

NEWSPAPER COPY DESKS IN 2000:  
THE IMPACT OF PAGINATION, DESIGN AND JOURNALISM EDUCATION

By

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It was an offer few newspaper bean counters could resist: update existing, outdated technology with a pagination system and eliminate the composing room while improving quality. Since pagination became a viable option for newspapers in the early to mid-1980s, however, the realities of pagination have forced changes to the sales pitch. Newspapers no longer move toward pagination giddy with thoughts of money savings.

Today, newspaper management realizes it might end up spending more for overtime, training, extra personnel and technical support than it saved by eliminating the cutting and pasting in the composing room. However, pagination's reach goes beyond the newspaper's bottom line. It is forcing changes in how newspapers operate, what readers see on their doorsteps each day and in what editors seek in new employees.

Research has shown that pagination adds to copy editors' workload and puts more production tasks into the newsroom. The current study sought to establish the level of pagination in the state of Florida and explore issues facing copy editors in today's

newsroom. The study also sought to determine how copy editors and designers viewed journalism education.

A survey, which was sent either by U.S. mail or e-mail, was used to gauge the level of pagination and to gain insight into the copy desks at Florida newspapers. The survey results also were used to select six newspapers to take part in the in-depth interview portion of the study, which sought greater insight into copy editors' satisfaction and views on journalism education. To prepare for the survey and interviews, two exploratory research projects were conducted. One project included a focus group of copy editors, and the other was a content analysis of an online discussion board for professional copy editors.

The participants have accepted pagination as a fact of newsroom life. They noted the control over the production of the newspaper that pagination put into the newsroom, but they also noted the complexity of some of the computer systems. The participants desired extra computer training, as well as more design and editing training. Overall, they were satisfied with their jobs, but many noted how the hours and pay were drawbacks. Many also mentioned problems keeping the copy desk staffed properly.

How copy editing and design duties were performed in the newsroom showed an interesting side of newsroom communication and the problems newsrooms face as design grows in importance. As that design focus grows, so do the technical skills required. However, most of the respondents felt that those who do only design work at newspapers should have a news background. With the demands now placed on the copy desk, educators face a difficult time in training new journalists.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

It was an offer few newspaper bean counters could resist: update existing, outdated technology with a pagination system and eliminate the composing room while improving quality. Pagination is the pulling together of all page elements for the final output of a complete page. Since pagination became a viable option for newspapers in the early to mid-1980s, however, the realities of pagination have forced changes to the sales pitch. Newspapers no longer move toward pagination giddy with thoughts of money savings.

Today, newspaper management realizes it might end up spending more for overtime, training, extra personnel and technical support than it saved by eliminating the cutting and pasting in the composing room.<sup>1</sup> However, pagination's reach goes beyond the newspaper's bottom line. It is forcing changes in how newspapers operate, what readers see on their doorsteps each day and in what editors seek in new employees.

As a 1994 graduate of the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications, I entered the Florida newspaper market as many of these changes were taking place. I began working as a copy editor at a midsize newspaper in fall 1994 using a pica pole, proportion wheel and paper dummies to lay out pages. After reporters had turned their stories over to the city editor for editing, the stories then went to the copy desk. On the copy desk, I edited and formatted stories using commands on an Atex terminal. Once edited, stories were then typeset to a processor downstairs, where composing room workers would use X-Acto knives and wax to cut out the story



elements, such as the headline and captions, and paste them onto a full-size page as directed by a paper dummy sent to them by the copy desk. Once a page was complete and signed off on by an editor, the page was “shot” by a huge camera, which produced a negative to go to the plate room, which then would be used to make a plate for the press.

When I left that same paper four years late to pursue a master’s degree, I still used Atex to edit copy, but I did so using a PC. The pica poles and proportion wheels, if they were even used, now belonged to a design desk, and the design desk created the page layouts on a computer based on budgets from the copy desk using QuarkXPress and a program called Press2Go that let Quark and Atex “talk” to each other. Once a page was complete, it was sent to a printer that provided full-size proofs for an editor to approve. Then, the page was sent directly from the computer to a negative, then to the plate maker, then to the press.

While not all newspapers have adopted the same pagination system or separate design and copy desks, the transition to pagination allowed me to see firsthand how pagination can change the process of how the newspaper is produced and the newsroom structure. Along with this transition to pagination, I have experienced the advantages and disadvantages of adopting the technology. No pagination experience is exactly the same, with circulation size, staffing and choice of technology all playing a role in how pagination affects editors.

This study looks at Florida newspapers to see what effects, if any, pagination has had in the newsroom through the perceptions of the copy editors and designers and what skills copy editors need for today’s newsrooms.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Anne Saul. "The Expense: How to justify a new system." *Technology and Pagination: Integrating the New into Your Newsroom*. Society for News Design and American Society for Newspaper Editors, 1999, p. 73.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### Evolution of Copy Editors

Newspaper copy editors largely go unnoticed today, but Solomon<sup>1</sup> noted that copy editors formerly had more authority in the newsroom. The early journalist and printer often were the same, but as the newspaper's social role changed during the Revolutionary and Federalist eras, the editorial aspects of the newspaper split from the production duties. This division of labor was further specialized on the editorial side with the distinction between reporters and editors as the newspaper staff and newsgathering role increased. Solomon said the role, but not title, of copy editor emerged after the Civil War as more of an assistant to the city editor. The actual job of copy editor, Solomon said, became common by the 1890s, and editors enjoyed a certain amount of authority over reporters, including telling reporters how to write their stories.

But that newsroom status began to decline after World War I, when copy editors were spun off onto news desks and their role became more removed from the newsgathering process. Reporters' status, however, rose with the increasing use of bylines after WW I, while the copy editors' work remained anonymous.

### Technology Grows Up

Technology also had an impact on the copy editor's role in newsrooms. In June 1900, the American Newspaper Publisher's Association reminded its members in a bulletin that it offered discounts for typewriters.<sup>2</sup> In a 1970 bulletin, the ANPA Research Institute wrote about the future of newsrooms:

A group of editing consoles will take the place of the copy desk. These consoles will be equipped with cathode ray tube display terminals, light pens, and keyboards. Using his keyboard, the editor will call up any story he wants from storage. He will also be able to call for other information displayed on his console screen. Using the light pen and keyboard, the editor will edit stories. When finished the editor will press a button and send the edited story back into storage.

When all editing is completed, the computer will prepare the tape, either punched paper or magnetic, used to run the automatic photocomposing machines. (p. 12)

Video display terminals brought electronic editing into newsrooms and were the first step toward pagination. Editing on VDTs was found to be slower, but fewer errors got past copy editors who used them.<sup>3</sup> Christopher<sup>4</sup> said the pace of newsrooms in the late 1970s sped up as wire copy began being transmitted at speeds of 1,050 words per minute, compared with 66 words per minute via Teletype. As the pace increased, Christopher said concerns over newspaper quality and job descriptions rose:

This early experience with technology brought with it other concerns as well: quality of work life, editor reactions to the technology outside of actual job performance, and whether the demand for technological competence infringed on journalistic quality. Many copy editors rejected the idea that they had been turned into technicians, and strongly disclaimed the notion that VDTs had depersonalized copy editing. Others, however, found the opposite to be true--for them, the work had become depersonalized and isolating, and the newspaper's quality suffered. (p. 7)

In 1979, an ANPA bulletin said pagination was the "exciting new development that always seems to be just around the corner, and it's staying just around the corner."<sup>5</sup>

But another technological advance would have newspapers peering around the corner at pagination: In 1984, Apple introduced the Macintosh computer. Robinson says: "The Mac had an immediate effect, which continues to this day, on the way newspapers are produced. Artists create graphics in programs like Adobe's Illustrator and Macromedia's Freehand, photo editors correct color in Adobe's Photoshop, and paginators lay out pages in QuarkXPress and Adobe's PageMaker--all on the Mac."<sup>6</sup>

Since those early predictions, pagination has arrived in American newsrooms. The early results of the Newspaper Association of America's pagination survey in summer 1999 show that only 3 percent of the respondents are not paginating. Twenty-six percent of respondents claimed complete pagination, meaning that the majority of the survey newspapers are at some stage of pagination.<sup>7</sup>

### Pagination Takes Over

Everyone in the newspaper business has a different definition of pagination. Some in management still might see it as a cost-cutting method, while those who work with the system are more likely to refer to it in unprintable terms--at least on occasion. The NAA's Technology Department has settled on a group of terms to describe different levels of pagination:

Complete pagination: The electronic compilation of all page components--including type, graphics, photos and logos of editorial, display and classified advertising--for final output to a completed page.

Substantial pagination: The electronic compilation of 90 percent or more of page components. A paper still using a camera to shoot full-page Veloxes would fit this description.

Moderate pagination: The electronic compilation of 50-to-90 percent of page components. Papers in this category paginate most editorial and advertising elements for final output to a completed page; additional elements might be stripped or pasted to the page.

Partial pagination: The electronic compilation of less than 50 percent of page components. A paper paginating only section fronts, feature pages or local-news stories fits this bill.

No pagination: Outputting galley type and pasting up all editorial and advertising components.<sup>8</sup>

Since pagination has had time to spread into a majority of newsrooms in the United States, a core group of researchers is slowly building a body of work that deals with the effects of pagination. Russia has looked at the effects pagination has had on

copy editors' workload; Cook, Stamm and colleagues have looked at copy editors' job satisfaction, which incorporates pagination; and Auman has followed the growth of design, or presentation, desks since the emergence of pagination.

While the researchers look at different aspects of the newsroom, one thing remains constant: Pagination has increased the burden on copy editors and raised fears about newspaper quality. When newspapers eliminated their composing rooms, those production duties, now in electronic form, shifted to the newsroom. Russial<sup>9</sup> said pagination saves time in overall production, but not in the newsroom. Paginating copy editors are forced to spend more time doing production tasks and less time doing traditional editing tasks, such as checking for style, grammar and spelling, and writing headlines:

Pagination may be changing the parameters of such [editing] decisions, adding a variety of tasks that simply must be done if the paper is to be published. An editor cannot fail to perform the 10, 15, 20 or more minutes of keyboarding and graphic manipulation needed to create an electronic page, even if he or she feels that the time could best be spent on another editing task. (p. 98)

Russial estimated that copy editors spend at least 10 minutes--probably more like 15 minutes--more on each paginated page. To emphasize this time burden, Russial provided an example: "At a medium-size paper whose editorial department paginates 50 pages a day, 10 minutes per page is 8 ½ hours of work that had been done in the back shop. In practical terms, that is more than a full shift a day. . . . For a large paper that produces as many as 200 pages a day with zoning and edition makeovers, it would be about five shifts a day" (p. 98).

In a follow-up study presented in 2000, Russial said copy editors estimated they spent about 40 percent of their time on production tasks.<sup>10</sup> The 2000 study also said that

about 48 percent of the newspapers kept the staffing level the same with pagination, while 13 percent said the staffing level was cut with the introduction of pagination.

So, why paginate? It may have been the trade press' promise of lower costs and streamlined business that lured newspaper managers into pagination, but pagination can benefit copy editors. The same act that added to copy editors' workload--the elimination of the composing room--also gave them more control over the final page.

Fryxell and Rush<sup>11</sup> said pagination is a tool--the mouse and keyboard replacing the X-Acto knife and wax of the composing room. They argued that pagination allows pages to come together earlier and ends the assembly line approach of handing off stories to the composing room for the final placement of the elements. Flexibility and creativity are other often-cited benefits of this new "tool." Russial<sup>12</sup> listed many of these benefits and the ability to make better trims in copy and produce straighter pages. But he raised the question of whether copy editors have the time to use this new tool to achieve the best results.

In his 2000 study, Russial said pagination is not the "smoking gun" responsible for an increase in errors and problems with credibility, but he did cite pagination as a contributing factor. Other key problems included a lack of time, deadline pressure, insufficient staffing and missed deadlines by others in the newsroom. "Overall," Russial said, "problems in one's job and job characteristics show little change, despite significant improvements in and greater overall experience with pagination systems in the last 10 years." He concluded:

Editors feel in general that pagination does increase workload and the production burden, in effect, turning them into back shop workers as well as journalists. Some feel that these constraints degrade the job and result in lower quality of work, while others seem to notice little negative effect and greatly appreciate the positive impacts in flexibility and control of the work.

### Reorganizing Newsrooms

Who controls the work, however, has different meanings at newspapers. The introduction of pagination often leads to top editors taking another look at the newsroom structure. While many recommend reviewing the workflow as pagination nears, the verdict is still out on some of the organizational changes that pagination has brought.

