# THE EAST LANSING TOWNE COURIER: STUDY OF A SUBURBAN WEEKLY NEWSPAPER IN COMPETITION WITH A UNIVERSITY DAILY NEWSPAPER

Thesis for the Degree of M.A.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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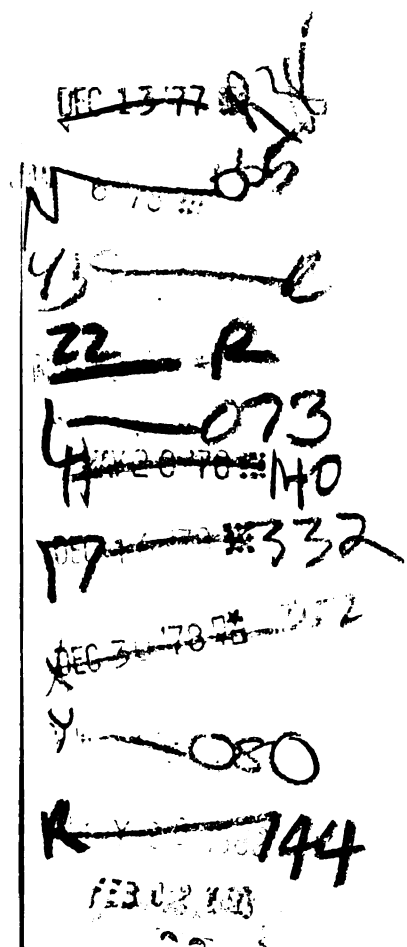

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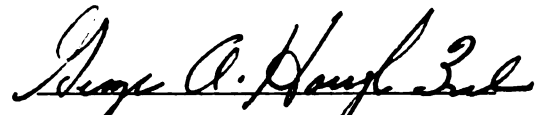
Accepted by the faculty of the School of Journalism, College of Communication Arts, Michigan State University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree.



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ABSTRACT

THE EAST LANSING TOWNE COURIER:
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IN COMPETITION WITH A UNIVERSITY DAILY NEWSPAPER

By

Peter Jeremiah Donaghue

In the thirty years since the end of World War II, the growth of suburban communities, usually at the expense of central cities, has significantly altered American newspaper publishing patterns. This movement to the suburbs has been reflected in rapid growth of the suburban press during a period in which metropolitan daily newpapers have been merging and declining in number, while perhaps not coincidentally becoming more regional in scope.

The Towne Courier is a weekly newspaper serving East Lansing, Michigan, a suburb of Lansing and also the site of Michigan State University. The university State News, published by students daily during the nine-month academic year, is devoted primarily to coverage of the university but does cover East Lansing city affairs to some extent.

The Towne Courier therefore finds itself in the unique situation of being a suburban weekly newspaper in indirect competition with a partially-subsidized university daily newspaper.

Purpose of this study is to determine what kind of a community East Lansing is, to take an overview of suburban and community newspapers in general, and to look specifically at the Towne Courier

editorial policies and practices. Included in this study is a content analysis of the Towne Courier and its editorial page, a look at its organizational chart and work flow, and exploration of the publisher's editorial philosophy, and some conclusions which can be gathered from these observations.

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A THESIS

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author has been working for newspapers full and part-time for twenty-five years, and twenty-three of these have been spent on weekly newspapers, both in-city and suburban. When he came to East Lansing to do graduate work in journalism, his interest naturally turned to the local community weekly newspaper, the Town Courier.

This interest developed into the study presented on these pages. Although this study is focused on one newspaper, similar conditions may exist in college suburbs elsewhere, and perhaps some observations made here may be applicable in other situations..

A particular debt of gratitude is owed to Mrs. Vivian F. Oates, editor and publisher of the Towne Courier, for her cheerful, efficient, and complete cooperation with the author's research.

The author is also deeply indebted to the entire faculty of the School of Journalism at Michigan State University for making this past year one of the most stimulating, educational, and memorable ones it has been his pleasure to enjoy. Special thanks are due the thesis adviser, Dr. George A. Hough, 3rd, for his helpful suggestions, keen criticism, and hours of consultation, reading, and editing of this manuscript.

But most of all, to the only one who really made it possible, Marge.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

# CHAPTER I

## EAST LANSING AS A SATELLITE CITY

The suburban phenomenon as we know it is a comparatively recent development, receiving its initial impetus in the post war boom immediately following World War II and continuing unchecked through the 1950s. The Committee for Economic Development[1] reported in 1960 that almost one-half of all the population of Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA) used by the Bureau of the Census to measure urban trends lived outside the central cities of those areas, and if that trend continued "a majority of all American will live in Suburbia before the year 2000."

Table 1 shows the growth of suburban areas, listed as "outside central city" in the table, from 1940 to 1970. The 1970 census for the first time showed more people living in suburban areas than either in the central cities or non-metropolitan, or rural, areas.

Even though all suburbs have some general similarities, the idea that there is only one kind of suburb must be discarded as quickly as the notion that there is only one kind of city. Scott Donaldson[2] defines a suburb as a community lying within commuting distance of a central city, usually but not always dependent on the central city economically and culturally, and usually but not always independent politically of the central city.

Obviously not all suburbs fall neatly within this definition. Sociologist Leo F. Schnore[3] classifies subordinate centers that have

TABLE 1

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN CENTRAL CITIES,

SUBURBS, AND NON-METROPOLITAN AREAS, 1940-1970

| Year | Total SMSA population | SMSA | | Non-metropolitan population |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Inside Central City | Outside Central City | |
| 1940 | 69,279,675 | 43,391,718 | 25,887,957 | 62,389,600 |
| 1950 | 89,316,903 | 52,371,379 | 36,945,524 | 62,008,895 |
| 1960 | 112,885,178 | 58,004,334 | 54,880,844 | 66,437,997 |
| 1970 | 139,418,811 | 63,796,943 | 75,621,868 | 63,793,115 |

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Reports, 1940, 1950, 1960,1970

Obviously not all suburbs fall neatly within this definition. Sociologist Leo F. Schnore[3] classifies subordinate centers that have substantially more residents than jobs as "suburbs," while those communities which attract more workers every day than the number of people who sleep there every night he labels "satellites." Satellites, according to Schnore, are basically subordinate to larger center, yet retain a high degree of independence stemming from their importance as employment centers.[4]

Schnore says all suburbs and satellites have one structural feature in common: although they are treated as separate units for a limited range or purposes...they are themselves merely constituent parts of a larger urban complex--the metropolitan structure as a whole.[5] Satellites usually are distinguished from suburbs, according to Schnore, in that they tend to be older,[6] and usually have a definable central business district.

Differences in growth patterns between satellites and suburbs are noted by Schnore. "Satellites may be able to exhibit growth only because of (recent) high rates of natural increase," he writes, "Suburbs on the other hand appear to be growing more rapidly from both demographic sources--natural increase and net in-migration. Thus it appears that 'employing satellites,' which are functionally similar to central cities in that they draw workers from other areas, are also highly similar to the metropolis in their sources of growth."[7]

Another type of suburb, the "college suburb," is defined by Dennis Sobin[8] as a community in which a major college or university is located,

and where a large proportion of community residents and their activities are due to presence of the college.

Sobin points out that a college suburb often sees the existence of conflicts between the college and local residents, especially where the college is undergoing rapid growth and expansion. "Residents are often fearful that the expanding college will change the character of the community. They are usually right, for as the college grows the community changes...bringing more people, more intensive development (and) more traffic."[9]

In the case of East Lansing, evidence indicates that if there had been no Michigan Agricultural College, as Michigan State University originally was known, there would have been no city of East Lansing as presently constituted. James D. Towar,[10] an early historian, writes that "owing to its location at the junction of two main thoroughfares, its attractive rolling terrain, its river banks and the wooded areas, (what is now East Lansing) might have become a residential section of the rapidly growing capital city, but no separate municipality" without the college.

Before taking a closer look at East Lansing itself, this study will examine some general observations about differences between city and suburban residents and how pronounced they are, or perhaps if they even exist.

William Dobriner[11] believes that the forces which make for economic homogeneity in city neighborhoods operate with equal facility in the suburbs. "The life styles, family structure, value systems, neighboring practices, etc., appear almost the same in the equivalent class and ethnic locality on either side of the city line. Life on the fringes of cities, particularly in the middle and upper middle class areas, seems to be

identical in almost all respects with life in the suburbs."[12]

In older suburban areas such as East Lansing, however, John Bollens and Henry Schmandt[13] find consistently higher median family incomes, higher educational rank, and a greater proportion of white-collar workers. They say the common conclusion that high-status persons live in the suburbs tends to be particularly true in urbanized areas having old core cities.

There is some difference of opinion as to whether suburban residents are more civic-oriented than their city neighbors. Bollen and Schmandt find that suburban residents are more likely than central city dwellers to belong to child centered organizations and social and hobby clubs, but less inclined to participate in civic-oriented groups, that the degree of differences is not great, and in fact is negligible when controlled for social rank.[14]

"What we should get straight, is that suburban living takes place in mass society and within a metropolitan context. Its government and the extent of its citizen involvement are not necessarily better or worse than that of the central city."[15]

Bollens and Schmandt maintain that suburban cities and towns are not isolated or autonomous units, but little more than parts or neighborhoods of a larger urban complex. The individuals and groups who inhabit them are subject to the same forces and pressures that typically characterize metropolitan life and operate against citizen activity and involvement in affairs of any local community.[16] The suburban resident, they say, is no more immune from the effects of bigness and specialization than is the central city dweller, and moving to Suburbia does not transform one's participational and civic habits any moreso than it does his political beliefs.

Donaldson, on the other hand, feels there are certain qualities of the

suburban experience that tend to guarantee greater participation in political activity:

> In the first place, the new suburban resident often becomes a homeowner for the first time in his life, and is confronted by the problems of fighting city hall that he formerly left to the landlord or consigned to such institutions as the army or the university.
>
> Secondly, the suburbanite frequently is a refugee from the city, where his life was conducted in comparative anonymity. It is, of course, possible for the suburban resident to avoid any sort of participation in local affairs, but there is no gainsaying the point that such an avoidance is more difficult in the suburb than it was in the city. What's more, the suburbanite has an advantage in pursuing political goals that the small-towner does not; the suburb is far less likely to be run by a clique -- the turnover is too high.

This, of course, is applicable where a suburban resident has moved from the city to a suburb, but Bollens and Schmandt note that with high mobility among the managerial (and professional) ranks of business and industry, the "organization man" frequently moves from the ~~suburb of one~~ suburb of one metropolis to a similar community in another.[18]

One area in which there is general agreement is that the suburban resident is more conscious of his school system and school problems than a city-dweller. Bollens and Schmandt say it is natural to "expect more suburbanites to belong to child-centered organizations simply because more young families live outside the core city,"[19] and Robert Wood[20] writes that the operation of public schools results in more extensive public participation in political affairs, more heat and not infrequently less light than any other function. "The school problem," he says, "exaggerates whatever conflicts and disagreements already exist." East Lansing has shown a steady if not spectacular growth rate since World War II. Table 2 shows that the city has grown from 11,065 in 1940 to

more than 47,000 in 1970, with the largest increase coming in the ten-year period from 1960 to 1970. These figures include students living on campus within the city limits of East Lansing. Although census data does not give a precise picture of the city itself, because of the student population, some general indicators describe East Lansing residents in broad terms.

East Lansing is considerably more affluent than the rest of the Lansing SMSA, with a mean average annual income of $14,973 compared to $12,367 for the entire area, and a median income of $11,630 as opposed to $11, 213 for the SMSA.[21]

A wider variance is found in the value of housing units. The median value of owner-occupied units in East Lansing is $29,300 as opposed to $17,600 for the entire SMSA. This probably has some correlation with statistics on education attainment, which show that the median school year completed by East Lansing adults is 16.4, while in the city of Lansing it is 12.2 years. The percentage of high school graduates among adults in East Lansing is 92.8 percent, compared with 58.3 for Lansing. Another indication of the socio-economic level of East Lansing residents compared with the SMSA is found in employment statistics. The number of East Lansing residents 16 years old and over who are employed is 20,088, and 7,460 of these are classified as "professional, technical and kindred workers." Lansing, however, has 52,178 employed adults and not quite as many workers, 7,037, in the professional category.

Presence of the university also is shown in the number of people employed in "educational services;" East Lansing has 9,665 listed as such out of its 20,088 work force, while Lansing has only 4,912 out of 52,178.

TABLE 2

EAST LANSING POPULATION GROWTH

FROM 1940-1970

| Year | Population |
|---|---|
| 1940 | 11,065 |
| 1950 | 20,325 |
| 1960 | 30,198 |
| 1970 | 47,540 |

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau,

Census Reports-1940, 1950, 1960, 1970.

East Lansing's position as a relatively "younger" community than others in the SMSA is reflected in the fact that only 6.9 percent of its population is in the 65 and over age group, while the entire area shows 19.6 percent over 65 years old.

A review of East Lansing's historical background shows that founding and growth of the city was closely intertwined with, and in fact almost inseparable from, that of the university. In his history of East Lansing, Towar points out that until about 1895 the community life of what is now East Lansing was confined almost entirely to residents of the college campus.[22]

The first actual settler in what is now East Lansing was D. Robert Burcham, who in 1849 acquired title to land which included forty acres of the college campus along the Red Cedar River. In 1851 Burcham built the first log house and cleared the first land, but purchase of the college farm in 1855 is used as the starting date for the city.[23]

When Burcham sold the south forty-five acres of his farm to the state for the college, he built another log house just east of the present People's Church on what is now Grand River Avenue. The latter house was sold in 1866 to Dr. Manly Miles. A legislative act establishing the Michigan Agricultural College was introduced and passed in 1855, and construction of the first college buildings began in 1856. The college formally opened May 13, 1857, with an enrollment of seventy-three students.

First plat within the present limits of East Lansing was recorded November 5, 1887, by Dr. W. J. Beal and Prof. R. C. Carpenter. Named Collegeville, it consisted of sixty-nine lots in a semi-forested area lying north of Michigan Avenue along Harrison, Center and Beal Streets, as

far north as Oak Street.

Residents of the area petitioned the legislature in 1907 for a city charter, which was granted with very little controversy except for selection of a name. Since the post office was called "Agricultural College," and there was no railroad station, telegraph or express ofice, a straw vote was taken to determine the name:

> One or more votes were received for College-ville, Agricultural College, Oakwood, College Park, Montrose, and East Lansing. College Park received the most votes, but the legislature settled the question by choosing East Lansing "because it was practical."
>
> Its location as to accessibility to railroad, freight, express, telegraph, and banking facilities, and its close proximity to the well-known city of Lansing, had an important bearing on the final Decision.[24]

Towar reports that it also was felt that the United States Post Office preferred the name chosen since the mails were routed through Lansing and the name of the post office would have to be changed to conform to the name of the city. In any event, the bill passed both houses of the legislature by unanimous vote and was signed into law by Gov. Fred M. Warner Mar8, 1907.

