THE (LANSING) STATE JOURNAL AS A GANNETT PROPERTY: AN INQUIRY INTO AND EVALUATION OF EDITORIAL PERFORMANCE UNDER GANNETT CO. OWNERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

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By

John Alfred Kaufman III

The study assesses changes in the editorial performance of the State Journal occurring since the Journal was acquired by Gannett Co., Inc., in 1971. Changes in various aspects of news gathering and presentation are detailed. The primary focus of the study is on the newspaper's editorial department; however, a summary of major changes in other departments is included. The study shows that gains in editorial performance have been made through cosmetic changes that improved the newspaper's appearance, a more comprehensive scheme of departmentalization of news, expanded editorial freedom and abandonment of a Saturday afternoon edition in favor of a morning edition. Editorial performance had been retarded because of an earlier copy deadline that has hampered timely coverage of local news; exaggerated use of feature material; cutbacks in editorial department positions; severe erosion of coverage of the affairs of state government; and a breakdown in morale among editorial staffers brought about by authoritarian administrative methods and a lack of inner-organizational communication.

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A THESIS

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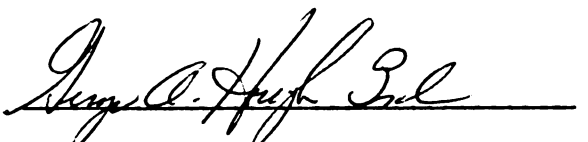

Director of Thesis

This is dedicated to Joan, my wife and benefactress,

who maintained an even temperment throughout.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. George A. Hough, 3rd for his counsel and encouragement, Linda Glendening for her assistance with statistical evaluation and all those persons affiliated with the State Journal who were so helpful in providing information for this study.

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INTRODUCTION

On July 1, 1971, Gannett Co., Inc., a large national corporation with holdings that at the time included thirty-six daily and eleven weekly newspapers, acquired by way of a corporate merger the holdings of Federated Publications, Inc., a group of seven daily newspapers published in four states. Included among the seven Federated newspapers that came under control of Gannett Co. is the State Journal, an evening newspaper published seven days a week in Lansing, Michigan.

The following study is an analysis of how the State Journal's editorial performance--that is, its methods of determining, collecting and presenting what it believes is news each day--has been affected since the newspaper became a Gannett property. Definite conclusions regarding the newspaper's change in editorial posture and performance have been reached in this study; however, it should be specified from the onset that after Gannett proprietorship of nearly two years the State Journal is still, as of this writing, in a state of transition. Consequently, the conclusions reached here are indicative of the course upon which the State Journal has been set by the parent company, but by no means is it an evaluation of the paper at its final destination.

The study involved a review of pertinent literature, interviewing staff members and former staff members of the State Journal, submitting a questionnaire to editorial employees to measure staff attitudes concerning conditions and changes under Gannett and conducting content analysis of the newspaper.

The interviews were conducted between August and October 1972; additional interviews were conducted from March to July 1973 to update information obtained earlier and to keep abreast of new developments at the State Journal. Personnel working for the State Journal, from the publisher on down to reporters, cooperated readily in furnishing answers to the many questions put to them. Because in many instances candid answers were given in response to sensitive questions concerning the affairs of the State Journal before and since the merger, many staff members asked that certain responses not be specifically attributed to them. Consequently, in many instances throughout the study such information is generically attributed as having come simply from a staff member. This study is principally concerned with the editorial operation of the newspaper, however, personnel from various other departments were interviewed to provide a broader perspective of the changes that have occurred at the Journal since it came into the Gannett fold.

The questionnaire was distributed among the members of the editorial department in February 1973. The questionnaire was composed of eighteen items concerning operation of the editorial department and the newspaper's editorial performance. The questionnaire was of the

set response, or multiple choice, type and staffers were not asked to identify themselves. The responses are presented in tabular form.

The content analysis of the newspaper was of a quantitative nature. Two composite sample weeks were randomly selected, one for the year preceding the Gannett-Federated merger, and one from the year following the merger. A scoring system was devised by which each news story in the fourteen editions was systematically analyzed. Daily columns of commentary, comics, ombudsman services, and other common fare were also analyzed, as were photographs and other art.

CHAPTER I

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE STATE JOURNAL

If one wishes to trace the geneology of the State Journal from its very beginning he must start by following the career of Henry Barns, an Englishman born of yeoman stock August 13, 1815, in the county of Kent, England. Barns received only a limited amount of formal schooling in England before his parents immigrated to the United States when Henry was twelve years old.[1] The family settled in New York state, and Henry decided that the printing trade was a promising and worthwhile profession to pursue in America. He served a seven-year apprenticeship with a printer, and upon becoming a journeyman bought his own equipment and started a small printing business in New York.

In 1835, Barns packed his printing equipment and headed for Michigan. He stopped briefly in Detroit but soon set out for Niles, "a town whose cosmopolitan past under four flags and flourishing present convinced him it would become one of the great population centers of the Great Lakes Region."[2] In Niles he founded the Gazette, published it for less than a year and sold it--a pattern repeated often in his career.

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[1] "Henry Barns, Founder of the State Journal, Was Dynamic Man," State Journal, April 28, 1955, p. 2-K.

[2] Ibid.

After returning to New York for new printing equipment with which he planned to start another newspaper in Niles, Barns was offered, in return for his new printing press, a promising partnership in a Detroit newspaper. The paper, whose press had been lost in a fire, was the Detroit Free Press. After two years had passed, Barns had made a substantial profit in the venture. He subsequently sold his share in the Free Press, married, and retired to Messina Springs, New York, where he intended to live out the rest of his days in genteel retirement. But tragedy struck not long afterward. The bank in which Barns had invested a $10,000 retirement stake went bankrupt and defaulted on his deposit. Barns, left virtually penniless, resorted to tenant farming for several years in order to make a living for his family. Eventually, he managed to work his way back into newspaper publishing, first in Syracuse and then once again in Detroit. And once again he made money in Detroit, later branching out to the town of Coldwater where he established a newspaper.

Barns had for many years been in correspondence with Horace Greeley and William H. Seward, later President Lincoln's secretary of state. He was profoundly influenced by their attitudes--attitudes that were shared by a growing number of people in the country who favored the abolition of slavery, and who eventually would become the founders of the Republican party. "Barns was one of the first half-dozen men to sign the call for the convention 'under the oaks' at Jackson, at which the Republican party took definite organizational form and began to become a potent political force in the nation."[3]

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[3] Ibid.

After the Republicans swept the state election of 1854 and put Kinsley S. Bingham in the governor's office, Barns, an ardent partisan, left Detroit for Lansing to establish a newspaper that would reflect the Republican philosophy. He took his printing press and his son along with him. "They arrived on Tuesday, April 24, 1855, and by Saturday, the 28th, managed to publish their first issue, a workmanlike, two-sheet, seven-column paper complete with two hopeful advertisers."[4] The fledgling newspaper was named the Lansing Republican and it remained a property of its founder for one week. Barns sold the newspaper to Rufus Hosmer and George A. Fitch, two gentlemen who soon turned the Republican into a sound business proposition by acquiring the state printing contract.[5]

Barns returned to his publishing interests in Detroit. He remained active in Michigan politics, later serving as a senator in the legislature. He merged his Detroit Tribune with James E. Scripp's Daily Advertiser in 1862. But misfortune continued to plague him. His wife died, and not long after he lost most of his money in a brick-making business. He married again, the second time to a woman of considerable wealth. But Barns, using his wife's money, continued to make unsound investments. Their financial situation became difficult and their domestic life strife-ridden. On July 21, 1871, Barns took his own life.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

But the Lansing Republican endured long after its founder had perished. The Republican remained a weekly newspaper until 1875 when it was published semi-weekly. On January 1, 1880, the newspaper began publishing thrice weekly. On January 4, 1886, the Republican was sold to Darius D. Thorp and Frank Godfrey.[6] Circulation at that time was approximately 500 copies an issue. The new owners immediately increased the publishing schedule to six days a week; three weeks later circulation had increased to 2,000 copies daily. The new owners made another modification, they changed the name of the newspaper to State Republican.

On July 1, 1896, the State Republican was sold to the Robert Smith Company, a firm that had built a substantial printing business of a diversified character with a particular specialization in publishing catalogues and books.[7] By 1903, circulation had increased to 3,600 copies; late in that year a new flat bed press with a capacity for 6,000 eight-page newspapers an hour was installed.

By May 8, 1905, circulation had jumped to 4,410. The population of the city was approximately 21,000 at the time.[8] In January 1910,

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[6]"Daily Paper Started Second Time; Editor Termed It a Sensation," State Journal, April 28, 1955, p. K-7.

[7]"Turn of Century Passed Without Fanfare; Minor Scandal Big News," State Journal, April 28, 1955, p. K-7.

[8]"New Duplex Press Was Installed; Lansing Was Prosperous City," State Journal, April 28, 1955, p. K-7.

the five-year-old flat bed press was deemed outmoded and a new "tubular plate press" was installed. The new press enabled the State Republican to turn out 25,000 sixteen-page papers an hour.[9]

On February 13, 1911, the State Republican and the Lansing Journal, a daily newspaper of Democratic persuasion that had been the Republican's enduring competitor and political rival in Lansing, merged into a single publication " . . . in the interests of sound business and improved service to the public . . . "[10] The merger was accomplished January 11, 1911; the hyphenated name Lansing Journal-Republican was used until February 14 of the same year when the paper was renamed the State Journal.

In the fall of 1912, the State Journal faced new competition; a daily newspaper, the Lansing Evening Press, was founded by W. S. and William Thomson of Battle Creek.[11] The Evening Press was touted as a politically independent newspaper. The new paper was at a sizeable disadvantage in competing against the venerable Journal because it did not have a wire service franchise and had to rely almost totally on local events for material with which to fill its news columns.

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[9] Ibid.

[10] "Republican Enticed Subscribers; Offered 'Free Music Lessons,'" State Journal, April 28, 1955, p. K-7.

[11] "Journal Got Competition; Evening Press Entered Race," State Journal, April 28, 1955, p. K-7.

In 1916, the Evening Press was absorbed by the State Journal, which "assumed its obligations."[12] Perhaps the most significant tribute that Lansing publishing history can accord the Evening Press is that--published Tuesday through Sunday--it provided the city with its first Sunday newspaper.

On February 16, 1914, the publisher announced that the State Journal had been purchased by a new company, the State Journal Company, whose major stockholders were Charles N. Halsted, a newspaperman from Grand Rapids; Henry B. Herpolsheimer, Grand Rapids merchant; and A. E. Richardson, mayor of Saginaw. The new corporation was formed with $150,000 of common stock.[13] Halsted took over as publisher of the Journal. At the time, circulation of the newspaper was approximately 15,000. Not long after the sale, the Journal was relocated in new quarters on the northeast corner of East Ottawa Street and North Grand Avenue.

On May 26, 1921, the State Journal, once again, found itself in a competitive publishing climate. On that day, Edward A. Lucas and Jack Francis founded the Lansing Capital News, an afternoon daily newspaper.[14] It, like the Evening Press before, was unable to successfully compete against the Journal, which bought it out in 1932.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] "New Owners Took Charge; Douglas Martin Made Editor," State Journal, April 28, 1955, p. 8-K.

[14] "Flu Epidemic Rolled Ahead; Quarantine Slapped on M.A.C.," State Journal, April 28, 1955, p. K-13.

Four years previous, on December 1, 1928, the State Journal itself had changed hands. The paper had been acquired by Federated Publications, Inc., a fledgling corporation founded by A. L. Miller, publisher of the Enquirer and News in Battle Creek, Michigan. Along with the State Journal and the Battle Creek newspaper, the new corporation also owned the Grand Rapids Herald and the Newspaper Engraving Company of Grand Rapids.[15] Paul A. Martin, who had been an editor in Battle Creek, was installed as the new editor and publisher of the Journal.[16] At the time of this change in ownership, the State Journal had built its circulation to 42,740 daily. The largest edition published weekly was a forty-four-page newspaper on Fridays.

On September 27, 1936, the Journal began publishing on Sundays and became for the first time a seven-day-a-week publication.

The newspaper moved to its present quarters on the southwest corner of Grand Avenue and Lenawee Street in August 1951. Capital outlay of almost $2 million was allocated for the new facility. At that time, the newspaper's format was changed from a nine-column to the more orthodox eight-column format, which it retains today.

During the 1950s and 1960s, according to senior editors and staff members at the Journal, the newspaper experienced few changes in terms of editorial mood and method. The newspaper, the only daily paper published in Lansing, was in the luxurious--and complacent--position of not having to worry about a competitor. It could only

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[15]"State Journal Transfer Made," State Journal, Dec. 1, 1928, p. 3.

[16]"Crash, Depression, World War II--Journal Chronicled All," State Journal, April 28, 1955, p. K-15.

follow that as the community grew and prospered, the State Journal was bound to do the same. In 1950, Lansing had a population of 92,129; the State Journal's circulation was 53,340.[17] In 1960, Lansing's population had increased to 107,807; the Journal's circulation had increased to 66,279.[18] In 1970, Lansing's population had jumped to 131,546, and the Journal, keeping pace, had increased its circulation to 77,384.[19]

The next significant evolutionary transformation in the development of the Journal came in 1971, the year Federated Publications was acquired by Gannett Co., Inc. The merger of the two corporations, like the merger of the State Republican and the Lansing Journal sixty years before, resulted not only in a change of ownership but also a profound change in editorial performance for the State Journal.

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[17]Editor & Publisher Co., Inc., Editor & Publisher International Yearbook, XXCIII, No. 5 (1950), p. 74.

[18]Editor & Publisher Co., Inc., Editor & Publisher International Yearbook--1970, p. 152.

[19]Ibid.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GANNETT CO., INC.

Frank Gannett and His Newspapers

The man whose name the Gannett Co. bears and who directed its fortunes until his retirement in 1957 was born September 15, 1876, in a house on the family's farm atop Gannett Hill overlooking Lake Canadaigua in the finger lake country of western New York state, forty miles southeast of Rochester. He was christened Frank Ernest Gannett (gán-nèt) by his parents, Charles and Maria Brooks Gannett. Charles Gannett was descendent from English-American forebears, Maria Brooks was born of Scottish and Dutch parents.[1] Frank was the third son to whom Maria gave birth; she had also borne a daughter.

Life on Gannett Hill was arduous. There was no well at the homestead and fresh water had to be carried from a spring; there was no cook stove in the house, only an open fire for cooking and heating; candles were the only means of illumination. Unable to make a substantial living from the farm at Gannett Hill, Charles moved his family off the hill in 1877 to try tenant farming at Blood's Depot,

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[1] Samuel T. Williamson, Imprint of a Publisher (New York: Robert W. McBride & Company, 1948), p. 3.

New York (now known as Atlanta). Unsuccessful at that venture, he and his wife took up innkeeping, managing one small country hotel and then moving on to another when a better prospect appeared.

While his mother cooked and cleaned and his father attended to the other chores of hostelry, young Frank helped supplement the family income by working at numerous odd jobs, such as delivering newspapers, selling old animal bones to a company in Rochester, picking wild raspberries to sell and creating a lucrative business by taking orders for name stamps from Italian immigrants who could not write English. He also peddled copies of a book that retold the horror of the Johnstown, Pennsylvania, flood.[2] When Frank Gannett was fourteen years old his family moved from Wallace to Bolivar, New York, near the Pennsylvania border. There Gannett got his first job as a newspaper reporter. He worked as a local correspondent for the Buffalo News, which paid him one dollar for each story he had published.

Gannett also worked as a waiter and part-time bartender while he was growing up in Bolivar; it was his experience behind the bar that fostered a hatred of liquor that later made him one of the zealous supporters of Prohibition:

> "I saw liquor make a lot of good men bad," he said, "but I never saw it make any bad men better. After watching booze ruin men, I made up my mind that if I ever got a chance, I would fight it."[3]

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[2] Ibid., pp. 22-26, passim.

[3] Ibid., p. 36.

And Gannett did pay allegiance to his youthful resolution. After he had launched his publishing enterprise one of the peculiar characteristics of the Gannett newspapers came from the fact that none of them carried any liquor advertisements--by direction of Frank Gannett.

After he was graduated from high school, Gannett attended Cornell University on a scholarship. By then Gannett had decided to pursue a career in newspaper work. While studying as an undergraduate at Cornell, Gannett wrote for the University newspaper, worked as campus correspondent for the Ithaca Journal, and expanded his reportorial endeavors by sending dispatches to newspapers in Buffalo, Syracuse, New York City, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago concerning the University and the heroics of Pop Warner's celebrated football teams.[4] While working for the Ithaca Journal, Gannett found, to his chagrin, that a number of local businessmen who refused to advertise with the Journal had been blacklisted from all mention in the newspaper's news columns.

> "I was outraged," says Gannett, "at the subjection of the editorial department to the business office, and when I became a newspaper owner I saw to it that nothing of this sort prevailed on any paper with which I was connected."[5]

Gannett was graduated from Cornell in June 1898. In August of that year the Spanish-American War came to an end and shortly afterward Jacob Gould Schurman, president of Cornell, was appointed by President

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[4] Ibid., p. 51.

[5] Ibid., p. 50.

William McKinley to serve as chairman of a presidential commission whose task it was to go to the Philippine Islands, study circumstances there and make a recommendation to the President as to how the islands should be governed. Schurman offered Frank Gannett the position of personal secretary at $3,000 a year, an offer that Gannett accepted. Gannett's experience in the Philippines provided him with definite ideas about government and administration that he utilized throughout the rest of his life. Commenting on the lessons learned by Gannett in the Philippines, Samuel T. Williamson, author of Imprint of a Publisher, an authorized biography of Frank E. Gannett of somewhat obsequious posture, noted that:

> He became intensely anti-imperialistic. Upon administration of government and of business he holds the same deep-rooted convictions: that centralization leads to dictatorship. He believes in decentralization in government and in delegation of responsibility in business. His twenty-one newspapers are largely autonomous, reflections, possibly unconscious, of his Philippine experience.[6]

Following his experiences abroad, Gannett returned to upstate New York and resumed his newspaper career, first as city editor of the Ithaca Daily News in 1900 and then as part-owner of the Gazette in Elmira. He purchased a half interest in the Gazette for $20,000 in 1906, putting up $3,000 of his own in cash and securing the remainder through "character loans" and by writing personal notes.[7] Within a year of his debut as a newspaper owner, Gannett, with his partner, had

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[6] Ibid., p. 69.

[7] Ibid., p. 88.

worked out a merger with their only competitor in Elmira, the Star; the owners of the two papers believing that it was to their mutual benefit to merge into a single publication, which they named the Star-Gazette.

In 1912, Gannett, spurred by the encouragement of the family who had helped him finance his way into part-ownership of the Gazette six years before, bought a part-ownership in the Ithaca Journal. Gannett subsequently spent his weekdays working in Elmira and traveled to Ithaca on weekends to check up on the operation of the Journal.

During the presidential campaign of 1912, Gannett came out editorially in the Star-Gazette in support of the Democratic nominee, Woodrow Wilson. In Ithaca, the editor of the Journal came out in support of the Republican incumbent, President William Howard Taft. But Gannett did not insist that the Journal endorse Wilson:

> The way Gannett looked at the matter, he had delegated to the Journal's management the responsibility for running the paper; and that management could not be responsible if he interfered. And so, in Ithaca, was pounded out on the anvil of experience another working policy--local autonomy--that now applies to all newspapers in the Gannett group.[8]

Thus, was instituted, ostensibly at least, one of the fundamental propositions of the Gannett Co.'s creed--local autonomy. Exactly what autonomy is in the Gannett concept today and to what extent it does or does not exist will be dealt with later in the chapter.

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[8]Ibid., p. 100.