One of the immediate questions raised by pagination is: Who will paginate? Some newspapers have moved composing room workers into the newsroom to input the “page geometry” from a paper layout created by a copy editor, while others have put workers from outside the newspaper industry in this role. Copy editors at some papers have simply added pagination duties to their usual editing and layout tasks.<sup>13</sup>

Another option is to create a design, or presentation, desk, although pagination is not the only reason spurring the formation of design desks. Auman<sup>14</sup> said the birth of *USA Today* in 1982 forced newspapers to realize the importance of color and graphics, and pagination gave newspapers a way to increase the use of visual elements in the newspaper. Design desks come in many sizes and forms but generally have at least one person who designs pages on a separate desk.<sup>15</sup> Auman’s study found that:

. . . design desks spent about half their time designing and dummyming pages, 15 percent doing pagination, and five to 10 percent on each of these duties: writing headlines and cutlines, creating infographics, photo-editing and coordinating people and elements in a story or project on a page. Some editors reported that their desks spent as much as 70 percent of their time designing and dummyming pages. Very little time was spent on editing or writing. (p. 131)

At the time of the study, copy editors were the most prevalent on design desks, followed by “editor with layout duties,” and reporter or graphics artist, depending on the newspaper’s size.



While Auman said design desks still are in the experimental stage--most were established in the late 1980s and early 1990s--her results are encouraging. About 86 percent of the survey respondents said the design desk improved the newspaper's appearance, and 77 percent said it improved coordination between editors, designers and reporters. She also found that as the overall newspaper staff increased, so did the perception that the design desk was more effective. The same was true for the design desk itself, with the average size being 5.7 people.

Some newspapers with design desks also are moving toward a more "team" approach, pulling individuals from each department to form "presentation" teams. Crosstraining also plays a large role in newspapers with design desks.

"The successful design desk editor," Auman said, "is perhaps a new breed of journalist who has an integrated editing mind--who is a *word* person but who can integrate words with visuals" (p. 140).

Russial<sup>16</sup> saw the emergence of design desks and presentation, or topic, teams as an assault on the copy desk. He cited several newspapers--The Wichita Eagle, the St. Paul Pioneer Press and the Minneapolis Star Tribune--that had dismantled their copy desks in favor of the team approach, which involves copy editors earlier in the story process. Others, Russial said, have opted to roll copy editing into design operations. Some of the arguments for this action are:

- Eliminating the copy desk will not eliminate copyediting.
- Newspapers might as well eliminate copyeditors because copyeditors no longer have time to edit.
- Pagination has spelled the end of copyediting as we know it.
- Newspapers don't need copyeditors because reporters should be able to provide clean copy.

- Copyeditors should be shifted to (take your pick) design desks, origination desks or topic teams, because that's where they belong (p. 3).

While Russial said splitting headline duties from word editing makes sense with a design desk, he argued that editors who must write the headline will design a headline with the appropriate point size and number of lines so they can write it, rather than focusing on the design aspects.

Good headlines are based on skill and on knowing the story well. Display editors may have the skill; what they may lack is the time to know the story well. Presentation specialists have much more than headline-writing on their plates. They have news editing, page design, pagination, item-tracking and sometimes digital imaging and graphics processing to worry about. They have a full day without the added burden of writing headlines. (p. 9)

Topic teams have received some positive feedback from copy editors. Casey Selix, a copy editor at the St. Paul Pioneer Press, often is quoted in articles on the topic. She said topic teams have improved the relationship between copy editors and others in the newsroom because the closer working relationship brings about camaraderie and respect. Copy editors also work on a story from the beginning, helping to pull all of the elements together early in the process and allowing the tough questions to be asked well before deadline.

However, Hansen, Neuzil and Ward<sup>17</sup> found in their 1996 study of the Star Tribune and the St. Paul Pioneer Press that the team approach had mixed reviews on the news process and news quality. However, the overall assessment of the approach from the two Newspaper Guild newsrooms was generally negative. Both newspapers instituted topic teams within months of each other in 1995, and the study was conducted more than 12 months after the introductions.

A team at the newspapers might have reporters, copy editors, a photographer and/or a graphics artist, and a team leader. The newspapers' reasons for the switch to

topic teams included empowering employees, ending newsroom hierarchies, planning for the future and focusing on the readers' needs in planning and producing the newspaper with more of a market approach.

Focus groups and a census survey of the two newsrooms in their study found that the new system tended to add to production time. Also, 54 percent of those surveyed at the newspapers thought that quality had declined, while 21 percent said it had improved. Respondents also cited an increase in errors. One journalist said, "To me, the newspaper looks good, but it's less useful, less meaningful and more difficult to work at" (p. 811). Another said, "Most of the nuts and bolts of copy editing have disintegrated under the new system. . . . Page proofs, once scrupulously read, are now ignored because the copy desk doesn't exist" (p. 815).

Some argue this approach is an end to the copy editor as reader's advocate. By involving themselves in stories early on, copy editors are no longer the "fresh eyes" on a story and might miss holes they would have otherwise caught. The disintegration of the copy desk also means that copy editors lose the camaraderie of the desk and quick answers to style questions from the editor sitting next to them. The news desk often is seen as a mentoring spot, where copy editors are encouraged by colleagues and style is handed down, but these things are lost when a newspaper divides its copy editors among the newsroom teams.

### Copy Editors, Pagination and Morale

One of the commendable features of topic teams is that it tends to raise copy editor morale. Copy editors have always been known as the "disgruntled" members of the newsroom, and studies by Cook, Stamm and colleagues have shown that copy editors suffer from burnout more than their fellow journalists. Cook and Banks<sup>18</sup> found that the

newspaper employee most likely to suffer burnout is “a young, entry-level journalist working as a multiple assignment copy editor at a small paper.”

Cook and Banks used the Maslach Burnout Inventory to measure job burnout on a sample of reporters and copy editors at daily newspapers. The MBI measures emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment.

Copy editors had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than reporters. Among copy editors, those whose job involved copy editing, layout and design had significantly lower levels of personal accomplishment than those whose job involved only copy editing.

Both a seemingly heavier workload and the multiple role assignment of the copy editor seem to mark it as a high-risk position for job burnout. . . . If job burnout is found to be directly related to job turnover in journalism, then copy editors with multiple duties . . . would appear to be at risk for leaving the profession. (p. 115)

Among all of the respondents who said they planned to leave the field, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were significantly higher. Both indicators were higher among copy editors than reporters in the study.

Cook, Banks and Turner<sup>19</sup> expanded on the study, using the MBI and the Work Environment Index. The work environment scale includes: involvement with the job; peer cohesion; support from management; autonomy; task orientation, as it relates to planning; work pressure; use of rules and pressure to control employees; innovation; and physical comfort.

The findings supported those of the Cook-Banks study. The study also found that higher levels of involvement, peer cohesion, autonomy and task orientation were correlated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Work pressure was correlated with emotional exhaustion, and clarity, in which

employees knew what to expect from their job, was associated with personal accomplishment. Control and innovation were not significantly correlated with the MBI measures. Physical comfort was related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

In response to the question “I am satisfied with my work,” reporters were significantly more satisfied than copy editors. They also were significantly more likely to respond positively to the statement, “If I had to do it over, I would still choose a career in journalism.”

Reporters also had significantly higher levels of involvement, autonomy, innovation and physical comfort. The one measure copy editors scored significantly higher on is control, meaning they feel management places more limits on them.

While Cook and colleagues did not study the newsroom causes for their results, they suggest that copy editors’ dissatisfaction is linked to the added responsibilities they have taken on in the wake of changing technologies and media competition. They also address the creation of design desks:

In some situations, the traditional newspaper copy desk job functions of editing, headline writing and page design have been separated at newspapers which now have design desks. This may or may not be a positive. Do copy desk workers feel as though they now merely are pawns of the designers, losing much of the creative potential and decision making authority?

On the other hand, if the responsibilities are not separated, then the copy desk now has additional responsibilities added to what in most cases already is a pressure-packed, heavy work load. (p. 133)

Newspapers’ focus on “packaged” stories and new technologies also raise questions about whether newsroom workers are being consulted on projects and how well they are being trained for their new duties. Cook and colleagues said attracting and retaining newsroom employees, especially copy editors, will be an increasing problem for newspapers.

In another study, Cook, Banks and Thompson<sup>20</sup> looked at copy editing as an occupation using three psychological tests, the MBI, the Hardiness Scale and the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire. They found 39 percent of the copy editors surveyed planned to leave journalism within five years, and 29 percent were very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with their choice of career.

Of the 59 copy editors in the sample, 22 worked on a pagination system and 34 did not.

Usage of a pagination system also appears to affect copy editors' attitudes about their jobs as well as their levels of job burnout as measured on the MBI. Results show those who don't work on a pagination system have lower levels of personal accomplishment than those who do.

Among those who do use a pagination system, copy editors who said it made their jobs easier had lower levels of [emotional exhaustion] and [depersonalization]. Following this finding, subjects who said pagination had allowed them to be more creative had significantly lower levels of [emotional exhaustion]. In addition, those who said pagination had decreased their work pressure also had lower levels of [emotional exhaustion]. (p. 13)

Satisfaction with pagination, however, did not have a significant relationship with job burnout. Stamm, Underwood and Giffard<sup>21</sup> also found a lack of evidence linking copy editors' job satisfaction to pagination itself. "Pagination," they said, "sets in motion a complicated array of changes, some of which may detract from job satisfaction, some of which may improve it, and some of which may make no difference whatsoever" (p. 852).

Stamm and colleagues focused on how pagination has changed editors' jobs, the organizational environment, newspaper quality and career prospects. They found job satisfaction "relatively high among editors with pagination experience." The main changes related to pagination were an increase in time given to composing room tasks, more priority for production tasks, increased routinization, and an increase in newspaper quality. Many of these changes were related to lower job satisfaction--even the perceived

increase in newspaper quality. The study also shows that the negative perceptions of pagination tend to persist beyond the first year.

Some of the positive changes included: more priority given to journalistic tasks, increased autonomy and better newspaper quality.

Stamm and Underwood<sup>22</sup> also studied how newsroom policy changes affected job satisfaction. Business-oriented changes, which involve news content, profit emphasis and staff reductions, were related to lower job satisfaction. Changes affecting the balance between business and journalism also affected satisfaction, with the greater emphasis on journalism raising satisfaction.

They also found that a newspaper's size did not have a major impact, but ownership did. Staff at family-owned newspapers had higher job satisfaction. However, it's not just ownership that causes dissatisfaction, they said. "Instead, differences in job satisfaction can be better understood in terms of policy variables such as dissatisfaction with newspaper quality, discomfort with newsroom policy, authoritarian management style, too much emphasis on profits, and too little emphasis on journalistic policies" (p. 538).

### The Copy Desk Problem

Since newspapers started undergoing pagination, many who have participated or watched from the sidelines have offered suggestions on how to keep the decision to paginate from upsetting the newsroom balance, particularly on the copy desk.

Many of the suggestions show up in article after article: involve the copy desk when deciding which pagination system to purchase; allow enough time to train and then train copy editors; hire more people; make technical support available; and re-evaluate

the newsroom's organization. All of these suggestions are in addition to those that have been made in an effort to solve the copy desk "malaise."

According to the American Society of Newspaper Editors' "The Newspaper Journalists of the '90s," which was released in 1996, copy editors held about 18 percent of the newsroom jobs, down from 19 percent in the 1988 survey.<sup>23</sup>

While copy editors are similar to their colleagues in the newsroom in terms of age, diversity and political leanings, their attitudes about the job differ. Copy editors have a more cynical view of the newsroom and are less likely than their colleagues to say they would choose journalism again if they had a second chance. Eighty-one percent of other newsroom personnel would choose journalism again, but only 62 percent of copy editors would. The figure is down from 74 percent in 1988.

Copy editors also had a different perspective on their newspapers. Twenty-six percent of non-copy editors rated their paper as "fair" or "poor" in quality, while 38 percent of copy editors did. When asked whether the newspaper was improving, 42 percent of non-copy editors said yes, while only 31 percent of copy editors did.

One reason for these differences might be that copy editors are the last ones to handle stories and other elements before the newspaper goes to press. "[Copy editors] know better than most of their colleagues what their newspaper's systemic problems are, because they are the ones who are there on deadline to cope with crisis after crisis," Foreman said.<sup>24</sup>

In an *Editor & Publisher* article, Cook<sup>25</sup> addressed another problem copy editors face:

One area that seems to contribute to job burnout is poor newsroom management. Countless copy editors tell me they get no respect and their ideas are often ignored. Copy editors want to feel a part of the team. They



want to be included in news and packaging decisions. They want to know that their opinions and ideas count in producing the newspaper.

The Cook, Banks and Thompson<sup>26</sup> study looked at the leadership role on a copy desk and how it relates to copy editor satisfaction. Copy editors' perception of their supervisors was found to have a significant relationship with job satisfaction in such areas as whether the supervisor was seen as a representative of the desk, tolerated freedom and had clearly defined roles on the desk.

Understaffing, increased work volume, new technology, and ungrateful supervisors all spell trouble for an overburdened, burned-out copy desk. Many studies and anecdotal articles point to these and other problems for today's copy editors. Copy desk supervisors who participated in this study cited a lack of time to train copy editors, not enough copy editors to handle such tasks as zoned editions and increased technological demands due to pagination, poor salaries and, in some cases, no payment for overtime as common problems. . . .

