

THE TRANSPARENT GATE: ONLINE AND PRINT EDITIONS AT TWO CENTRAL
FLORIDA NEWSPAPERS

By

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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This thesis examines the relationship between the content in the print and Internet editions of two central Florida newspapers, the *Ocala Star-Banner* and the *Orlando Sentinel*. These two newspapers represent separate classes of circulation size and corporate ownership while sharing circulation areas and local and state news stories. This study is aimed at contributing to the base of knowledge concerning the role of the online newspaper and its relationship to its print counterpart.

The researcher sought to determine the similarity in content in the two editions by examining several variables. These included the localization of written content, source of written and graphical content, type of graphical content made available and the article headline text. These variables were examined using a quantitative content analysis.

This study found dissimilarities between the two editions. The Internet edition offered a greater scope of state and local content, while the print edition provided more national and global content. This study also found that articles in the print editions were

more likely to include a photograph than articles in the online editions and headlines were nearly always replicated verbatim from the print to the online edition.

The study concluded that the focus of the online edition at the two newspapers is more localized than the print edition and its articles seldom offer supplementary content.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Overview

If one begins with the reinterpretation of Plato's simile of the cave contained in *Public Opinion* (Lippmann, 1922), the conveyance of information from the mass media to its audience has been studied for nearly a century. Since Lippmann's idea of the media's creation of a "picture in our heads," many theories have been initiated and multiple innovations have assisted in the study of mass communication. Among communication innovations, the Internet encompasses a unique audience and vast amount of information. While television and print communications offer information from an organization to the public, the Internet provides interactive communication to a global audience. Like communication devices before it, the Internet has inspired scholarly literature that searches to understand its use, its messages, and its effects on society.

Among journalists, the Internet presents a potential quandary and an opportunity. While reaching a wider audience and providing advanced technology for transmission of information, the newspaper Web site often channels information without demand for the financial compensation that makes it a viable business and its information a valuable commodity. Newspaper editors are faced with an industry-wide question of how to present information on the Internet without compromising the traditional pay-for-access format (Bolt, 2002; Geyskens, Gielens, & Dekimpe, 2002; Outing, 2002a, 2002b; Hall, 2001). This question has been answered in various manners. Some newspaper Internet

editions require payment for access to content, most notably *The Wall Street Journal*, where in 1999, 50,000 users paid \$59 annually for online access (Hall, 2001). Beyond requiring payment for content, other newspapers offer different levels of access to information: Some require registration for Internet content; some continue to offer online content for free while charging for archived content; some offer entire current-day and archived Internet content free while requiring payment for only the print edition. This inconsistency tells of an evolving and developing model of media practice.

The costs of acquiring information online are often borne in the purchasing of a computer and an Internet connection (Hall, 2001), not in direct payment to the information provider. This shift in consumer costs has resulted in the newspaper's reevaluation of how to present its information, at what costs, and on what medium. The print edition is traditionally profitable because of its advertising revenue, which allows a newspaper's financial viability (Bagdikian, 2000). A newspaper's print audience is what maintains the print advertising revenue. The Internet edition has proved to be less profitable in many cases it actually runs at a deficit. However, more than 3,000 U. S. daily newspapers have Internet editions that run information similar to what is found in the print edition (Palser, 2002). Past studies have shown different graphics, stories, interactive features in each edition (Dibean, 1999; Gubman & Greer, 1997; Li, 2002; Singer, 2001a, 2001b).

Exposure to each edition offers different exposure to what is considered newsworthy. The different information traveling through each model of transmission illustrates the concept of media gatekeeping: Who gets what information.

Gatekeeping and the Internet Newspaper

Gatekeeping as constructed by Lewin (1947b) is composed of “channels” that “proceed in definite steps” (p. 144). Lewin uses the distribution and consumption of food to describe this process. Channels to obtain food include the purchase at the grocery market or growing vegetables in a garden. After obtaining the food, the next step in the gatekeeping process is another channel option, to store or consume the food. The progression of channels can continue to the preparation and consumption of the food.

Once material passes through a channel its properties are altered to reflect its modification. Lewin’s example is the status of food after purchase: “Having invested a substantial sum of money in the food, she [provider] will be especially insistent that the food safely reach the table and be eaten” (p. 145). This is an example of the “gate,” which is a section in the channel that dictates whether the good passes through the channel based on its properties prior to entering the channel.

The gate or gate sections are governed by impartial rules or by “gate keepers” (Lewin, 1947b). The gatekeeper in this example is the person who either buys or produces the food. Impartial rules, according to Lewin, can include economic and social factors.

Lewin only briefly mentions gatekeeping’s application to the study of communications, but the widespread acceptance of Internet editions by newspapers to complement print editions provides a unique opportunity to study communications’ gatekeeping function between editions. Lewin’s food consumption model can be replicated by substituting the material (instead of food, written and graphical content), the gatekeeper (instead of the purchaser or provider of food, the newspaper editor), and the

gate (instead of the purchase of food, the transfer of information to the Internet or newspaper from the newsroom).

In this revision of Lewin's gatekeeping model, the news content – both written and graphical – is present in the newsroom from multiple sources: First, the newspaper staff; second, the wire service or syndicate; third, freelance writers; and fourth, the readers of the newspaper in letters to the editor. This information is judged by the gatekeeper (editor) and is either passed through the Internet channel – and transferred to the newspaper's online edition – or not passed through the channel to be placed online. Using this model, the researcher intends to examine the content that is present in the print and online editions of two newspapers.

Research Purpose

Applying the idea of media gatekeeping to the Internet newspaper is not a new concept, however, current research is limited. Further evaluation is required, if for no other reason than the constantly changing nature of Internet news content and presentation (McMillan, 2000). This study intends to demonstrate the news content differences, in amount and display, in the print and online editions of the daily newspaper. Both the print and online newspaper serve as gatekeeping channels through which news and information travel to its audience; these channels stream different amounts and types of information to each respective audience (Singer, 2001b; Gubman & Greer, 1997; Schafer, 2002).

By examining the print and online editions of selected newspapers, the author hopes to demonstrate the different “pictures in our heads” that each format presents. This study will look at the news content of the print and online editions of two central Florida newspapers and compare the results. Examining the content in the print edition and

comparing it to the online content allows comparison of what stories are redistributed online and how articles appear online compared to the print appearance. By displaying the variance in content, the author will demonstrate the contrasting perspective delivered to the readers of a publication's online and its print edition.

Thesis Outline

The following chapter investigates the fundamentals of the gatekeeping process in mass communication. The author reviews the seminal studies before narrowing the focus to electronic and Internet gatekeeping. There are two established manners of investigating newspapers' Internet presence: First, by looking at the content and format of newspapers' Internet presence, and second, by researching the wired newsroom and the process of channeling information from the print to the online edition. For the sake of brevity, the latter will be reviewed but not analyzed; the focus of this study is the articles presented in each edition (print or online). Chapter 2 will close with the study's research questions.

In Chapter 3, the researcher will present a quantitative content analysis model used to collect data for this study. This study employed a composite week model that investigated several variables. Chapter 3 will also discuss the sample used in the study, the units of analysis, and the general methodology.

Chapter 4 will look at the findings of the quantitative content analysis of the print and online editions of the newspapers. The findings will establish the dissimilarity between the two editions of the selected newspapers in several categories. Differences in content can be found in the geographic emphasis of the stories presented in each edition, the source of the written and graphical content in each edition, the type of graphical

content used online and in print, and the phrasing of the headlines among identical stories.