While administering the Star-Gazette, Gannett set forth another basic tenet in the Gannett creed, but one that would last only as long as its creator was alive to enforce it: a ban on all liquor advertising in Gannett newspapers, later expanded to include cigarette advertisements as well. After Gannett died in 1957 that particular idiosyncrasy of his pre-Prohibition morality was quickly put aside in order that the company might more fully imbide in the heady profit-making of the post-war boom.[9]

By 1917, Gannett and his business partners were ready to go after larger game. They turned their gaze on Rochester and the three afternoon newspapers published there. Gannett decided the wisest move would entail buying two of the newspapers and merging them into a single publication, to afford a dominant position in the afternoon publishing field in that city. Of the three newspapers, Gannett believed the Times and the Union and Advertiser were the right papers to buy. Gannett and his partners went into clandestine negotiations to purchase the two newspapers, which they acquired after raising $250,000 and writing notes of more than $400,000 against their holdings.[10]

By 1923, Gannett and his two principal business partners had bought six newspapers in upstate New York. They subsequently formed a company called the Empire State Group. Not long after, Gannett bought out the interests of his two partners, who had become weary of the pace, and formed Gannett Co., Inc.

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[9]"The Rochester Acquirer," Time, May 22, 1972, p. 39.

[10]Williamson, Imprint of a Publisher, p. 111.

The 1920s continued to be active years for Frank Gannett, who during the decade was involved in buying newspaper properties worth approximately $12 million. Over a span of forty years, Gannett acquired twenty-seven newspapers, ten of which he consolidated into five. He never founded a newspaper, always content to merge or purchase and consolidate if necessary.

He did have setbacks. Twice Gannett tried to buy the Chicago Daily News. He was also unsuccessful in his attempts to buy the Kansas City Star and the Denver Post.[11]

In 1935, Gannett founded the Frank E. Gannett Newspaper Foundation, Inc., an organization that was to ultimately own all the Class A common stock of Gannett Co., Inc., and would have control over all the company's newspapers. Gannett decreed that ". . . the Foundation's resources are to be devoted exclusively to 'public charitable, education, and general philanthropic uses and purposes.'"[12]

When Gannett died in 1957, his newspaper group--he disliked the word "chain" because, he said, each newspaper in the Gannett organization had its own character and followed its own editorial desires--was composed of nineteen newspapers, most of them located in upstate New York, none of which could be considered a metropolitan newspaper. "The Gannett image at the time was that of a celluloid-collar, low-budget exercise in small-city publishing, distinguished

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[11] Ibid., p. 142-150, passim.

[12] Ibid., p. 205.

mainly by a ban on cigarette and liquor ads that reflected Gannett's personal prohibitions. Then Paul Miller took over . . ."[13]

Paul Miller and the New Awakening

Paul Miller, now sixty-six years old, is the man Frank Gannett had hand-picked to take over the reins of the Gannett Co. Miller is a Missourian who got his start in newspapers working for publications in Oklahoma and also working for the Associated Press, an organization in which in the span of only ten years he climbed the ladder from night filing clerk in Columbus, Ohio, to Washington bureau chief. He is now chairman of the Associated Press, as well as the operative head of Gannett Co., Inc. He was appointed to serve as executive assistant under Frank Gannett in 1947, after he had worked for Gannett for several years. When Frank Gannett retired in 1957, Miller took over as chairman, and, not long after, the Gannett Co. took off.

In 1963 the company had reached an "earnings plateau" of under $4 million on revenues of between $50 and $60 million.[14] Then the boom came. With Miller at the helm, Gannett moved into five other states and acquired twenty-two newspapers during the next eight years. By 1972, Gannett Co. was operating fifty-two daily and fourteen weekly newspapers, a total of sixty-six newspapers--more than owned by any other newspaper group in the United States--and could boast record earnings for the previous year of $19,747,000 on revenues of

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[13]"The Rochester Acquirer," Time, May 22, 1972, p. 39.

[14]"Let's All Get Together," Forbes, June 15, 1971, p. 42.

$238,451,000.[15] Though much of the growth experienced by Gannett during the 1960s was acquired rather than generated internally, still operating margins for the company made a substantial increase from 14.7 percent in 1962 to 18.5 percent in 1970.[16] Much of Gannett's success under Miller can be attributed to simply being in or buying into, the right place at the right time:

> There are several reasons for the success of Gannett's move. First, the industry was ready for horizontal integration for the same reasons that made the independent telephone industry ready when General Telephone began acquiring companies in the 1930s. Just as the owners of small telephone companies shrank from the capital cost of converting to dial phones, so small family-held newspapers increasingly prefer to sell out to avoid the financial burden of converting to more efficient printing techniques.[17]

But perhaps even more stategic in Miller's plan of attack is his selection of targets. Miller has shied away from purchasing any large metropolitan newspapers, choosing instead to stay in the smaller market areas where there is still potential for growth. As of 1972 when group-wide circulation for Gannett was 2,243,999, only five of the company's newspapers could claim a circulation of over 100,000.[18] But even though the company was considerably lower in total circulation that year compared with newspaper chains such as Newhouse, Scripps-Howard, Knight and Hearst, it was enjoying a higher profit margin. In 1971, Knight Newspapers, a group that has concentrated on buying big

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[15]"The Rochester Acquirer," Time, May 22, 1972, p. 40.

[16]"Let's All Get Together," Forbes, June 15, 1971, p. 42.

[17]Ibid.

[18]"The Rochester Acquirer," Time, May 22, 1972, p. 40.

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Paul Miller and the New Awakening

Paul Miller, now sixty-six years old, is the man Frank Gannett had hand-picked to take over the reins of the Gannett Co. Miller is a Missourian who got his start in newspapers working for publications in Oklahoma and also working for the Associated Press, an organization in which in the span of only ten years he climbed the ladder from night filing clerk in Columbus, Ohio, to Washington bureau chief. He is now chairman of the Associated Press, as well as the operative head of Gannett Co., Inc. He was appointed to serve as executive assistant under Frank Gannett in 1947, after he had worked for Gannett for several years. When Frank Gannett retired in 1957, Miller took over as chairman, and, not long after, the Gannett Co. took off.

In 1963 the company had reached an "earnings plateau" of under $4 million on revenues of between $50 and $60 million.[14] Then the boom came. With Miller at the helm, Gannett moved into five other states and acquired twenty-two newspapers during the next eight years. By 1972, Gannett Co. was operating fifty-two daily and fourteen weekly newspapers, a total of sixty-six newspapers--more than owned by any other newspaper group in the United States--and could boast record earnings for the previous year of $19,747,000 on revenues of

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[13]"The Rochester Acquirer," Time, May 22, 1972, p. 39.

[14]"Let's All Get Together," Forbes, June 15, 1971, p. 42.

$238,451,000.[15] Though much of the growth experienced by Gannett during the 1960s was acquired rather than generated internally, still operating margins for the company made a substantial increase from 14.7 percent in 1962 to 18.5 percent in 1970.[16] Much of Gannett's success under Miller can be attributed to simply being in or buying into, the right place at the right time:

> There are several reasons for the success of Gannett's move. First, the industry was ready for horizontal integration for the same reasons that made the independent telephone industry ready when General Telephone began acquiring companies in the 1930s. Just as the owners of small telephone companies shrank from the capital cost of converting to dial phones, so small family-held newspapers increasingly prefer to sell out to avoid the financial burden of converting to more efficient printing techniques.[17]

But perhaps even more stategic in Miller's plan of attack is his selection of targets. Miller has shied away from purchasing any large metropolitan newspapers, choosing instead to stay in the smaller market areas where there is still potential for growth. As of 1972 when group-wide circulation for Gannett was 2,243,999, only five of the company's newspapers could claim a circulation of over 100,000.[18] But even though the company was considerably lower in total circulation that year compared with newspaper chains such as Newhouse, Scripps-Howard, Knight and Hearst, it was enjoying a higher profit margin. In 1971, Knight Newspapers, a group that has concentrated on buying big

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[15]"The Rochester Acquirer," Time, May 22, 1972, p. 40.

[16]"Let's All Get Together," Forbes, June 15, 1971, p. 42.

[17]Ibid.

[18]"The Rochester Acquirer," Time, May 22, 1972, p. 40.

metropolitan papers, such as the Philadelphia Inquirer, took in revenues approximately $100 million greater than Gannett but showed a profit of only $2 million more.[19]

Two other fundamental principles have guided Miller in Gannett's decade of rapid expansion. One principle is never buy a newspaper that is within the same market area of another Gannett paper, and always look for a newspaper that enjoys an essentially monopolistic position. "What we're interested in is a situation in which we are clearly the dominant communications medium in the field," Miller has said.[20] With those prerequisites in mind, it was not surprising that Miller should consider working out a merger that would take Federated Publications into the Gannett fold.

The Gannett-Federated Merger

The merger in which Gannett acquired the seven newspapers of Federated Publications was initially something of an animal of happenstance. In 1969, Paul Miller received a letter from Louis A. Weil, Jr., chairman of Federated, concerning some routine matter. Miller noted from the names of the chain's newspapers printed on the letterhead that Gannett did not own newspapers in any of the four states in which Federated operated. Acting on impulse, Miller called Weil and asked if Federated might be interested in a merger.[21] Within four months, terms for a merger had been worked out.

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[19]"Let's All Get Together," Forbes, June 15, 1971, p. 42.

[20]Ibid.

[21]"The Rochester Acquirer," Time, May 22, 1972, p. 40.

Originally, Gannett agreed to trade no less than 1.1 and no more than 1.3 shares of its stock for every share of Federated stock. Gannett stock, listed on the New York Stock Exchange, closed out at $27.625 the day the agreement was reached in February 1970. Federated stock, however, at $44.00 was sold over the counter. Complications arose in May 1970 when the stock market started to skid and Gannett stock went down in value. This made the merger less attractive for both parties since Federated's stock was not on the Big Board and had not been as seriously affected in the general decline of the market in 1970.[22]

Less than a year later, Gannett stock rebounded and by April 1971, at $45.875 a share, was far above its February 1970 level. At that time, the two groups decided to go ahead with the merger. Federated Publications had at the time 1,391,514 outstanding shares, which Gannett agreed to trade at a ratio of 1.1 shares of its stock for every share of Federated stock.[23] The Wall Street Journal placed the value of the transaction at $66.8 million.[24]

According to John Reynolds, business manager for the State Journal, Gannett acquired Federated Publications through an exchange of stock--rather than an outright purchase--so as to avoid paying any

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[22]"Gannett's Federated Publications Purchase Is Reactivated, at Value of $66.8 Million," Wall Street Journal, April 9, 1971, p. 8.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid.

capital gains tax. Consequently, the transaction is technically a merger, not a purchase, and Federated was to preserve its corporate identity within the larger organizational framework of Gannett Co., Inc.[25]

What Gannett got when it acquired Federated Publications was seven daily newspapers with a combined circulation of approximately 300,000. The newspapers are located in Lansing and Battle Creek, Michigan; Lafayette and Marion, Indiana; Olympia and Bellingham, Washington; and Boise, Idaho. In 1970, Federated reported earnings of $2.7 million--equal to $1.84 a share--on revenues of $30.1 million.[26]

For Gannett Co., 1971 was a banner year in terms of expansion. All in all, the company acquired seventeen daily newspapers whose combined worth was approximately $130 million. As in the case of the Federated merger, most of Gannett's new properties were acquired through an exchange of stock. In 1972, Gannett acquired the Nashville, Tennessee, Banner for $14 million and later in the year the Times in El Paso, Texas, for approximately $20 million.[27]

"Local Autonomy" vs. Centralization

Perhaps the most familiar catch phrase used by and associated with Gannett Co. is the term "local autonomy." In principle, local autonomy implies the right of a member newspaper to carry on its own

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[25]John Reynolds, private interview in offices of State Journal, Lansing, Michigan, September 12, 1972.

[26]"Gannett's Federated Publications Purchase Is Reactivated at Value of $66.8 Million," Wall Street Journal, April 9, 1971, p. 8.

[27]"The Rochester Acquirer," Time, May 22, 1972, p. 39.

day-to-day affairs without interference from the corporation's central office in Rochester. When the Gannett Foundation was organized, Frank Gannett offered the following policy statement concerning local autonomy:

> As the directors well know, it has been my policy to leave to the local management the fullest measure of autonomy. I like to have the editors express themselves freely. I have repeatedly indicated that I do not wish to dictate editorial policies for our Group. Each newspaper is an institution built up after years of effort. Each has a flavor and an atmosphere of its own. Each has its traditions and these traditions should be maintained. I do not want our ownership to destroy the individuality of any newspaper.[28]

Naturally enough, the concept of local autonomy as espoused by Gannett Co., Inc. is not without its qualifications. Most notable among those qualifications are standardization of business and accounting procedures, mandatory subscription to the Gannett News Service, for which each paper pays a pro-rated share of the cost of operation, and mandatory representation by the Kelly-Smith advertising agency, which took over the chores of a Gannett Co. advertising agency discontinued in 1966.[29]

> Local autonomy refers to the editors and other personnel in top-level local management and the work they must perform. They must be self-reliant, uphold the principles of fairness and integrity, and must be responsible for the daily operation of their newspaper. Local management, which means the management for each newspaper, must follow Gannett principles at all times. If Gannett policies are not followed, then local autonomy and self-reliance is curtailed when the central office steps in and makes necessary personnel changes.[30]

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[28]Williamson, Imprint of a Publisher, p. 208.

[29]George P. Evans, "An Analysis of the Local Autonomy Concept of the Gannett Newspaper Group" (unpublished M.S. thesis, Ohio University, 1966), p. 103.

[30]Ibid., p. 86.

Evans noted that in addition to the curtailment of local autonomy by Gannett through uniform business practices and mandatory subscription to certain editorial and advertising services, the practice of replacing local management which, in the eyes of the parent company, have failed to meet objectives, is also a decided encroachment on local autonomy. "To this Miller has stated: 'In other words, autonomy is not permitted to hide, protect, or perpetuate incompetence.'"[31] (During the course of this study it was learned that within "The Group" one who has been so replaced is said to have been "Gannatteered.")

Evans sent a questionnaire that inquired about particular editorial practices to twenty-five newspapers in the Gannett organization. Editors or publishers from ten newspapers returned the questionnaire. Asked if they had ever been required to publish a story at request of the central office, one respondent replied that he had, the others responded in the negative. Three respondents indicated that they had been asked by the parent company, at some time, to publish a particular story. Evans said he thought these replies served as a valid indication that decisions concerning editorial content are made at the local level, but "perhaps not for every newspaper, as one paper has stated."[32]

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[31] Ibid., p. 104.

[32] Ibid., p. 119.

Evans gives examples in support of the principle of local autonomy as applied to editorial commentary of member newspapers. In 1950, he reported, Frank Gannett refused to endorse Governor Thomas E. Dewey for re-election to the governor's seat in Albany, but the majority of the Gannett newspapers in the state supported Dewey editorially. Another example, according to Evans, occurred in the mid 1950s when the St. Lawrence Seaway project was under consideration. Gannett's Rochester newspapers, the ones that carried his name on the masthead, favored the Seaway, while the Gannett newspapers in the southern part of the state editorially opposed construction of the Seaway.[33]

It would seem, then, that within the Gannett organization the term "local autonomy" implies the right of each member newspaper to take its own editorial position concerning political or social issues, coupled with the right to individual subjective selectivity in terms of the fare that each newspaper chooses to publish in its news columns. It further implies that high-level management at each newspaper has a free hand in operating that newspaper, so long as the parent company believes that management is doing a competent job of meeting "objectives." The autonomy does not extend into the business departments and advertising departments of Gannett newspapers, where a number of functions are carried out in accordance with a master scheme established by the company's central office. As an example, advertising

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[33] Ibid., p. 44.

departments of all Gannett newspapers are required to annually submit a detailed projection of expected advertising revenues and expenses for the coming calendar year.

CHAPTER III

EDITORIAL REORGANIZATION AND POLICY REVISION UNDER GANNETT OWNERSHIP

Knights and Squires: Personnel Changes and Reorganization of Responsibilities

Influences of an Interim Publisher

Louis A. Weil, Jr., president of Federated Publications and the man who had sent the innocuous letter to Paul Miller that precipitated the Gannett-Federated merger, was also, at the time, the publisher of the State Journal. Three months before the merger was consummated Weil stepped down as publisher. In his place Eugene C. Dorsey, publisher of the Idaho Statesman, another Federated publication, in Boise, Idaho, was installed as the new publisher of the Journal. Dorsey's tenure as publisher of the Journal was not lengthy. He took over April 1, 1971, and left the Journal September 1, 1971, to assume new duties as general manager and operating head of Gannett's two newspapers in Rochester, N.Y., the Times-Union and the Democrat and Chronicle.[1]

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[1] "Publisher Change Disclosed," State Journal, Aug. 18, 1971, p. A-1.

As publisher of the Journal for a period of only five months, Dorsey had little time to institute any broad changes in the editorial department, but he did, during that time, make significant advances in several areas. Numerous staff members from the Journal recalled that Dorsey, as an individual, had an enlightening affect on the news room in general. He was said to have been much more accessible to staff members than Weil had been and took a more personal interest in the day-to-day operation of the newspaper and the concerns of individual staff members. Several staffers thought that Dorsey allowed a greater amount of editorial freedom than Weil had in terms of the subjects they were allowed to report on and write about. But if those conditions were essentially transitory in nature and not likely to persevere after Dorsey had left the Journal, he did initiate one policy change that seems likely to endure: creation of an editorial board to facilitate a greater exchange of ideas for staff-written editorials in the newspaper.

According to Robert Stuart, editorial writer for the Journal, when Weil was publisher the process of selecting subjects for editorial comment was essentially in the hands of two people, Stuart and Weil. Stuart would decide upon a subject, write an editorial and then submit it to Weil for approval.[2] When Dorsey took over as publisher he reviewed the editorial-writing process and decided it did not permit enough staff participation. Therefore, he established a seven-member

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[2]Robert Stuart, private interview in offices of State Journal, Oct. 16, 1972.

editorial board, composed of the publisher, managing editor, city editor, Sunday editor, capitol bureau chief and the editorial writer, charged with duties of discussing possible topics for editorial comment and then selecting ones that seem most appropriate. The editorial board was to meet weekly. After Dorsey left the Journal, the editorial board was continued and has become an established entity within the broader framework of the editorial, or news, department.

Personnel Changes Under a Gannett Publisher

The man who replaced Eugene Dorsey as publisher of the State Journal is Maurice Hickey. When Hickey became publisher in September 1971 he was thirty-seven years old and had worked for the Gannett organization since 1964 when he became promotion manager on Frank Gannett's first newspaper, the Elmira Star-Gazette.[3] Hickey is a native of Maine. He was graduated from the University of Maine in 1956 with a bachelor's degree in journalism. His first newspaper work was with the Virginian-Pilot and Ledger-Star in Norfolk, Virginia, where he worked as a retail advertising salesman. Later he took a position as general manager of a group of six community newspapers in the Philadelphia area before going to Elmira in 1964. In 1966, Hickey was sent to Florida by Gannett and placed in charge of a new daily newspaper in the Cape Kennedy area. The newspaper, Today, is the only publication Gannett Co. has ever founded. Under Hickey's guidance, the publication rose to a circulation of approximately 50,000 within

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[3]"Publisher Change Disclosed," State Journal, Aug. 18, 1971, p. A-1.

three years.[4] In September 1969, Hickey returned to New York State to take over as director of advertising for the two largest newspapers in the Gannett chain, the Times-Union and the Democrat-Chronicle in Rochester. Three years later, following the Gannett-Federated merger, Hickey was sent to Lansing.

When Hickey took over as publisher of the State Journal, Kenneth L. Gunderman was the managing editor of the newspaper. Gunderman had come to the Journal from the Daily Press in Escanaba, Michigan, in 1955. He worked as a copy editor, assistant Sunday editor and news editor before being promoted to managing editor in 1964. In January 1973, Gunderman retired as managing editor at age sixty-two. In his place, Benjamin J. Burns, who had been serving as assistant managing editor since he came to the Journal in September 1972, was promoted to managing editor.