Abbott Road originally was the dividing line between Lansing and Meridian Townships; when East Lansing was formed, however, the city became a separate municipal entity and continues to this day independent governmentally of the two townships.

College faculty members have been active in city government since its beginning. Prof. Clinton D. Smith was mayor when the first official session of what was then called the Common Council was held June 27, 1907. Prof. Wilbur B. Brookover, professor in the university Department of Secondary Education and Curriculum, continues the tradition today as mayor

of East Lansing.

In the early days of East Lansing and the college, the municipality made an agreement for use of the college sewer to carry off excess flow from a city septic tank, and in 1911 a system of numbering houses, devised by Prof. Chace Newman, was adopted. The college influence is noted in some of the names chose:

> Three of the streets are named for former presidents of the college: Abbott Road, for Theophilus Capen Abbot, LL.D,* president from 1862-84; Snyder Road, for Johnathan LeMoyne Snyder, LL.D., president from 1896-1915; and Butterfield Drive, for Kenyon Leach Butterfield, LL.D., president from 1925-28.
>
> There also is a street in the city named after each of the following professors: Dr. William James Beal, professor of Botany for forty years; Dr. Robert Clark Kedzie, professor of Chimistry nearly forty years; Dr. Charles Edward Marshall, porfessor of Bacteriology; William Frederick Durand, professor of Mechanics; Ernest Everett Bogue, professor of Forestry; Thomas Gunson, greenhouse manager over forty years and mayor of the city from 1909-13.[25]

Prior to 1884, Lansing was the post office for the college, and mail was carried once a day during the college terms by a student. After the college post office was estabished, the mail was received through the Lansing Post Office and carried under contract twice a day by open stage, which also carried passengers, express and freight. The office of postmaster was held by the college secretary until 1899.

In 1899, the post office was moved from the college library building to the horticulture building, and in 1902 it was moved to the trolley terminal and housed under the same roof as the combined trolley station and college bookstore. The post office was taken off campus in 1912, and has been in several locations before being moved to the present site on North Abbott Road.

Early water systems of the city and college were united, and even after they became separated were provided with connecting valves which could be opened in case of fire or an unusual demand for water by either. Interdependence was so marked in the early days that the college purchased the first East Lansing fire engine.[26]

As might be expected, transportation and its availability was a significant factor in the growth of both East Lansing and the college. The first railroad by which Lansing was connected with the outside world was the Michigan Central from Owasso, which for a time ended at the high bridge on Gunnisonville Road northwest of East Lansing. Students, college staff members and local residents were main users of a flag station of the Detroit, Lansing and Lake Michigan Railroad* on South Harrison Road, and when the Grand Trunk Railroad was built in 1876, the Trowbridge junction was established and the station was used for freight and passenger service. In 1900, a spur was built from Trowbridge to the college grounds and has served since for the delivery of coal and other freight to the college.

Towar says the coming of the electric railway, or street car line, was the real beginning of East Lansing as a separate municipality. "It furnished cheap** and easy transportation for men in 'Collegeville' going to work in Lansing, and carpenters, masons and other workmen from Lansing used it going to work in the East Lansing building boom that started in 1898."[27]

Before a street car line was built to the college, students were often carried to and from Lansing and other places by private bus. For a number of years, the Michigan Avenue street car line ended at the "old Split Rock,"***

and the college opposed its extension on the grounds that it "would bring an undesirable human element" from Lansing.[28]

Women were responsible for eventual extension of the street car line to the college and East Lansing, according to Towar:

> The line was extended to the west entrance of the college in 1893, where it stopped for a few years. Further objections by some members of the Board of Agriculture prevented its extension until 1896.
>
> A woman's course was established that year at the college, and the long vacation period was changed from winter to summer, so the electric line was the only means many girl students living in Lansing could (use to)get to the college.
>
> They finally convinced the board of trustees to permit the line to enter the campus, where a comfortable waiting room eventually was built.[29]

Ater extension of the street car line, Towar says "attendance at the college increased rapidly, Lansing people were attracted to East Lansing as a desirable place to live, families with children to educate moved out, and a new city was in the making."[30]

## CHAPTER II

## WEEKLY AND SUBURBAN NEWSPAPERS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As population shifts changed the face of urban America after World War II, it was only natural that newspaper publishing practices also would be significantly altered. The late Prof. Thomas F. Barnhart[31] said there are three types of weekly newspapers: (1) small town, in preference to the widely used terms "Country weekly" and "rural weekly;" (2) suburban; (3) community; by the latter he meant weekly, or less-than-daily, newspapers situated in and serving neighborhood areas of large cities.*

A formula for the strength of suburban newspapers was outlined two decades before they attained significance by Margaret Cosse, who wrote in 1928 that "just as the suburbs differ in their social and economic character from the true country town, so the papers that serve their local interests are developing a specialized kind of journalism...and the more suburban editors realize this, get away from both metropolitan and rural formulae, and make their papers reflect and lead their particular communities," the more successful they will be.[32]

John Cameron Sim[33] cites the divergent attitudes of suburban editors toward their product:

> Some editors are convinced that the suburban paper should resemble a rural weekly in an urban center, with a "folksy, highly personal approach." They say they should offer "scrapbook newspapers," print the kind of news people have been accustomed to

> clip and save--birth notices, school achievements, weddings, anniversaries, obituaries.
>
> Others are equally convinced that ultimately suburban weeklies will fall into a pattern most nearly resembling news magazines--reporting the nemerous and difficult social and economic problems of growing communities in depth, with a knowledgeable and sophisticated approach which requires well-educated and able staffers.
>
> They would minimize what they call "trivia," and which the other class of editors believe is the real news of interest to readers.

Agreement is no more general in the area of editorial comment, Sim writes, yet this is the one role which the metropolitan dailies are wholly surrendering to the weeklies and evidently expecting them to perform.[34]

Significant growth of the suburban press is illustrated by a finding of the Suburban Press Foundation that between 1950 and 1960 suburban papers grew by 113 percent while the nation's population increased by only 60 percent. The number of editorial workers on these papers more than doubled in this decade, and the papers also doubled their income.[35]

Raymond Nixon notes a significant concentration of ownership in daily newspapers, since 1910. Table 3 shows that the total number of U. S. daily groups and chains has grown from a total of 13 with 62 papers in 1910 to 159 with 828 papers in May of 1968, and that the average size of groups, which declined during the 1940s, then remained fairly constant in the 1950s and started to climb in the 1960s. This trend also seems to be reflected in the suburban newspaper publishing field. William Haight, a former weekly publisher and faculty member at Michigan State University, conducted a survey in 1958 which showed that "multiple ownership or chain operations of weeklies has become the dominant pattern in suburban towns."[37]

Examples of this concentration of ownership can be found in many metropolitan areas of the United States today. To cite just a few examples

TABLE 3

TRENDS IN NEWSPAPER OWNERSHIP, 1880-1968[36]

| | 1880 | 1909-10 | 1920 | 1930 | 1940 | 1945 | 1961 | 1968 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Circulation (Thousands) | 3093 | 22426 | 27791 | 39589 | 41132 | 45955 | 58080 | 61561 |
| Total Dailies | 850 | 2202 | 2042 | 1942 | 1878 | 1744 | 1763 | 1749 |
| Total Daily Cities | 389 | 1207 | 1295 | 1402 | 1426 | 1396 | 1461 | 1500 |
| One-Daily Cities | 149 | 509 | 716 | 1002 | 1092 | 1107 | 1222 | 1284 |
| % of Total | 38.3 | 42.2 | 55.3 | 71.5 | 76.6 | 79.3 | 83.6 | 85.6 |
| One-Combination Cities | 1 | 9 | 27 | 112 | 149 | 161 | 160 | 150 |
| Joint-Operation Cities | | | | | 4 | 11 | 18 | 21 |
| Total Non-Competitive | 150 | 518 | 743 | 1114 | 1245 | 1279 | 1400 | 1455 |
| % of Total Cities | 38.6 | 42.9 | 57.4 | 79.4 | 87.3 | 91.6 | 95.8 | 97.0 |
| Cities with Two or More Competing Dailies | 239 | 689 | 552 | 288 | 181 | 117 | 61 | 45 |

| | 1910 | 1923 | 1930 | 1940 | 1945 | 1961 | 1968 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Groups and Chains | 13 | 31 | 55 | 60 | 76 | 109 | 159 |

TABLE 3 (continued)

| | 1910 | 1923 | 1930 | 1940 | 1945 | 1961 | 1968 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Group Papers | 62 | 153 | 311 | 319 | 368 | 560 | 828 |
| Average Number per Group | 4.7 | 4.9 | 5.6 | 5.3 | 4.8 | 5.1 | 5.2 |
| Number of Inter-City Dailies | | | | | 20 | 68 | 89 |



*Sources:Figures from 1945 to 1968 are from Editor & Publisher International Year Book for years covered, with minor corrections. Sources for earlier years are given in Raymond B. Nixon, "Trends in Daily Newspaper Ownership since 1945," Journalism Quarterly, 31:7 (Winter 1954).

Definitions: A "one-combination" city has a single morning paper and a single evening paper under the same ownership A "joint-operation" city is one in which a morning and an evening paper combine their production and also usually their business operations, but retain separate ownership and editorial independence. An "inter-city daily is the dominant local paper in two or more adjacent non-metropolitan cities. A "group" or "chain" consists of two or more papers in different cityies under the same majority ownership or control.

with which the author is familiar, in Minneapolis-St.Paul, the weekly Sun Newspapers encircle the Twin Cities; the Lerner Newspapers of Chicago publish more than forty twice-weekly newspapers which circulate from Marina City in the loop, through the north and northwest sections of the city and into the north and northwest suburbs, as far north as Highland Park and as far west as O'Hare Field.*

The subject of this study, the East Lansing Towne Courier, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Suburban Communications Corporation, which is the product of a merger in December, 1973, of the Observer and Eccentric newpaper groups of suburban Detroit. Suburban Communications also owns Queen Cities Press, which has its own printing plant and publishes five suburban weekly newspapers in the Cincinnati, Ohio, area.

As metropolitan newspapers have changed through consolidations and suspensions, they have become more regional in scope while their suburban counterparts perhaps not coincidentally have grown and taken a stronger role in furnishing readers news of their local communities.

Table 4 shows that the number of daily newspapers in the United States has remained fairly constant from 1946 to 1973, with lows in 1967 and 1970, and a slow, steady increase since 1970. Wallace A. Eberhard says most of the new publishing ventures which have kept this figure at its present level are found in smaller communities and in the smaller circulation categories, including suburban newspapers and communities.[38]

Although no breakdown between suburban and rural newspapers in indicated, Table 5 shows the circulation growth of weekly newspapers between 1955 and 1975. It is significant to note that while the number of weekly newspapers has declined during this twenty-year period, total circulation

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF DAILY NEWSPAPERS, 1946-1973

| Year | Number |
|---|---|
| 1946 | 1763 |
| 1950 | 1772 |
| 1955 | 1760 |
| 1960 | 1763 |
| 1965 | 1751 |
| 1966 | 1754 |
| 1967 | 1749 |
| 1968 | 1752 |
| 1969 | 1758 |
| 1970 | 1748 |
| 1971 | 1749 |
| 1972 | 1761 |
| 1973 | 1774 |

SOURCE: American Newspaper Publishers Association

TABLE 5

WEEKLY NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION

AND ESTIMATED READERSHIP, 1955-1975

| Year | Number of Newspapers | Total Circulation | Estimated Readership |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1955 | 8428 | 17,396,936 | 69,587,744 |
| 1961 | 8183 | 21,327,782 | 85,311,128 |
| 1965 | 8061 | 25,036,031 | 100,144,124 |
| 1970 | 7612 | 27,857,332 | 111,429,328 |
| 1975 | 7612 | 35,892,409 | 143,569,636 |

SOURCE: American Newspaper Representatives, Inc.

and estimated readership has increased substantially. The author believes that much of this increase is due to growth of the suburban press.

Boyd Miller points out that the downtown papers don't have the space to print all the news affecting the suburbs. "In the Detroit area, there are eighty-six political subdivisions in...the northern suburbs, all brimming with newsy schools, sewers and local tax rates." The inability to carry all the news affecting suburbs, according to Miller, has created a gap in coverage provided by the downtown dailies, and this gap has been filled to some degree by the community press. Miller says the downtown press ignores happenings of the fringe areas only at the peril of losing influence to the suburban press.[39]

Because comminity papers got fat as a result of population growth in the outlying suburban areas of big cities, Sim says metropolitan papers in the 1960s thought it necessary to publish zoned suburban sections to provide increased local coverage of important suburban community affairs.[40]

The device of zoned editions to provide "local" news of the suburbs, he says was not due to a concern that some important news sector would go uncovered, "but rather than too much advertising revenue was being siphoned off" by the burgeoning suburban press.[41] Response to an inquiry by the author to the American Newspaper Publishers Association indicated that the practice of zoned editions is not as popular in the 1970s as it was in the 1960s.[42]

Kenneth Byerly writes that in the suburbs a need has been created for a newspaper to carry local news, promote community interest, and provide an advertising medium for the area's retail outlets, and "the result has been development of strong profitable suburban newspapers and a complete reversal of the publishing fraternity's attitude toward them."[43]

Factors which Byerly sees contributing to the phenomenal expansion of suburban weekly newspapers are a fast-growing population, decentralization of industry into the suburbs, the growing realization by publishers of big city dailies that it is not profitable for them to conduct extensive circulation programs in outlying areas, and a rapid improvement in the appearance of suburban weeklies because publishers have been financially better able to install efficient equipment.[44]

As an example of this latter point, Miller says the Birmingham, Michigan, Eccentric, also published by Suburban Communications Corportion, "takes great pains to keep in touch with its readers' tastes and needs" and has a product that reflects it. "The emphasis is on what sociologists say are the chief interests of suburbanites: schools, churches, cultural activities, and the city council." In addition to this, according to Miller, "the paper is a masterpiece of reader convenience, well-indexed and laid out. It reflects a greater effort to please than many metropolitan papers."[45]

What is the role to be played by a community newspaper? Prof. Byerly outlines nine criteria: (1) reports local news items that appear in no other newspaper; (2) reports details of local news that are not included in stories used by other newspapers; (3) Aids local shoppers, and serves as an advertising medium for a town's merchants and other business firms;* (4) promotes local welfare and projects; (5) gives recognition to those who work on community programs, further helping promote such projects; (6) creates interest in government and elections, serving to make the former better and the latter more effective; (7) stimulates thinking, particularly on local problems and projects; (8) instructs, entertains and informs; (9) serves as a unifying force for the community.[46]