Chapter 5 will discuss the study's findings and discuss the implications and weaknesses of the conducted research. Chapter 5 will also conclude the study with a general conclusion of this study's significance.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The adoption of new technologies by established media demands reevaluation of the production and presentation of information to its audience. When a newspaper establishes an Internet presence, the effects are significant in personnel, financial distribution, and most notably, the diversity of channels on which to transmit the information that allows the organization continued viability. Media gatekeeping theory is effective when evaluating the dissimilarity between content produced by traditional, established print media and Internet-based media. This chapter begins with a review of relevant academic research and literature, followed by research questions.

Gatekeeping in Mass Communication

As noted in chapter 1, the concept of a “gate keeper” was introduced by social psychologist Kurt Lewin, who in 1947 coined the term while studying food consumption habits. The gatekeeper in Lewin’s study was the person who decided what food appeared on a family’s dinner table. In the process leading to the appearance of food on the dinner table, the food passed through several “channels” or gate sections. Lewin briefly related this process to the news selection process, which he noted must be governed by a gatekeeper or “impartial” rules.

Lewin’s seminal study was followed by White’s introduction of Mr. Gates (1950), the wire editor who functioned as the at a medium-sized Midwestern newspaper. Mr.

Gates served as the gate for the news that would appear on the front and “jump” pages of the newspaper, and his decision was final. For this reason, White considered Mr. Gate’s decision-making to be the most important of the various “gates” of news selection that each story passed through. White’s study has since met criticism, however, for limiting its analysis to a single wire editor (Bass, 1969), and for not addressing the personal factors that influenced Mr. Gate’s decision-making processes (Gieber, 1960).

Since Lewin’s and White’s initial studies, researchers have investigated other channels in the process of media gatekeeping. Gieber (1960) sought to analyze the gatekeeping function of newspapers by reviewing the “judgments and perceptions of some of the persons involved in the transmission of news to the community” (p. 199). He concluded that the reporter must judge “whether the information is sufficiently important” (p. 200) to the audience while considering its newsworthiness. McQuail and Windahl (1981) expanded on this approach by creating a hypothetical model that demonstrated the transference of messages from the news source (N) to the media gatekeeper, who selects messages deemed suitable for the audience (M).

Beyond the organization that delivers the information, the process of gatekeeping can be narrowed to the individual consumer of information. Shoemaker (1991) defined this perspective as a process “by which billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day.” This interpretation holds certain validity among contemporary media consumers, who are offered far more choices of communication channels than those of previous decades.

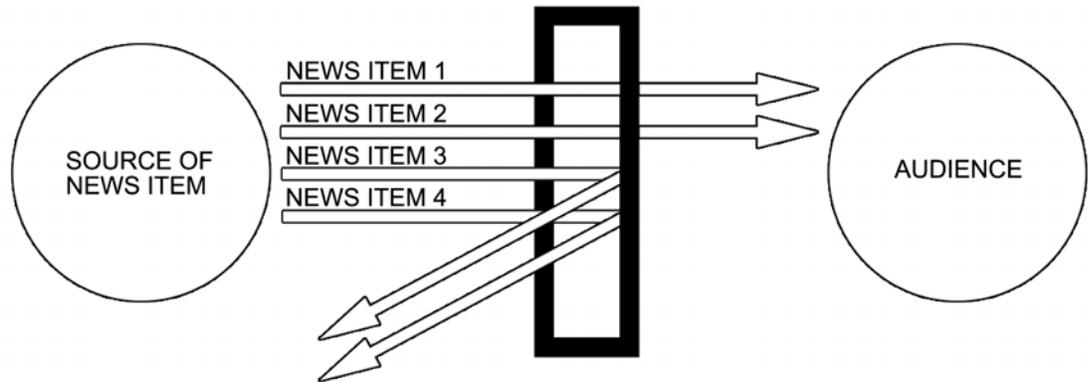


Figure 2.1: White's version of gatekeeping (based on Shoemaker, 1991, p. 10)

Gatekeeping and Social Reality

While contemporary media users have more sources of news and information than in the past, one effect of receiving that information remains unchanged: the construction of social reality from the information provided by news sources. When information is judged newsworthy by editors and passed through the gate to the public, it influences the public perception of what is considered important (Shoemaker, 1991). This can be achieved in mass media beyond journalism. Advertising can influence consumer behavior by portraying a product as necessary or beneficial; government announcements can inform the public of an array of information, from weather alerts to crime trends; editorials can influence the public by making judgment on an issue with supporting facts. But news is “the language in which most other claims to attention circulate” (Schudson, 2003), because it can strengthen public knowledge through unbiased reporting of facts

and circumstances without the appearance of conflict of interest between the source of the information and the facts presented.

This distinction between journalism and other mass media gives news a unique position in a democratic culture. Journalists are expected to perform watchdog duties on public and private institutions that would otherwise remain unchecked. Because journalism offers theoretically unbiased information, it gains greater respect among the public. Schudson (2003) calls this “moral amplification”: “A news story is an announcement of a special kind. . . . It announces to audiences that a topic deserves public attention.” The responsibility of the journalistic gatekeeper is to keep the public informed.

The process of journalistic gatekeeping goes beyond than the model of general consumption presented by Lewin (1947). Shoemaker (1991) provides an example of gatekeeping on the individual:

The process of gatekeeping is the process of creating social reality: If an event is rejected by the media I use, it probably will not become part of the social reality I perceive. If the event is accepted and displayed prominently, then it may not only become part of my version of social reality but it may strongly influence my view of the world. (p. 27)

Because the public perception of issues is framed generally by news organizations and specifically by gatekeepers, the news culture of the Internet that offers immediate news and information, presents new responsibilities for journalists and the public.

Electronic Newspaper Gatekeeping

The introduction of recent computer technologies into the newsroom was first examined by Garrison (1980), who studied the adoption of the word processor and its effect on the gatekeeping process. Garrison found that despite new technologies, slot editors relied on printed hard copy (paper) for the delivery to copy editors, who edited

hard copy content on word processors to create a soft copy (electronic) before sending the story to production. The study concluded that while the technology's effect on the newspaper's gatekeeping function was minimal, the computer eased editing while facilitating the copy flow from reporter to production.

The use of photographs transmitted via the Associated Press wire was studied in a gatekeeping study by Wanta and Roark (1992/1993). The researchers found that photographic gatekeeping decisions depended largely upon the newspapers' tradition, national trends, newspaper market size, and which news events provided a wide variety of images.

The introduction of the Internet has provided a new perspective on the gatekeeping process. It would seem the process of gatekeeping is rendered obsolete with the Internet, a medium that allows consumers to organize personal interests without the traditional gatekeepers to channel information. But the few studies that have explored online gatekeeping suggest the role of the gatekeeper is not disappearing but evolving. This revision of the gatekeeping process has placed nontraditional media representatives as gatekeepers, including discussion list owners (Allen, 1994); online newspaper editors (Singer, 2001); and Webmasters (Beard & Olsen, 1999).

One manifestation of the gatekeeper is the Webmaster, who Beard and Olsen (1999) argue fulfills characteristics of the mass media gatekeeper. The Webmaster, like the newspaper editor, makes decisions regarding the selection and presentation of messages. Like other traditional media gatekeepers, the researchers found that the Webmaster's skills and experiences influence content and selection of information when performing the gatekeeping role (Beard & Olsen, 1999). Internet editors at smaller and

medium-sized newspapers are often expected to perform multiple duties, while larger newspapers allow one employee to assume the role of Webmaster (Singer, Tharp and Haruta, 1999).

