A number of state newspapers have editorialized calling for a change in the design of the state flag after the issue returned to the fore in the aftermath of racially-motivated violence that claimed nine lives in Charleston, S.C., June 17.

The Sun Herald in Biloxi took the rare step of turning a front page into an editorial calling for a change to the state flag.

“For too long, we have lived with the fantasy that we can exist in the splendid isolation of an era shrouded in romantic notions and a remarkably wrong understanding of its meaning.”

In Jackson, The Clarion-Ledger asked on its front page whether the state flag is bad for business.

“Missed economic opportunity was one of the arguments used by groups who urged voters toward an alternate design in the 2001 referendum in which 64 percent of those who participated chose the flag with the Confederate emblem in its upper left corner.”

House Transportation Committee chairman Rep. Robert Johnson, D-Natchez,

“In thinking as I have for so many days now upon this subject, I recall many years ago opening a letter, addressed to the newspaper, in the

ROLLING FORK

In a lovely and historic cemetery in the city of Warrenton, Va., there is a Gray Ghost turning over in his grave. I have some reason to infer that: I have been there; I bear his name.

Amid the current flag flap, there has been quite a lot said, some true, some not, about Confederate heritage and because of one Col. John S. Mosby, the “Gray Ghost of the Confederacy,” no one is more entitled to speak to that than am I.

And I am furious. As would he be. And I am furious because the memory of him and those like him, the heritage those memories combine to form, has been hijacked by murderous thugs, hate mongering skinheads, whose vile words and actions have first marred, then purloined the nobility it once could rightly claim.

“When I talked in such a manner (against secession), Virginia had not seceded. She is out of the Union now. Virginia is my mother; God bless her. I can’t fight against my mother, can I?”

—John Singleton Mosby
**PRESIDENT’S COLUMN**

**JUNE 6 LIVES ON IN HISTORY; MORLEY’S REMARKS IN OUR HEARTS & MINDS**

JEKYLL ISLAND, Ga.

It’s a day that will live throughout history. I have thought about it every day,” Morley Piper told the Georgia Press Association and, later, our own during the Joint Convention in New Orleans.

The “day” was June 6, 1944. Morley was a 19-year-old second lieutenant among the thousands of American soldiers fighting their way on to and across Omaha Beach in a battle that without question changed the world forever.

I was honored to get to know Morley several years ago through my work with MPA and the National Newspaper Association. I knew him as the distinguished, humorous, and always personable executive director of the New England Newspaper Association.

But then last summer, I was watching coverage of the 70th anniversary of D-Day on the beaches of Normandy. President Obama was speaking and standing right behind him was Morley.

Since that time, I’ve learned my 90-year-old friend, who reminds me so much of my own grandfathers who both served in World War II, is a true American hero, although he would never subscribe to that description.

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In early June, I listened in awe as Morley eloquently shared details of his experience on Omaha beach that deadly day 71 years ago.

“I still think about how I made it and so many died. Fate, I guess. Fate and luck.”

He spoke of the moment when the landing gate on his Higgins Boat opened, exposing him and his comrades to the hail of bullets and mortar fire from the cliffs above and the overwhelming death all around them.

“A heart-stopping experience,” Morley said. “Inch by inch, we managed to get off the beach and mollify the German guns.”

Governor vetoes bill affecting public notice

Gov. Phil Bryant struck down Senate Bill 2269 April 23 over concerns it decreased transparency in government.

Bryant issued the veto – one of only four handed down this session – after a request from MPA. The bill would have given local government more control over the Gulf Coast Coliseum Commission. But a late revision in conference committee deleted a requirement the commission publish notices of changes in a local newspaper in favor of government controlled websites.

“We objected because we felt it was improper to make a fundamental change like this without input from interested parties. It really is an issue of transparency in the process,” said MPA Executive Director Layne Bruce.

In his veto order, Bryant said he had no objections to the basic intent of the bill to place more responsibility for the coliseum oversight with local authorities.

“The troubling part of the bill pertains to changes in public notice requirements,” the order reads.

“I would support additional publication electronically, but eliminating the provision in current law that requires the commission to publish a notice in the newspaper raises transparency concerns and could possibly hinder participation in the process.”
McNeece re-elected president, Reeves, Turner to join MPA board of directors

NEW ORLEANS

Joel McNeece of Bruce will serve another one-year term as president of the state newspaper association.

The publisher of The Calhoun County Journal was re-elected president of the Mississippi Press Association during the trade group’s annual meeting in June 19.

McNeece, 45, will serve as president of MPA and Mississippi Press Services, Inc., an affiliated advertising and marketing service.

Two other state newspapermen have been elected to fill vacant board positions.

Tim Reeves, publisher of The Vicksburg Post and president of Vicksburg NewsMedia, will serve a two-year term. He came to Mississippi in 2014 after serving several years as editor of the Selma Times-Journal in Alabama. Prior to his time in Selma, Reeves served as publisher of The Outlook, a daily newspaper in Alexander City, Ala., and the daily Suffolk (Va.) News-Herald. All papers are affiliated with Boone Newspapers, Inc., of Tuscaloosa.

George “Russell” Turner, editor of the Greene County Herald in Leakesville, will also serve a two-year term. He started his career at his family-owned paper in Leakesville before working as a reporter for the Deer Creek Pilot in Rolling Fork and The Leland Progress and as advertising manager for The Commercial Dispatch in Columbus.