Morris Janowitz[47] says the community newspaper is perceived generally as an extension of the reader's personal and social contacts, because of its emphasis on news about local voluntary associations and local social and personal news, and as such constitutes a device for democratizing prestige. "Readership of social and personal news involves "equals." The individuals publicized are men and women quite similar to the reader. There is not only an interest in the names of neighbors, but also a preoccupation with the democratic aspects of prestige. Easy accessibility to the columns of the paper (is)...concrete proof of this point."[48]

Extensive reader interest in the community press, according to Janowitz, is related to family attributes and community orientation,"and trends in these factors are certain to influence the viability of the community press. Moreover, the impact of the community press is conditioned by the imagery of its audience, which sees the contents in a non-commercialized, no-partisan perspective," an imagery which "contributes to a willingness to accept the validity and trustworthiness of its message."[49]

An essential ingredient to this imagery, Janowitz says, is that the community newspaper is not generally seen as political or partisan, but rather as an agent of community welfare and progress.[50]

The community press is generally viewed by its readers as an auxiliary to the daily press, not as a competing news source, and it is viewed favorably because of its preoccupation with details of the local community which are not reported in the daily press. This parochial attitude is more pronounced among readers of the community press than in its editors, according to Janowitz. "Interviews with editors indicate that the horizons of the editor are broader than those of (his) readers, who tend to emphasize the

purely local aspects of the community press."[51]

Community newspapers are rated high in credibility by their readers, stronger in fact than daily newspapers. Many readers seem to attribute a higher degree of veracity and trust to community newspaper content than to daily newspaper content because "community news consists of local news about events and people which the individual (reader) is in a better position to verify personally, directly or indirectly, than non-local news."[52]

Janowitz also finds that the community press is not generally perceived as a commercialized medium because the advertising in it is regarded with real interest, and for many is considered to be a genuine aid to daily living.[53]

There are some, however, who look askance at weekly newspapers, partly because they are thought to be too commercialized, a view not shared by Janowitz. "It is distorted perception when the community newpaper is... considered by daily newspaper publishers, the heads of advertising agencies and sophisticated critics of contemporary culture to be 'all advertisements.' The difference between the percentage of advertising in the daily and the community press is trivial; in fact, specific issures of the daily press contain a higher proportion of advertising."[54]

This disdain for the weekly press carries over into editorial areas, with resulting image problems that make recruiting somewhat of a problem. Miller says this feeling stems in part from the grass roots type of neighborhood news the community paper covers. This in turn affects journalism graduates, "few of whom want to start their careers on a suburban paper.* The lure of the big publications is considerably greater."[55]

What do suburban residents expect from their newspaper? To answer

this question we should look closer at interests of the residents themselves. Miller says sociologists have concluded that one of the common reasons for moving to the suburbs is to provide a better environment for children creating a great interest in schools and children's recreation.[56]

By far the strongest interest, according to Miller, is the same thing of interest to all taxpayers: local government, tax expenditures, and school administration.[57] Stock in trade of community weeklies, however, is social news, "whether it bores large portions of readers or not."[58] Miller sees an obligation to have "local news written with proper dimension, so that the new reader can understand it. Each event must have proper background information (requiring) experienced writers and editors."[59]

Allen H. Neuharth, president of the Gannett Newspaper Group, told a National Newspaper Association convention in 1974 that dailies and weeklies could have a "profitable co-existence" if each took advantages of its own strengths, and outlined what he thought were strengths of community newspapers:[60]

> Today's and tomorrow's most successful community newspapers should be almost totally local in news and advertising. They will carry the significant news which is importnat to their communities, which their readers want and can't get elsewhere-- the debate in the zoning board; the issues is the town council race; births, deaths, weddings; the church socials and the results of Little League.
>
> The editorial pages will provide a strong and strictly local voice. The advertising pages will carry the bargains of the local stores.
>
> But those community papers will not waste time and money and newsprint publishing national editorial cartoons, or comics, or boiler plate pages or features; and they will quit pretending that the penny-ante national advertising revenue some still get is worth the trouble and expense.
>
> The big city dailies, on the other hand, will concentrate wisely on a different approach -- the global approach with complete national, world, state and major city news. They will not spend time and effort and money trying to compete with the strictly local news coverage of suburbs or

small nearby communities -- because they can't do it successfully.

The two will develop so distinctively in news and advertising content that readers will want and need both.

It is at the community press level, Sim says, that a base for a solid contribution from the media for improvement in human relationships may best be realized, because by its very nature the community paper can be closest to its readers.[61] The importance of emphasizing local news is not a new development; it was seen fifty-two years ago: according to Emerson Harris and Florence Hooke, this emphasis is almost mandatory. "The local paper which determines to work its field intensively will have all that it can do, and the local paper has neither editorial nor economic justification for dealing with the extensive non-local field."[62]

Cosse made the same point in 1928: "Such subjects as home, education, schools, church, recreation, club, and other social life, and moral conditions affecting youth make a striking appeal to the suburbanite. These are interests which the metropolitan press cannot serve, and which at the same time validate the existence of the suburban weekly."[63]

The American Newspaper Publishers Association reported in 1966 that suburban readers of a metropolitan newspaper in the Middle West preferred the suburban weekly to a daily, television, or radio for coverage of certain kinds of events in the reader's own suburb.[64] The percentage of suburban readers who preferred the weekly over the other media for certain types of news stories is shown in Table 6.

Cosse wrote that merely reporting the news was not enough, though. She said a second function of the suburban weekly must be that of explaining the community to itself, "the obligation of editorial interpretation. Of

TABLE 6

PERCENTAGE OF SUBURBAN READERS WHO PREFER A SUBURBAN WEEKLY FOR CERTAIN TYPES OF NEWS COVERAGE IN THEIR OWN COMMUNITY

| Type of news story | Percent preferred suburban weekly |
|---|---|
| Local school affairs | 71 |
| Newsworthy accomplishments by their neighbors | 68 |
| Meetings of local groups | 52 |
| High school sports | 51 |
| Disputes or controversies about their suburbs | 50 |
| Local street and road improvements | 36 |
| Local accidents | 32 |
| Local crime and police news | 24 |
| Local advertising | 46 |

SOURCE: American Newspaper Publishers Association

what import is a mere statistical record of local happenings unless there is (an) editorial interpretation for the reader? The editor...should make his readers comprehend the significance of local events. He should see a sequence to local happenings which he can interpret in the light of some ultimate goal for which his readers are striving."[65]

The vehicle for carrying out this function is the newspaper's editorial page. Harris and Hooke see the editorial page as the place to focus, illuminate and interpret facts of local importance in such a way as to give the reader utmost assistance in formulating his own opinions, especially on questions requiring community action.[66]

But not all weekly newspapers fill this need. Sim points to surveys which indicate that fewer than one-half of all weeklies in the United States regularly run any kind of editorial comment, either in the form of conventional editorials or as personal columns, and that "among those papers which do offer measurable opinion content, a sizeable number just offer syndicated, clipped or 'planted' editorials which offer a poor, sometimes even misleading, evaluation of the 'grass roots' sentiment" of which so many political leaders speak so glowingly.[67]

Sim notes that few if any weeklies, considered as individual units, have any national influence, but it is their individuality, and their attention to a local scene, which gives them their greatest value and is the strongest attraction for both their owners and their readers.[68]

Readers of a weekly newspaper, according to Sim, tend to regard it with a proprietary interest, "our hometown paper," and they see its virtues or tolerate its defects just as they do for members of their immediate family.[69]

> At the same time they are likely to have only the mildest interest in any other weekly newspaper, just as there tends to be a sharp drop in interest and concern for people outside the family circle. In short, the weekly newspaper has better acceptance as an individual than as a class.[70]

The audience of suburban newspapers, according to Sim, is generally regarded as homogeneous, possessing higher-than-average income and education levels, and compact enough to justify selling advertisers on the advantage of the "rifle shot" technique over the scattergun;" i.e. advertising to a specialized audience versus the mass audience.[71]

Sim says this quality audience will justify higher advertising rates than most non-suburban weeklies ever dare to think of charging, which in turn provides the greater economic strength which enables the suburban publisher to be more progressive in his choice and use of modern equipment and "theoretically at least attract better qualified editorial and advertising staff members by paying better salaries; indeed, he must compete on relatively even terms with the metropolitan media."*[72]

Market potential of the suburban newspaper audience was dramatically illustrated in a survey sponsored by the Suburban Newpaper Research Center of Chicago and conducted by H. D. Ostberg Associates, a New York research company, in 1974. The study encompassed suburban communities in the top sixty-four Standard Metropolitan Statistical areas, i.e. those having a population of 500,000 or more in 1970, excluding the core city itself and any rural areas within such SMSA's.[73]

It was designed to measure the reach of suburban newspapers in terms of the number of adult men and women who read such publications, and to investigate the nature and extent of readership of suburban newspapers versus readership patterns for daily metropolitan newspapers. A suburban newspaper was defined as one which has primary distribution in suburban

areas, defined as urbanized areas, exclusive of the central city; contains news and editorial content in addition to advertising; devotes at least 65 percent of its editorial content to local and community news and events, as opposed to metropolitan, national and international news; and is distributed at least once a month, on either a free or paid basis.

Table 7 shows that 51 percent of the adults surveyed in suburban areas read a suburban newspaper, and Table 8 shows 11 percent of those adults read only a suburban newspaper, while 40 percent read both a suburban newspaper and a daily metropolitan newspaper.

TABLE 7

NEWSPAPER READERSHIP HABITS

| BASE: Adults in suburban areas surveyed -- 32,739,000 | Total | |
|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Read a suburban newspaper (Looked into an issue during past four weeks) | 16,694,000 | 51 |
| Read a daily metropolitan newspaper (Looked into a weekday issue during past seven days) | 27,028,000 | 83 |

SOURCE: Suburban Newspaper Research Center survey

TABLE 8

DUPLICATION OF NEWSPAPER READERSHIP

| BASE: Adults in suburban areas surveyed -- 32,739,000 | Total | |
|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Read: | | |
| A suburban newspaper only | 3,528,000 | 11 |
| A daily metropolitan newspaper only | 13,862,000 | 42 |
| Both types of publications | 13.166,000 | 40 |
| Neither type of publication | 2,183,000 | 7 |

SOURCE: Suburban Newspaper Research Center survey

The survey highlights several findings which are relevant to this study:

(1) Fifty-one percent of adults living in the suburbs of the sixty-four largest SMSA's reported having read a suburban newspaper during the prior four weeks.

(2) Forty-three percent of adults in the suburban areas covered reported reading the last available issue of a suburban newspaper.

(3) Forty percent of adults read both a suburban and a daily metropolitan newspaper.

(4) In general, suburban newspapers were read more thoroughly than daily metropolitan publications. Sixty percent and 47 percent of suburban and metropolitan readers, respectively, reported reading three-fourths or more of the last issue read.

(5) Proportionately more suburban than metropolitan readers, 71 percent to 54 percent, started reading at the front page of the paper, proceeding from one page to the next. Daily metropolitan readers were more apt to turn immediately to a section of special interest.

(6) Daily metropolitan newspaper readers, however, tended to look into more of the last five available editions than suburban newspaper readers.

(7) Suburban newspapers had proportionately more home delivery than daily metropolitan newpapers, 85 percent to 76 percent.

(8) Readership of retail advertising was about equal for suburban and daily metropolitan newspapers (in terms of percentage reading); classified and service advertising was read proportionately more extensively in the suburban press.

(9) Although daily metropolitan newspapers obtained somewhat greater

reader response to their advetising, this may be due primarily to the differences in publication frequency between the two newspaper types.

(10) Suburban newspapers were regarded as a valuable source of product information, especially for grocery items, household repair services, and gardening supplies. Metropolitan newspaper readers looked to their publication primarily for guidance in purchasing personal clothing, groceries, major appliances and automotive accessories.

(11) The two newpaper types serve their readers in different ways: suburban newspapers are credited with helping their readers feel they are part of their community; daily metropolitan newspapers are seen to provide coverage of national and international events.

(12) Suburban newspapers are believed to provide information not available eslewhere.

(13) Suburban newspapers were read to a greater extent by women than men.

(14) A greater proportion of women than men consulted suburban newpapers for guidance when buying products.

(15) Suburban newspaper readers had high community involvement.

(16) Suburban newpaper households are more affluent than U.S. households generally.

(17) There are virtually no differences between the demographic characteristics of suburban newspaper readers and of daily newspaper readers residing in the suburbs.

More details about these and other findings of the survey are of enough interest for further study, but these few were selected as being sufficient to form the backdrop for a closer look at the East Lansing Towne Courier.

## CHAPTER III

## TOWN COURIER BEGINNING, OWNERSHIP, PRESENT STAFF, AND NEWS OPERATION

The city of East Lansing did not have a newspaper of its own until early in the 1960s. The Michigan State University State News, which traces its origin back to 1909, has been a daily publication* since 1942,[74] a fact which probably discouraged any attempts to start a community newspaper.

The Towne Courier was launched late in 1962 by Harry Stapler, an East Lansing resident who had been a reporter for the Lansing State Journal. In a special fifth anniversary edition of the Towne Courier in 1967, Stapler said he started thinking about starting an East Lansing newspaper sometime in 1960 when he was working for the State Journal.[75] His first inclination in this direction was stimulated in the spring of 1961 when he saw an article in Editor & Publisher, a newspaper trade publication, about the Greenville, Michigan, Daily News switching from letterpress to offset printing with the installation of a new Goss Suburban press.

Stapler took a short course in publication design at New York University in the fall of 1961, and visited Greenville in January, 1962, to talk with Dale Stafford, publisher of the Daily News. Stafford offered encouragement and what Stapler felt was a reasonable price for printing a newspaper if he should decide to start one in East Lansing.[76]

Stapler recalled in the anniversary edition that his decision was forced upon him in September, 1962, when the State Journal asked him to take a new and more demanding assignment that would allow him little time to plan an East Lansing publishing venture. He thought it over carefully, consulted

with a few downtown East Lansing businessmen, and decided to go ahead.

After giving his notice to the State Journal, Stapler publicly announced the first issue would be distributed November 7, and began working on the new business. He actually was one week behind schedule, and the first issue of the Towne Courier appeared November 14, 1962. It has been printed offset from the beginning, and until recently was published in Greenville.

In 1966 Stapler purchased the Williamston Enterprise and since then the two newspapers have been published as "sister papers." Advertising for both papers is sold in combination, and overlapping news and the entire second section is published in both papers. The Towne Courier was purchased in 1969 by Henry Hogan, owner of Synercom Communications Corporation, which published the Eccentric group of suburban newspapers north of Detroit and also owned five suburban weekly newspapers in the Cincinnati area.

