

NINA

NORTHERN ILLINOIS NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION



Protect, advance your career

“ We are the only media industry I can think of that goes around saying the sky is falling. ”

*Katharine Weymouth
Publisher
Washington Post
(in Editor & Publisher)*

**‘DIGITAL INK’
BLOG**
www.ninaonline.org

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By Mike Cetera
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

In a challenging time for newspapers, journalists should find ways to embrace the change surrounding them. What you do to stay current can help you advance, if not save, your career.

This is the message three speakers will bring April 24 at the Northern Illinois Newspaper Association’s spring conference in DeKalb, part of the association’s 2009 theme, “The New Basics.”

Two seasoned journalists and the dean of Northern Illinois University’s College of Business will lead a panel discussion about how journalists can make themselves stand out in today’s environment.

Ray Long, a reporter for the Chicago Tribune, will talk about how he uses social-networking Web sites to promote his work, while Barbara Vitello, a reporter for the Daily Herald, will explain why her move from the features desk to the courthouse has made her a more valuable asset to her newspaper.

Denise Schoenbachler, dean of the NIU College of Business, will bring a business perspective to the conversation about adapting to an uncertain career path.

Long is a reporter in the Chicago Tribune’s statehouse bureau in Springfield. Long joined the Tribune in 1998 and previously ran the capitol bureau for The Associated Press. He has also worked for the Chicago Sun-Times and the Peoria Journal Star. Long has received numerous reporting honors and was most recently inducted into the Bill Miller Public Affairs Reporting Hall of Fame at the University of Illinois at Springfield, where he is a 1981 graduate of the PAR master’s degree



Vitello



Long



Schoenbachler

NINA SPRING CONFERENCE

When: Friday, April 24, 9:30 a.m. to noon.

Where: Campus Life Building, Room 100, NIU-DeKalb

Cost: \$20 for attendees from NINA-member newspapers or for individual members. \$40 for nonmembers. Pay at door.

Registration deadline: Thursday, April 16. Contact Jim Killam, jkillam@niu.edu / 815-753-4239.

program.

Vitello is a legal affairs writer covering Cook County courts for the Daily Herald, where she has worked since 1997. Vitello also has served as a theater critic and features writer for the paper. Vitello holds a bachelor’s degree in English and a master’s degree in communication from Northwestern University in Evanston.

Schoenbachler holds a Ph.D. in marketing from the University of Kentucky, and has taught at NIU since 1992. She won the NIU Marketing Department’s Excellence in Teaching Award for six straight years. After four years as the department chair, she has been dean of the College of Business since 2006. Her academic research interests have included privacy issues in marketing, and the role of the sales force in new product development.

Watch your e-mail for survey

By Sharon Boehlefeld

Last year, Greg Rivara, then past president of NINA, put together a draft of a membership survey. The membership committee is taking his beginnings to develop two Web-based surveys.

One of the surveys will be for NINA members and the other for non-members.

We plan to use Survey Monkey to ask our questions, probably in late June. We also plan to use the free option, which limits us to 10 questions and 100 responses for each of the surveys.

That means it won't take a lot of time for anyone to answer the questions, so we hope everyone will take a few minutes when the survey lands in e-mail boxes.

We do plan to prod non-respondents, so those who answer right away won't be bothered again.

Right now, we're expecting to focus on workshop and conference offerings in both surveys. There will, however, be one open-ended question about general suggestions in the membership survey.

For members, we hope to open yet another

channel of communications that will help us generate ideas for ways to help each other.

For non-members, we have two goals: making them aware of us and, we hope, interesting them enough to join us.

We aren't sure yet exactly how we'll be sending the survey, but we'll try to make NINA a prominent part of the address or the subject.

Please keep an eye out for the survey and help us by answering the questions as soon as you get them.

Committee members are Lonny Cain of The Times in Ottawa, Jim Slonoff and Pam Lannom of the Hinsdalean, Joe Corrado of Corrado Communications, and Penny Wiegert and Sharon Boehlefeld of The Observer in Rockford.

If you have any suggestions for us, please drop me a note by the end of April.



Sharon Boehlefeld, NINA past president, is part of the editorial staff at The Observer, the newspaper of the Diocese of Rockford. Contact her at sboehlefeld@rockforddiocese.org, or 815-399-4300, ext. 405.

Soul-searching in J classes

By Jason Akst

I'm suffering a two-pronged crisis of belief.