Many efforts to alleviate stress and burnout among copy editors may seem like common sense, but this study indicates such efforts demand increased attention and urgency from newspaper management and copy desk supervisors alike. The relationship of job burnout and job satisfaction is clear. (p. 15)

However, Cook and colleagues ended by saying that even the best of environments may not completely end the malaise that affects copy editors:

. . . it should be noted that some aspects of disgruntlement of the copy desk may be endemic to the profession. Copy desk work attracts perfectionists; the nature of the work is to find and correct problems. This will never change. But good leadership practices may go a long way toward helping copy editors be healthy, productive employees. (p. 16)

### Wordsmiths or 'Computer Jockeys'?

Some may not agree with the assessment that the nature of the copy desk will never change. Many believe that pagination has changed editors from wordsmiths into "computer jockeys" or "technicians." A 1988 study<sup>27</sup> on the introduction of VDTs onto copy desks found that editors liked electronic editing and the increased control it gave

them over the newspaper, but they resisted being labeled technicians. Lindley also said the copy editors “strongly disclaimed the notion that VDTs had depersonalized copy editing.” However, not all in his study agreed with that statement.

As technology moved beyond just electronic editing into pagination, the technical skills required by newspapers would grow. Russia<sup>28</sup> looked at the role technical skills played in job listings in *E&P* in 1987, 1990 and 1993. The content of the ads was searched for “no mention of pagination,” “pagination experience recommended” and “pagination experience required.” He found that the number of ads recommending or requiring pagination experience grew during the time period studied, from 4.4 percent in 1987 to 9.6 percent in 1990 to 31.6 percent in 1993. In 1987, 0.6 percent of the ads in the sample required pagination. That figure jumped to 14 percent in 1993.

Here’s how one ad appeared in the October 2000 Dow Jones Newspaper Fund Inc. job list for a self-described 74,000-circulation chain newspaper:

Copy Editor. Looking for someone with one to three years of editing experience but recent journalism graduates encouraged to apply. Strong grammar, style and headline skills needed. Duties include editing, headline writing, proofing and paginating on Mac QuarkXPress. Advance duties include designing pages, managing the nation/world wire and uploading to . . . , the newspaper’s Web site. Applicants should love the news, value both creativity and consistency, and be a self-starter who wants to grow.

In addition to the content analysis of the *E&P* ads, Russia tried to compare the skills appearing in the ads with what the Associated Press Managing Editors listed on its agenda for journalism education. The APME members were asked to rank five of 11 topics that journalism schools should focus on beyond the basics of writing and editing. The top five are:

- Thinking analytically
- Presentation of information

- Understanding numbers in the news
- Listening to readers
- Writing tighter.

While Russial acknowledged that a comparison has many caveats, he said that the importance placed on pagination/desktop publishing skills in the ads was clearly at odds with the APME rankings. The content analysis “suggests that pagination is now a significant part of many editing jobs and is increasing in importance.” However, the APME list ranked this skill eighth. He called the study a “mixed message” for journalism educators.

Auman and Cook<sup>29</sup> looked at what editors want in a new copy editing hire and what educators are teaching, and they found differences in how technology was viewed by the two groups. While editors and educators agreed that language skills were the most important, editors ranked technical skills somewhat higher than educators.

Editors ranked computer editing 13th out of a list of 26 skills, while educators ranked it 17th. On software for layout/pagination, editors ranked it 21st and educators put it 19th.

Auman and Cook said that educators are not sure how to prepare students for copy editing jobs in the ‘90s and into the next century. They also faced the dilemma that if they taught more technical skills, they would sacrifice basic editing and grammar lessons, which were sorely needed based on comments from both groups.

It is important to note that editors and educators do agree on the importance of language skills, accuracy and fact checking, ethics, headline writing and critical thinking. . . .

In addition, editors are sending educators the message that there are 10 areas that educators need to emphasize more than they already do. However, with more than 60 percent of the schools offering only one basic editing course, this may be impossible. (p. 12)

Educators also must look at the requirements newspapers have when they are seeking employees for design desks or for primarily design positions. Wanta<sup>30</sup> found that editors thought page designers should first have solid news judgement, then grammar and style knowledge, page design skills, pagination experience, a liberal arts education, followed by knowledge of complex software. Wanta found that larger newspapers tended to focus more on design characteristics, while smaller newspapers rated general newspaper knowledge higher. He said the study presented educators with “mixed messages about the direction journalism education should take in preparing students for jobs in design.”

College curriculum was taken to task in an *E&P* article. Cook<sup>31</sup> said that in addition to having a job satisfaction problem on copy desks, there appeared to be less emphasis on copy editing in college and university programs--an observation that newspaper managers needed to take notice of:

Copy editors are a key link in the chain of getting out the newspaper. They correct simple spelling errors, clean up sloppy reporting or perhaps keep a libel suit from being filed. How copy editors feel about their jobs should matter to the other parts of the chain.

But recruiting copy editors may need to begin even before college. According to a recent survey, undergraduate enrollment in journalism and mass communications programs in the United States grew modestly in 1999,<sup>32</sup> but projected enrollment and the projected number of degrees granted in the “news editorial” specialization has declined between 1997 and 1999. Enrollment has gone from 10.1 percent in 1997 to 9 percent in 1999; degrees granted has fallen from 11.5 in 1997 to 10.2 percent in 1999.

The importance of the copy editor’s role was emphasized in ASNE’s 1999 report on newspaper credibility,<sup>33</sup> which sought clues to the disconnect between readers and

journalists. Accuracy, which includes spelling and grammar mistakes and factual errors, was No. 1 among the six findings reported.

Thirty-five percent of respondents said they see spelling or grammar mistakes in their newspaper more than once a week, and 21 percent said mistakes occurred almost daily. Seventy percent of journalists said they find spelling and grammar errors, typos and other mistakes in the newspaper more than once a week. Among reporters and photographers, 30 percent see mistakes almost daily, while 50 percent of managing editors and assistant managing editors notice errors daily.

In focus groups, the researchers found that the errors lessened the newspaper's credibility: "Essentially, readers don't care whether the reporter was rushed, the staff was down three people, or the copy editor was too busy laying out pages to catch misuses of the common language."

The journalists' reasons for the errors were varied, ranging from deadline pressure to being overworked and understaffed to carelessness and inattention. Effort is made in the report to say that journalists who blamed the copy desk for the errors also said that pagination had turned copy editors' attention away from editing to "the business of page design."

When it comes to fact errors, 23 percent of adults see them at least once a week. However, only 21 percent of those finding fact errors believe that the errors are occurring more frequently. Thirty-three percent of journalists see fact errors more than once a week, with top editors reporting in at 47 percent.

Both the public and journalists say deadline pressure is the main cause for factual errors, with almost half for the public and 38 percent for journalists. Twenty-seven

percent of the public attributes fact errors to sloppiness or laziness, while 66 percent of journalists do.

While grammar and spelling mistakes are not the sole reason for the declining number of newspaper readers, it doesn't help to convince readers that their newspaper is credible. According to the study, 73 percent of the public has become more skeptical about news accuracy. According to NAA's "Facts About Newspapers 2000," weekday readership has dropped from 77.6 percent of the total adult population in 1970 to 56.9 percent in 1999.<sup>34</sup>

The American Copy Editors Society<sup>35</sup> is trying to tackle not only the credibility issue, but also the general copy desk malaise. The national organization began in 1997 and had about 750 members in November 2000. The professional organization is "dedicated to improving the quality of journalism and the working lives of journalists." Education, improving copy editing standards and "increasing the value the news industry places on our craft" are among the group's goals. The group also has established a scholarship program to help aspiring copy editors.

Pagination is not the root cause of declining readership and newspaper credibility, the copy desk problem or the uncertainty in training new journalists, but it is one more element thrown into an already burdened newsroom structure. With so many pagination systems and newsroom structures, no one solution will work at every newspaper. Newspapers must adapt to the changes and experiment, as with design desks and topic teams, for something that works. Newspapers have had to adapt to changing technology throughout history, and pagination won't be the last technological change.

### Looking Around the Corner--Again

Now that pagination has made inroads into most American newspapers, three more advances that could affect the copy desk are taking shape in the industry--the conversion to the 50-inch web, computer-to-plate technology and the multimedia newsroom.

The web is the roll of newsprint that runs through the press. The width of that paper determines the size of the newspaper. The adoption of the 50-inch web means that newspapers will get about an inch narrower. The move, which more than 300 newspapers have made,<sup>36</sup> is prompting guidelines similar to those for pagination: Include all affected departments, and that includes the copy desk. In addition to copy editors having to learn the new page dimensions, many newspapers are undergoing redesigns to accommodate the narrower widths, prompting even more changes.<sup>37</sup>

As newspapers become paginated, they become ripe for computer-to-plate technology, which allows a paginated page to be sent from the computer straight to a plate, skipping the production of a negative. The process has been around since the 1970s, but only 250 of the systems had been installed worldwide, mainly in Europe, by late 1999.<sup>38</sup> While this technology primarily involves the production process after the copy desk releases pages, it removes one more step--the production of a negative--during which editors had an opportunity to catch errors.

The most encompassing change taking place now is in convergence, which brings newspapers, online sites, television and cable together. According to NAA, more than 1,200 daily newspapers in North America also had an online site as of April 1, 2000.<sup>39</sup> The Tampa Tribune recently joined forces with TV station WFLA. The two news organizations, which are owned by the same company, now share a building, called The

News Center, which contains “all station operations, the Tribune newsroom and Tampa Bay Online. The Tribune newsroom is on one floor and WFLA's newsroom is on another. Online, print and broadcast share a multimedia assignment desk.”<sup>40</sup> WFLA reporters get bylines in The Tampa Tribune, and copy editors must make TV reporters' stories conform to newspaper style.

At the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, which launched a 24-hour cable news channel in 1994, reporters also write for television and sometimes appear on television. Newspaper photographers and TV video camera operators carry both types of equipment, and collaboration among all divisions on projects is common.<sup>41</sup> The Orlando Sentinel's newsroom works on stories for its print edition, for online ventures and for a cable-TV news channel.

While many of these incoming technologies have seemingly little direct impact on copy editors, those who are the last to see the newspaper before it goes onto the press--and even after the first pages are printed--often are the ones most impacted with having to change routines or proofing procedures to accommodate new equipment and endeavors.

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## CHAPTER 3 METHODS

### Introduction

This study looked at the level of pagination at newspapers in Florida, and the perceptions of copy editors on their jobs and on journalism education for students going into today's newsrooms. A survey, which either was sent by U.S. mail or e-mail, was used to gauge the level of pagination and to gain insight into copy desks at Florida newspapers. The survey results also were used to select six newspapers to take part in the in-depth interview portion of the study, which sought greater insight into copy editors' satisfaction and journalism education. To prepare for the survey and interviews, two exploratory research projects were conducted. One project included a focus group of copy editors, and the other was a content analysis of an online discussion board for a professional copy editors' group. The exploratory research provided details into how copy editors view themselves and how they use pagination. It also pointed to problems that most likely exist on a wider scale, judging by the literature review.

### Exploratory Focus Group

The exploratory focus group was conducted at a North Florida newspaper that had been paginated for about four or five years. A second researcher who knew none of the participants moderated the focus group. While the moderator was familiar with journalism and copy editing, he was not familiar with pagination. While this did not affect the data, a better knowledge of pagination was needed to ask follow-up questions

and to prevent editors from having to explain basic definitions during the session. Since I have experience with paginated and nonpaginated copy desks and I observed unfamiliar pagination systems prior to conducting the interviews, this was not a problem. The focus group, which lasted about one hour, also was held at the newspaper on a weekend afternoon, a time when few people are in the building. The timing of the focus group presented no difficulties.

From the demographic data collected after the focus group from the four participants, ages ranged from 27 to 41, with total journalism experience ranging from 4½ years to 23 years. The time spent in their current positions was 2 months to 2½ years. Time spent as a copy editor ranged from 4½ years to 20 years. All of the participants had worked on at least one other pagination system. Only one participant was female, which is not unusual considering that women made up only about 37 percent of surveyed newsrooms in 1996, according to an ASNE study.<sup>1</sup>

The focus group's participants handle the editing and design duties at their midsize newspaper.

The themes that emerged were:

1. Editors feel more like technicians than editors because of their pagination duties.
2. Editors enjoyed increased control over the newspaper on one hand because they did layout, but felt constrained by the newspaper's rules on design.
3. Editors complained of numerous computer system glitches and the lack of technical support.
4. The participants didn't discuss their editing role in relation to pagination.

The results showed how difficult it may be to get participants to separate management issues, such as the newspaper's design style, from pagination issues. Results also showed that layout, rather than copy editing, was of more interest among the four participants. Two participants would choose layout over copy editing if forced to choose between the two, and one did not think he would like doing either one all of the time. The fourth participant said he would rather do design work at the current paper, but he would choose editing if he thought his input would be valued. The editors who chose layout said it was something they enjoyed more and that it was more of a challenge.