Burns, a graduate of Michigan State University with a bachelor of arts degree in journalism in 1965 and a master of arts degree in history in 1968, had briefly worked as a reporter for the State Journal in 1965. He later worked for Knight Newspapers, Inc., and was serving as night editor of the Miami Herald in 1971 when he took a nine-month leave of absence to undertake a study of Congress in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the Ford Foundation. Burns had worked for six years with Knight Newspapers, starting as an investigative reporter on the Herald, and attended numerous management and executive training courses sponsored by Knight, whose directors, according to Burns, had groomed

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[4] Ibid.

him to take over an editorial supervisory position somewhere within that organization.[5] While working in Washington, Burns was approached by officials from Gannett who offered him a position on the State Journal. Burns had been approached by Gannett on previous occasions concerning a position in that organization, but it was not until 1972 that they were able to agree on a proposition that Burns thought was attractive enough to warrant his severing connections with Knight Newspapers. Burns signed on with Gannett with the understanding that he would ultimately direct the news operation at the State Journal. When he came to the Journal in September, 1972, he assumed the newly created position of assistant managing editor, a position, he said, that was principally intended to serve as a convenient tag until Gunderman retired and he took over as managing editor.

Since Maurice Hickey became publisher of the State Journal in September 1971, there have been numerous, and seemingly continuous, changes in assignments and duties among the various editors in the editorial department. However, most of the changes were effected at two specific junctures: shortly after Hickey became publisher and then again shortly after Gunderman had retired and Burns was promoted to managing editor early in 1973.

Prior to the Gannett-Federated merger, John Ward, news editor at the Journal, was charged with overseeing the entire day-to-day operation of the newsroom. He coordinated production between the news

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[5]Benjamin J. Burns, private interview held in offices of State Journal, May 24, 1973.

room and the composing room, selected news stories for Section A, and was responsible for the performance of each department within the news room structure: metropolitan, sports, family living, outstate and the Sunday paper. Each editor in charge of those departments looked after the day-to-day affairs of his or her department, but Ward was in overall charge on a continuing basis.

After Hickey became publisher, Ward's duties were changed so that he no longer had responsibility for so much of the news room operation. His revised assignment included supervising the activity of the copy desk, selecting news content for Section A, and looking after production in the news room. He was also given charge of several special pages, including theater, television, stock market, and real estate.[6]

Early in 1972 when the responsibility for overseeing all the various daily operations of the news room was taken off Ward's shoulders, it was divided between two men, Harold Fildey, assistant to the publisher, and Gunderman, managing editor. Under the revised alignment, the news editor and the family living editor were directly responsible to the assistant to the publisher--Fildey--for daily operations; the sports and metro, or city, editors were responsible to the managing editor--Gunderman.

Of the five departmental editorships that existed within the organizational scheme of the editorial department when the State Journal became a Gannett property--Section A (national and international news),

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[6]John D. Ward, private interview held in offices of State Journal, Aug. 29, 1972.

Section B (metro), Section C (sports), Section D (family living) and Sunday editor--it was the last position (aside from the modifications made to Ward's duties) that early in 1972 was significantly affected through reorganization. At the time, Warren Brintnall was Sunday editor of the Journal, a position he had held since 1964. Before January 1972, his job had involved preparing copy during the week for all the Sunday edition pages that were not allocated to late news. Early in 1972, his duties were modified so that he was responsible for the planning of fewer pages. Approximately twenty to thirty pages, depending upon the size of the edition, that previously had been handled by Brintnall were distributed among several other staff members in the editorial department, in order to spread out the load.[7]

When interviewed in August 1972, Brintnall said the realignment of duties had been beneficial for both the staff members working on the Sunday edition and for the Sunday edition as a product. The Sunday paper had increased substantially in size since 1964, when he became Sunday editor, and it had become difficult to keep up with the sheer number of pages and the volume of copy that he and an assistant had to plan for each weekly edition. He and one assistant were the only staff members working on the Sunday paper, and, according to Brintnall, their work had turned into much of a separate operation that often resulted in unnecessary duplication of news content between the weekday editions and the Sunday edition. He said he thought the personnel working on

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[7]Warren K. Brintnall, private interview held in offices of State Journal, Aug. 17, 1972.

the Sunday edition were no longer so isolated from the newspaper on a day-to-day basis, a change that had reduced the chances of duplication and had greatly enhanced the finished product.

Brintnall's duties were further modified by putting him in charge of makeup for the daily editorial and "op ed" pages, duties that did not entail much additional burden because of a scheme of static makeup that encourages a rather routine pattern for those pages, according to Brintnall.

Another modification in editorial department supervision was made early in 1972 when Jack Bolt, chief photographer at the State Journal, was shifted from the photography department to the news room as an assistant city editor. Before Bolt was installed in the new position there had been only one assistant city editor. The only significant division of labor between the two assistant city editors was centered around the handling of photographs: Bolt was to handle all charts, maps, drawings and other art designated for publication by the news department. Photographs could be handled by either editor. Otherwise, the two assistant editors were to handle similar chores, editing copy, doing page makeup and other routine daily tasks.[8]

In January 1973, after Gunderman had retired as managing editor of the Journal and Burns was promoted to that position, there came a second major reshuffling of assignments and duties in the editorial department at the State Journal.

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[8]Jack Bolt, private interview held in offices of State Journal, Oct. 18, 1972.

The system of divided accountability, wherein the news editor and the family living editor were responsible for the daily news content of their sections to the assistant to the publisher--Harold Fildey--and the city editor and sports editor responsible to the managing editor--Kenneth Gunderman--was discontinued. Burns assumed all supervisory responsibilities for the day-to-day operation of the news department as a whole, while Fildey assumed the newly created position of "executive editor." Fildey was to be concerned with budgets, financial affairs, cost overruns, and other long range concerns and serve as principal liaison between the editorial department and the other departments at the Journal. Fildey, as executive editor, was to be the immediate superior to Burns, looking after the overall interests of the editorial department, while Burns attended to the day-to-day operation of the editorial department.[9]

When Burns was elevated to the position of managing editor, D. Patrick McCarthy, the city editor, was promoted to the position that Burns had vacated, assistant managing editor. James Wellington, one of the assistant city editors, was promoted to city editor, leaving Jack Bolt as the single remaining assistant city editor. The position of Sunday editor was discontinued. In its stead was created the position of "special features editor," currently held by Warren Brintnall, the man who had been Sunday editor. Beverly Hall, the family living editor, was given responsibility for the news content of all of Section D--previously, she had been responsible only for the pages in that section allocated for family living.

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[9]Burns interview, May 24, 1973.

According to Burns, the elimination of the position of Sunday editor was little more than a change in title to more properly reflect the task involved. The Journal had not been actually putting out the Sunday edition as a newspaper separate from the weekday editions for several years and Brintnall's position had been principally concerned with special features. Brintnall now handles a potpourri of special interest pages, including fine arts, stock market, "Young World," as well as feature stories for special editions. McCarthy, as assistant managing editor, has assumed much of the Sunday edition work that Brintnall was handling previously. He also handles daily makeup for the editorial and op ed pages, chores that previously were Brintnall's responsibility.

John Ward, news editor, no longer is in charge of selecting the news content for the front page of Section A; Burns has assumed that task. Ward is still in charge of selecting the news content for the remainder of Section A. Under the second managerial realignment, Ward spends more time reading copy, editing and supervising the operation of the copy desk than he did before Burns became managing editor. Wards primary responsibility as news editor continues to be supervising production between news room and composing room.

The Editorial Board, originally founded by Eugene Dorsey, was also reorganized early in 1973. The frequency of meeting was increased from weekly to daily, and two positions were modified: the capitol bureau chief and Sunday editor were dropped from the board and in their place the assistant managing editor and the family living editor were

installed as members. The Board began meeting daily after it was decided that by doing so the Journal would be better able to publish timely, relevant editorials.

In May 1973, an additional editorship was created within the sports department of the State Journal. The new position was "executive sports editor," and it was given to Edward Senyczko, a veteran sports writer at the Journal. His charge is to serve principally as a coordinating agent for the department, a position different from that of sports editor in that the executive sports editor will not divide his time between writing and supervising. Robert Hoerner, sports editor, resigned in May 1973. As of this writing, the Journal is still looking for someone to fill that vacancy.

Burns believes it is difficult to draw a well-defined schematic representation of the supervisory alignment of the editorial department because of overlap in positions. As an example, there are now four persons sitting at the metro, or city, desk: the city editor, his assistant editor, the state editor, and Richard Frazier, a veteran staff member who has held various reporting and editing positions since he started work for the Journal in 1947. Frank Hand, the state editor, continues to serve in that capacity. Both he and Frazier assist in processing copy that comes across the metro desk. The arrangement also enables the three other members of the metro desk to substitute for Hand when he has to be away from the news room, assuring that any outstate stories submitted in his absence will be immediately processed.

Burns does not believe the responsibilities and duties of the managing editor position have changed significantly during the reorganization of supervisory duties. Burns has given other editors some of the minor chores that Gunderman concerned himself with when he was managing editor, such as reading page proofs for the television pages, color pages and Action Line column, and the processing of letters to the editor. Burns believes that the primary difference between his editorship and Kenneth Gunderman's editorship can be directly attributed to difference in personality and circumstance. Burns believes he is making greater use of the power inherent in the position than did Gunderman. "It is normal that a young new managing editor will come in and look for a vacuum that he can fill," he said. And, he suggested, a man who has been managing editor for a considerable length of time is less likely to be exercising maximum control and authority over his domain or looking for new areas in which to expand his authority.[10]

Metamorphosis: Capitol Bureau Transformation

Prior to Gannett ownership, the State Journal's Capitol Bureau--technically a Federated bureau--was, realistically, a news bureau that essentially served the State Journal. (The Bureau did occasionally write stories for the Federated newspaper in Battle Creek.) The Capitol Bureau was staffed by Willard Baird, who was on the Federated payroll, and two Journal reporters, Marcia VanNess and David Hanson. In February 1972, after conferring with the publishers

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[10] Ibid.

of its three daily newspapers in Michigan (Gannett had purchased the Port Huron Times-Herald in July 1970, exclusive of the Federated merger), Gannett Co. decided to transform the Capitol Bureau into a Gannett State Bureau, its staffers to become members of the Gannett News Service.[11] Gannett operates similar state bureaus in Trenton, New Jersey; Albany, New York; Tallahassee, Florida; and Springfield, Illinois.

According to Baird, the philosophy behind reorganization of the Capitol Bureau was based on the assumption that the three Michigan daily newspapers in the Gannett group--the State Journal in Lansing, the Port Huron Times-Herald and the Battle Creek Enquirer and News--could obtain most of the routine daily news reports of state government activities from the wire services. The Gannett State Bureau would then be free to serve as a supplemental news-gathering agency, providing follow-up stories concerning particular aspects of issues in the news that the wire services did not cover. Most supplemental stories, it was believed, would come from queries submitted by the three newspapers. In such a way the Gannett State Bureau would not compete with or duplicate the efforts of the wire services.

In February 1972, the Capitol Bureau became a Gannett State Bureau, and, because David Hanson had resigned his position several weeks previously, found itself in the paradoxical situation of suddenly

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[11]Maurice Hickey, private interview held in offices of State Journal Sept. 19, 1972.

having two staffers to write for three newspapers instead of three staffers writing for two newspapers. The position vacated by Hanson is still unfilled as of this writing.

Asked if he thought the three Michigan newspapers owned by Gannett were not receiving as much capitol coverage as they would have had the manning level not been lowered from three to two, Baird said he thought it has "balanced out pretty well."[12] He said duplication of wire service stories had been almost eliminated because the newspapers used the wire services for routine stories and depended on the State Bureau for more exclusive, individually tailored stories. He believes there have been some instances since the manning level was lowered when more newsmen would have allowed the Bureau to dig deeper into certain stories or take care of backlogged queries, but said the same circumstances sometimes came about when the Bureau was staffed with three reporters. "That is management's perogative," he said, "and you can almost always do a better job, get better stories and coverage if you have more people."[13]

Marcia VanNess, the other staff member of the Gannett State Bureau, said the Bureau is under orders not to duplicate wire service material, unless the wire services are not covering a particular story or are not going into enough depth on a particular issue. With the change in mission from primary to supplemental, the Bureau now

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[12]Willard Baird, telephone conversation, Aug. 7, 1972.

[13]Ibid.

must concern itself with writing reaction pieces, side bar material for topics the wire service reporters are writing about and for bills before the legislature that pertain to one particular geographic area of the state.[14] Echoing the sentiments of David Hanson, the reporter who had been the third member of the old Capitol Bureau, Miss VanNess believes that regardless of the new emphasis on eliminating duplication between staff writers and wire service reporters, much duplication of copy continues to exist simply through a lack of awareness on the part of the editors at the State Journal. She cited as an example an instance in which she had spent several days working on a story dealing with yearly postal expenditures for legislators that had been requested by the State Journal. It was a laborious assignment that entailed much routine checking of records. A few days after her story was run by the Journal, a reporter from the Associated Press office in Detroit who had been temporarily working in Lansing took her story back to Detroit, rewrote it and sent it over the AP wire. The Journal picked the story up and ran it the following day.

Miss VanNess believes the loss of one reporter and the increase in the number of newspapers served by the Bureau has measurably diminished the amount of work that the Bureau can handle well. Beyond the loss of one reporter and the addition of another newspaper, the Bureau's reportorial potential has been further eroded by the necessity for Baird, as a Gannett bureau chief, to spend more time with administrative chores than previously.

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[14]Marcia VanNess, private interview in offices of Michigan House of Representatives, Oct. 5, 1972.

According to Publisher Maurice Hickey, the reorganization of the Capitol Bureau into a Gannett State Bureau was initiated by John Quinn, vice president for news operations in the Gannett Co., and as such was an action of the company, not the publisher of the State Journal. Hickey believes that the loss of one reporter in the reorganized bureau has significantly restricted its capacity to accomplish the work that needs to be done. He hopes eventually he and the publishers of the Gannett newspapers in Battle Creek and Port Huron can persuade the central Gannett office to reinstate the position left vacant when Hanson resigned.[15]

Hickey does believe the policy of transforming the Bureau into a supplemental reportorial agency from a primary agency is fundamentally sound because too much duplication occurs between wire service stories and staff-written stories.

The Gannett State Bureau is funded through the Gannett News Service. Member newspapers in the Gannett chain have the option of subscribing or not subscribing to Gannett State Bureau, but regardless of that prerogative each newspaper in the chain is annually assessed a share of the operating cost of the news service. Consequently, there is little reason not to belong to Gannett State Bureau, since each paper is helping foot the bill whether it uses the service or not. Hickey knows of no newspaper in the Gannett chain that does not suscribe to the Gannett News Service.

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[15]Hickey interview, Sept. 19, 1972.

If the reorganization of the Capitol Bureau was out of the hands of Maurice Hickey, he was directly responsible for two ancillary modifications in the State Journal's coverage of capitol affairs: the page in Section B that previously had been reserved for capitol news was discontinued--much to the chagrin of the Bureau staffers--and Willard Baird's weekly column, "Capitol Watchtower," was moved from its traditional placement on page A-1 of the Sunday edition to an inside page--much to the chagrin of its author.

Procedural Changes: Technical and Timely

When Louis Weil was publisher, the State Journal had used a "straight" press run to print the newspaper. When Maurice Hickey became publisher, he changed press operation to "collect." "A straight run produces in each revolution of the press two identical newspapers; a collect run produces one newspaper consisting of . . . different sections."[16]

A straight run, in effect, is a method of doubling up on a press. Duplicate printing plates are installed on the press cylinders so that two papers can be turned out simultaneously. Minimum operating time is the chief advantage of a straight run.

The collect run, on the other hand, utilizes all the printing plates of the press to turn out a single newspaper; there can be no doubling up. The obvious advantage of a collect run is the ability to print a newspaper twice as large as would be possible with a straight run.

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[16]Victor Strauss, The Printing Industry (Washington, D.C.: Printing Industries of America, Inc., 1967), p. 380.

As an example, the rotary press used by the State Journal, a Goss Mark II Headliner, has a maximum printing capacity of 128 pages. If a straight run is used, the newspaper can be no larger than sixty-four pages, or half the total capacity, since duplicate printing plates are used to print two copies simultaneously. If a collect run is used, the 128 printing plates can all be used to print a single newspaper, but it takes twice as long to print the paper. When the Journal was using a straight run, the press was operated from 1:00 to 3:00 P.M. and could print 60,000 copies an hour at maximum operating speed. When the Journal switched to a collect run the press was started at 10:30 A.M. and ran to 2:30 P.M. with a forty-five-minute interruption at noon to change cylinders for pages remade for the city edition and to allow press operators to go to luncheon. Maximum printing speed is 30,000 copies an hour using a collect run.

There is another advantage in using a collect run aside from the feature of being able to produce a larger newspaper. It requires fewer pressmen.

According to Gunderman, the monetary savings realized by paying less money to press operators was a significant factor in deciding to switch from a straight run to a collect run. The collect run was further preferred because it would permit use of all 128 printing plates for a newspaper of maximum size and would put an end to the use of "stuffers."

Stuffers, sometimes called "inserts," are used in newspaper publishing when it is known that the number of pages required for an edition on a particular day will be greater than the page-capacity of

the press. When such a situation arises--normally on Wednesdays and Thursdays, days when the advertising lineage will be at a weekly peak--the newspaper is increased in size by including extra sections that have been printed earlier in the week. The extra pages, called stuffers, are later inserted into the main body of the newspaper after it is printed. Editors generally dislike stuffers because they are unable to use the available news space in the stuffers for stories concerning recent news events, since the stuffers are printed days in advance of actual publication. The stories that went into the stuffers of the State Journal usually were general interest pieces obtained from wire services--stories that John Ward, news editor, characterized as either readable but not very interesting or unreadable and "just plain junk."[17]

The stuffers were the creature of the straight run. When the Journal began using a collect run the stuffers were no longer necessary and the entire newspaper went to press the day it was published.

There was another consequence resulting from the change to a collect run, a consequence that some staff members at the Journal claim is of little import in terms of editorial performance, and one that others say is a definite malady in the overall editorial operation--the copy deadline had to be moved up.

When Louis Weil was publisher and the straight run was used, press time was 1:00 P.M. When Maurice Hickey became publisher and changed the press operation to a collect run the press time was moved

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[17]Ward interview, Aug. 29, 1972.

up to 10:30 A.M. At the same time, copy deadlines had to be moved up also. The old copy deadline for the city desk had been 11:00 A.M. When the newspaper went to a collect run the copy deadline was moved up to 9:00 A.M. Before Hickey became publisher the deadline for sports copy had been 9:30 A.M. Afterward the copy deadline was moved up to 8:00 A.M. for the sports desk.

Gunderman thought the earlier copy deadline had little affect on timely news coverage because "there is not much happening around ten in the morning." He said the earlier deadline " . . . has had no affect on our local news coverage."[18] According to Gunderman, because the State Journal now publishes two editions each day, a state edition and a city edition, if a story breaks after the 9:00 A.M. deadline it can still be run in the city edition, the deadline for which is twelve noon. According to John Ward, one minor problem caused by the earlier deadline affects some subscribers in outlying areas. Subscribers in those areas who receive the state edition by home delivery might miss out on late-breaking news that would be carried in the second, or city, edition, the edition delivered to homes in the metropolitan area. That is the most serious detriment Ward could see arising from the earlier deadline.[19]

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[18]Kenneth L. Gunderman, private interview held in offices of State Journal, Aug. 1, 1972.

[19]Ward interview, Aug. 29, 1972.

Patrick McCarthy, assistant managing editor, also believes there is not much going on during late morning hours in terms of news events. In August 1972 when he was still working as city editor, McCarthy did say that the earlier deadline had inconvienced the city desk and that there was some difficulty getting a late-breaking story into the city edition and rewriting or updating stories in the state edition for the city edition. He also said at the time that the city desk was somewhat cramped in finding adequate time to properly process copy and do page layouts. When he was interviewed in June 1973, McCarthy moderated his position somewhat and said he thought the earlier copy deadline had not hampered operation of the city desk in any substantial way, most of the earlier problems stemming simply from a need for those working on the desk to establish a new working pace. Adding a postscript, McCarthy said perhaps his position had moderated because he no longer worked at the city desk and was able to take a more detached, philosophical view of the issue.[20]

Robert Hoerner, former sports editor, believed the earlier deadline caused some problems in the operation of the sports desk. According to Hoerner, copy previously processed in the morning now has to be processed the preceeding afternoon, curtailing to a degree the use of timely, up-to-the-minute sports stories. In addition, sports writers now have to obtain information concerning local sports events late in the evening rather than waiting until the morning, a

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[20]D. Patrick McCarthy, private interview held in offices of State Journal Aug. 2, 1972.

situation that caused some discontent among sports writers. Hoerner believes the earlier deadline is also detrimental in that it creates a couple of hours lag time for sports writers, whose news sources usually are not available until late in the morning.[21]

When Hickey became publisher, he made two other changes in the daily schedule. As mentioned before, a state edition was established to augment the regular city edition. The state edition goes to press at 10:30 A.M., the city edition goes to press shortly after noon. Hickey established an early edition primarily to get the newspaper on the street earlier in order to boost street sales. The circulation of the newspaper increased over 1,000 copies as a result of putting out the earlier edition.[22] Neither the state nor the city edition is identified as such in the front page logotype.

