Stopping the Presses: A Longitudinal Case Study of the Christian Science Monitor Transition From Print Daily to Web Always

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Abstract

Though many news organizations have talked about going "Web-first" in response to sweeping economic and technological changes rocking the media landscape, the *Christian Science Monitor* took the mantra beyond platitudes. In 2009, the *Monitor* became the first nationally circulated newspaper to replace its daily print edition with its website and a weekly print magazine. This study utilizes three weeks of newsroom observation, interviews, and a survey to examine the paper's effort to grapple with this transition and the way it has altered news routines and values. Drawing upon theories of organizational culture and leadership, it offers insight for other organizations seeking to implement change. The study also documents a shift in the *Monitor's* news-gathering efforts and coverage as immediacy and page views rose as critical measures of success.

Though many traditional news organizations have talked about going "Web-first" in response to sweeping economic and technological changes rocking the media landscape (Brown, 2008; Groves, 2009), the *Christian Science Monitor* took the mantra beyond platitudes. In 2009, the *Monitor* became the first nationally circulated newspaper to embrace digital innovation by replacing its daily print edition with its website and a weekly print magazine. As other news organizations (e.g. the *Detroit News/Free-Press*) are experimenting with decreased print frequency and expanded online distribution, the *Monitor*'s effort to grapple with this transition is worthy of examination for lessons learned**.**

This longitudinal study involved three weeklong on-site visits to the *Monitor*'s primary newsroom in Boston for ethnographic observation and interviews, and included an online survey of the newsroom staff. The first visit took place in December 2009, nine months after the transition began; researchers followed up with visits in July 2010 and January 2011 to gather longitudinal data.

Informed by theories of organizational culture and leadership as well as diffusion of innovations, this study reveals how the elimination of the daily print edition gave the *Monitor* more room to develop new routines to better adapt to the Web imperatives of always-on immediacy and greater attentiveness to audience. However, newspapers, like all organizations, are resistant to change (Kets de Vries, 2001; Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002), and the *Monitor*'s transition was not without its difficulties. Many staffers resisted what they saw as the devolution of the *Monitor*'s serious journalism into pandering to the lowest common denominator with lighter news to capture the audience's attention. This analysis reveals these and other opportunities and challenges for news organizations

attempting radical transformations to adapt to digital and economic imperatives.

Literature review

Since the rise of the Internet as a disruptive news medium, newspapers have watched their circulations and ad revenues decline as audiences gravitated away from traditional news sources (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2011). This shift has prompted them to what business management and organizational change scholars call a "critical moment," or a widespread acceptance by all stakeholders that something must be done to better meet customers' changing demands and revitalize a failing business model (Kets de Vries, 2001). This level of change is difficult to achieve when the organization remains saddled with the need to produce the legacy product. By eliminating the daily print edition, the *Monitor* opened itself up to innovation, with greater opportunities to experiment with new routines.

Innovation theorists talk about the need for a nimble organization, one that focuses on emergent strategy driven by experimentation, rather than deliberate strategy requiring detailed planning before execution (Christensen & Raynor, 2003). Once successful strategies are developed, though, it is critical that they spread throughout the culture.

The diffusion of innovations paradigm from Rogers (2003) provides a well-tested framework for making sense of how organizations adopt or reject innovations, defining diffusion as "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (p. 5). Innovations are adopted at different rates by organizations, depending upon how individuals perceive the

innovation's *advantages* and *compatibility* with the existing system, as well as its

complexity (Rogers, 2003). Other critical factors are *trialability,* or how well an

innovation may be experimented with, and *observability*, or how well those in the

organization see the results of the innovation. Interpersonal relationships are a key part of

this diffusion: A change agent enters the existing system to introduce the innovation, and

with the help of opinion leaders, spreads the innovation throughout the organization.

Another critical factor affecting the diffusion of innovation is organizational

culture. Scholars of organizational change have found that deciphering culture is critical

to understanding how an organization can effectively transform itself to meet external

challenges (Schein, 2010). Schein (2010) defines organizational culture as a set of shared

assumptions have been learned by a group to solve its basic problems of external

adaptation and internal integration. Some of these assumptions have proved practical or

effective in the past but are less so when circumstances change, as they have in

newsrooms.

Schein (2010) defines three layers of culture:

1) *Artifacts*, or processes and physical structures, such as the layout of the

newsroom and the daily newsgathering routines.

2) *Espoused values*, or the beliefs the organizations explicitly articulates.

3) *Underlying assumptions*, which are often unspoken or even unconscious values

but represent some of the true motivations for behavior in an organization. Argyris (2004)

makes a similar distinction: *espoused theories*, or what people say about their goals when

asked directly, and *theories-in-use*, which are the unspoken operating values govern their

actions.

Scholars must identify these components of culture to understand what factors might be facilitating or inhibiting change (Schein, 2010). For example, news organizations that espouse the importance of the Web but tend to continue to reward reporters whose work appears on the front page over those who contribute multimedia or other Web efforts will, not surprisingly, notice that reporters devote more time and energy to the print product (Brown, 2008).

Another critical aspect of organizational culture is leadership. Leaders set an example for others and communicate their underlying assumptions in terms of what they reward and what they punish; the direction and intensity of their attention; what types of things are measured and evaluated; their allocation of resources; and through whom and how they promote, hire and recruit (Schein, 2010).

Research indicates that organizations that adapt to changing environment by building on existing strengths and values are often the most successful (Schein, 2010), and news organizations are no exception. Research on change in newsrooms has found that journalists are resistant to changes they perceive as being in conflict with the core values of the profession and may passively or actively block their adoption (Brown & Groves, 2010; Singer, 2004, Stamm & Underwood, 1993). Journalists draw fundamental aspects of their identity from their commitment to core values of accuracy and independence, among others, and to their mission of providing information to citizens in a democratic system (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). This strong sense of identity also serves to defend journalism from critics and to provide it with bona fides as a true "profession" (Schudson, 2001; Zelizer, 2004). Many people first get into journalism

because of their attraction to these core values and they are further reinforced as part of the socialization process in journalism education and on the job (Schudson, 2001 & 2003).

Case studies of news organizations undergoing major changes (e.g. Daniels & Hollifield, 2002; Gade, 2004; Gade & Perry, 2003; Singer, 2004) have found that journalists, as trained skeptics, are suspicious of changes espoused as being good for journalism but suspected of being more about the bottom line. For example, Gade & Perry (2003) studied a cultural change attempted by public-journalism movement supporter and then-editor Cole Campbell at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Journalists began the process fairly optimistic, but after four years, surveys showed that many staffers had become negative and believed that the underlying motivations were not rooted in the values of public journalism. Instead of allowing the organization to connect more effectively with the community, these initiatives were more about increasing circulation and advertising, staffers said (Gade & Perry, 2003).