Also re-elected to leadership positions were First Vice President Don Norman, publisher of the Starkville Daily News; Second Vice President Paul Keane, publisher of The Wayne County News in Waynesboro; and Treasurer James Arrington Goff, executive editor of The News-Commercial in Collins.

Jim Prince, publisher of The Neshoba Democrat and president of Prince Newspaper Holdings, Inc., continues as Immediate Past President and Chairman of the MPA Education Foundation.

Board members re-elected to three year terms are Pat Brown, publisher of The Magee Courier; Kevin Cooper, publisher of The Natchez Democrat; Ray Mosby, editor and publisher of The Deer Creek Pilot; and Jack Ryan, editor and publisher of the McComb Enterprise-Journal.

Continuing on the board are Stephanie Patton, editor and publisher of The Leland Progress and Clay Foster, publisher of the Daily Journal in Tupelo and CEO of Journal, Inc.
Film on Minor’s career draws ovation at premier

» By C. TODD SHERMAN
The Clarion-Ledger

Longtime journalist Bill Minor is greeted by friend Pam Johnson at a June premiere of a new documentary on his long career.

The wheel of progress turns slow and deliberate in a place like Mississippi. Resistance to change is often so great that it would turn backward if not for force applied to it by the hands of brave and dedicated men and women.

One of those men is Wilson F. “Bill” Minor, a longtime journalist in the state of Mississippi who saw and reported on some of the darkest chapters of the state’s history.

Minor’s experience covering the civil rights movement in Mississippi is now chronicled in a documentary titled “Eyes on Mississippi.”

Several hundred readers, writers, colleagues, family and admirers were on hand at a June premiere of the film recently at The Gertrude C. Ford Academic Complex recital hall at Millsaps College.

The hourlong documentary is the work of Ellen Ann Fentress of Greenwood, a freelance journalist who worked for Minor in the late 1970s when he edited The Capitol Reporter, a small alternative weekly.

“Bill” Minor, a longtime journalist and reported on some of the darkest chapters of the state’s history. His work is syndicated in papers throughout the state. His voice commands respect, has lost none of its potency and still rattles the walls of power.

“When he writes today it’s not in a vacuum,” Fentress said. “It comes with a deep thread of his experience that goes back decades.”

The film is told through the voice of its participants, who include Minor; former Gov. William Winter; Myrlie Evers, the widow of slain NAACP field officer Medgar Evers; former New York Times Southern bureau chief Claude Sitton; Jim Amoss, editor of The Times-Picayune; civil rights activists Robert Smith and John Doar; and Hank Klibanoff, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of “The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation.”

Sitton and Doar have died since their interviews.

The interviews take the viewer from 1947, when Minor began reporting from Jackson as a bureau reporter for The Times-Picayune, up until the convictions of those involved in the conspiracy of the 1964 slayings of MLK and others.

A NUMBER OF MPA member papers said from the get-go that they’d accept such announcements. Only a handful reached out after an email notice from our office and said they’d most likely not run such articles out of concern of either a reader or advertiser backlash. Or both.

The most notable, of course, has been the Daily Journal in Tupelo and its sister publications announcing the papers will not accept such notices. The decision was detailed in a column written by Journal, Inc., CEO Clay Foster.

(Both the Tupelo flagship paper and its affiliated Itawamba County Times did cover news of the first same sex engagement and marriage announcements, therein lies a Catch-22: Just because you’re within your right to refuse, it doesn’t necessarily mean someone won’t sue for alleged discriminatory practices.

Think about the Christian bakery in Oregon that refused to make a wedding cake for a same sex couple. That dust-up ended in a $135,000 fine being recommended by a judge for the state bureau of labor. It’s possible the fine will be reduced on appeal.

Nevertheless, it demonstrates, as we all know, just about anyone can sue anybody at any time for anything.

In my admittedly limited professional opinion, papers contemplating what to do when a same sex notice lands in their inbox must weigh the backlash from readers and a possibly messy and costly defense should someone feel aggrieved and sue for alleged discrimination.

THOSE ON THE fence who are not charging a fee to publish engagement and wedding announcements may want to consider doing so. It’s by far the norm in the industry these days and may make the process of printing unconventional notices more palatable for both the publisher and the public.

Layne Bruce is executive director of MPA-MPS. His email address is lbruce@mspress.org.
Longtime editors end tenures in Tupelo, Biloxi

Tiner retires; Gray takes lead at education group

Two longtime editors are hanging up their green eyeshades in Tupelo and on the Gulf Coast this summer.

Both Lloyd Gray, longtime editor of the Daily Journal, and Stan Tiner, executive editor of the Sun Herald in Biloxi-Gulfport, announced their departures this spring.

Tiner is planning to retire following his newspaper’s coverage and observance of the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina’s landfall in late August. Gray left the position at the Tupelo paper he had held since 1992 at the end of June to take over leadership of the Phil Hardin Foundation in his hometown of Meridian.

“Lloyd is an outstanding editor and an even better person,” said Daily Journal publisher and CEO Clay Foster. “For the past 23 years, he’s embodied a set of principles and values consistent with the Journal’s that has served this company and our community well. Principles such as service, honesty, transparency, inclusion, fairness, dignity and trust.”

