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Study of Convergence in Nebraska Newspapers

By

Kathryn L. Schindler

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Arts

Major: Journalism and Mass Communications

Under the supervision of Professor John Bender

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2010

## Study of Convergence in Nebraska Newspapers

Kathryn L. Schindler, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Advisor: John Bender

This thesis studies Nebraska newspapers and their efforts to converge with Web, multimedia, radio, or television entities. It also studies the efforts by Nebraska newspapers to converge reporter roles and organizational roles. Paper surveys were sent and in-person interviews were conducted in Nebraska during the 2009-2010 academic year. The results showed more examples of multimedia convergence than role or organizational convergence. Nebraska publishers and editors say they do not want to attempt convergence or multimedia products just to be trendy. They say convergence has to make sense, be useful, and be profitable for their individual businesses, staff, and communities.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this thesis

to my family

Steven Schindler, Michael Schindler,

David and Debra Flugstad, Peter and Annette Flugstad,

and the late Rev. Luther and Marian Flugstad.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the advice and guidance of Dr. John Bender, committee chairman, and the members of my graduate committee, Dr. Charlyne Berens and Mr. Tim Anderson, for their encouragement and suggestions.

Thank you to the editors and publishers of Nebraska newspapers who returned the surveys I sent them and to the editors and publishers who took time out of their busy schedules to allowed me to interview them.

Thanks to the Lord Jesus, through whom all things are possible.

Special thanks to my family, friends, and co-workers for all your encouragement and support.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction .....	1
Defining Convergence .....	4
Chapter 2—Literature Review .....	8
Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	14
Thesis Statement .....	16
Chapter 3—Methodology .....	18
Chapter 4—Results .....	19
Demographics .....	19
Reasons for Having a Web Site .....	22
Benefits of a Web Presence: Increasing Revenue, Attracting New Readers, and Enhancing the Newspaper’s Visibility .....	23
The Value of a Web Presence .....	24
Major Impetus for Web Presence .....	26
Multimedia Products and Social Networking .....	27
Competitors to Nebraska Newspapers .....	29
Barriers to Convergence .....	30
Newspapers are a Valuable Community Commodity.....	35
Future of Journalism with Convergence .....	37
Future of Journalism in General .....	44
Quality of Journalism.....	46
Resistance to Convergence .....	47
Answers to Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	49
Research Question 1 .....	49

Research Questions 2 and 5 .....	50
Research Question 3 .....	53
Research Question 4 .....	54
Research Question 6 .....	57
Role Convergence in Print Production .....	58
Role Convergence in the Newsroom .....	60
Organizational Convergence.....	61
Observing and Practicing “Coopetition” .....	62
Attracting New Readers .....	63
Revenue from the Web .....	64
Favorite Multimedia Products.....	69
Research Question 7 .....	72
Responses to Hypotheses.....	74
H1.....	74
H2a.....	76
H2b.....	76
H3.....	78
H4.....	78
H5.....	80
H6.....	82
Chapter 5—Conclusion.....	84
Future of Journalism: Cautiously Optimistic.....	84
References.....	89
Appendix.....	93



## List of Figures

Figure 1	Survey Responses of Nebraska Newspapers by Circulation .....	19
Figure 2	Percent of Respondents by Age .....	20
Figure 3	Number of Newsroom Staffers by Survey Responses .....	21
Figure 4	Has Your Online Presence Attracted New Readers? (by Number of Responses, Not Percent) .....	24
Figure 5	Editors Views on the Value or Convergence (by Number of Responses) .....	25
Figure 6	Editors' Perception of How Readers Like the Newspaper Web Presence (by Number of Responses, Not Percent) .....	26
Figure 7	Where is the Major Impetus Coming from to Develop a Web Presence or Converged Product (by Numbers, Not Percent).....	27
Figure 8	Competitors to Nebraska Newspapers (by Number of Responses, Not Percent) .....	29
Figure 9	Barriers to Convergence in Nebraska (by Number of Responses) .....	30
Figure 10	The Larger the Newspaper, the Greater Chance It Will Have a Web Site.....	75

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Advances in technology, revisions in rules governing media ownership, and customer demands have deeply influenced the media in the last 15 years (Kraeplin & Criado, 2005; Quinn, 2005). These developments have led to profound changes and uncertainty about the future of journalism.

A relatively new term has surfaced that tries to capture many of the changes in which media businesses and reporters come together to report on the same story in multiple forms: convergence. This industry buzzword describes what happens when two or three media converge to cover a single area or market. A famous trio of news organizations often set on a pedestal as a prime example of convergence includes the *Tampa Tribune*, WFLA-TV (NBC affiliate), and TBO.com, all located in Florida and owned by Media General, Inc. (Singer, 2004b).

The technological sophistication of readers and media audiences is also pushing the advent of convergence. People no longer have to fit their news consumption to the media's schedules, such as reading the morning paper or watching the evening news (Quinn & Filak, 2005, pp. 10-11). Today 24-hour TV news channels and the Internet allow news consumers to find news when and where they want. Twenty-first century citizens are already consumers of converged news. In 2005, Quinn wrote: "Convergence is attractive to both media managers and practitioners because it satisfies consumer demands and lifestyles" (p. 30). Because consumers are already seeking converged news, opportunity exists for news organizations to meet audience demands for converged

news any time of the day. Many newspapers do this by providing a Web site in addition to a printed product.

The term “convergence” describes many different ways media organizations and reporters come together to report on stories. It explains media business reorganization, newsroom cooperation, the blending of roles, the crossover of media from one arena to another, the use of multimedia products, and the creation of new storytelling approaches.

Former media competitors are now being asked to cooperate with their competitors in a new term called “coopetition” (Silcock & Keith, 2006). To facilitate this cooperation, reporters’ desks are placed in close proximity to other reporters based on their medium or their beat (Miro-Quesada, 2007). This alignment can lead to either: (a) sharing information and story tips, or to (b) continued competition and a resistance to sharing information. Working together depends on how well the reporters get along and whether they “buy in” to the idea of convergence. Failure to align staff in close proximity may lead to a breakdown of a particular converged effort, similar to an effort in Arizona (Silcock & Keith, 2006).

“Convergence” also describes the coming together of roles, such as when a crime reporter writes for his own newspaper but also creates a product for other affiliated media, such as the Web, radio, or television productions. Print reporters have found themselves working together with online reporters. Television reporters have found themselves making “stills” of video for online or print editions of their media organization. Online staffers may find themselves adding video or audio files to their Web site.

As convergence evolves, reporters are finding even more integrated ways to tell their stories. A newspaper Web site might include a video or a slide presentation with voice-over.

The University of Hawaii at Manoa was the site of a study by Auman and Lillie about adding convergence and integrated storytelling into the university's journalism curriculum (2008). Auman and Lillie studied the journalism school as it implemented a new convergence curriculum from 2004-2007. The senior capstone class (J402, Intellectual Foundations) focused on covering contemporary issues in a seminar format with an applied major reporting project. For the final project, students used their multimedia, critical thinking, writing, and reporting skills to determine which media (at least two) were the best choices to tell a particular story. The end results, according to the professors who taught the class, were "impressive student learning outcomes in the form of well researched stories told in a wide array of media appropriate to the particulars of each story, and thus showing evidence of interdisciplinary thinking." (p. 366). See the senior stories at <http://www.soc.hawaii.edu/uhtoday/spring2007/WebTeam/voices.html>.

This paper will look at Nebraska newspapers to see if they are practicing multimedia convergence, role convergence, or organizational convergence. It will also look for integrated storytelling in multimedia products.

In addition to definitions of convergence mentioned above, other definitions are given. The literature below offers an array of definitions.

### *Defining Convergence*

The term “convergence” originally came from the worlds of science and math, according to author Rich Gordon (2003) in the book “Digital Journalism: Emerging Media and the Changing Horizons of Journalism.” In the 1960s and 1970s, it started being used to describe communication technologies. In 1985, Nicholas Negroponte from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) used three overlapping circles to describe his plans for a media lab with the three circles labeled “Broadcast and Motion Picture Industry,” “Computer Industry,” and “Print and Publishing Industry” (Gordon, 2003, pp. 57-59).

In his 2006 article, Edgar Huang et al. described four types of convergence below:

1. Content: This is where content is shared, repackaged, or re-purposed (a new term from Silcock & Keith, 2006) for competing media forms – newspapers, magazines, television, and the Internet;
2. Form or Technological: In the mid-1990s, computer and Internet technology made it possible to converge various forms of communication such as video, audio, still photo, data, text, and graphic arts;
3. Corporate, Structural or Organizational: Media mergers have contributed to convergence in newsrooms following the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that allowed owners to own more than one media type in a market; and
4. Role: Reporters, photographers, and editors may see their roles converge as their newsrooms and corporations unite.

Huang et al. wrote:

A newspaper reporter may also produce a newspaper in QuarkXPress or serve as a TV news anchor, while a newspaper photographer may shoot video stories or produce interactive online stories in Flash. Role convergence requires that both reporters and editors re-equip themselves both journalistically and technologically. (2006, p. 228)

Stephen Quinn (2005) defines convergence as multiple-platform publishing, which is similar to Huang's Form or Technological convergence. Quinn presents five types of convergence:

1. Ownership which applies to large media partnerships and involves cross promotion and content sharing;
2. Tactical, which also applies to media partnerships;
3. Structural, which occurs in the newsrooms;
4. The "platypus," "Inspector Gadget," or "backpack" approach. These terms have become disparaging expressions for the individualistic journalist who tries to do all forms of journalism, but none of them well. The term "platypus" comes from the name of a mammal found only in Australia that crosses the biological classification categories of bird, mammal, and reptile. The term "Inspector Gadget" (from the motion picture and cartoon with the same name) is a nickname for a journalist who is so enamored by technology that he or she misses the point of being a journalist. The "backpack" term relates to a reporter who carries all his news-gathering tools, such as a computer, cell phone or notebook, in his backpack; and

5. Storytelling convergence, which refers to emerging storytelling forms.

Vincent F. Filak (2004) describes three types of convergence:

1. A function of cross ownership of multiple media outlets within a market;
2. An aspect of technology and multimedia growth; and
3. Work roles and cooperative behavior among journalists from different media outlets.

Researchers Silcock and Keith (2006) listed five stages along a convergence continuum in their writings. These stages rank from the least integrated to the most integrated. This continuum fits closely to Huang's Content Convergence (#1).

1. Cross promotion for publicity (the least integrated version);
2. Cloning (or re-purposing) in which one person republishes the other's product with little editing;
3. "Coopetition" in which partners both cooperate and compete;
4. Content sharing in which partners share, then repackage each other's content (similar to Quinn's Ownership, #1, and Storytelling, #5, definitions, and also to Filak's Work Roles and Cooperative Behavior, #3, definitions); and
5. Full convergence, where content is fully integrated for most media.

Singer (2004a) defines convergence as reporting in print, broadcast, and online media with a combination of technologies, products, staffs, and geography. And she says that it refers to newsroom culture and reporter relationships that happen inside a newsroom. She added that convergence can mean "working in separate buildings – or at adjacent desks" (p. 3). Singer writes that it is not a synonym for media consolidation

even though other authors have suggested that definition. Huang et al. made a similar statement that media convergence is not tied to media mergers (2006, p. 253).

This paper will use definitions provided by Huang et al. (2006) and Singer (2004a) to address and encompass the print/online/broadcast associations in Nebraska.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

The relevant literature review examines processes used and problems that have occurred as news organizations and newsrooms move to merged and cooperative models. Scholars have conducted case studies, surveys, and interviews about converged news organizations in Florida, Texas, Arizona, and Kansas.

One of the most helpful articles to this author is a study done by Wilson Lowrey on small newspapers in Mississippi. In his 2003 article, Lowrey studied various factors that did or did not influence small newspapers to publish online news. This thesis provides an opportunity to determine whether Nebraska newspaper editors and reporters express the same reasons for publishing online news or cooperating with broadcast media that those in Mississippi did. This study included newspapers of all sizes, including weeklies and dailies, within Nebraska.

This research would be valuable to academic and journalistic communities because: (a) there have been no studies of Nebraska newspapers and their efforts with convergence on the Web, with broadcast organizations, with multimedia, or through job roles; and (b) there have been few studies about medium to small newspapers and their convergence efforts.

The theories that will help explain Nebraska's efforts with convergence are the diffusion of innovation and the social learning theories. These two theories offer the best fit when explaining the successes or lack of success of convergence in Nebraska. Because Nebraska is a Midwestern state that has large rural areas, the rate of adoption of

new technologies may be slower than in more cosmopolitan and urban areas (Malecki, 2003). Nebraskans have discussed a digital divide between the rural and urban areas of the state, and this technological divide could also extend to rural media (Natale, 2001; Hendee, 2001). Given the geographic size of Nebraska and its sparse population, one could expect from these theories to find less convergence in Nebraska than in more urban and highly populated states.

Jane B. Singer (2004a) described the diffusion of innovation theory and explains that diffusion is “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system” (p. 4).

The diffusion of innovation theory is a well-known communications theory from Everett Rogers (2003, 5th ed.) that looks at how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures. Rogers explained that many people consider new innovations uncertain or risky. To overcome this, most people seek out others like themselves (social or business peers) who have already adopted the new idea. The theory states that four key elements of social change must occur for a process to be accepted and adopted: (a) the innovation itself, (b) communication with other like-minded individuals or peers, (c) time, and (d) social system. Within the innovation itself (#1), additional obstacles must be surmounted: advantage over the current system, compatibility with adopters, its perceived complexity, its trialability (the degree to which it may be tested on a limited basis), and its observability. Of these four elements, complexity is the only negative influence on the likely rate of adoption (Singer, 2004a).

The social learning theory, first proposed by Albert Bandura in 1963 ([www.learning-theories.com](http://www.learning-theories.com)), states that people observe the behavior of others who are using new technologies, process information from these observations, make decisions about which of these behaviors to adopt, and later perform the previously observed behaviors. Historically, rural areas have seen slower adaptation of new innovations because fewer people use and teach the new technologies. In addition, lack of good technological infrastructure and slower, older computers may lead to audience frustration while accessing Web sites.

Numerous case studies have been conducted of prominent news organizations, such as the corporate merger of *The Tampa Tribune*, WFLA-TV, and [www.tbo.com](http://www.tbo.com) in Florida. However few articles have been written about the general “rank and file” news organizations trying to build convergence. This study will contribute to knowledge about small to medium-sized newspapers. Below are outlines of several studies of converged organizations.

Lowrey’s study of small newspapers in Mississippi found that the “higher the degree of structural pluralism (a diversity of views or ideas in the organization’s owners, editors, and publishers) in a newspaper’s community and the more complex the newspaper organization, the greater the degree of interactivity in the newspaper’s Web site” (2003, p. 84). He found no support for the idea that the more competition the newspaper had, the more likely that the newspaper would have an online product. He found only weak support for the idea that the higher the degree of education of the online manager, the greater the degree of interactivity in the newspaper’s Web site. Lowrey

found strong support for the contention that newspapers that contract with outside businesses for online services are likely to include more interactive features on their Web site than newspapers that did not use outside vendors.

Jane Singer's article "Strange Bedfellows? The diffusion of convergence in four news organizations" (2004), studied four converged media organizations – one each in Texas and Kansas, and two in Florida. She also studied *The Tampa Tribune*, WFLA-TV, and www.tbo.com. Singer calls this trio the "temple of convergence" because all three media products are housed within a 120,000 square-foot building.