Overall, the participants acknowledged that pagination had brought some advantages, but they seemed to focus more on negatives, such as an increase in production tasks, technical glitches and lack of technical support. One participant said of the copy desk's production role:

I consider myself now basically a technician, if that, and you know very rarely are we asked to use our own journalism skills and judgment. And we pretty much have to do what the city desk tells us to do. So I think increasingly where we're headed is, down the road, we'll just become an adjunct to the production end. . . .

Another participant added:

Generally, it seems like upper-management wants to bring us automation. And yeah, a lot of editors end up focusing a lot on the mechanics of the process and like, when I'm reading copy, I don't have time to really challenge it the way a few years ago I might have. It's kind of just processing it and trying to get it through.

Pagination, however, has not just brought more production duties to the copy desk. One participant said: "There's a uniformity to things. You don't have paste-up mistakes. There may be other mistakes once in a while." That same uniformity of design also was the source of some participants' displeasure at not being allowed to be more

creative. They also felt their job had been hindered by technical problems, which were not always fixed or fixed satisfactorily. One participant said of the technical problems:

Something I've seen a little here and also elsewhere, is that it's really hard to get the point across that some glitches need to be fixed and that, you know, the idea seems to be we can cope with them and nobody wants to hear about it.

Another participant agreed:

Yeah, probably one of the biggest weaknesses of being on a computer system is you're dependent on people in [the technical services department] who are these computer geniuses but have no idea, apparently, that the function of a newspaper is to get a newspaper out. And changes that they make really are more for the computer and not for the users. They have no idea what our needs are. . . .

The exploratory focus group served several purposes. It supported previous research themes and pointed out problems with some of the planned survey and interview questions. It also gave an indication of how difficult it could be to elicit information from editors, at least in a group setting.

### Exploratory Content Analysis

The qualitative content analysis of the American Copy Editors Society's online discussion board at [www.copydesk.org](http://www.copydesk.org) was done to see what types of information editors seek outside of their newsroom resources. The analysis included all messages posted from Feb. 3 to March 30 of 2000, which were all of the messages available at the time. The discussion board included 70 main posts and 134 responding messages for a total of 204 postings. A few posts were duplicate messages caused by user error. The discussion board allows the user to post his name or to use an alias. The majority of users posted at least their first name.

While the messages covered a variety of topics, four main themes emerged from the analysis:

1. Editors sought help with style questions, especially those that The Associated Press' style manual did not address.
2. Users sought job advice. Some sought advice on entering the market and editing tests, while others wanted information on jobs outside of copy editing.
3. The board serves as group support. In answering queries, many posted messages of encouragement or sympathy.
4. While users did not use the board to vent frustrations, issues such as low pay or deadline pressure often were apparent in messages.

Messages in the analysis sought answers to style questions such as the proper usage of "European Union" in stories, how to handle captions, how to properly punctuate "dot-com" and whether a period should follow Web addresses at the end of a sentence.

In response to one message on the discussion board seeking opinions about whether it would be difficult to get back into journalism after taking a job in the "real world" for a while because the writer was "fed up with all the problems where I work," someone wrote back:

I can empathize. I think just about all copy editors can. Working nights, working every weekend and other standards of our jobs sometimes is only the beginning of our frustrations.

My advice to you is to really think about what is getting you to the point of being fed up. If it's the actual job of copy editing, then maybe finding a job outside of journalism would be a good move for you. You might find happiness in a job better-suited to you.

But if it's not the job but issues in your workplace, I'd at least attempt to try to solve some of the issues before leaving the industry altogether. Talk to your supervising editor or managing editor.



I personally don't think any hiring editor would punish you for your "free-spiritedness," as you say. But what could cost you a job when you try to re-enter the industry is having gone for years without using the skills you're now using every night on the copy desk. All of us are trying to refine our skills and get better. Learning more about editing and building on our experience is what makes us better and attractive candidates for those hard-to-get positions. I think it would be difficult to get training and advanced editing experience in a PR firm where the work you do is completely different.

Just take your time and think it through.

Good luck!

While few messages addressed pagination-related issues, the focus of this research was to see what types of information copy editors sought, which feeds any study where copy editors' job satisfaction is questioned. The discussions analyzed show that copy editors still pay attention to editing details, evidenced by the many style-related posts, and that the job presents many challenges.

### The Survey

The exploratory research provided ideas on how to improve questions for the survey and interviews to gauge the level of pagination and the state of copy editors at Florida newspapers. It also provided the experience of a "trial run." Efforts were made to keep the survey short since copy desk supervisors generally do not have much spare time, if any, during the night.

The survey was sent by e-mail or U.S. mail to copy desk supervisors at all 42 Florida newspapers that appear in *E&P's* 1999 International Year Book to discover what type of pagination system, if any, the copy editors use and whether the editors also perform layout duties. Florida was used in this study because it is newspaper rich. The survey was posted online, and printouts of the Web site were sent to about 10 newspapers

through the U.S. mail because e-mail addresses were unavailable. The mailed letters said the survey also was online. The online survey was used because it was faster and easier for the supervisors to complete. If the surveys were not returned initially, follow-ups by e-mail, U.S. mail and telephone were conducted. At least three attempts were made to contact nonresponding newspapers. The survey was conducted from May 31 to July 22 of 2000. Sixty percent of the 42 newspapers responded to the survey.

After the survey results were compiled, they were used to decide which newspapers to use for further study, which included observations in newsrooms and in-depth interviews with copy editors. Since some supervisors expressed interest in learning the results of the survey, they were posted at the Web site in September. E-mails were sent to the participating newspapers on where to view the results. A short follow-up survey also was posted, along with the original survey. The follow-up survey was an effort to find out how many newspapers were hiring at that moment and what type of computer system--Macintosh or PC--the newspaper used for editing and design functions. Outside of filling out the second survey during newspaper visits, efforts were not made to boost the response rate for it.

### The Interviews

In an effort to gain further insight into copy editors' jobs, six newspapers were selected from the survey participants for further study. The six newspapers were chosen to give the sample a variety of pagination methods and newsroom structures. Observation and in-depth interviews were chosen because most of the research relating to pagination is quantitative and comments often come from supervisors. Attempting to conduct this

study in a quantitative manner would not have given the rich descriptions available through in-depth interviews and observations.

The study included copy editors who edit and do the layout for the newspaper, editors who work with a design desk, and individuals who handle the layout. Each newspaper had been paginated to some degree for at least one year to minimize the “learning curve” effect on the study. If the newspaper had one copy desk that handled local copy and another for national and world news, emphasis was placed on the local copy desk since it handles copy that is generally more in flux.

The copy desk supervisor was the initial newspaper contact for the study, and contact with participants was made based on availability during the visit. Two to four interviews were conducted at each newspaper, with an attempt to get a balanced view based on job descriptions.

Participant observation also was used when possible to gain an understanding of the pagination system at each newspaper and to put editors’ responses into context.

The interviews were audiotaped and conducted on weekends at the newspaper in an office or other relatively private location. The newspapers and the participants were told the visits and interviews would be confidential to encourage honest responses. Weekends at newspapers are generally quiet and more relaxed, with few, if any, upper-management officials on duty. All of the supervisors contacted agreed weekends were the best time to conduct the study. The newspaper visits were done over the course of five consecutive weeks in fall 2000. No time limit was placed on the visits or the interviews, since the day’s news events would shape the availability of copy editors to do the interviews. A guideline with six questions was used during the interviews:

1. What is your past experience with pagination?
2. Tell me about editing and pagination issues at your current newspaper.
3. How are editing and pagination related to each other at your newspaper?
4. After a normal night at work, how do you feel about your job?
5. Do you think that you will stay in copy editing?
6. Is there any type of continuing education that might be helpful to you as an editor?
7. Do you feel that colleges are preparing copy editors for today's news desk?

Basic demographic information also was collected from each participant to gauge experience in journalism, copy editing and pagination, and to put comments into context. Notes were written after each newspaper visit, and the interviews were analyzed for emerging themes once all of the interviews were conducted.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Paul S. Voakes. "The Newspaper Journalists of the '90s." American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1996, [www.asne.org/kiosk/reports/97reports/journalists90s/profiles2.html](http://www.asne.org/kiosk/reports/97reports/journalists90s/profiles2.html), viewed April 2000.

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

### Overview

The survey showed that pagination is a fact of newsroom life in Florida and that no one layout system really dominates, although at 48 percent, Quark came close among the responding newspapers. More surprising was the lack of a clear favorite among text editing systems, with Microsoft Word leading among participants. The survey also showed that copy editors in Florida are a fairly transitory bunch. While the survey did not pursue the causes for copy editors leaving or their next job, it does point to a problem with retention. Coupled with the 83 percent of the participants who cited hiring as “difficult” or “very difficult,” the results point to a problem with copy editing as a profession in Florida.

The majority of the participants said the copy desk handled layout and editing functions. Only 13 percent, or three newspapers, said they had separate desks--one to handle the design functions and another to handle editing duties. All of the respondents agreed that grammar and spelling were the most important skills to look for in a new hire, with news experience second.

From the survey participants, six newspapers were selected for more in-depth study. From the interviews with copy editors and designers at those six newspapers, several themes emerged. The participants appreciated the control of the newspapers that pagination had brought to the newsroom, but they also said the computer systems often

were complex and computer training often was not enough. The expressed interest in learning more about the technology and furthering their skills through seminars. They majority also expressed satisfaction with their jobs, although they admitted the low pay and late hours were not for everyone.

Most of the participants also mentioned problems with keeping a full staff on the copy desk and receiving positive feedback. They advocated crosstraining to help designers and editors to improve relations between editors and designers, and they wanted their designers to have a news background instead of one in art. As far as a college education, most of the participants felt that they had a good experience, but they stressed the importance of internships.

### Newspaper Survey

The survey was conducted to determine which newspapers to visit for the in-depth interviews, and to gauge the level of pagination and state of copy desks in the state of Florida. Sixty percent, or 25, of the 42 Florida newspapers asked to participate in the pagination survey responded. All but three of the newspapers responded through the online survey.

Circulation Size. The survey participants came from all levels of circulation size, providing a fairly representative sample. Only the 15,000 to 50,000 circulation category had less than a 50 percent response rate, with 42 percent, while the response rate was higher among papers with a circulation of more than 50,000. Ownership did not affect participation, and all geographic regions of the state were represented.

Five newspapers had daily circulation figures less than 10,000, as compared with nine in the sample, for a 55 percent response rate in the size category. Two had

circulation figures between 10,000 and 50,000, as compared with four overall, for a 50 percent response rate. Five had circulation figures between 15,000 and 50,000, compared with 12 overall, for a 42 percent response rate. Six were between 50,000 and 100,000, compared with nine, for a 66 percent response rate. Seven were more than 100,000, compared with 8, for an 88 percent response rate.

Layout Systems. Quark was the most popular layout system used among the participating newspapers, with DTI coming in second. The breakdown for pagination systems was:

1. QuarkXPress: 48 percent, or 12 newspapers
2. DTI: 20 percent, 5
3. Harris: 12 percent, 3
4. CCI: 8 percent, 2
5. SII with Coyote: 4 percent, 1
6. SII with Quark: 4 percent, 1
7. Harris with Quark: 4 percent, 1

Text Editing Systems. No text editing system had dominance among the survey participants. Twenty-four percent, or six, of the respondents used some version of Microsoft Word, and 20 percent, or five, used DTI. Some systems were listed with third-party applications and are noted; also, Harris now owns Baseview.

1. Microsoft Word (any version): 24 percent, or 6 newspapers
2. DTI: 20 percent, 5
3. Sii: 8 percent, 2
4. Baseview NewsEditPro: 8 percent, 2

5. Harris NewsMaker: 8 percent, 2
6. Sii with Coyote: 4 percent, 1
7. Baseview NewsEditPro Ique: 4 percent, 1
8. Quark Copy Desk: 4 percent, 1
9. Atex: 4 percent, 1
10. Coyote3: 4 percent, 1
11. CCI5: 4 percent, 1
12. ACT: 4 percent, 1
13. CCI with Microsoft Word: 4 percent, 1

Pagination Level. Nineteen of the respondents, or 76 percent, claimed complete pagination as defined by the NAA. Only one respondent claimed partial pagination, and no respondent claimed less than partial. One respondent noted the newspaper was paginated except for classifieds.

1. Complete: 76 percent, 19
2. Substantial: 20 percent, 5
3. Partial: 4 percent, 1

Time Paginated. The majority of the 25 respondents, 76 percent, said their newspaper had become paginated in the last five years; some noted that full pagination had been attained just prior to the survey. Twelve percent, three newspapers, said pagination occurred in the last six to 10 years; 4 percent, or one newspaper, became paginated in the late 1980s; while 8 percent, or two newspapers, said pagination arrived in the early 1980s. As several respondents noted, the newspapers had been at various levels of pagination through the last 20 years.



Staffing. A full staff on the copy desk among the respondents ranged from three people to 42 full-time and 10 part-time employees. Some also reported more nontraditional staff arrangements, for example, reporters also perform traditional news desk duties. Only one respondent reported losing no staff members in the last year; some respondents reported losing up to 15 staff members. In all, 100 to 103 copy editors left the 24 newspapers that responded to the question, for an average loss of about four copy editors per responding newspaper. The 24 newspapers reported hiring 93 to 94 copy editors in the last year.

