

= Street newspaper =

Street newspapers (or street papers) are newspapers or magazines sold by homeless or poor individuals and produced mainly to support these populations . Most such newspapers primarily provide coverage about homelessness and poverty @-@ related issues , and seek to strengthen social networks within homeless communities . Street papers aim to give these individuals both employment opportunities and a voice in their community . In addition to being sold by homeless individuals , many of these papers are partially produced and written by them .

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries several publications by charity , religious , and labor organizations tried to draw attention to the homeless , but street newspapers only became common after the founding of New York City 's Street News in 1989 . Similar papers are now published in over 30 countries , with most located in the United States and Western Europe . They are supported by governments , charities , and coalitions such as the International Network of Street Papers and the North American Street Newspaper Association . Although street newspapers have multiplied , many still face challenges , including funding shortages , unreliable staff and difficulty in generating interest and maintaining an audience .

Street newspapers are sold mainly by homeless individuals , but the newspapers vary in how much content is submitted by them and how much of the coverage pertains to them : while some papers are written and published mainly by homeless contributors , others have a professional staff and attempt to emulate mainstream publications . These differences have caused controversy among street newspaper publishers over what type of material should be covered and to what extent the homeless should participate in writing and production . One popular street newspaper , The Big Issue , has been a focus of this controversy because it concentrates on attracting a large readership through coverage of mainstream issues and popular culture , whereas other newspapers emphasize homeless advocacy and social issues and earn less of a profit .

= = History = =

= = = Historical foundations = = =

Although the modern street newspaper began with the 1989 publication of Street News in New York City , and the Street Sheet in San Francisco , 1989 , newspapers sold by the poor and homeless to generate income and to bring attention to social problems date back to the late 19th century ; journalism scholar Norma Fay Green has cited The War Cry , created by the Salvation Army in London in 1879 , as an early form of " dissident , underground , alternative publication " . The War Cry was sold by Salvation Army officers and the working poor to draw people 's attention to the poor living conditions of these individuals . Another precursor to the modern street newspaper was Cincinnati 's Hobo News , which ran from 1915 to 1930 and featured writing from prominent labor and social activists as well as Industrial Workers of the World members , alongside contributions of oral history , creative writing , and artwork from hoboes , or itinerant beggars . Most street papers published before 1970 , such as The Catholic Worker (founded in 1933) , were affiliated with religious organizations . Like workers ' papers and other forms of alternative media in the late 19th and early 20th centuries , early street newspapers were often created because the founders believed mainstream news did not cover issues that were relevant to ordinary people .

= = = Modern street newspapers = = =

Modern street newspapers began to emerge in the United States in the late 1980s in response to increasing levels of homelessness and homeless advocates ' dissatisfaction with the mainstream media 's portrayals of the homeless . At the time , many media outlets portrayed homeless people as being all criminals and drug addicts , and suggested that homelessness was a result of laziness rather than societal or political factors . Thus , one motivation for the creation of the first street

newspapers was to counter the negative coverage of homeless people that was coming from existing media .

Street News , founded in late 1989 in New York City , is frequently cited as the first modern street newspaper . Street Sheet in San Francisco started organically around the same time , without the knowledge of Street News ' existence , and is considered the longest @-@ running continuously published street newspaper . While some small papers were already being published when it was founded , Street News attracted the most attention and became the " catalyst " for many other papers . Many more street papers were launched in the early 1990s , crediting the high @-@ profile New York paper as their inspiration , such as Spare Change News in Boston founded in 1992 . During this period , an average of five new papers were created every year . This growth has been attributed both to changing attitudes and policies towards homeless individuals and to the ease of publishing provided by desktop computers ; After 1989 , at least 100 papers sprung up in over 30 countries . By 2008 , an estimated 32 million people worldwide read street newspapers , and 250 @,@ 000 poor , disadvantaged , or homeless individuals sold or contributed to them .

Street papers have been started in many major cities worldwide , mainly in the United States and Western Europe . They have especially proliferated in Germany , which in 1999 had more street newspapers than the rest of Europe combined , and in Sweden , where the street papers Aluma , Situation Sthlm and Faktum won the 2006 grand prize award for journalism of the Swedish Publicists ' Association . Street papers have been established in some cities in Canada , Africa , South America , and Asia . Even within the United States , some street newspapers (such as Chicago 's bilingual Hasta Cuando) are published in languages other than English .

In the mid @-@ 1990s , coalitions were established to strengthen the street newspaper movement . The International Network of Street Papers (INSP) (founded in 1994) and the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA) (founded in 1997) aim to provide support for street papers and to " uphold ethical standards " . In particular , the INSP was established to help groups that were starting new street newspapers , to bring more mainstream media attention to the street newspaper movement during the 1990s , and to support interaction and cross @-@ talk between street paper publishers and staff from different countries . The INSP and the NASNA voted to combine their resources in 2006 ; they have collaborated to found the Street News Service , a project which collects articles from member papers and archives them on the internet . National street paper coalitions have also been formed in Europe (there is a national coalition in Italy , and the Netherlands has the Straatmedia Groep Nederland) .