Gray began his newspaper career as a teenage sports writer for his hometown newspaper, The Meridian Star. He started his professional career as a reporter for the Delta Democrat-Times in Greenville after graduating from Millsaps College in Jackson. He spent over a decade at the Sun Herald as a capital correspondent and later editor before returning to lead his hometown newspaper in 1990. He moved to Tupelo in 1992.

“I’ve always had great admiration and appreciation for the mission and work of the Hardin Foundation, and I’m very excited to become a part of one of our state’s most respected and effective vehicles for educational philanthropy,” Gray said.

The Hardin Foundation provides grants for education programs and partnerships in Mississippi.

Gray is a past president of the Mississippi Press Association and past chairman of the MPA Education Foundation.

Tiner led the Sun Herald’s staff during the critical period of Katrina’s impact and long recovery. The paper was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 2006 following the storm.

He joined the coastal daily in 2000 as executive editor and executive vice president. A Louisiana native, Tiner is a veteran of the Marines and served in the Vietnam War. His first newspaper job was at the Texarkana Daily News. He later was as a political correspondent and editor for newspapers in Shreveport before serving as editor for the Daily Oklahoman in Oklahoma City and the Press-Register in Mobile.

Tiner said much of his later career and, indeed, his decision to retire are inextricably linked to the 2005 storm that devastated the Mississippi coast and the city of New Orleans.

“A catalyst of sorts was the Katrina 10-year anniversary,” Tiner said in a May article announcing his retirement. “The Sun Herald has significant projects to tell the story of how South Mississippi has recovered and rebuilt. I wanted to be a part of that.

“So much of this part of my career has been devoted to telling the unique story of our part in the bigger fabric of what Katrina did to us that August day.”

A successor to Tiner has not yet been named. In Tupelo, local government reporter Rod Guajardo has been tapped to take over for Gray.

“These two gentlemen have contributed mightily to Mississippi newspapers and journalism at large,” said Layne Bruce, MPA executive director. “Both Lloyd and Stan are dogged newspapermen who believe in the watchdog role our newspapers play in the communities they serve. We have nothing but the utmost respect for them and best wishes for their futures.”

TECHNOLOGY

RJI needs help from small media WordPress users

Large media organizations have teams and tools to help with daily tasks, from finding images to fact-checking. During my nine-month RJI Fellowship at the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute, I’ll adapt some of these tools for use by smaller newsrooms and freelancers.

As both a public radio producer and a Web developer, I’ve seen how a little programming can automate chores such as adding pull-quotes or interacting with editors. This RJI Fellows project will create a suite of WordPress plugins — I call them Storytelling Tools — designed for journalists.

Rather than guess what people want, I’ll ask them. In August I’ll be surveying journalists, journo-coders, broadcasters, podcasters, freelancers and student media staff. The goal is to better understand writers’ digital workflows, gathering insights such as:

- Do writers compose in Microsoft Word or input text directly into their content management systems (CMS)?
- Do editors run all articles through a fact-checking process?
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Deaths

J.E. Strange

NEWTON

Funeral services for J.E. Strange were held Wednesday, June 3, 2015, at Hopewell Baptist Church, with Bro. Jimmy McDill, Bro. Dano Rainer and Bro. Gary Morris officiating.

Burial was in the church cemetery with Robert Barham Family Funeral Home in charge of the arrangements.

Mr. Strange, 91, of Little Rock, passed away Sunday, May 31, at Wisteria Manor in Shubuta.

Mr. Strange was born and raised in the Collinsville/Little Rock area. He served in the U.S. Navy during WWII aboard the USS Panamint. He worked at The Meridian Star in advertising for 25 years and for 26 years, he was the editor and later publisher of The Newton Record.

He was a member of Hopewell Baptist Church where he served many years as the music minister.

He is survived by his son, Mike (Connie) Strange; daughters, Karen Chisolm and Karol (Gary) Morris; grandchildren, Chris (Kym) Strange, Eli (Paige) Strange, Dustin (Katheryn) Bunkley, and Ashley (Jeremy) Chisolm-Whitten; great-grandchildren, Amber Strange, Noel Bunkley, and Caroline Strange; and siblings, Carleen Graham, Roger Earl Strange and Joyce Rainer.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 66 years, Mary Frances Moss Strange.

Minor

From Page 4

of three civil rights workers in Neshoba County.

The film unfolds in chapters that run chronologically and intersperses interviews with archived news film footage (several digitized for the first time) from important events that Minor covered.

Events during that time include: the trial and execution of Willie McGee in a traveling electric chair; the lynching of Mack Charles Parker; Mississippi’s reaction to the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954; the rise of the citizens councils and Ku Klux Klan; and James Meredith's enrollment at Ole Miss, which precipitated violence and the presence of federal troops.

Winter summed up the importance of Minor’s work in the civil rights struggle. Minor, he says, was, “perhaps the only regular reporter who covered the issue realistically.”

 Minor’s coverage differed starkly from that of the local press at the time. Many editorial staffs of papers viewed the struggle as the work of communists and agitators. Early in his career, Minor saw things differently. According to his interviews, he saw resistance to change and federal power as futile. Minor often stood alone in his perspectives and in doing so gained the ire of many and, at the same time, the respect of an important few.

Myrlie Evers talks in the film of the respect her husband, Medgar Evers, had for Minor. She said she had an eye for those with an agenda and motives that Minor never showed. Minor said he saw a leadership quality in Medgar Evers that demanded respect. "He never spoke of being violent," he said. Myrlie Evers, speaking for herself and her husband, said Minor “gave us hope for a brighter future.”