Stephen Quinn has studied, written about, and taught convergence worldwide. His article titled "Convergence's Fundamental Question" (2005) looks at the phenomenon from a practitioner's perspective. He says the fundamental question is whether the media are implementing convergence for business reasons or for better journalism. He concludes that they are doing both and writes, "In essence, they need to find ways to blend the twin aims of telling the truth and making money" (p. 37).

Silcock and Keith (2006) studied two cooperative partnerships – one in Phoenix, Arizona (the *Arizona Republic* and KPNX-TV) and one in Tampa (*The Tampa Tribune*, WFLA-TV, and www.tbo.com). They investigated how working journalists accepted convergence, how they dealt with language and cultural changes, and how they addressed different work routines. Silcock and Keith conducted interviews in person or over the phone, and then analyzed the information. A major finding in their article is that cooperative efforts in Arizona did not work as well as they did in Tampa. In 2000, the

*Arizona Republic* and KPNX-TV began a merged operation. Four years later, Silcock and Keith noted that

the partners had discontinued efforts to substantially converge print and broadcast operations on a daily basis, largely because they found that convergence was not profitable. . . . What did work for both platforms, staff members said, was their common Web site, [www.azcentral.com](http://www.azcentral.com). (p. 615)

One of the problems the *Arizona Republic* and KPNX-TV experienced was that they were physically located 20 minutes away from each other, unlike the Florida group, which is housed in one large building. The researchers believe that other media outlets and journalism schools can learn from problems that occurred in Arizona.

Silcock and Keith (2006) did not provide a specific definition for “convergence.” Instead they agreed with other authors and researchers that the definition of “convergence” is not a fixed idea or term, because it moves back and forth depending on the nature of the news and the commitment of workers and managers.

Edgar Huang and his co-researchers (2006) directed a national survey among colleges, daily newspapers, and commercial television stations. They believed these surveys could provide journalism schools with knowledge about attitudes, practices, suggestions, and ideas for implementing convergence into the curricula. This research gave the academic world a large, well-researched, and valuable starting point for further research on implementing convergence. Huang’s article is called “Bridging Newsrooms and Classrooms: Preparing the Next Generation of Journalists for Converged Media” and is co-authored Karen Davison, Stephanie Shreve, Twila Davis, Elizabeth Bettendorf, and Anita Nair from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and the University of South Florida at St. Petersburg.

Camille Kraeplin and Carrie Anne Criado's article is titled "Building a Case for Convergence Journalism Curriculum" (2005). Kraeplin and Criado surveyed television stations, newspapers, and journalism programs to determine the state of convergence in those arenas. They found that journalism educators rated convergence skills higher than industry managers did. They also found that reporters were not sure *where* they should learn about convergence – on the job or while in college.

Huang and his fellow researchers also studied whether journalism schools should be teaching convergence before it takes hold in the work place. "The legitimacy of media mergers needs repeated tests before such mergers can be truly accepted as a healthy development and a full-force education of media convergence can be seen," wrote Huang et al. (2006). Based on his studies, he concluded that journalism schools should provide cross-media knowledge to their students because "multi-dimensional news reporting in multiple media platforms will be tomorrow's way news is presented" (p. 254).

Because the idea and practice of convergence is relatively new, researchers are still uncertain as to whether it is a sustainable practice. Many forces influence whether a newspaper adopts convergence and whether it has staying power. Those forces include: business climates; newsroom practices, complexity, culture, and biases; and consumer and community demand.

Most scholars agree that it is important to not lose sight of basic journalism tenets. Quinn wrote in his 2005 journal article, "The role of journalism is to tell stories with a purpose – to help citizens make choices in an increasingly complex world."

Research has provided empirical evidence about efforts to converge newspapers, broadcast TV and radio stations, and the Web. A majority have been fairly successful even though the transition has been stressful to the staff and the organization. As Huang et al. (2006) noted above, media mergers and cross-platform publishing need repeated tests before convergence can be truly accepted as a healthy development.

Rewriting news texts across media platforms takes effort by employees and a shift in newsroom cultures. Erdal (2009) suggested taking a synergistic mode of production. He wrote, “The demand for news content has increased, because of new platforms and more news programmes, or slots on existing platforms. Media organizations striving for organizational and journalistic convergence, therefore, seek a synergetic mode of production. One strategy for achieving this synergy is increased reproduction of news across media platforms.”

Research conducted by this author and described in the literature review, as well as behavioral theories, help clarify Nebraska’s progress with adopting convergence. The goal of this specific research is to add to the body of knowledge about convergence adoption and to study Nebraska in particular. It is hoped that a survey of Nebraska newspaper publishers and editors will affirm or negate other studies, these research questions, and these hypotheses.

### ***Research Questions and Hypotheses***

The goals of these questions are to give a “snapshot” of where these media organizations were in the 2009-2010 academic year (newspapers in particular), and to offer a basis for future convergence studies. This research may also provide support for

the two theories used in this paper to explain convergence in Nebraska's media. These questions are qualitative and quantitative.

- RQ #1: What is the status of media convergence in the Nebraska newspaper industry? (Where are Nebraska newspapers in terms of adopting convergence?)
- RQ #1a: Are larger newspapers farther along with adopting convergence than the smaller ones?
- RQ #1b: Why have some newspapers decided to publish online while others have not?
- RQ #2: Why does the level of Web site complexity differ across Nebraska newspapers?
- RQ #3: What might have influenced or affected early adopters of a converged newsroom – either with print and online, print and radio, print and TV, or all four media together?
- RQ #4: Are forms of convergence in Nebraska newspapers similar to those in other states that have been studied?
- RQ #5: What are the barriers to adopting convergence at Nebraska newspapers?
- RQ #6: What does convergence mean for the variety of journalistic voices in Nebraska?
- RQ #7: What factors are most likely to predict whether a Nebraska editor will adopt convergence?



To provide answers to these research questions, this thesis will seek to test the following hypotheses:

- H1. The larger the news organization, the more likely it will have an interactive (and therefore more complex) Web site. Interactive is defined by reader e-mails to key staffers, the ability to respond to articles, blogs, etc.
- H2a. The more urban the news organization, the higher the chances that it is aligned or converged with another medium.
- H2b. Conversely, the more rural a newspaper is, the lower the chances that the newspaper will have a converged presence with another media (online, radio, or TV).
- H3. The larger the newsroom or production staff, the greater the degree of interactivity in the newspaper's Web site.
- H4. The greater the media competition within the community, the greater the likelihood that the newspaper will produce an online news product.
- H5. The more education the editor, publisher or staff has, the greater the chances that the paper will have an online news product.
- H6. The younger the editor, publisher or staff is, the higher the chances that the paper will have an online news product.

### ***Thesis Statement***

Taken as a whole, Nebraska newspapers are behind other American newspapers in adopting convergence. This research sought to test these hypotheses by focusing on

Nebraska newspapers and studying current literature about other newspapers and their efforts with convergence.

Several factors affect the adoption of convergence in Nebraska: (a) fewer key staffers who are experienced, influenced, or educated in convergence attitudes and best practices; (b) fewer key staffers who have experience with multimedia technology; and (c) a slower demand by audiences for converged news products. These questions are addressed via survey questions related to staff skills and audience requests and preferences. Some answers may be qualitative and others may be quantitative.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The author mailed 175 paper surveys in the fall of 2009 to Nebraska weekly and daily newspapers who are members of the Nebraska Press Association (NPA), according to the association's 2009 Directory and Rate Book. NPA newspaper members were the population for this survey; however, no college or university newspapers were surveyed.

The survey asked about newspapers' efforts with convergence. Self-addressed stamped envelopes were included with the paper survey. Those newspaper businesses that did not return the paper survey received two reminder e-mails (if there was an e-mail address available for that particular newspaper). The survey was attached to the e-mail reminders. Each survey response was assigned a number to keep the responses confidential. This study is generalizable only to Nebraska newspapers.

The author followed the paper surveys by conducting face-to-face interviews with five Nebraska editors to discuss their convergence efforts and views. These editors/publishers were chosen based on their responses to the initial surveys, from recommendations by journalism professors and other newspaper stakeholders, and based on the size of their newspaper. The face-to-face interviews were held during the winter and spring of 2010. These interviews are not generalizable, but provide anecdotal evidence.

This paper provides information about existing data, observations by other researchers, and perspectives and data by current practitioners (see Appendix A for the survey questionnaire).

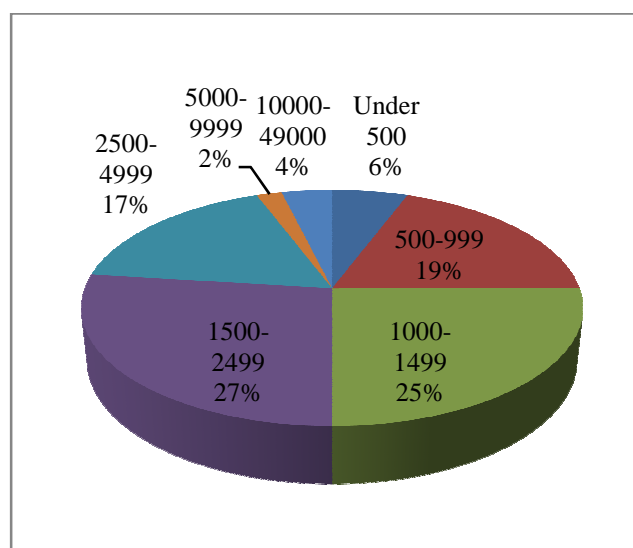
## Chapter 4

### Results

The author received 52 survey responses via regular mail and e-mail for a total response rate of 29.7 percent. Because of the small survey population, much of the evidence will be anecdotal rather than statistical. The organization of the results loosely follows the organization of the survey (Appendix A).

### *Demographics*

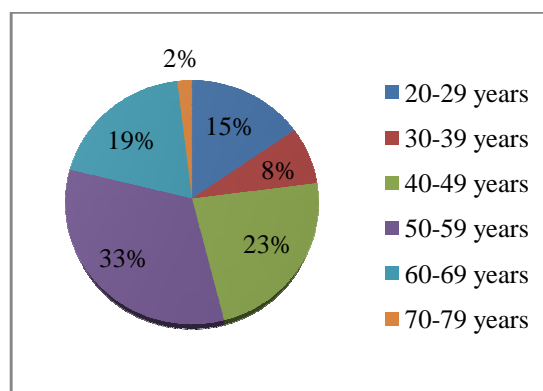
The majority of the responses (94 percent or 49 responses) came from small newspapers with a circulation of 5,000 or less (see Figure 1). The respondents included more males (55.8 percent) than females (44.2 percent).



*Figure 1.* Survey responses by Nebraska newspapers by circulation.

A majority (53.8 percent) of the respondents were editors or publishers between the ages of 50 and 79 while 46.2 percent were below age 49 (see Figure 2). This is

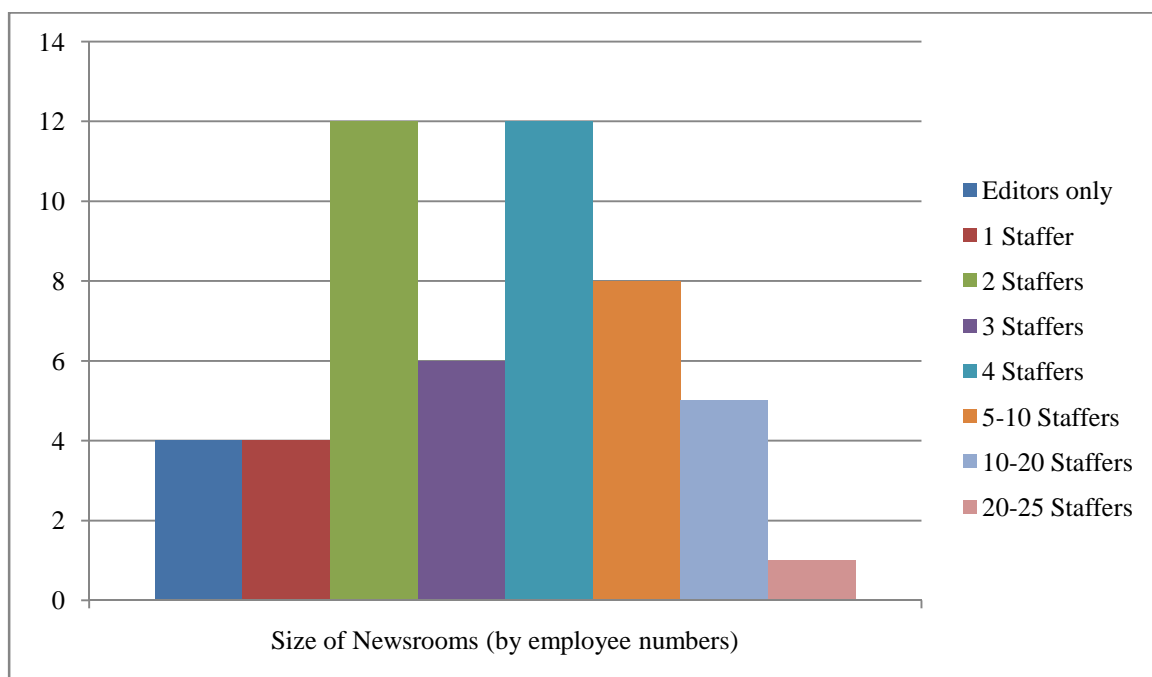
important to know because the editors over age 50 may retire within the next 15 to 20 years and those under age 49 would likely replace them.



*Figure 2.* Percent of respondents by age.

Half of the editors/publishers who responded to the survey had a bachelor's degree (27) while 10 said they had a high school diploma, eight said they had an associate's degree, and one said he or she had some college. Five responded that they had master's degrees or higher.

The editors were also asked to provide demographic information about the staff in their newsrooms. A majority of Nebraska newspapers have a staff between one and five people (See Figure 3). Most newsrooms responding to this survey had either two or four staffers (12 responses for two staff members and 12 responses for four staff members).



*Figure 3. Size of Nebraska Newsrooms, according to survey responses.*

The largest number of staff fell into the 40-49 age range with 75 people. The second largest number was between 20 and 29 with 61 employees in that age group. Responses indicated 34 staff members each in the 30-39 age group and the 50-59 age group. Sixteen employees were reported in the 60-69 age category, four employees in the 16-20 age category, and two employees in the 70-79 age category. The average years of staff experience was 22 years in the newspaper industry.

Newsroom staffs included 133 females and 97 males. Most newsroom employees had a bachelor's degree (123). Eleven had a master's degree or higher, 25 had an associate's degree, and 67 had a high school diploma or GED.

Most of the newsroom employees each have fewer than 20 years of experience in journalism. Eighty-three employees each had 0-5 years of experience; 49 each had between 5-10 years of experience; and 58 people each had between 10 and 20 years of experience. Twenty-five newsroom staffers each had between 20-30 years of news experience; eight each had between 30-40 years of news experience, and two each had between 40 and 50 years of news experience. One person had more than 50 years of news experience.

***Reasons for having a Web site.***

Many of these newsroom employees also work on a Web site. Of the 52 responses, 35 or 67 percent of newspaper editors said they publish both a print and Web version of their paper. Half of those respondents said they published an online version to meet the needs of their customers, especially the “non-print” and younger audiences. Six said they observed other organizations’ success with an online version and wanted that success for their paper, too. Only two respondents said they started an online version to save costs. There was no support for the idea that convergence could lead to consolidating newsrooms and, therefore, lower costs.