= = Description = =

Most street newspapers have three main purposes :

To provide income and job skills to the homeless and other marginalized individuals , who act as vendors of and often contributors to the newspapers

To provide coverage of , and to educate the general public about , issues pertaining to homelessness and poverty

To establish social networks within homeless communities and between homeless individuals and service providers

The defining characteristic of a street newspaper is that it is sold by homeless or marginalized vendors . While many street newspapers aim to provide coverage of social issues and educate the public about homelessness , this goal is often secondary : many people who buy street newspapers do so to support and express solidarity with the homeless vendor , rather than to read the paper .

The precise demographics of the readership of street newspapers is unclear . A pair of 1993 surveys conducted by Chicago 's StreetWise suggested that the paper 's readers at the time tended to be college @-@ educated , with slightly over half being female , and slightly over half unmarried .

= = = Operations and business = = =

Most street newspapers operate by selling the papers to homeless vendors for a fraction of the

retail price (usually between 10 % and 50 %) , after which the vendors sell the papers for the retail price and retain all the proceeds from street sales . The income vendors earn from sales is intended to help them " get back on their feet " . The purpose of requiring vendors to purchase papers up front and earn back the money by selling them is to help them develop skills in financial management . Vendors for most newspapers are identifiable by badges or messenger bags . Many newspapers require that vendors sign a code of conduct or otherwise " clean up their act " .

Most street newspaper vendors in the United States and United Kingdom are homeless individuals , although in several other countries (especially in Europe) papers are mainly sold by refugees . Nevertheless , not all vendors are homeless ; some have stable housing situations but are unable to hold other jobs , while others started out homeless but were eventually able to use their income from sales to find housing . In general , the major American street newspapers do not require prospective vendors to show proof of homelessness or poverty , and they do not require vendors to retire once they find stable housing . In the United States , since 2008 there have been a growing number of vendors who are " newly needy " ? only recently homeless , or with only temporary financial difficulty ? as opposed to the " chronically homeless " who have traditionally made up the majority of the vendor force . These vendors are often well @-@ educated and have extensive work experience , but lost their jobs in the 2008 financial crisis .

Street papers start in a variety of ways . Some , such as Street Sense , are begun by homeless or formerly homeless individuals , whereas others are more professional ventures . Many , particularly in the United States , receive aid from local government and charities , and coalitions such as the International Network of Street Papers and the North American Street Newspaper Association provide workshops and support for new street papers . Many develop in a bottom @-@ up fashion , starting up through volunteer work and " newcomers to the media business " and gradually expanding to include professionals . For most papers , the majority of revenue comes from sales , donations , and government grants , while some receive advertising revenue from local businesses . There has been some disagreement among street newspaper publishers and supporters over whether papers should accept advertising , with some arguing that advertising is practical and helps support the paper , and others claiming that many kinds of advertisements are inappropriate in a paper that is mainly geared towards the poor .

Specific business models for street newspapers vary widely , ranging from vendor @-@ managed papers that place the highest value upon homeless empowerment and involvement to highly professionalized and commercialized weeklies . Some papers (especially in Europe) operate as autonomous businesses , while others operate as parts of existing organizations or projects . There are papers that are very successful , such as the UK @-@ based The Big Issue , which in 2001 sold nearly 300 @,@ 000 copies a week and earned the equivalent of over 20 million USD in profits , but many papers sell as few as 3 @,@ 000 copies a month and barely generate a profit at all for the publishers .

= = = Coverage = = =

Most street newspapers report on issues regarding homelessness and poverty , sometimes functioning as a main source of information on policy changes and other practical issues that are relevant to the homeless but may go unreported in mainstream media . Many feature contributions from the homeless and the poor in addition to articles by activists and community organizers , including profiles of individual street newspaper vendors . For example , the first edition of Washington , D.C. ' s Street Sense included a description of a prominent homeless community , an interview with a congresswoman , an editorial about the costs and benefits of taking a job , several poems about homelessness , a how @-@ to column , and a section for recipes . A 2009 issue of the Lawrence , Kansas @-@ based Change of Heart included a story on the recent bulldozing of a homeless camp , a review of a book on homelessness , a description of the Family Promise organization for homeless support , and a list of community resources ; much of this content was submitted by the homeless . The writing style is often simple and clear ; social scientist Kevin Howley describes street newspapers as having a " native eloquence " .

According to Howley , street newspapers are similar to citizen journalism in that both are a response to the perceived shortcomings of the mainstream media and both encourage involvement by non @-@ professionals . A major difference between the two , however , is that the citizen journalism movement does not necessarily advocate a particular position , whereas street newspapers openly advocate for the homeless and poor .