Similarly, Singer (2004) found that journalists were suspicious about underlying motivations for change in her study of four converged newsrooms, even though managers did not frame the change in terms of the bottom line. One might expect that one of the major conflicts in converged newsrooms would be the differences between former print and broadcast competitors, but because they shared core values, the staff integrated fairly well. Instead, the main source of resistance was changes that they felt threatened these values. One of the survey respondents she quoted said that any change brought about to raise profits and not improve journalism was never going to be accepted by the newsroom, no matter what top managers said or did to encourage people.

More recent studies (Brown, 2008; Brown & Groves, 2010; Groves, 2009) have found that the threat to core journalistic values remain a top concern in newsrooms, but there is also a growing acceptance that change is necessary and concern for the bottom line is no longer anathema to journalists. Survival anxiety in newsrooms is high as the entire industry has been rocked by budget cuts, high debt loads, declining ad sales, and digital competition (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010), and this brings with it the powerful motivation needed to transcend comfortable routines (Schein, 2010). Over the past several decades, researchers have shown how journalists routinize their work to meet deadlines and fulfill time and space requirements (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978), but journalists are perhaps more open than ever before to the idea of change because of economic realities facing the industry. Still, underlying assumptions about the prestige of print often remain powerful barriers to true transformation (Brown, 2008).

Once the values and culture are understood, Rogers' framework allows researchers to understand how innovation filters through an organization. Rogers (2003) frames the innovation-decision process among individuals and units as a five-step process: *knowledge*, or learning about the innovation; *persuasion*, or understanding the perceived characteristics of the innovation; *decision*, or adopting/rejecting the innovation; *implementation*; and *confirmation*. This structure will be used to organize the organizational narrative over the 13-month study period.

In the implementation and confirmation stages, old routines are modified, and new ones develop. One of the most important elements of news routines in this study include the set of standards through which journalists can decide what is worthy of

coverage from the obviously vast range of possibilities. These standards traditionally

include prominence, proximity, conflict/controversy, timeliness, the unusual (Shoemaker

& Reese, 1996), and impact (The Missouri Group, 2010). The animating idea behind

these standards is that journalism should tell the public what it needs to know in order to

govern itself and to hold government and the powerful accountable (Kovach & Rosenstiel,

2007). American journalism still adheres to the general notion that these standards help

further objectivity by minimizing the personal biases of journalists about what news is

important, although many journalists do understand that they can produce their own types

of subtle biases, such as playing up conflict over compromise (Brown, 2008).

This research seeks to build on this literature on organizational culture and change

as well as decades of past research on newsroom processes and routines to answer the

following research questions:

RQ1: How did the *Monitor's* organizational culture affect its effort to transition to the
Web?

RQ2: How are news processes/routines changing as the *Monitor* shifts from a daily print
publication to a Web-only/print weekly?

RQ3: How has the emphasis on "Web first" affected the types of topics the *Monitor*
covers?

RQ4: How is the *Monitor* bringing the enduring values of journalism to life in its daily
routines and practices?

Methodology

This study relied on ethnographic observation, interviews, and an online survey of

staff, and involved three week-long on-site visits to the *Monitor* newsroom, spread over

the course of 13 months. Researchers attended meetings, shadowed staffers, and observed

the news-production process at work. A cross-section of staffers from all levels and departments were interviewed, including some on both the editorial and business sides of the organization. Researchers also collected organizational e-mails and other relevant documents as well as all articles in the journalism trade press for analysis. The researchers then analyzed the data for key themes.

Top managers have been identified in the organizational narrative, but individual interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality to encourage honesty and openness. The longitudinal design allowed for the observation of how change and innovation spread through the organization over time and how responses evolved or stayed the same.

A case study is an appropriate methodological approach for examining newsroom change because it allows for the in-depth study of phenomena in its real-life context (Jankowski & Wester, 1991; Yin, 2003). Practically speaking, a single case allowed for a greater depth of exploration into multiple phenomena, given the constraints of resources and time. As Dyer and Wilkins (1991) argue, single case studies are also valuable because they allow the researcher to offer deeper description and locate the fundamental meanings behind events. Open systems theory explains that an organization has many internal and external stakeholders that must establish congruence in needs and responsibilities for the organization to adapt and perform effectively, and researchers must carefully examine each of these and their relationships in an immersive context to understand the organization (Harrison, 2005).

Findings

Organizational culture

All organizations' cultures are products of their past (Kets de Vries, 2001; Schein, 2010), and it is important to understand the *Monitor*'s history, which informs its values and approach to change. The *Monitor* has deep connection to the First Church of Christ, Scientist, which founded the paper and still provides much of the funding for the newspaper's operations, although aside from one article each day, the content is otherwise not religious in nature. The paper was founded on Aug. 8, 1908, with a short, hand-scrawled missive from church founder Mary Baker Eddy (Canham, 1958). She also crafted the mission: "To injure no man, but to bless all mankind," which remains on the "About" page of csmonitor.com and in the weekly magazine's information box. Her motivation stemmed in part from the "yellow journalism" of the day, as several major newspapers had written misleading articles about her and the church. Eddy sought to offer an alternative to this sensationalism, and to this day staffers often define themselves as what they are not: Not obsessed with conflict, not adding to the froth of unsubstantiated opinion.

The first part of an organization's culture as defined by Schein are its artifacts, or its organizational and physical structures and routines. Soon after the paper's founding, the newspaper's offices were constructed in downtown Boston in an ornate edifice next to the Mother Church, the denomination's home sanctuary (Canham, 1958). Today, the church's tolling bells are still audible from the newsroom. In its 112-year history, the paper has won seven Pulitzer Prizes, which hang outside the newsroom's main

conference room, and more than a dozen Overseas Press Club awards. The commitment

to core journalistic values is connected to the mission of the organization. The roots run

deep for many employees, who grew up with the *Monitor* in their households. Many are

church members and feel a sense of journalistic mission connected to their faith,

especially since the paper was created at the behest of the church's founder. This weaving

of personal faith and journalistic commitment affected how many employees perceived

the Web-first change effort over the course of the year. As one staffer said, "Many of us

are Christian Scientists, and for those of us that are, we really have a sense of mission

that goes beyond the journalistic mission…the real challenge is to take this new form

given to us, and forge it to our purposes, not let it forge its on us" (interview, July 2010).