Hogan's Eccentric group of newspapers, including the Towne Courier, were merged in December, 1973, with the Observer Newspapers of suburban Detroit, published by Philip H. Power. The new organization took the business name of Suburban Communications Corporation, and the Town Courier is a wholly-owned subsidiary of this company.

Table 9 shows Towne Courier paid circulation with a steady decline for the first three years under new ownership, but this trend was reversed in 1973. The increase shown from 1973 to 1974 is due largely to installation of a voluntary pay system.* Stapler continued with the Towne Courier as editor and publisher until the summer of 1973, when he resigned and was replaced by Mrs. Vivian F. Oates. Mrs. Oates, who still holds that position had been editor of the Rochester, Michigan, Eccentric, a newspaper

published by Hogan. Stapler now teaches Journalism at Ferris State College, Big Rapids, Michigan.

Figure 1 is an organizational chart of the Towne Courier. Department heads working under Mrs. Oates are a managing editor, advertising director, circulation director, composing room supervisor, and a bookkeeper-office manager. Department heads meet every Wednesday after that week's issue is published to coordinate activities of their various departments and plan future issues.

Mrs. Oates determines the ratio of advertising to news, and says "67 to 33 percent is the break-even point." The advertising director determines the number of pages each week, and prepares advertising dummies for the composing room and editorial department. If the editorial department wants more space than expected any particular week, such a request is made through Mrs. Oates, who has the final decision.

Prior to 1969 the Towne Courier was delivered to subscribers on Wednesdays, but from 1969 to 1974 publication date was Thursday. Mrs. Oates says the newspaper publishing day was changed back to Wednesday again last year because a preponderance of advertisers preferred Wednesday delivery.

The advertising department has four full-time retail salesmen, and there are two people working on classified advertising sales. Mrs. Oates says most of the downtown East Lansing business district is student oriented. "It's the only place I know," she says, "where stores pull in their horns December 14" when classes end after the fall quarter and students leave the campus for winter break. Mrs. Oates says most East Lansing residents do their "big shopping"* at the Meridian Mall and Frandor shipping centers, which "are not directly competitive with the central East Lansing business district."

TABLE 9

PAID AND FREE CIRCULATION

OF TOWNE COURIER, 1970-74

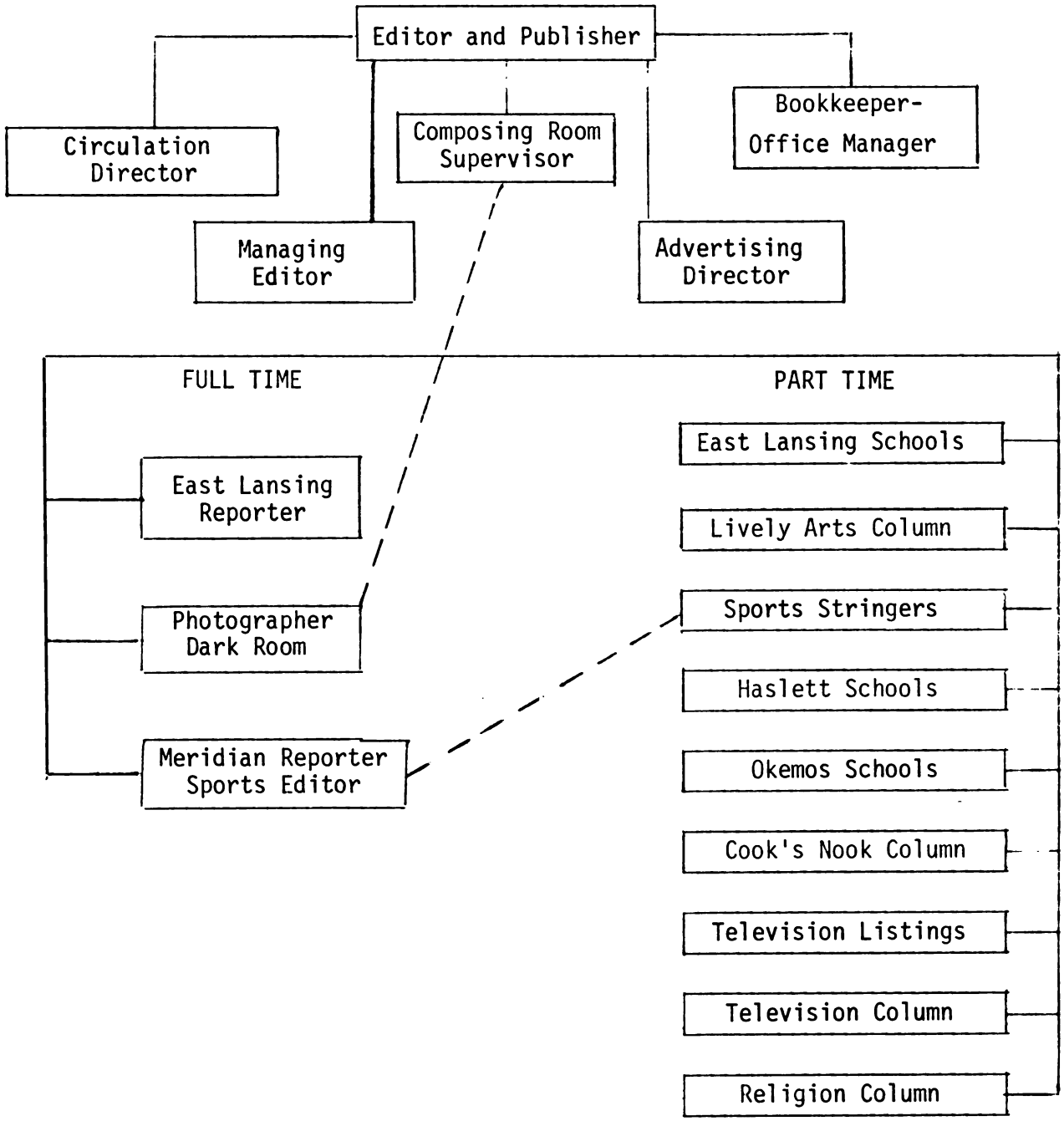
| Year | Paid Circulation | Free Circulation |
|---|---|---|
| 1970 | 3,489 | 348 |
| 1971 | 3,208 | 375 |
| 1972 | 3,181 | 1,383 |
| 1973 | 3,862 | 2,007 |
| 1974 | 6,883 | 5,350 |

SOURCE: Sworn U.S. Postal Service Statements of Ownership, Management and Circulation, 1970-74.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE TOWNE COURIER

DEPARTMENT HEADS AND EDITORIAL STAFF

FIGURE 1



Full-time editorial staff of the Towne Courier includes a managing editor, East Lansing reporter, combination sports editor and Meridian Township reporter, and half-time photographer who doubles as cameraman in the darkroom. The managing editor position is vacant at this writing, but other staff members with their experience, assignment, and educational background are shown in Table 10. Duties of the full-time editorial staff members are:

Managing editor: Directs news coverage and staff activities, handles hiring and firing, subject to approval of Mrs. Oates, edits or checks the editing of all copy before it is sent to the composing room by reporters, writes all headlines, keeps a log of all articles and pictures sent to the composing room, and lays out the editorial portion of each page.

Additional responsibilities of the managing editor include dealing with the public, handling news and photo inquiries and requests, writing editorials, all of which are approved before publication by Mrs. Oates and lays out the editorial page. The managing editor also supervises photographers and the photo assignment log, sizes and crops pictures, for which captions are written by the reporters, and supervises editorial coverage in cooperation with Mrs. Oates.

In addition to the meeting with other department heads each Wednesday. Mrs. Oates and the managing editor confer briefly each Friday and again on Monday to check progress and status of key news stories and editorials.

East Lansing reporter; Delores Moiseeff: Covers city government, police and fire beats, community organizations such as the Drug Education Center, civic and fraternal groups, and goes to East Lansing zoning and other commission meetings only if they are deemed newsworthy by the managing editor or Mrs. Oates. "We have tried," Mrs. Oates says, "to cut down on the number

TABLE 10

ASSIGNMENT, EXPERIENCE, AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

OF TOWNE COURIER EDITORIAL PERSONNEL

| Name | Length of Time | | Assignment | Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | With Towne Courier | Total News Experience | | |
| Vivian F. Oates | 2 years | 6 years | Editor and Publisher | B.A.Journalism Indiana University |
| Delores Moiseeff | 2 years | 4 years | East Lansing Reporter | B.A.Journalism Michigan State University |
| Steve Giegerich | 1 1/2 yrs. | 1 1/2 Yrs. | Meridian Township Reporter-Sports Editor | B.A.Journalism Michigan State University |
| John Medill | 8 months | 8 months | Photographer Darkroom | Associate Degree in Photography Lansing Community College |

NOTE: At this writing, the position of managing editor was vacant.

of meetings covered and instead concentrate on issues of importance to the community."

Sports editor-Meridian Township reporter; Steve Giegerich: Spends approximately one-half of his time working in each of these areas. This person either handles personally or directs all sports coverage, which includes supervision of six part-time stringers, and covers Meridian Township government and meetings, including those of the Okemos School Board.

Photographer-darkroom man; John Medill: A full-time employe who spends about one-half of his time working on photo assignments and film processing, and the other half in composing room darkroom work. All editorial personnel at the Towne Courier are qualified photographers and do some of their own shooting. The Towne Courier has its own darkroom, and 95 percent of its photography is done with 35 millimeter cameras, and the remainder with a Rolleiflex reflex camera.

Part-time correspondents have specific beats, and with one exception work out of their own homes. Their duties and responsibilities at the time of this study are:

Jean Swanson, East Lansing schools: A housewife with a B.A. degree in education and a minor in Journalism from Michigan State University, she works from the newspaper office about 15 hours per week covering school board news and handling all other East Lansing school news. She also attends East Lansing School Board meetings.

Mary Long,Haslett schools: A houswife with no formal journalism training, she covers meetings of the Okemos School Board and writes other Okemos school news. Her hours vary each week depending on the coverage needed.

Phyllis Thomas, The Lively Arts column: A university professor's wife with a B.A. degree in English from the University of Michigan, she writes

this compendium of drama, music, art exhibits, dance performances and classes, films, classes, and lectures. She spends approximately fifteen hours per week in this job.

Melissa Kaplan, television listings: A high school senior on the cooperative work program, she works fifteen hours per week preparing the listings and also is a stringer for high school sports.

Brad Greenberg, a television column: Columm One is written with the cooperation of the Lansing Committee for Children's Television, an area-wide volunteer group, on a flat weekly rate, with payment contributed to the Children's Television Committee.

Eloise McCarty, Cook's Nook column: This column of recipes is written on a weekly basis by an East Lansing housewife.

A religion column usually is written once a month by a Lutheran minister and a woman who is a beginning seminary student.

Ingham County Board meetings are covered by stringers on an irregular schedule, and other govenmental agencies receive coverage on an ad hoc basis. Mrs. Oates says that nost news of Michigan State University which is published by the Towne Courier comes from University News Bureau releases, and almost none is done on the newspaper's own initiative. Meetings of the Board of Trustees are covered only when the agenda includes an issue of importance to the community.

Procedures and policies for handling routine news stories have been established by Mrs. Oates and are transmitted to editorial staff members through the managing editor by word of mouth. These procedures follow the pattern outlined below.

Almost all pictures published in the Towne Courier are produced by editorial staff members. The few exceptions are those submitted by

professional photographers, usually associated with regular news sources such as public relations agencies or news bureaus. Policy of the newspaper is to refuse requests for pictures for fund-raising events, "check-passing" occasions,* or installation of officers for community organizations. News articles are given for fund-raising events, however, if deemed newsworthy in their own right.

Mrs. Oates says almost all presss releases submitted to the Towne Courier are rewritten by one of the full-time writers. Reporters do not write their own headlines. After an article is written or rewritten by a reporter, it is given to the managing editor for editing, a headline, and entry on the master log for the week before being sent to the composing room. One exception to this policy is sports copy, which is sent directly to the composing room by the sports editor.

Page dummies showing placement of advertisements are given to the editorial department by the advertising director on a schedule to be mentioned later, and all news stories on each page with editorial matter are marked on the dummies by the managing editor. After these dummies are sent to the composing room, news articles are placed on the page according to these dummies. Compositors make minor adjustments or fill small holes on their own initiative, but any substantial variations from the makeup as dummied must be cleared with the managing editor.

The managing editor goes to the composing room in the final stages of the page makeup process to supervise any required adjustments in the dummies and to approve editorial content of the completed page. All pages must be approved by representatives of the editorial and advertising departments before they are released to the camera room.

Deadline schedules for the Towne Courier are similar to those of other weekly newspapers with which the author has been associated. First editorial deadline for the following week's edition is at 5:00 P.M. Friday, when all material for the Lively Arts column, women's news, television listings, and other news for the second section must be sent to the composing room. The mechanical staff works a full production shift on Saturday to handle this copy.

Stated goal of the editorial department is to have at least one-third of the news copy processed and submitted to the composing room by Friday. Sports copy is due in the composing room by 12:00 M. Monday, and deadline for all other editorial copy, with a few exceptions, is 5:00 P. M. Monday, which also is the deadline for all advertising copy.

Last minute news from Monday evening is prepared Tuesday morning, and the composing room is on notice to take up to ninety inches of editorial straight matter through the day until 3:00 P.M., which is the final news deadline.

Mechanical deadlines for page makeup closely follow editorial deadlines. Advertising dummies for the second section are due in the composing room Monday morning, and editorial dummies for these pages are to be turned in early Tuesday morning. Second section pages are expected to be corrected and ready for the camera for shooting Tuesday from 12:00 M. to 1 P.M.

Advertising dummies for the first section are due in the composing room at 8:00 A.M. Tuesday, and editorial dummies for these pages are to be turned in early Tuesday afternoon, with the last one due no later than 2:00 P.M. First section pages are expected to be corrected and ready for the camera for shooting from 4:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. Tuesday.

During the time this study was undertaken, the Towne Courier was being printed at the same plant in Greenville, Michigan, where Harry Stapler began in 1962, but early in 1973 this arrangement was terminated because of what Mrs. Oates says was a substantial price increase. At this writing the newspaper is being printed in Livonia, Michigan, on presses owned by its parent company, Suburban Communications Corporation. The Towne Courier is printed on spare time between press runs of other Suburban Communications publications as a regular printing job.

Page negatives are scheduled to leave East Lansing at 5:00 P.M. Tuesday and be ready for the press in Livonia by 7:00 P.M. When the press run is completed anytime between 10:00 P.M. and 12:00 P.M., the newspapers are delivered back to the Williamston branch office of the Towne Courier-Enterprise operation, where a mailing crew addresses them from 1:00 A.M. to 4:00 A.M. Delivery at the East Lansing Post Office is scheduled no later than 7:00 A.M. for mail delivery the same day.