Among journalists, the online gatekeeper plays a unique role. Unlike reporters or traditional editors, online staffers are often understood to be “content providers” who understand the technology necessary for putting the information on the Web (Lasica, 1997). The content that is replicated from the print to the online edition is often referred to as “shovelware,” or “content that was created for the print product and has simply been shoveled on the Web” (Singer, 2001a). Many critics (Katz, 1994; Regan, 1995; Lasica, 1996) begrudge shovelware as lacking original content in a fresh medium and not fully utilizing the technology available to online. This criticism has been investigated repeatedly – to mixed results – over the past decade.

Gubman and Greer (1997) found inconsistencies among sites after analyzing 83 online newspapers of all circulation categories for content, structure and interactivity. The researchers found that electronic newspapers offered content that was mainly reproduced exactly from the print edition. There was no localization of national stories and few changes in the linear storytelling format adapted from the print edition. The researchers also found few sites using multimedia or interactive tools to assist in storytelling. Gubman and Greer concluded that much of the criticism of online journalism was well founded.

Singer (2001a) looked at six Colorado newspapers’ online editions and examined the content for geography (local versus non-local), Web-only content, and artwork. The study found very little original content on the online editions. Of 2,455 total stories

analyzed, only 158 were Internet-exclusive, and 2,173 ran only in the print edition, suggesting that “shovelware” continued to be prevalent at these papers. In the Web sites studied, more space was devoted to metro and local news, proportionately, than to the content offered in the print edition. Another characteristic of the online edition, according to Singer, was the lack of appealing graphics. Singer noted that “despite the Web’s multimedia capabilities, many online papers are less visually enticing than their print counterparts, at least in terms of information-conveying graphics” (p. 76). Singer’s analysis seems to agree with Gubman and Greer’s and that of other critics – too much shovelware, little original content, few multimedia applications.

Singer (2001b) examined the online coverage of the 2000 local and national elections by surveying editors at the largest newspaper in each of the 50 states and all American newspapers included in the Newspaper Association of America’s largest circulation category (250,000 and greater). Realizing the Internet offers means of enhancing political discourse as a two-way, interactive medium with tools such as polls, e-mail, discussion forums and information-retrieval tools, Singer sought to measure the difference in Internet utilization between the 1996 and 2000 elections. In the four years separating the elections, the study found more original content (78.9% of the analyzed sites offered Web-only election coverage), increased traffic to Web sites, and extensive interactive features including ballot guides, detailed candidate profiles, precinct finders, and archived poll results. The online newspapers also offered frequent updates that permitted competition with television as the medium of choice (Singer, 2001). These capabilities drew a greater audience to Internet news sites during Election 2000, when nearly 20% of Americans reported getting campaign news online, according to the Pew

Research Center for the People and the Press (Schafer, 2001). Such statistics suggest that the Internet is becoming a viable political news source and gatekeeping is indeed moving beyond simple shovelware.

Arant and Anderson (2000) performed perhaps the most extensive survey of newspaper editors regarding online media ethics in the contemporary environment. Despite not focusing on Internet newspaper gatekeeping, the survey offers insights into the amount of original content relative to shovelware at newspapers of various sizes. With over 200 responses, the researchers built upon Singer's foundations and reestablished that Internet newspapers are moving beyond repurposed content. Among the wide-ranging sample (from less than 15,000-circulation to more than 200,000-circulation newspapers), Arant and Anderson found only 20% offering no unique content on the Internet. Additionally, 31% offered Internet-only content and 53% presented Internet-only sections and features. The survey also provided insight into what is added when a story goes online: 60% of editors said they added hypertext links; 30% changed artwork and photos, and 23% changed the structure of the story (Arant and Anderson, 2000).

Electronic gatekeeping has been examined from the inception of wired content and the introduction of the word processor to the current circumstances of the global audience and interactive mass media. Beyond specific gatekeeping studies, the researcher must examine the electronic newsroom, where important gatekeeping and editorial decisions are made.

The Electronic Newsroom

The Internet offers the media professional new means of both collecting and transmitting information. While researchers such as Garrison have written extensively on

reporters' use of the Internet for reporting, the purpose of this study is not to examine reporter's use of information; therefore, media professionals' use of the Internet for research will be ignored here. The focus of this section is the environment at Internet newsrooms – how many employees, what tasks are employed, the general relationship between the online and print newsroom and the disparities between large and small newspapers. These variables allow for inconsistencies in online newspaper's content and appearance, which is the focus of this study.

How to staff an online edition of a newspaper continues to be explored differently at various institutions. For example, the New York *Times* houses its online staff in a different building than the print staff, while *The Wall Street Journal* reconfigured its newsroom to accommodate both staffs (Singer et al., 1999). Even among newspapers with the same ownership, approaches differ. The Boston *Globe* and the New York *Times* are both owned by the New York Times Company, yet take varied approaches at their Internet identities. While the *Times* emphasizes similarity to its print edition, the *Globe's* Web site, Boston.com, serves as a city guide as well as a media outlet.

There is perhaps no greater indication of technological and human resources than the circulation of the newspaper and its operating budget. Garrison (1998) examined technological discrepancies among newspapers of various circulation categories and found that large newspapers (newspapers with a circulation greater than 50,000) hold several advantages over smaller newspapers. Garrison (1998) found that large newspapers:

- Have more individuals involved in computer-assisted reporting than small newspapers.

- Are more likely to provide computer training than small newspapers.
- Subscribe to “expensive” (p. 5) online databases (Lexis-Nexis, Database Technologies’ Autotrack Plus, Dow Jones) more often than small newspapers.
- Devote a greater amount of financial support to online services.

While conceding the “common sense” (p. 6) findings of the study, Garrison did show that large newspapers are able to grant more resources to Internet editions and computer-assisted reporting than counterparts at smaller newspapers. During the time of the survey (January through March 1997), more than 76% of larger newspapers, and fewer than 60% of the smaller newspapers, had Internet editions (Garrison, 1998).

Singer et al (1999) investigated the responsibilities, attitudes and salaries of online and print staffers and editors in her 1998 survey that looked at online and print newsrooms. Like Garrison, Singer found that larger papers were likely to offer resources, especially in terms of online edition employees, where smaller newspapers were more likely to have crossover staff (employees performing tasks at two departments) from the print to the online newsroom. The study also showed copy editors to be the most likely to do double duty in the online and print newsrooms. Financially, print employees fared better than online employees, and the sizes of online staffs were smaller than those of print newsrooms (Singer et al, 1999). These disadvantages in the online newsroom affected attitudes in both the print and online newsrooms, as evidenced in open-ended responses to the survey. Several print managers described their job as harder because of firm deadlines and space restrictions. Online managers said some of the problems they face include finding qualified applicants for technological positions and the difficulty of

producing a profitable product. Online managers also complained about a lack of respect from their print colleagues (Singer et al, 1999).

Justification for Study

The process of gatekeeping determines what information is provided to the public from traditional journalistic organizations. Prior to the implementation of the online edition at daily newspapers, only one channel from the print journalist to the public existed to measure the gatekeeping process. With more than 1,200 daily newspapers offering an Internet edition (Singer, 2001b), there are now two channels that can be compared and analyzed.

The collective criticism of newspapers' Internet edition is the repurposing of content, or "shoveling," from the print edition. The introduction of computer technologies to the newsroom alters the editors' ability to dictate what information is provided to the public to shape readers' social reality of what is newsworthy. If print edition content is "shoveled" to the Internet edition, the process of discriminating between content passed through this channel is eliminated. This holds important societal consequences in a democracy that allows citizens to influence public policy. If the online edition replicates print edition content, it follows that the information provided to the audience is not unique to either newspaper edition. Past studies (Singer, 2001a; Li, 2002; Gubman & Greer, 1997) have demonstrated that online editions are not precisely replicated from the print edition and usually include a greater proportion of local stories compared to national and global articles. These findings demonstrate the online newspaper reader perceives a more localized reality of what is newsworthy compared to the reader of the print edition.