Other stated reasons for starting an online version of the newspaper included to “scoop” competitors, to have an additional venue for photographs and news, to improve public image and stay “modern,” to diversify, and to capture online advertising. Two editors said they anticipated a “re-launch” of their Web sites with a redesigned look and revamped content and features. Of those who said they did not currently have a Web presence, two said they planned to launch one within the coming year.

***Benefits of a Web Presence: Increasing Revenue, Attracting New Readers, and Enhancing the Newspaper's Visibility***

Nebraska's newspaper managers are examining the reasons for having Web sites. While a majority of respondents had an online Web presence, they also indicated by a slim margin in this survey that the Web presence enhanced their profitability: 14 agreed that the online presence enhanced their profitability; 13 disagreed, and nine editors were undecided.

The responses to the question of whether the online presence was successful was mostly yes (18 responses) and undecided (16 responses). Only one respondent said the online presence was not successful.

Respondents were mostly positive when asked whether the online presence enhanced their visibility and attracted new readers.

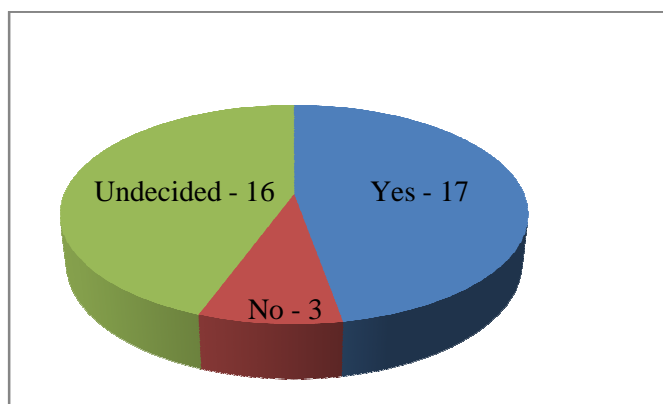
Twenty-nine publishers or editors said their newspaper's online presence enhanced their visibility in the community. Five were undecided whether it enhanced their visibility, and two said the Web site did not enhance their visibility within the community.

Editor #160 said he likes the increased visibility that comes with his newspaper's Web site. "It puts newspapers back into the breaking news game. We can post immediately ... so that's been a tremendous thing. So, yeah, it has been successful in that regard. It's caused some challenges and frustrations, too, but it's been successful."

Seventeen respondents said the Web presence attracted new readers while 16 respondents said they were not sure the online version of the newspaper attracted new



readers (see Figure 4). Only three respondents said the Web version of their newspaper did not attract new readers.

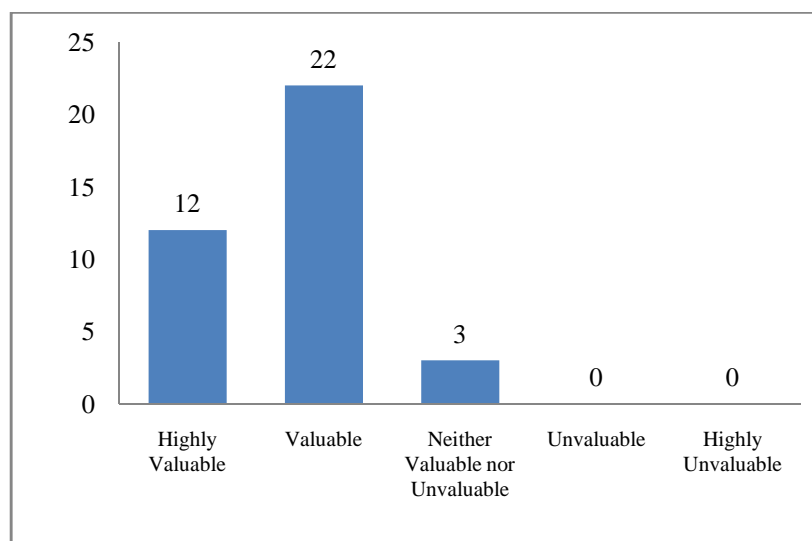


*Figure 4.* Has your online presence attracted new readers? (by number of responses, not percent).

### ***The Value of a Web Presence***

The responses to this survey indicate that Nebraska newspaper editors find value in having an online presence, and they think their audience and community find value in the online presence as well.

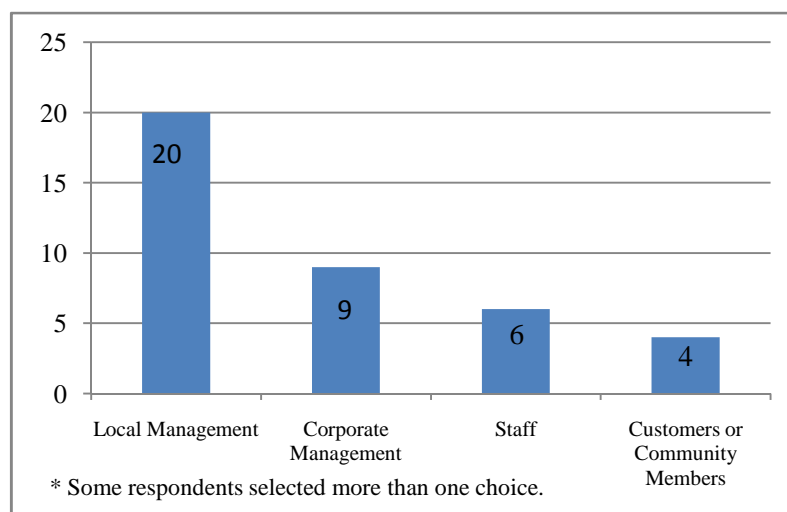
Twenty-two editors said they thought having an online or converged presence was valuable with 12 editors saying they thought it was highly valuable (see Figure 5). Altogether, 34 respondents thought an online presence had value. Only



*Figure 5.* Editors views on the value or convergence (by number of responses).

three people said it was neither valuable nor unvaluable and no one responded that the online presence was unvaluable or highly unvaluable.

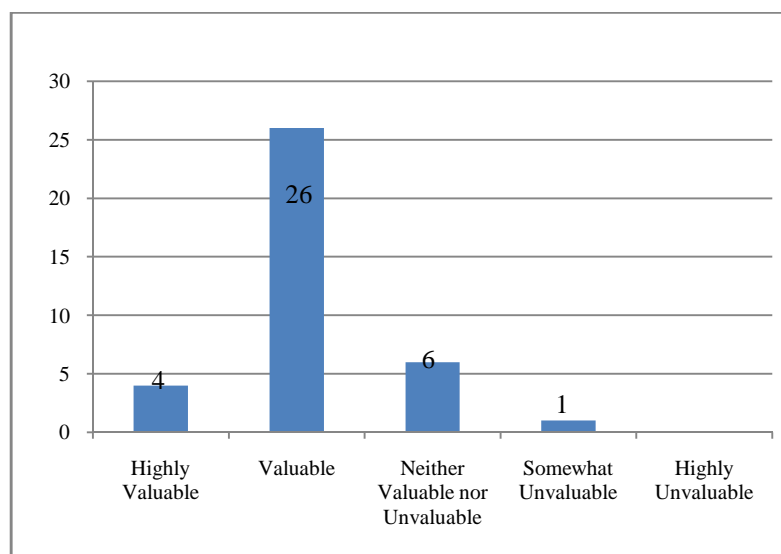
The results were similar when the editors were asked what their readers or community members thought of having an online presence (see Figure 5). Twenty-six said they perceived readers thought that having a Web presence was valuable and four said they believed their readers thought having an online presence was highly valuable. Six responded that readers were neutral (neither valuable nor unvaluable) about the newspaper having an online presence, and one person said his/her readers thought the Web presence was somewhat unvaluable. No one said their readers thought their Web sites were highly unvaluable.



*Figure 6.* Editor's perception of how readers like the newspaper Web presence (by number of responses, not percent).

### ***Major Impetus for Web Presence***

While newspaper editors and publishers are finding benefits to publishing online, who is driving the online effort? When asked where the major impetus was coming from to develop a Web presence or converged process, 20 respondents said it came from local management (see Figure 6). Nine said the drive was from corporate management. Six said the momentum was from staff, and four said it was from customers and community members. When answering this question, the editors could select more than one answer.



*Figure 7.* Where is the major impetus coming from to develop a Web presence or converged product (by numbers, not percent)?\*

### ***Multimedia Products and Social Networking***

Besides having an online presence and a newspaper presence, multimedia products are finding favor with the editors who responded to this survey. They said they liked adding video and slide shows to their Web sites (the editors could list more than one multimedia product that they liked).

When asked which multimedia products they had tried and liked, 16 respondents said video and nine said slide shows. Four people said they liked photo galleries or photo pages. Three people said they had tried and liked social networking (such as Facebook or Twitter). Three editors had tried podcasts and two had tried blogging (Web logging with commentary, descriptions, photographs, etc.). One editor liked his paper's online contests.

“We do some Twittering, (and) we have a Facebook page,” Editor #129 said.

“These are things that we are just really beginning to try to explore the full potential of them.” Photo galleries are extremely popular, she said, especially for community events like prom or sporting events.

When asked whether these new multimedia forms would catch on as new ways to tell stories, 20 people said “yes.” Two people said “no,” 11 respondents were undecided, and one person wrote, “I hope not.”

Editor #160 said new multimedia technologies have challenged his newspaper staff. Most everyone in the newsroom grew up and went to college to become a newspaper reporter, he said.

To all of a sudden have us changing how we were going about doing things ..., it’s a whole adjustment, it took some getting used to. It took some getting used to the idea of one deadline a day to a deadline anytime you want it to be because you can post things right away. We recognize that, even though the Internet business model is still evolving, still developing. (Editor #160)

This editor has been investigating the addition of an Internet pay wall where content is hidden behind a “virtual wall” until a subscription is paid.

Will that work? Will it just drive people away? There are lots of questions to be answered. We recognize that there’s a market there. There’s a demand there from certainly younger people in our coverage area. It would be foolish to not at least explore and proceed aggressively but yet cautiously. We are not worried about being on the cutting edge of some Internet technology that might be being tried on the East Coast, or West Coast, or in a large metropolitan area. We’ll see what works and why or why not, or how we might tweak it to make it work for us .... We want to do things that make sense for us; not do things just because they’re trendy. (Editor #160)

### *Competitors to Nebraska Newspapers*

In addition to radio and TV, Nebraska newspapers are finding additional competition in the Web and on social network sites. The main competition for Nebraska newspapers responding to the survey is other newspapers (see Figure 8). Twenty-eight editors responded that their competition was another newspaper. Nineteen said a radio station was their main competition. Three editors said a TV station was their newspaper's main competition, and five editors said both TV and radio stations were their main competition. Eight editors selected the "other" category. The "other" competition category included both paper and radio, freebies, shoppers, the Internet, and regional dailies. Several newspapers that focused solely on business or religion said they had no other competition. Many editors wrote that no other media outlet could cover their communities as thoroughly as they could.

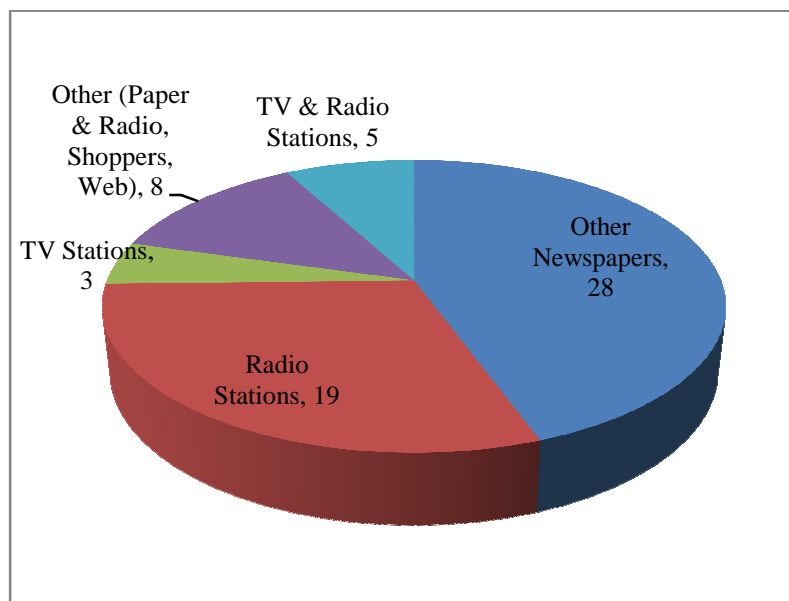
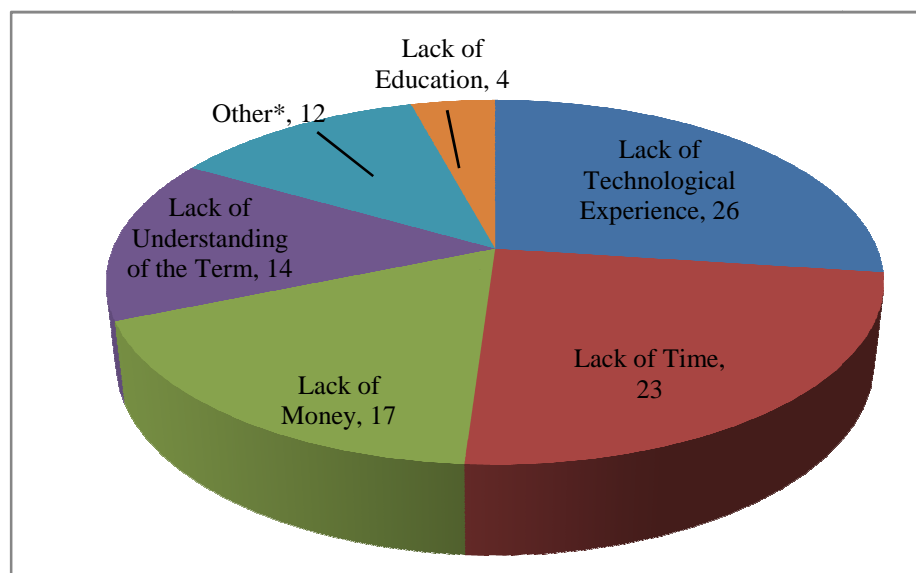


Figure 8. Competitors to Nebraska newspapers (by number of responses, not percent).

Even though these competitors have engaged in convergence, it was not enough to worry the editors, especially if the competitor required visitors to pay for online articles. The majority of the competitors' converged efforts involved a Web site (15). Other converged efforts by the competitors included: blogs, slideshows, photographs, podcasts, trade ads, shoppers, and online videos.

"Competition is ... anything that's vying for people's time as they get information," Publisher #2 said. He explained that it can be a daily newspaper, a statewide daily, radio, Internet, TV, cell phones, e-mail, or Twitter. He said it is important that newspapers provide credible information to their customers because younger readers visit Internet blogs, read the tabloids, or believe forwarded chain e-mails that do not always provide accurate information.

### ***Barriers to Convergence***



*Figure 9.* Barriers to converge in Nebraska (by number of responses).

Lack of technological experience was the number one barrier to implementing convergence more prominently in Nebraska's newspaper organizations (see Figure 9). Twenty-six responses listed the lack of technological experience. This was followed by a lack of time at 23 responses. These two reasons may be related since a person who is unfamiliar with technology will need more time to learn and implement new technology. Time is consistent with the diffusion of innovation theory, and it takes time to learn new technologies and processes.