An excerpt from the introduction of *Monitor*'s stylebook reveals the subtle

intertwining of faith and profession:

> To blaze its own path of clean, constructive journalism, broad in appeal,
> high in character, powerful in helpfulness, the Monitor tries hard to
> develop stories that are not routine, articles that are original, interesting,
> and important to human progress. ... Our aim is to bring light rather than
> heat to a subject. The purpose is to heal. When exposing evil, we don't
> call names or sling adjectives; we record acts and official charges. Warmth,
> compassion, even humor, can help the Monitor serve as 'a most genial
> persuader.' (p. 2, *Monitor,* 1997)

This commitment is echoed on the website's About page on csmonitor.com:

- We're unrelenting but fair.
- We're excited by what's new and developing — yet always mindful of the history behind us.
- We're broad in scope but written for the individual.
- And we make a point of resisting the sensational in favor of the meaningful. (*Monitor*, 2011)

Visitors to the main newsroom must have a badge to access the third-floor offices.

The newsroom is an open space, with low-walled cubicles, making most editors and

writers visible. Most of the organization's editors are based in the Boston headquarters,

working with correspondents and staff writers in bureaus around the United States and

the world. Most bureaus consist of one staffer, although the *Monitor'*s Washington office

has eight, including a bureau chief.

In Boston, the top editors have separate offices along a far wall of the newsroom,

although the Web editor and managing editor usually work from cubicles among the

other employees in the newsroom proper. People work quietly, communicating through

e-mail, instant messaging, and telephones. Several televisions hang around the newsroom

tuned to the major cable news networks, although the volumes are turned down. Each

cubicle has the occupant's name on a nameplate. A number of dry-erase boards dot the

newsroom, with tidbits of information, such as names of foreign correspondents or

schedules of cover stories for the *Monitor*'s weekly magazine.

Prior to the transition, the organization had a mid-day deadline and published one

newspaper each weekday. Because the newspaper relied on mail delivery to reach its

subscribers, the newsroom developed a strategy of introspective journalism over the years

to differentiate itself. To compensate for the delayed delivery cycle, the *Monitor* focused

on a more reflective take and took a bigger picture approach to covering the news.

Though it had had a Web site for years, the routines prior to 2009 — like those of many

other print dailies (Brown, 2008; Groves, 2009) — remained focused on the production

of the daily newspaper. Until 2007, the newsroom had separate managing editors for the

Web site and the newspaper; those positions were later merged.

John Yemma, a former *Monitor* reporter and business editor who had spent 20

years working at the *Boston Globe,* returned as editor of the *Monitor* in July 2008 (Cook,

2008). In an interview with the *Monitor* at the time, he affirmed the commitment to

Eddy's founding principles, saying Eddy

> founded the *Monitor* during the era of 'yellow journalism,' when
> objectivity, accuracy, and fairness were in short supply. Now, at a time
> when news organizations are struggling to establish a sustainable
> economic base, the Monitor's role is more crucial than ever in providing
> careful reporting, compassionate analysis, and a clear-eyed view of the
> world (Cook, 2008).

> At the time of his hiring, the Web staff had already begun experimenting with

Wordpress sites to provide more interaction than was available under the organization's

previous K4 publishing system, which was geared toward print (J. Orr, interview,im pioss

Dec. 1, 2009). Soon afterward, the newsroom began investigating a new content-

management system.

The second key component of organizational culture is its espoused values

(Schein, 2010). In interviews, many staffers referred to "*Monitor* values" or "*Monitor*

journalism." These espoused values described a type of journalism that is contextual,

explanatory, and solutions-oriented; journalism that avoids sensational or alarmist tones.

Several quoted Eddy's original mission as a guiding principle for their work. A few

samples from five different staffers over the course of the study period reveal how many

conceive of "*Monitor* journalism":

> The *Monitor* story before was a very particular kind of story. You always
> looked for a larger analytical story on any given news point. You just
> didn't do the news story, you know. You always did something larger than
> that, and you always looked for, to be, you know, to be more analytical
> about it. (interview, Dec. 1, 2009)

> … I think that *Monitor* journalism is basically like bringing an uplifted
> sense to what's happening in the world today and what the main currents
> of thought are. I think that's the most important thing. … and news is
> important, but there's just so much being done on the news of the day, and
> not enough being done on what's behind it. And so, I think good *Monitor*

journalism takes the time to investigate those deeper things that are more important, that are instigating some of the little things that are popping up every day. (interview, Dec. 4, 2009)

We talk about being solution-based journalism. We don't go into the fray; we try to push the discussion in a new way that is productive. (interview, July 2010)

…a lot of us at the *Monitor* … perhaps are more mission-oriented than at other places. Maybe it's not quite that way, but, at least for me, it feels like the type of journalism that we strive for, and that we were always known for, is worth fighting for. (interview, Jan. 10, 2011)

I grew up reading the *Monitor*, and I valued the, well, values of what we stand for. I like the solutions-based journalism and responses to world issues; and yeah, so I really admire it. … seeking solutions to problems, staying away from sensationalism, analysis and thoughtful kind of assessment of what's going on rather than jumping to snap conclusions and going for, not so much a focus on breaking news, but more on understanding the reasons, the causes behind the news of the day — I mean, that's what we aspire to. (interview, Jan. 7, 2011)

In meetings about content, whether for the Web or the print products, staffers also mentioned the idea of a "*Monitor* story" to ensure that the ideal was kept in mind. Unlike other newspapers, the structure of the *Monitor* places the editor and the publisher on equal footing. The editor reports to a board of directors; the publisher reports to a separate board of trustees, although both managers often meet with each other's boards. Such structures reinforce the importance of the news operation and its connection to the larger mission set forth by Eddy.

Given the primacy of "*Monitor* journalism" to the organization's identity, the second major espoused value is the need to make these values come to life on the Web so that the organization can survive, not only financially, but in terms of finding a larger audience for this form of solution-based, serious journalism. One staffer, who has been at the paper for over 30 years, said that the Web transition was a big morale booster because

despite what he saw as a winning product, in print it had a deeply declining circulation and reach (interview, July 2010). The Monitor has thus set concrete goals and defined some new espoused values for the web era. For example, page views was determined to be a key early metric of success after the print daily was eliminated; departments were given monthly targets to meet. By July 2010, staffers were also talking about the importance of engagement and stickiness as the next critical metric, or getting people to interact with content and stay on the site longer, although this concept was less well defined and measured. Staffers were asked to increasingly value immediacy, jumping on breaking news or trending topics quickly, to write more and shorter stories, and to master search engine optimization, particularly in headlines, to give their stories Google juice. As will be shown in greater detail later in the paper, these new values were constantly reinforced in news meetings and in interactions between managers and staffers.

