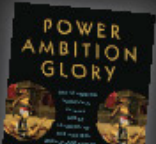


POWER AMBITION GLORY
BY STEVE FORBES
A fascinating read about how the past can guide your future.



CLICK [HERE](#) TO ORDER YOUR COPY NOW.
Email your order confirmation to STEVEFORBESBOOK@FORBES.COM and receive a personalized book plate signed by Steve Forbes.



Newspapers

The Paperless Town

James Erik Abels 11.26.08, 9:30 AM ET

An odor of death clings to the newspaper industry. According to *Editor & Publisher*, seven American newspapers shut down between 2003 and 2007. With over 13,000 jobs lost from the industry over the past year, according to online layoff tracker Paper Cuts, that number is poised to grow.

Academics and journalists predict the worst. Government will run amok, information will not be traded and the "nagging conscience of a community" will be lost, says Conrad Fink, the Morris chair of Newspaper Strategy and Management at the University of Georgia.

But looking at some of the big and small communities where those seven papers shut down shows there may be less impact than you might expect. Many readers turned away from newspapers long ago. In the Internet age, information overload, rather than starvation, is the main lament of most news consumers. "What you've seen as to closures recently has been simply marginal operation falling prey against combined competitive threats," says Fink.

John Leone, a former mayor of Bristol, Conn., and the president of the Greater Bristol Chamber of Commerce, knows the feeling. His town faces the closure of *The Bristol Press*, circulation 8,285. The imploding Journal Register Company said in early November that it may close the paper, and *The Herald*, circulation 9,646, of New Britain if it can't sell them.

"There's so many other ways to get your message out, I can understand the problem of keeping [it] open," he says, though he doesn't like it--some 50 years ago, he was a paperboy for the *Press*. "The reality is that some of the other newspapers in the area will probably step it up."

That's what happened to the *Post-Herald* in Birmingham, Ala. Owned by E.W. Scripps Company, the 7,500 circulation afternoon daily closed in September 2005. "Certainly, losing a voice in the community has an impact, but that voice had become less influential as the paper had shrunk," says Tom Scarritt, editor of the rival *Birmingham News*, which has a circulation of 137,220. His paper was handling most of the *Post-Herald's* non-editorial operations, including ad sales under a Joint Operating Agreement at the time.

And how did local businesses react to the closure? Maggie Krost, the News' vice president of sales and marketing says they didn't. "I think it had no impact on the business community at all from the perspective of being able to reach the marketplace with advertising," she says.

In De Queen, Ark., the *De Queen Daily Citizen* was shut down by new owner Lancaster Management in 1997. With a circulation of roughly 2,650, Mayor Billy Ray McKelvey says the paper had been a labor of love of local scion Ray Kimball for years.

De Queen's 5,765-person community loved the paper too. McKelvey, who was once its editor and worked there for 18 years, says people used to pick it up in the morning and sit around the local courthouse discussing the day's events. "I can tell you the community did not like losing the daily newspaper. There were lots of howls," he says.

But not as much changed in the aftermath as one would have thought. True, there are no more courthouse news gatherings. And local flower shop owner Joanie Paterson says her funeral business was cut in half by some \$10,000 because the elderly stopped learning of deaths soon enough to send flowers. But she says she can't think of any other local businesses similarly impacted, although folks living in the town's rural outskirts--like her father--have trouble getting the news.

The local radio station's Web site has become a major spot for community news, a weekly newspaper (the daily's sister paper) still operates, and the *Texarkana Gazette* has stepped up its coverage in the area. And Paterson is putting up a new marquee outside her store with a spot on it to advertise store promotions. "I think life has gone on," says McKelvey. "We've changed our habits some."

