



Community Media Workshop
Connecting the Community with Media,
the Workshop promotes news that matters.



Media Consolidation Hurting Chicago

As the Federal Communications Commission visits Chicago to hear what the public has to say about potential weakening changes to media ownership rules, the Commission should bear this in mind: What has already happened to Chicago-area national and local media outlets over the last year or two isn't pretty.ⁱ The bottom line: there are fewer traditional print news outlets than there used to be. And, at the print and broadcast news outlets that remain, there are fewer reporters to cover Chicago stories.

National Media Abandoning Chicago

In the last year alone, the Chicago bureaus of all three major newsmagazines —Newsweek, Time and U.S. News & World Report — have closed.

The Chicago bureaus of the major television news networks aren't in much better shape, with steep cuts over the last year in the bureaus of ABC News, CNN, CBS News, and NBC News, whose "Dateline" program has lost two of its three Chicago-based staffers.

Local Newspapers Slashing Staff

The Chicago area's major daily newspapers -- the Chicago Sun-Times, the Chicago Tribune and the Daily Herald -- have felt budget pressures and each has dealt with them differently.

- The Sun-Times has held on to editorial staff and considered a variety of other cost-saving schemes -- including implementing a distribution agreement with its archrival the Tribune.ⁱⁱ
- The Tribune, meanwhile, has offered buyouts to several dozen editorial employees during May and June 2007, primarily in features but also in metro, sports, photography and online. According to Chicago's Community Media Workshop estimates, the Tribune's editorial staff has fallen by between 30 and 35 reporters, editors and photographers over the last year, or almost exactly 5 percent.
- And in August 2007, the suburban Daily Herald began laying off an unspecified number of staff, just weeks after a July 19, 2007 memo that announced salary cuts of 5 percent—at least temporarily—and a 10 percent reduction in non-payroll expenditures. These mark the first staff reductions in the Herald's history.

Chicago's alternative press is also facing cut-backs. The Chicago Reader, the city's free alternative newspaper since 1971 is trimming the size of its staff, including an effort to get the drivers who deliver its 135,000 copies each week to leave the payroll and become independent contractors. Reader Publisher Mike Crystal said in September 2007 that some of the paper's recent moves, such as outsourcing production work to Atlanta, are tied to the paper's July sale to Florida-based Creative Loafing.

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ⁱ Goldsborough, Bob. "Media Landscape Overview" from Getting On the Air, Online and Into Print 2008. Community Media Workshop (2007). www.newstips.org

ⁱⁱ This move has some financial analysts asking "Why do we need two newspapers in Chicago?" and proposing a Tribune purchase of the Sun Times. [See Rosenthal, Phil. "Chicago Sun-Times chief dismisses talk of merger." Chicago Tribune. August 10, 2007. http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/columnists/chi-fri_phil_0810aug10,0,5929614.column