The process of taking content from one edition and channeling it to another format is an example of gatekeeping. The gatekeepers are the editors who decide what print content is to be repurposed in the Internet edition. How the two editions differ determines the extent of distinct information provided to the each audience. Three manners in which the editions can differ are the written and graphical source of the article, the geographic emphasis of the article and the supplementary interactive features in the online article. This will be the focus of the current study.

This study will apply past models to the gatekeeping process linking the print and Internet editions at two daily newspapers. By examining the print content and comparing it to the Internet edition content, the researcher hopes to find what content is repurposed in the Internet edition. Figure 2.2 illustrates the process that will be measured. The original newspaper print edition content will be analyzed and the results will be used to find what content was transferred to the Internet edition. This will be measured by

geographic emphasis and the source of written and graphical content.

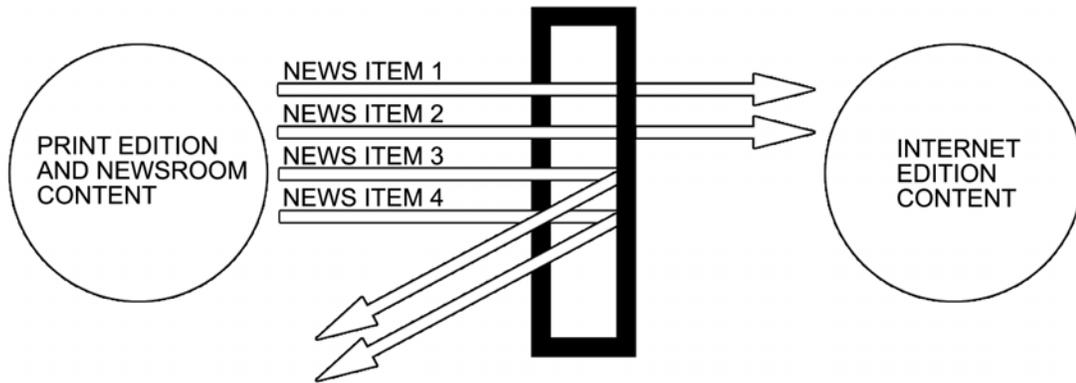


Figure 2.2: Inter-edition newspaper gatekeeping

This study will demonstrate the different information provided to the audiences of both the print and Internet newspaper edition.

Research Questions

The process of media gatekeeping in both print- and online-edition newspapers has been investigated. Singer (2001) offers a validated design for examining the discrepancies between print and online editions of newspapers. This includes the representation of the Newspaper Association of America's (NAA) circulation categories and the use of a constructed week to measure variables. Using established methods of comparing online and print content, this study will ask the following:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between geographical location of content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online)? Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between use of staff and non-staff content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online?) Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between graphical content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online?) Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)?

RQ4: Is there a relationship between headline content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online)? Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)?

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Overview

To examine the mass media gatekeeping process, researchers rely upon different methodologies, including the case study, the survey, the in-depth interview and the content analysis. While each offers advantages, content analysis allows the researcher to unobtrusively compare the exact content that passes through the “gates” or “channels” in the process. This becomes especially relevant when comparing the content of a newspaper’s online and print edition because often the stories are repurposed “shovelware” and lack overall creativity on the online edition (Katz, 1994; Regan, 1995; Gubman & Greer, 1997; Singer, 2001b). Print and online editions have been compared and researched during the past decade, but due to the Internet’s continual adaptation of new technologies and continuous changes in content (McMillan, 2000) past findings must be reevaluated to measure current validity.

This chapter will begin with definitions and functions of content analysis, followed by a detailed explanation of the researcher’s selection criteria for newspapers, time frame, and stories. After listing the coding categories, the conceptual and operational definitions of key terms stated in the research questions will be provided.

Content Analysis Description

Berelson offered the most commonly used definition of content analysis: “Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (1952, p. 18). Krippendorff (1980) explains

content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (p. 21). Content analysis is by nature an unobtrusive technique that prevents errors being included in the data due to the subject’s knowledge of the study. Potential subject factors that could invalidate a study include: Awareness, influences, stereotypes, and experimenter-interviewer interaction (Krippendorff, 1980). Inferences from content analysis involve the sender and receiver of the message, the communication channel and the message itself.

Study Sample

To compare online and print content of newspapers, one must examine articles in both formats. Two newspapers were selected and both formats were examined for six variables. The units of analysis for this study were the individual articles in both the print and the online format. Considering each format for a single story allowed for individual analysis of a single story in two formats.

To ensure validity beyond a single week, the researcher employed the constructed week format of sampling. To construct a composite week, the researcher randomly selected a Sunday from the sample period, followed by random selections of a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. This eliminates the possibility of overrepresentation of certain editions of the week, such as the larger Sunday paper. Using a composite week also allows greater generalization over time (Riffe, Aust, and Lacy, 1993). Both online and print editions of each newspaper were content analyzed during each day of the composite week period. In this study, the composite week was constructed during four weeks beginning Saturday, February 1, 2003, and ending Saturday, March 1, 2003. During the seven selected dates, the researcher conducted all coding for the print and Internet newspaper content.

This content analysis includes two central Florida newspapers, the Orlando *Sentinel* and the Ocala *Star-Banner*. These newspapers offer contrasting ownership and circulation. Both, however, share overlapping circulation areas, and subsequently distribute similar local and state news stories and coverage.

The Orlando *Sentinel* has a circulation of 254,956 (Editor & Publisher Yearbook, 2002) and is owned by the Tribune Company, the second largest newspaper publisher in the United States (behind Gannett). The Tribune Company owns 12 newspapers including The Chicago *Tribune*, Los Angeles *Times*, South Florida *Sun-Sentinel*, and *Newsday* (Hoover's Company Profile Database, 2003).

The Ocala *Star-Banner* has a circulation of 52,041 (Editor and Publisher, 2002) and is owned by the New York Times Company. The New York Times Company includes the New York *Times* newspaper, Boston *Globe*, the international *Herald-Tribune*, 18 smaller dailies (including the *Star-Banner*) and three weeklies (Hoover's Inc, 2003).

The contrast in circulation size is relevant because it has been demonstrated that large newspapers offer greater resources for online productions than smaller newspapers (Singer et al, 1999; Garrison, 1998). Ownership of the newspapers is relevant because different corporate ownership indicates unique management philosophies in relation to online and print publications.

Study Sample: Print Edition

The first articles to be selected and evaluated were those that appeared in the current-day print edition of the two newspapers. For both newspapers, the front section and local or state section were evaluated. In the *Star-Banner*, the local section is named "Marion," the name of the county of publication; in the *Sentinel*, the local section is

named “Local & State.” Other newspaper sections (sports, arts, entertainment, lifestyle, business, travel, general feature sections, weather and advertising sections) were ignored.

Also withheld from examination were “In Brief” stories or updates because these articles lacked image content and standard headlines. Determining what was an “In Brief” story varied among the two newspapers. The Orlando *Sentinel* notated these stories with a label reading “In Brief” and several one-paragraph stories. The *Star-Banner* labeled these articles under a general subject heading (for example, “Nation” or “World”) and included multiple paragraphs. Other than the briefs and updates, each current-day news story was coded in the two selected sections.

Study Sample: Online Edition

After coding stories from each newspaper’s front and local sections, the researcher examined the content of the same stories that appeared in the online edition. The Internet content was examined on the same date as the print publications’ release.