Total press run of the Towne Courier and its sister paper, the Williamston Enterprise, is 23,000 copies, of which Mrs. Oates says 7,000 are for paid subscribers, 4,500 for voluntary pay carrier routes, 1000 for free distribution in Michigan State University married housing units, and the remainder for circulation in Williamston.

# CHAPTER IV

## CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE TOWNE COURIER FOR TEN-WEEK PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 2 TO DECEMBER 4, 1974

In previous chapters we reviewed literature on various types of suburban communities, looked at the beginning and later development of East Lansing, reviewed the literature on suburban and community newspapers and their role and growth, and examined the origin, development, and present organization of the East Lansing Towne Courier, with specific attention to the editorial department, its personnel, policies and weekly work flow.

This and the following chapter will be concerned with a content analysis of the Towne Courier in a ten-week period from October 2 to December 4, 1974. Chapter IV willcontain an overview of the entire newspaper in the frame of reference discussed in Chapter II, and Chapter V will take a closer look at the Towne Courier editorial page to see how it fits into an overall newspaper objective and the Towne Courier's frame of reference.

The Towne Courier in its self-promotion advertises itself as follows: "In the seventies, the nation's most honored suburban newspaper in National Newspaper Association evaluations." This statement, which appears each week on the editorial page masthead, is based primarily on the strength of nine awards won in the National Newspaper Association Better Newspapers Contest in 1971.

Awards won in that contest were a first place for sports page, under 4,000 circulation; first place, women's pages, under 4,000 circulation; third place, best advertising idea, open circulation; and honorable mentions, all in the under 4,000 circulation category, for best news story, excellence

in typography, newspaper promotion, special issue, and best sports picture.

Prior to 1971, the Towne Courier won four first place National Newspaper Association awards, all in the same circulation category: best sports picture, 1970; best sports stories, 1969 and 1967; best feature story, 1965. From 1967 to 1970 the Towne Courier also won six second-place awards from the National Newspaper Association, two for general excellence, two for classified advertising, one for community service, and one for excellence in typography.

Since 1971 the Towne Courier won a single national award, a third place in 1972 for the best sports picture in National Newpaper Association newspapers under 4,000 circulation. In addition, the Michigan Press Association presented the Towne Courier with an award of excellence for its circulation category in 1972.

In order to study the editorial content of the Towne Courier today, a ten-week quantitative content analysis was undertaken. It was decided to analyze the content of all issues published during the fall quarter of the 1974-1975 academic year at Michigan State University. One full quarter, it was felt, would give a representative sampling of the newspaper's content, and news events of overlapping interest to the university and city were more likely to occur during a period when classes were in session.

There were three events during this period, however, which substantially altered what could be considered average coverage, and they have been noted in the findings: a special section for older adults was published October 23 containing twelve pages of news and advertising specifically oriented toward older citizens; a county and state general election November 5 resulted in increased advertising, more space available for news, and a large amount of political news; and the Michigan State-Ohio State football game November 9,

in which Michigan State upset the previously nationally number one-ranked Ohio State team, prompted the Towne Courier to devote more space to the game when is usually accorded Michigan State University football games.

The period examined in this content analysis encompassed ten issues, beginning with Ocotber 2, 1974, and continuing through December 4, 1974. During this period, size of the newspaper ranged from a minimum of forty-eight tabloid-sized pages to a maximum of sixty pages. Average number of pages during this ten-week period was 51.2 per week. (See Table 11)

Based on ninety-three column inches per page, this made a total of 47,616 inches available for news and advertising, of which 16,472 was filled with editorial matter, giving the Towne Courier an average of 65 to 35 percent advertising to news ratio. Highest percentage of news, 43 percent, appeared in the October 30 issue immediately preceding the election, and only one other issue, that of October 2, with 41 percent editorial matter, contained more than 40 percent news. Highest percentage of advertising, 75 percent, appeared in the November 27 issue which followed Thanksgiving and kicked off the Christmas shopping season. None of the other nine issues analyzed contained more than 70 percent advertising.

In the content analysis, thirteen categories were established in which to place news articles and pictures, with the following criteria being used:

1. Government: activities of the city, township and county governing bodies and their subordinate boards and commissions. All election news coverage also was placed in this category.

2. School: activities of the various school boards in the area served by the Towne Courier, in addition to school personnel matters and news of school programs and activities. This category did not include items about

TABLE 11

ADVERTISING AND EDITORIAL SPACE OF THE TOWNE COURIER

BY ISSUE FOR TEN-WEEK PERIOD OCTOBER 2 TO DECEMBER 4, 1974

| Date | Pages | Total Space | Advertising | Percent | News | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| October 2 | 48 | 4464 | 2614 | 59.0% | 1850 | 41.0% |
| October 9 | 52 | 4836 | 3220 | 67.0 | 1616 | 33.0 |
| October 16 | 48 | 4464 | 3034 | 68.0 | 1430 | 32.0 |
| October 23 | 60 | 5580 | 3651 | 65.0 | 1929 | 35.0 |
| October 30 | 56 | 5208 | 2993 | 57.0 | 2215 | 43.0 |
| November 6 | 48 | 4464 | 2863 | 64.0 | 1601 | 36.0 |
| November 13 | 48 | 4464 | 2873 | 64.0 | 1591 | 36.0 |
| November 20 | 48 | 4464 | 2963 | 66.0 | 1501 | 34.0 |
| November 27 | 48 | 4464 | 3365 | 75.0 | 1099 | 25.0 |
| December 4 | 56 | 5208 | 3350 | 68.0 | 1658 | 32.0 |
| Total | 512 | 47,616 | 31,142 | - | 16,474 | - |
| Average per week | 51.2 | 4761 | 3114 | 65.4% | 1647 | 34.6% |

Michigan State University.

3. Civic: reports of meetings and events held by civic and fraternal organizations, including news about the library, police and fire reports, traffic problems, weather, and consumer-oriented articles. Also included in this category were "bulletin board" listings carried under the headings of "Lively Arts," "Potpourri," and "Community Calendar," and events at Michigan State University of general interest to East Lansing residents irrespective of any ties to the university.

4. University: news directly related and of prime importance to the university community, and only incidentally of interest to East Lansing residents not associated with the university. Very little of the university news carried by the Towne Courier was related to strictly internal university affairs such as trustee meetings, student government, academic policy, course descriptions, or registration information.

5. Editorial: editorials, letters to the editor, editorial art work, and general "op-ed page" material, i.e. items usually reserved for the page opposite the editorial page. Not included in this category was the "Community Calendar" column which frequently appeared on the editorial page.

6. Sports: coverage of sports events and activities specifically, as opposed to "color" stories about events surrounding a game. Included in this category was coverage of sports events at Michigan State University, primarily football, and the East Lansing High School, intermediate schools, and city sports leagues. Unusually extensive coverage of the Michigan State-Ohio State football game was included in this category rather than under university news.

7. Family: women's page news such as weddings and engagements, women's club activities, recipes, births, deaths, and "people" items such as

promotions, transfers, academic achievements of East Lansing residents, and other social notes. (See Religion)

8. Business: news of business and commercial organizations and activities, including but not restricted to movie reviews and announcements, a "dining out"column, and other items about advertisers, advertising and advertised products.

9. Religion: a periodic religion column, news of church events and personnel and some church activities. Because of the number of church women's and social groups, and the overlap between this and the "family" categories, most items of this sort were placed in the latter categories, resulting in a minimun amount of news actually classified as "religion."

10. Feature: human interest articles, feature stories, and columns. Included in this category was the content of a special section "For Older Adults," published October 23, which was aimed specifically at a certain age group and not considered of general reader interest.

11. TV-Radio: articles, columns, and weekly program listings for television and radio stations and programs.

12. Other: News of no specific relevance to East Lansing, including "fillers" and other general non-local news.

13. House: newspaper editorial self promotion and logotypes or nameplates.

Where content of any article overlapped one or more categories, its dominant characteristics were arbitrarily used as the criteria, and an effort was made by the author to include the item in the most appropriate category. Because of the subjectivity necessarily involved in these decisions,

statistical reliability of the categories cannot be guaranteed. Despite this, results of the content analysis are significant enough to show general trends in editorial emphasis and policies during this ten-week period.

Table 12 shows that, as might be expected, the highest percentage of news space, 17 percent, was given to civic news, which averaged almost 300 inches per week. Television and radio listings and articles, with 15 percent, occupied the second-highest amount of space, slightly more than 250 inches per week, while sports news, with 13 percent, was third with a little more than 200 inches per week.

Both Miller and Janowitz stressed that community newspaper readers wanted news of schools, chirches, cultural activities and local government. If this supposition is to be applied against content of the Towne Courier, it would appear that news of cultural activities and local government is adequately presented, at least in space allotted. Space given to sports news, however, would seem to be high when compared with the amount of school and religious news in the Towne Courier.

Sports coverage received more space than government news, which had 12 percent, even with the large amount of political news included in the latter category. Family news, with 10 percent, and feature items, 9 percent, followed in that order, and together accounted for almost 20 percent of the news space. Despite heavy emphasis on politics in the two weeks on either side of the general election, in which almost two full editorial pages were published each week, editorial page items over the ten-week period averaged only 6 percent of the total news space, about one full page per week.

University and school news occupied approximately 5 percent each of the

TOWNE COURIER NEWS RATIO ACCORDING TO CATEGORY

DURING TEN-WEEK PERIOD OCTOBER 2 TO DECEMBER 4, 1974

TABLE 12

| Category | Average Inches Per Issue | Percentage of Total News Hole |
|---|---|---|
| Civic | 286.0 | 17 |
| TV-Radio | 252.1 | 15 |
| Sports | 206.8 | 13 |
| Government | 193.7 | 12 |
| Ramily | 178.0 | 10 |
| Feature | 144.7 | 9 |
| Editorial | 89.7 | 6 |
| University | 77.2 | 5 |
| School | 73.4 | 5 |
| Business | 63.8 | 4 |
| Other | 42.0 | 3 |
| House | 29.8 | 2 |
| Religion | 12.0 | 1 |

NOTE: Percentages have been rounded off.

available news space, with university news averaging seventy-seven inches per week and school news seventy-three inches per week. Business news, with slightly less than sixty-four inches per week, averaged 4 percent of the news space.

Other, or non-local news, 3 percent, and house news, 2 percent, were given more space than religion news 1 percent, although it must be noted that as previously mentioned many church group activities were included in the family category for purposes of definition. Another reason for the proportionately low amount of space accorded religion is that the religion column is not published on a weekly basis. As a result, religion news averages only twelve inches per week, while non-local, or other, news averages torty-two inches each week.

The low amount of non-local news carried by the Towne Courier is consistent with the unanimous opinion expressed by sources quoted in Chapter II that the main thrust of a community newspaper should be local, and local news is its main ingredient.

Table 13 shows a generally consistent pattern of the amount of news printed in each category each week, with two exceptions. School news fluctuated from a low of six inches October 2 to a high of 176 inches October 16, and university news had lows of 4 inches on two separate weeks, October 16 and Novenber 27, with a high near 130 inches on three other weeks.

Smallest deviation in amount of space used each week was in the TV-Radio category, which consistently occupied from 230 to 270 inches per week. The only other significant deviations from a generally even pattern were as noted previously for the general election, the Michigan State-Ohio State fooball game, and the special section for older adults.

Ratio of advertising to news in the Towne Courier would confirm the

opinion of Janowitz that community newspapers are not "all advertising," as claimed by some of their detractors. The average percentage of advertising in the Towne Courier in the ten-week period studied is comparabe to that of other newspapers, both weekly and daily, with which the author has been associated and certainly falls short of the 75 percent advertising maximum established by postal regulations for second class mailing privileges.

It is of interest to note at this time that the Towne Courier management in the spring of 1975 conducted an informal readership survey with an unscientifically drawn sampling that nonetheless produced results of some relevance to this content analysis.

Approximately five hundred homes in the Towne Courier circulation area were contacted by telephone to gain information about the respondents' newspaper reading habits. Of those contacted, almost four hundred were willing to participate in the survey. Although results of the survey were broken down by area into East Lansing, Okemos, and Haslett, these observations will be directed to the total response because most of the respondents were from East Lansing, and there was no significant deviation in responses from those living in East Lansing or outside the city.

(See Appendix A for wording of survey questions and responses by number and percentage.)

TABLE 13

TOWNE COURIER NEWS RATIO ACCORDING TO CATEGORY

EACH WEEK FROM OCTOBER 2 TO DECEMBER 4, 1974
(First five of ten weeks)

| Subject | October 2 | October 9 | October 16 | October 23 | Cotober 30 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Government | 176 | 132 | 105 | 127 | 690 (B) |
| School | 6 | 25 | 176 | 59 | 134 |
| Civic | 298 | 268 | 288 | 384 | 207 |
| University | 105 | 126 | 4 | 74 | 129 |
| Editorial | 95 | 73 | 77 | 87 | 180 |
| Sports | 253 | 191 | 171 | 118 | 235 |
| Family | 270 | 246 | 179 | 160 | 194 |
| Business | 136 | 105 | 27 | 74 | 80 |
| Religion | 15 | - | 26 | 9 | - |
| Feature | 151 | 114 | 44 | 525 (A) | 46 |
| TV-Radio | 265 | 264 | 276 | 273 | 257 |
| Other | 54 | 48 | 33 | 21 | 31 |
| House | 28 | 24 | 24 | 18 | 32 |

(A) This issue contained a special section, "For Older Adults," all of which was classified in the Feature category.

(B) This issue was the last one before the November 5 general election and all election coverage was placed in the Government category.

TABLE 13 (continued)

(Second five of ten weeks)

| Subject | November 6 | November 13 | November 20 | November 27 | December 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Government | 210 | 189 | 127 | 125 | 56 |
| School | 46 | 118 | 76 | 18 | 76 |
| Civic | 233 | 290 | 267 | 241 | 384 |
| University | 83 | 49 | 133 | 4 | 63 |
| Editorial | 124 | 75 | 67 | 56 | 63 |
| Sports | 219 | 373 (C) | 200 | 111 | 197 |
| Family | 145 | 105 | 150 | 118 | 213 |
| Business | 66 | 24 | 22 | 4 | 100 |
| Religion | 4 | 30 | 32 | - | 4 |
| Feature | 194 | 30 | 136 | 37 | 170 |
| TV-Radio | 232 | 235 | 235 | 262 | 222 |
| Other | 11 | 41 | 20 | 87 | 74 |
| House | 32 | 32 | 36 | 36 | 36 |

(C) Unusually extensive coverage of the Michigan State-Ohio State football game November 9 was included in the sports category rather than under university news.

Of the 393 persons who were willing to participate in the survey, 238, or 61 percent, said they received the papers. Five percent of those said they received it free,* while 51 percent were mail subscribers, 40 percent had carrier delivery and 4 percent bought it at the newstand.