Lack of money had the third highest number of responses (17), and lack of understanding of the term was the fourth highest response (14). Twelve editors selected "Other" reasons that convergence had not caught on more. Those other reasons included:

- No demand by Nebraska customers who are 60 or older;
- Unwillingness of customers to pay for Web-delivered information;
- Concern that newspaper sales will decrease with a Web site that offers free access to news articles;
- Finding a way to make online version profitable;
- Exploring how Twitter and Facebook (free social networking sites) can be used;
- Supervisors/Publishers don't understand advantages/disadvantages of convergence;
- Might not be beneficial or meet any needs;
- No barriers – it is inevitable.



Four respondents said convergence does not have higher use in Nebraska because of a lack of education. Editors were allowed to select more than one barrier when answering this question. Fourteen publishers/editors selected two choices; six selected three choices; one selected four choices; and two selected all five choices.

The apprehension about not making a profit with convergence concerned more than one newspaper editor/publisher.

“It’s an expensive proposition, and you need people who know what they’re doing to make it work right,” Editor #131 said.

We’re fortunate to be part of (a larger organization) so we have a few more resources than independent papers our size. I think a Web presence is just as vital in the more remote areas of the state but the talent pool, and the money pool, may be a lot smaller. Plus, time maintaining a Web site is time away from something else. (Editor #131)

Editor #80 wrote: “Our paper is so small – we don’t know what we could post on-line for free and still be able to sell subscriptions. We don’t want to go to on-line payment and all the credit card stuff, either.”

“Funds, equipment, and the ability to use them are major factors,” wrote Editor #117.

Some papers struggle enough with funds but being able to afford video equipment and software for convergence (is difficult). Also, finding staff to be able to place these items can prove to be difficult or simply spending the time to train the reporters to do this (is a challenge). (Editor #117)

“Convergence not only has to be profitable, it must meet some need that cannot be met in another way,” Editor #13 said. “In a small market, it would be seen as a media monopoly.”

“(Convergence) will continue to grow, which may or may not be a good thing,” wrote Editor #148. “It may continue to make some media markets feasible, but it may end up being like the family farm where only a few smaller, single-owner entities struggle to survive.”

Editor #129 addressed the barriers to convergence in Nebraska by writing: “Primarily, newspaper companies need to invest in technology and staff familiar with its use. This requires some creative management and commitment. Some will succeed, some won’t.”

“Nebraska customers don’t demand it (convergence) as much as someone might on the Coasts,” wrote Editor #55.

We’re a rural weekly, with a subscriber base and advertiser base of mostly people 50 years and older. Businesses here don’t favor Web advertising because they don’t understand it. We have no one on staff with the tech ‘know how’ to do more than what we are doing. And time to learn just isn’t there. (Editor #144)

“Approximately 70 percent of my subscribers are over 60,” wrote Editor #65.

“Many do not have a P.C. (personal computer) in their home and never will have.”

Publisher #2 said one of the barriers to convergence is a lack of overall resources. He said if reporters spend more time on products for the Web, they will create fewer bylined stories (and an unintended decrease in content) for the printed newspaper. His newsroom focuses on protecting reporters’ time for writing original stories. “That’s significant because again that is our franchise. That’s what we have that nobody else has. Protect your resources and do what you do best.”

“If we did converge, we would need to hire someone with experience,” wrote Editor #29.

I am the most technological advanced in the office and simply cannot do it all. We would also need another 'newer' computer. Two of three (computers) are unable to perform quickly and mine is the only one with CS2 Suite (an Adobe product). (Editor #29)

Another Editor (#74) wrote: "I do not think there are any barriers. It is an inevitability that papers will have to face in order to survive."

When asked whether a brand new media environment would emerge that goes beyond blending two or three media together, 24 of the respondents said they were undecided or did not know whether that would occur. Sixteen said they thought that would occur, and seven said they did not think a brand new media environment would evolve.

One editor (#103) wrote that news convergence "is already happening with the daily newspapers."

Another editor (#81) said a brand new media environment would not occur in the next few years, but possibly in the next five to 10 years.

"I think the small town papers will be around as usual with help from a Web presence; however, larger markets will move towards a Web-based presence with video, chat rooms, etc." wrote Editor #62. "We are already seeing some of this."

Editor #129 said she sees a big difference in Web activity between the two papers she edits.

The (smaller town) just doesn't go to the Web site. It is an older population and it is . . . a more rural community as well, so there definitely are markets where there just isn't as much interest in the Web yet. (Editor #129)

*Newspapers are a valuable community commodity*

Even though the newspaper industry is changing, there is still a demand for the product and services that newspaper companies provide.

“Journalism is a valuable commodity to a community, not just in terms of information but also entertainment,” Editor #21 wrote. “A Web site could enhance that standing, especially with younger potential readers, though it will always be a financial challenge in a small market like ours.”

“We think the local community newspapers will still be a profitable and valuable resource for the small communities for many years to come,” Editor #103 wrote.

Editor #65 said, “Small weekly papers are not that affected — yet.”

“I am fairly confident that small town newspapers like mine, if run well, will continue to thrive even as larger papers die/go bankrupt,” Editor #87 wrote. “No one can provide the local coverage like we do.”

“Newspapers still have the niche of being able to provide 99 percent of local news,” Publisher #105 said. “Radio stations that are big can’t cover every single town’s news like a little newspaper can.”

“The Internet allows us, as a weekly, to become a daily,” Publisher #14 said. “We’re just now starting to take those steps. I never put all of my product on the Internet ... and I never will. We really, as a weekly paper, have more product than we have space for.” Publisher #14 uses the Internet as an outlet for that extra product. She also likes the immediacy of the Internet because breaking stories can be published there. However, she hopes her community members will pick up a copy of her newspaper for the how, the

why, the background details, and various perspectives on the story. “We don’t have to give our stories in ... 60-second sound bites. We can really do the research and give them the full story. The Web site allows us to give them the 30-second sound bite.”

Newspapers can do a better job of providing different perspectives, Publisher #14 said. She gets discouraged when she reads about an event in three different newspapers and it is the same point of view in all three papers. “So we (her newspaper) try real hard to give a different perspective than anybody else. We’re closer to the readers for a local story. I would hope, because we live there -- we breathe there, we eat there, we go to church with these folks, we’re often at the same grocery stores, our kids are in the same schools -- that we can do a better job.”

“I think that we are doing our readers an injustice by not giving them the full perspective,” Publisher #14 said. “It is not unusual for me to assign the same story to two different writers even though I’m a little tiny weekly... because I want those perspectives and then each of those two writers has to get three or four independent perspectives before I’ll even allow them to put it into print. Perspective is so important.”

“I cannot emphasize enough the role of newspapers in today’s society,” said Publisher #14. “(Radio and Television) will never do the in-depth research that we do.”

“The paradigm is definitely shifting in our industry – no doubt about it,” Publisher #2 said. “It’s anxious times for publishers who forever have known that their core product is the newspaper ...” He added that current publishers and editors cannot go on that assumption anymore. He said he feels less risk in his county than he did when he was working at a large eastern Nebraska newspaper because subscribers can get statewide

and national news from other places. They can only get news about his community from his newspaper.

Publisher #2 said, “It makes it more important than ever that we’re being aggressive about coverage and we’re not shy about saying ‘we’ve got the best local coverage that you’re going to get anywhere.’ That’s not a sales pitch when I say that, that’s a fact. So we need to make sure we’re telling that story.”

Publisher #2 said a University of Nebraska-Lincoln marketing class is working with the Nebraska Press Association to get that message across to customers. The NPA selected a campaign from the class’s top suggestions that will blanket Nebraska in the spring and summer 2010 to promote local newspapers through house ads, radio spots, and billboards. One of the class’s recommendations is to use other media to tell the newspaper story. “We have a good story to tell; we need to not be shy about it,” Publisher #2 said.

### ***Future of Journalism with Convergence***

The last two questions of the Nebraska newspaper survey sought the impressions, thoughts, and feelings that editors and publishers have about convergence in the journalism field.

While many were not sure where convergence is going to take journalism, others believed the process of converging multimedia products, reporter roles, and news organizations is inevitable and is already happening in Nebraska. There were positive and negative responses to the future of journalism with the addition of convergence.

Many editors are convinced that their medium fills a unique and valuable role.

“Community journalism will always have a place, regardless of the medium,” wrote editor #131.

Local news is what people want. The more ways you have to tell stories, the better job you can do of telling them. Similarly, there will always be a place for community journalists, but they need a broader skill set. Here, for example, not only do you have to be able to report, write, and photograph, you also need to be able to shoot and edit video and update a Web site. (Editor #131)

Editor #13 wrote,

It comes down to ‘*raison d’être*’ (reason to be), and the dailies are struggling to find it. The success of weeklies is due to local or topical focus with pictures and features no longer found in most newspapers. Also many newspapers have reduced size and thus have less content. Journalists need to continue to meet the needs of their readers, in spite of these challenges caused by decisions of management.

“Local papers will do great – people want to know who (and what) the news is about – good or bad,” wrote Editor #38.

“I think it will certainly expand greatly the sources of information and the different ways that it’s presented,” Editor #129 said.

I think that in the future, we will get a better grip on the different audiences and how to best meet their needs, and so the way we package the news will continue to evolve differently for our different types of products. I think right now we’re just learning how to package information and multimedia so that the print and online and the multimedia, all of it, will work together, rather than having pieces put here and there, but no real cohesion to it all. (Editor #129)

This editor said convergence will offer her audience a more complete picture or package of the news and that would be a positive development.

I think as technology continues to advance, as newsrooms get more savvy with technology that more newsrooms will be exploring multimedia. I think as technology advances, equipment becomes cheaper, and young people enter the field, they know how to use all that stuff, that it will just become a much more natural process. It’ll become easier and it will just be routine for newsrooms. I

think right now it's probably not routine for most newsrooms, but I think it will become so. (Editor #129)

Editor #174 wrote: "For small weekly newspapers, the use of print and Web site are easy to achieve. I think the most we can hope to add, given our resources, is video."

"The walls between disciplines are coming down – reporters and editors must be multimedia savvy," Editor #129 wrote. "Readers will get their news in many forms. Journalists will adapt and learn to use technology to supplement printed stories."

"We cannot, must not, forget the value of the print product," wrote publisher #14. "People read, digest, inhale information differently with the paper in their hands. Each, the Web and our paper, bring value. They are not the same and should not be treated as such."

Editor #152 wrote,

Time pressures at smaller publications are immense with little or no formal training in online/video skills. Everyone performs every task, and the traditional print product still must be served. The future is good with more and quicker ways to reach readers. Anyone who has not grasped this is doomed. The primary challenge is to move away from free online products to paid access.

"Without adapting to new technologies, weekly papers . . . will not survive," wrote Editor #44. "We currently also use Twitter and will soon also move into a Facebook account."

Responses about social networking were hopeful. Editor #55 said, "I can see using social networking Web sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Corporate leaders haven't told us ... to do that, but they could. Money is the key factor."



In the midst of trying convergence, editors and publishers still want quality journalism for their businesses and their communities. Researchers in the literature review also noted that maintaining quality journalism while using technological innovation was important.

“We will still need capable writers and editors,” wrote Editor #167, “with more knowledge of video/audio production and editing.”

A number of editors expressed optimism about the future of journalism in Nebraska while others felt convergence and new technologies would not affect their newspaper.

Editor #170 wrote: “I feel that if you want to be considered a ‘trusted’ news source through any media, the future is bright; but I also believe that there is a lot of competition and you have to be good.”

“I think convergence can be a good thing as long as it doesn’t affect hard copy,” wrote Editor #139.

“I think if publishers embrace the possibilities, convergence will be an advantage,” wrote Editor #29.

For small newspapers, we could create a Web presence and enhance our printed subscriptions. We could draw in those who are doing genealogical research. We could draw in more readers and more of the ‘younger’ generation. Technology is always changing; we need to go with the flow. (Editor #29)

Publisher #2 noted that the story about the plane crash in the Hudson River last year was broken by Twitter. “I just don’t see the value of knowing five minutes sooner, other than if you’re a family member wanting to know the status of your family.” He

said a newspaper or other trusted news source could provide more complete information than blogs or social networks in that type of situation.

“I tend to not want to be a cutting-edge type person who jumps at every new technology,” Publisher #2 said. “We just added Facebook last month and some (newspapers) have been doing it for a long time.” He said Facebook does not take a lot of time and he has a younger staff member who is more adept than he is at posting updates and using Facebook lingo. He also gets assistance from other staff in his building who are experienced at uploading photographs. He said technology and convergence means looking at your staff and using their skills to the company’s advantage. He designs the newspaper’s Web site, but his teenage daughter comes in every week after school to update content. “I guess I’m just at the point that I’m very mindful of ‘what is the impact on our staff and our resources?’ Every minute or hour that the editor spends doing something (for the Web) is less time on byline stories or putting the paper out.”

“I think as long as the industry of journalism can uphold itself with its reputation and its integrity and its accuracy, we will destroy bloggers,” Publisher #105 said. “Bloggers are not committed the way journalists are supposed to be. There’s a big difference between reporting the news and then telling someone what happened with your opinion mixed into it. That’s the risk that you run with bloggers.” This editor said he thought the industry of journalism would be just fine in the future.

Editor #129 agreed that news organizations are held accountable whereas bloggers are not. “Another Web site started in town, which was a glorified blog, that they tried to present it as a news site,” she said.

It was full of errors and no accountability. People would try to call them and there was no contact information for them to get corrections. It was laced with opinion rather than research. That hurt us as well because some people just assumed that it was associated with our newspaper, which of course it wasn't. Those kinds of sites, I think, illustrate that without having trained journalists, without having standards, without having accountability, editors, and those kinds of things, that the sites are not credible. I think people have more confidence in a news organization site — at least I hope they do. A journalist will identify where that information is coming from, but a blogger, you have no idea if that's from a credible source or it's from some person who knows nothing whose opinion is being quoted. (Editor #129)

Even though Nebraska newspapers are holding to journalistic tenets, editors and publishers realize they may need to evolve.

I think it's going to be a constant evolution, and the pace of change is picking up so quickly, it's just hard to know where it's going to go. I mean I look at our product today, where it was a year ago, and the year before that. When I do that, I shake my head thinking ‘wow, we've really come a long ways.’ It makes me wonder where we're going to be a year from now. I don't really have a clear vision and that's what makes me nervous as a publisher. (Publisher #2)

The future of convergence will be interesting, Editor #160 said. In his community, the same company owns the newspaper, shopper, and radio station. “We have not yet gone into that organizational convergence ... where we share stuff with the radio station ... and they're pushing stuff on our Web site. Will that happen in the future? It might. There's some logic behind it ... so for us (because of our situation with the ownership), that's an area that we need to explore. But prior to that, I think the whole newspaper industry has to figure out how to make a Web site a more ... profitable

venture. The revenue that is generated is great, but it's not covering necessarily the costs." Editor #160 said there is some cooperation in advertising between the three media organizations in his city.

Publisher #105 thinks it is important to think "outside the box" regarding the future of journalism. He expects a lot of newspaper editors and publishers to retire in the next few years. "And when they decide they want to retire, all these towns are going to either 1) lose their newspaper or 2) really have to scramble to find someone willing to bust their hump for \$20,000 a year." The pay is not great, he said, but owning your own business has its own benefits.

Editor #160 said, "Convergence is not an option anymore. It is certainly an essential part of being in the media business today. ... How far you go with it or what shape it takes is still yet to be resolved for individual newspapers or radio stations. But there's no question that we all have to be going down that path.

