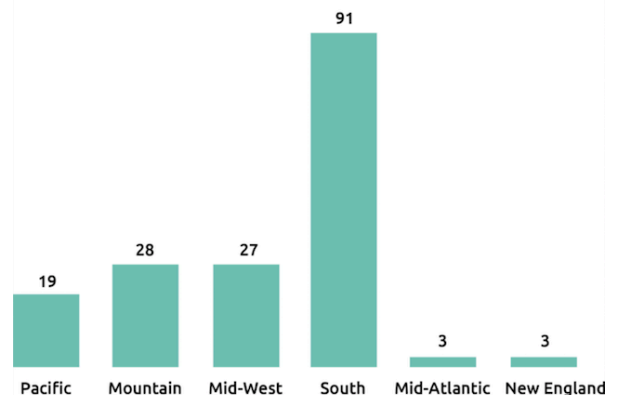
### COMPREHENSIVE, SEARCHABLE DATABASE

UNC's startling statistics arise from a comprehensive new database created by its researchers. With publication today of their report, "The Expanding News Desert," the database became available to all to search, down to the county level, at [usnewsdeserts.com](http://usnewsdeserts.com).

The 14-member research team, composed of four full-time researchers and 10 graduate and undergraduate students, first melded data in differing formats from almost 60 national, state and regional newspaper organizations as well as from the Local Independent Online News Publishers, or LION. They then overlaid the result with demographic, political and economic data from government sources.

A preliminary analysis in May showed that at least 900 communities had lost all news coverage since 2004.

COUNTIES WITHOUT NEWSPAPERS BY REGION  
2018



SOURCE: UNC Database

States were grouped into regions according to the following classifications:

Pacific: AK, CA, HI, OR, WA;  
Mountain: AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY;  
Midwest: IL, IN, MI, OH, WI, IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD;  
South: DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV, AL, KY, MS, TN, AR, LA, OK, TX;  
Mid-Atlantic: NJ, NY, PA;  
New England: CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT

Penelope Muse Abernathy, the Knight Chair in Journalism and Digital Media Economics at UNC who directed the year-long study, said in an interview that no work she had ever undertaken had spurred so much response as the earlier finding.

Then her team used internet research and interviews to resolve conflicts and ambiguities in the data, some of which was out of date and some of which was ambiguous because different sources kept data in different ways. This led to today's announcement of more than 1,300 news desert communities, supplemented with stories of many publications and communities that epitomize the trend.

"This is more than baseline data," Abernathy said. "It shows the scale and scope of the problem and allows us to concentrate on places that are most at risk."

She said researchers will continue to update the database as long as funding is available. She said the Knight Foundation and UNC jointly funded the effort, which is the latest in a growing stream of academic efforts to understand and overcome the withering of community news coverage. A few examples:

NEWS DESERT - cont. on page 2



## IPSWA opens football all-state nominations



*The nomination form is online and active Oct. 15-Oct. 29 at [iowasportswriters.com](http://iowasportswriters.com).*

**A** two-week window to nominate Iowa high school football athletes for the Iowa Print Sports Writers Association's football all-state teams is now open.

Any sports writer, football coach or athletic director in the state of Iowa is free to nominate high school players for the distinction from Oct. 15-Oct. 29. The nomination form is online at [iowasportswriters.com](http://iowasportswriters.com). The access key to nominate is: ipswa2

The Iowa Print Sports Writers Association will be picking its first all-state football teams after the state championships are completed. The meeting will be held Saturday, Nov. 17 at 10 a.m. It will be held at Dowling Catholic-WDM High School. Sports writers who are members of the IPSWA are welcome to attend and vote. For information on how to join IPSWA visit [iowasportswriters.com/join.html](http://iowasportswriters.com/join.html).

The Iowa Print Sports Writers Association was formed in February 2018 and produces the all-state teams for football, boys basketball, girls basketball and baseball each year.