Fentress said that what she hopes comes through in her work is the sense of a man who was guided not just by the pursuit of a good story, but by a sense of making Mississippi better.

Fentress said it took five years to complete the documentary. Fentress and editor Lida Gibson worked until mid-afternoon Saturday to ready the film for its first showing. "We're so excited and humbled by the number of people who have come out today," Fentress said.

Both the film and Minor received standing ovations. Minor expressed his thanks and from his wheelchair entertained questions.

Fentress hopes the film gets distribution and exposure in film festivals. The project, though, is unfinished. “I hope to begin the second one with the Civil Rights Act of 1965,” she said. Fentress said she has enough video interviews to make it happen.

Flag

From Page 1

used the same argument in a recent interview with the paper.

“You consider that Amazon, eBay, Wal-Mart — all these companies are taking (Confederate merchandise) off the shelf, and they are part of the free-market economy. It just doesn’t make sense for us to have it in any way in an official capacity,” said Johnson, whose committee develops transportation policy, one of the primary drivers of economic development. ‘Anybody who says it doesn’t have a bearing on our ability to attract more people and jobs to our state is just not looking at reality.”

On its editorial page, The Nesboga Democrat pondered the response to the horrific church shootings in Charleston and reached the conclusion the debate on the Confederate symbol provides the opportunity to have a broad, necessary conversation about race in the United States.

“We do need to begin having conversations about changing Mississippi’s flag.

And those discussions about the flag could be modeled after those in Neshoba County in 2004 when there was a call for justice in the Mt. Zion murders and like 1989 when there was a public apology here and our community got to know some of the families of the slain men, which put an entirely different perspective on one of the most heinous race crimes in American history at that time.”

Below is the full text of the front page Sun Herald editorial.

A Time to Change

In these searing days of late June, Mississipians are at once confronted by our past and given the rare gift of writing a new chapter of history that can be regarded with pride for generations to come.

The awful events in a Charleston, S.C., church a week previous have caused Americans, and especially Southerners, to reflect on the Confederate flag. It is a symbol which still holds a place of prominence on our state flag, causing a sense of disquiet in many of our own citizens while eliciting harsh judgment against Mississippi and those who live here by many beyond our borders.

For too long, we have lived with the fantasy that we can exist in the splendid isolation of an era shrouded in romantic notions and a remarkably wrong understanding of its meaning.

Yes, the time of the Confederate States of America existed – now a century and a half removed – but it caused a tear in the nation, and death and carnage on an unimaginable scale. It was a lost cause, and that military defeat and Reconstruction hardships, have existed through our generations as a seminal part of our psyches.

Our attachment to the time and its painful memories has overcast the hope of the succeeding years.

“Forget, hell!” has been our battle cry too often on the road from then to now, and too many of our leaders have used the sentiment like a narcotic to dull the pain of our economic and educational deficits.

The tragedy in Charleston has launched a stirring new sentiment within that seems to speak to many and offers a new will across the South for us to throw off the weight of the past and to embrace a new day.

If in these days of reflection we can remove the battle flag from our public spaces and retire them to museums and books, we will have written our own chapter of Mississippi history, one in which we can say WE THE PEOPLE honored those victims of hatred with this inestimable gift of understanding and even peace.

It is the next step on our journey to a more perfect union, and it is a gift to our children and theirs that will allow them to be free of a symbol of the past we have carried far too long.

We will be forever indebted to leaders such as Gov. Nikki Haley in South Carolina, and to our House Speaker Philip Gunn, and those who have joined this righteous cause to turn the page to a remarkable and heartening next chapter.

— June 25, 2015

The above editorial represents the views of the Sun Herald editorial board.

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Member and Industry News Anytime
Keynote speaker Morley Piper, a U.S. World War II veteran of the Normandy invasion.

Joe and Brenda Lee (from left), Immediate Past President Joel McNeece and Steve Browning.

Lindsey, Peggy and Don Norman of the Starkville Daily News.

MPA President Joel McNeece (left) and Commercial Dispatch managing editor William Browning.

Tim & Betty Gail Kalich (left) of The Greenwood Commonwealth and Tim Beeland of the Scott Co. Times.

Ray Mosby (left) of the Deer Creek Pilot and Jack Ryan of the Enterprise-Journal.

Wyatt Emmerich of The Northside Sun (left) and Dick Mathauer of the DeSoto Times-Tribune.

Jerry Mitchell (left) and Kate Royals of The Clarion-Ledger.

Former Gov. Haley Barbour (left) and Sun Herald executive editor Stan Tiner.

Kevin Kirby of Visit Natchez and speaker Jan Hargrave “discuss” non-verbal communication.

Cartoonist Ricky Nobile (left) and Cindy Baxley of the Clarke County Tribune.

Layne Bruce of MPA (left) and lobbyist Hayes Dent.
MPA has launched an enhanced effort to promote member content through social media channels.

The project is a stated goal of MPA President Joel McNeece, publisher of The Calhoun County Journal. Efforts to catalog member newspaper social media accounts were headed by David Gustafson, publisher of The Lamar Times and The Petal News in Hattiesburg.

Newspapers’ Facebook and Twitter feed links have now been posted on the daily and non-daily member directory pages at mspress.org.