Finally, the third component of organizational culture is underlying assumptions, or the often unspoken motivations for behavior. At the *Monitor*, the core underlying assumption that affected the digital transition was a deep-seated sense that the Web is fundamentally incompatible with *Monitor* values and that the increased attention to traffic and metrics was undermining the craft of journalism and the editorial judgment that fuels quality. Despite what many said was their hope that the paper could offer a more serious take on the issues preoccupying the American public as surfaced by Google trends, one editor said they still felt like a "carnival barker" pandering to the lowest common denominator. Nearly all of those interviewed said they recognized that not just the *Monitor* but the industry had reached what scholars of organizational change call a "critical moment" in which they have to change to survive (Kets de Vries, 2001). It was

clear, however, that for all the talk about how the Web could be a new venue for journalism values, many resisted change because they believe meaningful journalism is difficult or impossible to achieve online. Also, the attention to metrics was undermining their craft, like controlling an artist's work by popular opinion.

Going Web first: Knowledge/persuasion

Like other newspapers, the *Monitor* had seen a noticeable decline in circulation in recent years. Its daily circulation peaked at more than 220,000 in 1970; it was 52,000 when the change to Web-first was announced in October 2008 (Clifford, 2008). Within three months of taking the helm, Yemma announced plans to eliminate the daily print newspaper to become a Web-first operation (Clifford, 2008). The organization would continue to publish a weekly magazine, but its emphasis would be the Web. At the time, the organization's Web site was getting 3 million page views per month; Yemma hoped to reach 20 million to 30 million per month within five years to offset cuts in the church subsidy. The church had provided about $12 million a year to the news organization, but that amount was to be cut to $4 million by 2013 (Clifford, 2008).

In preparation for the transition, Yemma worked closely with *Monitor* publisher Jonathan Wells. By December 2008, the organization had tallied responses from customer-service lines and e-mails: 50 percent were positive, 14 percent were negative, and the remainder wanted to know more about the change (J. Yemma, interview, Nov. 30, 2009). The organization also converted 93 percent of its subscriber base to the new print weekly.

The *Monitor* identified a unique value proposition, or an updated mission to guide its strategy in the months ahead: "Explaining world news to thoughtful people who care

about solutions." At the time the study began, interviewees were familiar with the

statement and could quote all or some of the phrase. But several saw it as repackaging of

Eddy's original mission, which many could quote verbatim.

In the first part of 2009, management offered voluntary buyouts to staffers and

held a town-hall meeting to take questions and discuss severance packages. The leaders

had set an April 30 deadline to complete its newsroom staff reduction. In a Feb. 2, 2009,

memo to staff from Yemma, a question-and-answer section made clear the connection

between cuts and the new mission:

> Q: If after Feb. 16 you need to reduce the staff further with layoffs, how
> will you decide which staffers get laid off?
>
> A: We are first looking at the jobs and tasks necessary to carry out our
> core publishing mission. That mission, of course, is changing as we move
> to a Web-first strategy with a weekly print edition. We know that we will
> have to do without certain positions and will have to narrow our editorial
> focus. In general, if the work associated with a particular position is no
> longer needed, that would be a position we would not continue to staff
> (memo, Feb. 2, 2009).

As the *Monitor* published its last daily edition, Yemma sent the following e-mail

memo to the staff:

> To the staff:
>
> No need to bury the lede. This is a momentous day. After we clear the
> final pages of the daily print Monitor today, we are in uncharted waters.
> Everything we do from this point is new to us and new to the world of
> journalism.
>
> We'll try things, think about whether they worked, adjust, and try again.
> We are all moving into this new Web-first + Weekly world together.
> Years from now our successors at the Monitor -- and probably a lot of
> people at other news organizations -- will be using techniques that we
> have pioneered.
>
> With apologies for King Harry's un-PC language:

"And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here"

Our goal, of course, is to carry out our 100-year-old mission, expand our
reach, and secure ourselves financially. It won't be easy. But we have all
the tools and support necessary to succeed. We are part of something
bigger than ourselves, part of an unfolding demonstration of eternal Love
for mankind (memo, March 25, 2009).

At the end of his memo, Yemma also noted the commitment to the organization's

founder and founding principles: "Mary Baker Eddy launched us in 1908. Each year of

the 100 years and four months since then our predecessors have charted their course by

the values she instilled. It's up to us now" (J. Yemma, interview, March 25, 2009).

The newsroom staff was cut to 75 through attrition and voluntary buyouts. The

changes did not come without criticism, even from some former staffers. William A.

Babcock, a former senior international news editor for the *Monitor,* wrote an essay

critical of the Web-first move, noting, "… as the current church board of directors plans

to launch a new weekly edition of the print newspaper and beef up the *Monitor*'s online

presence, it's difficult to be optimistic. After a century of publication, the *Monitor* could

have been a beacon — the sort of illuminating presence America's Founding Fathers

envisioned in our nation's marketplace of ideas. It is sad, if not tragic, that a church

allowed this journalistic light to be extinguished" (Babcock, 2009).

Shortly after the launch, Yemma and online editor Jimmy Orr began pushing a

new initiative: shorter stories with more frequent updates. Previously, most *Monitor*

stories included multiple sources and ran about 800 to 1,200 words. Now, the leadership

wanted stories no longer than 500 words. If possible, writers were to produce multiple

takes; newsroom leaders emphasized increased updating would help improve page-view

counts (J. Yemma, interview, Dec. 3, 2009). Orr, a former chief Internet communications

strategist for President George W. Bush and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger,

himself blogged regularly as part of a feature called The Vote blog. By July, the blog

accounted for 20 percent of the site's traffic (memo, July 4, 2009).

By August, page views had reached 7.5 million, with 2.5 million to 3 million

unique visitors (Mitchell, 2009). In September, the organization hired a consulting firm to

provide advice on search-engine optimization. The changes introduced at this time came

primarily from the top, with Yemma, Orr, and managing editor Marshall Ingwerson

serving as the primary change agents (Rogers, 2003). The majority of the newsroom was

focused on the Web operation; less than a quarter of the staff was dedicated primarily to

the print operation on the organizational chart at the time the study began.

The newsroom developed a four-pronged approach of innovation to growing its

online audience:

- Increasing the frequency of updating from journalists, with two shorter blog posts a day.

- Using search-engine optimization (SEO) techniques in headlines and posts to improve positioning in organic Google searches and Google News.

- Monitoring Google Trends for hot topics and occasionally assigning stories that offer the Monitor's nuanced take on issues people are interested in and talking about.

- Using social media (Twitter, Facebook, and Digg) to extend the Web-site presence and content to other audiences.

December 2009: Decision

By the first week of immersive observation, the Web-first culture had begun to

take hold, and page views had hit 9.5 million. The weekly magazine had performed better

than expected; after starting with 43,000 subscribers at launch, the paid subscriber base

had grown to 68,000 by December 2009. A third product, known as the Daily News

Briefing, was breaking even as well with 1,900 paid subscribers. It culled the best of the

*Monitor'*s original Web content into a three-page PDF file e-mailed to subscribers.