The method of finding the stories within the Internet edition included numerous techniques. First, the researcher used the search function located on the home page of each newspaper’s online edition. Inside the search form, the researcher initially entered the first four words of the article’s print headline. For example, if the print headline read, “Trauma centers warn lives could be at risk,” the researcher entered “Trauma centers warn lives” into the search form to examine results.

If the search results yielded stories included an identical headline or a subject matter related to the print edition article, the researcher determined whether the story was identical to the print edition by examining its first sentence and written content. If the initial search failed to produce any results, the researcher then entered the entire headline into the search form. The final step using the search function to find the story in the

online edition was to enter the article's reporter or author name, which resulted in a display of the recent stories by the reporter or author. The search function was the most commonly used method of finding online stories because it most often yielded articles offered in the print edition.

If every search attempt failed to produce the story or a closely related article, the researcher then manually searched the hypertext headlines appearing on the newspaper home page and individual section home pages. This method differed for each newspaper due to the each site's architecture.

The Orlando *Sentinel* offers five hypertext headlines on the top of the home page (<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/>) and lists 20 additional hypertext headlines at the bottom of the homepage under the label "More Headlines." Searching these headlines for stories found in the print edition was the first step in manual search process. Next, the researcher entered the "News" home page (<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/>) and evaluated its hypertext headlines for stories found in the print edition. Besides evaluating headlines on the "News" home page, the researcher investigated subsections contained in the "News" home page navigation bar. This included examining the hypertext headlines contained in the "Regional" section home page (<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/regional/>), the "State" section home page (<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/regional/>) and the Nation/World section homepage (<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/nationworld/>).

The Ocala *Star-Banner* online contains a more basic site structure than the *Sentinel* and thus required less intensive inquiry to find print stories that were not found with the search function. The home page (<http://www.starbanner.com/>) offered three featured

headlines with the beginning of the articles and 10 hypertext headlines under the label “AP Top Stories” which are updated periodically. These hypertext headlines were searched first. The researcher then examined the “News” section (<http://www.starbanner.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=NEWS>), which offered hypertext headlines for local, state, national and global news.

Only after these steps failed to produce an online version of the print story would the researcher concede that it was not included in the Internet edition of the newspaper. The researcher did not count Internet-exclusive stories for two reasons. First, as McMillian (2000) pointed out, the Internet is a constantly changing medium, one which does not rely on static dates or times to produce stories or editions. There is also no established time frame for which online stories remain posted in the online edition. Without means of ensuring consistency among articles, the researcher could not promise replicable results when finding Internet-exclusive articles.

The second reason is the process of gatekeeping, which evaluates the properties of goods before and after passing through a channel or gate region. The channel in this study separates the print edition story from the online story. The story appearing only in the Internet edition never passed through this channel and therefore offers no comparable counterpart appearing in the print edition. For these reasons, the researcher used a one-way model of finding stories appearing in both editions.

Sampling Procedure

During this composite week, both the print and online editions of the selected newspapers will be analyzed. Every current-day news story will be coded; sports, arts,

entertainment, lifestyle, business, travel, general feature sections, weather and advertising sections will be ignored. Artwork that accompanies selected news stories will be counted as well. The following will be coded:

- The newspaper where the story appeared. This consisted of two values with two possible entries.

1. Sentinel
2. Star-Banner

- The edition where the story appeared. This consisted of two values with two possible entries.

1. Print
2. Internet

- The date of the article, expressed in month, day and year of publication. Also recorded was the day of the week. Where xx=month, yy=day, zzzz=year,

xx/yy/zzzz

- The type of image(s) that accompanied the story. The following values were recorded:

1. Photograph
2. Cartoon
3. Infographic

4. Composite Image
5. Photograph and Infographic
6. Photograph and Composite Image
7. None
8. Photograph, Composite Image and Infographic
9. Infographic and Composite Image

- The source of the image(s) that accompanied the story. The following values were recorded – entries with multiple sources indicate multiple images and sources.

When an article contained two or more images, the researcher coded the source for each and the results required multiple categories for image source.

1. Staff
2. Wire Service or Syndicate
3. Contributor
4. Another Newspaper
5. Staff and Wire Service/Syndicate
6. Government (Police photos, NASA, etc.)
7. None
8. Staff and Contributor
9. Staff and Government

- The geographic emphasis of the story. This was divided into five categories: metro (about something inside the county in which the newspaper is located); state (inside Florida but outside the newspaper's home county); national (a national story, outside of Florida); international (any story outside the United States). Some stories could ultimately be coded in multiple categories; for example, the Elian Gonzalez saga in 1999 was simultaneously an international, national and state story. In a case

of multiple locales, the story will be coded for each of the locations. The following values were recorded – entries with multiple sources indicate multiple images and sources.

1. Global
 2. National
 3. State
 4. Metro
 5. Metro and State
 6. Metro, State and National
 7. State and National
 8. National and Global
 9. Metro and Global
 10. Metro, National and Global
 11. Metro, State, National and Global
- The source of the article’s written content, or the writer’s or reporter’s affiliation.
The following values were recorded.

1. Staff
2. Wire Service/Syndicate
3. Contributor
4. Another Newspaper
5. None

- The headline that accompanied the article. The print headline was first recorded verbatim and then compared to the headline presented on the Internet edition (if applicable). This required three values.
 1. Print headline
 2. Online headline same
 3. Online headline different

- Six categories were created for online-only content which could not appear in print format. These included video, audio, poll, interactive graphic, “E-mail story” option and photo gallery. Each of these were recorded separately in the following format.
 1. None
 2. Present

Data Analysis

Utilizing the widely used statistical software program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the researcher employed chi-square tests to measure levels of statistical significance.

Chi-square tests are used to describe relationships between variables by using a null hypothesis (Babbie, 2001). The null hypothesis is defined by Babbie (2001) as “the assumption that there is no relationship between two variables in the total population.” By accounting for the null hypothesis, the chi-square test reveals the likelihood that the relationship between variables is real. The calculation of chi-square is based on the comparison between expected and obtained frequencies and is used to “determine the

probability that the discovered discrepancy could have resulted from sampling error alone” (Babbie, p. 487).

Tests of significance are commonly followed by an expressed level of significance. The level of significance is the probability that the association between variables could have been produced by sampling error, as opposed to what are considered genuine scientific relationships. For example, a significance level of .05 denotes that an association “as large as the observed one could not be expected to result from sampling error more than 5 times out of 100” (Babbie, p. 492). The significance level used in this study is less than .05 and permits the researcher to discard the null hypothesis at the 95% level.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

This study sought to compare content of articles appearing in the online and print edition of two newspapers in unique communities by asking the following research questions: Is there a relationship between geographical location of content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online)? Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)? Is there a relationship between use of staff and non-staff content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online?) Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)? Is there a relationship between graphical content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online?) Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)? Is there a relationship between headline content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online)? Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)?

When examining these questions, the researcher examined the content of articles in two sections, front and local, of newspapers varying in circulation volume and corporate ownership. The researcher then searched for the articles in the online edition of each newspaper. During the composite week of examination, the final story count for both editions of both newspapers was 743. The print story count was 418 full-length articles. Of these, 325 (77.8%) were offered in the online edition of the two newspapers. The Orlando *Sentinel's* story count during the composite week of examination totaled

444 articles for both its print and online edition. The Ocala *Star-Banner* story count during the same period totaled 299 articles for both editions.