Additionally, MPA recently relaunched the blog Inkblots, dormant since 2012, as a method of promoting member newspapers’ content. The blog posts are linked to the Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts of MPA.

“This is a small effort MPA can make to better promote the original content of our members,” said MPA Executive Director Layne Bruce.

While the blog is updated as needed, a regular weekly feature is the “Sunday Reader,” a collection of news stories appearing in Mississippi daily and weekly newspapers.

“Sometimes the Sunday Reader lead is a human interest subject such as the Neshoba County Fair, or it can be the hot topic of the day and week such as the state flag controversy,” Bruce said.

The blog can be accessed at mpainkblots.wordpress.com.

MPA’s Twitter handle is @MPAnewspapers.

The social media effort is a digital component of communications at MPA, which also includes the quarterly Fourth Estate and monthly eBulletin.
Mosby

In was an invitation from “The Mississippi Knights,” all of whom apparently resided in a Post Office box in Harpersville, and it was ostensibly seeking our attendance at an upcoming Ku Klux Klan rally, there. I say “ostensibly,” because despite being addressed to a newspaper named the Press Register, that invitation was adamant that its senders desired “no press.”

That genius aside, I don’t think they wanted all of us, either. “White people invited,” was actually the way it read.

Along with their fellow humanitarians in the larger Confederate Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, it seems that they were going to march in Jackson, then meet later for an “old time rally” on some dirt road nine miles north of Forest that evening.

And that glorious day, we were informed, would be culminated by “a beautiful cross-lighting ceremony.”

That last part actually inspired me to actually write them an R.S.V.P., of sorts.

“Does one properly wear cotton or percale to a "beautiful cross-lighting ceremony,"’ I asked them.

And I wrote them I wouldn’t be able to make it because “proximity to that many racists would be like walking barefoot over slugs in the dark.”

I said, “I hate their would-be pious preachings of poison,” and that theirs was, “the work of fools and could I limit it to them, I would gladly wish they might drown within the hell-hole of hate in which they would have all the rest of us bathe.”

I told them to “strut around in their bedclothes, and wallow within their muck and light their racist fires, even so as to engulf a symbol that is universally that of the Prince of Peace.”

And though 25 years ago, that is completely on point today.

John S. Mosby, my great-great uncle John, never owned a slave. He hated the institution.

He argued staunchly against secession, knowing it was fool’s errand. He proved a fierce warrior, but was also a reluctant one. The most cursory reading of his memoirs makes that clear.

Could Uncle John somehow have been in that church in South Carolina, armed with his pair of trusty .44’s, there would be one dead racist, defiling a flag he fought under, not nine innocents in a prayer meeting.

But it is not my ancestor, nor other of his ilk that so many now identify with that flag. It is rather the murderers and the Lynchers and the burners and the enforcers of Jim Crowe and the idiots who gather on county dirt roads for “beautiful cross-lighting ceremonies.”

They are thieves. They are usurpers. They are hijackers of a heritage of which they are unworthy to even claim as their own.

And hence, we are duty bound to shame them as such.

Ray Mosby is editor and publisher of The Deer Creek Pilot in Rolling Fork. His email address is deercreekpilot@bellsouth.net.

OwnLocal works with 2,000+ newspapers to automate the digital sales process. Contact sales@ownlocal.com for more information.

www.ownlocal.com

Nissan Canton and its more than 6,000 employees are proud to support the mission of the Mississippi Press Association.

We’re also proud to be assembling the Nissan Murano at our Canton plant. The All-New 2015 Murano — Mississippi Proud.
a major source of database bloat. A well-edited article can easily have 100 revisions, which all take up database space. You can limit the number of revisions, but then you lose all but the most recent changes, along with much of an article’s editorial history.

This plugin takes a different approach: it keeps revisions based on differences — the number of changes — rather than by date. It keeps all your revisions until you publish, then saves only those with the most changes. You slim down your database while archiving almost everything you might someday need. (Uses WP core “diff” utility.)

Lean and mean — This project applies proven “lean startup” product development techniques to creating storytelling tools for journalists. Rather than a “we know best” attitude, I’ll use a “let’s find out” experimental approach. I’ll examine the real-world workflow of everyday journalists via surveys, mail-lists and interviews, and I’ll ask people what tools they need.

The project will create “minimum lovable products” — early versions that work well while also providing feedback on the problems of the product. I’ll test these tools with selected users, iterating and improving. Finally, I’ll rally the WordPress open-source community to review and refine these plugins, which will be free, open-source solutions, distributed via the WordPress directory.

The RJI Research Center will help survey; the Futures Lab will help test the tools. I’ll also enlist the aid of the Missouri School of Journalism and its media partners.

I’ll seek survey respondents and testers from state press associations and industry groups, including the Association of Alternative Newsmedia, the Association of Independents in Radio, Community Media Training Organisation (Australia), Current, Global Voices, Hacks/Hackers, MediaShift, Institute for Nonprofit News, Online News Association, Public Radio Program Directors Association, Transmedia Online Workshop and Transom.

Storytelling Tools will be built for, and with help from, the journalism community — people from print and online periodicals. I hope a side-benefit of the project is perpetuating a habit of cross-discipline cooperation among our colleagues. We often work in our own self-contained, deadline-driven silos, offering few opportunities to interact on common projects. These tools will be an initial step in thinking systemically and acting collectively to evolve the way we work.