Twelve respondents, 50 percent, said hiring copy editors is “very difficult.” Thirty-three percent, or 8 newspapers, said hiring is “difficult;” and 17 percent, or four newspapers, said hiring was “moderate.” One participant did not respond to the staffing question.

Copy Handled. Most of the copy editors in the survey handled state, national, world and business copy. One participant did not respond to this question. While the question about whether copy editors handle Web content is included here, the visits to the newspapers showed that this question should not be considered valid since it was misinterpreted by some of the respondents. Some copy desks edit stories for the Web version of the newspaper because the print version of the story is automatically placed online, whereas other copy desks edit stories specifically for the Web that may not be in the print edition. Some supervisors marked Web when the online version mirrored the print edition, while others did not, leading to inaccurate results for this question.

1. State: 92 percent, or 22 newspapers
2. National: 83 percent, 20

3. World: 83 percent, 20

4. Business: 83 percent, 20

5. Features: 46 percent, 11

6. Editorial: 46 percent, 11

7. Sports: 25 percent, 6

8. Web: 8 percent, 2

9. Other: 8 percent, or 2 newspapers, cited such things as zoned copy, obituaries or specific features-style content.

Desk Duties. The majority of the 23 participants who responded to the question about desk duties, 83 percent, handled layout duties as well as copy editing functions. Seventy percent, or 16 newspapers, reported handling editing and layout duties. Thirteen percent, or three newspapers, noted that the editing and layout duties on the copy desk were divided by shifts. Thirteen percent, or three newspapers, cited separate desks for layout and editing duties. And 4 percent, or one newspaper, responded that fronts were handled separately.

Skills. All 25 respondents look for grammar/spelling skills in potential hires. Ninety-six percent, or 24 respondents, cited previous news experience. Ninety-two percent, or 23, cited headlines, with AP style coming in fourth at 88 percent, or 22 respondents.

1. Grammar/spelling: 100 percent, 25

2. News experience: 96 percent, 24

3. Headlines: 92 percent, 23

4. AP style: 88 percent, 22

5. Layout experience: 84 percent, 21
6. Pagination experience: 60 percent, 15
7. (tie) graphics software and Web skills: 8 percent, 2
8. HTML: 0 percent, 0

Follow-up. In a follow-up survey that was posted with the results of the initial survey, the majority of the respondents were hiring editors or editors/designers at that moment. The data were collected via the Web site and through the newspaper visits. Participation in the follow-up survey was only 36 percent of the 25 newspapers, but the results provide further insight into hiring problems. Of the follow-up participants, two were hiring editors, five were hiring editors/designers, one was hiring an unknown position, and one was not hiring.

Also in the follow-up survey were questions regarding editing and layout equipment. Six of the nine newspapers used PCs to edit copy, while three used Macintoshes. For layout, five used Macintoshes and four used PCs. Knowledge of which type of system is used most in newsrooms is helpful to journalism programs because it allows them to tailor computer labs to fit what the industry is using. Also, some programs, such as Quark, run a little bit differently depending on which type of system is used.

### The Selected Newspapers

Six newspapers were selected from the 25 that participated in the survey. One of the six newspapers had a circulation below 50,000; two were between 50,000 and 100,000; and the other three were more than 100,000. None of the newspapers used the same computer system to do both editing and design work, although some used similar

systems to do one or the other. Two of the newspapers, for example, used Microsoft Word for editing purposes, but the program had different features at each site to accommodate the pagination system in place.

Four of the newspapers said in their surveys that their pagination level was complete, and one each said pagination was substantial and pagination was partial. One of the newspapers required the staff to do the editing and layout each night, and one had a separate design desk and editing desk. All of the other newspapers had editors who did layout and edited with some division of labor. An example would be a worker who designed the local section one night and then only read copy the next night.

Four of the newspapers said hiring was “very difficult,” one said hiring was “difficult,” and another said it was “moderate.”

Demographic data were collected on 24 people who participated in observations and in the 21 interviews during the six newspaper visits. Interview participants were selected based upon availability during the visit, since the interviews could not affect the newspaper’s deadline, and were sometimes guided by the person in charge of the copy desk. However, efforts were made to talk to a variety of people. For example, if the newspaper had some employees who mainly edited and others who mainly designed pages, efforts were made to talk with employees from both groups. Most of the interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes each.

Demographics. Fourteen men and 10 women shared their views during the observations and interviews for a breakdown of 58 percent and 42 percent, respectively. Of those 24 employees, 21 were white, two were black and one was white-Hispanic, for a breakdown of 88 percent, 8 percent and 4 percent, respectively. The majority of the

participants, 54 percent, or 13, were in their 20s; 29 percent, or seven, were in their 30s; 13 percent, or three, were in their 40s; and 4 percent, or one, in their 50s. For the age demographic, the median age was 28.5, the mode was 24, and the mean was 31.5. The young work crew is at least partly because the visits were conducted on the weekends, when many newer, thus, often younger, employees work. Weekends off often are given to employees based on seniority.

The majority of the participants had at least a bachelor's degree in journalism. Nineteen, or 79 percent, had a bachelor's degree, while 4 percent, or one participant, had a master's degree in journalism. Four, or 17 percent, did not have a degree in journalism, but this category included a participant who had a doctorate in English and another who graduated with an English major and a journalism minor.

As the age demographic would suggest, the participants were relatively new to professional newspaper experience. Of the participants, 15, or 63 percent, had been in their current job for one year or less; 20, or 83 percent, had been there for three years or less; and only four, or 17 percent, had been there for more than three years.

Two participants, or 8 percent, had been a copy editor for one year or less; 11, or 46 percent, had been an editor for four years or less; eight, or 33 percent, had been one for between five and 10 years; and five, or 21 percent, had been an editor for more than 10 years. In terms of how long the participants had been in journalism, two, or 8 percent, had been in the profession for less than one year; 10, or 42 percent, had been in the industry between one and five years; four, or 17 percent, had been in it for five to 10 years; another four had been in it for 10 to 15 years; and three, or 13 percent, had been in journalism between 15 and 25 years. One participant's data was declared invalid for the

question seeking the length of time in journalism because the amount of time listed was less than the amount of time listed for having worked as a copy editor, making the results based on 23 answers.

While a direct comparison with ASNE's study "The Newspaper Journalist of the '90s" presents difficulties, it puts the present sample into perspective. The 1996 ASNE study<sup>1</sup> found fewer young people in newsrooms with only 20 percent of journalists age 20 and younger, while the current participants were mainly in their 20s, with 54 percent. The current sample also had a higher percentage of women, with 42 percent, compared with 37 percent in the ASNE study. Blacks made up 11 percent of the ASNE study, but only 4 percent of the current sample. For academics, the ASNE study showed that 54 percent of the journalists have college degrees in journalism, and the current sample showed that 79 percent had at least a bachelor's degree in journalism. The ASNE study noted that in demographics, copy editors mirror other journalists.

### Interview Findings

The participants have accepted pagination as a fact of newsroom life. They noted the control over the newspaper that it put into the newsroom, but they also noted the complexity of some of the computer systems. The participants desired extra computer training, as well as more design and editing training. Overall, they were satisfied with their jobs, but many noted how the hours and pay were drawbacks. Many also mentioned problems keeping the copy desk staffed properly.

How copy editing and design duties were performed in the newsroom showed an interesting side of newsroom communication and the problems newsrooms face as design grows in importance. As that design focus grows, so do the technical skills required of

copy editors and designers. However, most feel that those who do only design work at newspapers should have a news background. With the demands now placed on the copy desk, educators face a difficult time in training new journalists.

Most of the 21 interview participants cited previous pagination experience, with about half mentioning Quark. Pagination was simply accepted as part of the newsroom. However, at the least-paginated newspaper in the sample, respondents wanted a pagination system put into place. Employees at that newspaper who did some pagination had two computer systems on their desks--one to edit and one to use the layout system. Other employees designed pages with paper and pencils. During the interviews, some of these employees believed the lack of technology was a turnoff for younger copy editors.

One 50-year-old copy editor, however, who had experienced a bad transition to pagination decried how computers have changed the business:

I think that the introduction of these things, computers, have sped up our business terrifically. . . . These machines have changed our lives, and not for the better. They've made what is appearing in the newspaper cleaner, you see fewer typos than you did 25 years ago, but something is lost in quality of worklife, and pagination can only complicate that. It cannot, it cannot make it easier. It won't. Guarantee it, having lived through that. . . .

Others say pagination has improved things by taking control of the final pages out of the composing room and putting it into the newsroom. But along with this control comes the production-oriented tasks that used to take place in the composing room, or back shop. A copy desk supervisor said:

I think it's easier to do a lot of the things that we used to fumble around with productionwise. We've eliminated the back shop, which in its purest sense is good because it puts control of the editing process in the hands of editors, which is where it belongs. That's the sales pitch that they give you when they're selling these pagination systems to newspapers, and that's what we bite on, hook, line and sinker.

The reality is it takes longer to do these things, it takes more experienced people to do them, it takes editors that are making a lot more than the people in the back shop were making, you're replacing temporary-type workers downstairs with people with a great deal of skill and ability. And those are some of the things that I don't know if people at the top truly understood those things when we converted to this.

They saw all the gee whiz features involved with this, such as sending it right to negative, eliminating the old-fashioned cut and paste, getting rid of all that clunky equipment downstairs. The gee whiz factor was there and it was very immediate, it was easy to bite on and it has lived up to that end of it, but the reality is it's much slower doing things. If you have to send out a fix on something, you have to resend the front for example, the A1 on deadline, it's a nightmare. It takes 15 to 20 minutes to do, which should be a very simple thing. And I will never understand why it's that difficult to do it.

Another participant in his late 20s who primarily designs at his newspaper enjoys that additional newsroom control despite the production aspect:

To me the best thing about pagination is I don't have to deal with a composing room clerk and try to explain what I'm seeing in my mind. I can just do it myself. Put it on a page and get it out. [The pagination system] doesn't always do all the little details that I would like, but for the most part, there are pluses. As far as visual design goes, it's much better to be on pagination than on a nonpagination system. As far as being able to send copy quickly on deadline when your down to that last half-hour, hour of the night, it's much more time consuming.

Many of the participants said their newspaper's computer system was frustrating or complex. Some talked about complex coding that was needed, and more participants said they needed additional training when they started working at the newspaper than those who said training was at least adequate. Although, a few also said they didn't know what could have been done to improve training on the computer system. Several also cited their reliance on co-workers for the first couple of weeks.

Additional training on the computer system was one of the topics suggested by participants for seminars, and a couple specifically said older newsroom workers who had struggled with the technology could benefit. The participants overwhelmingly



supported the idea of seminars, whether they were in-house or from outside sources. Most of the newspapers either offered in-house training or would send employees to conferences. However, participants cited their nontraditional schedules and a lack of focus on copy desk issues for not participating in local opportunities. One participant cited laziness for not attending in-house training sessions.

One copy editor in his late 20s liked the wake-up call seminars provide:

You get into a rut. We all know how to do our jobs, but you get into a rut and you're doing the same thing--well, I guess the mechanical part of it kicks in, and it becomes so easy that you kind of lose the edge, you kind of lose the innovative edge. The seminars help a lot to re-educate you, to put you back into what you learned in college. Remember this? This does matter.

In addition to more training on the pagination system, participants expressed interest in refresher courses on AP style and grammar; tips on editing, headlines and captions; and seminars on libel and police reporting; and how to edit stories on difficult issues such as politics and science. Several also mentioned the need for a better understanding of the history behind current events, such as the Mideast conflict, so they could better handle the stories. Additional training in design also was a popular topic.

This interest in outside learning conflicted with the views of some of the older participants who believed that younger journalists lack a commitment to journalism. The older participants also decried the lack of "life experience" among the youthful copy desk workers of today.

One of the more surprising findings was that the participants were generally happy with their jobs, but that's not to say working conditions are ideal. Issues that have become identified with the copy desk in other studies appeared in the interviews. While few copy editors referred specifically to their own salary, low pay for the copy desk

workers was mentioned by about half of the participants. One copy editor in her late 40s mentioned health-related problems and wanted more ergonomic features in the workplace. Lifestyle issues, specifically the hours endemic to putting out a morning newspaper, also were cited by nearly half. Many said that while the hours took time to get used to, the odd scheduling was not necessarily a problem. However, a few mentioned that family concerns, either present or future, would in time affect their desire to work the late-night hours. One participant in his mid-30s said:

I made a comment a while back that sort of struck me as funny . . . sometimes I come [to work] and I'm exhausted, and I leave here and I'm wired, and it should be the other way around. . . . I think that the nightly grind after a while gets to you, working the midnight hours and everything else is something that does take its toll over time, and you have to completely readjust your schedule to accommodate it, and there is something to the whole sleep cycle thing.

When you're used to a system where you're staying up till 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock in the morning every night, getting up at noon and coming into work at 3, 4, 5 o'clock, it does grind on you after a while even when you've completely set yourself to that schedule, which I have done for the last six or seven years. . . . It's a tough schedule and your heart just has to be in the business, and if you don't have that, then you're going to burn out pretty quickly.