Despite the quantitative successes, several interviewees expressed concerns and

frustrations about some of the changes, as they felt writing headlines optimized for

Google short-changed readers, and providing shorter, more frequent content was far

removed from the *Monitor*'s original mission. One editor noted,

> I mean, we're up there with all the different newsiest online organizations
> [in Google]. The down side would be, we're doing a lot more sort of
> culture war stuff — headlines with Palin in it and like gee-whiz electronic
> gadgetry stuff — simply to get traffic. Little blogs that might be a good
> read but don't really have much reporting — if any — are sort of what
> gets all the traffic; that, and photos of the day. So it's a little disheartening
> to be traipsing through the jungle, risking your life in the areas that I cover
> for my readers, if that's not going to get any traffic at all. All management
> seems to care about is traffic (interview, Nov. 29, 2009)

All employees had access to the daily Omniture reports showing how stories

performed in terms of page views, the primary measure of success in the newsroom.

Workplace schedules had been adjusted to meet the rolling deadlines for the Web site,

ensuring coverage from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. each weekday. A skeletal staff of editors handled

duties through the weekend. The newsroom was also about to change from its K4 print-

focused publishing system to eZPublish, a content-management system designed for the

Web, which would allow editors to add links and photos, and publish stories without

having to go through the Web team.

Despite resistance in the newsroom, a few opinion leaders had begun to embrace the idea. One editor, for example, had begun keeping a spreadsheet of how stories performed on the Web to try to understand which topics and writers engaged readers.

Another summed up the internal tension mentioned by many in interviews:

The underlying thing about the whole transition is that if you do good work, but no one sees it, what is the point? So even if you have to do something that's populist in order to draw readers, but then those readers come and they'll see other things that are good, then, that is the premise on which, I think, we now operate (interview, Dec. 1, 2009).

In addition to shorter reports, the Web-first environment saw the evolution of "roundups," curated content from a variety of Web sources to help readers sort through the news. More topical blogs had been added to the site as well, and the national desk had instituted a requirement that all stories adhere to the 500-word limit. On the international desk, the 500-word limitation was introduced as a guideline, and some writers did exceed the limit. On the whole during this week, national stories tended to perform more strongly than international.

Reporters were encouraged to use individual Twitter accounts and Facebook pages to spread their stories, a recommendation that sparked some dissension from bureau reporters who questioned whether it was worth the investment of time. Daily news budget meetings began with a review of page-view reports and talk of what worked well on the Web. As the move to Web first took hold, Orr emerged as a primary change agent, along with Yemma. Orr often challenged traditional assumptions and routines, pointing out different stories or themes as possibilities to increase traffic. When news of Tiger Woods' infidelities hit, Orr noted the trends in budget meetings. He experimented with

different types of blog posts and content, and often, blog posts would appear among the

most viewed stories on the Web site.

Several staffers said in interviews the organization had begun covering topics that

would not have appeared in the daily print edition, such as the unfolding circumstances

surrounding Michael Jackson's unusual death and the story of a man who had faked the

disappearance of his son on an experimental balloon.

> … now we can see exactly which story they're reading and how much.
> And you know — surprise, surprise — it's the Tiger Woods, it's the Sarah
> Palin. Those are the ones, you know. Good stories are not assured of doing
> badly, but you're going to hit more, you're going to get better page views
> more consistently, with the stuff that's kind of — can tend to be fluff. So
> then the challenge of course is to decide whether you're just going to take
> a hit and not do it, or whether you're going to try and find something you
> can say about that, that adds to the conversation in a positive way. Not a
> positive spin, but something that adds information (interview, Nov. 29,
> 2009).

Search-engine optimization (SEO) strategies were instituted as well, and how-to

memos were circulated. Some editors mentioned headlines optimized for Google often do

not always meet good editorial standards. As part of the Web-first strategy, editors also

spent more of their time tracking trends in Google and Yahoo. Another opinion leader,

who expressed some worry and skepticism, said: "I feel like we're in a process, and it's

hard to tell how far we're gonna swing in that pendulum and where the right place is to

be on that. So I'm willing to sort of suspend some of my previous biases about who we

are and what we should be, to let this play out and see how this works" (interview, Dec. 1,

2009).

One survey respondent put it this way:

> While keeping up with new techniques and a multimedia approach is
> important, we need to maintain good, old-fashioned journalistic standards
> as top priority. The race-to-the-bottom that occurs when the goal is to run

whichever stories get the maximum number of 'hits' is a huge risk when
you go to an all-Internet edition. The 'cult of real time,' i.e. the breathless
need to update a story every hour, often comes at the cost of context,
analysis and reflection (survey, January 2010).

Though editorial staffers had opened up to the Web-first idea, the Web staff

remained separated, physically and psychologically, from the national and international

news desks. Some Web staffers referred to feeling like "second-class citizens," although

that sense had begun to change. Previously, requests for Web summaries and other Web-

specific content would go ignored; by December 2009, news staffers had become more

responsive to such queries. "I think we have a little bit more [stature], probably because

we've been able to demonstrate success," one Web team member said (interview, Dec. 2,

2009). "We've been able to bring in a ton of traffic."

The weekly magazine, referred to as "the weekly" by most of the staff, features

more of the long-form journalism that most of the staff consider "*Monitor* journalism."

At this point, editors and writers viewed assignments for the weekly as a respite from the

daily grind of the Web site. When working on an article for the weekly, staffers on the

national and international desks were temporarily freed from Web responsibilities.

By the end of the first study week, a few themes had emerged. Some worried

whether the organization had sacrificed quantity for quality. As one staffer said of the

Web: "Hopefully, we can be in it, but not of it." The number of stories handled by editors

— in the form of updates, roundups, and blog posts — had increased sharply from the

days of the print newspaper, although most of the pieces were shorter. Still, many people

noted the increased workload in interviews. Also, the national and international desks

became more competitive in terms of page-view results.

Though the Web team and the editorial desks had been separate, the differences had lessened gradually as more editors were forced to embrace a Web-first ethic.

July 2010: Implementation

In July 2010, more than one year into the digital transition, there were some signs that despite some ongoing underlying resistance, the staff was settling into the new routines and, in some ways, finding gratification in the paper's increased audience.

Editor Yemma likened the process of adjusting to change to the stages of grief and noted that it is an industry-wide phenomenon in the newspaper business. He said there was huge resistance at first, particularly for older staffers, but that people became gradually more accepting over time and came to recognize that the changes were not as threatening to their values or professional identity as originally thought. He noted that he saw a similar process when working at the *Globe*, and added that he felt many at the *Monitor* had already "read the writing on the wall" by the time he arrived there.