WordPress powers 24 percent of the Web (60 percent of websites that use a CMS) and thousands of media websites. This project targets WordPress because our goal is, rather than build something and hope they come, to go where people are, and give them something they want.

Barrett Golding is a 2015-16 RJI Fellow, a web developer and leader of the project Hearing Voices from NPR. Reach Golding on Twitter @hearvox.
Elimination of marked postal copies is on hold

The National Newspaper Association’s Postal Committee had been hopeful that the U.S. Postal Service rulemakers would agree to an elimination of a marked copy of Periodicals newspapers showing advertising for each issue. This is based on a request to the Periodicals Advisory Group and the initial agreement of management of the Pricing & Classification Service Center in New York City. In this era of growing electronic documentation, the marked copy is becoming a bit of a throwback, and it causes NNA members to lose some of the efficiency they should have as they join the e-Doc program.

We even felt hopeful enough that USPS would loosen the requirements after I mentioned the possibility in this column awhile back, and I’ve had resoundingly positive feedback from NNA members.

Nevertheless, we were disheartened to learn in a follow-up PAG meeting at the PCSC in June that elimination was tabled. Mailers expressed concern to me about the extra scrutiny such a change could bring to Periodicals Class Mail at this time. It would have caused more of an “exposed look” at mailings that could be costly, and those costs would be passed along to Periodicals mailers.

NNA, which has a coveted seat on the PAG, where all decisions must be by consensus of Periodicals mailers and the Postal Service, agreed with Hill’s assessment, especially in light of the USPS emphasis on eliminating paper transactions.

In lieu of the elimination of the marked copy, NNA requested that Periodicals be granted a delay in submission by up to 24 hours or next business day after the newspapers are entered. (Sometimes a holiday or non-work day occurs the day of entry of a newspaper.)

Most newspapers can compute the actual advertising percentage before the actual press run, but they often don’t have the physical copy available to mark. And often mail entry is made after hours when there is an Overnight Drop and the newspaper office is closed. Printing is often far away at a central web printing plant.

Plant closings halted

The closing of mail processing plants for 2015 was halted May 20 until 2016 after an outpouring of complaints by mailers at the National Postal Forum in Anaheim, CA.

Operating Officer David Williams led off with the announcement that “we have heard the industry loud and clear about stabilizing delivery performance” before announcing the halt.

Unfortunately, much of the damage has already been done to newspaper service, especially in rural areas, by the 2012 round of plant closings and consolidations. Whether the system can be altered to overcome these problems before most newspapers lose their outside-county subscribers to history remains to be seen.

Tonda Rush, NNA chief executive officer, continues to work with Congress to enact meaningful postal legislation to stop the last round now on hold, as she and her Washington staff have in prior years. Unfortunately, partisan divisions and the federal deficit have made substantive changes difficult.

NNA has requested that the Postal Regulatory Commission establish a separate “service score” for rural areas to supplement the evaluation it does over USPS success in meeting service standards by mail class and by region. Because urban mail so heavily fills USPS mail volumes, the smaller amount of rural mail is not visible within the averages of each mail class.

NNA believes USPS should break out the on-time delivery percentages for rural areas separately in a report to the commission and to Congress.

Postal financial problems were largely caused by prior legislative changes, some taking money from USPS to help the deficit. Even though the Postal Service is “off-budget” as a “quasi-governmental” agency, it is still part of the unified federal budget and the federal government uses postal funds as part of overall national cash management strategies.

Copyright © 2015. Max Heath, National Newspaper Association postal chair. Heath is a postal consultant for AMG Parade, which also publishes American Profile, Relish and Spry newspaper supplements, and also for Landmark Community Newspapers LLC. E-mail maxheath@lcni.com.
You may have heard the story about the man who asked the clerk at the hardware store for a wrench. “What kind of wrench?” the clerk asked. “Just show me what you’ve got,” the man replied. Not quite knowing what to do, the clerk pulled a socket wrench from the shelf. “I think I’ll try it,” the man said.

About an hour later, the man came back to the store and said, “This wrench didn’t work. Do you have a different kind?” The clerk put a crescent wrench on the counter, and the man said he would try that one.

After another hour passed, the man returned to the store and said, “This one didn’t work, either. Do you have a bigger one?” The clerk went to the last shelf and found the biggest pipe wrench in inventory. “How about this one?” he asked. The man broke into a big smile. “I know that one will work. I’m just going to use it as a hammer.”

Ridiculous, isn’t it? But how many times have we seen advertisers do something similar? They insist on using the wrong tool and then get frustrated when it doesn’t meet their expectations – even when their expectations are way off base.

Generally speaking, there are two types of advertising – image and response. Image advertising – or institutional advertising, as some people know it – is designed to give consumers a positive feeling about the advertiser. The car dealer that runs ads claiming to be “the friendly dealership” is presenting itself as a nice place to do business. There’s no specific call for action. The appeal is indirect: “If you like us enough, maybe you’ll decide to buy a car from us.”

While image advertising can pay big dividends, it’s a longer cycle. Powerful brands like Apple, FedEx and Coca-Cola didn’t win their market share overnight. Their overall growth has been gradual – not necessarily snail-paced, but step-by-step in an upward direction.