Staffing was another problem often mentioned by participants, and several of the newspapers were hiring at the time of the visit. Workload and stress issues were cited more often at the least paginated newspaper, but the lack of a pagination system may be coincidence. Further research would be needed to determine if a pagination system would alleviate the problems. Tight deadlines for zoned editions also were mentioned.

Workspace issues also emerged in the interviews. A few participants said the physical layout of the newsroom was not conducive to communication among members of the desk. Some participants actually changed desks on the weekends when fewer people were around so they would be closer to co-workers. Others had shifts that required

them to move to a certain desk for that shift. Another participant noted that there was not room for the desk to hire another person because there was no place to put another desk. At least one participant said there wasn't always a computer available, a problem that other newspaper participants recalled as a previous problem.

When asked what their ideal job would be if they were to start looking, many said their current job was pretty much it. Some reasons for moving on, however, were pay, moving to a larger newspaper and location. Most planned to stay in the newspaper industry, although the lifestyle issue caused one woman to say that she might leave the industry for copy editing work in an area that's more family friendly. Some also said they wanted more input earlier in the news planning process. Those employees who dealt strictly with words seemed to be the more passionate when describing their jobs. Some participants also talked about how the job allowed them to "be in the know" about the world.

One mid-30s participant talked about the positives of his job:

One of the rewarding things about this job, and there aren't a whole lot of them, but one of the rewarding things about this job is that when you come in, you know you have a product to put out and when you go home you know that you've succeeded in getting the product out. And it's not always easy, but most of the time there are some rewards in it just in the fact that you can pick up the paper the next day and see something that you had a part in or the coverage of something was good or you beat somebody [with the news coverage]. It's gratifying.

One supervisor in her 20s said she thought some of the drawbacks for copy desks were starting to change as newspapers face a more difficult time in finding copy editors:

I can see in my newsroom, and I'm assuming in other newsrooms and from other people I've talked with who work for different papers, I think people are starting to value the copy desk a little more . . . like I know that they're really having to think about how to attract quality copy editors not just, "Oh, who didn't cut it as a reporter? Who can we stick on the copy desk?" . . .

[Job-seeking copy editors] have unlimited options. You have to have a reason for them to want to come to your organization, so I think they're rethinking what they pay copy editors and how they treat copy editors, and as your desk gets more short-handed, it forces, I think, the people in upper-management to look and say "Oh, that's what they do. Oh, that's really how many people it really does take to make the paper get out." Because they really don't understand the technology, never have used it or touched it. So I think they think things just magically pop up on the machines, and there does come down to be a minimum number of people.

So I think I have started to see somewhat of a shift in that, but I do think that the copy desk is still kind of like the stepchild of the newsroom. Every once in a while people notice you, but for the most part, you're just the ones who play the art too small or not enough story on the front. . . .

Feedback was another issue mentioned by the participants. At least one cited the adage of "no news is good news." One newspaper had a type of daily critique, while a few others had some sort of contest that would recognize a good page design or headline, with at least some of the contests having small monetary awards. However, most said they received little feedback unless it was negative. Some employees noted that they had to write memos when errors occurred. While they didn't mind the error being pointed out and said it helped prevent them from making the same mistake again, the nature of the feedback was humiliating. Many said that mistakes showing up in the newspaper were natural, since they are only human. Once supervisor said people are quick to notice a relatively small error buried in a story, yet don't acknowledge that a person managed to put out an entire section in a matter of a few hours.

One of the more interesting areas of this study emerged in the discussion of newsroom structure and the communication between those who primarily design and those who primarily edit. All but one of the newspapers had a fairly structured division of labor, with one of the newspapers having a design desk and an editing desk. The few employees at newspapers with editing/design positions who were able to focus on editing

enjoyed not having to perform layout duties. The employees who primarily did design work enjoyed having the opportunity to edit when needed, although many of these workers expressed more interest in design work and their interviews reflected that interest. One caution, however, is that since participants knew the study was pagination related, some may have kept their comments geared more toward pagination despite efforts to discuss both editing and design work.

At least one word editor expressed the wish to have more editors/designers work more editing shifts so their editing skills would improve. Many of the editors/designers said the combination of duties kept their interest level higher and kept burnout at a distance. One employee in her mid-30s who had worked at a small newspaper that required her to wear many hats in the newsroom said:

I thought it was fun, doing everything. It could be hectic and stressful, but at the same time I like a lot of variety. . . . I had kind of resisted going to a larger paper for a long time because I knew the bigger paper you get, the more pigeonholed you were going to get.

Many of the editors/designers would like to continue to perform both duties, but if forced to choose between the two, many would stay with layout. This hints at a problem for an industry that already is struggling to find qualified copy editors. Newspapers may want to consider this when thinking of installing a pagination system or changing newsroom structure. But several of those who primarily performed layout duties would like to focus solely on design whether the structure remains as one desk or is split into separate design and editing desks. One mid-30s participant said of the split desk concept:

One thing I'd like to see is maybe a switchover to a design desk and copy desk because we have some people who are stronger in design and some people who are stronger with copy and they struggle with design, and I think that might make better use of different people's talent is to have it more segregated. Some people are great copy editors, but they just don't

have a feel for designing pages. Other people can design pages but they don't have the touch for copy. . . .

I think some people would like it because I've heard some people say they like it. Other people would not care for it too much because they like being able to do both. There are some people who are good at both and they would miss out. For something like that, we could maybe rotate people onto each desk for a while, and that would also help with burnout so you don't just get burned out just designing pages all the time or just reading copy.

An editor in his 20s at a newspaper that has separate design and editing desks liked the division of labor:

There's more of a workload here. Designers are drawing out the page, laying it out, making it look good, something I wouldn't be able to do under pressure and having to edit. I'd just be throwing stories in, "Yeah, that looks fine there." I'd never have the ability to do some of these great fronts that these people do. Some of these designers just, they really surprise you with their artsy layout sometimes.

Another 20-something editor at the newspaper who had done both editing and design at another newspaper said her preference would depend on the workload:

I kind of like doing page design, but I guess it would just depend on the workload. If I'm expected to edit an entire section myself and lay out the entire section, no, I would not want to do that because I know that I could not devote the time I need to devote to both of those jobs to do my job well. So, no, I wouldn't do that. But, no, I wouldn't have a problem with editing and page design if I were only responsible for maybe one to three pages a night, depending on the size of the pages.

Most of the participants said they would not seek out any particular type of newsroom structure regarding layout and editing if they were to look for a new job, although many expressed interest in being able to continue performing both functions. Crosstraining, where editors and designers would learn each other's job, was one way to keep the job interesting and to address issues that arise between editors and designers on any given night, participants said. In addition to the general lack of respect that is often associated with copy desk work, respect issues arise between editors and designers over

whose job is it to write the headlines to an appreciation of the other person's job. One late-40s participant who only word edits said:

One is an issue for me, I'm not sure it is at the forefront of issues, but . . . involv[es] the separation of duties. Now our department head has encouraged designers to put a headline in the place that they have planned the headline, and I'm not sure that I like that idea. In some cases, certainly, anyone is capable of writing a headline and writing a good headline, a better headline than the next person might, but I think the percentages of that are fairly low, that's why we have the separation of duties and most of the designers will tell you that. And I find it difficult to look at something that's already there instead of a blank canvas and be able to make a decision as to what is really the best headline that I can come up with or that we can come up with.

Some of the designers at the same newspaper believe that the headline is part of the design and enjoy the opportunity to write the headlines. Some pagination systems, however, do not allow the designer to see the story when they design the page. At one newspaper, a designer lamented that he received only a story budget with no details as to what the story was about, meaning he could not design the headline taking into account the editor may need to fit in a word such as "Alzheimer's" into the headline if all he receives is a slug that says "23science." The copy editors said such problems often were resolved with some negotiation, although tempers sometimes flared on deadline.

One young editor at this newspaper acknowledged the inherent conflict between editors and designers:

They [designers] have a job to do, and their job is to make sure the paper is attractive and that they adhere to their standards. And we have a job to do in making sure we get in what's important, and sometimes we tend to clash on those issues.

Some designers are much easier to work with. And some designers, I think, seem to have a better sense of what we're trying to do, and it's not always simple as OK this headline has to be a certain point size regardless; they understand that you have to get certain words in there. They tend to understand better where we're coming from, and they try to work with us better than others.

What was interesting at the newspaper with separate desks was that the copy editors said there were respect issues between the two desks but also acknowledged what those tensions were between designers and editors, especially on deadline. One editor added:

Copy editors have a hard time understanding, I don't even know if it's understanding or maybe they're just not thinking. I think people tend to think copy editors have their set goals and this is what I want and these are my priorities--to get the text right, to make sure I'm presenting both sides. And you know designers are thinking, "Well, this is what I want and this is what I need to fit," and sometimes if you need to cut a story you need to cut it where it's going to be 15 lines short of the space the designers give you. And your priority is to make it, OK that's a great place to end up cutting, that's information that we don't need, but when you tell the designers that.

I think both people need to understand more about the other person's position. I think copy editors need to say, "OK, well, the design people are paginating so that it looks good, and they need to understand what we're doing is so the story looks good."

She followed up by saying some amount of crosstraining would help the editors to understand what it meant for the designers when the copy was sent too short or too long.

A designer at the same newspaper agreed:

I think it helps here that I have done copy editing because I can catch things that sometimes the copy editors miss. . . . But I don't think copy editors have a lot of respect for paginators because they look at what we do as just drawing boxes and they're doing the work.

. . . I think copy editors assume that they know how to paginate, but for the most part they really don't. I think some crosstraining would definitely help build their level of respect for what we do. . . . Just because you do it on paper doesn't mean it's going to translate over or if, a lot of times they will get an idea in their head of what something is supposed to look like and the art has to be right and all the things they imagine. Just because you imagine a 36-point headline fitting, that doesn't mean it's going to fit, and there is more, I guess, more artistry in design than they give credit for. To them it's just pretty much slapping boxes together.



The participants also believed that designers should have a news background. One big reason behind this thinking was so the designers could be another pair of eyes on the page, catching any mistakes the editors may have missed. Having news judgement also was key. One mid-30s participant who primarily designed but also liked to edit packages said:

The first thing you have to be is a journalist. You really have to, your job as a journalist, you have to be telling a story. So it's important that you know all of the factors that go into a page, not just the art end of it. You have to know what is a story, you have to know the strategy for the headlines, the strategy for the content of the page. I think that's a critical thing. When you're a designer you're bringing all of the elements together, you're the final editing, in many ways you're the final editing voice of what the page is going to look like. You're deciding what people are going to look at, so I think it's important that you know you have a strong journalistic feel to you of storytelling and knowing what you're trying to convey to the reader. . . .

The ultimate designer is somebody who is very good with editing copy and can write headlines very well, is good with photography, has a strong artistic sense for photography, is good with cropping photos, understands photography really well, understands color, is artistically inclined, knows what art works and what doesn't, is good with working with people. Doing page design can be very diplomatic at times. One of the parts of my job that can be hard is when you're doing the front page when you have a big story, you get a lot of input from people, especially from top managers. It requires a certain mindset to have to tell top editors, no you can't do that or yes you can. All those skills are required. So it takes quite a bit.

Another primarily design participant at the least paginated newspaper said:

. . . I think newspaper designers especially need to have news judgement skills, editing skills. I mean, I don't want somebody whose background is in art designing my pages because, you know, you might be able to catch something on the screen that the readback didn't catch or the rim didn't catch, but if your background is in art and pictures and you're not really a word person, you're not that valuable, you're not really valuable in that capacity.

However, a few participants said that designers with no journalistic background had an easier time picking up on skills such as news judgment, whereas editors had a

more difficult time picking up on the creativity needed for layouts. At the smallest newspaper in the sample, where editors and designers are one and the same, editing skills were secondary to design skills when it came to hiring. Once the copy desk had a good bunch of designers, then the hiring focus shifted toward applicants with better word skills.

In addition to having some journalism background, those participants who did more design said designers needed skills in such things as a basic pagination system, Macintosh computers, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator and Macromedia Freehand.

Educating the designers and editors of tomorrow is no easy task for colleges. One editor in his late 40s said he didn't feel that he could really comment on whether colleges were preparing students for today's newsrooms, but he said one needs a broad educational background:

I think it's probably impossible to be able to take someone out of college and place them in a newsroom and have them know what they're getting into. . . . You should come not only knowing how to write or knowing how to edit and how to report, but know about the world. Economics and political science and just current events in general and literature and everything, bring some personal experience to the job because it's not just writing and editing in a vacuum. If someone is very well prepared in journalism, that's not the whole picture. . . .

I wonder whether the importance of being able to spell and just write a properly punctuated sentence has lost a little importance, because I think a lot of people who are obviously talented and intelligent who are still maybe a little deficient in basic things. I can't appreciate spellcheckers. I don't like to use them because I figure that if my dictionary and my head can't spell it correctly, then I'm asking for trouble if I go to the spellchecker. And it's a time factor, too. If you have to look up every third word or run the spellcheck through your story and it stops at a dozen or two words, then you're not as proficient as maybe you need to be.