The Journal sells approximately 4,500 newspapers daily through street sales in the metropolitan area and an additional 2,000 papers in the outstate areas, for a total daily street sale of 6,500.[23]

The other scheduling change was the abandoning of the regular Saturday afternoon newspaper in favor of a morning edition. Hickey wanted a Saturday morning paper primarily to capitalize on local sports news. The results of high school games played Friday night could be reported Saturday morning, when people are interested in knowing how

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[21]Robert Hoerner, private interview held in offices of State Journal, Aug. 24, 1972.

[22]Hickey interview, Sept. 19, 1972.

[23]Richard Ferris, private interview held in offices of State Journal, Oct. 24, 1972.

local teams performed. Hickey thought the Saturday afternoon newspaper had been "pretty much a waste."[24] People follow a different routine on weekends and are less likely to be home Saturday afternoon when the paper is delivered, whereas during the week their schedules are more compatible with an afternoon edition. The Saturday morning edition benefits home delivery service because newsboys are able to take care of their delivery chores first thing Saturday morning. They are less likely to be late in delivering or even forgetful, as they sometimes were when the newspaper was published Saturday afternoon, according to the publisher.

Hickey said no consideration was given toward possible increased advertising revenues in deciding to change from an afternoon to a morning Saturday paper. He believed that while the reader can better use the newspaper Saturday morning to check advertisements before shopping, the Journal has little to gain in terms of advertising revenues. Hickey thought any additional advertising in the Saturday edition would result mostly from "switch advertising," that is, advertisements changed by advertisers from the Friday or Sunday newspapers to the Saturday morning edition.

Ted Sondag, director of advertising for the Journal, reported that there had been some switch in advertising after the Saturday morning edition was started, but not what Hickey had expected. Two large discount stores, Meijer Thrifty Acres, the largest advertiser in the Journal, and K-Mart, switched advertisements for their Sunday and

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[24]Hickey interview, Sept. 19, 1972.

Monday "specials" from the Saturday morning edition to the Sunday newspaper. They had received so many requests from shoppers on Saturdays that the Sunday and Monday specials be put on sale then that a bothersome situation resulted. Store managers told Sondag that when the Journal published a Saturday afternoon paper they had never had that problem. According to Sondag, the resulting loss of advertising in the Saturday paper was partially compensated by an increase in advertising from restaurant operators, who found the Saturday morning paper highly effective in reaching weekend customers.[25]

Cosmetic Surgery and Departmentalization

After Maurice Hickey had settled down in the publisher's chair, one of his first impressions was that the Journal is "a powerhouse of a newspaper."[26] He thought for the size community it serves the State Journal is an extraordinarily large newspaper in terms of the amount of advertising it carries. He was impressed with the ninety-six-page editions published Wednesdays and Thursdays, and said that, for a seven-day newspaper, the State Journal, at the time, carried more advertising lineage than any other seven day paper in the Gannett chain. Because the newspaper was so bulky, he thought the immediate task before him was to work toward putting out a newspaper better "packaged," that is, one easier for the reader to use.

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[25]Ted Sondag, private interview held in offices of State Journal June 27, 1973.

[26]Hickey interview, Sept. 19, 1972.

Under Louis Weil's direction, the newspaper had been printed in four sections, but departmentalization of news had been loose, almost haphazard. Staff-written stories were scattered throughout the paper with wire service stories. A staff-written story dealing with some local education issue might be found on an inside page of Section A, on the first page of Section B or on the back page of Section D.

Early in 1972, Hickey instituted a more rigid scheme of departmentalization of news within the paper's format. Section A was allocated to international and national news and for state news obtained from wire services. Page A-1, under the new scheme of departmentalization, could, along with wire copy, carry significant stories of local interest by Journal staff writers. Section B was to become principally a section for news concerning the metropolitan area of Lansing with some pages reserved for news concerning mid-Michigan and the outstate areas. The only wire service stories carried in Section B are those dealing with affairs of state government. All other copy is staff-written. Section C was allocated to sports news and classified advertising. Sports stories are not segregated by source, both staff-written and wire service stories appearing on the same pages. Section D became the family living section under the new scheme and also carries a theater page and family magazine page.

In conjunction with the more rigid scheme of departmentalization, Hickey instituted a more definite plan for "anchoring," that is, carrying the same editorial item in the identical place every day. Hickey believes both departmentalization and anchoring are effective

methods of making the newspaper easier for the reader to use. As a result of the move toward more comprehensive anchoring, items such as weather summaries, editorial columns, obituaries, sports statistics and amusements are now always found in the same position in the newspaper each day. Some deviation is allowed, as in the placement of the comic section. Comics usually appear in Section D but are sometimes placed in sections C or G, on days when the paper is expanded beyond the standard four-section size.

Along with the change in departmentalization of news and increased anchoring came a radical modification in makeup. According to John Ward, before Hickey became publisher, the Journal's makeup was hybrid in character, a mixture both horizontal and verticle. Hickey changed the makeup to purely horizontal, a move that Ward believes has improved the newspaper's appearance and made it easier to read. Headlines are no longer placed adjacent to one another in a confusing manner and the page no longer looks as jumbled as it did before.[27]

Numerous changes in typography were also part of the cosmetic face-lifting that Hickey gave the State Journal. Headlines were "aired out" to provide more white space between headlines and text and between separate lines in each headline. The use of cut-off rules between the caption of a picture and the text below was discontinued. The use of 30 dashes at the end of stories was also discontinued, as was the use of column rules except on classified advertising pages. The news columns were indented from eleven picas to ten-and-a-half picas to

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[27]Ward interview, Aug. 29, 1972.

improve visual appearence. The practice of printing an eight-point centered subhead between paragraphs was discontinued and instead bold face capital letters are now used for the first two words of every third paragraph in the text of a story. Section headlines and stock headlines--those used daily to designate a specific editorial item--were redesigned several times to be more aesthetically appealing. Use of larger photographs and art was encouraged.[28]

According to Jack Bolt, head photographer for the paper when Gannett acquired it in 1971 and now assistant city editor, Weil had a standing rule that if a local story was run on a page a local photograph also had to be run on the page. As a consequence, normally the staff photographers had to produce fifteen or sixteen pictures, sometimes more, for every edition, since the local stories were spread throughout the newspaper. Because so many of the pages at that time were split on a six-to-two-column ratio for advertising and news, most of the photographs were printed as two-column cuts that did little to enhance the appearence of the page. The demand for so many local news photos resulted in extensive use of "wild art," that is, photographs that do not illustrate a news story but are independent of any news story and must stand on their own merit, accompanied by only a cutline, or caption. According to Bolt, such wild art usually turned out to be little more than a hackneyed portrayal of some weather theme or a shot of an inanimate object, such as a new building under construction.

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[28] Ibid.

Under the rigid departmentalization of news, local stories are now carried on several designated pages. There has been an accompanying decrease in the number of photographs needed for each edition, according to Bolt, with a resulting increase in the quality of photography. The old rule of having to include a local photograph on every page that carried a local story was discontinued. Bolt believes that by giving up "junk art" and with the new emphasis on larger photos, the aesthetic character of the State Journal has been substantially enhanced.[29]

Hickey further modified the physical appearance of the newspaper by implementing two other policy changes concerning page makeup: he directed that fewer stories be printed on the section pages, the front page of each major section of the newspaper, in order that a less cluttered, more attractive appearence be achieved, and he banned all advertising from section pages. Gunderman said that under Louis Weil the paper carried advertising that sometimes took up as much as a quarter of the space on section pages. Advertisers paid nothing extra for such "positioning." Hickey disliked the practice and now all advertising is carried on inside pages.

Some Pros and Cons Concerning Departmentalization

John Ward said he was not sold at the onset on the makeup and typographical changes that Hickey wanted but now believes they have substantially improved the looks of the newspaper. He believes the

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[29]Bolt interview, Oct. 18, 1972.

changes have made the newspaper more difficult for the editorial staff to produce, but at the same time made it much easier for the reader to read: "I have found the changes very beneficial and can't say I was in favor of them at the time."[30]

Not all editors at the Journal are as enthusiastic as John Ward concerning the changes effected by Hickey, particularly the move to rigid departmentalization. One editor said that "easier does not necessarily mean better. Packaging is a good idea, but when it is done so hard and fast it sometimes can shortchange the reader." He said sometimes a story comes over the wire from a news service that, although not dealing directly with the Lansing area, is, nevertheless, pertinent to a similar situation in Lansing and, consequently, would be of interest to readers of the Journal. Under the scheme of rigid departmentalization of news that particular wire story would not be allowed in Section B. The wire editor, not so acutely attuned to local issues as editors who have staff reporters working for them, might not realize its significance and fail to either run the story in the section reserved for wire copy, or at least inform the appropriate local news editor of its existence.

The Publisher's Position

When confronted with that argument against a rigid scheme of departmentalization of news, Hickey rejoined that there may indeed be instances where rigid departmentalization has drawbacks--as in the case

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[30]Ward interview, Aug. 29, 1972.

of not allowing mixing of wire copy and staff-written copy on the same page--but that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. He said his principal concern is whether it makes the newspaper easier for the reader to use or more difficult.[31]

News Presentation: Changes In Approach and Delivery

When Hickey came to the State Journal, his impression of the writing style employed was that it was "colorless and dull."[32] He wanted his staff writers to instill in their copy a more conversational tone, in order to humanize the news more and make it more readable by writing from the viewpoint of the reader, not the government official or the politician. He wanted, quite simply, what former Sports Editor Robert Hoerner called "a little pizazz." Hickey thinks it is desirable for reporters to bring out the personalities of people in the news: government officials, political leaders, businessmen, educators, and others. He wanted to get away from much of the reporting of routine governmental activities he believes had made the Journal too much a "paper of record" in the past. The newspaper's "Help" column, an ombudsman service for readers, was initiated in order to more closely associate the reader with the newspaper and serves as an excellent example of the kind of reader-oriented attitude that Hickey wants reflected in the pages of the State Journal.

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[31] Hickey interview, Sept. 19, 1972.

[32] Ibid.

Several editors at the Journal reiterated that along with the emphasis on a brighter writing style, Hickey also ordered copy editors to take greater pains in writing headlines. There was a consensus among veteran editors at the Journal that headlines in the past had not been one of the newspaper's strong points. Hoerner said that the new publisher was very concerned that editors write clever, eye-catching headlines. "Many times when he sees a good head he'll let you know," Hoerner said, "and when he sees a bad head you can be sure he'll let you know."[33]

The elimination of stuffers, freeing hundreds of column inches every week for up-to-date, timely news stories has already been mentioned as a significant step taken by Hickey to enliven the news columns of the Journal. That one improvement alone, according to John Ward, has been a great boon in putting out a newspaper that is more current and topical than it was before Hickey assumed command.

According to one editor, along with the new emphasis on a livelier, more conversational writing style came a change in reportorial philosophy--one that had left him and many others perplexed. At a meeting of editors in August 1972, Gunderman announced that reporters should seek to be fair before being objective in their news stories. The editor said that such a pronouncement was directly opposed to the editorial philosophy toward reporting followed under Louis Weil when the Journal was a Federated publication. According to the editor, Gunderman's call for fairness first and objectivity second "shook a

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[33]Hoerner interview, Aug. 24, 1972.

lot of people up" because it was so radical a departure from the Journal's philosophy. He believed that the change in philosophy had caused a sense of apprehension and concern among many editorial staff members who were confused about the direction in which the State Journal is headed in terms of reporting and the presentation of news.

Asked about the "fairness-first-objectivity-second" policy, Fildey, the new executive editor, said he thought the whole proposition was pretty much a matter of semantics. He believes that attempting to be fair is what the editorial department should most concern itself with because objectivity in the reporter "does not exist as an abstract value."[34] According to Fildey, the fairness policy, the emphasis on a conversational writing style and the attempts to report from a perspective to which the reader can relate are all part of a change in news philosophy--what he called a "philosophical transition"--under Gannett. He said he was aware that a departure from an orthodox writing style and sentence-for-sentence attribution had caused some concern among veteran staffers who had been strongly attached to traditional ways.

Hickey, too, was rather oblique when asked about the fairness versus objectivity philosophy. He said, as had Fildey, that such talk is on a "fine edge" and dismissed it as mostly a matter of semantics.

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[34]Harold Fildey, private interview held in offices of State Journal, Aug. 22, 1972.

Changes in Personnel Policy

After Maurice Hickey became publisher of the State Journal, he decided that productivity in the editorial department, in many instances, was not as high as it should be. According to Hickey, a large corporation such as Gannett Co., listed on the New York Stock Exchange and accountable to thousands of shareholders, must be concerned with running an efficient, profitable operation; more so than a privately owned newspaper with a lesser degree of accountability.[35] With that economic premise in mind, Hickey instituted an overall cost reduction program throughout the State Journal. In the editorial department the cost reduction campaign became manifest when editorial personnel departed and no replacements were hired to fill the vacant positions. The effects of economizing were further realized when the publisher ordered a sharp cutback in overtime wages paid. By August 1972, the editorial department was operating with seven fewer positions than before the Gannett-Federated merger--six full-time and one part-time.

The positions that remained unfilled included posts for three reporters, two of which had been held by the Journal staffers who worked in the Capitol Bureau--David Hanson, who resigned, and Marcia VanNess, who became a member of the Gannett News Service--and the other which formerly had been held by Curtis Hanes, who also resigned. The three other full-time positions left vacant were for a copy editor, a fine arts writer, and a photographer. The latter vacancy was created

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[35]Hickey interview, Sept. 19, 1972.

when Jack Bolt was promoted to assistant city editor and no replacement hired for the photography department. The part-time position discontinued was for a photographer. In January 1973, another vacancy was created when Birt Darling, assistant state editor, retired and no replacement was hired.

In August 1972, Harold Fildey, then assistant to the publisher, believed the manning level would not be permitted to drop any further, or that it would ever return to its old level. He did not believe that the failure to fill the vacant positions had been a detriment to the effective operation of the editorial department. "I think there were some people who weren't, shall we say, dipping their oar very hard," Fildey said.[36] He thought that staff members were producing more under Hickey than they had under Weil because they were working harder. Fildey believed the increased performance of individuals, combined with the reorganization of reporter's beats and an attempt to use team reporting compensated the loss in manpower.

Along with the personnel attrition, the Journal interrupted its student intern program in the editorial department after Hickey became publisher. Previously, the Journal had selected two or three journalism students, usually from Michigan State University, to work as summer interns in the news room. That program was temporarily discontinued in 1972 when Hickey decided there was little sense in training student reporters if the newspaper could not promise them a full-time position after they had been graduated. However, in April

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[36]Fildey interview, Aug. 22, 1972.

1973, the student intern program was reinstated and expanded, at the request of Benjamin Burns, the new managing editor, and Harold Fildey. According to Burns, it was decided that the intern program was a worthy venture that a newspaper the size of the State Journal should be involved in if the editors and publisher are interested in helping improve the professional acumen of those working to enter the profession. Whereas the intern program had been in operation for only three months a year, the Journal will now offer three internships each academic term throughout the year. Burns is interested in creating another intern program especially for minority students and believes such a program could be operational sometime in 1974.

According to Burns, the editorial department in May 1973 was down three positions from the manning level before the Gannett-Federated merger. At the time, he was considering applicants to fill two vacancies. Positions vacant at the time that had been operative under Federated ownership included an opening on the copy desk, a photographer position and the assistant state editorship, as well as the position of sports editor, Robert Hoerner having resigned only weeks before. Burns said it was unlikely that those vacant positions, with the exception of the sports editor, would be filled immediately because there had been a great deal of reshuffling of duties and assignments in the newsroom. The two persons he was considering for employment would assume duties other than those entailed in the vacant positions. Burns would like to hire four or five additional reporters but said he insists on being selective and hiring people who will substantially improve

the Journal's pool of talent. He believes he has a good chance of getting approval to hire additional staff members if he can justify his requests.[37]

The cutback in manpower necessitated some reorganization of news beats and assignments for reporters, a condition that Harold Fildey believed had helped compensate the lower manning level. Not all supervisory personnel in the editorial department concur with such an opinion. Frank A. Hand, state editor, said that while under Louis Weil his four county bureaus each had a full-time staff member in residence to cover news in the outstate areas, under the new alignment two of his bureau staffers have been recalled to the downtown office and now cover the counties only on a half-time basis, the other half of their time spent on various other assignments. According to Hand, reporters from the newsroom now are occasionally assigned to cover specific stories in the outstate areas in an effort to take up some of the slack in coverage created when the two full-time staffers were taken out of the bureaus. He thinks the overall affect is a weakening of news coverage in the outstate areas because the reporters who manned the county bureaus on a full-time basis were knowledgeable of the issues in those communities and could see a story developing, whereas staffers only occasionally involved with those same communities are less likely to be as informed and conscious of what is happening in them.[38]

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[37]Burns interview, May 24, 1973.

[38]Frank A. Hand, private interview held in offices of State Journal, Aug. 4, 1972.

The program of cost reduction under Gannett ownership was carried further in the editorial department through drastic cutbacks in the amounts of overtime wages paid reporters. According to Beverly Hall, family living editor who worked as a general assignment reporter before being promoted, when Louis Weil was publisher there seldom were any complaints from management about too much overtime. When she was a reporter she sometimes earned $100 a week from overtime compensation.[39] Curtis Hanes, former Journal reporter, also made a considerable amount of money working overtime. He said when Gannett took over the overtime subsided to a trickle, much to the displeasure of many staffers.[40]

According to Harold Fildey, the cutback in overtime had not put any strain on the news-gathering effectiveness of the newspaper because most of the overtime was paid to reporters who attended routine night meetings of various governmental agencies. The meetings previously attended by a reporter are now covered by telephone the following morning. One editor interviewed said the cutbacks in overtime had been detrimental because a number of good news stories had been missed through the failure to have a reporter at meetings.

Personnel policies were further affected under Gannett when newsroom staffers were required to start coming into work earlier. Under Weil the newsroom was not manned until 7:30 A.M. Now the sports

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[39]Beverly Hall, private interview held in offices of State Journal, Aug. 18, 1972.

[40]Dewey Curtis Hanes, private interview held in offices of Lansing City Hall, Oct. 17, 1972.

editor, wire editor and slot man on the copy desk come in to work at 5:00 A.M., the metro, or city, desk is manned at 6:00 A.M. and the remaining page layouts for the day are started at 7:00 A.M.

Collective Bargaining with Gannett

On June 23, 1972, a two-year contract was signed between Gannett Co. and Lansing Local 24 of the Newspaper Guild, the latter organization composed of fifty editorial staff members at the State Journal. Under terms of the contract, the five-year scale for a reporter at the Journal is $224.50 a week, compared with $207.00 under the previous contract, which expired October 1971. A copy editor with five years experience would make $234.50 a week compared with $217.00 under the expired contract. Those figures are a 5.5 percent increase in salaries paid under the old contract and were within the permissible bounds for wage increases authorized by the federal Pay Board. A second salary increment increase agreed upon during negotiations would pay reporters $242.00 a week and copy editors $252.00 a week. However, the Pay Board had to be petitioned for permission to allow the second increment and, as of this writing, permission had not been received.