On the other hand, response advertising is designed to create urgency. “Buy now,” an ad might say, “because we’re having a sale... or “because this offer expires on Saturday.” There is a faster payoff and results are easier to measure. When an advertiser has a sale, you’ll find out immediately if it’s a success. Either it works or it doesn’t.

Repetition often forms a strong bond between image and response advertising. A business that runs a strong image campaign – one that resonates with its target audience – will eventually make sales. And an advertiser who runs a lot of response ads – ads that get results – will establish a strong image in consumers’ minds.

Some of the best campaigns deliberately combine image and response. They project a carefully crafted image and ask for specific action – all at the same time. (“We’re the friendly car dealer. That’s why we’re offering you these weekend specials.”) If you take this approach, make sure it’s a consistent strategy, not a one-and-done experiment.

It’s all about using the right tool.
A federal district judge in Mississippi recently reaffirmed that the media's publication of official written statements from the Office of the State Attorney General or other public law enforcement officials about court proceedings cannot be the basis for a defamation claim in Mississippi. See King v. State et al., No. 3:14-cv-157-CWR-FKB (S.D. Miss. Jan. 28, 2015).

In April 2012, Patrick King was arrested for selling bootleg CDs and DVDs at his place of business, “The Ice House,” in Copiah County. The arrest was part of the Mississippi Attorney General’s initiative “Operation Knock Out Knock-Offs,” a multi-phase project funded in part by a federal grant and aimed at creating public awareness about intellectual property theft and the sale of counterfeit goods. Following King’s arrest and the separate arrest of another Hazlehurst man, the Attorney General issued a press release which various media outlets reported on, either quoting directly from the press release or airing clips of the press conference itself.

Later King pled guilty to six state felony counts of the illegal sale or distribution of recordings without the display of required information. The media reported on King’s guilty plea and his sentence of 18 years in prison with 3 years suspended, relying on the official arrest report and another press release from the Attorney General.

After an unsuccessful attempt to overturn his conviction, King and his wife sued the State of Mississippi, Copiah County, the City of Hazlehurst, the investigation agency that assisted with the arrest, four media outlets, and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) in Federal district court in Jackson, seeking $61 million in damages. In a 90-page complaint, the Kings alleged a variety of claims, including defamation and civil rights violations. The defendants promptly filed separate motions to dismiss the case. The media defendants pointed out that, among other problems, the 1-year statute of limitations for defamation claims had already passed.

The Federal court dismissed the suit against all defendants in a well-reasoned and detailed opinion written by United States District Judge Carlton Reeves. First and foremost, Judge Reeves explained that the Kings had ignored the basic statutory requirements for any defamation claim based upon news reports published by the media in Mississippi. Plaintiffs had not sent retraction letters to any of the media defendants to notify them of King’s alleged defamation claim. And the case was clearly brought too late. Mississippi has a 1-year statute of limitations for defamation claims, and the Kings conceded that they brought the case over two years after the broadcasts and publications at issue.

Even had the Kings complied with the retraction statute and timely filed their suit, Judge Reeves ruled that the defamation claim was still non-actionable since their claim was based on official communications provided by the Attorney General or to the Court as part of Mr. King’s guilty plea and sentencing hearing and the fair and balanced publication of this type of information is protected by the official statement privilege in Mississippi.

Laura R. McCarthy is part of the media defense team with Butler Snow LLP, which is counsel for the Mississippi Press Association.
The public has a right to know, but too often we see elected or other officials who are paid by taxpayers’ dollars take a cavalier attitude to the public’s right to know.

My job keeps me in contact with elected officials, department heads, and those who represent them to the public.

How can I say this without throwing shade. The public has a right to know, but too often we see elected or other officials who are paid by taxpayers take a cavalier attitude to that right.

We, those of us in the media, try to keep the public informed, but we can’t do our jobs effectively if we don’t have cooperation from our public officials or their representatives to answer our questions when we seek them out.

The framers of our Constitution knew the importance of preserving the public’s right to know and the role of the press in ensuring that right.

Elected officials often hire a communication person to be their public spokesperson. That’s great if that spokesperson knows how to effectively communicate with the media. I can think of many times I have personally called in futile attempts to get a communications person who is paid to deal with the media, only to get no response.

And if I’m lucky to reach the communications person, often the person seems annoyed that we are trying to get the information or they give a lame excuse for why he or she can’t get the information.

However, there are some good communications professionals. One that comes to mind is Pamela Weaver, communications person for Mississippi Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann.

Weaver is always professional and rarely ever keeps the media waiting to get information.

It shouldn’t be too much to ask a communications person or a public official or agency to do their job. Our tax dollars are paying for it.

If elected officials or department heads of public agencies aren’t going to make themselves available to provide information to the public, they should ensure their representatives are available to provide the information.

Elected officials often talk about transparency, but don’t practice what they preach. They often try to keep things from public view or hide behind executive sessions to keep items from public view.

There are times that executive sessions are appropriate, but it appears every governmental meeting I attend there is an executive session. Some of the items in my mind are questionable at best on whether they are legitimate for executive session.

Right now, I can hear the proverbial personnel matter or pending litigation used to justify a closed door meeting.

Jimmie E. Gates is a reporter for The Clarion-Ledger. His email address is jgates@jackson.gannett.com. Follow him on Twitter @jgatesnews.
Some call them “decorative.” Or “illustrative.” Or “expressive.” I call them funky fonts.