The relationship between the individual newspapers and amount of content present in the print edition and repurposed content for online use is important to examine. If there is a significant difference in content between markets, this study would not be able to compare the two newspapers with statistical validity. The findings indicate no significant difference between the two newspapers studied. While a modest increase in story count was evident in the larger market (Orlando), there is no evidence that this varies because of market size. Because the difference between the two newspapers is negligible in story counts in both editions, it allows for valid comparison.

Table 4.1: Print and online story count by market

	Print	%	Online	%	Total	%
Orlando	252	60.29	192	59.08	444	59.76
Ocala	166	39.71	133	40.92	299	40.24
Total	418	100.00	325	100.00	743	100.00

Chi square = .0111347030396494, df = 1, not significant

Localization of Editions

The first research question examined the emphasis on geographic region in the print and Internet editions of both newspapers. As Singer (2001a) noted, the Internet is perceived as a niche medium and the newspaper Web site offers the editor the opportunity to provide unique local news on an international platform. The current study sought to examine the relationship between location of story and redistribution of articles from the print to the online edition of the Ocala *Star-Banner* and Orlando *Sentinel*.

When story location was compared with the edition (print and online) and the individual newspaper, the relationship was statistically significant -- the geographic location of the story does have a relationship to the story selection of online content. The

difference between the variables is strongest when looking at the *Sentinel* results, where residual analysis shows a strong relationship between its print and online edition content when looking at geographic location of stories. The greatest residual difference (-13.78) exists in the value of the *Sentinel*'s online global content, meaning that stories of a global subject are less likely to be repurposed in the online edition than stories with a more proximate geographic emphasis. This relationship continued when looking at the *Sentinel*'s online national content, which contained a residual value (-11.56) that indicates fewer national stories were made available online than expected. Residual analysis of the *Sentinel*'s state (10.09) and metropolitan stories (5.77) demonstrated an figure that exceeded expected values, which indicates more state and metropolitan stories were made available than expected.

The geographic stratification of articles appearing in the *Star-Banner* does not follow the pattern of providing more local content in the online edition. When looking at residual analysis of global (6.98) and national articles (4.51), there exist a greater number of articles than the expected value. Residual analysis of the state (-5.26) and metropolitan articles (-0.06) show a value that falls below the expected number of stories.

The findings show that while the *Sentinel*'s online content included more metropolitan and state stories than expected, the *Star-Banner* reproduced fewer state and metropolitan articles than expected. It appears that the NAA's largest circulation group exhibit significant differences in geography of articles appearing in both the online and print edition. At the smaller circulation newspaper a less-significant difference exists between the two editions.

Table 4.2: Geographic location of story by market and edition

	Orlando Print	Orlando Online	Ocala Print	Ocala Online	Total
Global	41	18	35	29	123
%	33.33	14.63	28.46	23.58	100.00
National	77	44	51	43	215
%	35.81	20.47	23.72	20.00	100.00
State	61	61	45	30	197
%	30.96	30.96	22.84	15.23	100.00
Metro	38	36	22	21	117
%	32.48	30.77	18.80	17.95	100.00
Multiple ¹	35	33	13	10	91
%	38.46	36.26	14.29	10.99	100.00
Total	252	192	166	133	743
%	33.92	25.84	22.34	17.90	100.00

Chi square = 28.2011616882942, df = 12, $P \leq .05$, significant

Reliance on Non-Staff Content

The second research question asked if there exists a relationship between use of staff and non-staff content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online) and if this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural). This was measured using two variables: First, the writer's affiliation (newspaper staff, wire service staff, or non-staff contributor), and secondly, the source of photographs or graphic work accompanying the article (staff, wire service, non-staff contributor, government source).

When both editions are counted, stories by writers not on the newspaper's staff totaled 443 (59.6%), while stories by writers affiliated with the newspaper totaled 300

¹ "Multiple" includes articles with more than one geographic classification, including: Metro and State; Metro, State and National; State and National; National and Global; Metro and Global; Metro, National and Global; and Metro, State, National and Global.

(40.4%). When looking at the source of stories within each edition, the contrast becomes more apparent. As displayed in Table 4.3, the distribution of staff and non-staff material across editions is substantial. Residuals for the *Sentinel*'s print edition demonstrate a greater-than-expected value of staff-written material (17.26) and a less-than-expected value for non-staff material (-17.26). When looking at the *Sentinel*'s online edition, the residuals for the staff-written content (39.48) and non-staff-written content (-39.48) are both considerable. This shows that while both editions of the *Sentinel* show a preference for staff-written material, the online edition reproduces staff content much more frequently than non-staff content.

The *Star-Banner* exhibits significant differences in the source of written content as well. But where the *Sentinel*'s online edition displayed more staff content, both the print and online editions of the *Star-Banner* displayed greater proportion of non-staff material compared to its staff content. Residual analysis of the print edition shows values of staff-written material (-31.03) that do not meet expected value and non-staff material (31.03) that exceeds expected value. Analysis of the online edition demonstrate a similar relationship, with residuals below expected value for staff-written material (-25.70) but above expected value for the non-staff material (25.70). This demonstrates that while neither edition matches expected values of staff content, the *Star-Banner* online edition is less dependent on non-staff material than the print edition.

Table 4.3: Article source by market and edition

	Staff	%	Non-staff ²	%	Total	%
Orlando Print	119	39.66	133	30.02	252	33.92
Orlando Online	117	39.00	75	16.93	192	25.84
Ocala Print	36	12.00	130	29.35	166	22.34
Ocala Online	28	9.33	105	23.70	133	17.90
Total	300	100.00	443	100.00	743	100.00

Chi square = 83.3379375665623, df = 3, P = .001, significant

Like the written content, the graphical content contained in both editions was more likely to have been produced by a non-staff source than by the newspaper staff. Stories with non-staff graphics constituted 21.66% of the entire sample, but within editions of individual newspapers this distribution varied greatly. While the print edition relied heavily on non-staff produced graphics at both newspapers, neither newspaper reproduced a substantial number of non-staff graphics in the online edition. Residual analysis of Table 4.4 supports this statement: *Sentinel* non-staff graphics in the print edition (5.66) exceeded the expected value, while the non-staff graphics in the online edition (-16.40) fell far below the expected value; *Star-Banner* non-staff graphics in the print edition (24.20) far exceeding the expected value, while non-staff graphics in the online edition (-13.46) fell below the expected value. This shows that the source of graphics accompanying articles in the print edition differ from the source of graphics in the online edition articles. It also appears that while both staff-produced- and non-staff-produced graphics reduced in number when stories were transferred online, non-staff

² “Non-staff” includes all sources not listed as newspaper staff, including: Wire service and syndicate articles, articles by contributors to the newspaper, and articles from other newspapers.

produced graphics were less likely to reappear in the online edition than graphics produced by the newspaper staff.

Table 4.4: Graphic source by edition and market

	Staff	Non-staff ³	Combination ⁴	None	Total
Orlando Print	35	60	6	151	252
%	42.68	37.27	24.00	31.79	33.92
Orlando Online	24	25	19	124	192
%	29.27	15.53	76.00	26.10	25.84
Ocala Print	15	60	0	91	166
%	18.29	37.27	0.00	19.16	22.34
Ocala Online	8	16	0	109	133
%	9.76	9.94	0.00	22.95	17.90
Total	82	161	25	475	743
%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Chi square = 80.6193047840931, df = 9, p = .001, significant

Use of Photographs and Artwork

The use of artwork and images in the print and online editions was the focus of the third research question of the current study. Already discussed was the frequency of the sources of graphics in both editions; this section deals with the prevalence of the types of graphics used in each edition. To measure this variable, the researcher classified graphical content appearing in each article of both editions. The types of graphics appearing in both editions were categorized as photographs, infographics, composite images and cartoons. Since no cartoons appeared in the sample, this category will be excluded from the following analysis.