## ?question of the week

**Can a bar advertise Ladies Night where women get in free or get free drinks?**

According to INA Legal Hotline attorney Joe Quinn, using Ladies Night or free drinks or admission to ladies is in violation of the Iowa Civil Rights Statute. The newspaper running such an ad would have no legal responsibility but may wish to advise the advertiser to check with its attorney before placing such an ad. In any case, newspapers are cautioned to not give advertisers any legal advice on this or any other matter.

## CONTACT US



**Phone** 515-244-2145

**Fax** 515-244-4855

**Website** [www.INAnews.com](http://www.INAnews.com)

### INA/CNA/INF STAFF DEPARTMENT MANAGERS

#### Executive Director

Susan Patterson Plank  
ext. 125 [spatternsonplank@inanews.com](mailto:spatternsonplank@inanews.com)

#### Sales and Marketing Director

Samantha Fett  
ext. 140 [sfett@cnaads.com](mailto:sfett@cnaads.com)

#### Communications Director

Cicely Gordon  
ext. 133 [cgordon@inanews.com](mailto:cgordon@inanews.com)

#### Development Director

Geof Fischer  
ext. 132 [gfischer@inanews.com](mailto:gfischer@inanews.com)

#### Media Director

Autumn Phillips  
ext. 136 [aphillips@cnaads.com](mailto:aphillips@cnaads.com)

#### Network Sales Manager

Rachelle Kjellberg  
ext. 126 [rkjellberg@cnaads.com](mailto:rkjellberg@cnaads.com)

#### Program Director

Jana Shepherd  
ext. 159 [jshepherd@inanews.com](mailto:jshepherd@inanews.com)

#### Technology & Digital Development Manager

Susan James  
ext. 129 [sjames@cnaads.com](mailto:sjames@cnaads.com)

### BOARD PRESIDENTS

#### Iowa Newspaper Association

Steve Fisher, Dubuque Telegraph Herald  
563-588-5611  
[steve.fisher@thmedia.com](mailto:steve.fisher@thmedia.com)

#### INA Services Company

Chris Edwards, Cedar Rapids Gazette  
319-398-8222  
[Chris.Edwards@gazcomm.com](mailto:Chris.Edwards@gazcomm.com)

#### Iowa Newspaper Foundation

Mary Ungs-Sogaard, Dyersville Commercial  
563-875-7131  
[mungs-sogaard@wcinet.com](mailto:mungs-sogaard@wcinet.com)

### U.S. MAIL

Iowa Newspaper Association  
319 East 5th St.  
Des Moines, IA 50309

### INA LEGAL HOTLINE

515-283-3100 (paid service)

- In August, a Duke University study took an approach that's very different from UNC's and found a different kind of bad news. It analyzed all the news stories provided to 100 randomly selected communities in the same week and discovered that only 17 percent were about the community where they were presented.
- The Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University, which has historically focused on national and global mainstream news, has recently added a focus called Digital Journalism: Sustainability & Business Models. "As traditional newsrooms shrink and even disappear," the Shorenstein website says, "the information landscape for Americans is bleak."
- The Center for Cooperative Media explored the factors that make for-profit online publishers successful by interviewing the publishers of 43 sites and found that 1) "Only the wealth of the community is statistically correlated with 'success'" and 2) "It seems clear that outside support is crucial to ensure that local news outlets can be sustained in poorer communities."
- And at Ohio University, professor Michelle Ferrier, director of the Media Deserts Project and a pioneer in studying fading newspapers and online efforts to replace their journalism, went beyond research and announced the launch of ZipIt.news as communications hubs to serve 20 rural communities in southeast Ohio.

#### EXTENT OF THE DESICCATION

About 70 percent of the newspapers that have died since 2004 were in suburban areas of metropolitan areas that historically offered many news choices, the researchers say, but counties with no coverage at all tend to be rural.

State and regional papers have also pulled back dramatically, and this "has dealt a double blow to residents of outlying rural counties as well as close-in suburban areas."

Compounding this, most emerging online news sites are clustered in affluent metro areas, and only two are in counties that have no newspaper.

