

5.7: Influence of the Internet on the Magazine Industry

Learning Objectives

- · Describe how print magazines have adapted to an online market.
- Indicate a unique benefit of print magazines archiving back issues on their websites.

In March of 2010, *Consumerist* published a story titled "Print edition of *TV Guide* tells me to go online to read most of cover story." According to the article, *TV Guide* printed a story listing "TV's Top 50 Families," but shocked readers by including only the top 20 families in its print version. To discover the rest of the list, readers needed to go online. Phil Villarreal, "Print Edition of *TV Guide* Tells Me to Go Online to Read Most of Cover Story," *Consumerist* (blog), March 30, 2010, http://consumerist.com/2010/03/print...ver-story.html. As dismayed as some readers were, this story reflects an ongoing trend in magazine journalism: the move toward online reporting.

Just like their newspaper cousins, magazines have been greatly affected by the influence of the Internet. With so much information available online, advertisers and readers are accessing content on the Internet, causing declines in both revenue and readership. These changes are forcing magazines to adapt to an increasingly online market.

Online-Only Magazines

In 1995, *Salon* launched the first major online-only magazine at http://www.salon.com. "Salon, the award-winning online news and entertainment website, combines original investigative stories, breaking news, provocative personal essays and highly respected criticism along with popular staff-written blogs about politics, technology and culture." *Salon*, "Salon Fact Sheet," www.salon.com/press/fact/. Like many print magazines, the site divides content into sections including entertainment, books, comics, life, news and politics, and technology and business. With an average of 5.8 million monthly unique visitors, this online magazine demonstrates the potential successes of Internet-based publications. *Salon*, "Salon Fact Sheet," www.salon.com/press/fact/.

Other online-only magazines include *Slate* and *PC Magazine*. All three magazines, like most online publications, support themselves in part through ads that appear alongside articles and other content. Founded in 1996, *Slate* is a "general interest publication offering analysis and commentary about politics, news, and culture." *Slate*, "About Us: Everything you need to know about *Slate*," http://www.slate.com/id/2147070/. Considering itself "a daily magazine on the Web," *Slate* offers its readers information on news and politics, arts, life, business, technology, and science via online articles, podcasts, and blogs. *Slate*, "About Us: Everything you need to know about *Slate*," http://www.slate.com/id/2147070/. The successful magazine has been recognized with numerous awards for its contributions to journalism.

PC Magazine differs somewhat from *Slate* or *Salon* in that it was originally a print publication. First published in 1982, the computer magazine published hard-copy issues for over 15 years before announcing in 2008 that its January 2009 issue would be its last printed edition. In an open letter to its readers, *PC Magazine* discussed the transition:

Starting in February 2009, *PC Magazine* will become a 100-percent digital publication. So, in addition to our popular network of Websites ... we'll offer *PC Magazine Digital Edition* to all of our print subscribers. The *PC Magazine Digital Edition* has actually been available since 2002. So for thousands of you, the benefits of this unique medium are already clear. And those benefits will continue to multiply in the coming months, as we work hard to enhance your digital experience.Lance Ulanoff, "*PC Magazine* Goes 100% Digital," (2008), *PC Magazine*, http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2335009,00.asp.

While it is perhaps fitting that this computer-focused publication is one of the first print magazines to move to an entirely online form, its reasons for the transition were financial rather than creative. In describing the decision, Jason Young, chief executive of Ziff Davis Media, said, "[t]he viability for us to continue to publish in print just isn't there anymore."Stephanie Clifford, "PC Magazine, a Flagship for Ziff Davis, Will Cease Printing a Paper Version," New York Times, November 19, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/20/business/media/20mag.html. Unfortunately for the magazine industry, Young's sentiment reflects a trend that has been building for some time. Several other publications have followed in PC Magazine's footsteps, making the move from print to online-only. Journals such as Elle Girl and Teen People that were once available in print can now be viewed only via the Internet. As printing costs rise and advertising and subscription revenues decrease, more magazines will likely be making similar shifts.