According to Galen McClain, assistant news editor and president of the Lansing chapter of the Guild during negotiations, most of the complaints and dissatisfactions among news room employees concerning reorganizational changes initiated by Gannett remained "below the surface." During the bargaining session he had few complaints stemming from the reorganization changes instituted by Hickey that staffers

wanted put before the negotiating table.[41] McClain said most of the staff complaints centered around issues that had existed before the Gannett-Federated merger. Two of the most significant specifications that came out of the negotiating session were agreements that editorial department employees would no longer be required to work split shifts and that they must be given a minimum ten hours off between shifts. The new contract also provided for a wage differential of 5 percent for any shift that begins between 6:00 P.M. and 7:00 P.M., and a 7.5 percent differential for shifts beginning between 9:00 P.M. and 5:00 A.M.

Curtis Hanes, former reporter, was the chief negotiator for the Guild during the last collective bargaining session. He characterized the Lansing chapter of the Guild as weak with little power to back up demands. According to Hanes, few staff members at the Journal would be willing to strike to force management's hand. The national Guild provided little assistance during the negotiations.

According to Hanes, there was little actual negotiating at the last bargaining session: "They gave us pretty much what they wanted to give us."[42] Gannett set a maximum figure for salary increases and there was little hope of obtaining anything greater. "The negotiators took a hard stand on increases they would pay and there was no swaying them from it," Hanes said.

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[41]Galen McClain, private interview at his Lansing residence, Aug. 11, 1972.

[42]Hanes interview, Oct. 17, 1972.

The Guild was negotiating with the same people from Federated it had dealt with at the last contract negotiation before the merger. But those same Federated personnel had to confer and clear everything with Gannett headquarters in Rochester during the 1972 negotiations, according to Hanes. Under Federated, too, Hanes said, there had always been a greater amount of lattitude in what the company was willing to consider than under the new ownership. The Guild local thought it could justify a 12 to 12.5 percent wage increase. It wanted an increase of $75 a week over a three-year period for a reporter minimum increase, but got only $40. Gannett offered 5.5 percent and agreed to petition the Pay Board for an additional 1.5 percent. Gannett did make some minor concessions, such as maternity leave for women staffers.

Reflecting on his years as a member of the Lansing Guild, Hanes said the negotiations under Gannett lasted much longer and were more troublesome than any session he was involved with before the merger. According to him, Gannett had the upper hand before negotiations began because it had petitioned the Pay Board to classify the State Journal as an entity within the corporate structure of Gannett Co., rather than as an independent newspaper, or a newspaper within the Federated structure. Consequently, the Pay Board would not allow as large a wage increase for the Journal as part of the corporate property of Gannett Co. as it would had the Journal been considered a separate newspaper. In such a manner, Hanes said, the Gannett Co. had the wage-price freeze in effect at the time working in its favor.

CHAPTER IV

INNOVATIONS AND CHANGES IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Business Department: A Change in Accountability

According to John Reynolds, business manager of the State Journal, there have been no major organizational changes within the business department since the newspaper came into the Gannett fold. The Gannett presence has been outwardly felt principally by a change in accountability that accompanied the Gannett-Federated merger. Business reports that previously were sent to the home office of Federated in Battle Creek now go to Gannett's home office in Rochester for review. All internal audits previously conducted through Federated are now handled through Gannett.[1]

Among the changes in the business operation of the State Journal that Gannett has instituted is a switch from the old calendar accounting period used by the Journal to a thirteen-week accounting period by which Gannett Co. operates. The old accounting period used by the Journal followed each week of the quarter as it came on the calendar. The thirteen-week period used by Gannett divides the quarter so there are five weeks in the first month and four weeks in each of

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[1]John Reynolds, private interview held in offices of State Journal, Sept. 12, 1972.

the two following months. The thirteen-week system permits keeping year-to-year records that correspond with one another by week day. As an example, the quarter always begins with a Monday under the thirteen-week accounting period, whereas under the former accounting period used by the Journal only the date was comparable. Reynolds is pleased with the change because the day of the week is a significant determiner of gross income for a newspaper and the new accounting period helps lessen the chance of making misleading year-to-year comparisons.

The only accounting report changed by Gannett was the chart of accounts, which has been modified to conform with the format preferred by the parent company.

Employee benefit programs are still administered by the Federated office, Gannett corporate philosophy holding that because of the diverse character of the newspaper chain it is more efficient and practical to allow local administrative offices, such as Federated's office, to administer hospitalization, insurance and pension programs established for employees. According to Reynolds, who served as business manager of Federated's central office before coming to the Journal March 1972, the Federated office is also maintained to handle property tax returns, franchise tax returns, fixed asset records and other accounting tasks. Even though Gannett has taken over most of the administrative responsibilities for the Federated newspapers, Reynolds said, Federated Publications continues to retain corporate identity.

Circulation Department: Increased Agressiveness

The two most significant changes instituted in the circulation department after Maurice Hickey became publisher were the establishment of a Sunday-only subscription contract and the creation of a "telephone sales room," both innovations aimed at obtaining more customers.

The Journal used to contract only for what is known as a seven-day forced subscription. Under such a contract, the subscriber must agree to have the newspaper delivered seven days a week; he cannot subscribe for the Sunday paper only, or for every newspaper except the Sunday paper. The Journal now offers a Sunday-only subscription, the newspaper delivered, as the description implies, only on Sundays. According to Richard Ferris, assistant circulation manager, the Journal has picked up approximately 1,000 Sunday-only subscriptions since April 1972.[2]

Frank C. Wippel, circulation manager, suggested to Hickey that Sunday-only subscriptions be offered. According to Wippel, it was a move he had considered before, but one that had not been implemented because the Federated organization, more isolated and conservative than the Gannett Co., had been less receptive to innovations. Whippel believed Gannett was a progressive organization whose personnel would be more receptive to new ideas than had been Federated. The implementation of the Sunday-only subscription contract was so successful that the Journal took first place in a circulation promotion contest

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[2]Ferris interview, June 27, 1973.

sponsored by Family Weekly, a Sunday supplement magazine to which the Journal subscribes. The Journal competed against twenty-one other daily newspapers in the 77,000 to 105,000 circulation range for the highest percentage of increase in the sale of Sunday newspapers during a six-month period between 1971 and 1973. The Journal had a 6.5 percent increase in Sunday sales for the six-month period of October 1, 1972, to April 1, 1973, over the same six months in 1971-72.[3] Wippel won a ten-day vacation to Mexico for his efforts in increasing Sunday sales.

The creation of a telephone sales room was Hickey's idea. The sales room is operated from 5:15 P.M. to 8:55 P.M. Monday through Friday. Ten part-time employees canvas the circulation area of the newspaper by calling residents at random from a sequential list of telephone numbers. Residents are asked if they are Journal subscribers. If they are, the caller inquires about the quality of service. If they are not, the caller tries to solicit a subscription. The first time the telephone sales room was put in service the campaign netted 1,300 new subscribers during a twenty-six-week period in 1971-72. The most recent campaign, conducted from September 1972 to May 1973, brought in 2,469 subscriptions for the State Journal.[4]

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[3]Frank C. Wippel, private interview held in offices of State Journal, June 27, 1973.

[4]Ferris interview, June 27, 1973.

According to Wippel, the establishment of Sunday-only subscriptions and the telephone sales campaigns were the major factors in achieving a daily circulation increase from 78,581 in April 1971 to 82,445 in April 1973, representing a 4.9 percent increase over the two-year period. That gave the State Journal an average annual circulation increase of approximately 2.5 percent for those two years, compared to a yearly increase rate of 1.5 percent during 1970. Wippel said that whereas the daily, or evening, circulation increase for 1972 and 1973 is 1 percent higher than the 1970 increase, the 1972-73 increase for Sunday sales was 2 percent higher than the increase for 1970.

In the area of administration procedures, the most significant policy adjustment made by the circulation department of the State Journal was the need to project expected circulation figures ten years into the future for Gannett. According to Richard Ferris, Federated required that circulation projections be made for only two or three years.

Advertising: Minor Adjustments

According to Ted Sondag director of advertising for the State Journal, there have been no organizational changes in either retail or classified advertising departments as a result of Gannett proprietorship. The most significant change Gannett has instituted is a requirement that the advertising director of the Journal submit annually a projected income and expense budget for the coming calendar year.[5]

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[5]Sondag interview, June 27, 1973.

Under Federated ownership, the Journal never had to submit a comprehensive report predicting likely income and expenditures for the next year. Sondag believes that because Gannett is a much more tightly run organization than was Federated, it is normal to expect a certain amount of conformity with Gannett policies and procedures. Referring to Gannett's local autonomy concept, Sondag thinks such a policy is more applicable and practical in the editorial department than in the business or advertising operation where there is a need to insure procedures are followed that will assist in assuring maximum profits. Sondag believes the new requirement to forecast yearly revenues and expenditures has, all in all, been beneficial to the administration of his department. "I never had to prognosticate in the past, but have now become a better planner because of the new requirement," he said.[6]

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[6] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

STAFF ATTITUDES TOWARD REORGANIZATION

Questionnaire Results

In February 1973, an eighteen-item questionnaire concerning editorial reorganization was submitted to personnel in the editorial department of the State Journal. The questionnaire was of the multiple choice type. Forty-six questionnaires were distributed, twenty were returned. Staff members were not asked to identify themselves. A summary of the results are recorded here, followed by written comments offered by editorial department personnel who completed the questionnaire. Results are presented in tabular form by percent with the number of responses indicated in parenthesis.

1. Do you believe the news writing style of staff-prepared copy has improved since the Journal became a member of the Gannett group?

Noticeable improvement	45%	(9)
No substantial change	40%	(8)

(One respondent indicated the news writing style had "deteriorated," two respondents did not answer the question.)

2. Do you believe there has been any substantial change in the quantity of staff-written copy being published by the Journal since it became a Gannett property?

More staff-written news published	15%	(3)
Less staff-written news published	45%	(9)
No substantial change	35%	(7)

(One respondent did not answer the question.)

3. Do you believe that the reorganization of the Journal's Capitol Bureau into a Gannett State Bureau has significantly affected the newspaper's coverage of capitol affairs?

Capitol coverage weakened	55%	(11)
Capitol coverage improved	5%	(1)
No substantial change	40%	(8)

4. Do you believe that the Journal under Gannett ownership enjoys a greater amount of editorial freedom in terms of the subjects it can choose to write about?

Editorial freedom expanded	80%	(16)
Editorial freedom curtailed	10%	(2)
No significant change	10%	(2)

5. Do you believe the rigid departmentalization of news and other "packaging" changes have significantly improved the readability of the State Journal?

Readability improved	80%	(16)
Readability impaired	0%	(0)
No substantial change	20%	(4)

6. Do you believe that under Gannett ownership the State Journal in its editorial column has more frequently addressed itself to contemporary issues relevant to Lansing and outlying communities which the newspaper serves?

Yes	55%	(11)
No	5%	(1)
No significant change	35%	(7)

(One respondent did not answer the question.)

7. Do you believe that the earlier copy deadline under which the Journal is now operating has prohibited the inclusion of news accounts of late happenings in that day's edition that under the old deadline would have got into the paper?

Yes	65%	(13)
No	25%	(5)

(Two respondents did not answer the question.)

8. Do you believe the Journal is doing as comprehensive a job of covering outstate news now as it was before the Gannett-Federated merger?

Yes	20%	(4)
No	55%	(11)
No significant change	25%	(5)

9. Do you believe the failure to fill editorial staff vacancies created when staffers have departed the Journal has impaired the editorial department's operating effectiveness?

Yes	65%	(13)
No	15%	(3)
No significant change noticed	15%	(3)

(One respondent did not answer the question.)

10. Do you think there has been any increase in individual productivity among staff members of the editorial department since the Journal became a Gannett newspaper?

Yes	35%	(7)
No	35%	(7)
No significant change	15%	(3)

(Three respondents did not answer the question.)

11. Do you believe that under Gannett ownership the Journal has been more inclined to publish stories of local happenings that before would have not been considered because of political or social influences?

Yes	70%	(14)
No	20%	(4)
No significant change	5%	(1)

(One respondent did not answer the question.)

12. Do you believe there has been any significant change in the amount of political news coverage being published by the Journal under Gannett ownership?

More political news published	20%	(4)
Less political news published	25%	(5)
No substantial change	55%	(11)

13. Do you believe the Journal's handling of political news has under Gannett become fairer toward various contending political parties than it was previously?

Yes	35%	(7)
No	15%	(3)
No significant change	45%	(9)

14. Do you think the workaday atmosphere among editorial staffers has undergone any significant changes since the Journal became a member of the Gannett group? If your answer is affirmative, please explain what changes have occurred.

Yes	70%	(14)
No	20%	(4)

(Two respondents did not answer the question.)

15. During the past year, have you experienced any personal anxiety over what direction the news department of the State Journal will take under Gannett ownership?

Yes	65%	(13)
No	25%	(5)

(Two respondents did not answer the question.)

16. Do you believe that the Journal is satisfactorily utilizing the individual talents of its newsmen and women?

Yes	25%	(5)
No	55%	(11)
Indeterminable	20%	(4)

17. From the descriptions listed below, how would you characterize the overall editorial posture of the State Journal? Do you think any significant change has been effected under Gannett? If so, please explain how.

Agressive	40%	(8)
Reserved	20%	(4)
Cautious	5%	(1)
Indifferent	25%	(5)

(One respondent characterized the newspaper's posture as "reaching," and one respondent did not answer the question.)

18. Do you believe the Journal's community service role in providing the public with the necessary information it needs to be properly informed has improved under Gannett ownership?

Yes	35%	(7)
No	45%	(9)
No significant change	20%	(4)

It is significant that staffers were closely divided in their opinion of whether the news writing style at the Journal has improved under Gannett ownership (question one), nine indicating there has been improvement and eight indicating that there has been no substantial change, with one respondent remarking that the writing style had deteriorated. It would seem from the closely divided responses to that question that if the writing style at the Journal has indeed improved it has not been so great a change as to elicit wholesale affirmation. So too with the question asking if there had been any

change in the quantity of staff-written copy being published, staffers were divided in their opinions, 45 percent indicating less staff-written news was being published, 15 percent indicating more staff-written news being published and 35 percent indicating no substantial change.

There was also a significant difference concerning whether or not reorganization of the Capitol Bureau had affected the newspaper's coverage of capitol affiars, 55 percent indicating that capitol coverage had been weakened, 5 percent indicating that coverage had been improved and 40 percent believing there has been no substantial change in capitol coverage.

Respondents were quite evenly divided in their opinions as to whether productivity among staffers had increased or remained the same since Gannett came into the picture (question ten). Seven staff members indicated that productivity had increased and seven indicated that it had not. Three respondents believe no significant change occurred in individual productivity in the editorial department.

Answers to other items on the questionnaire did reveal a strong consensus among the twenty respondents. Eighty percent of the respondents believe that the departmentalization of news and the packaging changes made have significantly improved the readability of the State Journal (question five). Sixty-five percent of the responses to question seven indicate the earlier copy deadline has been detrimental in permitting the inclusion of late-breaking news into the paper, which under the old deadline would have been carried. Fifty-five percent of the responses to question eight, asking if outstate coverage had been affected under Gannett, indicated that outstate coverage is believed

to be less comprehensive than before the Gannett-Federated merger, while 25 percent indicated they thought there has been no significant change.

Fourteen staffers, or 70 percent of the respondents, believe that under Gannett the newspaper is more inclined to publish stories of local concern that previously would not have been considered because of political or social influences in the community. In conjunction with those opinions, 80 percent of the respondents believe that editorial freedom in the newsroom has been expanded under Gannett ownership.

On personnel issues in the editorial department, 55 percent of the respondents indicated they do not believe the Journal is satisfactorily utilizing the individual talents of its staffers and 65 percent indicated that the failure to fill vacant positions in the news room has impaired the editorial department's effectiveness. Seventy percent indicated that the workaday atmosphere in the news room has undergone significant change (question fourteen), and thirteen, or 65 percent of the respondents, indicated they had experienced personal anxiety over what direction the news department is headed under Gannett (question fifteen).

Concerning questions fourteen and fifteen, thirteen of the fourteen respondents who indicated that changes in the day-to-day atmosphere of the news room had occurred remarked that morale among staff members in the editorial department dropped profoundly after the State Journal became a member of the Gannett chain. None of the twenty

staff members who returned the questionnaire indicated there had been an improvement in the day-to-day working conditions of the editorial department. One staffer commented:

> There has been a significant demoralization of the staff since becoming part of Gannett. The source of that demoralization has been a feeling that individual staff members are no longer individuals, but cogs in the corporate structure. Another source of that feeling is an increasing amount of arbitrary direction and one-way communication from the top down.

Reflecting similar perplexity, another staffer wrote:

> Who do I work for? My friends think I work for the State Journal. Management tells me I work for Gannett. My supervisor tells me I work for the State Journal. My W-2 Form comes from Federated.

One employee said that "lack of encouragement, constant nit picking and rewriting of staff stories is severely destroying individual incentive." One staffer said that morale at the Journal was as low as it ever had been, and while writers might have a greater choice in subjects, they are forced to cover the particular subject and write within more constricting guidelines than before. Commented another respondent:

> The pressures from changes in writing style, and in news emphasis, have had an unsettling affect on the staff. Essentially, the change has been from a meeting-oriented coverage with a few features to a bright writing style with emphasis on personalities where ever possible.

Several others indicated that much of the lowering in morale can be attributed to personality problems between supervisors and staff members, and further cited the long and troublesome contract negotiations with Gannett as having contributed to low morale.

A majority of respondents indicated the shift in news orientation had weakened the overall editorial effort of the Journal and believe the earlier deadline has seriously impaired the newspaper's capacity to publish late-breaking news. Concerning that issue, one staffer commented:

> There has been an increase in stories that "appeal to reader interest" rather than dealing with day-to-day dealings that are important. Reporters are spread so thin, they cannot dig out facts and information and are relegated to a production formula that relies heavily on light features rather than solid in-depth reporting.

Writing in a similar vein, another respondent believes that sometimes the desire to entertain is in conflict with the need to inform: "Let's face it, issues like land use, pollution and zoning simply don't lend themselves to light, breezy writing. But they do have an impact on all citizens."

Another staff member who is also disturbed over the new emphasis on writing stories that appeal to reader interest wrote:

> Management calls it a trend, but I haven't yet observed so-called great newspapers in the country reaching for facts that simply are not there. Our city editor comes up with story ideas and regardless of whether his ideas can be supported with fact, the story is usually edited to say what he thinks it should say--correct or not.

Solicited Opinions Concerning Reorganization

Transitional Trauma

Mary Perpich, former entertainment writer at the Journal, recalled that when Hickey came to Lansing as the new publisher appointed by Gannett, a wave of apprehension swept through the managerial ranks of the editorial department over job security. According to Miss Perpich

everyone from Harold Fildey, the assistant to the publisher, down to the assistant editors was concerned about the future of their jobs. She said editors became overtly cautious about discussing policy changes among themselves or personally interpreting what they believed was proper procedure to follow in various aspects of day-to-day editorial department operation. "Nobody wanted to cause waves," Miss Perpich said. She believes the situation fostered a regressive posture in the news operation. Supervisors were reluctant to make personal decisions concerning various problems that appeared from day to day in the department, resulting in a weakening of leadership and a loss of direction in the news room.[1] Other experienced staffers working in the news room tell essentially the same story concerning a partial vacuum in leadership. One staffer commented:

> We could live with the new deadline if we had some organization at the top. The editors are hampering things because they are afraid and never do anything on their own account.

The same staffer said that part of the problem comes from the fact that Hickey has made so many changes, modifications and remodifications in the operation of the editorial department that editors do not know what to expect next and are hesitant to stick their necks out and make a personal ruling on a particular situation. According to the staff member, morale in the editorial department was extremely low not only among reporters but among some of the veteran editors also.

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[1]Mary Perpich, private interview held in offices of Michigan State Chamber of Commerce, Lansing, Oct. 5, 1972.

Staff members interviewed, including both reporters and editors, said a significant amount of unrest and confusion was created in the editorial department as a result of numerous changes in editorial operation made by Hickey after he became publisher. The adjectives "arbitrary" and "dogmatic" were frequently used by staffers to characterize changes Hickey instituted in the day-to-day publication of the newspaper.