"There's a lot of good things (in convergence); there's some frustrating things," Editor #160 said. "For example let's say there's a story breaking that's police related. If we were simply still just a newspaper company ... before we printed anything, we would make sure we had the official word from ...the police chief or the county sheriff or witnesses ... Now with the Internet we hear something on the police scanner and you're thinking 'is the radio station down the street going to be posting that; should we post that too?' based on just what we heard on the police scanner? Can we take the time to call all the people that we will for the newspaper story, or how quickly should we get it out?

Boy, there's some real challenges in terms of deciding what's appropriate and what's not, how quickly you proceed, how cautiously you take it."

"(Convergence) is a work in progress," Publisher #2 said. He is looking forward to the next state press association convention where convergence will be part of the roundtable discussions. He wants to hear where other newspapers are in this process.

### ***Future of Journalism in General***

Editor #51 wrote, "I feel the future of community journalism is strong. People will be interested in local news forever. We simply need to provide it in a medium that they desire. Determining that medium is our challenge."

"I think the future is now," said Editor #74. "With so many forms of media, we now have the means to reach anyone in the world. It is truly amazing."

Editor #131 also wrote,

It's an exciting time to be in journalism. Even in the smallest papers, the old methods are giving way to technological advances. Despite the leap forward, the basics are the same as they've ever been: get the facts, tell a compelling story. We just have more tools at our disposal.

"Journalism is bright in the area," Editor #117 wrote. "The problem is finding reporters able to do more than simply write. To be able to survive in this era of convergence, reporters need to be able to edit video, shoot video, take photographs, etc."

"Journalism has a bright future if for no other reason than convergence has expanded readership," wrote Editor #165.

The responsibilities of newspaper journalism remain steadfast and still receive the highest marks when it comes to news integrity. After all, this is the information age, and no entity gathers local information like local newspapers. Given that, newspapers must stay on the cutting edge of technology so they can deliver this information to as many readers in as many formats as possible. (Editor #165)

Other editors were not sure that convergence is good for Nebraska newspapers. Editor #12 wrote, “I think it is going to continue to hurt the profitability of newspapers, which in turn will lead to fewer jobs and ultimately less newspapers.”

“Everyone still looks out for their own business – it is unlikely many will cross media to go to another source to spread news,” wrote Editor #79.

Editor #85 wrote: “I think (the future of journalism) will go on as usual. The only difference I see, is how the news is delivered. Eventually there will be no need for printing presses because it will all be done digital.”

A few editors were intrigued by the challenge of convergence, the comparisons and contrasts of old and new technology, and examples of new technology.

“We were among the first Nebraska newspapers to install phototypesetting computers in 1970 and MacIntosh typesetting computers in 1985,” wrote Editor #126.

Both were big changes but the change is not over. Forty years from now our newspaper may be delivered electronically. How much of the old will we keep? I don’t know, but I am using a 50-year-old typewriter to complete this survey. I expect some of the old will still be around but hard to guess what. (Editor #126)

Another editor (#10) envisioned two on-line versions – one would be a pay-for-viewing version and the other would be a free version. “There will be a lot of experimenting through trial and error to find out what works, and what people are willing to pay for.”

“Earlier this year we purchased two small video cameras and have posted 15 short video reports,” Editor #126 wrote about adding multimedia to her news products.

Two years ago we began posting slide shows; before that we tried displaying slide shows on a computer playing in our front window – that wasn't a good venture. While the two publications have kept their separate identity, we have joined the people of two newspapers in two communities and will be adding two more to the group in early 2010! Our Web presence has been good for our image. We now have 60 subscribers to our e-edition which is a scanned copy of our newspaper. (Editor #126)

### *Quality of Journalism*

There were editors and publishers who expressed concern that the quality of journalism may be dropping while reporters, editors, and publishers tinker with multimedia products and associations.

Editor #143 stated: “(I’m) concerned about the quality of journalism – already see a lot of biased reporting that is called journalism in the mainstream media and that inevitability trickles down to local media.”

“The types of our reporting are getting too blurred,” Publisher #105 wrote. “It makes hard news more about proving what you say is true.” On another question, this editor wrote: “Journalism is under typical attack when something goes public – everyone can ‘write’ news . . . and the challenge is to remain faithful to the traditional news style and writing.”

“Quality, unbiased, fact-based reporting focusing on local news is the deciding factor in whether print journalism will remain the most valuable source of news and information, not gadgets and whistles,” Editor #172 wrote.

Editor #93 wrote: “Journalists will still need to know:

- How to write well,
- How to check facts,
- How to keep stories concise.

And they'll need to learn how to keep their personal opinions out of stories – seeing way too much of that! But they'll also need to know how to shoot good still photos and video – and how to record.”

Editor #81 wrote: “Journalists will need more and more schooling/resources to keep on top of the constantly changing media. However, I believe the bigger the town, the more they will be affected – the smaller towns won't be as affected.”

“Sadly, I think days of thorough news coverage of events will die out,” wrote Editor #144.

The younger generation wants sound bites and headlines and seems not interested in reading full stories. Twenty-four hour news stations, Internet, and radio provide news briefs in flashy style, but newspapers provide depth. Also (I) see more corporate ownership of smaller papers hurting “local news.” (Editor #144)

Editor #129 said journalistic standards still have to be maintained during times of transition whether the news is published in a print product or an online product. “We may be presenting news in a totally different way, but the fact that it's a news organization with editors, and accountability and standards gives our readers a sense of confidence in the news,” she said.

### ***Resistance to Convergence***

There is still resistance to convergence within the Nebraska newspaper community and uncertainty whether convergence is a good addition to journalism or not.

Editor #46 wrote:

I'm glad I'm 45 in the newspaper business and not 25. Young people covet the Internet and it will only get more powerful. Weekly newspapers will combat the Internet the longest. Larger dailies have felt it the worst. Medium-sized dailies are next.



Editor #144 wrote:

Newspapers our size (circulation: 2,500-4,999) have to change to survive, even if the change cuts at what we do best, which is provide solid local news coverage. We have to become daily papers on the Internet, but we risk not being able to sell our weekly paper if we give too much news away free before we print. Internet subscriptions won't be popular, but may be necessary.

Publisher #14 said one drawback to convergence is not getting the entire story to the community. She regularly sees fellows at the local coffee shop who think they know the whole story based on a blurb off the Internet. They understand what happened, she said, but not why and all the thought processes that went on before a city council (or other governing body) made a particular decision. When community members do not read the in-depth story, they do not really know what happened and who gained or who lost, she said.

“If you have a bond issue in your community and you have total convergence between your newspaper, your radio station, your Internet, then you have ability to unfairly influence your voters....” Publisher #14 said. “Instead of giving them just the information and allowing them to be the intelligent voters that they are, you become an influence on their voting. That doesn't mean you don't write a column and say, ‘vote for the school bond issue, the school is falling apart’ or ‘don't vote for it, it's the wrong plan,’” she said. Reporters and editors can have an opinion about the bond issue on the opinion page, but they should not have a convergence of opinions and facts in regular news stories, she said.

“And so, am I for convergence? Maybe. Maybe.” said Publisher #14. “The jury is out.”

## *Answers to Research Questions and Hypotheses*

### *Research Question 1*

The first research question asked: “What is the status of media convergence in the Nebraska newspaper industry?” The results from the survey showed the roughly 67 percent of the respondents (35 out of 52) have a Web site that accompanies the print version of their paper. According to qualitative information, the online site might not be very extensive or elaborate but it is there and available for readers who want to get their news from a non-print medium.

Research question #1 had two follow-up questions: 1a. Are larger newspapers farther along with adopting convergence than the smaller ones? and 1b. Why have some newspapers decided to publish online while others have not?

The results from the surveys showed that the smaller the newspaper circulation, the less likelihood that the newspaper would have an accompanying Web presence. Newspapers that responded to this survey and had a circulation of 2,500 subscribers or greater all had a Web presence. Between the 1,500-2,499 circulation range, two newspapers did not have a Web presence. Eight newspapers with a circulation between 1,000-1,499 had an online presence while five did not have a Web site. Of the 10 respondents in the 500-999 circulation size, three had a Web presence and seven did not. Three newspapers in the Under 500 circulation size returned surveys with two papers providing a Web presence and one that did not. The survey results suggest that larger

newspapers are trying convergence more than smaller newspapers. So there was support for this follow-up question.

The second follow-up question asked, “Why have some newspapers decided to publish online while others have not?” Responses to survey question 14 (What are the barriers to convergence?) are helpful to answer this question and show numerous reasons. The largest response indicated a lack of technological experience (26). Technology can be complex to learn. This response is consistent with the idea in the diffusion of innovation theory that complexity has the largest negative impact on a new innovation.

The second largest response was a lack of time (23). Time is also a component in the diffusion of innovation theory. It takes time to teach and learn new technologies, and it takes time to install technological infrastructures.

The third and fourth reasons, respectively, for why newspapers may not publish online, were a lack of money (17) and a lack of understanding of the term (14). There were 12 responses to “Other” which included explanations such as: making the Web site pay for itself, lack of demand by older customers, and lack of understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of convergence. Only four respondents cited lack of education. This is understandable because more than half of the editors/publishers who responded had at least a bachelor’s degree (27 bachelor’s/5 master’s degrees).

### ***Research Questions 2 and 5***

The second research question (R2) asked, “Why does the level of Web site complexity differ across Nebraska newspapers?” Some newspapers work very hard at

having an up-to-date Web site with flash, video, photo galleries, and other features.

Others may post the bare minimum but can still say they have a Web presence.

The barriers to convergence question (#14 on the survey) also suggest answers to this question. This survey question also addresses Research Question #5, which is “What are the barriers to adopting convergence at Nebraska newspapers?”

Lack of technological experience, lack of time, and lack of money appear to be the top three barriers to convergence listed by Nebraska newspaper editors and publishers. Without someone to show or teach editors about technology, how to use it with print journalism, and how to blend roles, as described in the social learning theory and the diffusion of innovation theory, convergence will take longer to catch on. In small to medium-sized newspapers, editors and reporters must be a “jack of all trades” to get the paper published. Because they have so many responsibilities, there is no time to learn about convergence or to learn new technology. Editors and publishers at smaller newspapers said they cannot afford to spend time learning new technology. As noted earlier, Editor #141 wrote: “We’re fortunate to be part of (a larger organization) so we have a few more resources than independent papers our size.”

Usability is an important facet of Web page design, according to Jakob Nielsen (2010), an author and presenter on what makes good Web sites. Efficiency is another key component of a successful Web site, according to Xigen Li (2006) and Lowrey (1999). Lowrey also said that most newspapers use online design patterns based on their print newspaper design. Lowrey recommended that newspaper Web sites also be “designed with the technological limitation of the users in mind” and that editors and publishers

should “design for efficient retrieval.” He also found that users will not return to sites where they had to wait to download large graphics. Li defined the efficiency of news retrieval “as the level of easiness, speediness, and smoothness (uninterrupted) in locating and accessing the news information from an Internet newspaper.” (Li, 2006).

From this author’s perspective, one area of complexity for online readers is requiring visitors to sign in to a newspaper’s Web site with a username and password. Quite a few newspapers are going to a pay wall system, which requires users to pay by credit card before viewing the online product. According to Nat Ives (2009), *Newsday*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Financial Times*, the *Newport Daily News* in Rhode Island, and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* have all gone to Internet– pay walls. However, Mark Dolliver wrote in *Mediaweek* (2010), “... the newspaper-reading habit won't easily carry over to a habit of paying for content online. Indeed, there's a double whammy here for newspapers. Young adults have come of age with the Internet but are the least interested in newspaper content (and most accustomed to free online fare); old adults are keen on newspapers but are the least comfortable doing things online.”

While the qualitative responses of the survey indicate that newspaper editors are considering this process as a way to increase revenue, only nine editors responded that they currently required online viewers to sign on with a username and password. Twenty-eight said they did not require a username or password to view the paper’s online site.

### ***Research Question 3***

Research Question #3 was: What might have influenced or affected early adopters of a converged newsroom – either with print and online, print and radio, print and TV, or all four media together?

The top reason that newspaper editors/publishers listed for adding a Web site to accompany their print product in survey question #2 was to meet the needs of their customers (27 responses or nearly 52 percent).

Fourteen editors selected “other” as the reason they wanted an online Web product. Those “other” reasons included to scoop the competition, to give another venue for photographs and news stories (tell a story in another way), to stay modern, to capture online advertising, and because of inconsistent mail delivery.

Only seven editors/publishers said they observed other news organizations’ success with convergence and wanted to try it themselves. There was slight support in the survey responses for the idea that watching other news organizations’ success with Web sites and multimedia products influenced early convergence adopters in Nebraska. Observing others’ use of new technology is suggested by the social learning theory. There was vocal support during the in-person interviews for newspaper editors and publishers monitoring what other industry personnel did with convergence.

Only two respondents said they added a Web presence to save costs. The qualitative written responses and the oral responses indicated that newspaper editors and publishers do not think a Web presence will save costs. Many said their online sites

actually reduce the amount of time news employees spend on the print product, thereby taking away resources from the print product.

The idea of role convergence had little support from the survey respondents. Role convergence would be when a newspaper, radio, or television station ask one reporter tell the story for several different media (cross media). An example would be when the TV weatherman writes a weather report for the local newspaper or radio station. During the in-person interviews, it was apparent that this is one area that newspaper editors are watching, with only a few testing it in their own newsrooms.

The survey questions 3a, 4a, and 5a were meant to address role convergence; however, the majority of editors and publishers chose the answer “undecided” to this question. Ten editors responded to questions 3a and 5a (eight undecided) and eight editors responded to question 4a (four undecided). There was no revealing information from these responses. Possibly the questions were not explained thoroughly enough in the paper survey.

#### ***Research Question 4***

Research Question #4 asked: Are forms of convergence in Nebraska newspapers similar to those in other states that have been studied?

The only other study that this writer found on newspapers and Web convergence throughout an entire state was conducted by Wilson Lowrey (2003) in Mississippi. Lowrey found strong support for smaller newspapers using outside vendors to make their Web versions more interactive. A review of the Web sites for Nebraska newspapers

linked from the Nebraska Press Association's Web site showed at least four newspapers using vendors such as Information Analytics, Townnews.com, and 1Up! Software.

Lowrey (2003) found that there was no support for his hypothesis that "the greater the intramedia competition for an online newspaper, the greater the likelihood the newspaper will produce an online news product." However, this survey of Nebraska newspapers found evidence that Nebraska editors and publishers were aware of their competition and what the competition provided for a Web or converged presence. Twenty-nine editors/publishers (more than half the responses) said their competition had an online presence while seven said their competition did not have a Web presence. Eleven editors/publishers (21 percent) said they did not know what their competitors provided online. In response to a follow-up question, 15 said their competitors specifically had a Web site, while six listed "other" products such as blogs, photos, online video, and online radio.

Several studies have researched the *Lawrence Journal-World* in Lawrence, Kansas, to investigate its success with convergence. Because Kansas is directly south of Nebraska geographically, and they are both Midwestern states, there may be similar characteristics between Nebraska and Kansas newspapers and their subscribers.

A thesis by Maria Miro-Quesada of the University of Missouri-Columbia studied the *Lawrence Journal-World* and added to the "discussion of how to turn a newspaper's Web site into an asset that fully benefits from the potential of both technology and quality journalism." (2007, p. v). Turning a newspaper's Web site into an asset that benefits



everyone is also a goal for Nebraska newspaper editors, according to the survey responses and the in-person interviews.