Prong 1: As I write this, my graphic design students are struggling with basic magazine design in a high-end Mac lab. It's too soon to tell how they'll do with this assignment, but I just received their newspaper layout.

I say layout, singular, because only a couple years ago the students designed several newspaper layouts. I've pared it down to one, and now I need you, NINA colleagues, to answer this question:

Should I abandon teaching newspaper design altogether? E-mail your answer to me at jakst@niu.edu.

Prong 2: Nobody needs her help at the moment, so my teaching assistant sits quietly, reading Goethe in the original German. I promised her anonymity in exchange for me mentioning her plight, which is this.

This student is the best and brightest of NIU journalism undergraduates. She has won several awards, has multifaceted skills, writes a great column and has already led the Northern Star as editor-in-chief. She

graduates in a couple months.

Her plans? Graduate school to study linguistics. She will be an extraordinary linguist and linguistics is certainly a critical field of study.

It's just that she is pursuing a career in linguistics because – to a very large extent – she has no faith in journalism's future. Her boyfriend, a working news designer, feels the same way. A friend she's known since childhood, who got hooked early after watching "All the President's Men," is trying to figure out some other career.

Something is profoundly wrong when the very people who herald a bright, redemptive future for our profession are leaving before they even really start, and for good reason.

The Pew Center just released its annual state of the media report. I haven't read it yet. I'm not sure I need to.



Jason Akst is a journalism instructor at Northern Illinois University. Contact him at jakst@niu.edu, or 815-753-7009.

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Newspapers need a new (old) pitch

By Jim Killam

On ESPN Radio's "Mike and Mike" show recently, host Mike Greenberg compared newspapers to 8-track tapes and the phonograph and said that very soon, all newspapers will be gone. He was reacting to a TIME story (which later was disputed because it was a thinly sourced report from 24/7 Wall Street. It was picked up by TIME and published online only).

Co-host Mike Golic chimed in that when younger people want news, they just go to Google. I wanted to reach through my car radio, grab Golic's microphone and shout, "You really don't get it. Without newspapers, there IS no Google news!"

First: The Greenberg comment strikes me as ignorant of all newspapers except major metros. We as an industry used to promote the newspaper as the lifeblood of a community. I think that's still true in most small- to midsized communities, and I don't think it's practical yet to assume an online product would have the same impact or reach. A few newspapers will fail, and soon. Most will not.

Second: The Greenberg comment scares me -- not because I think it's true, but because of the pop-culture traction he helps give the idea that newspapers are going away soon. Think of that "Simpsons" episode where Nelson the bully mocks a print journalist: "Ha ha! Your medium is dying!" Newspapers' disappearance very well could become a self-fulfilling prophecy if we let stand the notion that only the old and terminally uncool read newspapers.

Remember the mid-1990s, when baseball was supposedly dying? It was too slow-paced, too old-school. Kids weren't playing it anymore. The sports magazines and talk shows did a lot of hand-wringing. Pro wrestling: Now that was what young people wanted to watch.

Then, a few things happened. First, Cal Ripken. Then a resurgence of the Yankees. Then a host of new, retro ballparks. Then, Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire (yeah, yeah, I know) and the tieback to Babe Ruth and

Roger Maris. Fantasy baseball. ESPN and DirecTV and the ability to watch any game, anywhere.

Underneath it all, baseball changed the way it marketed itself. It highlighted its new-era stars, but it also celebrated its rich history, its connection with the past.

From my little corner of the world -- a college newsroom -- I've seen the baseball resurgence. Eyes widen when we talk about baseball records, or lineups from 20-30-40 years ago. Students hang on every pitch of spring training games. That doesn't happen with other sports. Yeah, we all know about steroids and out-of-control salaries, but it hasn't ruined maybe the best game ever invented. There's something significant about watching the same game my father and grandfather watched, talking about the same records, wondering if the Cubs will ever win anything. Younger generations have figured out the connection.