According to one staff member, within a three or four-week period, Hickey made repeated changes in the same editorial items, such as switching the weather summary from one page to another, redesigning the front page index or section logotypes one week and then making further modifications to the same items the following week. The staffer believed the new rules were arbitrary changes made primarily for the sake of change:

> It is a situation where changes are made but no reason is given for the change. The staff is left to feel as though they are a bunch of children who don't need to know why and are only expected to do their work and not ask questions.

Displeasure over Deadlines

Many staff members interviewed, reporters and editors, were displeased with the 9:00 A.M. copy deadline established when the newspaper switched from a straight to a collect press run. One reporter believes writers now have to "back into a story" often times because it might be a day or more from when an event occurred to when an account of it is published. The reporter said sometimes he now has to rewrite the lead to a story a day after the original story was

written to offset the "publishing lag" and make it appear current. According to several veteran staff members, they sometimes wait days to see their stories published because of what one writer called "that screwy nine o'clock deadline." One reporter said sometimes stories are left on overset for weeks.

Marcia VanNess, formerly a reporter with the Capitol Bureau now working for the Gannett State Bureau, said if she comes to work early, writes a story for the State Journal and has it on the city desk by 8:00 A.M. there is little chance the story will be published in the state edition because the pages have already been locked up. According to Miss VanNess, if the story is vital and of a timely nature, it might be included in the second, or city, edition, but more than likely will not be published until the following day.[2]

There was a consensus among staffers interviewed that though management at the Journal might claim the early deadline has not hampered coverage of hard news because late-breaking stories can be included in the city edition, such is seldom the practice. According to several staff members, little is done to improve the city edition other than the routine correcting of typographical errors. One veteran staffer theorized that the reason pages are not remade for the city edition is directly attributable to the expense involved.

Several staffers remarked that the early deadline had turned the State Journal into a mid-morning newspaper rather than an evening publication. According to staffers, the wire service stories carried

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[2]VanNess interview, Oct. 5, 1972.

on inside pages are taken off the wire the afternoon preceeding publication, a practice that gives the reader much the same coverage of national and international happenings he can obtain each morning in the Detroit Free Press.

Staffers believe the earlier deadline, combined with the publisher's desire to put out a newspaper more conversational in approach, has eroded hard news coverage and caused a reorientation toward writing in retrospect.

Manpower Deficiencies

Many staffers believe the reduction in manpower in the editorial department has had a detrimental affect of considerable proportion on the news-gathering capability of the State Journal. Numerous staff-members interviewed believed reporters were over-taxed in the amount of work assigned them. One editor said reporters had been working much harder under Gannett than they should be asked to work. Another staff member said so many news beats had been cut up or expanded to cover reportorial gaps created by the failure to fill vacancies that reporters found it impossible to allocate enough time to properly cover news beats assigned them.

Mary Perpich thought the Journal editorial department was understaffed before Hickey became publisher, citing Okemos and other outlying communities as areas that had never been properly covered by the Journal. Now the situation is even more aggravated, according to Miss Perpich.[3]

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[3]Perpich interview, Oct. 5, 1972.

One editor believed the lowering of the manning level at the copy desk from five to four copy editors was an impairment to the smooth flow of staff-written copy in the news room. In answer to Maurice Hickey's contention that the copy desk vacancy does not need to be filled because copy editors now work a forty-hour week rather than a thirty-five-hour week, as was the case before the merger, the editor rejoined that regardless of whether the copy editors work forty or thirty-five hours, five editors are needed on the copy desk to handle the processing of local copy at peak periods during the day and week. The same editor believed that the early deadline hampered makeup of local pages by not permitting adequate time to properly plan and execute page makeup and to get stories in type.

Coverage of capitol affairs and happenings in the outstate areas was cited by numerous staffers as having been undermined through lowering of the editorial manning level. Marcia VanNess believes it is unfortunate that the only daily newspaper in the state capitol does not have one staff member assigned to full-time duties at the capitol. She believes that Lansing, as a community, has a greater vested interest in what goes on at the capitol simply because of proximity. She cited state building projects, local civil service employment levels and other activities of state government as activities that directly affect thousands of people living in the Lansing area. Miss VanNess believes there is enough news coming out of the capitol to keep both a reporter from the State Journal and the Gannett State Bureau busy.

One editor believes the Journal should be much more aggressive in its coverage of the capitol and do a reportorial job befitting its name. "There are things here we haven't touched in years," he said. The editor also singled out Michigan State University as an excellent source of news that has never been adequately tapped by the Journal.

Frank Hand, state editor, believes the cutback in manpower seriously eroded the coverage of outstate news. Hand cited discontinuance of full-time bureaus in Charlotte and Howell, the assigning of responsibilities other than outstate coverage to the resident staffer in the Mason bureau and the expansion of the coverage area of the St. Johns bureau to include Gratiot County as reorganizational directives that have seriously diluted outstate coverage. Under Louis Weil, the outstate editor was allocated two pages daily for outstate news, both staff-written and wire copy. According to Hand, now wire service copy can no longer be carried in the outstate section and only one page is allotted daily for outstate news. Hand said outstate news has been reduced by six to eight columns a day under Gannett. He believes a smaller quota of outstate news will, in the long run, have a detrimental affect on the Journal's circulation since one out of every three newspapers is sold outside the metropolitan area.[4]

Another editor said the loss in manpower had depleted the reportorial staff of several talented and experienced reporters, much to the injury of the newspaper and to the indifference of management. Curtis Hanes believes the Journal and Gannett Co. are not concerned

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[4]Hand interview, Aug. 4, 1972.

over the loss of experienced staff members because it allows hiring less experienced personnel at a lower scale on the salary schedule. "Sixty bucks here, sixty bucks there, it all adds up," Hanes said.

One editor believes that a lackadaisical reportorial attitude under Louis Weil, combined with an emphasis on feature writing and the loss of experienced reporters under Maurice Hickey has fostered a reportorial staff at the State Journal incapable of effectively covering a local calamity of major proportion. When that same proposition was put to other staffers, the majority agreed that the Journal did not, at the time, possess a news-gathering team of sufficient experience to properly cover a breaking news event of major proportion. One editor said the Journal simply did not have a "first team" that could be sent out to cover breaking news. According to the editor, interviewed during the fall of 1972, the editorial department had only two reporters he considered "top-notch newsmen."

Discontentment over News Reorientation

Many staffers expressed dismay over what they believe has been a definite shift away from reporting of hard news in favor of feature writing and entertainment pieces. Mary Perpich believes the "feature gimmicks" have not improved the editorial content of the newspaper and thinks the publisher is "grasping at straws to sell newspapers." One experienced reporter does not think the shift toward more feature writing has been beneficial, believing that readers could not possibly keep up with all the feature stories and entertainment pieces run in the Journal, and doubts if they have any desire to do so in the first

place. He characterized the Journal's "Fall Festival of Features," run during the fall of 1972, as "a grab bag of hackneyed, overworked themes--the tribulations of divorce, alcoholism, marijuana legalization and what have you--that have been written about a thousand times before and which have little in them that is new." According to the reporter, management had become so preoccupied with publishing feature stories and interpretative pieces that reporters had been given vague feature assignments concerning people or institutions without the editors having bothered to first check with reporters to determine if there was factual basis for the planned article. One reporter was given an assignment to do a feature series on a local topic and was told the first installment was due in a week. The reporter said he then sat down and tried to determine if there was anything of substance to write about concerning the specific topic. He decided there was not, but went ahead and assembled something he thought the editor would accept as satisfactory, which the editor did.

Affirmative Reaction to Reorganization

A substantial majority of the State Journal staff members interviewed during the study believed the rigid scheme of departmentilization instituted by Hickey has greatly improved news presentation in the Journal. Staffers, with but a few exceptions, believed the move toward intense departmentilization has produced a newspaper that is now more organized in format and easier for the consumer to use than under Federated operation. Most staffers thought the streamline

packaging modifications also have been beneficial in producing a newspaper that is far more aesthetically appealing and professional in appearance than before the Gannett-Federated merger.

Editorial employees interviewed thought abandonment of the regular Saturday afternoon paper in favor of a morning edition had been extremely helpful in making the Journal a more serviceable commodity to its subscribers. Staff members said the morning edition had been a subject of discussion in the news room off and on for several years, but it was not until Maurice Hickey became publisher that the talk ended and something was done. Curtis Hanes believes the old Saturday afternoon edition was read by few people, with the consequence that some merchants thought advertisements in the Saturday afternoon edition were a waste of money.[5]

Most editorial employees interviewed believed that under Hickey's direction editorial freedom--the amount of freedom editors and reporters have in deciding what happenings and circumstances are worthy of coverage--has been expanded. Several staffers recalled that under Louis Weil, there had been constraints upon editors concerning what was acceptable for publication. According to David Hanson, former reporter, news stories with the potential for placing in an unfavorable light various business, political and community leaders in the area were not published. According to Hanson and others, because some State Journal personnel in the top echelon of management belonged to the City Club, an exclusive key club in Lansing quartered in the Olds

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[5]Hanes interview, Oct. 17, 1972.

Hotel, many of the influential persons in business and state and local government who were also members of the City Club enjoyed a certain amount of insulation against unfavorable newspaper exposure--in the State Journal, at least. Since Hickey became publisher, the sacred cows have lost the blessing, according to several veteran staff members. One employee cited as an example an editorial published by the Journal on February 11, 1973, attacking State Senator Philip O. Pittenger, Lansing Republican from the twenty-fourth senatorial district, for abusing the privileges of his office. He was criticized for making a junket to California that the Journal said appeared more of a pleasure excursion than a fact-finding trip, and subsequently submitting an unreasonably high statement of expenses incurred while on the trip. According to the staffer, under Louis Weil such an editorial never would have been published.

Beverly Hall, family living editor, cited what she thought had been an interesting story about an unusual book store in East Lansing as an example of a story published under Gannett that never would have been carried in the Journal while Weil was at the helm. Weil believed any story that focused on a commercial establishment, no matter how interesting or newsworthy, encouraged readers to suspect the Journal of behaving in a patronizing manner. Consequently, such stories never were published.[6]

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[6]Hall interview, Aug. 18, 1972.

Another staffer recalled that Louis Weil had something of a Victorian attitude toward sex, an attitude that was reflected in the pages of the State Journal. Under Weil, stories with sexual themes were seldom carried by the Journal, regardless of content--or redeeming social value--because the publisher believed in providing the community with a "family newspaper," a definition that precluded stories dealing with sex or nudity. According to the staffer, Weil on one occasion vetoed the proposed use of a particular comic strip because it contained drawings of young children with bare navels. Weil's ban on sex and nudity extended to advertising, too. The composing room had standing orders to chip all navels out of advertising mats used by the newspaper. Weil also directed that "adults only" be placed across the chests of bare-breasted female drawings in movie advertisements (apparently the publisher's principles were not so inflexible as to preclude accepting such advertising.) After Hickey became publisher, according to the employee, the old taboos faded away. The Journal has carried feature stories dealing with prostitution in Lansing, massage parlors, key clubs, wife-swapping and other stories with strong sexual themes.

One staffer believes it is difficult to determine whether such stories have been published because Hickey believes they will attract reader interest or are symptomatic of a national trend toward more open and explicit treatment of sexual themes in both the press and entertainment media.

Staff members were divided concerning whether management and supervisors were making a more conscientious effort to score news beats and provide timely coverage of important local news events or were still operating under what one staffer called "the old if-we-don't-get-it-today-we'll-get-it-tomorrow attitude." Several staffers thought the editorial department had become more aggressive under Gannett, while others cited the 9:00 A.M. deadline as one modification in the news operation that served to discourage timely coverage. Several staffers thought there had been little or no change in attitude among management personnel concerning more aggressive coverage of local news, saying the most noticeable change has been superficial in nature: an attempt to make local news presentation more "slick."

CHAPTER VI

A COMPARATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Design and Execution

A comparative content analysis of the State Journal was conducted to detect and measure changes in news content and to serve as a weathercock in indicating apparent new trends in news presentation since the newspaper became a Gannett publication. The content analysis was of a quantitative nature. Two samples, each composed of seven issues, were used. The first sample was a composite week of State Journal editions selected at random from October 1, 1970, through September 30, 1971. The second sample was selected from issues between October 1, 1971, and September 30, 1972. The first sample is indicative of news content of the State Journal while it was a Federated publication. The year from which the sample was selected was extended three months beyond the date of the Gannett-Federated merger because changes directly attributable to Gannett influence did not occur until Maurice Hickey had become publisher September 1, 1971, and been in that position for several weeks. The second sample was selected from the twelve-month period that began October 1, 1971, one month after Hickey had become publisher. Consequently, the two samples were taken from twelve-month periods immediately before and after Gannett influence became manifest in the pages of the State Journal.

The samples were of composite structure in that each edition in the two samples was published on a different day of the week, but not in normal calendar succession. As an example, the first sample contains a Sunday from November, a Monday from August, a Tuesday from July and so forth. A composite week was used to negate any possible seasonal characteristics that might arbitrarily have influenced the content analysis had each sample been chosen in regular calendar sequence. The first sample (1970-71) was composed of the following issues, listed Sunday through Saturday: February 14, 1971; July 12, 1971; June 15, 1971; December 30, 1970; April 1, 1971; August 13, 1971; September 18, 1971. The second sample (1971-72) was composed of the following issues: November 7, 1971; August 14, 1972; July 18, 1972; March 22, 1972; September 7, 1972; April 14, 1972; February 19, 1972.

The 1970-71 sample week was composed of 354 "home print" pages, that is, pages printed by the State Journal, plus 32 tabloid preprinted pages. Preprinted pages are supplied by advertisers and contain advertising only. The first sample week contained 42,101 column inches of advertising and 15,082 column inches of news, exclusive of syndicated columns, editorials, letters to the editor, comic strips and other daily fare. The 1971-72 sample week was composed of 418 home print pages, plus 52 tabloid and 10 full size preprinted pages. The second sample week contained 54,432 column inches of advertising and 13,664 column inches of news.

The categories used to classify the subjective character of a news story, what the story is about, were derived from a system of categories for general news content devised by Chilton R. Bush. Bush's

schedule of subjective categories, forty-nine in number, was published in 1960.[1] Several general categories that Bush had divided into subcategories were combined by the researcher. Categories not included in Bush's schedule were added to accommodate changes in newsworthy issues since 1960. For example, Bush's schedule contained no category for news concerning the Vietnam war or environmental issues--thirteen years ago these issues were not in the news as they are now. As an example of a category combined with another, Bush listed "Atomic Bomb-Atomic Energy" as one of the forty-nine categories. That category was dropped and stories dealing with The Bomb and atomic energy were scored in the categories for "Defense" and "Science and Invention." The subjective schedule used in this study contained forty-three categories, a list of which is contained in Appendix A.

The geographical origin, or character, of a news story was scored either in terms of its geographic proximity to State Journal readers, that is, whether the story dealt with national affairs, state affairs, local affairs and so forth, or if it was a story whose geographical proximity was insignificant to the reader but did contain psychological significance, such as the story of a school boy's attempt to break the world altitude record for kite flying. The geographical categories are listed in Appendix B.

Story types, used to designate various general story forms used in news presentation, were divided into eleven categories, defined in Appendix C. The source of the news story was recorded either as

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[1]Chilton R. Bush, "A System of Categories for General News Content," Journalism Quarterly, XXXVII, No. 2 (1960), p. 206.

"staff written" or as having been obtained from an outside news service, such as Associated Press, Newsday, New York Times and so forth. The length of each story, including the headline, was measured and recorded in column inches.

Photographs and common fare, such as daily columns of commentary, letters to the editor, comics, and cartoons, were scored separate from news stories. Photographs were scored for source, size, and whether they were supplementary or wild. Daily columns, comics and other items were simply itemized by type and source.

Method of Evaluation

After all news stories in the two sample weeks were scored and the data compiled, a one-way analysis of variance was made to determine significant differences in the amounts of news published between the two sample years for various individual categories. Each of the fourteen issues that made up the sample was used as a unit of analysis. The two twelve-month periods, October 1970 through September 1971 and October 1971 through September 1972, were used as the category variable. The number of inches of copy per day for each category, such as staff-written news of state geographical proximity, out-county proximity, metro and so forth, was used as the dependent variable. The variance analysis was programmed through the Michigan State University CDC 6500 computer.

An alpha level of .10 was used to determine which changes can be considered significant. Consequently, there is chance that one out of ten of the categories would be erroneously rejected as not

significant. A smaller alpha level, one that would incorporate a lower degree of probable error, was not used because of a relatively low degree of precision inherent in the variance analysis. The low degree of precision was caused by the small sample size and compounded by possible variance between week days and seasonal fluctuations latent in the individual issues that compose the sample. Therefore, the differences determined significant through the one-way analysis of variance are not necessarily the only significant changes involved--as in fact several categories came close to being below the .10 alpha level indicative of significant change--but are changes that for the purpose of this study will be deemed definitely significant, that is, changes effected through design rather than happenstance.

The categorical results of the content analysis are presented in tables 1 through 6. The total number of column inches of copy for every category are recorded for each of the two sample weeks, accompanied by the percent it represents in relation to the other categories in the table. The difference in percent between the two sample weeks is expressed as a percentage differential in relation to the second sample week, 1971-72. Thus in Table 1 (page 101), the category for news of out-county proximity shows the 1970-71 sample week contained 638.5 column inches of staff-written copy, representing 11.9 percent of all staff-written copy recorded for that sample week. In the second week, 1971-72, 689 column inches of staff-written copy were designated out-county, representing 15.8 percent of the total staff-written copy scored for the second sample week. The percentage differential is +3.9, that is, in the second sample week 3.9 percent

more staff-written copy was of out-county proximity in geographical character than in the first week. Categories in which variance analysis showed that significant change occurred between sample weeks are so designated with an asterisk alongside the percentage differential.

Results

Table 1, which summarizes data collected on the geographical character of staff-written copy, shows that there were no significant differences in the amounts of copy published for the two composite sample weeks in any of the six categories dealing with geographic proximity or psychological attraction. Even though the psychological category showed a -5.5 percent differential, which might seem significant at face value, the variance test determined that it was not.

Table 1. Geographical character of staff copy.[a]

Geographic Proximity	Sample 1 (1970-71)		Sample 2 (1971-72)		1971-72 differn'l. in percent[b]
	length (inches)	percent	length (inches)	percent	
Internat'l.	23.0	0.4	0	0	-0.4
National	0	0	13.0	0.2	+0.2
State	274.0	5.1	216.5	4.9	-0.2
Out-County	638.5	11.9	689.0	15.8	+3.9
Metro	2,565.0	47.7	2,144.5	49.5	+1.8
Psych.	1,876.5	34.9	1,276.5	29.4	-5.5
Total	5,377.0	. .	4,339.5	. .	

[a]See Appendix B for description of categories.

[b]Asterisk designates differences determined significant.

The content analysis did not reinforce the opinions of staff members who believed that less out-county news has been published by the State Journal since Gannett took over control. The second sample week showed the reverse, an increase of 3.9 percent staff-written copy concerning outlying areas. However, the difference is of no particular significance.

Table 2. Geographical character of news service copy[a]

Geographic Proximity	Sample 1 (1970-71)		Sample 2 (1971-72		1971-72 differn'l in percent[b]
	length (inches)	percent	lengh (inches)	percent	
Internat'l.	792.5	8.1	303.5	3.3	-4.8 *
National	2,463.5	25.3	2,653.0	29.0	+3.7
State	1,367.5	14.0	1,185.0	12.9	-1.1
Out-County	32.5	0.3	38.5	0.4	+0.1
Metro	77.0	0.7	77.0	0.8	+0.1
Psych.	4,988.5	51.3	4,869.0	53.3	+2.0
Total	9,721.5		9,126.0		

[a]See Appendix B for description of categories.

[b]Asterisk designates differences determined significant.

The most dramatic change in news presentation manifest from a comparison of the geographical character of copy obtained from news services (Table 2) involves a drastic cutback in news of international character published under Gannett ownership. In the first sample week, 1970-71, international news accounted for 8.1 percent of all news

obtained from outside sources. In the second sample week, 1971-72, only 3.3 percent of all outside copy was scored as having international proximity, a cutback by more than half. That difference was determined significant.