³ “Non-staff” includes all graphic sources not listed as newspaper staff, including: Wire service and syndicate graphics, graphics by contributors to the newspaper, graphics from other newspapers and graphics from government sources.

⁴ “Combination” includes all articles that had graphics from multiple sources, including: Staff and wire service/syndicate; staff and government; and staff and contributor.

When looking at the use of graphics it is important to first examine the distribution between the two newspapers. Both newspapers' print editions contained more stories without graphics than stories containing graphics and this reflects on the graphic use in stories appearing in the online edition. Both newspapers offered visual content in almost a third of all stories, and the majority of stories within both newspapers offered no in-story graphics.

The relationship is altered when looking at stories in the individual online and print formats. In the both newspapers the number of stories with photographic content decreased significantly when moving from the print to the online format. The *Sentinel's* residual analysis of the print edition (16.84) and online edition (-16.84) demonstrates that stories containing photographs in the print edition did not usually contain photographs in the online edition. The *Star-Banner* showed a similar, but stronger relationship. Residual analysis shows the print edition (17.55) offering more photographic content than the online edition (-17.55), while stories with no graphical content was far more prevalent in the online edition (-23.27) than in the print edition (23.27). This shows that stories with photographs in the print edition appear without photographs in the online edition.

Table 4.5: Type of graphic by newspaper edition and market

	Print	%	Online	%	Total	%
Orlando Photograph	90	21.53	40	12.31	130	17.50
Orlando Other ⁵	18	4.31	30	9.23	48	6.46
Orlando None	144	34.45	122	37.54	266	35.80
Ocala Photograph	71	16.99	24	7.39	95	12.79
Ocala Other ⁶	8	1.91	0	0.00	8	1.08
Ocala None	87	20.81	109	33.54	196	26.38
Total	418	100.00	325	100.00	743	100.00

Chi square = 46.8659442579277, df = 5, $p \leq 0.001$, significant

Headline Relationship

The fourth research question sought to examine the similarity between headlines appearing in the print edition and the online edition of the two selected newspapers. To measure this variable, the researcher first recorded the article headline as it appeared in the print edition and then compared its phrasing with the headline appearing in the online edition. As Table 4.6 shows, among the stories reproduced in the online edition, the great majority of headlines matched verbatim. Of 325 articles appearing in both editions, only 8 online articles used an original headline to accompany its written content. This

⁵ “Other” graphic types include all multi-format and non-photograph graphics including: Cartoon; infographic; composite image; photograph and infographic; photograph and composite image; photograph, composite image and infographic; and composite image and infographic.

⁶ “Other” graphic types include all multi-format and non-photograph graphics including: Cartoon; infographic; composite image; photograph and infographic; photograph and composite image; photograph, composite image and infographic; and composite image and infographic.

relationship, however, lacks statistical significance between editions and between markets.

Table 4.6: Headline appearance by newspaper market

	Print Headline	%	Online Headline Same	%	Online Headline Different	%	Total	%
Orlando	252	60.23	187	58.99	5	62.50	444	59.78
Ocala	166	39.77	130	41.01	3	37.50	299	41.22
Total	418	100.00	317	100.00	8	100.00	743	100.00

Chi square = 0.15131120724963, df = 2, $p \leq 1$, not significant

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the variation of content among the online and print editions of two central Florida newspapers. The research questions asked the following: Is there a relationship between geographical location of content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online)? Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)? Is there a relationship between use of staff and non-staff content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online?) Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)? Is there a relationship between graphical content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online?) Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)? Is there a relationship between headline content and edition of the newspaper (print versus online)? Is this relationship affected by market (metropolitan versus rural)? A sample of the Orlando *Sentinel* and the Ocala *Star-Banner* was collected during a composite week during March 2003. Both frequency and cross-tabulation analyses were employed to answer the research questions. To determine statistical significance, Chi-square tests were performed on the cross-tabulation tables.

Discussion of Results

The results demonstrated that among the two selected newspapers, a substantial difference exists between the content presented in the online and print editions. During the composite week period, each edition of the newspapers presented unique geographic emphasis, different amounts of staff and non-staff produced stories and graphics, as well

as types of graphical content. Headlines were found to be almost identical in presentation.

When comparing the localization of online and print content, this study showed that both newspapers focused on different geographical areas for online content. Content originally appearing in the *Sentinel* print edition and redistributed to the online edition was more likely to cover local and state issues rather than global or international issues or subject matter. The *Star-Banner*'s online content was concentrated on stories of a global and national subject matter, rather than the more localized online content exhibited by the *Sentinel*. This distinction is important because while the *Sentinel* followed the expectations of previous research (Singer, 2001a), the *Star-Banner* demonstrated that some newspapers do not necessarily place a greater local emphasis of online content.

Because of this distinction it appears that story geographic location is a selection criterion for online distribution. For the *Sentinel*, the more localized the story, the more likely it is to appear in the online edition; and conversely, for the *Star-Banner*, the less localized, the greater the likelihood of an article appearing in the online edition. This allows for important considerations of both audiences. Because the *Sentinel* audience is exposed to a proportionately greater amount of local coverage and the print audience is exposed to more global coverage, it would follow that each audience has a different conception of what is "newsworthy" and perhaps a more localized social reality. The *Star-Banner*'s audience online would have a less-localized social reality compared to its print audience.

While the source of both graphical and written content in both newspapers leaned toward non-staff content in both editions, differences existed in the redistribution rates of

both written and graphical content. The source of written content appears to have affected selection for online distribution in the two newspapers, as stories reproduced online were more likely to be written by a staff reporter than a non-staff writer. This is true for stories with graphics, as well. While many articles were stripped of graphical content when placed online, it was more likely that a staff-produced graphic would be redistributed than non-staff graphical material.

There are three plausible explanations for this relationship. First, the editors intentionally focus the online material on local issues, which happen to be covered by staff reporters. Secondly, the required manpower of placement of articles on the Internet may prohibit a complete replication of the print edition. Third, costs of distributing wire service and syndicate content online may discourage redistribution of non-staff material.

The use of different types of artwork and graphical content also were dissimilar in the two editions. While the majority of stories lacked accompanying graphics in both formats, photographs were the most common type of graphic used and were more commonly displayed in the print edition than the online edition. Despite lacking the strict space limitations found in the print edition, the online edition did not display additional graphics. This may be explained by the lack of resources devoted to the online staff (Singer et al, 1999).

Headlines appearing in the online edition nearly always matched the print edition's headline. Of the 325 stories appearing in both editions, only 8 stories (2.5%) contained headlines that did not repeat the print headline verbatim. The level of homogeneity between headlines of each edition suggests the use of content management system applications to place stories in the online edition. The headline being an essential

element of the news article, the lack of variation among the two editions reinforces the established criticism of online news being simply “shovelware.”

Implications of Study

The process of media gatekeeping, which dictates what information is channeled to the public, is essential in the functioning in a democratic culture. Because democracy relies upon informed citizens to advance public policy, the media’s gatekeeping is one means of judging public exposure to issues and news events in society. Past research (Singer, 2001a; Gubman and Greer, 1997) has demonstrated a unique function of online newspapers when compared to the print edition. These studies have criticized the amount of “shovelware” in the online edition and the amount of content repurposed from the print edition. This criticism contends that since Internet editions lack much original content, the newspapers’ online editors fail to utilize the interactive and multimedia capabilities of the Web and do not facilitate the gatekeeping function to inform the public of important societal issues.