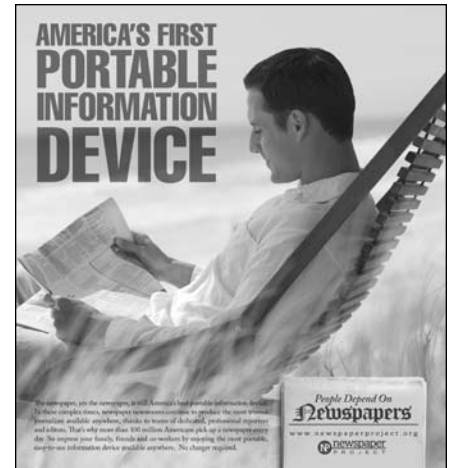
I wonder if newspapers could experience a similar renaissance. Could we as an industry sell ourselves as being old-school? On being a little slower-paced, and a lot more thorough? On connecting a community with its past? On the fact that we're not putting our heads in the sand when it comes to technology, but we're also not giving up on a product that's still vitally important to its readers? What if the newspaper industry collectively marketed itself, as baseball did? What if we created public-service ads that show what America would look like without newspapers?

(Shortly after I posted this column on our Digital Ink blog, I discovered The Newspaper Project, which aims to do precisely that. See the info at right.)

In short, this conversation is about us. Why don't we lead it, instead of reacting to often-uninformed opinions that are unfortunately shaping our future?



Jim Killam is adviser for the Northern Star, the daily student media at Northern Illinois University. He serves as NINA's communications coordinator. Contact him at jkillam@niu.edu, or 815-753-4239.



The Newspaper Project offers free ads promoting the value of newspapers. Consider publishing these in your newspapers and on your Web sites. To download them, go to the Web site and click on the drop-down menu called "Latest Ads."



CALENDAR

Friday, April 24

NINA Spring Conference, Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb. See page 1.

Saturday, April 25

IHSA Journalism Sectional competitions at various sites including NIU-DeKalb.

Saturday, May 2

IHSA Journalism State Championships at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston.

June (Date TBA)

NINA Workshop focusing on staff morale and making yourself indispensable to your paper. Details soon.

Friday, June 26

NINA Board meeting, 10 a.m., Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.

Friday, Sept. 11

NINA Board meeting, 10 a.m., Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.

Thursday, Oct. 22

NINA Board meeting (dinner).

Friday, Oct. 23

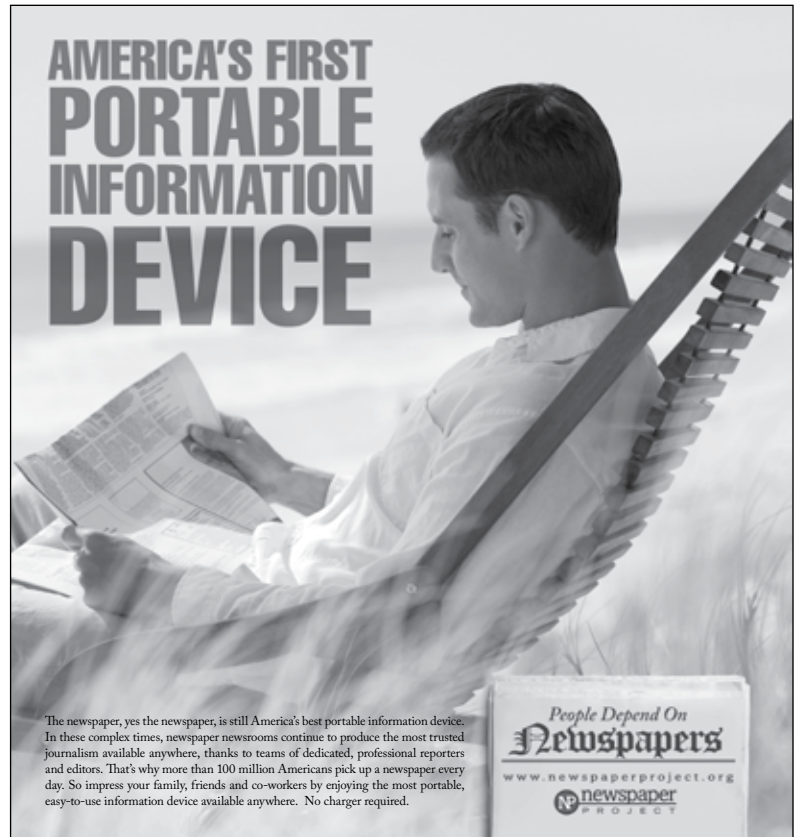
NINA Fall Conference, NIU-DeKalb.

November (Date TBA)

NINA Webinar. Potential topic: Newsroom cross training. Details soon.

Friday, Dec. 4

NINA Board meeting, NIU.



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