In addition to a broad education, which was mentioned by several participants, more than half of the participants cited their internship experiences as invaluable and

urged internships or work on the college newspaper for all journalism students. One fairly recent college graduate said:

I think that they need definitely a very hands-on approach to [journalism education]. I don't think you can teach journalism by sitting in a class with a chalkboard. I think if you're wanting to teach design and editing, maybe have a basic design class and then make the students actually do work on a newspaper.

I think internships are extremely good, and I think before anybody graduates in journalism they should have had at least one if not two internships. I think that, at our college every student was at least for one quarter required to work on the student newspaper. I think that's a very positive thing as well. I would almost say make it more than a quarter. Because I think the more you actually work on a newspaper, the more you're going to learn. Honestly, I probably learned more on my 3-month internship . . . than I did in a lot of my classes . . . the entire time just because it's very hands-on and you're forced to learn it immediately.

Another participant who mainly did design work agreed on the value of internships:

Most of the stuff I learned in journalism at school came from working on college papers. It didn't come from the classroom. The classroom was nice, it gave insight into what you were doing when you were working. But that's where I learned most of my stuff, is by working at newspapers in college. . . . There were people that went through the communications program and never worked on a paper. They only wrote the few stories they had to write for their classes. And it would be hard for me to believe that they were actually prepared to actually go into the workplace. Journalism as a career, you know, you can learn it in school, but some people are just not good at it, it's not just something you learn. It's also sort of a craft to it. I mean, there's a lot of good journalists that never even went to college. It's experience, certainly. . . .

About half of the participants also recommended that colleges include some sort of pagination instruction. Many suggested using Quark, saying that once you know a basic system, the others are relatively easy to pick up. Some also suggested that if money was a barrier to installing the needed software, then perhaps the college could work out a deal with the local newspaper or college publication to gain access to a pagination

system. Some recent graduates said that while their colleges had software such as Quark, the professors did not spend any time actually teaching the program or simply did not spend enough time on the subject. They also complained that they sometimes knew more than their professors about the software because of their work at the college newspaper or an internship. Since many of the participants said older newsroom workers had difficulty adjusting to pagination, it is worth noting that nearly one-third of the United States' full-time professors are 55 or older.<sup>2</sup> One recent graduate who also is a supervisor said of journalism education:

Copy editors need to know how to write, they need to know how to edit, and I think they need to know the current technology. And I think one or the other tends to sometimes get [less attention], more often the technology. I think the problem is they have professors who have never--I mean, I was helping my professor with Quark when I was in school. . . . I think the good candidates that I see coming out of college are supplementing it with their papers, with their student papers, and learning it there.

One participant said she wished her college had included a photography course in her track; another said more individual feedback would be helpful. A couple of participants said they were surprised by the business and advertising side of the newspaper industry once they entered the profession and wished they had learned more about it earlier. More instruction on how to handle deadline pressure and interpersonal skills also was mentioned. Several suggested that editors should have at least some reporting experience before they are able to work reporters' copy, and many said they wished they had more design experience in college. One word editor in his late 20s cited the value of a graphics course even though it wasn't oriented toward newspapers:

The [college graphics] course itself was geared more for the people heading toward magazines, magazine work, but it really helped give me an idea of, for instance, now when I've got to work with people who specialize in that design area, now I know why they like white space so

much and it generally just gave me a better sense of what designs look good. . . .

One recent graduate considered his college experience a test to see whether he could survive it and said he didn't learn much. Another recent graduate said her journalism program was lacking. She said copy editing wasn't encouraged and said editors came to be known as "comma counters." The professor, she said, went over editing merely to fulfill the course requirement. However, when a copy editor from a nearby newspaper talked to the class, the visitor sparked an interest in copy editing in the participant as well as several classmates. Overall, however, most participants believed that journalism colleges were doing a good enough job, and some cited good experience with recent graduates.

A few participants said future journalists would need to be more tech-savvy, citing the increasing focus on technology at newspapers and multimedia ventures. The focus on technology, whether it is on the copy desk or in another area of the newsroom, has not been lost on editors, nor has its effects. One participant in his mid-30s said:

I think most editors these days are resigned to the fact that there's going to be some pagination involved with editors who are in the production chain. The copy desk people realize they're going to have to learn to be proficient at pagination, and it should be something that they want to be able to do, because there again it's just control over the product, and in the old days you didn't have that level of control. So the whole thing comes down to being able to build a staff that's proficient and knows the program, and that takes time. And unfortunately here we tend to have a lot of turnover, and we lose a lot of people just as they're gaining the proficiency they need to do a lot of different jobs on the desk.

Another 30-something participant whose focus was design looked at the technology issue in a broader sense:

I would say the saddest thing about these journalists is, about going to pagination, is that while editors have to do more and more work and they saved a lot of money by getting rid of the production department, so it

would be nice if they invested some of that money back into hiring more people. . . . It's kind of like now newspapers are going to the 50-inch web to save money, well a few years ago they were going to pagination to save money. And there are certain benefits to going to the 50-inch web, the paper is smaller, easier to hold, and there are certain benefits to going to pagination, we have more control, we can use more color, we can do more creative things. But all these things, the motivations behind them from the corporate level, a lot of times it seems it's more financially based than it is toward the strategy or quality based. And to me that's kind of the saddest thing.

With pagination we lost, while we've gained a lot of control, we've lost the initial eyes that used to be on the page. In the production area, people used to, a lot of people used to look at the paper, before people used to look at the pages before they were printed. . . . I just wish they would invest more money in the editing end. A lot of times top managers will complain about copy editors making mistakes or design falling flat and then the deadline structures are remaining the same, even though you have to do more work, the planning does not improve. The expectations get higher because you can do more, but they're not always investing as much as they could into that process.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Paul S. Voakes. "The Newspaper Journalists of the '90s." American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1996, [www.asne.org/kiosk/reports/97reports/journalists90s/profiles2.html](http://www.asne.org/kiosk/reports/97reports/journalists90s/profiles2.html), viewed April 2000.

<sup>2</sup>Denise K. Magner. "The Imminent Surge in Retirements." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 17, 2000.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

### Summary

Newspaper managers placed pagination systems into newsrooms with visions of money savings, but that plan often did not live up to reality. The reality is that pagination has changed how copy desks function. It has brought often complex computer systems into the newsroom and forced newspapers to re-examine how the newsroom is structured. When the composing room was eliminated, the newsroom gained control over the production of the newspaper, but that control brought extra duties. Some copy desks were forced to absorb those extra tasks, while other copy desks gained design desks that handled the layout and production tasks. This study sought to examine what changes pagination had brought to Florida newsrooms through the eyes of copy editors and designers.

A survey and interviews were used to determine the level of pagination in Florida and to try to understand the issues facing copy editors in the newsroom of 2000. Twenty-five newspapers out of 42 responded to the survey for a 60 percent response rate. From those participants, six newspapers were chosen for more in-depth study, resulting in 21 interviews with copy editors and designers. The results showed that 76 percent of the participating Florida newspapers have adopted pagination. The majority of the survey participants, 83 percent, also had copy desks that handled both layout and editing duties. The interview participants felt that pagination was inevitable for all U.S. newspapers.

The interview participants were relatively satisfied with their jobs, but they would like to attend seminars to improve their skills. Most also said that copy desk hours and pay were problems that prospective editors/designers must overcome. Some participants recommended crosstraining so editors and designers could gain a better understanding of the other's job. They also wanted designers to have a news background, rather than an art background.

Hiring and retaining copy editors also was a problem cited in the interviews and survey. However, educators face a difficult task in preparing students for copy editing jobs. Participants stressed the importance of internships in journalism programs and said that some form of pagination should be taught in journalism programs.

### Discussion

As new technology enters the newsroom, newspapers must reconsider how the newsroom is structured, in terms of workspace issues and how copy editing and design duties are completed. Journalism educators also must pay attention to the changing technology and newsroom structure in order to prepare students. The findings are similar to those of previous studies in the literature review and to the exploratory projects.

As a working newspaper copy editor, I could understand and appreciate many of the comments made by participants, but there were a few results that I did not expect. While problems certainly exist for copy editors and designers, the majority seemed happy with their jobs, going against the notion that copy editors are a disgruntled bunch. It is worth noting, however, that many of the participants were either young or fairly new to their job, and sometimes both. It would be interesting to see how their views change as they continue in their careers.



Had the participants been given advance notice of the questions and more time to think about them, the answers also might have been more in-depth on some questions. I don't believe copy editors are accustomed to being asked what their opinions are and, therefore, were caught somewhat off-guard. One must also remember that the interviews were done on a weekend, when things are more relaxed. Only one copy desk supervisor was concerned about the topic of the questions. Once informed that the interviews would be conducted in private, his fears about comments on pay being overheard were allayed.

The problem of hiring and retaining copy editors was evident in the study. Not only did participants mention staffing and hiring problems, but two of the newspapers visited tried to recruit the researcher. It is fairly well accepted that there is a problem finding good copy editors. Many participants mentioned pay and hours as two reasons not to go into copy editing or as reasons to eventually leave. While the hours are not easily changed, at least one participant was pushing his newspaper into allowing four-day workweeks. While that may not work at all newspapers, it might be a way to entice some editors to stay in the business. As for pay, salaries are increasing; the median salary for journalism graduates with bachelor's degrees rose \$1,000 to \$25,000 in 1999.<sup>1</sup> The increase was the fourth straight annual rise in pay.

Several participants also expressed interest in becoming involved in the news planning process earlier, aimed at making better-packaged stories and creating a sense of involvement from the editors. Positive feedback also may help to improve retention on copy desks. A study of exit interviews of copy editors might provide insight into how to prevent copy editors from leaving. Further study on ways to provide positive feedback also would be helpful.

In addition to the lack of copy editors, the study also raised concern over the number of copy editors/designers who would choose layout over editing. The study suggested that workers are happier when there is a clear division of labor between those who edit and those who design, even if that division is set on a nightly basis. If more newspapers were to go with separate desks for design and editing, would that mean that copy editors would become even more scarce, as those who have both skills choose layout roles? On the other hand, if newspapers keep copy desks that have workers shifting between editing and design, will that mean that employees will become proficient in both areas but highly skilled in neither? While the participants viewed crosstraining as a plus, it was viewed mainly as a method to have backup designers in place and to improve the relationship and understanding between designers and editors.

### Further Research

There is no easy answer to how newsrooms should structure their copy desks, although that decision is based at least somewhat on the size of the newspaper and on the selected pagination system, if there is one. In the study, the newspaper with the least level of pagination seemed to have a higher level of stress and more pressure; however, a clear link with the lack of pagination cannot be established in this study. While it would be interesting to investigate whether a link exists, the proliferation of pagination systems could make such a study difficult. However, it should be possible to find out what type of newsroom structure newspapers are adopting across the country.

Given that pagination is almost inevitable, research into which systems work best from copy editors' and designers' perspectives would be beneficial. At least one participant complained that those teaching the pagination system knew the system well

but did not know how to do his job. The comment mirrored comments in the exploratory focus group. Looking at ways to make these systems less complex and less quirky, which are complaints from many participants, would help to lower the frustration level on the copy desk as well as making the copy desk more efficient. Some participants said they felt constrained by the technology.

As the newsroom technology becomes more integrated into the process, whether it is a pagination system or a multimedia project, journalism colleges must be prepared to train workers for tomorrow's copy desk. While only a few participants expressed unhappiness with their journalism education, the thing they all encouraged was the internship. That is where they learned about "real" newspapers and learned about the technology they needed to do the job. This stresses the need for colleges to require internships as part of the journalism program and the need for real, hands-on experience in the classroom.

Participants' comments also suggested that professors need to keep up-to-date with the technology and that journalism tracks need to encompass all aspects of the newsroom--from the business angle to photography to reporting to design to editing. The study also suggested that few courses separate the editing track from the other journalism programs, and that professors do not encourage editing and design.

While many, if not all, journalism programs would be hard-pressed to do many of these things and still work to improve students' grammar and writing skills, changes could be made to include more computer-based design work and to encourage editing and design as professions. The fact that many participants said newspaper designers should have a journalism background raised the question of whether newspaper design should

become its own track, along with editing and reporting. One study on undergraduate enrollment has added visual communication as a classification scheme for specializations,<sup>2</sup> showing the growing importance of this area.

Further study of journalism programs would be helpful in determining what improvements could or should be made. A recent study showed that educators and professional journalists are not too far apart on their views of what journalism education should be.<sup>3</sup> That said, more study is needed to explore how to better prepare students for today's newsrooms. Also helpful would be to study what sort of relationship colleges have established with local newspapers to help give students that real world experience.