Unlike most street newspapers , the UK @-@ based The Big Issue focuses mostly on celebrity news and interviews , rather than coverage of homelessness and poverty . It is still sold by homeless vendors and uses the bulk of its proceeds to support homeless individuals and advocacy organizations for the homeless , but the paper 's content is mostly written by professional staff and geared towards a broad audience . Because of its professional nature and high production values , it has been a frequent target of criticism in an ongoing debate between adherents of professional and grassroots ideals of how street newspapers should work .

= = = Social benefits = = =

In addition to providing some individuals with income and employment , street newspapers are intended to give homeless participants responsibility and independence , and to create a tight @-@ knit homeless community . Many offer additional programs to vendors , such as job training , housing placement assistance , and referral to other direct services . Others operate as a program of a larger social services organization ? for instance , Chicago 's StreetWise can refer vendors to providers of " drug and alcohol treatment , high school equivalency classes , career counseling , and permanent housing " . Most are engaged in some form of organizing and advocacy regarding homelessness and poverty , and many function as " watchdogs " for the local homeless communities . Howley has described street newspapers as a means of mobilizing the networks of " formal and informal relationships that exist between the homeless , the unemployed , and the working poor , and shelter managers , healthcare workers , community organizers , and others who work on their behalf " .

= = = Challenges and criticisms = = =

In the early days of street newspapers , people were often reluctant to buy from homeless vendors for fear that they were being scammed . Furthermore , many of the more activist papers fail to sell well because their writing and production are perceived to be unprofessional and lackluster . Topics covered are sometimes seen as lacking newsworthy content , and of little relevance or interest to the general public or the homeless community . Organizations in Montreal and San Francisco have responded to these criticisms by offering workshops in writing and journalism for homeless contributors . Papers such as StreetWise have in the past been criticized as " grim " and for having vendors that are too loud and intrusive . Some newspapers sell well but may not be widely read , as many people will donate to vendors without buying , or buy the newspaper and then throw it away . Howley has described readers ' hesitation or unwillingness to read the papers as " compassion fatigue " . On the other hand , those papers that do sell well and are widely read , such as The Big Issue , are often targets of criticism for being too " mainstream " or commercial .

Other difficulties street newspapers face include high turnover of " transient " or unreliable staff , lack of adequate funding , lack of journalistic freedom for papers that are funded by local government , and , among some demographics , lack of interest in homeless issues . For example , journalism professor Jim Cunningham has attributed the difficulties in selling Calgary 's Calgary Street Talk to the fact that the mostly middle @-@ class , conservative population has " not enough sensitivity to the causes of homelessness " . Finally , anti @-@ homeless legislation often targets street newspapers and vendors ; for example , in New York City and Cleveland , laws have prevented vendors from selling papers on public transit or other high @-@ traffic areas , making it difficult for the papers Street News and Homeless Grapevine to earn revenue .

= = = Differing approaches = = =

Among proponents and publishers of street newspapers there is disagreement over how street newspapers should be run and what their goals should be , reflecting a " clash between two philosophies for advocating social change " . On one side of the debate are papers that seek to function like a business and generate a profit and a wide readership in order to benefit the homeless in a practical way ; on the other are papers that seek to provide a " voice " to the homeless and poor without watering down their message for a broad readership . Timothy Harris , the director of Real Change , has described the two camps as " liberal entrepreneurial " and " radical , grassroots activist " .

Controversy surrounding The Big Issue , the world 's most widely circulated street newspaper , is a good example of these two schools of thought . The Big Issue is mostly a tabloid covering celebrity news ; while it is sold by the homeless and generates a profit that is used to benefit the homeless , the content is not written by them and there is little coverage of social issues that are relevant to them . In the late 1990s when the London @-@ based paper began making plans to enter markets in the United States , many American street newspaper publishers reacted defensively , saying they could not compete with the production values and mainstream appeal of the professionally produced The Big Issue or that The Big Issue did not do enough to provide a voice to the homeless . The reaction to The Big Issue raised what is now an ongoing conflict between commercialized , professional papers and more grassroots @-@ style ones , with papers such as The Big Issue emulating mainstream papers and magazines in order to generate a large profit to invest in homeless issues and others focusing on political and social issues rather than on content that will generate money . Some street newspaper proponents believe that the primary aim of the papers should be to give homeless individuals a voice and to " fill the void " in mainstream media coverage , whereas others believe it should be to provide homeless individuals with jobs and an income .

Other frequent areas of disagreement include the extent that the homeless should participate in the writing and printing of street newspapers , and whether street newspapers should accept advertising to generate revenue . Kevin Howley sums up the division between different street newspaper models when he questions if it is " possible (or desirable for that matter) to publish a dissident newspaper ? that is , a publication committed to progressive social change ? and still attract a wide audience " .

= = List of street newspapers = =