One mid-level editor went so far as to seek out the researcher to note how much better he felt about the new expectations since having first been interviewed in December 2009: "I'm really gratified. The higher efficiency is really rewarding. We have gotten really nimble, we feel more responsive and relevant…. Yemma said we would get more efficient, and we really have…We are out of the middle of the storm" (interview, July 2010). He felt that while stories were less meaty and less original, he was surprised at the good that had come out of being more responsive to readers, allowing the paper to increase its relevance, as well as his own ability to edit more stories more quickly than he ever thought possible. Similarly, another staffer said that the staff size was first decreased in her department, there was initial panic, but "once you get the routine down, it's OK."

A staffer said that March 2010, about one year in to the transition, was a significant moment, bringing "a huge sigh of relief" as "there is a feeling there's been some responsiveness on management's part as to how heavy the workload had gotten." Daily story counts for departments were reduced slightly or not heavily enforced, she said, and she felt that traffic goals were not being increased as much as they had initially thought they might be; on the international desk, a request for an additional staffer did result in an intern being hired.

What some described as not only acceptance but excitement about the quest for traffic and its instant gratification led to a shift in how staffers felt about writing for the magazine. While it was still prized as a place for longform journalism and "*Monitor* values," magazine editors had had an increasingly hard time getting staffers to write for it, especially cover stories that require a significant investment of time. In some cases, staffers would not return calls to magazine staffers. Part of this was a sense that with the increasingly fast pace of output for the Web, it was hard to fit in the magazine stories, but part of it was also a concern about what slowing down the publication cycle would mean for an individual's or a department's all-important numbers. Editors were reluctant to have more than one of their reporters pulled out of the rotation to focus on magazine work because it would of course lessen their ability to contribute traffic-generating stories.

Even some of the staffers who had been at the *Monitor* for more than a decade expressed some enthusiasm for the change, often noting that the transition was much less wrenching than the *Monitor*'s failed experiment with broadcasting in the late 1980s and early 1990s. One said, "I'm at the end of my career, at least in theory. I feel like anything is possible. It's injected some new vitality into my thinking" (interview, July 2010).

Another said that after investing his career there, he didn't want to be one of the ones to

turn the lights out on the newsroom. He noted all news organizations are trying to figure

out what works in the new-media world, and in some ways, the new mandates were

allowing the *Monitor* to get its edge back again. "This time, I can cope, learn, deal,

whatever you want to call it," he said (interview, July 2010).

However, there were still some pockets of resistance to change and anxiety about

what it meant for the *Monitor* in July 2010. One staffer said that the change had not

played out as much as been fought out. Many continued to express concerns that the hunt

for page views was driving poor journalistic choices. One person on the business side of

the organization said:

> It's hard, if you've been working here for 30 years, to realize that people are not
> reading what you are writing. That is tough for people. Change is a real struggle.
> Power has shifted dramatically from editors deciding what is important…It's a
> hard mindshift to take, that readers are not as interested in what you want them to
> be interested in. Maybe they really are more interested in Paris Hilton than the
> deficit, even if you don't like it. You are giving up that control….the real cultural
> challenge is just the idea that the customer knows best, that the customer knows
> anything…yes, we can't just chase page views at any cost. But the newsroom has
> to give up the idea that they can just do whatever interests them. So if readers
> want a weekly column about what is going on the White House, give that to them,
> even if that's not what you feel like doing. This makes me very concerned…the
> Web allows you to have an iterative process and change very quickly, and that's
> what the Web competition is doing, but journalists just don't want to do that
> (interview, July 2010).

The *Monitor* did, however, maintain a spirit of experimentation and evolution, even if the

process wasn't as quick as it may be in Silicon Valley. For example, the Green Blog, an

environmental blog written by Eoin O'Carroll, a member of the Web staff, was canceled

in March 2010. Yemma explained in an e-mail to the *Columbia Journalism Review*:

> … in a world in which editors manage ever-more constrained resources, no decision is ever made for just one reason. We felt confident about moving in the direction I've outlined and we also wanted Eoin, our blogger, to contribute in other ways. He is one of our most valuable Web specialists and has played a key role, for instance, in the implementation of our new content management system. That was a high priority with us.
>
> The Bright Green blog has been updated much less frequently because of Eoin's other duties. It seemed logical, then, to discontinue it, since best practice with blogs is frequent updating (*CJR*, 2010).

Shortly after the July visit, Orr left the paper to take a job with the *Los Angeles Times*, and Dave Scott, an award-winning international editor, took over as online editor. In a memo introducing the change, Yemma noted of Scott:

> He lived *Monitor* values in the field and supports them in the newsroom. He understands what makes *Monitor* journalism unique. And he knows that the entire news industry is in an unprecedented period of transition that requires new survival skills, creativity, flexibility, experimentation, and collaboration. That requires a continued emphasis on increasing our traffic along with a new emphasis on deepening reader engagement (memo, July 2010).

Several staffers also confirmed their trust in Scott. One said, "he has a ton of credibility in the newsroom," (interview, July 2010). However, some executives on the business side were a little concerned about Orr's departure, noting that Orr "gets it" in the way many others don't, especially the need to balance the drive for page views with engagement and an overall understanding of metrics and how to achieve them.

Indeed, Orr was willing to confront and challenge traditional assumptions. One editor noted Orr "broke a lot of eggs, which you had to clean up" but in doing so, he took the newsroom forward. "He had this great energy, was always pushing boundaries. A lot of what he did got people worked up, especially

longtime reporters and editors, but we needed that to some extent" (interview, July 2010).

Orr himself saw his role as fighting an uphill battle to get journalists to understand that it is not about what they like, it's about what the readers like. However, he noted that the *Monitor*'s relatively small size and bureaucracy, in proportion to its journalistic heft, in many ways made it easier to push change forward.

January 2011: Confirmation

Almost two years into the change, SEO and a Web-first philosophy had become part of the newsroom routine. "Riding the Google wave" had become a common phrase, as staffers had figured out how to write quickly and freshly on topics trending on the Internet. The strategy had reaped page-view gains, and the newsroom had become adept at experimenting with different strategies to increase traffic. Some ideas, such as quickly adding wire stories not produced by *Monitor* staff to chase trending topics, worked but were seen as artificial means of inflating numbers. Though success had bred converts, some reporters and editors had not lost all skepticism.

> …there have been times when I think we send mixed messages. Like we all talk about *Monitor* journalism, but it's like, we'll do anything to get hits. And we'll give up our core values to get them. So I always feel like there's a mixed message going on around here (interview, Jan. 10, 2011).