According to the About Us section of its Web site, the *Lawrence Journal-World*, a newspaper in eastern Kansas with a circulation of more than 20,000 daily, became one of the first daily newspapers to begin publishing on the Internet in 1995 (ljworld.com). Miro-Quesada wrote that the company works with technological convergence as well as cross media convergence and role convergence. The *Lawrence Journal-World* has received numerous awards and publicity for its efforts to promote convergence and has produced successful stories and articles across media. The About Us description concludes with the sentence that: "In the fall of 2001, The World Company became one of the first media groups to combine its print, television and Internet news-gathering into one newsroom."

That kind of role conversion has not happened in Nebraska, although editors and publishers are monitoring role convergence and corporate or organizational convergence. The observation of other media and their efforts with convergence follows the behavior described by the social learning theory. This theory states that people observe the behavior of others who are using new technologies, process information from these observations, make decisions about which of these behaviors to adopt, and later perform the previously observed behaviors.

Two daily newspapers responded to this author's survey between the 10,000-49,999 circulation size, and they are similar in circulation size to the *Lawrence Journal-World*. However on closer inspection, those Nebraska newspapers were located in

communities with smaller populations than Lawrence, Kansas (90,000 people). Both Nebraska papers had a news staff of approximately 20 people. The *Lawrence Journal-World* lists a staff of 212 on its Web site. This size difference and the fact that the *Journal-World* also owns a television station, radio station, and cable company, makes it difficult to compare the *Journal-World* and the two daily Nebraska newspapers.

Nebraska newspaper editors and publishers and the *Lawrence Journal-World* both value their online efforts. The respondents to the Nebraska survey said their online efforts were valuable or highly valuable, and that opinion coincides with actions of high-profile convergence organizations like the *Lawrence Journal-World*. The goals that Nebraska newspapers have in common with the *Lawrence Journal-World* are to tell well-written quality stories and to turn a newspaper's Web site into an asset that benefits everyone and provides a revenue stream.

### ***Research Question 6***

Research Question #6 is: "What does convergence mean for the variety of journalistic voices in Nebraska?"

The Nebraska Press Association (NPA) is setting the multimedia and convergence example by encouraging its members to participate in its newest digital product, Nebraska News Link. According to the NPA's Web site, the Nebraska News Link is an online Web portal designed to give newspaper publishers/editors and their customers easy access to more than 100 digitally scanned Nebraska newspapers.

This NPA project began in June 2009 when the association started scanning printed newspapers as a way to archive newspapers and promote e-subscriptions,

according to the Web site. The scanned files are stored on the NPA's Web site (behind a sign-in system) as portable document files (pdfs). The e-subscriptions allow members to search articles, news events, people, and advertisements for a small fee. Customers purchase the page(s) they want from the NPA's Web site. They use PayPal or credit cards to complete the financial transactions. The higher the Web traffic and the more customers purchase hometown newspaper e-pages, the more income the hometown newspaper earns.

The NPA's Web site also links to member Web sites and provides both statewide and national advertising services.

### ***Role Convergence in Print Production***

There was support for role or organizational convergence in the printing aspect of newspaper production during the in-person interviews. Several editors said they have seen this happening in Nebraska during the last 20-30 years. Publisher #105, who operates a newspaper in the 1,000-1,499 circulation size, noted that he no longer uses his printing press because it became more economical to outsource printing to a company that specializes in printing newspapers.

"They (the printing company) can print black and white newspaper and they'll deliver it for about \$75 a week less than I was getting it done in (another city)," Publisher #105 said. The process works when he uploads the pdf (portable document format) version of his newspaper to the printing company's Web site and the company delivers it to his business the next day (instead of his driving to pick up the papers) thereby saving

time and money. He said the company also offers full color at a reasonable rate using a high-grade computerized plate machine that is set on a traditional press.

We're kind of ahead of the game . . . because we do everything digitally (digital pictures, pagination). They're (the printing company) updated enough and forward enough that . . . they can offer printing the label right on the newspaper, which is a big deal for a small newspaper. (Publisher #105)

This publisher said the company's label process saves time so newspaper employees do not have to update the address file, affix labels on every newspaper, or worry about labels falling off in the mail. He decided to outsource the newspaper printing after his pressman retired. So far he has been happy that it has cut down on his overhead because there is no ink, developer, plates, fixer, chemicals, parts, or labor for a printing press.

For small papers, it is cost prohibitive to buy the new InDesign/PhotoShop package, said Publisher #105, who is 29 and has a bachelor's degree.

The struggle I have is I actually came in during the transition period and I like the old way better. It's much easier to take action shots with a film camera (with a fast film speed) than it is with a medium-grade digital camera unless you're willing to put in thousands of dollars for the high-end body and lens." He said that digital cameras produce a lot of blurry photographs and a photographer has to spend more time focusing the camera. "It's (technology) certainly easier, but that doesn't make it better. (Publisher #105)

Publisher #105 still uses hand-written techniques: "I still use a piece of paper to write down all my stories and cross them off as I use them (in the paper) to make sure I'm using them all." He said newspapers used to be the recorders of the community but now many people blog or communicate through other media. Even so, he does not believe newspapers have lost their value.

Editor #129 said her business is a printing center and they print for other newspapers other than their own. It is expensive to maintain a printing press, she said.

“So I think a lot of the smaller press operations are shutting down as the equipment breaks down. It used to be every newspaper had their press in the backroom and they’d print their own papers.” Today most small newspapers contract out their printing process, she said.

Editor #160 and Publisher #2 do not see anything new in the idea that there is convergence in printing centers. They both operate central printing plants and say this movement has been going on for the last 20-30 years.

“Most small town weekly newspapers can’t afford to have their own printing press especially when it only runs once or twice a week,” Editor #160 said. For as long as he can remember, there have been printing sites and the smaller papers contracted with those sites to print their newspapers. He continues to see that trend. As an example, he noted that the Fremont and Columbus newspapers (both part of Lee Enterprises) used to print at their respective sites 49 miles from each other. In the last year, Columbus (population 21,000) closed its printing facility and now prints in Fremont (slightly more than 25,000 population).

### ***Role Convergence in the Newsroom***

Responses from the in-person interviews also showed that newspaper publishers and editors are watching other newspapers’ efforts in role convergence. They want to determine what fits for their particular newspaper.

Editor #129 is female, between 40 and 50, who holds a master’s degree and has 21 years of industry experience. The two newspapers she edits are both in the 1,500-2,499 circulation size. One publishes twice a week and the other publishes once a week.

Her responses indicate that she is ahead of other newspapers in attempting role convergence.

“At our operation we put out three newspapers, and we also have corresponding Web sites for those newspapers,” she said. “Everybody has the role of writing for both the print product and the Web site and helping to update the Web site.” She said news staffers also try to incorporate multimedia into the Web site such as video, slide shows, and audio.

Editor #160 is also using role convergence, in addition to multimedia convergence, at his newspaper. He wants to maximize the staff’s effectiveness online as much as they choose to. “We’ve also identified a couple people within the newsroom itself who have ... responsibilities that are Internet based. One deals with video, one deals with more ... non-video content.”

We’ve had a Web site for quite a few years. Initially it was more just because we thought we had to have a Web site, and we didn’t do much with it. It was probably about three years ago that we created a new position, a full-time Webmaster/key marketing manager type person. And so she deals with, not only that end of things, working with our ... Web site host, but also deals a little bit with (selling) advertising, works with us when we want to do some interactive things. She doesn’t really get involved in content, per se, but she’s the point person for coordinating those kinds of things. (Editor #160)

### ***Organizational Convergence***

Publisher #105 said he would cooperate with other media (mostly radio), while the previous publisher at his paper would not. He will trade radio spots for newspaper spots (cross promotion). “Weekly newspapers are read three or four times by the people

who get them and at least twice by somebody else. There's a great audience there that advertisers don't realize."

He said he sees the schools giving a push into multimedia technologies. He has seen student programs about school events on You-Tube with news, sports, and weather all produced by students. "But I still have two or three (students) a year that come down here and ask if they can write for me, work for me, or take pictures for me so there's no lack of interest (in newspapers)."

Publisher #14 believes that newspapers need to do a better job of promoting themselves and everything they do. She trades advertising spots (cross promotion for publicity) with the local radio station, and she uses those ads to promote her newspaper's products such as: the progress editions, business editions, sports coverage, special projects, and community service projects. She doesn't use that kind of advertising to promote individual stories.

### ***Observing and Practicing "Coopetition"***

Editor #160 noted that the *Sioux City Journal* (Iowa) has a cooperative arrangement with a local television station. Silcock & Keith (2006) called this type of joint venture between former competitors, "coopetition."

"They're competitors; they're not owned by the same company, but the Sioux City TV station will report what's in tomorrow morning's headlines in the *Sioux City Journal*, which allows them to have some breaking news, but also gives the *Sioux City Journal* that name recognition and free publicity. So yeah, they're competitors but from their perspective they think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages."

Editor #160 said his newspaper belongs to the *Omaha World-Herald* news service. “The *World-Herald* owns a lot of newspapers in Nebraska and they have developed a cooperative approach where their own newspapers share content ... Now we’re not owned by the *World-Herald* but we decided to join that and we pay to join that because we can make use of anything that’s in the *World-Herald* and we share our content with them.” His said his byline may appear in the *World Herald* and stories from the *World-Herald* will appear in his newspaper with the writer’s byline and the *World-Herald* News Service tag. “We felt that having the stronger content was worth the risk of people thinking that we’re part of the *World-Herald*.”

### ***Attracting New Readers***

“I feel good about our site,” Publisher #2 said. “I think it’s as progressive as any I’ve seen. We’ve talked about video. It’s not hard to do, but what I’m hearing is ... for every minute of video, they’re spending 10 minutes of either shooting or editing. So if you’ve got a lot of video, that’s a lot of time ...” After Friday night football games, he spends an extra hour putting together narrated slide shows of the game (including coaches comments and 25 photographs from the game) and then posting that online.

“That is one hour that is not going to benefit the newspaper but it goes on the Web,” he said. These slide shows with accompanying sound get “a ton of hits,” he said. Publisher #2 said that product is unique to his Web site and brings good traffic to the site in the form of a younger audience. He said high school students and young adults love it. He will continue to use the slide shows with sound voiceovers, but he is not in a hurry to



use video yet because he does not see the revenue stream following it. “I’m not going to do it just because it’s cool. It has to work from a business standpoint.”

Publisher #2 said, “We know we’ve got 50-, 60-, 80-year-old readers who want their paper in their lap and they’ll always be there ... It’s the teens and 20s and 30s and the newcomers to the community that haven’t developed that habit of reading our paper. We’ve got a very progressive community. I like our chances if people take the time to start reading it, and I like our chances of keeping them as a subscriber. But we realize that that’s just not automatic anymore with the transient population...” Publisher #2 works hard to get his newspaper in front of newcomers by coordinating with the town’s Chamber of Commerce to include it in the chamber’s newcomers’ packets and offering free short-term subscriptions to newcomers.

### ***Revenue from the Web***

Like managers at other Nebraska newspapers, Publisher #105 is trying to find a cost-effective way to design a Web site and sell digital subscriptions. He is investigating log-in or sign-in Web pages, Web page templates, and Facebook. He knows how to create Web pages but he does not have time to do it. He updates the information and links every week on his current site and then, he said, it just sits there for a week. He added a corrections area on the Web site as a way to get accurate information to the public as soon as possible.

“It seems to me that the towns of 3,500 or more – those newspapers are much more willing to put the money into the Web sites,” Publisher #105 said.

Editor #129 said revenue from the Web site is hard to pinpoint. “How can you know that your increased visibility hasn’t led to some increased sales?” she asked.

It’s hard to gauge that, but the primary way that we gauge profitability on the Web site is through advertising sales. It hasn’t been the revenue stream that we had hoped for that . . . we would like to have for the amount of effort that we put into the Web site. But certainly increased visibility, increased credibility for our news organization are very important. There are people . . . that go to the Web site who are not traditional readers of the print product. So I think it is expanding our audience, I think it is expanding readership and giving us a greater presence, and I think that in the long run is helpful to our organization. (Editor #129)

Publisher #14 said the Internet has increased revenue and visibility and added new readers at her newspaper operation. However multimedia technologies and maintaining a free Web site take away from paper circulation numbers, she said. She believes the Internet product should be different from the printed product. Customers ask her why they should buy the paper when they can get local news for free online. She hopes her customers will purchase the paper for a more in-depth and trusted viewpoint. Publisher #14 sees newspapers as the historians of each community, and she would like to see today’s newspapers be the historians of tomorrow. One hundred years from now, she said, people will want to look at her paper product, not her Internet product, especially since that changes so quickly.

For Publisher #14’s community, the largest population that has quit subscribing to her newspaper is college students. She said when a student headed off to college in the past, he or she would subscribe for the next four years. Today those students look online for news about their hometowns, she said.

Editor #160 agrees with the idea about having separate print and online products.

“We are not one of those newspapers that ... wants to put everything online, and also, we don’t believe in giving away the farm,” he said.

We certainly are generating revenue from the Web site that we didn’t have five years ago. So there’s no doubt, it’s successful there. Is Internet-based advertising replacing dollar for dollar what might be lost on the newspaper side of things ... ? No. The rates are still not to the point where that is an equal switch ... It’s certainly helpful; it’s certainly has a lot of potential. But your printed product is still your core product where the vast majority of your revenue comes from. A lot of newspapers had perhaps overly ambitious ideas of what percentage of the revenue could come from the Internet ... Those expectations have not been met. (Editor #160)

Publisher #2 said profitability is a big deal. He said the “warm fuzzy” of getting 1 million page views can only go so far. His newspaper is looking to create an online business directory, like the yellow pages. “People who are new to town or a prospective business ... can get a quick look at all the businesses.”

“We’ve also noticed that our advertising is up significantly from ... the Web,” Publisher #2 said. However the newspaper is currently feeling the effects of the poor economy on print circulation. He has been watching this trend closely, talking with other publishers, and reading what trade magazines have to say about this.

“If you put all your content on the Web, are you giving it away for free to a younger audience who would just as soon get it that way?” publisher #2 said. “I’ve watched those numbers closely and it wasn’t a huge dip, but four one month and six the next, and I actually got out the list and just physically called them myself.” A couple were non-renewals and a few said they got what they needed on the newspaper’s Web site. One woman said she just couldn’t afford the \$35 subscription during this economic

downturn.

“The few that said ‘we get everything we need on the Web’ really got my attention,” Publisher #2 said. “Though I like the idea of driving traffic to the Web, we consciously made some changes as of January 1, and that is that we do not put the entire story up...” Even obituaries and classifieds are abbreviated online, he said. His Web site encourages customers to purchase the e-edition of the newspaper (for \$25 annually) or to buy the print version to get the full story (\$35 annually). The e-edition is a pdf (portable document format) version of the printed paper. “We put color photos on the front (of the e-edition), even though we didn’t print it that way. So it’s a very nice looking product. It’s also available on Wednesday at 1 p.m. so if you live in Phoenix, Arizona, you’re not waiting five days for the mail. We feel good about that part. We’ve also learned that when you use the e-edition and Web site, a lot of people see that as one and the same.” Publisher #2 said there is an education process for the public that the e-edition and the free Web site are different. His newspaper has seen more interest in the subscriber-based e-edition since they started abbreviating stories and ads on the free Web site.

Publisher #2 said he has seen other newspapers back off from posting every story or announcement they have to the Web because they now realize that a free Web site affects paper subscriptions. “Everybody has their own model, and different corporations have different philosophies. Personally I think you have to look at the business side at some point,” Publisher #2 said.

