

May 23, 2010



The NYPA Publishers' Memo is a weekly e-newsletter from the New York Press Association with industry articles, meeting & seminar notifications, member news, and more!

NYPA Meetings & Seminars:

NYPA Fall Convention

Mark your calendars for NYPA's Annual Fall Convention on September 24th & 25th at The Woodstock Inn in Woodstock VT. Registration materials will be mailed out in the beginning of July.

Industry News:

Denver Post editor asks: Is there boring stuff in our paper?

By Michael Roberts

Newspapers across the country are trying to figure out how to make the most of their shrinking resources, and the Denver Post is no exception, as is made clear by a memo sent to staffers last week under the signature of editor Greg Moore.

The note talks about a new initiative, prompted by the latest budget cycle, to reorganize the news operation -- something the paper has done a number of times over the years (to learn more about a July 2007 iteration, [click here](#)). This time around, Moore argues that the paper's work is less meaningful than it could be because journalists are trying to cover the same number of subjects they did when the staff had 300 members, rather than about two-thirds that total, as is the case today.

To that end, Moore writes, the Post is holding a series of staff meetings. Attendees are told not to "whine," but are encouraged to call out anything in the paper they see as

"boring." There'll also be a survey, with an outside firm hired to interpret the results. The idea: If the Post can't be broader, it should get deeper.

To read the rest of the article, [click here](#).

Dig into Archives and Memories to Present Primary Data on Historic Anniversaries

By Michelle Minkoff

You've been in this situation before. The anniversary of an important local event approaches and you need coverage. Interviewing people on the street about an event that happened years ago doesn't help unless they were there. We need concrete information to bring the facts to a story; we need historical, primary-source data.

The Spokesman-Review of Spokane, Wash., did this right in today's [text and multimedia package](#) commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Mount St. Helens eruption. You can listen to photojournalist Christopher Anderson explain the story behind the famous photo he took of the volcanic eruption on May 18, 1980. Go to another page, and you discover that he went back to the places he photographed to show us what those places look like now. A new photographer wouldn't bring the same emotions to the page that juxtaposes the old and the new. Don't tell us what's changed; show us the visual data.

And because stories aren't all about a newspaper's history, there's a reader memory page. You can read and listen to the stories of community members who were actually there then, and see their snapshots, which allow you to experience the story in a personal way.

To read the rest of the article, [click here](#).

Horizontal Attention Leans Left

Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox

Summary: Web users spend 69% of their time viewing the left half of the page and 30% viewing the right half. A conventional layout is thus more likely to make sites profitable.

My previous column discussed the distribution of user [attention along the vertical dimension of Web pages](#). In short, people look at information above the fold far more than they do at information further down the page.

... Using the same data set as my previous analysis, we find the following distribution of user attention from the left edge of the screen to the right...

People spent more than twice as much time looking at the left side of the page as they did the right:

- Left half of screen: 69% of viewing time
- Right half of screen: 30% of viewing time

The remaining 1% of viewing time was spent to the right of the initially-visible 1,024 pixels. Such information is visible only after horizontal scrolling, and the minute amount of attention it attracts confirms the guideline to avoid horizontal scrolling.

To read the rest of the article, [click here](#).

How to Scrape Websites for Data without Programming Skills

By Michelle Minkoff

Searching for data to back up your story? Just Google it, verify the accuracy of the source, and you're done, right? Not quite. Accessing information to support our reporting is easier than ever, but very little information comes in a structured form that lends itself to easy analysis.

You may be fortunate enough to receive a spreadsheet from your local public health agency. But more often, you're faced with lists or tables that aren't so easily manipulated. It's common for data to be presented in HTML tables -- for instance, that's how California's Franchise Tax Board [reports the top 250 taxpayers with state income tax delinquencies](#).

It's not enough to copy those numbers into a story; what differentiates reporters from consumers is our ability to analyze data and spot trends. To make data easier to access, reorganize and sort, those figures must be pulled into a spreadsheet or database. The mechanism to do this is called Web scraping, and it's been a part of computer science and information systems work for years.

To read the rest of the article, [click here](#).

People:

Send us news about your newspaper for NewsBeat. Please email the information to Jill Van Dusen at jill@nynewspapers.com. Photos are welcome!

To update your email address, click here: [Update Email Address](#) or reply to this issue of the NYPA Publishers' Memo and include the phrase "update email address" in the subject line.

If you no longer want to receive this newsletter, click here: [Unsubscribe](#) or reply to this issue of the NYPA Publishers' Memo and include the words "unsubscribe to pub memo" in the subject line.

Privacy Policy: NYPA does not sell or share this distribution list or the names and email addresses on it.

Thank you.