> Sometimes I feel like the content is shaping itself rather than us shaping the content (interview, Jan. 10, 2011).

> …it's still an evolution, I guess. I think there's still difficult things that we're trying to wrestle to the ground. I think some of the staff — how to put this? — still is trying to figure out whether we still stand for what we used to stand for, you know? Or, is it changed? So it's still an adjustment.

The adjustment is still going on, even from that initial transition (interview, Jan. 11, 2011).

Though the weekly and Daily News Briefing numbers had remained flat, page views had continue to grow over the year. In November and December, the site experienced monthly page views of 19.4 million, and the *Monitor*'s stories regularly received top ranking on Google searches and Google News.

Scott's appointment to online editor reaffirmed a commitment to *Monitor* journalism in the eyes of several interviewees in the newsroom. "I feel like he's been there and done that on the editorial side in terms of having journalism background. … So he's got a lot more respect and credibility when he goes and asks you to do something," one staffer said (interview, Jan. 9, 2009).

As Yemma had mentioned in his memo announcing Scott's appointment, the online editor began focusing on the idea of reader engagement; rather than just concentrating on page views, he began investigating time spent on site as a measure of success. He worked with the Web staff to create new content vehicles called "multipliers" that some felt were more in line with traditional *Monitor* values. Adding new vocabulary to the newsroom lingo indicated a certain comfort level with the concepts. Such "multipliers" included photo galleries of multiple images on specific topics and links to related *Monitor* content. Reporters also began developing online quizzes, spread over multiple Web pages, on news topics. Several staffers saw such efforts as educational and befitting of the traditional *Monitor* mission. Writers and bloggers regularly produce "lists" related to news trending topics; each item is featured on a separate page.

Many in the newsroom reported feeling more "settled" than before, in part because page views had increased so sharply and people began to believe that the 25

million page-view goal was possible and sustainable over the long term. One editor noted success had eased some anxiety in the newsroom: "I think things have settled down. It's easier to have a conversation because our numbers are up" (interview, Jan. 6, 2011).

With the implementation of eZPublish, the creation of Web content had become democratized throughout the newsroom, and the noneditorial Web staff had been reduced to five people, as some former Web people had taken on writing and editing roles. And even staffers whose job descriptions were focused on the weekly had begun produce quizzes and blog posts for the Web, a change from a year earlier.

> …everybody feels this ownership now, and it's been, it's been great for us
> in terms of traffic and it's been great for us in terms of workload,
> especially now that we've got this new technology system. And it also
> gives us space to experiment with new ideas (interview, Jan. 11, 2011).

The first part of every budget meeting remained dedicated to discussing page-view reports. Two content items, the lead story and the "upper left," had been added to the home page on the Web to focus on *Monitor*-specific content throughout the day, and a rundown of candidates for these slots had become part of the budget-meeting process. These items, combined with multipliers, were meant to transform search traffic into destination visitors, people who come to read *Monitor* news and filter through the site's offerings.

In November 2010, the organization also enabled comments on the site to increase participation. The comments were placed on a separate page from the stories, requiring an additional click; for the most part, the organization had not experienced a rash of negative commentary, as other news sites have experienced (Perez-Pena, 2010). The news librarian served as in-house monitor for the comments; she would respond when a comment had been flagged by a number of users as offensive. The newsroom had

also begun affiliation agreements with bloggers outside of the organization to expand its

reach.

Other facets of the Web efforts have been modified, however. A daily podcast

interview with *Monitor* correspondents and a weekly Webcast with Yemma were

discontinued because of low numbers and lack of revenue. A push for increased Twitter

and Facebook use by reporters had slowed by the final study week, although a Web staff

member now dedicated much time to managing the organization's Facebook page.

The weekly magazine is still held in high regard by those in the newsroom as the

place where serious journalism, the long-form journalism that the *Monitor* is known for,

is done. The weekly meeting has a slower pace and features little talk of page views and

Web performance. At weekly critique meetings, editors flip through the magazine and

critique photo selection and writing style. More time is spent focusing on the content; the

Web is rarely mentioned. The newsroom is now preparing for a reader survey to find out

who is reading the weekly and what kind of content they want out of the magazine; it is

applying the same kind of audience feedback from the Web site to the magazine.

For many in the newsroom, success comes in the form of page views, which holds

the keys to the future of the organization. One staffer said:

> It's just digits; it's numbers. That's the sad truth of it, is that a lot of the
> decisions are now made by numbers, and I get it, but you know, it's not as
> romantic as you'd like. But you know, we get big numbers, and that's
> doing our job well. And we've been lucky enough, I think, to get — to
> keep increasing, to keep pushing that needle further every month
> (interview, Jan. 11, 2011).

Conclusion/discussion

In many respects, the *Monitor* has embraced the emergent strategy of innovative

organizations to remain competitive (Christensen & Raynor, 2003). It is regularly

experimenting with new techniques to increase Web traffic, and is constantly refining metrics, albeit perhaps at a somewhat slower pace than organizations like the Huffington Post that never had a legacy product to weigh down its mentality, as a person from the business side of the organization noted (interview, July 2010). It is willing to dispense with multimedia offerings that fail to garner page views. Such an iterative environment has led to success in page views, although the ad revenue promised by such successes has, importantly, not followed yet.

Since March 2009, the innovation of Web-first journalism has spread throughout the newsroom. It was introduced as a top-down initiative, with page-view demands and staff cutbacks. As page views rose, success validated and embedded new routines, turning implementation into confirmation (Rogers, 2003; Schein, 2010).

In answering RQ1, the *Monitor*'s culture is rooted in its history, mission, and connection to the First Church of Christ, Scientist. Though the organization emphasizes it is not a religious publication, its multimillion-dollar subsidy from the church and number of employees who are church members inextricably tie the church and its values to the organization. The original mission, "To injure no man, but to bless all mankind," remains a guiding principle.

Staffers are especially proud of the paper's long-time commitment to serious news, exemplified by the seven Pulitzers it was won. But the reality of more frequent updates has resulted in less original reporting and fewer *Monitor*-originated interviews that some staffers believe are compromising the core values and thus tarnishing the brand. One editor summed up the struggle of frequent updating, still apparent almost two years in:

> So I have to do it six, seven times (a day), you know — to think of stories that bring what I would consider our *Monitor* values to a topic that is not where we normally would have been, and we're doing it because the public is interested in this topic. So, what do we have to say about it that's interesting, or clearer, or sheds some new perspective on what's going on here? And it's hard. You know, we weren't accustomed to having to be that instantaneously responsive, and we don't have the luxury of saying, "Well, you know that story is really not for us." And when we've got page-view targets that we're all assessed to hit every month, you've gotta come up with something on what people want to read about. And it's just a lot of work (interview, Jan. 11, 2011).