“In talking to other publishers, if you can get 10 percent of your circulation by e-edition, that’s a huge success,” he said. “We’re working through the alumni association

(at the local high school) ... so I think that's our biggest target market – people who used to live here or have a connection (like) their family still lives here. Of course we can afford to charge less (for the e-edition) ... because we don't have to mail it. We put the same amount of effort into it – whether we sell one e-subscription or 500."

Publisher #2 is also selling photographs off the Web and promoting his company's commercial printing capabilities on the Internet. His newspaper wants to be a local portal while keeping the business side of the newspaper in mind and determining what type of convergence works for them. He finds revenue from a mix of advertising, circulation, and commercial printing and all three have to provide the right mix of support. "It doesn't work when you take away that circulation revenue. From a business standpoint, it just has to be there." He said other Nebraska newspapers are also looking for the right mix.

The lack of a concrete roadmap for newspaper journalism has made business planning more difficult.

In the past, Publisher #2 said he has always known when to upgrade products, like the image setter for sharper color, or camera equipment. There have been clear changes and updates that could be planned from the capital investment standpoint.

But this is a time ... in the industry when ... there's no clear path and here's what we need to do next. I'm proud to say ... our paper has been as successful as any community weekly of our size in developing a Web site that is growing in revenue and yet not depleting the news resources. I think we've taken some good steps, but we're certainly not there yet. We're not where we want to be. It's a constant evolution. (Publisher #2)

Editor #160 is also wrestling with these same questions. He wonders if customers would be willing to pay \$10 more a month to see the Web site or if they want it for free. If they want it for free, are the advertisers willing to pay higher advertising rates in order to support the Web site? “I don’t know whether anyone knows the answers to those questions yet. Until that shakes out, we’re all just sort of positioning ourselves and trying a few things and watching and talking amongst ourselves to see what’s going to happen.”

Editor #160 said he understands customers’ reluctance to pay for an online product. He follows a professional baseball team on the East Coast. When the city’s newspaper put its coverage behind a pay wall, he did not sign up for the e-subscription. He figured he could get the information elsewhere. From a business perspective, the advantage of small town newspapers is that customers cannot get that local coverage anywhere else. He said there is value to being the only outlet to offer local coverage, but area residents have to determine whether they are willing to pay for it.

### ***Favorite Multimedia Products***

Publisher #2 likes the narrated slide shows that he added to his online product. There is minimal cost and effort to add the slide product, he said: a \$75 digital recorder, free software, a little bit of training, and one hour per event for staff. “Small papers can do that,” Publisher #2 said. In fact, his business has been successful at selling a few of those narrated slides to community members and parents of high school athletes for \$10 each.

“Very rarely do we post a story or information uniquely to the Web,” said Publisher #2. They do use the Web for important or high interest stories such as a

tornado story, sports stories, short feature stories, or huge stories that break right after the paper has been printed. His staff is cautious about spending time for the Internet product when that time should be used for the printed product. The only exclusive online product is the narrated slides, he said.

Publisher #105 has several multimedia products he likes: digital cameras, a laptop computer with wireless and Bluetooth, Web sites that allow him to log into his work computer from his laptop at home, and digital recorders. He said he sees more multimedia convergence than role convergence in his work.

He likes digital cameras because he has been able to market and sell photographs after events. The mark-up is good. He used to use dotPhoto.com to purchase prints and he would get 30 percent of what they sold. It was handy for him, but he could not get customers to try it because they had to register for the service and they refused to do that. He said they would prefer to visit or call his office rather than order the photographs online.

Publisher #105 takes his laptop to all his meetings and can type as fast as people talk. His desktop computer has the pagination program and he uses logmein.com to connect his laptop to his work computer. That allows him the freedom to work from anywhere.

I have the ability right now with the Internet and with the digital things that I use to tell my staff “if anybody walks in the door and says ‘Can you do this?’ tell them ‘yes.’ I don’t care what it is; I can find a way to do it. (Publisher #105)

“They (editors and publishers) need to be willing to investigate in things like video cameras and digital recorders,” Publisher #105 said.

You can take one of those digital recorders and they'll hold 30 hours of audio. You could sit through a legislative hearing, and record the whole thing, and be 20 yards away, and get it crystal clear. And on a (cassette) tape, it's junk by comparison. (Publisher #105)

He works with the local telephone company on technology.

Our telephone company is very willing to work with whatever I want. I'm constantly pitching them projects and they're constantly bringing stuff over for me to try. They do a really good job and they have some good people there that know both sides. (Publisher #105)

E-mail is not always reliable, he said, even though his community has broadband and wireless Internet. He constantly has people asking him, "Did you get my e-mail?" The one aspect of e-mail he does not like is getting invoices digitally. It is not always reliable and he sometimes forgets to print off the bill for his bookkeeper.

Publisher #14 said her paper has started posting a few videos online. The photo galleries have been more successful, she said. They also use digital cameras and digital recorders. "My editorial staff each ... has a very nice digital camera with several lenses and they all have digital recorders. We've got one video recorder that we pass around..."

Editor #129 believes that multimedia convergence has value and that Web sites are a necessity in today's environment.

I think ... that the public needs to get as much news from us in as many different ways as they can. I think that that improves our credibility as a news organization and helps us compete. Certainly competition is very important. We have a radio station in town and they also have a Web site. We need to be the first to (post) the news. (Editor #129)

I think your readers expect for you to be doing multimedia, expect for you to be on the Web, and if you aren't, you're behind the times and they're going to be looking elsewhere. I think that (this) is an exciting time for us because ... the more ways that we can share news and get news out there, as a news person, the happier I am. The key now is to make it profitable for us to do that. (Editor #129)



Editor #160 said his staff has not reached the point where employees are coordinating multimedia reporting projects from a story's beginning. "We generally start from the newspaper side and then add other elements (video, etc.) as we go along." The newsroom staff members did not consider interactive components on their Web site even a year ago, he said. Examples of successful multimedia products include online contests and videos of sports staff discussing previous or upcoming games. "There's absolutely no hard reporting involved in that; it's just them (sports staff) talking and offering opinions." A third revenue opportunity for the newspaper comes from photographs. The printed product only needs one to three pictures of an event, he said, but the Web can handle photo galleries, and readers and parents can view all the pictures and order prints from the gallery. This makes better use of his photographers' talents, he said.

Nebraska editors and publishers are observing what other newspapers are accomplishing with convergence and they are willing to try new products and methods if they see it has been successful for another paper. If the new products are successful for staff and from a business standpoint, they will keep the product. If not, the product may not be used well, or it may be dropped altogether.

### ***Research Question 7***

Research Question #7 is: "What factors are most likely to predict whether a Nebraska editor will adopt convergence?"

At age 29, Publisher #105 has youth, education, and an interest in technology and convergence. He has seen the industry move from the old fashioned way of layout where the text was printed and cut out, waxed to a master sheet, and a printing plate was made

off the master sheet to computerized pagination. He has seen the industry move from film cameras and audio cassette tapes to digital cameras and digital recorders. However, he said he still values the journalistic standards and traditional methods of newspaper production.

At age 47, Editor #129 is in mid-career but has an advanced degree and an interest in providing news in a more thorough and speedy way via convergence. She has also watched the industry move from the old ways to the technological processes.

Publisher #14 is a female between the ages of 50 and 60 who operates a newspaper in the circulation range of 2,500-4,999. Her family has been in the business for three generations and she is determined that the newspaper will not close on her watch. She said she is very passionate about the newspaper and hires employees who share that passion. The newspaper's circulation has increased by 23 percent in the last 10 years. She has her master's degree.

Editor #160 is 49-years-old from a newspaper that has a circulation between 10,000-49,000 subscriptions. He is a second-generation newspaperman.

Publisher #2 is 49 years old and has a bachelor's degree in journalism and a minor in business administration. He also comes from a newspaper family and shares the title of co-publisher with his wife. The paper's Web site has several interactive features including Facebook, weather, RSS feeds, online photo galleries, and two separate online editions: a free e-version and a subscription e-version.

"We've really put a lot of emphasis on that in the last few years, particularly the last two years," Publisher #2 said. "I think last month, for the first time, we topped 1

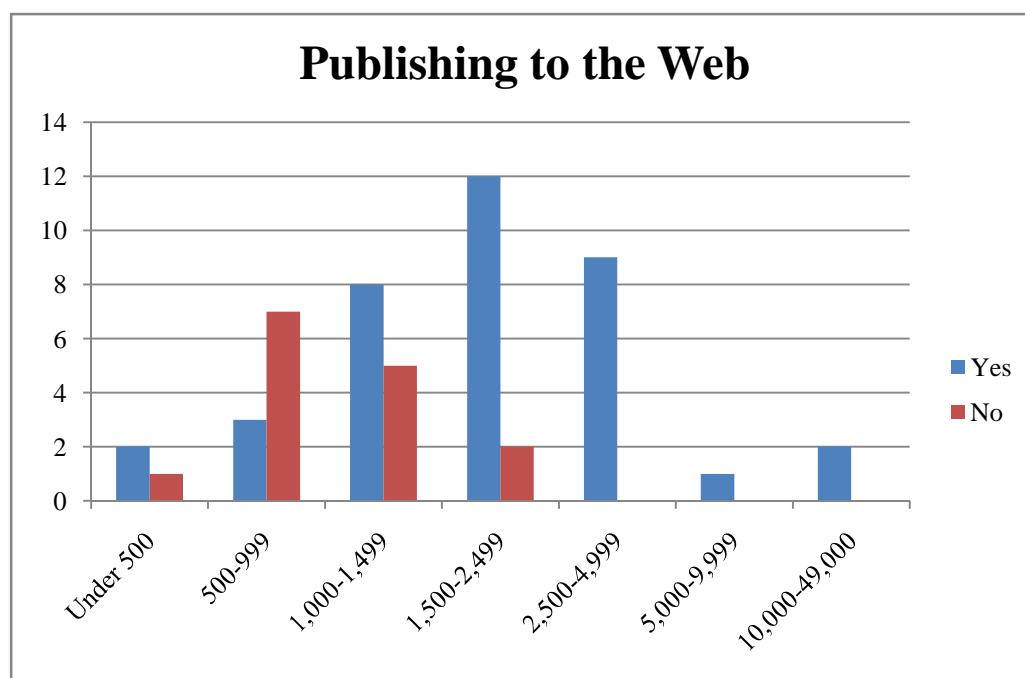
million (online) page views and it's kind of mind boggling when you think about a rural community (getting that many Web hits).”

Publisher #2 said his newspaper's Web site has been developed with the idea that it is a community portal. A natural disaster propelled his Web site into large traffic numbers. His newspaper was the first to have pictures and slides with narration of the event. CNN picked up those narrated slides and gave his Web site national and international exposure.

Youth, education, a newspaper background, a commitment to the future of the newspaper and the community, and an interest in convergence and/or technology are all factors that influence whether a newspaper tries convergence. Whether or not the newspaper stays with convergence depends on finding successful ways to financially sustain newspapers, using staff skills to their fullest potential, and maintaining journalism standards.

### ***Responses to Hypotheses***

***H1.*** The larger the news organization, the more likely it will have an interactive (and therefore more complex) Web site. Interactive is defined by reader e-mails to key staffers, the ability to respond to articles, blogs, etc.



*Figure 10.* The larger the newspaper's circulation, the greater chance it will publish to the web.

A check of the 12 Web sites from those papers with a circulation greater than 2,500 subscriptions shows that all but one of these sites offer online viewers active e-mails to key staffers.

Other interactive features on the Web sites include blogs, interactive polls, online submission forms, the ability to request e-mail updates about breaking news, the ability to pay for subscriptions or gift subscriptions online, logging in with a username and password, rotating photos and stories, photo galleries, video, site searches, the ability to share/e-mail the article to another

person via e-mail, the ability to print the article, the ability to submit letters to the editor, online forums and discussion boards, the ability to submit an advertisement online, community calendars, contests and promotions, and the ability to make the paper's Web site the computer user's homepage.

This hypothesis was supported.

***H2a.*** The more urban the news organization, the higher the chances that it is aligned or converged with another medium.

***H2b.*** Conversely, the more rural a newspaper is, the lower the chances that the newspaper will have a converged presence with another media (online, radio, or TV).

Hypotheses questions 2a and 2b considers the urban and rural nature of Nebraska newspapers and whether that affects convergence with other media or organizations. Nebraskans regard the eastern part of the state more urban than the western half because it includes the cities of Omaha and Lincoln, which have the largest populations. The population of the metropolitan statistical area of Omaha, Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa, was 837,925 in 2008. The population of the Lincoln, metropolitan statistical area was 295,486 in 2008. In addition, South Sioux City, Nebraska, in northeast Nebraska, is part of a metropolitan statistical area (with 143,157 people in 2008) that includes Sioux City, Iowa, and North Sioux City, South Dakota.

There were no survey responses from large newspapers in Nebraska's

urban areas. However, there were five responses from small- to medium-sized newspapers from urban areas that had circulations between 1,000 and 4,999 subscriptions. While these newspapers had highly technical Web sites and there was cooperation with newspapers owned by the same company, there was no indication from the surveys or from the newspapers' Web sites that any of the five were cooperating with other media entity such as radio, television, or cable companies.

However, three of the five newspapers had weather boxes on their Web sites, that were powered by a weather Web site or the company hosting the newspaper's site. The fifth newspaper was affiliated with a religious organization. Other than a fairly complex Web site hosted and funded by the religious group, there was no indication of convergence with other media in the fifth newspaper.

The three smallest newspapers (that responded to this survey) with a circulation of under 500 subscriptions were all from communities with a population of under 400. The newspaper in the smallest community of fewer than 200 people did not have a Web site. The one area of visible convergence in these small newspapers, based on the survey responses and observations of their Web sites, was the use of an outside vendor to publish the Web sites. This finding was similar to Lowrey's findings in Mississippi.

There was slight support for H2a and H2b through observational and anecdotal evidence.

**H3.** The larger the newsroom or production staff, the greater the degree of interactivity in the newspaper's Web site.

This hypothesis was examined by looking at the responses from three large newspapers with circulation sizes of 5,000 or more. Certainly with more staff, more people are available to post stories on the Web and to maintain the content. It is noteworthy that while the editors of these publications were all over 49 years of age, the highest proportion of their staff was between the 20 and 30-year-old range. In addition, more than 77 percent of the employees in these larger newsrooms had bachelor's degrees. By reviewing the Web sites from these newspapers, one can see that these newspaper's Web sites had plenty of interactivity: live e-mail links to staff, search functions, the ability to comment electronically on stories, the ability to buy advertisements online, and the ability to get specific local feeds from the newspapers via RSS (Really Simple Syndication). There was slight support for this hypothesis.

**H4.** The greater the media competition within the community, the greater the likelihood that the newspaper will produce an online news product.

As mentioned earlier, the main competition for Nebraska newspapers is other newspapers. The main competitors to Nebraska newspapers was as follows: another newspaper – 28; radio station – 19; TV station – 3; TV & Radio Stations – 5; Other – 8 (included both paper and radio, freebies, shoppers, the Internet, and regional dailies).

When a newspaper had another paper as its only competition, there was no evidence showing that the original newspaper would have a Web presence because of that competition. Out of 20 newspapers that listed another paper as the main competition, 10 had a Web site and 10 did not.