The current study is exploratory in nature and has several implications in regards to the field of converged journalism and the ongoing transition from printed newspapers to newspapers presented on the Internet. First, based on this study’s results, it seems the process of online “shovelware” is as prevalent as ever. Stories that were repurposed to the Internet edition often varied little from the print edition other than the medium of which the information was passed. This supports the findings of Singer (2001a) and suggests that online editors are not fully utilizing the interactive and multimedia capabilities offered by the medium. The headlines were mostly identical; the photographs were mostly not transferred to the online edition; only major stories

generated interactive features and these were repurposed from other stories and other newspapers.

These findings suggest an evolving notion of newspaper gatekeeping. Beyond deciding what information is granted to the public, the Internet allows editors to choose how to present newsworthy information. The online news story allows the capability to include additional photographic, textual and multimedia content that is not viable in the print edition, providing the audience with an expanded reality of what constitutes a news story.

This study is significant on two levels. First, it demonstrates that stories appearing in both print and online editions show little difference in the written content and often limits photographic content. Headlines and story content varied little between the online and print formats. Photographs accompanying stories appeared more frequently in the print format than the online format, despite the Internet's less restrictive space limitations. The "gate" from the print to the online format is primarily a geographic filter that allows much local and state content to appear while serving as a barrier to less-local news being redistributed online. The "gate" also filters the source of content, reproducing most staff content while limiting the redistribution of non-staff material. On this basic level, the online gatekeeper is concerned with simple replication from print to online format, while considering factors that determine a story's reproduction.

On another level, the online gatekeeper plays an important role in dictating, in the case of significant news, how the story is told. The Shuttle Columbia story appearing in the online *Sentinel* demonstrates this finding. The Columbia story had many local angles from the Orlando area and generated 19 articles during the seven-day content analysis.

All 19 were reproduced in the online edition, representing 9.9% of all online content replicated from the print edition of the *Sentinel*. Each online Columbia article was accompanied with a photo gallery, video content, an interactive graphic and a “mail-to” link, none of which were offered in the print edition. These features allowed a matchless format, providing the audience and public with a truly multimedia understanding of the event. In the case of the Columbia story, the repurposed content was textual and photographic; however, multimedia and interactive content supplemented this material.

This demonstrates the gatekeeping role of the online journalists at the *Sentinel* surpasses simple replication of the print edition. While the majority of articles online lack interactive features, certain subjects offer opportunities to expand coverage beyond what is capable at traditional media outlets. This manifestation of gatekeeping suggests an additional gate present at online newspapers, a gate determining whether a story deserves expanded interactive coverage or textual replication from the print edition.

Limitations of Study

The study has several limitations, the first of which is its small sample size. Most studies examine more than two newspapers to generate findings of value and statistical significance. This restriction threatens the external validity of the study and its larger application. A study lacking external validity cannot be projected to other populations. In this case, the results of the study are not applicable to other online and print newspapers of the circulation range of the *Star-Banner* and *Sentinel*. The two newspapers only apply to two – 50,000 to 100,000 and more than 250,000 – of the four NAA circulation categories.

Another limitation is the method used for data collection. Because the analysis only included the front and local/state sections, it cannot be generalized to the

newspapers and their online websites in totality. Editorial, sports, entertainment and other sections may demonstrate different results of the gatekeeping process. While this study thoroughly examined the specified material, the scope could be increased both within the selected newspapers and in the number of newspapers examined.

Suggestions for Further Research

While this study contained weaknesses in regard to external validity, it succeeded in adding to the literature of online gatekeeping and offers opportunities for further research. Ideally, a study of online newspaper content would include a sample that incorporates all national regions, newspaper circulation sizes and major ownership groups. While this would be difficult, a study examining a larger sample of any of these categories would result in greater generalization among the specified population.

The study of ownership groups would provide findings to distinguish to levels of interactive and multimedia content among different media companies. An examination of newspaper circulation sizes could investigate the relationship between circulation size and the amount and forms of content available online. A study looking at newspapers in unique regions could examine the focus of online content in relation to community and regional issues.

Beyond simply increasing the scope of the population sample, further research could investigate the online-only content at daily newspapers. Because each media organization has unique management and publication philosophies, online content varies among each organization. This could be examined for a number of variables: multi-media content, interactive content, community elements and the distribution of content among different newspapers within the organization.

Further research could also investigate how decisions are made within the newspaper management about what content is included online and what is withheld. This could include a survey of editors' use of content management programs to transfer stories to the online edition.

Conclusion

When considering the process of gatekeeping at journalism organizations, it is rare to find an example of a study that examines the process occurring between two forms of media. Past studies analyzed gatekeeping at the individual decision-making level (Garrison, 1980; Gieber, 1960; Shoemaker, 1991) or at the communications routine level (Martin, 1998; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). This study analyzed the gatekeeping process across different media with similar content ownership by following the model established by Singer (2001a).

Gatekeeping provided an appropriate model to compare the content of the newspapers' original model of information transmission (print) to the online model of transmission. Using Lewin's (1947b) model of transference of goods between channels, this study was conducted to compare the content of the online and print editions of two central Florida newspapers. The purpose of this study was to explore the different representations of news content provided to the consumers of online and print versions of the newspapers.

The results demonstrated a considerable dissimilarity between the online and print editions of the two newspapers and the possible existence of a "gate" that dictates which content is distributed online and which remains as print-only. While one newspaper chose to focus online content on local and state issues, another focused on more global and national issues. The newspapers also differed on the distribution of the sources of

graphical and written content. But at both newspapers, some elements changed little from the print edition – the headlines were reproduced nearly always verbatim and little original content existed in the online edition.

These findings offer important implications for the consumers of these news sources. While examining only a fraction of newspapers and media in general, this study does show that factors can determine what content is transferred across platforms. With emerging technologies, news content becomes increasingly converged and content becomes more easily redistributed between different media. This study provides only a glimpse of current sharing of information between media.

APPENDIX
SAMPLE CODING SHEET

News story identification #: # _____

Media Source: _____

1. Orlando *Sentinel*
2. Ocala *Star-Banner*

Newspaper Edition: _____

1. Print
2. Internet

News story dated: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

Headline:

News Story First Sentence:

Type(s) of image(s) accompanying story: a. ___ b. ___ c. ___

1. Photograph
2. Cartoon
3. Infographic
4. Composite image
5. None

Image source(s): a. ___ b. ___ c. ___

1. Staff
2. Syndicate or wire service (Associated Press, New York Times, Scripps Howard, etc.)
3. Contributor
4. Another newspaper: _____
5. Parent company
6. None

Types of interactive features accompanying online story

(note all applicable):

a. ___ b. ___ c. ___ d. ___ e. ___ f. ___ g. ___

1. Video

2. Audio
3. "E-mail to" option
4. Photo gallery
5. Forum
6. Interactive graphics
7. Poll
8. None

Geography of story (note all applicable): a. ___ b. ___ c. ___

1. Outside of United States
2. Inside U.S.; outside Florida
3. Florida
4. None

Dateline (city, state): _____

Story writer name: _____

Writer source: _____

1. Staff
2. Wire service or syndicate (Associated Press, New York Times, Scripps Howard,

etc.)

3. Contributor

4. None

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Matthew D. Blake was born in Evanston, Illinois, in 1976. He spent his early childhood in Madison, Wisconsin, before moving to Missoula, Montana, where he lived for much of his upbringing. In 1998, Blake graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he earned a Bachelor of Science and majored in political science.

Blake has instructed two Internet communications classes during his tenure at the University of Florida, as well as creating Web sites for clients at the university and beyond. His research interests include online communications and popular music history. Blake begins the doctoral program at the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications in Fall 2003.