They’re all funky fonts—and none of them deserves a place in your newspaper.

Funky fonts are: Cheap. Cliché. Dated. Silly. They’re also difficult to read. But the real problem with funky fonts is that they tend to draw too much attention to themselves, becoming a dominant part of the design of a page.

If you want to use funky fonts, save them for those advertisers who find them appealing. But let’s not use them in our page designs.

Funky fonts may have a place in other publications—like church bulletins or high school yearbook—but I can’t think of a designer for a high-class magazine (Elle, GQ, Vogue and NatGeo come to mind) who would debase a design with a funky font.

A quick story:

Years ago, I was approached by the features editor of a client newspaper on the very morning we were launching a redesign. She showed me her feature front. It included a funky font for a headline.

“No, Amanda,” I said. “As of today, we’re only using our new headline and accessory typefaces for design elements. No more funky fonts.”

“Oh…” she said, her voice trailing off.

“Tell ya what,” I said. “I’m gonna make you a better designer right now, with one simple rule.”

“What’s that?” she asked.

“No more funky fonts. Not for three months, until I return for my follow-up visit. None!”

“OK,” she said. But I could see she wasn’t quite convinced.

The launch went well, I left town. When I returned three months later, Amanda saw me walking in the door. She pointed at me, looked at me purposefully and shouted across the newsroom: “You’re right!”

“I know,” I said, joking. But I really had no idea what she meant.

“Tell me how I’m right.”

“I’m a better designer than I was three months ago.”

“Yes, you are,” I said. “I’ve been looking at your pages in the papers I get mailed to me. But…you tell me why.”

“Because I’m no longer using funky fonts. Now I don’t waste my time spinning through that CD of fonts, searching for just the right one—which is often the wrong one. Now I pay attention to the design of the entire page. My designs are better because I’m looking at the whole design, not just one silly font.”

I couldn’t have been more pleased.

“So,” I said, “what did you do with that CD?”

“I don’t know. I think I tossed it.”

End of story.

Wanna become a better designer? Right now? Start today: Never… ever…use a funky font again.

Henninger Consulting has served hundreds of dailies, weeklies, business journals, church-affiliated newspapers and niche publications throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. Email Ed at edh@henningerconsulting.com.

Forecast: ‘Native social’ ad format growing at fast clip

A new forecast for the local media industry highlights the fast growth of the “native social” mobile ad format.

Rick Ducey, managing director of BIA/Kelsey, provided the native advertising forecast at the Local Media Native Advertising Interactive Summit on Thursday in Washington, D.C. Based in Chantilly, Virginia, BIA/Kelsey is a research, consulting and advisory service company focused on local media.

“Native ad formats are more engaging,” Ducey said. “With all of the first-, second- and sometimes people say third-party data, the targeting is really fabulous. It just makes the advertising experience relevant and very impactful for the user and advertiser. They are getting to the right people at the right time with the right message.”

“Native social” is defined by graphical and textual brand messaging that is merged into the organic feed-based interfaces of mobile social apps, Ducey said. He described these ads as being targeted based on granular social signals, such as behavior and connections within the social graph. He noted that the most common examples are Facebook’s News Feed Ads and Twitter’s Promoted Tweets.

The forecast shed light on mobile advertising targeting local audiences. The native/social category of mobile ad spend for local audiences is expected to increase from 14.0% in 2015 to 25.5% in 2019.

“Within the mobile ad channel, native ad formats on social platforms are the fastest-growing segment,” Ducey said.

Ducey emphasized how audiences’ eyes and advertisers’ dollars are shifting toward mobile. Online will gain a few points of local advertising market share, while mobile will nearly triple its share by 2019, he said.

The interest in the native social format comes at a time when more Americans are discovering news on social platforms.

Sixty-three percent of Twitter users say they get news there, compared with 52 percent in 2013, according to a new report by the Pew Research Center. Sixty-three percent of Facebook users say they get news there, compared with 47 percent in 2013, the report said.
Board visits with NNA Fellow

Karson Hoagland (right), a recent graduate of the Meek School of Journalism and New Media at the University of Mississippi, visits with MPA Immediate Past President Jim Prince (from left), Meek School Dean Will Norton, MPA Treasurer James Arrington Goff, Assistant Dean Charlie Mitchell, and MPA directors Stephanie Patton, Clay Foster and Paul Keane during the board’s spring meeting in Oxford. Hoagland, who attended the National Newspaper Association Leadership Summit through a grant from the MPA Education Foundation, is spending this summer as an intern at the Savannah (Ga.) Morning News.

Google: 56 percent of digital advertising served never seen

» Advertising Age

An incredible 56.1 percent of ads on the internet are not seen by humans, according to new research released by Google.

“With the advancement of new technologies we now know that many display ads that are served never actually have the opportunity to be seen by a user,” said Google group product manager Sanaz Ahari in a blog post.

Those ads appear outside the viewable area of a browser window. Once you factor in bots, even fewer ads are seen by the people advertisers are paying to reach.

The report comes at an uneasy time in the digital ad world, when fraud and poor inventory quality are raising doubts about the industry’s ability to deliver on what is sold to advertisers.

The publication of data from Google, the world’s largest ad-tech company, is likely to increase advertiser concerns about the trustworthiness of the digital ad industry supply chain. Google’s finding is based on information collected from its Doubleclick ad server and its display network in October 2014.