Further, the people who live in news desert communities tend to be poorer, older and less educated than the average American — often its most vulnerable citizens, the researchers say.

"If journalism and access to information are pillars of self-government," said Rutgers University professor Philip M. Napoli after leading a separate study of three demographically disparate communities in New Jersey, "these tools of democracy are not being distributed evenly, and that should be cause for concern."

When the UNC researchers finished their database, it showed that of the 3,143 counties in the United States, more than 2,000 now have no daily newspaper, 1,449 have but one newspaper of any kind, and 171 counties, with 3.2 million residents in aggregate, have no newspaper at all.

And the database may overstate the number of surviving standalone papers. The researchers estimate that

10 to 20 percent of the papers in it are geographically zoned weekly editions published by metro dailies. Papers owned by Digital First Media number 158 in the database, for example, but Digital First's website lists fewer than 100. Different industry databases list zoned editions in different ways, making them difficult to count accurately.

As print publishing continues to wither, the researchers predict, many zoned editions will become ads-only shoppers or specialty publications, or be eliminated entirely.

#### GHOSTS STALK NEWS DESERTS

The NewsGuild-CWA credits Abernathy with coining what it calls the bleak metaphor of ghost newspapers. In an article in March, the union describes these ghosts as "pared-down-to-nothing papers (or even single-page inserts) that are the remnants of once-robust local publications."

"The quality, quantity and scope of their editorial content is significantly diminished," the UNC report says of the ghosts. "Routine government meetings are not covered, for example, leaving citizens with little information about proposed tax hikes, local candidates for office or important policy issues that must be decided."

The researchers identify two common ways newspapers become ghosts:

1. A larger paper buys a smaller one in a nearby community and the smaller one slowly fades away as the titles merge their coverage efforts. The researchers discovered that almost 600 once-standalone newspapers — or one third of the 1,800 papers that the country has lost — had become advertising supplements, free distribution shoppers or lifestyle specialty publications. "In its final stages of life," the report says, "there is no breaking news or public service journalism."
2. Owners cut their news staffs so drastically that a newspaper cannot adequately cover its community. The researchers say this tends to happen at dailies and larger weeklies and estimate that 1,000 to 1,500 of the 7,100 newspapers still publishing have cut more than half of their newsroom staffs since 2004.

The researchers say the ghosts include metro papers such as The Denver Post and state and regional dailies such as The Wichita Eagle; both have cut staffs and pulled back their coverage dramatically.

Six hundred weeklies that evolved into advertising supplements were removed from the UNC database, but researchers kept the 1,000 to 1,500 titles with drastically reduced editorial missions that still provide some value. "The sheer size of this contingent," the report says, "speaks to the magnitude of the diminishment of local news in recent years."

To read the rest of this article online visit: <http://amp.poynter.org/news/about-1300-us-communities-have-totally-lost-news-coverage-unc-news-desert-study-finds>.

*This article was originally published on October 15, 2018 by Poynter.*

*Tom Stites is founder and president of the Banyan Project, which is pioneering a co-op model for community journalism.*



*"Our sense of community and our trust in democracy at all levels suffer when journalism is lost or diminished. In an age of fake news and divisive politics, the fate of communities across the country — and of grassroots democracy itself — is linked to the vitality of local journalism."*

**Iowa has zero counties without a newspaper.**





Iowa Newspaper Association

# Bulletin

www.INAnews.com

## IN THIS ISSUE...

- Five in 24: Ideas to grow your business

View and submit ads on the Internet at [www.INAnews.com](http://www.INAnews.com). Students and professionals may also submit their resumé for online viewing.

There is no charge for most of these ads. They are a free service to INA active (newspaper) members only. The name of the newspaper in the ad must be the same as published in the current INA Directory.

If you are trying to help an employee relocate, please send us the ad information on your letterhead, rather than having the employee write us. We will not run ads for persons living in a member's town without first clearing the ad with the publisher.