Table 3. Story types for staff-written copy.[a]

Story Type	Sample 1 (1970-71)		Sample 2 (1971-72)		1971-72 differn'l. in percent[b]
	length (inches)	percent	length (inches)	percent	
A. Hard News	2,065.5	38.7	1,777.5	40.4	+1.7
B. Hard: Sup.	293.5	5.5	191.0	4.3	-1.2
C. Casual	124.5	2.3	124.5	2.8	-0.5
D. Routine	701.0	13.1	529.0	12.0	-1.1
E. Enterprise	0	0	0	0	-
F. Fea.: Intp.	270.5	5.0	93.0	2.1	-2.9
G. Fea.: H. I.	295.5	5.5	433.5	9.8	+4.3
H. Fea.: Entr.	352.5	6.6	378.0	8.6	+2.0
I. Fea.: Other	950.0	17.7	446.0	10.1	-7.6
J. Comm. Serv.	163.0	3.0	383.0	8.7	+5.7 *
K. Statistical	122.0	2.3	49.5	1.2	-1.1
Total	5,338.0		4,405.0		

[a]See Appendix C for description of categories

[b]Asterisk designates differences determined significant.

Table 3, a summary of story types for staff-written copy, shows that in only one of the eleven categories was there a significant difference in amounts of news published between the two sample weeks. Stories scored as community service items, category J., jumped from

3 percent of all staff-written stories in the first sample week to 8.7 percent of all staff stories in the second week. That change would appear a direct reflection of Maurice Hickey's resolve that the State Journal should become more involved with the community and responsive to its needs.

Categories B., Hard News: Supplementary; D., Routine Informational; I., Feature: Other, and K., Statistical, all come close to showing significant differences in amounts of staff-written copy written. In as much as the method used in determining significance could erroneously reject one out of ten comparisons as representing no significant difference, it is possible that one of those categories does represent a significant change.

The summary of story types for all copy, staff and outside sources inclusive, is contained in Table 4. Analysis of variance showed that significant differences exist in amounts of news published in two categories, C., Casual General Informational, and E., Enterprise. There was a drop from 2.6 percent of all copy published in the 1970-71 sample week to 1.9 percent in the 1971-72 sample for casual news. That development would seem to reinforce John Ward's belief that the abandonment of stuffers has helped substantially in reducing the amounts of often dull, uninteresting stories of a noncurrent nature formerly used to fill up the news hole in stuffers.

The increase in news stories of an enterprising nature jumped from .10 percent of all stories published in the 1970-71 sample week to 1.2 percent of all stories published in the second sample week. That increase was realized through greater use of news service and

Table 4. Story types for all copy.[a]

Story Type	Sample 1 (1970-71)		Sample 2 (1971-72)		1971-72 differn'l. in percent[b]
	length (inches)	percent	length (inches)	percent	
A. Hard News	5,431.0	36.0	4,927.5	36.0	-
B. Hard: Sup.	562.0	3.7	507.5	3.7	-
C. Casual	395.5	2.6	255.5	1.9	-0.7 *
D. Routine	1,273.0	8.4	1,307.0	9.6	+1.2
E. Enterprise	19.0	0.1	177.5	1.3	+1.2 *
F. Fea.: Intp.	1,085.0	7.2	639.5	4.7	-2.5
G. Fea.: H.I.	1,308.5	8.7	1,230.5	9.0	+0.3
H. Fea.: Entr.	872.0	5.8	824.5	6.0	+0.2
I. Fea.: Other	3,013.5	20.0	2,444.0	17.9	-2.1
J. Comm. Serv.	158.5	1.0	376.0	2.6	+1.6
K. Statistical	958.0	6.4	972.0	7.1	+0.7
Total	15,031.0		13,661.5		

[a]See Appendix C for description of categories.

[b]Asterisk designates differences determined significant.

wire service stories, as no staff-written stories of an enterprising nature were written for any of the fourteen editors used in the content analysis.

Table 5, a summary of subjective character of news stories, shows two significant differences in amounts of news published. News concerning the weather dropped from 2.0 percent of all news published in the 1970-71 sample to 1.8 percent of all news published in the 1971-72 sample. Sports news underwent the most dramatic change, climbing from 14.9 percent of all news published in the 1970-71 sample

Table 5. Summary of subjective character.[a]

Subjective Character	Sample 1 (1970-71)		Sample 2 (1971-72)		1971-72 differn'l. in percent[b]
	length (inches)	percent	length (inches)	percent	
1. People well known	665.0	4.4	457.0	3.3	-1.1
2. People not well known	692.5	4.6	497.5	3.6	-1.0
3. Hollywood	213.5	1.4	218.5	1.6	+0.2
4. Government activities	1,073.0	7.1	1,206.5	8.8	+1.7
5. Politics	369.0	2.4	516.0	3.8	+1.4
6. Other nations	970.0	6.4	419.0	3.1	-3.3
7. Vietnam war: general	103.0	0.7	48.0	0.4	-0.3
8. Vietnam war: tactical	135.5	0.9	137.5	1.0	+0.1
9. Vietnam war: political	72.0	0.5	13.0	0.1	-0.4
10. Defense	102.5	0.7	114.5	0.8	+0.1
11. Diplomacy, foreign r.	70.5	0.5	73.5	0.5	-
12. Economic activity	827.5	5.5	760.0	5.6	+0.1
13. Prices	20.5	0.1	40.5	0.3	+0.2
14. Taxes	307.0	2.0	54.5	0.4	-1.6
15. Labor	176.0	1.2	105.0	0.8	-0.4
16. Agricul.	16.0	0.1	59.0	0.4	+0.3
17. Judicial proceeding	164.5	1.0	180.5	1.3	+0.3
18. Crime	263.5	1.7	266.5	2.0	+0.3
19. Race rel.	33.0	0.2	20.5	0.2	-
20. Health	343.0	2.3	266.0	1.9	-0.4
21. Sci. & inv.	88.0	0.6	139.5	1.0	+0.4
22. Accidents, disasters	187.5	1.2	80.0	0.6	-0.6

Table 5-continued.

Subjective Character	Sample 1 (1970-71)		Sample 2 (1971-72)		1971-72 differn'l. in percent[b]
	length (inches)	percent	length (inches)	percent	
23. Religion	246.0	1.6	172.5	1.3	-0.3
24. Weather	299.5	2.0	243.0	1.8	-0.2 *
25. Natural deaths	263.5	1.7	210.5	1.5	-0.2
26. Transportation	167.5	1.1	210.5	1.5	+0.4
27. Education	623.5	4.1	565.0	4.1	-
28. Youth	534.5	3.5	50.5	0.4	-3.1
29. Animals	16.5	0.1	48.5	0.4	+0.3
30. Amusements	696.0	4.6	821.5	6.0	+1.4
31. Arts, cult.	260.0	1.7	298.0	2.2	+0.5
32. Space expl.	45.0	0.3	49.5	0.4	+0.1
33. Sports	2,251.5	14.9	2,798.5	20.5	+5.6 *
34. Recreation	156.0	1.0	64.0	0.5	-0.5
35. Women	734.0	4.9	729.5	5.3	+0.4
36. Rebellion & protest	24.0	0.2	22.0	0.2	-
37. Misc.	584.0	3.9	560.5	4.1	+0.2
38. Environment	333.5	2.2	293.5	2.1	-0.1
39. Consumer affairs	65.0	0.4	139.5	1.0	+0.6
40. Commerce & industry	275.5	1.8	395.0	2.9	+1.1
41. Social issues	523.0	3.5	276.5	2.0	-1.5
42. Communication	66.5	0.4	20.0	0.1	-0.3
43. War	23.5	0.2	22.0	0.2	-
Total	15,081.5		13,663.5		

[a]See Appendix A for description of categories.

[b]Asterisk designates differences determined significant.

up to 20.5 percent in the 1971-72 sample. Consequently, under Gannett ownership, an additional 5.6 percent of all news published in the State Journal was allocated for sports news. The increase in sports coverage, according to the publisher, is the direct result of following the advice of readers who, when polled, indicated the newspaper was not running enough national and international sports news.[2]

Table 6, a summary of the origin of news other than that written by staff members, shows two significant changes in use of news service copy. In the first sample week, taken from editions of the State Journal when it was a Federated publication, no news stories were used from the Gannett News Service, as might be expected. The second sample week contained 307 column inches of copy from the Gannett News Service, representing 3.3 percent of all outside news copy used in those seven editions.

More important, there was a dramatic lowering in the amount of news obtained from the capitol bureaus--both the old bureau operated under Federated ownership and the new Gannett State Bureau. In the first sample week, 654 column inches of copy from the capitol bureau were published, representing 6.8 percent of all news obtained from news services published in the seven editions. That percentage dropped to 3.0 in the second sample week, when 276 inches of copy were published. Using those percentages for comparison, news obtained from the capitol bureau has been cut by more than half since the Journal became a Gannett publication.

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[2]Hickey interview, Sept. 19, 1972.

Table 6. Summary of outside news sources.

Source	Sample 1 (1970-71)		Sample 2 (1971-72)		1971-72 differn'l. in percent[a]
	length (inches)	percent	length (inches)	percent	
UPI	2,267.5	23.6	2,098.5	22.8	-0.8
AP	3,611.0	37.6	3,638.0	39.5	+1.9
NEA	159.5	1.7	62.5	0.7	-1.0
L.A. Times	218.0	2.3	496.0	5.4	+3.1
Washington Post	356.5	3.7	307.0	3.3	-0.4
New York Times	437.5	4.6	170.5	1.9	-2.7
Gannett News S.	0	0	307.0	3.3	+3.3 *
Capitol Bureau	654.0	6.8	276.0	3.0	-3.8 *
U.S. Weather S.	106.5	1.1	163.5	1.8	+0.7
Newsday	68.0	0.7	36.0	0.4	-0.3
Washington Star	26.0	0.3	21.0	0.2	-0.1
London Observer	0	0	68.5	0.7	+0.7
Seattle Times	0	0	24.0	0.3	+0.3
Media Features	14.0	0.1	0	0	-0.1
Unidentified	1,692.0	17.6	1,541.0	16.7	-0.9
Total	9,610.5		9,209.5		

[a]Asterisk designates differences determined significant.

Daily Fare: Deletions and Additions

After Maruice Hickey became publisher, numerous changes were made in the syndicated columns, cartoons, comic strips and other amusement items carried by the State Journal. Those editorial items that were dropped by the Journal are listed below, followed by a list of new items included in the newspaper after it became a Gannett publication.

The deletions and additions are listed by title with a description in parenthesis followed by the number of times they appeared in the particular sample week.

Deletions:

Stanley Karnow (syndicated columnist) 1

John Scott (syndicated columnist) 1

Max Frankel (syndicated columnist) 1

Robert G. Kaiser (syndicated columnist) 1

Tom Wicker (syndicated columnist) 1

Jeffrey Hart (syndicated columnist) 1

Hal Boyle (syndicated columnist) 1

Joyce Brothers (syndicated columnist) 1

Jeanne Dixon (daily horoscope) 6

Minit Doodle (sketch) 1

Today's laugh (amusement) 4

Citizen Smith (cartoon) 3

Lancelot (comic strip) 5

Up Anchor (comic strip) 1

Johnny Hazard (comic strip) 1

Additions:

Hobart Rowen (syndicated columnist) 2

D. J. R. Bruckner (syndicated columnist) 3

Paul Greenburg (syndicated columnist) 2

Dwight Chapin (syndicated sports columnist) 2

Sylvia Porter (syndicated financial columnist) 4

Dick West (syndicated columnist) 1

Don Oberdorfer (syndicated columnist) 1

Bruce Biossat (syndicated columnist) 1

Jack Anderson (syndicated columnist) 2

Jack Bell (syndicated columnist) 2

Jim Murray (syndicated sports columnist) 1

Carroll Righter (daily horoscope) 5

Amanda Panda (educational cartoon) 4

Button-a-Day (amusement) 2

It's the Record (unusual world records) 2

Doonesbury (comic strip) 5

Winthrop (comic strip) 1

In June, 1972, the Journal also added "Help," a staff-written ombudsman column that attempts to serve as advocate for readers who need advice or assistance in dealing with a variety of problems. The column is published six days a week.

Photographic Variations

Of 216 photographs published in the first sample week, exclusive of one-column head shots, 64.3 percent (139) were illustrative photographs. Wild photographs, those not illustrating a news story, accounted for the remaining 35.7 percent (77). The second sample week showed a moderate increase in the percentage of illustrative photographs used with 67.7 percent (126), an overall increase of 3.4 percent.

Illustrative photographs taken exclusively by Journal staff photographers showed an almost parallel increase, rising from 69.3 percent (70) in the first sample week to 72.8 percent (51) in the second week, an overall increase of 3.5 percent. That trend would seem to support Jack Bolt's belief that under Gannett ownership a conscientious attempt is being made to cut back on wild art in favor of illustrative photographs.

CHAPTER VII

EDITORIAL PERFORMANCE UNDER GANNETT: AN EVALUATION

Advances and Retreats

Advances

A sincere attempt has been made to compile the information and data for this study employing objective measurement. However, the juncture is at hand where disgression is necessary to permit subjective assessment of the many organizational changes made at the State Journal since it became a Gannett property. The evaluations that follow concerning influence of reorganization on editorial performance are solely the inference of the author.

Virtually all persons associated with the State Journal consulted in the course of this study agreed that the packaging changes, the cosmetic surgery ordered by Maurice Hickey, has fostered a dramatic improvement in the appearance of the newspaper. And to the disinterested observer paging through old copies of the State Journal, a similar conclusion would not be unexpected. The use of horizontal makeup, the airing out of headlines, the indentation of news columns, the practice of running larger photographs and the use of other face-lifting techniques have infused substantial visual vitality into a

newspaper whose appearance, under Federated control, was akin to the confusing, jumbled and jam-packed pages characteristic of American newspapers during the first half of the century.

Departmentalization of news, too, has been instrumental in improving the State Journal and making it a better-assembled, more serviceable product--but with some qualification. As noted before, there is questionable gain in maintaining a system of news departmentalization so rigid that a wire story with local application cannot be carried on a page alongside staff-written copy simply because it is a wire story. It is just such a situation that one editor claims has been created through the rigid scheme of departmentalization, a situation which the publisher acknowledges but dismisses as insignificant to warrant modification of the departmentalization scheme.

Establishing source as the criteria for categorization, rather than subject, is not a practicable tactic. Yet, Section A, with the exception of allowing important local stories run on page A-1, is exclusively allocated for wire copy. And Section B, with the exception of including wire stories concerning capitol affairs, is reserved for staff-written copy only. It might be more practical to simply make geographical proximity the criteria, and, when appropriate, allow the mixing of wire copy and staff-written copy. That practice is followed daily in the Journal's sports section where wire copy and staff copy are carried on the same pages.

Benjamin Burns believes that if such a predicament does exist, it can be easily remedied by placing a specific story in the section it properly belongs, regardless of source; a move he said he would not

hesitate to approve if he thought the situation warranted such action. Perhaps Burns, as managing editor, will be more inclined to bend the guidelines than was his predecessor. If such is the case, that particular problem precipitated by rigid departmentalization might be remedied.

Rigid departmentalization precipitates another unfavorable condition in the newsroom. It fosters an element of isolation between various department editors and sub-editors who become preoccupied with their own domain. Newspapers, by nature, deal in a highly eclectic commodity--news. When departmentalization serves to constrict individual perspective, the result, as attested by several staffers, is a lack of awareness that can bring about inadvertent duplication of coverage, as noted before, or a failure to spot stories of significance that should be brought to the attention of another editor. Editors and reporters should not confine themselves to only their immediate assignment, remaining disinterested in the other aspects of newsroom operation. Faculties of manifold intellectual capacity and hypersensitive memory are not required to keep abreast of national, state and local issues. It takes, simply, a conscientious newsman.

It is significant that 80 percent of the questionnaire respondents believe editorial freedom at the State Journal has been expanded under Gannett. That is a healthy development for any newspaper. A newspaper whose editorial department has constraints upon it not to publish news of particular persons or institutions will never gain the respect of its readership, or its employees. So too with the editorial commentary published by the Journal in its editorial column.

A majority of the respondents believe that since the Gannett-Federated merger the Journal has been more aggressive and candid in its editorial stands concerning local issues. However, no qualatative measurement of editorial comment was made to substantiate that consensus. Although the editorial board founded to facilitate editorial commentary was the innovation of Eugene Dorsey, a Federated employee, under Gannett proprietorship that body has been sustained and its activities intensified.

The change from a Saturday afternoon newspaper to a morning paper has also enhanced the State Journal and made it a more valuable, serviceable commodity to the reader. The move toward Saturday morning publication has gained considerable momentum among evening newspapers in this country. The Detroit News, largest evening newspaper in the United States, abandoned its Saturday afternoon paper in favor of a morning edition in July 1973.

The abolition of stuffers, promoted through switching from a straight to a collect press run, has been a significant step forward in maximizing the amount of available space for current, topical news. The absence of stuffers, no doubt, has been chiefly responsible for less news of merely casual interest published by the Journal under Gannett ownership, as indicated in Table 4.

The new approach toward local news reporting--the emphasis on humanizing the news by sketching personality, writing from the viewpoint of the reader and using a bright conversational tone--can only be evaluated with ambivalence. The precepts of writing from the viewpoint of the reader and maintaining a conversational narrative should not be

automatically affiliated, because they are not necessarily complimentary. The first deals with perspective, the second deals with idiom. There can be little argument that keeping the reader's perspective in mind, rather than that of the news source, is a principle bound to improve the effectiveness of local news presentation. The preference for a bright, conversational writing style is a desirable character in certain realms of narration--but it has its place. Feature stories, particularly those dealing in human interest or entertainment, easily lend themselves to the light, breezy writing style with which editors and reporters at the Journal are now concerned. But that same conversational style does not necessarily lend itself to reporting news of serious concern to the reader. And when the writer, or newspaper, persist in using a lighter style--in pushing for pizzaz--the result can be a degeneration of reportage into little more than parody. If management is concerned with the quality of news writing, it should also place a high premium on compliance with correct usage, proper grammer and exact syntax--fundamentals that are the hallmark of precise, intelligent writing.

Retreats

In reviewing those organizational changes enacted at the State Journal since the Gannett-Federated merger that have impaired editorial performance, the change that comes to mind first is establishment of the early copy deadline. Editors in the top echelon of management categorically deny that advancing the deadline for the metro desk from 11:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. has weakened the Journal's coverage of local news

because "not much happens between nine and eleven in the morning." Several editors cited the capitol as a case in point, saying that not much news comes out of legislative sessions until early in the afternoon. However, in light of the eroded status of capitol affairs reporting, as evidenced through content analysis, that is not too valid an example, as the State Journal, apparently, is not overly concerned with capitol affairs reporting to begin with. Otherwise one might reach the opposite conclusion, that the early deadline has indeed been detrimental to capitol coverage. The tide of human--and governmental--activity may ebb and flood daily, but to assert that between 9:00 A.M. and 11:00 A.M. it stands virtually inanimate is little more than public relations rhetoric. But such is to be expected. It is unlikely that editors high on the management ladder would jeopardize their prospects by going on record as having profaned changes initiated by a new publisher. That is known as realpolitik. When interviewed in July 1973, after having been retired for six months, Kenneth Gunderman was asked if he thought the overall editorial performance of the State Journal had improved under Gannett. His answer was not so patriotic as it had been a year previous when he was managing editor. Gunderman demured for a few moments, saying that every publisher has his own way of doing things, then when asked the question again stated flatly that he did not care to offer a judgment.[1]

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[1]Kenneth L. Gunderman, telephone conversation, July 10, 1972.