Included among reasons given for not taking the paper by non-subscribers were that they took other papers, 18 percent; didn't like the Towne Courier, 33 percent; it was too costly, 6 percent; no time to read, 9 percent; too much advertising, 3 percent; poor service, 5 percent; miscellaneous, 3 percent; and no reason, 25 percent.

Almost 60 percent of those receiving the paper said they kept it in the home for longer than one week, including 4 percent who said it stayed in their home for two weeks. Eighty-eight percent of those who received the paper said it was kept in the home for longer than one day.

One of the most interesting survey findings, particularly in view of the space allocation previously mentioned, was that 73 pecent of those who received the paper said they did not look at the television listings.

Respondents were asked which part of the paper they particularly enjoyed, and 42 percent said the entire papers. Singled out for special mention were local news, 17 percent; sports, 10 percent; and classified advertising 7 percent. Four percent or less mentioned specific subjects such as city council news, the arts, cooking, school, page one, features, editorial page, second section items and miscellaneous news.

Seventy-seven percent of those who received the paper indicated a general satisfaction with its contents. Specific items on which more coverage was requested were sports, 4 percent; and school news, 2 percent. Many other categories received 1 percent or less mention in response to this question.

Of all those contacted, not just subscribers, 81 percent said they subscribed to a daily newspaper, and of these 58 percent said the Lansing State Journal, 15 percent the Detroit Free Press, 1 percent the Michigan State University State News, 12 percent to both the State Journal and the Free Press, and the remainder to various combinations of these and other newspapers.

When asked about their shopping habits, 30 percent of those contacted said their primary shopping was done at the Meridian Mall shopping center near Okemos, 24 percent at Meijer's in the same general location, 20 percent at Frandor, and only 15 percent in the central East Lansing business district. The remainder was spread over East Lansing's Brookfield Plaza, 9 percent, and other locations.

Although this telephone survey was not conducted in accordance with scientific methodology, its results give an indication of reader interests that will be discussed in subsequent remarks directed toward Towne Courier editorial management philosophies.

# CHAPTER V

# THE EDITORIAL PAGE AND COVERAGE OF TWO UNIVERSITY-CITY ISSUES

We saw in Chapter II the importance attached to community newspapers and their role in the community. Janowitz said the community newspaper is seen as an agent of community welfare and progress, and Cosse said a function of the suburban weekly must be that of explaining the community to itself.

The vehicle for carrying out this function is usually the newspaper's editorial page, which Harris and Hooke envision as the place to focus, illuminate and interpret facts of local importance. In order to place editorial coverage of the East Lansing Towne Courier in some perspective, this study will take a closer look at its editorial page during the ten-week period being observed.

Table 14 shows that ordinarily only one editorial was published each week, and in this ten-week period the Towne Courier carried an average of slightly less than two editorials per week. This average was increased substantially by the fact that, for classification purposes, endorsements in the October 30 pre-election issue were counted as six separate editorials.

During this period, seventeen editorials were published totaling 319 column inches, making the average length of each editorial almost nineteen inches. It is the opinion of the author that shorter editorials have better readership.

The Towne Courier averaged about three letters to the editor each week, but occurence of the general election during this period increased the number of letters and this average, as thirteen letters were published in

TABLE 14

NUMERICAL ANALYSIS OF TOWNE COURIER EDITORIAL PAGE

ARTICLES BY ISSUE FROM OCTOBER 2 TO DECEMBER 4, 1974

| Date of Issue | Editorials | | Letters | | Community Calendar | News Articles | | Op-Ed Articles | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Inches | Number | Inches | | Number | Inches | Number | Inches |
| October 2 | 1 | 18 | 2 | 31 | 12 inches | 1 | 5 | - | - |
| October 9 | 2 | 30 | 3 | 31 | 18 inches | 1 | 3 | - | - |
| October 16 | 1 | 21 | 4 | 54 | 16 inches | - | - | - | - |
| October 23 | 1 | 34 | 3 | 34 | 10 inches | 1 | 2 | - | - |
| October 30* | 6 | 93 | 6 | 80 | 6 inches | - | - | - | - |
| November 6** | 1 | 24 | 7 | 82 | 14 inches | - | - | - | - |
| November 13 | 1 | 29 | 2 | 36 | 18 inches | - | - | - | - |
| November 20 | 1 | 20 | 2 | 31 | 14 inches | - | - | 1 | 47 |
| November 27 | 1 | 19 | 1 | 29 | 18 inches | 2 | 13 | - | - |
| December 4 | 2 | 21 | 1 | 12 | 18 inches | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 17 | 319 | 31 | 420 | 144 inches | 5 | 23 | 1 | 47 |
| Average Per Issue | 1.7 | 31.9 | 3.1 | 42.0 | 14.4 | .5 | 2.3 | .1 | 4.7 |

* The entire October 30 editorial page was devoted to endorsements in six different races in the November 5 general election. All other items usually carried on the editorial page appeared this week on the op-ed page.

** The November 6 issue contained a full editorial page that carried over to the op-ed page. Five letters to the editor, for example, appeared on the editorial page, and two ran on the op-ed page.

the issues immediately preceding and following the election.

Only one interpretive article of the type commonly found on an "op-ed page"* was published in the ten weeks, and this article was forty-seven inches in length.** The article contained analysis of how the East Lansing School Board was preparing its budget for the coming year, and was the only interpretive or background article "explaining the community to itself," as Cosse saw the function of an editorial page, carried on the editorial or op-ed pages during the period under observation.

The Community Calendar, which the author would not consider editorial page material per se, averaged about fourteen inches of space per week on the editorial page, and a total of twenty-three inches of general news was printed on the editorial page during the ten-week period.

Editorials and letters to the editor were reviewed in the light of their specific relevance to East Lansing and its residents, and rated accordingly. The author arbitrarily assigned them into one of three categories: purely local, some local interest, and primarily non-local. Although this assignment was necessarily subjective and in some cases borderline, the result nonetheless gives some idea of the degree of local relevance.

A breakdown of the editorial page by issue follows, with the author's evaluation added.

October 2

Editorials protesting a cut by the Ingham County Board of Commissioners in social services such as welfare, child care, mental health, the Ingham Medical Center, and various other community projects. This editorial was classified as purely local, because it had local applicability, even though it did not deal exclusively with East Lansing. Length: eighteen

inches.

Letters: praising the gubernatorial candidacy of Zoltan Ferency, and associate professor at Michigan State University, twenty inches; and an open letter to the Meridian Township Board of Trustees on a were project, eleven inches. The Ferency letter was deemed partially local because of his local identification, and the Meridian letter was rated purely local despite not relating to East Lansing itself.

Other: Community Calendar, twelve inches; one general news item, five inches; and the op-ed page contained only obituaries.

October 9

Editorials: criticising state Senator Philip O. Pittenger for holding night committee meetings on proposed legislation, eighteen inches; and one urging citizen support for a proposed new Performing Arts Center building on the Michigan State University campus, twelve inches. The Pittenger editorial was rated as partially local because East Lansing is in his district. The Arts Center editorial was classified partially local because it did not relate directly to East Lansing, even though there is an overlapping interest between East Lansing and the university in this situation.

Letters: a thank you note from the Meridian Township Farmer's Market, seven inches; and a letter identifying a picture that had appeared in an earlier issue, nine inches. Both were classified purely local, although again the Meridian letter had no specific relevance to East Lansing. A third letter,praising the Cooley Law School of Lansing, fifteen inches, was rated partially local despite its broader scope.

Other: Community Calendar, eighteen inches; one general news item, five inches; and the op-ed page contained only obituaries.

October 16

Editorial: noting the observance of Michigan Inernational Week and relating it to the involvement of Michigan State University in overseas programs, twenty-one inches. Despite its oblique tie-in to the university, this editorial was rated non-local.

Letters: criticising the controversial reconstruction of the Michigan-Harrison intersection, eight inches; and another supporting Meridian Towneship in its fight against pornography. Both were rated purely local even though the Meridian letter had no direct bearing on East Lansing. Another letter urging a vote for Democratic congressional candidate M. Robert Carr, twelve inches, was rated partially local, and one favoring improved programming for children's television, thirteen inches, was classified as having no direct local relevance.

Other: Community Calendar, sixteen inches; and the op-ed page contained only obituraries.

October 23

Editorial: Listing recommendations of the Towne Courier on four statewide election proposals, and one Meridian Township proposition, to be decided at the November 5 general election, thirty-four inches. This editorial was listed as partially local because of the Meridian item, but again there was no specific relevance to East Lansing.

Letters: against rezoning space for a parking lot near the East Lansing Post Office, twelve inches; and two separate letters protesting contents of a political advertisement published the previous week, thirteen and nine inches. All three letters were deemed to be purely local.

Other: Community Calendar, ten inches; one general news item, two inches; and the op-ed page contained a general news article about the

the pending Maridian Township trustee election contest.

October 30

Editorials: a full page of editorial endorsements by the Towne Courier was classified as six separate editorials; endorsing Republican Clifford Taylor in the Sixth Congressional District race, incumbent Democrat Lynn Johdahl for state representative, Democrat Earl Nelson against incumbent Republican Phillip O. Pittenger in the state senate race; and individual candidates in the Meridian Township races for supervisor, clerk, and the board of trustees. For classification purposes, the first three editorials were rated partially local, because East Lansing is included in the district involved. The latter three editorials were considered purely local, even though they had no bearing at all on East Lansing residents, because they were of interest to Towne Courier subscribers outside East Lansing city limits.

Letters: favoring the proposed Michigan Vietnam veteran's bonus, twenty-four inches; criticising the Towne Courier position on the state highway fund proposition, twenty-five inches; objecting to the editorial criticising Senator Pittenger, eight inches in favor of public financing of political campaigns and against congressional candidate Taylor, five inches; all considered partially local. Two other letters were supporting the Meridian Township proposition, ten inches; and praising the East Lansing High School junior class, five inches. Both these were considered purely local, even though only one specifically related to East Lansing.

Other: Community Calendar, six inches. This editorial "page" occupied almost two full facing pages.

November 6

Editorial: criticising tactics used in the election contest for state

representative, state senate and congress, twenty-four inches, rated partially local.

Letters: criticising the political advertisement of a state representative candidate, eighteen inches; condemning the Towne Courier editorial opposing the Michigan Vietnam veteran's bonus proposal, eleven inches; deploring Halloween violence, sixteen inches; all considered partially local. Three others were thanking the Towne Courier for supporting the Meridian Township proposition editorially, six inches; correcting a misleading statement published in a previous news release, seven inches; and asking some pointed questions about how Towne Courier editorial endorsements are made, twelve inches. These were considered purely local, even though none of them had specific relevance to East Lansing. One letter, urging support for a famine relief program, twelve inches, was deemed non-local.

Other: Community Calendar, fourteen inches; material which usually would be considered relevant to an editorial page occupied all of the editorial page and most of the op-ed page. There also were two general news articles. totaling seven inches, on the op-ed page.

November 13

Editorial: deploring a change in the format of a children's television program, The Attic, which appeared on Channel Six in Lansing, the one commercial television station in the immeditate area, twenty-nine inches. This editorial was classified as non-local because it had no direct bearing on East Lansing.

Letters: expressing the same opinion as stated in the editorial regarding the childresn's television program, written by the program's co-producer and host, twenty-four inches, classified as non-local; from the Meridian Township clerk thanking the Towne Courier for its editorial support for the Meridian

Township proposition, twelve inches. This letter was rated purely local despite no specific interest to East Lansing.

Other: Community Calendar, eighteen inches; and the op-ed page contained two general news stories.

November 20

Editorial: asking any community service group to donate its time and services to decorate the city for the holiday season, accompanied by a picture of previous decorations, twenty inches. This editorial was deemed purely local.

Letters: a reply to the Towne Courier editorial about campaign dirty tricks, from congressional candidate Taylor, twenty-five inches; thanking the East Lansing Rescue Squad, six inches. The Taylor letter was classified partially local, and the latter one was deemed purely local.

Other: Community Calendar, fourteen inches; the op-ed page contained a fory-seven-inch interpretive article on how the East Lansing School Board prepares its budget for the coming year, with background information and an outline of available options.

November 27

Editorial: The Towne Courier suggested ways to spend about $3 million which is expected to become available to East Lansing over the next six years in federal Community Development Act fund, and asked readers to contribute ideas of their own, nineteen inches. This editorial was classified purely local.

Letter: From William Ballenger, who was defeated in the Republican congressional primary election, responding to Taylor's letter the previous week, twenty-nine inches. This letter was deemed partially local.

Other: Community Calendar, seventeen inches; two general news articles appeared on the editorial page, thirteen inches; and the op-ed page contained a 32-inch news story on public hearings which were held to get suggestions on how to spend the Community Development Act money.

December 4

Editorials: urging the rescinding of Executive Order 9066, which was used to intern Japanese-Americans on the West Coast of the United States during World War II, and is still in effect, eighteen inches. This editorial was considered non-local, despite an indirect tie to some present East Lansing residents.* Another editorial criticized the naming of State Senator Joseph Mack of Ironwood as chairman of the senate conservation committee, thirteen inches, and was considered non-local because of its limited specific local interest.

Letter: correcting a news story which appeared in the previous week's issue, twelve inches, classified purely local.

Other: Community Calendar, eighteen inches; and the op-ed page was a full news page containing only general news items.

Contents of Towne Courier editorial pages over this ten-week period are detailed at length to illustrate three points:

1) Even with generous standards applied by the author as to what constitutes a local editorial, particularly pertaining to East Lansing, editorials generally had limited local interest. Letters to the editor, perhaps following this emphasis, also were of little direct relevance to East Lansing.

2) The editorial page was not used exclusively for editorial page material, at least as defined by the author, and the op-ed page was wasted on general news.

3) Editorials, letters and articles appearing on the editorial and op-ed pages generally were of a non-controversial nature; they did not seem to explain community problems or urge courses of action in other than universally-approved directions.

Table 15 indicates that purely local editorials were outnumbered substantially by those with little or no specific interest to East Lansing.

TABLE 15

MEASUREMENT OF LOCAL EMPHASIS OF TOWNE COURIER EDITORIALS IN TEN-WEEK PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 2 TO DECEMBER 4, 1974

| Local Emphasis | Editorials | Letters |
|---|---|---|
| Purely local | 6 | 16 |
| Partially local | 7 | 12 |
| Non-local | 4 | 3 |
| Total | 17 | 31 |

Only two editorials, one each on November 20 and November 27, directly related to East Lansing and its problems, and both these were non-controversial in nature. Letters to the editor during the same period showed only a little more local orientation. There were sixteen purely local letters, while only fifteen had a partial local interest or were deemed non-local.