Please have copy to the INA office no later than noon on Monday. The INA will make the determination of whether an ad qualifies for free or paid publication. If payment for an ad is not enclosed with the ad, the INA will require payment in advance before the ad will be published.

Ads for products or services which could be marketed for a profit may be published for a fee of \$10 per insertion, paid in advance, with a 40-word maximum.

Recruitment (help wanted) ads for positions in states other than Iowa may be published for a fee of \$25 per insertion, with a 100-word maximum.

For more information, contact Cicely Gordon at [cgordon@inanews.com](mailto:cgordon@inanews.com).

# FREE MEMBER EXCHANGE

## ▼ HELP WANTED

**NEWS STAFF WRITER.** The Clinton (Iowa) Herald, a six-day-a-week newspaper, is seeking applications for a News Staff Writer in the newsroom. Clinton sits on the Mississippi River and features many outdoor activities. Subscriptions continue to circulate in Iowa and Illinois. The Clinton Herald has won several state, regional and national awards in the past four years. The position is responsible for covering local beats, such as area city councils and school boards. In addition, we're looking for a journalist who can construct local enterprise stories that involve research and quality writing. The Clinton Herald has won investigative reporting awards through the Iowa Newspaper Association in two of the previous three years. Some responsibilities will go beyond reporting. Videography, editing and reporting are required skills. The Clinton Herald staffs a full-time photographer. However, some photography also will be required. The qualified candidate must be a proficient writer, typer, be a self-starter and possess excellent people skills. The Clinton Herald publishes in the morning Monday through Saturday. Submit resume, cover letter and examples of your work to Associate Editor Scott Levine at [scottlevine@clintonherald.com](mailto:scottlevine@clintonherald.com). Resumes will be reviewed right away. All skill levels are encouraged to apply. The Clinton Herald is an equal opportunity employer. 1017

## ▼ FOR SALE

**Considering a sale of your newspaper but not sure where to start?** Iowa's newest media broker, Scenic Trail Media Brokers, LLC, is here to help you. Scenic Trail Media Brokers will work with you in every step of the process to properly market your newspaper to help you attract the right buyer for your property. We'll work with you until the final closing to make sure you get top dollar. Call Ryan Harvey today at 515-689-1151 or reach him by email at [scenictrailmediabrokers@gmail.com](mailto:scenictrailmediabrokers@gmail.com) for more information.

Iowa weekly newspaper for sale; excellent community; city, school, county legals, gross around \$200K. 40 year owner seeking to slow down. Contact Northeast Iowa, Iowa Newspaper Association, 319 E. 5th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50309. Contact: Iowa Newspaper Association, 319 E. 5th St., Des Moines, Iowa.

Two weekly newspapers, including one in county seat community. Progressive communities. City, county, school legals. Located in southwest Iowa. Contact: Weekly Newspapers, Iowa Newspaper Association, 319 E. 5th St., Des Moines, Iowa.

Profitable group of three small weekly newspapers for sale in South Dakota, two in Black Hills. If interested write to: S.D. Newspapers c/o Iowa Newspaper Association, 319 E. 5th St., Des Moines, IA 50309.

News Brokerage of Iowa has a client interested in purchasing a weekly newspaper that grosses \$100K-300K a year. Contact Dave at 319-350-2770. County seat newspaper for sale; strong reader and advertising base; cozy office and friendly, progressive community. \$10,000 down, the rest on contract. SE Iowa weekly shopper, \$75k, has lot of potential, will sell on contract, call for details. We have buyers for all price ranges.

**NEW LISTINGS NEEDED.** This could be the right time to sell! \*Appraisals-Consultations-Brokerage services\* Your full service broker, News Brokerage of Iowa, [dtappnewsbrokerageofiowa@gmail.com](mailto:dtappnewsbrokerageofiowa@gmail.com), 319-350-2770. Looking for part or full-time salespeople. Paid by commission or salary. Also, 30-year news editor looking for job in eastern Iowa. Experienced graphic designer looking for freelance projects. Give us a call today!