However, many staffers also recognize that the Web does not mean forsaking these values and can in fact enhance them; in some ways, the *Monitor* staff sees itself as leading the way online by showing how it can add the kind of well-verified context and nuance to stories other outlets can't or won't. By the end of the study period, several staffers felt more frequent stories did not necessarily mean less depth; sometimes one longer story may now be a series of three shorter posts instead, as the reporter gradually learns more about the issue. In addition, the weekly offers regular real estate and institutional support for in-depth, investigative pieces and provided an outlet for traditional *Monitor* journalism to sustain job satisfaction.

In answering RQ2 and RQ3, the newsroom has focused its success on page-view goals and the new metric of reader engagement, as measured by time spent on site. To meet these goals, staffers have developed new routines to "ride the Google wave" and pursue trending topics. In the past, the news organization wrote stories based primarily on reporter and editor choice, much as traditional organizations had done to fill time and space requirements (Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978). But the *Monitor* began filing shorter items and posts, with fewer sources, more frequently. Often, four or five posts on a hot

topic could appear within a day's time to keep the readers coming back for more. Most of the 75-person newsroom remained focused on producing content for the Web.

With such a focus, most of the newsroom had to shift from a monochronic, singular deadline focus to a polychronic environment with multiple deadlines, a move that can often create some anxiety (Schein, 2010). Several scholars have connected how time and space constraints affect the routinization of newswork (e.g. Tuchman, 1978; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In this instance, the elimination of the daily newspaper freed the organization from the constraints of the print product, something that has hindered change efforts at other newspapers as they moved to the Web (Brown, 2008; Groves, 2009). Here, falling back on traditional routines was not possible because the Web site became the primary platform. New routines had to be created, and with success in the form of page views, these new routines became embedded, although some resistance remained.

These Web-first innovations were introduced by Orr as the primary change agent. He proved the success of blogging and frequent updating with his The Vote blog, and his team incorporated SEO strategies to garner more page views for stories. They served as the proving ground, providing observability in the Rogers paradigm. Soon, opinion leaders in other parts of the newsroom began implementing those ideas, especially with the new eZPublish content-management system in place reducing complexity and allowing for trialability. With experimentation proliferating throughout the newsroom, staffers began to see the advantages and compatibility with their goals. With all of these facets in place, the innovation decision took hold throughout the social system.

One tangible result of the changing routines is the effect on content. Some *Monitor* staffers voiced concerns that quantity was winning out over quality in the quest for page views and unique visitors. During the study periods, the *Monitor* tackled stories such as Tiger Woods' infidelities, sinkholes and ski-chairlift accidents in Maine — topics that several staffers said would not have been covered in the past. But many agreed such changes are necessary for survival, and many felt that the Web was making the *Monitor* more relevant and, by increasing the number of people likely to read its content, more influential and capable of having nationwide impact.

Much of the acceptance of the change comes through rationalizing the effect of their work. Although the work comes in shorter blog posts and shorter pieces, many of the reporters and editors have come to accept the "rolling story" idea, that the story evolves over a series of posts, rather than as a single story with three or four sources.

> …now, I may have 90 minutes to get a blog up, and I'm happy to get one source to call me. You know? Now, I could wait for more sources, but if I do, I miss the trend. And I gotta make the trend. So, you, you get faster; but you also sacrifice comprehensiveness. Now, you know, every journalist has faced this since time immemorial. I mean, this is nothing new in the sense that we all face deadlines, and we all have to, we all have to get out stuff quickly. It's just, it's just a bigger leap for us, because before … the deadline was so paper-driven that we had time to kinda think about stuff. And we don't now (interview, Jan. 10, 2011).

Rogers' framework (2003) is useful when considering RQ4. The enduring values of journalism outlined by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) — especially the importance of verification and the pursuit of truth — fit well within the *Monitor*'s original founding mission. But the focus on survival and the quest for page views initially subverted those values in the eyes of many in the newsroom. Yemma and Orr became prime change agents to introduce the innovation of Web-first journalism to a resistant newsroom that

worried about the impact of quantity over quality. Several worried that pursuing a strategy focused on page views would ultimately endanger the journalism that had won Pulitzer Prizes in the past.

However, the newsroom faced a crisis point (Kets de Vries, 2001; Schein, 2010): The church's subsidy would be cut within five years, and the organization had to be able to sustain itself. Over the years, the print paper's circulation had gradually eroded, and the mail delivery of the paper took the *Monitor* out of the national consciousness. Despite Pulitzer prizes and respect from academics and fellow journalists, the publication did not reach the vast majority of Americans; business-side executives said one of their primary challenges in securing advertisements and subscribers was educating people unfamiliar with the *Monitor* that it is not a religious publication. This stressor forced changes despite resistance. Several interviewees expressed a sense of anxiety and helplessness during December 2009 study weeks. They did not like the idea of abandoning the values, but they had no alternate solutions to secure survival.

With Yemma and Orr leading the way, some key opinion leaders embraced Web-first and tried to bring *Monitor* journalism to the Web. By hitting page-view goals each month, staffers began to believe that they could succeed and become relevant in a new age. With the Web, the organization began to tap into a wider audience, and with the number came a sense among many in the newsroom that *Monitor* journalism could take a new form. There came an acceptance of this new shorter, less-deep journalism because the organization — with millions of page views and unique visitors — became more relevant. When people searched for news topics on Google, the *Monitor* was now among the *New York Times,* CNN and other national news organization on the first page of hits.

This new sense of confidence was bolstered by the appointment of Scott, an editor more in the mold of the traditional *Monitor* journalist, with deep ties to the organization's journalistic commitment. The new normal of the newsroom then became finding a way to reconcile the new routines with the traditional mission established by Eddy in 1908. By moving a longtime international editor to the online spot, the news organization re-emphasized its commitment to tradition while looking ahead.

Despite the new online editor's roots in the organization, a culture of innovation had taken hold at the organization, and he remained committed to finding new ways to expand page views — within the bounds set by the traditional mission. As a result, new forms to deepen engagement arose, such as the "multipliers" (quizzes, photo galleries, and related links), and new experimental efforts continued to evolve. Unmoderated comments were added, and the newsroom struck up affiliation agreements with select guest bloggers to expand content and traffic.

The news organization was also willing to abandon new-media efforts that did not reap expected traffic, a key quality for sustainable innovation (Christensen, Anthony & Roth, 2004). The *Monitor* quit dedicating time and resources to a daily podcast because of lack of traffic and sponsorship, and a weekly Webcast that featured Yemma was stopped after a few months. But those strategies that succeeded, such as SEO techniques, blog affiliation agreements, and frequent updating, became embedded in the culture.

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