The issue-by-issue compilation shows that the editorial page often was used for general news items, or those thought by the author not to be of editorial page nature. The op-ed page was used only once directly as an auxiliary to the editorial page, although on two other occasions it was used as a spillover page for letters to the editor. Items usually appearing on this page were obituaries or general news articles.

Editorials and letters tended to be few in number and lengthy, with editorials averaging almost nineteen inches each and letters more than thirteen inches. And as noted previously, a substantial amount of editorial

page space, both editorials and letters, was devoted to items considered by the author to be of little or no specific local applicability.

While controversy only for the sake of controversy should not be the goal of a newspaper editor, the generally non-controversial nature of Towne Courier editorials and editorial page material would lead the author to believe that the Towne Courier did not seriously grapple with local issues during the ten-week period from October 2 to December 4, 1974.

## TWO UNIVERSITY-CITY ISSUES

In observing news coverage of the Towne Courier, this study will examine two issues of overlapping interest between the city of East Lansing and Michigan State University that were newsworthy during 1974.

The first of these concerned a university decision, announced for the first time July 10 in the State News, that university sophomores would be allowed to live off campus fall term in an effort to alleviate expected overcrowding in university residence halls.[77]

The State News said university officials would be sending letters to sophomores containing an application for a waiver to live off campus and a form for cancellation of the student's housing reservation. It was estimated in this article that if no sophomores took advantage of this housing policy change, there would be about 1,200 over-assigned rooms at the beginning of fall term.

The university assistant director of student activities and off-campus housing was quoted as estimating that there was space for about 300 students in East Lansing apartments. The article said university officials expected that the option to live in housing other than university-approved units would be only open to sophomores for one year, but included speculation that this

could be the beginning of the end for the housing policy requiring sophomores to live on campus.

This housing issue is of particular importance to East Lansing and its residents because presence of the university by itself creates a demand for housing units in East Lansing, a relatively small community, and a sudden policy change that night allow 1,200 or more college students to seek quarters off campus, presumably many of them in East Lansing, would place a burden on the city's housing situation.

Demand by students for additional housing units in East Lansing also could conceivably increase demand for zoning variations to allow crowding of more students into less space, which could lead to the disintegration of neigborhoods.

One week after the State News article, the Towne Courier published an editorial deploring the lack of cooperation in planning between Michigan State University and the city of East Lansing:[78]

> Several years ago when Michigan State University restricted student parking, we pointed out editorially that it was time decisions affecting the total community were not made on an ad hoc basis as in days of yore.
>
> We suggested that a liaison committee be established, that an agenda be prepared, and that city and university officials meet on a regularly scheduled basis to discuss areas of mutual concern, past, present and future. That seemed and seems eminently sensible.
>
> In the past the city council and the MSU Board of Trustees met occasionally to discuss matters of mutual concern, a procedure that proved unsatisfactory. Now members of the university administrative staff meet occasionsally with city department heads, but apparently that isn't enough.
>
> ... Within the past week two situations have developed which indicate the need for a more continuous dialogue and mutual problem solving by the city and university.
>
> Whereas many colleges and universities are experiencing declining enrollments, MSU is not. An increased enrollment of freshmen this fall will create campus housing problems. As a result,

sophomores will be permitted to live off campus.

> No one knows how many students will take advantage of the opportunity to live off campus, but East Lansing won't have enough accommodations.

Second point mentioned in the editorial concerned cable television receipts from university married housing units, and it concluded that there should be more cooperation between the university and city.

"With many well-intentioned courses and seminars on communications, planning, public administration, and so forth being offered on campus, there ought to be one or more pragmatist who could put it all together. The university has come a long way from its college days. The town has grown too. Obviously town and gown polarization is an archaic concept that needs to be put to rest. However, it won't be if the present informal setup between the city and university regarding mutual problems continues to be practiced."

The twenty-three-inch editorial was accompanied by a cartoon showing a Michigan State University truck dumping a load of students on a pumpkin house labeled "E.Lansing Housing." (See Figure 2) The same July 17 issue of the Towne Courier contained a sixteen-inch news article reporting on a meeting of the East Lansing Planning Commission July 10 at which the commission "expressed disappointment" at failure to be notified of the sophomore housing decision.[79]

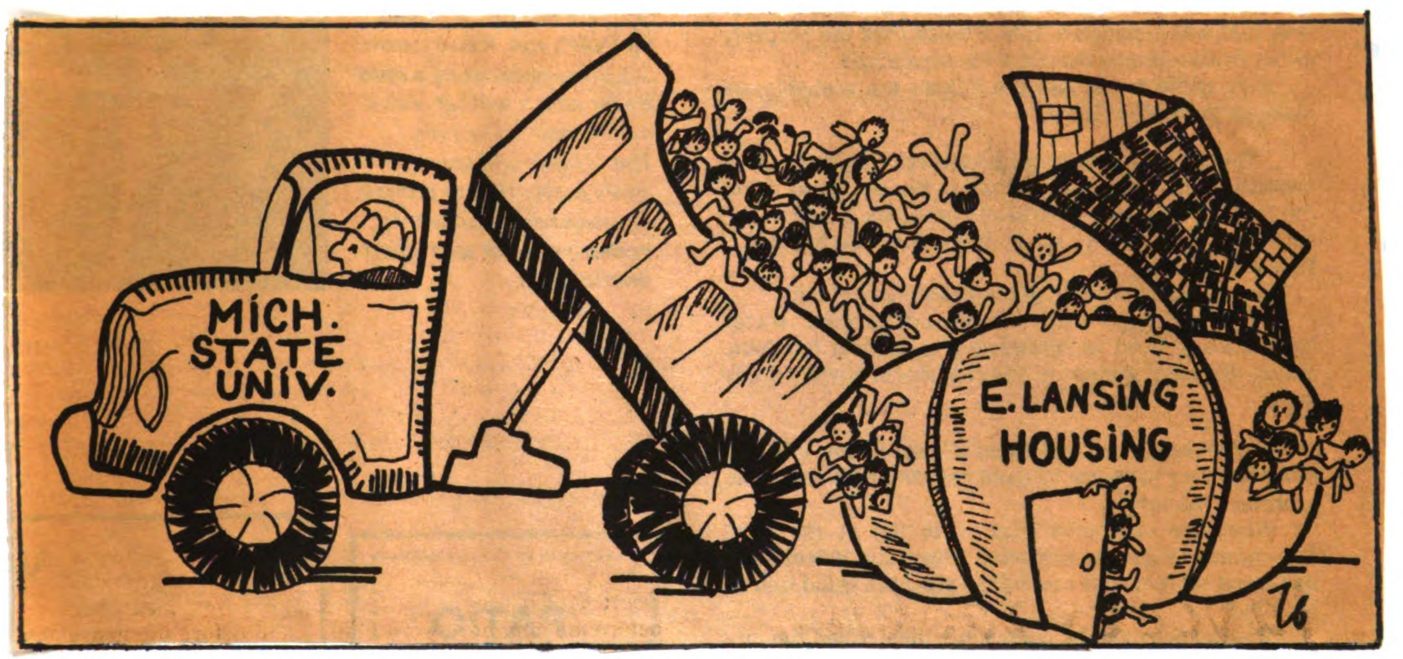
The Towne Courier article said no members of the planning commission or the housing department of East Lansing were aware of the university action until they saw it in the State News. It said the commission requested the East Lansing City Council set up a liaison with the university to keep the commission informed on the university's housing policy.

Only two other references, both indirect, were made to this housing problem in the Towne Courier from July 17 through the ten-week period ending

FIGURE 2

TOWNE COURIER CARTOON JULY 17, 1974

ON UNIVERSITY HOUSING DECISION



December 4 covered by this study. A news article October 23 said residents of the Bailey neighborhood were afraid of losing their residential flavor to wholesale student rentals, and gave notice of a meeting between residents and city officials.[80]

A report of the meeting between Bailey residents and city officials was published October 30, but no specific mention was made of the change in university housing policy. One East Lansing housing commissioner was quoted, however, as saying that the university and the community should have to "open the lines of communication."[81]

These were the only references to this problem of mutual city-university interest that appeared in the Towne Courier between July 3, 1974, and December 4, 1974.

During this same period, following its initial breaking of the sophomore housing story, the State News published three articles having a direct bearing on its implications for East Lansing, and two others which were of incidental interest.

On August 23, the lead page one news story in the State News said the university off-campus housing office "has been packed in the past few weeks with students (checking) the rental card folders."[82] On September 26, the State News reported that "so far 450 sophomores have cancelled their reservations in residence halls and moved off campus."[83] The State News on October 1 speculated that "now that it appears the sophomore on-campus living requirement will be abolished..."[84] Two other State News articles during this period dealt with the related problem of tripling students in dormitory rooms as a result of easing the sophomore housing policy.

A comparison on treatment of this story by the Towne Courier and the

State News indicates to the author that the State News gave it more comprehensive coverage, and in this issue which was of direct and imminent importance to East Lansing, the Towne Courier did not explain the problem or its import at any great length to its readers.

The second subject studied of mutual university-city interest concerned a proposed new Performing Arts Center on the university campus. This subject, though of primary importance to the university, related to East Lansing because of the university orientation of so many of its residents, and the impact it would have on cultural life of the city.

A Towne Courier editorial October 9 commented that sports facilities seemed to take precedence over those for cultural activities, and called for a reordering of community priorities "in favor of those who aren't sports fans." About the only conclusion expressed in the editorial was the hope that a new Performing Arts Center would be subsidized by "faithful area patrons of the arts."[85]

A short eight-inch Towne Courier news item October 23 said that a search for a site on which to build the Performing Arts Center had been narrowed to two location,[86] but there was no Towne Courier mention when Michigan State University President Clifton Wharton, Jr., announced that the site had been selected early in November.

As might be expected, the State News during the same period gave extensive coverage to the search for a site for the Center, carrying three articles and two editorials on the subject. Coverage of the Towne Courier, while not expected to be as extensive as that of the university newspaper, in the opinion of the author should have been greater than the perfunctory treatment received because of the Center's implications for East Lansing.

## CHAPTER VI

## ROLE OF THE TOWNE COURIER EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Sim says that any newspaper, large or small, takes on an individuality, a personality of its own, separate from that of any of its writers.[87] At the same time, there usually is one individual who is most responsible for shaping the force and thrust of that personality, and that individual usually is the editor or publisher.

The role taken by a community newspaper, according to Janowitz, tends to reflect the publisher's senitivity to his audience. "The community newspaper publisher is not merely a commercial agent attempting to increase his profit without regard to the social consequences of his newspaper content. He is in too close contact with his clientele to be able to accomplish this, and he is aligned with the local community leaders who have a vested interest in promoting the (respectablility ) of the local community."[88]

Guiding force in shaping the role of the Towne Courier for the first eleven years of its existence was its editor and publisher, Harry Stapler. Mrs. Vivian F. Oates has directed the news operation since 1973. Mrs. Oates says she spends about 20 percent of her total working time supervising the editorial department and Towne Courier news coverage. Despite this relatively small amount of time, information gathered in preparing this study indicates that she is in fact as well as name the editor in that she sets the frame of reference within which the newspaper operates, and follows up to insure that her policies are implemented.

John DeMott, in a study of editors' use of behavioral models, said that an editor appears at times to be using models borrowed from other occupations and fields, and observed that the models most often used by an editor are

what he called political, commercial, professional, clerical, historical, and recreational.[89]

The models as defined by DeMott are:

(1) Political: Sees the newspaper not as the community ruler, but as its most public-spirited citizen, exerting community leadership by disinterested public service. The editor or publisher sees his subscribers or readers as constituents, and is elected daily by the ballot of readers and subscribers. This model does not appear to have power for its own sake as the principal objective.

(2) Commercial: Sees himself as a businessman selling a product, and the product and its quality, rather than its political impact or influence on the community, therefore become the chief consideration. Since the editor or publisher employing this model is tempted to endorse the old commercial slogan "the customer is always right," the product is tailored to fit the trade.

(3) Professional: Sees the newspaper as providing a specific service, providing objective and impartial intelligence of current events. In their highest professional capacity, members of the news gathering and reporting organization are seen as being more or less detached members of the local community, putting a high premium on their independence. Using the professional model, newspaper editors and others have developed the "mirror" theory of news. The newspaper's function is to hold a mirror up before society, and to reflect it as it is, to reflect the image coldly, impartially and objectively.

(4) Clerical: Sees his role as that of making moral judgments on the community and its life. Somewhat like an old-time hell-fire and brimstone preacher, the editor using this model is tempted to spend too much time showing

his neighbors the error of their ways and taking the hide off a community's most notorious sinners. Under this model's influence, an editor is tempted to become increasingly moralistic, and more given to viewing with alarm all kinds of trends in the community.

(5) Historical: The editor tends to see the newspaper as "history written on the run," or the "first rough draft of history." Every newspaper is seen as one of record, chronicling the community's life day-by-day and year-by-year. The record and its accuracy are chief considerations, although analysis of the news and its interpretation can also be seen as major responsibilities.

(6) Recreational: Using this model, the editor is tempted to see himself as being engaged in the "newspaper game" and to put chief emphasis on the the paper's entertainment function. Like other entertainers, the editor using this model becomes preoccupied with the newspaper's audience and its ratings.

"The most important thing of all to a newspaper editor using the recreational model" DeMott says "is providing entertainment, vicarious adventure escape, diversion, relaxation, and excitement. It is by excelling as an entertainer that such an editor wins the top trophies, the biggest money."[90]

DeMott concludes by saying that most editors undoubtedly make use of all the models discussed, and combine them in attempts to explain the newspaper's function and role in society. In an effort to determine which role the Towne Courier editor and publisher seems to fulfill, the author conducted several interviews with Mrs. Oates.

East Lansing is viewed by Mrs. Oates as a "community, not a suburb,"

because "suburbs don't have neighbors; in a community they do." She says suburbs may have their own government, but East Lansing is distinctive because many of its residents live and work in the same place.

Mrs. Oates sees her subscribers as her constituents, and this feeling was particularly apparent in her endorsements in the Sixth Congressional District campaign in November, 1974. The Towne Courier endorsed Republican Clifford Taylor, although Mrs. Oates says her personal preference was Democrat M. Robert Carr, the eventual winner in a close race.

The endorsement was made, Mrs. Oates said, "because Taylor better represented the wishes of my constituencey. I am more liberal than my constituency and I personally felt that Carr was the better candidate. But Taylor was more representative of the people in East Lansing and would have carried the city if it hadn't been for the student vote." According to Mrs. Oates, Taylor had a more stable, traditional approach, which to her reflected the wishes of the community.

Mrs. Oates says she has complete autonomy in making political endorsements, but that she doesn't endorse any candidate, including those in statewide races, unless she has interviewed him personally, In the 1974 election, the Towne Courier did not endorse judicial candidates or county commissioner candidates. "It would have taken more expertise than I have," Mrs. Oates said, "I didn't have the time to interview all of them, so didn't endorse any."

