Mass Communication: Living in a Media World

**Chapter 6 Comments**

Newspapers are, by far, the dearest medium to my heart. I actually began, unknowingly, my newspaper career in the fourth grade. Today, I continue with a responsibility in a weekly newspaper. I started working for newspapers at the age of 18, with my first job at the *Parkersburg News and Sentinel*. I won’t tell you how long ago that was, but it has been a while.

For this chapter, we will go beyond the book and explore two of my favorite websites so that you can gain an in-depth understanding of newspapers and experience reporting for yourself.

I will lift a piece of interesting information from your book about news. No matter who you ask, most journalists will differ a bit on their concept of news and how to define it. Certain characteristics and values, however, help guide decisions on reporting. These include the following:

* Timeliness: last night is more relevant that two months ago.
* Proximity: something happening in your town is more important than what happened across the country or the world
* Prominence: a break up of Brad and Jennifer (or suspected get together nowadays) makes national news, while no one reports so publicly on your movie dates or suspected relationships
* Consequence: the steeper the penalty, the more newsworthy (or it could be something like the bigger the lottery, the more publicity)
* Rarity: if it rarely happens, it is news – anyone remember that two-headed cow?
* Human interest: stories that have the potential to evoke empathy or emotion

**Your assignments for chapter six include:**

1. Go to the website: <http://www.newseum.org/> Click on the button at the right side of the screen titled “Today’s Front Pages.” You should find 741 front pages from 71 countries, all for the same day that you click onto this site. It changes daily. Three newspapers from West Virginia are found in the mix. In foreign papers, you will find much different content on front pages.

You must find two pages that you particularly like – one from the United States, and the other foreign. Look at the design of the pages and explain what you like about it. Since these change daily, you must click on the page, then do a right click and choose “Save Page As.” Save it with the newspaper name\_date. You can put this portion of the assignment in the discussion board under Front Pages. You will attach both pictures and then write a paragraph in the discussion thread explaining why you chose these two pages (for example, what visual aspects did you like or refer to the reporting characteristics mentioned above?). You will also be able to view the choices of other students, if you so choose.

1. Go to the website <http://www.newsu.org/> You will need to register with the site (a button on the right side of the screen) to use it. Register as a student. Mark to have them not to send you emails if you don’t want to be bothered in the future and they will not. Trust me. Once you set up an account, you will need to enroll in the following course: Anatomy of a Newspaper: Understanding the Business. You will find this under courses and Newspapers, Print. Go through the course online, doing what it tells you to do. When complete, write one complete, double-spaced, 12-point font paper explaining what you found interesting or simply just learned about the newspaper industry through this brief web course. Submit that paper to me under the assignments tab.
2. Also on the newsu.org website, you will enroll in one other course entitled The Be A Reporter Game. It is found under course lists and then Journalism Basics. You will complete this interactive game (you really need a good bandwidth speed to do this properly). Once finished, write briefly what the story is and then attach it as a second page to your assignment #2 so both parts can be submitted under the assignments tab.

MY ADVICE: Pay particular attention that part one will be submitted in the discussion board. It is worth 30 points there. Parts two and three will be combined and submitted under assignments. Together those are 60 points. (This is a combined total of 90 points for entire chapter.) I tried to find interesting ways to show you the world of newspapers without requiring you to just read the text or the history of it. Enjoy!