The addition of a radio station seemed to spur more convergence efforts than any other competitor. Of the nine newspapers that listed a radio station as the main competitor, all nine newspapers had a Web presence. All four newspapers that listed two main competitors – a radio station and another newspaper – had an online presence

Three newspapers listed radio, TV, and another paper as their competitors. Of those three, two had a Web site and one did not. Two newspapers listed TV and radio as their chief competitors. One had a Web site while the other did not have one. One newspaper listed its main competitors as TV, radio, and the Internet; however, this competition was not enough to spur the paper to add a Web site (although the newspaper did use social media such as Facebook).

Finally four newspapers said they had no other competitors. Three had Web sites to accompany their printed product while the fourth newspaper did not.

There was support for this hypothesis when a radio station was the only competition or when a radio station was added into the competition mix. There was no support when the only other competition was another newspaper or when the competition was a combination of four media products: newspapers, radio, TV, and the Internet.



**H5.** The more education the editor, publisher or staff have, the greater the chances that the paper will have an online news product.

Eighty-one percent of editors or publishers who held a bachelor's degree also published an online version of their newspapers. Five respondents with a bachelor's degree, or 19 percent of those holding a bachelor's degree, did not have a Web site.

In this survey, 100 percent the editors or publishers who held a master's degree published an online version to correspond with their newspaper. In addition, 100 percent of those with associate degrees also published an online version of their paper.

The editors with a high school diploma had a lower chance of having an online version of their newspaper. Out of the 10 editors/publishers with only a high school diploma, there were four (40 percent) who had a Web site and six (60 percent) who did not have a Web site to accompany their print product. There was support for this hypothesis with regard to editors and publishers.

Out of 230 newsroom employees, 123 held bachelor's degrees (53 percent) and 11 had masters' degrees (5 percent). Twenty-five had an associate's degree (11 percent), and 67 had a high school diploma or GED (29 percent).

Of the 32 newspaper managers who answered this question, who had newsroom staff other than the editor, and who had Web sites or planned one in 2010, 24 (72 percent) said at least half their newsroom staff held a bachelor's degree. Twenty-six (81 percent) newsrooms in that population said at least half

their staff held an associate's degree. Fourteen (44 percent) of those newspapers had 100 percent of their staff with a bachelor's or master's degree. Nineteen (59 percent) of those newspapers had at least 75 percent of their newsroom staff holding a bachelor's or master's degree. Only one newsroom with a Web presence had no staff with advanced degrees such as an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree.

Of the 15 newspapers that did not have a Web presence, four (26.6 percent) newsrooms had employees with no advanced degrees. Three of the four editors in those four newspapers only had a high school diploma. The fourth editor held a bachelor's degree and was just starting in the industry.

Seven of the newspapers that did not have a Web presence had 50 percent of their employees with at least an associate's degree. Two newsrooms without Web sites said at least 75 percent of their employees held a bachelor's or master's degree. Only one newspaper without a Web site had 100 percent of its newsroom staff holding bachelors' and masters' degrees.

Three of the 15 newspapers with no Web site had no staff except the editor.

In question 10 of the survey, six editors/publishers said a major impetus for convergence came from their staff. A review of these survey responses showed that these newspapers had a high percentage of editors and staff with advanced degrees. Three had editors with a bachelor's degree and those three said their newsroom staff all held bachelor's degrees. The fourth editor held a

bachelor's degree with 100 percent of the staff holding at least an associate's degree. The fifth editor had a high school diploma but 85 percent of his staff had a bachelor's degree. The sixth editor had an associate's degree and at least 50 percent of her staff held either an associate's or bachelor's degree.

In the group of newspapers without a Web presence, there was a greater likelihood that the newspapers would have a smaller percentage of newsroom employees with advanced degrees. When looking at the newspapers that had a Web site, there was a greater likelihood that the newsroom employees would have more education. In addition, newspaper editors and publishers with a higher percentage of advanced degrees in their newsroom employees said they were influenced by their staff to try convergence.

There was also support for this hypothesis with regard to newsroom staff.

**H6.** The younger the editor, publisher or staff is, the higher the chances that the paper will have an online news product.

There were six editors/publishers between the ages of 20-29 who had an online version of their paper; three between the ages of 30-39 who had an online product; 11 between the ages of 40-49 who had an online product, 13 between the ages of 50-59 who had or plan to have an online product; seven between the ages of 60-69 who have an online product; and one between the age of 70-79 who is planning to add an Web version in 2010. The majority of the editors with an online product were over age 40 so there was no support for this hypothesis.

No noticeable differences appeared in the percentage of staff under age 40 until one looked at the larger newspapers. The only paper in the 5,000-9,000 circulation range had 54 percent of its staff under age 40. In the two newspapers with circulation between 10,000 and 49,000 subscriptions, one paper had 61 percent of its staff under age 40 and the other paper had 63 percent of its staff under age 40. There was support for this part of the hypothesis, but only for newspapers with a circulation of 5,000 subscriptions or more.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

#### *The Future of Journalism: Cautiously Optimistic*

Nebraska newspaper editors and publishers are cautiously optimistic about convergence in their newspapers, but they appear to be moving slowly toward implementing convergence in their newspaper businesses.

Because of this slow movement, Nebraska newspapers appear to be behind newspapers that have been the focus of previous convergence research studies. In survey comments and in-person interviews, newspaper leaders said they are taking a “wait and see” attitude toward convergence. Most convergence efforts in Nebraska surround the Web and multimedia products, and there was slight verbal and written support for role or organizational convergence. In addition, this research showed little evidence that Nebraska newspapers are considering newer technologies such as mobile devices or electronic readers. The research found only slight audience demand to push editors and publishers into greater use of multimedia products or convergence. As several editors and publishers noted, their audience includes people over age 60 who may not have computers and may not care about Internet access. Indeed, survey respondents said the greatest demand for convergence came from corporate and local management.

It is difficult to compare Nebraska’s newspapers with newspapers in other states because there has been little research done on newspapers on a state-by-state basis. More state specific studies could be conducted by researchers from other states.

Nebraska publishers and editors have valid reasons for waiting to see which technologies and systems emerge to be practical, usable, and profitable. They are observing other newspapers and media to see what works, and they are deliberately careful about new media technology and new media trends. Nebraska newspaper publishers and editors want solid reasons for using convergence and they are taking small steps into the world of convergence. These “wait and see” actions and attitudes are consistent with the social learning and diffusion of innovation theories.

Today’s Nebraska newspaper editors and publishers recognize that change is coming. They also recognize that these new technologies and developments will inspire greater changes than almost any previous innovation, with the exception of the Gutenberg printing press. New technological innovations will certainly be greater than the merging of printing centers that has occurred over the last 20-30 years.

Nebraska editors and publishers seemed to like and use new multimedia tools to get their news out to the general public and to their communities. In particular, they liked Web sites, video, slides with audio, digital cameras and recorders, social networking, and computerized pagination. They are just beginning to discuss integrated storytelling using multimedia products.

These Nebraska newspaper men and women do not want to step on the convergence bandwagon just because it seems like the right thing to do or the “in style” thing to do. It is also important that they maintain quality journalism tenets such as good writing, research, and style amidst quickly evolving technology. They want to make sure that it fits with their newspaper missions, their communities, and their business plans. In

the same way that Quinn (2005) said “they (newspaper leaders) need to find ways to blend the twin aims of telling the truth and making money” (p. 37), Nebraska newspaper editors and publishers also want to meet those twin aims. They want to ensure that it makes sense to publish on the Web, and that they do not harm their print newspaper financially by posting Web stories for free. To reduce the loss of subscription sales, Nebraska newspapers are moving to abbreviated stories on the Web and posting their full stories behind Internet pay walls. Unfortunately, this added level of complexity may be a drawback for customers.

It is unlikely that Nebraska newspapers will get to the point of embracing convergence as the *Lawrence Journal-World* does in Kansas because respondents in Nebraska are taking a “wait and see” attitude, and they are not charging full speed ahead with convergence. That newspaper has embraced convergence wholeheartedly and has backed the effort financially and organizationally. The company has purchased most of the media outlets in Lawrence, Kansas, whereas Nebraska editors and publishers expressed concern that ownership of that many media in one market might be considered a media monopoly, even though the United States government has loosened restrictions on media ownership.

One interesting study result suggested that when a newspaper had a radio station as a competitor, it was more likely to have a Web site. This finding emerged while the author was researching Hypothesis 4. Of the nine newspapers that listed a radio station as the main competitor, all nine newspapers had a Web presence. All four newspapers that listed two main competitors – a radio station and another newspaper – had an online

presence.

When the newspaper only had another paper as its main competitor, the chances that the original paper would have a Web product was lower. Out of 20 newspapers that listed another paper as the main competition, 10 had a Web site and 10 did not. Three newspapers listed radio, TV, and another paper as their competitors -- two had a Web site and one did not. Two newspapers listed TV and radio as their chief competitors -- one had a Web site while the other did not.

It is hard to determine why having a radio station in the community would spur a newspaper to have a Web site. One suggestion is that radio stations are usually in larger markets and larger newspapers were more likely to have Web products. Another suggestion is that the newspapers are using the Web site to compete with the radio station for breaking news. More research could be conducted on this finding.

There were few other surprises in the survey and interview results. Newspaper leaders who are excited about the future with convergence are vocal about their enthusiasm for the convergence of multimedia products. Still others do not want convergence to come to their newspapers.

More research needs to be completed on this subject in Nebraska and in other states and countries. More studies on media in other states are needed in order to have state-by-state comparisons. It would be beneficial to find out where other newspapers and other media entities (small, medium, and large) are situated in their adoption of convergence, including convergence on the Web, role convergence, multimedia technologies, and corporate or organizational convergence.



It is encouraging that Nebraska editors and publishers are determining whether convergence practices are healthy and sustainable developments. Once these decisions are made, the move to more integrated convergence practices in Nebraska newspapers could occur in the next five to 10 years.

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## Appendix

### Convergence Survey for Nebraska Newspapers

Description: Convergence is a term used to describe changes in media storytelling methods. It explains the merging of media businesses, the interweaving of multimedia products, and the crossover of reporter roles from one media to another.

Newspaper name and location: \_\_\_\_\_

Editor's Age: \_\_\_\_\_ or age range: 20-30 yrs.; 30-40 yrs.; 40-50 yrs.; 50-60 yrs.; 60-70 yrs.;  
70-80 yrs., 80-90 yrs.

Gender: M F (circle one)

Education (highest degree earned): \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) Does your newspaper publish news in some form in addition to print?

☐ yes

☐ no (if no, skip to Question 11)

- 1a. If yes, describe that converged presence:

☐ Print  
& Web

☐ Print &  
Radio

☐ Print,  
TV &  
Radio

☐ Print,  
Web &  
TV

☐ Print,  
Web,  
Radio  
& TV

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1b. If yes, what is the attitude of your newsroom staff about convergence?

☐ Strongly  
Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither Agree  
nor Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly  
Disagree

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1c. Do you require visitors to your Web presence to register with a username/password?

☐ Yes

☐ No

- 2) If you are publishing online, what are the reasons you started an online version?

☐ To meet  
needs of  
customers

☐ To save  
costs

☐ To  
consolidate  
newsroom  
staff

☐ Observed other  
organizations'  
success with  
convergence

☐ Other  
(Please  
Explain  
Below)

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

- 2a. If you have converged your news operation with other media (other than the Web), what are the reason you started a converged association with other media?

☐ Meet  
needs of  
customers

☐ To save  
costs

☐ Consolidate  
newsroom  
staff

☐ Observed other  
organizations'  
success with  
convergence

☐ Other  
(Please  
Explain  
Below)

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Has the online presence enhanced your profitability?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

3a. Has the converged presence (other than the Web) enhanced your profitability?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

4) Has the online presence enhanced your visibility?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

4a. Has the converged presence (other than the Web) enhanced your visibility?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

5) Has the online presence attracted new readers?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

5a. Has the converged presence (other than the Web) attracted new readers?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

6) Could your converged efforts be described as successful?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

7) What do you think is the value of having an online or converged presence?

☐ Highly Valuable ☐ Valuable ☐ Neither Valuable Nor Unvaluable ☐ Somewhat Unvaluable ☐ Highly Unvaluable

8) How do you think your readers or audience value of having an online or converged presence?

☐ Highly Valuable ☐ Valuable ☐ Neither Valuable Nor Unvaluable ☐ Somewhat Unvaluable ☐ Highly Unvaluable

- 9) Have you used any multimedia products, such as slide shows, podcasting, or video streaming that you have especially liked? Please list: \_\_\_\_\_

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- 9a) Do you think these products will catch on as new ways to tell stories?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Don't Know

- 10) Where is the major impetus coming from to develop a Web presence or a converged product?

☐ Local      ☐ Corporate      ☐ Staff      ☐ Customers/Community  
Management      Management      Members

- 11) If you do not now have an online publication, do you plan to launch one within the coming year?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Undecided or  
Don't Know

- 11a. If you are not now engaged in a converged news publication, do you plan to launch one within the coming year?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Undecided or  
Don't Know

- 12) What news organization is your main competition?

☐ Another      ☐ Radio      ☐ TV      ☐ TV &      ☐ Other (Please explain)  
Paper      Station      Station      Radio

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- 12a. Have these competitors engaged in convergence?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Don't Know

- 12b. If yes, can you describe their converged efforts? \_\_\_\_\_

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- 13) How many news staffers/reporters does your organization have? \_\_\_\_\_

13a. How many are in each age range:	_____ 16-20 yrs.	_____ 50-60 yrs.
	_____ 20-30 yrs.	_____ 60-70 yrs.
	_____ 30-40 yrs.	_____ 70-80 yrs.
	_____ 40-50 yrs.	_____ 80-90 yrs.

- 13b. How many are male? \_\_\_\_\_

- 13c. How many are female? \_\_\_\_\_

- 13d. How many have a high school education? \_\_\_\_\_

- 13e. How many have an associate's degree? \_\_\_\_\_

- 13f. How many have a bachelor's degree? \_\_\_\_\_

- 13g. How many have a master's degree or higher? \_\_\_\_\_



- 13h. How many have 0-5 years of news experience? \_\_\_\_\_
- 13i. How many have 5-10 years of news experience? \_\_\_\_\_
- 13j. How many have 10-20 years of news experience? \_\_\_\_\_
- 13k. How many have 20-30 years of news experience? \_\_\_\_\_
- 13l. How many have 30-40 years of news experience? \_\_\_\_\_
- 13m. How many have 40-50 years of news experience? \_\_\_\_\_
- 12n. How many have more than 50 years of news experience? \_\_\_\_\_

14) What do you see as barriers to convergence in Nebraska?

- ☐ Lack of money    ☐ Lack of Understanding of the term    ☐ Lack of Education    ☐ Lack of Technological Experience    ☐ Lack of Time    ☐ Other (Please Explain Below)

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15) In the next few years, do you think you will see a brand new media environment that goes beyond merging two or three media together?

- ☐ Yes    ☐ No    ☐ Undecided or Don't Know

16) What do you think is the future of journalism since convergence has come onto the mass media scene in Nebraska? Feel free to use the back of this sheet to continue.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

17) Are there any additional thoughts, comments, or questions you would like to add to this survey? Feel free to use the back of this sheet to continue. \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please place the survey in the stamped enclosed envelop and return to Kathy Schindler, 4324 Allendale Court, Lincoln, NE 68516. For questions about this survey, please contact me at 402-483-5338 (after hours) or [kaschindl@yahoo.com](mailto:kaschindl@yahoo.com). You may also contact the project advisor, Dr. John Bender, at 402-472-3053, or (402) 423-6636 (after hours).