Because Mrs. Oates feels that East Lansing has what could be called a relatively transient population, partially due to university faculty turnover, she sees the newspaper's role as keeping the news in perspective for people for whom the newspaper is their only community continuity. "It makes them welcome and feel involved," she says.

East Lansing is a "company town," according to Mrs. Oates, and Michigan State University is the "company." She sees this as generally beneficial because of the type of people involved, but it also creates problems. "The people are progressive in their thinking, maybe too liberal," she says. "Sometimes they can't pull together without getting caught."

Mrs. Oates says she feels there is a high degree of civic participation and interest in government and schools, but not as much in service clubs such as Kiwanis, which she says is made up mostly of businessmen. "East Lansing has first class schools, but they experiment too much. Educational innovations are constantly being tried."

As noted in Chapter IV, the Towne Courier contained a relatively small percentage of school news during the ten-week period studied, and that on a sporadic basis, most of it coming over the counter rather than being staff-produced. Mrs. Oates says one of her goals for the coming year is to increase and improve school news coverage.

The relationship between Michigan State University and the city of East Lansing are seen by Mrs. Oates as strained at best, with "indifference to one another." Sobin says that in a college suburb conflicts between the college and community residents sometimes occur when the college is undergoing rapid growth and expansion, as Michigan State University has. "Residents are often fearful that the expanding college will change the character of the community. They are usually right, for as the college grows, the community changes..bringing more people, more intensive development (and) more traffic..."[91]

"The university appears to be indifferent to the city," Mrs. Oates says, "or at least indifferent to the needs of the city." Prime example of this cited by Mrs. Oates is the decision by university officials to allow

sophomores to live off campus, a decision she says was taken unilaterally by the university without consulting East Lansing officials.

"The university creates problems for East Lansing, as a factory would," according to Mrs. Oates, "but unlike a factory there are no tax dollars going from the university to East Lansing." Mrs. Oates says she feels strongly that the university does not have a sensitivity to needs of the community, but the Towne Courier makes no attempt to comment on anything on campus except as it affects the city.

"We have done our share of gentle prodding," Mrs. Oates says, "and some not so gentle. We have been behind the Performing Arts Center, but editorially have criticised some of its scheduling practices." According to Mrs. Oates, there has been a "gentleman's agreement" between the Towne Courier and the State News not to encroach on each other's territory, but she is not so certain the State News in recent years has lived up to its word.

When eighteen-year-olds were given the right to vote, Mrs. Oates says, it almost "blew the lid off" East Lansing city politics. "There is a definite student-resident schism, but residents still run the show. Student votes are important, but the students aren't highly organized yet."

Perhaps one reason student influence has not been fully felt in East Lansing elections is that primaries are held during the summer, when most students are away from the campus. Mrs. Oates also indicates there are some misgivings in East Lansing about students voting in city elections where bond issues are decided, in some cases where students might have the balance of power, even though they do not pay direct real estate taxes. She feels this may be one reason why such elections are usually scheduled at the primary election date in the summer.

The need for cooperation between the university and city was reflected in one editorial published during the ten-week period studied, that following announcement of the sophomore residency change. Sentiments expressed in that editorial are reminiscent of the following excerpt from a National Student Association publication:

> The university, partially as a product of the community, partially as a participant in the community, must place its power behind the needs of the community...The university should enter into positive relations with the community.[92]

Mrs. Oates, who says she is fully aware of the impact on East Lansing of the university, concurs.

# CHAPTER VII

## THE TOWNE COURIER AS A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

In looking at the various types of suburban communities, we saw in Chapter I that East Lansing most closely resembles a satellite suburb in that it is basically subordinate to a larger center, yet retains a high degree of independence stemming from its importance as an employment center. East Lansing also could be defined as a college suburb, one in which a major college or university is located and where a large proportion of community residents and their activities are due to presence of the college.

Although the literature reviewed in this study does not make such a fine distinction, the author in defining East Lansing would combine these descriptions and refer to the city as a college-satellite suburb.

East Lansing's past, present and future are inexorably intertwined with those of Michigan State University through physical location, historical origins, and duality of interest in both the university and city among many East Lansing residents and subscribers to the East Lansing Towne Courier.

It seems to the author that this dichotomy of interests should be acknowledged by and reflected in the East Lansing newspaper. In this ten-week survey of its content, he is inclined to wonder whether in an attempt to remain separate from the university the Towne Courier has not consciously or subconsciously underplayed university news even when it has had significant impact on the community, such as in elimination of the sophomore residency requirement.

A superficial look at basic demographic information about East Lansing

also shows that the community generally is above most of the Lansing Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area in income, educational achievement, and overall socio-economic status, a fact one also would expect to see reflected in the community's only local newspaper.

We saw in Chapter II that Sim said some editors feel they should offer scrapbook newspaper, print the kind of news people have been accustomed to clip and save - birth notices, school achievements, weddings, anniversaries, obituaries, and other similar items. Other editors are convinced they should report the numerous and difficult social and economic problems of growing communities in depth, with a knowledgeable and sophisticated approach.

While few newspapers fit precisely into either category, observations made during this study indicate to the author that at least for the ten-week period studied, the Towne Courier came considerably closer to being a scrapbook newspaper than a newspaper which reported the community and its problems in depth.

This is not necessarily a criticism, for there could be fine scrapbook newspapers, but rather a reflection of the author's own editorial prespective in commenting on the goals toward which the Towne Courier seems pointed.

Completion of this limited survey suggests two other areas which could be of interest to study at greater length:

--A qualitative content analysis of the Towne Courier to determine attitudes and biases in news and editorial coverage of East Lansing and Michigan State University.

--A three-pronged comparative study of the Towne Courier as in independently-owned newspaper from 1962 to 1969, from 1969 to 1973 as part of a newspaper group but continuing under editorial direction of the original

editor and publisher, and since 1973 in its present status, to determine how these changes in ownership and management have been reflected in the newspaper's editorial policies and emphasis.

We saw in Chapter II that Miller and Cosse felt the news of paramount importance to a community newspaper was of schools, churches, cultural activities, and city government. Byerly said the community newspaper should promote local welfare and stimulate thinking on local problems and projects. Cosse outlined the obligation of a community newspaper editorial page to explain the community to itself, the obligation of editorial interpretation for the reader to comprehend the significance of local events, to see a sequence to local happenings that can be interpreted in the light of some ultimate community goal.

Using this as a frame of reference, the author would offer the following observations about the Towne Courier as seen during the ten-week period from October 2 to December 4, 1974.

(1) Its extensive sports, city government and civic news coverage appear to be adequate to satisfy readers' interests and needs.

(2) Too much space proportionately is used for bulletin board news items and columns such as the television listings with extremely low interest and readership.

(3) Religious news seems to have a very low priority, and there is room for in-depth articles about religious activities, or programs associated with religiously-oriented groups, possibly including a series of visits to community churches to determine and report on their perspectives and contributions to overall community objectives.

(4) Cultural activities are given a large amount of space, but in

bulletin-board fashion. It would seem that this coverage could be broadened to give Town Courier readers a knowledgeable and sophisticated look at what the vast exposure of talent at Michigan State University means to the community. The university itself should contain a reservoir of potential specialists qualified to convey this message.

(5) Proportion of school news is very low compared to the generally-accepted theory that education of the community's children is of prime importance to the reader. Regular visits to schools and regular contact with school administrators at all levels, who should be anxious to explain their programs and activities, should stimulate a number of news sources who would be able to support a regular column of school news to complement the mostly routine present coverage of school board meetings.

(6) The editorial page and op-ed page could be more concerned with local issues. Editorials of specific local interest and relevance hopefully could stimulate local letters to the editor, and maximum use could be made out of the op-ed page for interpretive articles and in-depth studies that would in fact help explain the community to itself.

It comes to mind that one good place to begin might be an article or articles explaining the inter-relationship of East Lansing and Michigan State University, and bringing public awareness to focus on this one issue of great significance to East Lansing.

The author would suggest an individual approach by the Towne Courier to its particular situation, and offers Sim's words as an appropriate manifesto:

> If the community weekly is, as it has been called, the stronghold of free individual expression, it bears a responsibility toward all men as individuals. The danger to it lies in the tremendous economic pressure to make it an instrument of mass expression, an organ of mass communication.[93]

FOOTNOTES

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[5]Schnore, p. 139

[6]Schnore, p. 141

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[52]Janowitz, p. 157.

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[79]"MSU Passes on Housing Problem,Say Commissioners," East Lansing Towne Courier, July 17, 1974, p. C8

[80]"Student Housing Worries Bailey," East Lansing Towne Courier, October 23, 1974, p. 1.

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[82]"Economics a Factor in City Housing Crundh," The State News, August 23, 1974, p. 1.

[83]"Record Number of Triples Plagues Residence Halls," The State News, September 26, 1974, p. 1.

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## * Notes

Page

7. *The mean income is the amount obtained by dividing the total income of a particular statistical universe by the number of units in that universe, while the median income is the amount which divides the distribution into two equal groups, one having incomes above the median and the other having incomes below the median.

11. *Although Abbott Road was named for Dr. Abbot, official city records and maps list it as "Abbott Road."

12. *Now the Pere Marquette.

12. **Six fares for 25¢.

12. ***The Split Rock was a huge granite boulder of several tons located on Michigan Avenue about midway between the state capitol and the college, and was known to students as the "half-way stone." A cherry tree grew in a crack in the rock, and it finally split the rock in two, with a two-foot-wide gap at its upper edges. The rock was removed in 1924 when Michigan Avenue was widened.

14. *Although Barnhart refers to "community newspapers" as newspapers within a city, the words are used interchangeably with "weekly newspapers" and "suburban newspapers" in other references and have been so used in this study.

17. *Bryce W. Rucker, The First Freedom (carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. 34, says the two weekly newspaper groups with which the author has been associated are the largest chains. "The largest urban-suburban chain owner is Lerner Home Newspapers with 33 paid and free circulation weeklies in northside Chicago and its adjoining suburban area. Total circulation is approximately 350,000. Close behind are the Minneapolis-St. Paul Crawford Publications, 28 weeklies, and Great Western Publishing Company of California, 21."

21. *To this, the author would add, at a price far less than that of the metropolitan daily.

23. *When the author was graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1954, most of his classmates sought jobs on Twin City daily newspapers, which at that time paid a Guild minimum scale of $54 per week, while jobs on suburban newspapers at $20 to $30 more per week were considered less desirable.

28. *This is borne out by the author's experience in Chicago, where editorial employees, represented by the Newspaper Guild, during negotiations compared their salary structure with that of the metropolitan dailies and bargained for equity in pay because in essence they were doing the same work.

33. *The State News is published Monday through Friday during the fall, winter and spring quarters, and Monday-Wednesday-Friday during the summer sessions.

34. *Under the Towne Courier voluntary pay system, a carrier delivers the newspaper to every home on his route and collects later if possible. The customer, however, receives a newspaper whether or not payment is made. Editor and publisher Mrs. Vivian F. Oates estimates that collections are made for 40 percent of the newspapers delivered under this system.

35. *By "big shopping," Mrs. Oates says she means major appliances, automotive and hardware.

42. *"Check-passing" pictures are defined by Mrs. Oates as those which depict someone from the organization presenting a check to some worthy organization as the procedes from a fund-raising event.

57. *Under the voluntary pay plan described in Chapter III.

61. The op-ed page is the news page opposite the editorial page which newspapers have taken to recent years to using for interpretive, analysis, or background articles to complement straight news coverage.

61. **Measurements in this study are noted in column inches and include space taken up by the accompanying headline.

66. *The editorial and accompanying picture were not keyed to any news article, but page one of this issue was filled with the story of present East Lansing residents who had lived through the relocation mentioned in the editorial.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONS AND REPLIES TO
### TOWNE COURIER READERSHIP SURVEY

These are the questions asked and replies received by percentages, in an informal telephone survey conducted by the East Lansing Towne Courier.

1. Do you receive the Towne Courier?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 61 percent |
| No | 39 percent |

2. Why are you not receiving the Towne Courier?

| | |
|---|---|
| Several papers | 18 percent |
| No reason | 23 percent |
| Don't like | 33 percent |
| Too costly | 6 percent |
| No time to read | 9 percent |
| Too much advertising | 3 percent |
| Poor service | 5 percent |
| Miscellaneous | 3 percent |

3. How do you receive the Towne Courier?

| | |
|---|---|
| Mail | 51 percent |
| Carrier | 40 percent |
| Receive free | 5 percent |
| Newstand | 4 percent |

4. How long does the paper stay in your home?

| | |
|---|---|
| One month | 1 percent |
| Two weeks | 4 percent |
| One week | 55 percent |
| Four days | 4 percent |
| Three days | 12 percent |
| Two days | 13 percent |
| One day | 3 percent |
| Hours | 4 percent |
| No answer or don't Know | 5 percent |

5. Which part of the paper do you particularly enjoy?

| | |
|---|---|
| All | 42 percent |
| Sports | 10 percent |
| Local news | 17 percent |
| Classified | 7 percent |
| Arts | 2 percent |
| Cooking | 3 percent |
| School news | 2 percent |
| Front page | 2 percent |
| Features | 2 percent |
| City council news | 4 percent |
| Pictures | 4 percent |
| Second section | 1 percent |
| Editorial page | 1 percent |
| Miscellaneous | 3 percent |

6. Do you look at television listings?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 24 percent |
| No | 73 percent |
| No response | 3 percent |

7. What would you like to see added to the paper?

| | |
|---|---|
| Nothing | 77 percent |
| More sports | 4 percent |
| Bigger art section | 1 percent |
| More city council News | 1 percent |
| School news | 2 percent |
| Local news | 1 percent |
| Features | 1 percent |
| Better organization | 1 percent |
| Cartoons | 1 percent |
| Plant news | 1 percent |
| Women's section | 1 percent |
| Bigger community calendar | 1 percent |
| More letters | 1 percent |
| Miscellaneous | 7 percent |

8. Do you subscribe to a daily newspaper?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 81 percent |
| No | 17 percent |
| No response | 2 percent |

9. Which daily newspaper(s) do you get?

| | |
|---|---|
| State Journal | 58 percent |
| Detroit Free Press | 15 percent |

| | |
|---|---|
| State News | 1 percent |
| State Journal and Free Press | 12 percent |
| State Journal and State News | 1 percent |
| Three or Four papers | 4 percent |
| No response | 9 percent |

10. Which is your primary shopping area?

| | |
|---|---|
| Meridian Mall | 30 percent |
| Frandor | 20 percent |
| Meijer's | 24 percent |
| Downtown East Lansing | 15 percent |
| Brookfield Plaza | 9 percent |
| Other | 2 percent |

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