The need for an earlier deadline was precipitated by switching from a straight to a collect press run and, more urgently, by creation of an early edition. Eroding timely coverage of local news in order to sell an additional 1,000 newspapers on the streets each day is hardly supportive of Maurice Hickey's pronouncement that local news reporting is the paramount task with which the editorial department should concern itself. According to Hickey, the basic responsibility of a newspaper is to be always abreast of what is happening in the community and to report all the news, free of special interest entanglements.[2] He believes that a newspaper in a monopolistic situation, such as the State Journal, has more difficulty honoring that responsibility than competitive newspapers. The public can keep score on competing newspapers when one covers a significant story and the other misses the same story. In a single newspaper situation there is no competition around to demonstrate deficiency: what the newspaper reports is what the public reads. However, with establishment of the earlier copy deadline, it would seem that Hickey pays only lip service to that creed. When the copy deadline is moved up two hours, with an accompanying digression from timely reporting to writing in retrospect, when more time must be spent on production tasks and less on news gathering each day before publication, then the damage inflicted on presentation of local news is substantial.

The detriment to timely coverage of local news fostered by the earlier deadline was not reflected in the content analysis. Time between occurance of an event and publication of a written account by

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[2]Hickey interview, Sept. 19, 1972.

Journal reporters was not measured. However, reporters interviewed during the course of this study provided strong indication that an increased lag between occurance and publication does exist, which they attributed to the earlier deadline.

The injurious impact on timely news coverage precipitated by the earlier deadline could be partially offset through more extensive remaking of section pages for the later city edition, permitting inclusion of late-breaking stories and the updating of other stories. Numerous staff members, however, intimated that such has not been the case, principally, they theorized, because of the expense involved. If true, it would seem a newspaper as much a "powerhouse" as the publisher says the Journal is could afford the additional expense necessary to remake pages for the second edition.

The comparative content analysis of the State Journal conducted for this study showed no significant decrease in the amount of staff-written copy published by the newspaper under Gannett ownership (Table 1). However, the quality of coverage was not analyzed. A majority of the reporters interviewed, and some editors, believe that local reporting has been impaired and become less comprehensive under Gannett ownership. Fewer reporters and an inept scheme of rearranged news beats were cited most often as conditions that have weakened the Journal's reporting effort. Furthermore, because both text and headlines were measured in the content analysis, there is no way of determining how much news space was taken up by use of larger headlines and other techniques instituted by Gannett to improve the visual appearance of the newspaper, news space that under Federated ownership was used for text.

There is no doubt that the Journal is operating with fewer reporters under Gannett. On June 30, 1971, the day of the Gannett-Federated merger, the State Journal had sixty-one employees in the editorial department. Two years later, on June 30, 1973, the editorial department was operating with fifty-six employees, a decrease of five positions. Three of those positions had been held by editors, two of which were discontinued when employees retired (a copy editor and assistant state editor) and the other, sports editor, will be filled when a candidate is chosen. The two other positions were for reporters. Another reporter position was lost when an artist was hired in February, 1973, to help with graphic arts in the editorial department. He is one of the fifty-six employees working in the editorial department in 1973. Because the position for a graphic arts specialist is a new one, that means under Federated there was another reporter working. Consequently, the editorial department has three fewer reporters than it did under Federated.

Coverage of local news has been further eroded by cutbacks in overtime previously paid reporters to cover night meetings of various government bodies. Harold Fildey said many of those meetings are now simply covered by telephone the next morning. Covering a news beat by telephone is, at best, second-rate reporting. When the person contacted for information is likely to be affiliated with the institution or government office involved, such as a secretary to the superintendent of schools, the reporter resigns his perogative to decide what issues are most newsworthy and to objectively report, to the best of ability,

what transpired. Covering such meetings by telephone is, in effect, submitting to a kind of censorship--a price that must be paid by the newspaper if it is not willing to send its reporters to cover an event.

Editorial performance of the State Journal has been impaired by diluted coverage of capitol affairs. The severe erosion of coverage under Gannett ownership, as indicated by content analysis (Table 6) can be attributed to the loss of one capitol affairs reporter incurred in the reorganization of the capitol bureau. As noted before, the Journal does not have a single staff member assigned to full-time capitol coverage. It must rely on the wire services and a two-man Gannett State Bureau, which also writes for two other Gannett newspapers in the state.

Benjamin Burns said he knows capitol coverage is weak. He is attempting to work out an arrangement whereby one additional reporter from the Journal will be free most of the time to "run over to the capitol when it looks like something is developing."[3] But such a solution sounds like a stop-gap measure. Burns admitted that during the spring of 1973 when investigative news stories revealing questionable hiring practices on Governor Milliken's staff broke, it was not the State Journal that was in the forefront. "It really frustrates me that we haven't gotten some of that stuff first," he said.

A substantial amount of discontent among staffers has been generated at the State Journal since Gannett bought the newspaper, resulting in a lowering of morale. According to Burns, it is not a

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[3]Burns interview, May 24, 1973.

case of "low morale" it is a case of "no morale." Morale is an intangible, but it is nevertheless vital to the effective functioning of a news gathering operation. A majority of those who returned questionnaires inferred that their suspicions of diminished corporate concern for the individual under Gannett have crystallized. Staff members, including editors, told of anxiety over the new corporate attitude they work under, citing numerous organizational changes made with no accompanying explanation as to what management hopes to accomplish. According to staffers, there has been little communication from the top down, explaining how management hopes to redirect the efforts of the editorial department. There have been instances where changes were made in a particular area and not even editors in charge were included in planning sessions, or at least notified of the imminent change. One editor complained that his section logotype and format was drastically revised without his having been consulted. When he began page makeup on a particular day he was informed by the composing room of the changes that had gone into effect. Such inconsiderate actions have offended and alienated many staff members.

With increased emphasis on industrial psychology and personnel relations in contemporary society, it would seem that those guiding the fortunes of the State Journal might do well do moderate authoriatarian techniques and administer in less feudal fashion. Employees, in any business, are concerned about the affairs of the organization in which they work. People like to be informed. That is what sells newspapers. It is paradoxical that an organization whose stock in

trade is communication appears to suffer within from inadequate communication--it is also unnecessary. When a company changes hands, a natural eventuality exists that employees will be more concerned and sensitive to its state of affairs than under usual circumstance. A large corporation such as Gannett that expands through horizontal integration should be, if it is not, well-schooled in the necessity to inform newly acquired employees of impending organizational changes and modifications to existing policies. That enhances morale, and it does not cost anything.

Prospects

The State Journal has, in the span of two years, undergone profound changes. In terms of editorial taste, the pendulum has swung from a publication of utmost propriety that methodically censored exposed navels to one that now has no qualms about publishing a staff photograph of a young man making an obscene hand gesture at the camera as he is arrested for operating an illegal massage parlor.[4] Along with greater indulgence in the editorial fare it is now willing to include in its news columns, the Journal has undergone considerable house cleaning of a cosmetic nature, accomplished a major reorganization of its editorial department, made major revisions in its publishing schedule, and attempted to convert its news presentation from that of a paper of record to one that humanizes the news, is more vibrant and writes in retrospect.

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[4]"Friendly Fellow," State Journal, April 7, 1973, p. B-1.

Throughout the study, changes have been described as having come under Gannett ownership or after Maurice Hickey became publisher. Quite logically, then, comes the question of whose changes they have been--Gannett's or Hickey's? The answer is ambiguous. All editors interviewed believe that Gannett has no master plan which the publisher must follow. The research of George P. Evans concerning the local autonomy concept in the Gannett organization showed that there is no standard plan followed by Gannett newspapers in news presentation.[5] Hickey said he has had a free hand in deciding what should be done and what should not. The only matter out of his hands was reorganization of the Capitol Bureau into a Gannett State Bureau. That was decided upon by the Gannett home office. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the changes effected at the Journal have been done so at the pleasure of Hickey, rather than Gannett Co. But the solution is not so simple. It is difficult, more likely impossible, to separate the man from the organization. Hickey readily admits that most of what he has learned about news presentation and newspaper administration has been acquired while working for Gannett Co. He has instituted practices at the Journal that he has seen used effectively on other Gannett newspapers and while working for Today in Florida.

Conjunctively, any evaluation of Gannett Co. violation of local autonomy hinges on whether Hickey is considered Gannett personified or only an individual, and independent, publisher. If the former is the

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[5]George P. Evans, "An Analysis of the Local Autonomy Concept of the Gannett Newspaper Group," (unpublished M.S. thesis, Ohio University, 1966), p. 152.

case, then local autonomy at the State Journal has been violated repeatedly. If the latter is considered, then the reorganization of the Capitol Bureau and the forced--for practical assessment--subscription to Gannett New Service are the most serious violations of local autonomy.

In summarizing his aspirations for the State Journal, Hickey said he wants the paper to get into more investigative and interpretive reporting. He believes that because the Journal is located in the state capitol, a community that also has a large industrial base, it should avail itself of the inherent opportunities that encourage investigative reporting. He favors both investigative and interpretive reporting for two fundamental reasons: they can be beneficial to the whole community and they result in highly interesting reading. However, content analysis showed a decrease in interpretive reporting--though not significant--and a total absence of investigative, or enterprise, reporting by Journal staffers. The Journal advertised in Editor & Publisher for an investigative reporter but has been unable to find a good prospect. Hickey also hoped to establish a graphic arts department to produce maps, illustrations, line drawings and other art work. Strides have been made in that area with the hiring of a graphic arts specialist.

Hickey believes that because the American public is becoming more and more transient, frequently changing jobs and residences, it is necessary to be less provincial and include more national and international news of a general nature in the Journal, along with more national and international sport news. Yet, content analysis showed

there has been a significant decrease in the amount of international news published since he became publisher. There has been, however, a dramatic increase in the amount of sports news published. The Journal now publishes on a regular basis news of even minor league baseball played throughout the country, to keep former residents of other cities now living in Lansing abreast of sports happenings in their former communities.

Concerning long range projections, Hickey does not intend, he said, that the Journal attempt to work into a competitive position with the two major newspapers in Detroit or other central Michigan newspapers, such as the Grand Rapids Press or the Saginaw News. Lansing is room enough, to paraphrase the publisher. However, one of the cosmetic changes Hickey ordered was removal of the Lansing dateline from the front page logotype of the Journal. Instead, the logotype now proclaims the State Journal as "Michigan's Complete Newspaper." That move hardly supports the publisher's professed parochial contentment.

As was indicated at the onset of this study, the State Journal is still very much in a state of transition, and it is likely to be some time before a new identity solidifies. One person who, no doubt, will be instrumental in determining the final character of that identity is Benjamin Burns, the new managing editor. Burns would like to see the Journal become "the Washington Post of Michigan." He hopes that someday when newspapermen talk about journalism in Michigan they will mention the State Journal, the Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News,

"instead of only the last two, as they do now."[6] That is an admirable aspiration. And it is one that will require a more sophisticated scheme of news gathering and presentation than the Journal now has.

According to Burns, the editorial department of a newspaper must fight infringements and constrictions from other departments within the newspaper's organization to insure its own independence and maintain a high standard of editorial performance. Indicating that the Journal has made conscientious strides to improve its editorial performance, Burns said that several times during his first six months as managing editor he received permission to drop advertisements from an edition or add additional pages at the last minute to accommodate important late-breaking news, such as the announcement of the Vietnam cease fire. Burns wants to hire experienced reporters to upgrade the newspaper's reportorial ability. He singled out two new staff members, John McAleenan and John Teare, as experienced reporters hired to provide reporting expertise to the Journal's editorial staff and to show young reporters how to compose and write an interesting news story. However, from what the researcher has read, the main of their efforts have gone toward writing clever feature stories intended to entertain more than inform--such as writing about the ups and downs of a garbageman's life or attempting to persuade people to sign a copy of the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July.

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[6]Burns interview, May 24, 1973.

Those types of stories seem to be key ingredients in the editorial substance that has gone into reshaping the character of the State Journal since it came under the administration of Hickey. Content analysis showed increases in the amounts of staff-written stories categorized as human interest features and entertainment features that, when combined, represent an increase of over 6 percent of all staff copy published in the second sample week. While the 1971-72 percentage differentials for the two categories taken separately were not necessarily statistically significant, taken together they are, in the judgment of the researcher, indicative of a trend toward increases staff production of stories intended chiefly to entertain.

When asked about the necessity for the current volume of breezy, entertaining features that have appeared in the Journal since it became a Gannett property, Burns replied that they are a necessary and important part of everyday editorial fare. "You can't stamp 'significant' on everything," he said.[7]

Burns has, no doubt, the experience, professional expertise and initiative to guide the State Journal into a position of editorial emminence. He has stellar aspirations for the Journal and that is commendable. Newspapers, like any business, are influenced by a fundamental proposition of hydraulics which instructs that a fluid seeks its own level. Reporters working for editors and supervisors who maintain an attitude of indifference toward aggressive local news coverage can hardly be expected to display a greater amount of enthusiasm

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[7] Ibid.

themselves, that is an axiom that the author can attest to from his personal experiences in the newspaper business. Perhaps Burns will be able to infuse some of that essential enthusiasm into the editorial staff.

Furthermore, if Burn's aspirations are to be realized, a greater premium will have to be placed on timely coverage of hard news, combined with a substantial increase in interpretive and investigative reporting--areas of endeavor that management has been talking about but which, up to the present, have not been manifest in the news columns of the newspaper. The Washington Post has gained a well-deserved reputation as one of the finest newspapers in the country through its excellent coverage of national government and its investigative reporting, not by publishing entertaining features and human interest material, or by allocating one-fifth of its news space to sports coverage. If Burns would have the Journal emulate the Post, he might start by striving for thorough coverage of state government. That, in itself, would be a considerable improvement and might prove a harbinger of things to come. Newspapers become great by determination and design, not through fait accompli.

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APPENDIX A

SUBJECTIVE CATEGORIES

APPENDIX A

SUBJECTIVE CATEGORIES

1. People Well Known--Persons well known to most readers because of their fame or notoriety or particular accomplishment.

2. People Not Well Known--Persons in the news because of their particular accomplishments or activities or position but not well known to the usual reader.

3. Hollywood--Persons not otherwise well known who are associated with the entertainment industries.

4. Governmental Activities--News about internal and domestic acts of a government (city, state or national), the legislative process and the actual execution of laws which are non-political.

5. Politics--News about politics on the city, state, or national level; all aspects, issues, candidates, leaders, criticisms of government activities laden with political implications.

6. Other Nations--News about happenings in and between other nations; excludes news of relations or dealings between other nations and the United States.

7. Vietnam War: General--All news of the Viewnam conflict not specifically categorized under 8 and 9.

8. Vietnam War: Tactical--News of battles and military operations in Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries involved directly or indirectly in warfare.

9. Vietnam War: Political--News concerning diplomatic and political happenings and issues involving North and South Vietnam and other principals involved in the war in Southeast Asia.

10. Defense--News of activities of defense departments, including civil defense.

11. Diplomacy and Foreign Relations--News of diplomatic relations between nations; including news of the United Nations, official activities of ambassadors, military and occupation officials.

12. Economic Activity--News of conditions and activities, both private and governmental, that affect economic conditions.

13. Prices--News about the fluctuation of the prices of consumer items or the controls of prices.

14. Taxes--News about establishment, abolishment or changes in rates of taxes and other related activities concerning taxes.

15. Labor--News concerned with both the long range and day-to-day goals and activities of organized labor.

16. Agriculture--News of farming, farm organizations, the technical and business aspects of farming, and farm prices.

17. Judicial Proceedings--News of pleadings, trials, and reviews of civil suits.

18. Crime--News of criminal trials, acts of crime, arrests.

19. Race Relations--News concerned with segregation, activities of ethnic minorities involved in seeking racial equality, conflicts between races.

20. Health--News of public health, the communal or national welfare, and health agencies.

21. Science and Invention--News from the natural and social sciences involving theory, inventions, and innovations.

22. Accidents and Disasters--News stories in which there is property damage, injury and death, or anticipation of the same.

23. Religion--News about churches and religious sects, including weekly church page items.

24. Weather--All reports and news about the weather, including feature items about past or expected weather conditions.

25. Natural Deaths--News of natural deaths; obituaries.

26. Transportation--News of commercial, industrial, governmental and private developments and activities in transportation.

27. Education--News of private and public schools, colleges, universities, trade schools, night schools; trends in education, statements by leaders in education and education administration.

28. Youth--News concerning the lives and activities of the younger set, the new generation.

29. Animals--News involving animals, both domestic and wild.

30. Amusements--News of entertainment events, celebrations, contests, movies, television and radio; recreational activities of an entertaining nature.

31. The Arts, Culture--News of culture, including counter-cultures, and cultural entertainment that involves painting, literature, drama, architecture, languages, museums--as opposed to the entertainment functions of movies and television.

32. Space Exploration--News of space exploration activities, including missions and new techniques and developments.

33. Sports--News from the sports world, including results of competition, profiles of personalities in sports and stories recalling past moments in the world of athletics.

34. Recreation--News concerning the activities of man at his leisure, including information about new types of recreational activities and current trends.

35. Women and Domestics--News concerning activities of particular interest to women, including fashion trends, cooking, gardening and household-related activities.

36. Rebellion and Protest--News concerning physical protest against governments or institutions, including non-violent social protest.

37. Miscellaneous--News of activities or of a particular circumstance not covered by the other categories listed here.

38. Environment--News concerning the environment in which we live; ecological issues, forecasts of future problems, including news of various forms of environmental pollution.

39. Consumer Affairs--News intended to inform and assist consumers in selecting and purchasing goods.

40. Commerce and Industry--News of activities and developments in the business world; includes news concerning specific institutions, excludes news of a general economic nature.

41. Social Issues--News concerning important or controversial issues in society, including abortion reform, drug abuse, women's rights and marijuana legalization.

42. Communication--News concerning activities and developments in the communications industry, including mass media. Excludes any reports dealing with the behavioral aspects of communication.

43. War--News of armed conflicts between nations, excluding the conflict in Southeast Asia.

APPENDIX B

GEOGRAPHICAL CATEGORIES

APPENDIX B

GEOGRAPHICAL CATEGORIES

1. Proximity:

   A. International--News originating in other nations; excludes activities or relations between the United States and other countries where the United States is one of the principals involved.

   B. National--News originating in the United States; includes reports of activities involving the United States and foreign countries, also includes activities between the national government and state governments as well as activities and relations between and in individual states.

   C. State--News originating in the State of Michigan.

   D. Out-county--News originating in the out-county, or mid-Michigan, areas, including Eaton Rapids, Howell, Williamston, Mason, Ionia, DeWitt and St. Johns; excluding Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Jackson, Flint and Saginaw.

   E. Metropolitan--News originating in the Lansing metropolitan area, including Holt, Okemos, Haslett, East Lansing and Grand Ledge.

2. Psychological--News that has no significant geographic proximity to the reader but which is of interest to him because of strong psychological identification or involvement.

APPENDIX C

STORY TYPES

APPENDIX C

STORY TYPES

A. Hard News--News stories concerning timely occurrences, such as automobile accidents, death and injury, governmental activities and acts of crime; usually written in the orthodox inverted-pyramid form.

B. Hard News: Supplementary--Follow-up or sidebar stories that serve to update or augment an original hard news story.

C. Casual General Informational--A news story written, usually, in orthodox form that does not deal with timely or late-breaking news and which could be considered as of only passing, or casual, interest to most readers, such as a report on the current status of sheep-raising in New Zealand.

D. Routine Informational--Reoccurring news items; included in the category are daily weather forecasts, obituaries and television and radio listings.

E. Enterprize--News stories, sometimes called "made" stories, that have resulted from the investigative efforts of the newspaper or news service publishing them, such as the Washington Post's investigative stories concerning the Watergate affair.

F. Feature: Interpretive--A story in which the writer attempts to explain to the reader the significance inherent in a particular circumstance, such as the ramifications surrounding a recent devaluation of the dollar.

G. Feature: Human Interest--A story strong in psychological identification or involvement for the reader dealing with the attainments or problems of other persons; often written in a more literary style than other news stories.

H. Feature: Entertainment--A story whose principal purpose is to entertain the reader.

I. Feature: Other--A feature story of a type not categorized under story types F, G, or H.

J. Community Service--A news story that serves to inform the public of a particular event or available public service, such as an announcement that the local community chest will conduct a door-to-door campaign to solicit contributions.

K. Statistical--News accounts that are primarily statistical in format, such as sports box scores and stock quotations.