And  
Finally

Collywobbles means "butterflies in your stomach," that feeling you get when you're nervous or anxious about something.



An Iowa Newspaper Foundation webinar...

# FIVE IN 24: IDEAS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS



**Thursday, November 8 1-2 p.m.**

**Registration fee: \$35 · Deadline: November 5**

## IN THIS WEBINAR...

What can newspapers learn from a professional marketer? Join Michael Libbie from Insight Advertising, Marketing & Communications for Five in 24. He'll share five things your business can do in 24 hours to re-manufacture your brand and sell more. During the webinar you will learn: Less is More (people have the attention of a goldfish); Mobile vs Desktop (who is winning the battle and how your content can be seen); Video (a powerful tool, if done correctly); Creative (what works and what needs work); Email Campaigns (data and tracking); Know Your Consumer (does your message match what consumers want/need?); plus, Three Reasons (why people are not buying what you are selling). Join us for a deep dive into marketing for business.

*Group discounts are available. Visit our website for more information.*

**Registrations submitted after the deadline will be subject to a \$10 late fee. Registrations are accepted up until the day of the webinar.**

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**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Registration fees cannot be refunded if a cancellation is made less than 72 hours prior to the session.

## THE PRESENTER...

### Michael P. Libbie



Michael P. Libbie is a marketing expert, broadcaster, public speaker and business owner. He has helped hundreds of non-profit and for-profit corporations better market their products and services through Insight Advertising, Marketing & Communications. Libbie is the founder of Insight on Business the News Hour, which can be heard daily in podcast form as well as on News/Talk 1540 KXEL each Sunday at 2 p.m. He also serves as the executive director of the Windsor Heights Chamber of Commerce, is an international public speaker on topics such as effective communication, branding and marketing. Libbie has also been the spiritual leader of the Jewish Congregation of Mason City -- Adas Israel -- for the past 30 years.



**REGISTER TODAY AT [WWW.ONLINEMEDIACAMPUS.COM](http://WWW.ONLINEMEDIACAMPUS.COM)**

*Online Media Campus is brought to you by Southern Newspaper Publishers Association and Iowa Newspaper Foundation*



# ONLINEMEDIACAMPUS



## Webinar Registration

YES! Sign me up for the *Five in 24: Ideas how to grow your business* webinar Thursday, November 8.

☐ I am a Wisconsin journalism advisor or student, please waive my registration fee (*online registration not available*)

### Registration fee: \$35 per webinar; free to SNPA members

Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more from the same newspaper or company.

Find out more at [www.onlinemediacampus.com](http://www.onlinemediacampus.com) or contact Erica Wipperling at 515-422-9052 or [ewipperling@inanews.com](mailto:ewipperling@inanews.com).

### Registration deadline: November 5

(Registrations submitted after the deadline will incur a \$10 late fee. *No discounts apply after the registration deadline*).

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Newspaper \_\_\_\_\_

Corporate Affiliation (*for group discount tracking*) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill my newspaper ☐ Charge my credit card (see below)

Credit card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_  
VISA/Mastercard only

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
must be address/zip where billing is sent

Amount to be charged \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please send a separate registration form for each registrant. This form may be photocopied as many times as necessary.

### SEND YOUR COMPLETED REGISTRATION FORM(S) AND FEE TO:

IOWA NEWSPAPER FOUNDATION, 319 E. 5th St., Des Moines, IA 50309, FAX to INF at 866-593-7406,  
EMAIL to [ewipperling@inanews.com](mailto:ewipperling@inanews.com) or REGISTER ONLINE at [ONLINEMEDIACAMPUS.COM](http://ONLINEMEDIACAMPUS.COM)

### RECEIPT OF REGISTRATION:

You will receive log-in instructions 48-hours prior to the webinar you've registered for. If you have questions, please contact Erica Wipperling at [ewipperling@inanews.com](mailto:ewipperling@inanews.com) or 515-422-9052.

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Registration fees cannot be refunded if a cancellation is made less than 72 hours prior to the session.