While the plight of the copy desk has been well documented, few people have given copy editors and designers a chance to be heard, in their own words. As several participants noted, a copy editor/designer has to love the work to put up with the low pay, late hours and technological glitches that often crop up during the night. The copy desk is an integral part of the newsroom, and its work should be encouraged not only by newspapers, but by educators. Without strong editors and designers to put out the newspaper, more errors will inevitably slip into the newspaper, eroding credibility and readership even more.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Lee B. Becker, Gerald M. Kosicki, Joelle Prine and Wilson Lowery. "1999 Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates." [www.grady.uga.edu/annualsurveys/](http://www.grady.uga.edu/annualsurveys/), viewed Nov. 2000.

<sup>2</sup>Lee B. Becker, Gerald M. Kosicki, Wilson Lowery, Joelle Prine and Aswin Punathambekar. "Undergrad Enrollments Level Off, Graduate Education Declines." *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, Autumn 2000, p. 68-80.

<sup>3</sup>Tom Dickson and Wanda Brandon. "The Gap Between Educators and Professional Journalists." *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, Autumn 2000, p. 50-67.

APPENDIX A  
LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Newsdesk Supervisor,

My name is Amy Moulden, and I'm a master's student in Mass Communications at the University of Florida. I am conducting a study on copy editors and pagination in the state of Florida. Please visit < . . . > and fill out the short online survey.

An explanation of your rights as a research participant is included at the top of the survey. Please take a moment to read this information.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at. . . .

Thank you for participating.

Amy Moulden

APPENDIX B  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Newsdesk Supervisor,

As a full-time newspaper copy editor, I know how difficult it is to find a spare 10 or 15 minutes to answer a survey on pagination. But as a master's student in mass communications at the University of Florida, I also know how understudied copy editing issues are. This survey is only part of a wider study I am doing on copy editing issues in the state of Florida.

Please visit < . . . > and fill out the short online survey so this study on copy editing issues can be as complete as possible.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at. . . .

Thank you for participating.

Amy Moulden

APPENDIX C  
CONSENT FORM/SURVEY

Pagination Survey of Florida

My name is Amy Moulden, and I'm a master's student in Mass Communications at the University of Florida. I am conducting a study on copy editors and pagination in the state of Florida. I can be reached at. . . . This survey is being supervised by Dr. Leonard Tipton, Professor in the Journalism Department at the University of Florida, College of Journalism and Communications, 3045 Weimer Hall, Gainesville, FL 32611. If you have any questions about this survey, he can be reached at. . . . If you have questions about research participants' rights, you may call the University of Florida Institutional Review Board at 352-392-0433.

If you agree to participate all of your answers will be confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. You may stop at any time without consequence. The survey should take about 10 to 15 minutes to fill out. The survey results will be kept in a locked cabinet in the faculty offices until they have been compiled, and then they will be destroyed. Only the principal investigators will have access to the results.

There are no anticipated risks for participating in this survey, but your participation will be beneficial in establishing the level of pagination in the state of Florida.

Just complete this form. Click on Submit when ready to send.

NOTE: While this survey is in a public space on the Web, I ask that you not take part in the survey unless you have received an e-mail requesting participation as part of the research. Thank you for understanding.

Your name:

Email address:

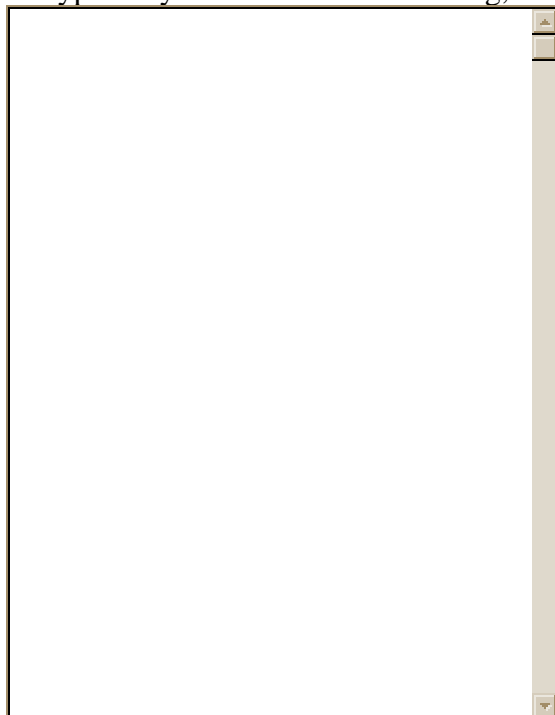
1. Newspaper name:

2. Newspaper contact:

3. Type of system used for layout, such as DTI or QuarkXpress:



4. Type of system used for text editing, such as Atex or Microsoft Word:



5. How would you describe your level of pagination based on the definitions below:

Complete

**Complete pagination:** The electronic compilation of all page components - including type, graphics, photos and logos of editorial, display and classified advertising - for final output to a completed page.

Substantial

**Substantial pagination:** The electronic compilation of 90 percent or more of page components.

Moderate

**Moderate pagination:** The electronic compilation of 50-to-90 percent of page components. Papers in this category paginate most editorial and advertising elements for final output to a completed page; additional elements might be stripped or pasted to the page.

PARTIAL

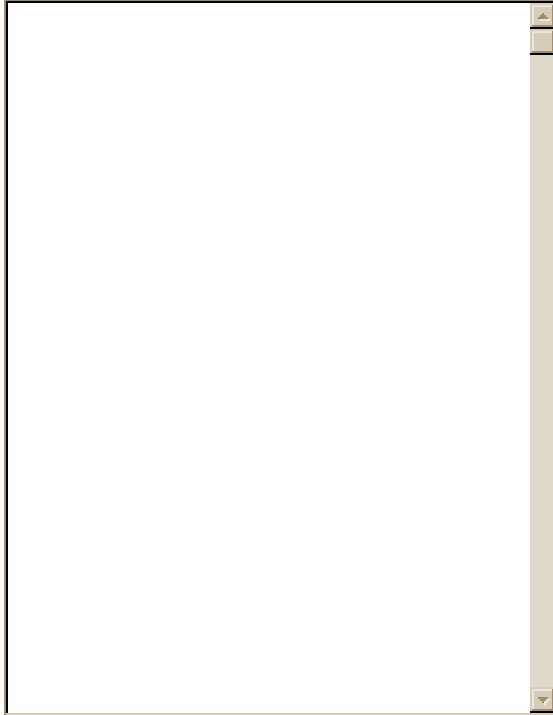
**Partial pagination:** The electronic compilation of less than 50 percent of page components. A paper paginating only section fronts, feature pages or local-news stories fits this bill.

None

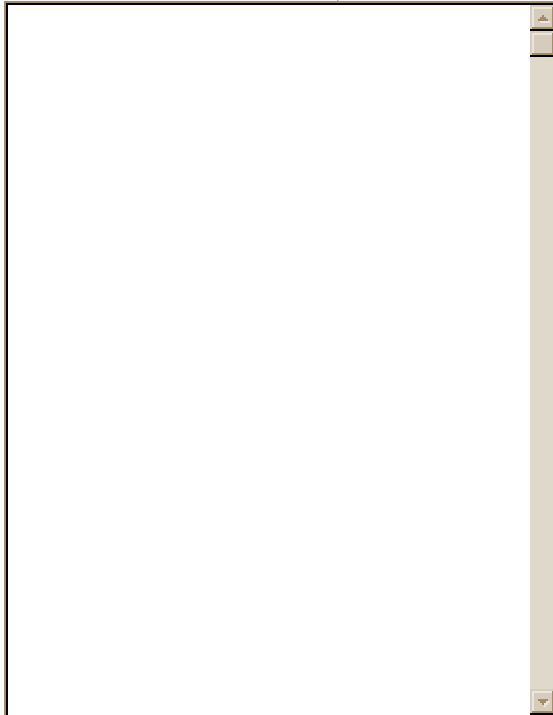
**No pagination:** Outputting galley type and pasting up all editorial and advertising components.

**Note:** Definitions are taken from the Newspaper Association of America.

6. Approximate length of time newspaper has been paginated:



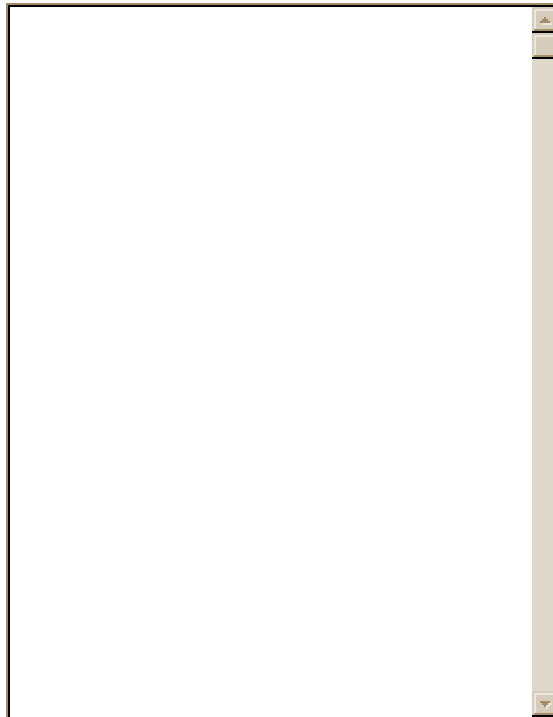
7. How many copy editors are needed for the newsdesk to be full staff? (Please provide the number of copy editors who handle local news if separate desks handle nation/world news):



8. On the desk where local news is edited, what other types of copy do the editors handle?

State	State
National	National
World	World
Business	Business
Sports	Sports
Features	Features
Editorial	Editorial
Web	Copy for Web edition other than what appears in the print edition

Other:



9. Do copy editors also handle layout duties, or is there a separate layout desk or certain individuals for these functions:

10. How many newsdesk copy editors have left the newsdesk in the past year?

11. How many newsdesk copy editors have been hired in the past year?

12. How difficult has it been to find new copy editors? (Mark the most appropriate one.)

Very Difficult	Very Difficult
Difficult	Difficult
Moderate	Moderate
Easy	Easy
Very Easy	Very Easy

13. What type of skills do you look for in new hires? (Mark all that apply.)

AP style	Knowledge of AP style
Grammar/spelling	Grammar/spelling skills
Headline	Headline skills
Layout	Layout skills

Graphics Softwar	Knowledge of graphics-oriented software, such as Illustrator and
Freehand	
Previous paginat	Previous use of a pagination system
Newspaper expe	Previous newspaper experience
Web	Internet, Web skills
Web editing	Knowledge of HTML or Web page editing software

Thank you for your time.

Submit	Reset
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[Top](#) [Results](#) [Follow-up Questions](#)

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*For comments or questions,  
e-mail [Amy Moulden](#)*

## APPENDIX D RESULTS/FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

### Pagination Survey of Florida

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Pagination Survey. The initial analysis of the results are posted, along with a couple of quick follow-up questions and the original survey. If you have any comments or questions about the survey or the results, please contact Amy Moulden at. . . . This survey is being supervised by Dr. Leonard Tipton, a professor in the Journalism Department, University of Florida, College of Journalism and Communications, 3045 Weimer Hall, Gainesville, FL 32611. . . .

#### Survey Results

Sixty percent of the 42 Florida newspapers asked to participate in the pagination survey responded. Of those newspapers:

- Five had daily circulation figures less than 10,000, as compared with 9 in the sample, for a 55 percent response rate in the size category.
- Two had circulation figures between 10,000 and 15,000, as compared with 4 overall, for a 50 percent response rate.
- Five had circulation figures between 15,000 and 50,000, compared with 12 overall, for a 42 percent response rate.
- Six had circulation figures between 50,000 and 100,000, compared with 9, for a 66 percent response rate.

- Seven had circulation figures more than 100,000, compared with 8, for an 88 percent response rate.

Note: Circulation figures are taken from Editor & Publisher's 1999 International Year Book.

LAYOUT SYSTEMS: Quark is the most popular layout system used among the responding newspapers, with DTI coming in second.

- QuarkXPress: 48 percent
- DTI: 20 percent
- Harris: 12 percent
- CCI: 8 percent
- Sii with Coyote: 4 percent
- Sii with Quark: 4 percent
- Harris with Quark: 4 percent

TEXT EDITING SYSTEMS: No text editing system has dominance among the survey participants. Twenty-four percent of respondents used some version of Microsoft Word, and 20 percent used DTI. Some systems were listed with third-party applications and are noted.

- Microsoft Word (any version): 24 percent
- DTI: 20 percent
- Sii: 8 percent
- Baseview NewsEditPro: 8 percent
- Harris NewsMaker: 8 percent

- Sii with Coyote: 4 percent
- Baseview NewsEditPro IQue: 4 percent
- Quark Copy Desk: 4 percent
- Atex: 4 percent
- Coyote3: 4 percent
- CCI5: 4 percent
- ACT: 4 percent
- CCI with Microsoft Word: 4 percent

PAGINATION LEVEL: Most of the respondents, 76 percent, claimed complete pagination as defined by the Newspaper Association of America. Only one respondent claimed partial pagination, and no respondent claimed less than partial. One respondent who marked "substantial" pagination noted that the newspaper was paginated except for classifieds.

- Complete: 76 percent
- Substantial: 20 percent
- Partial: 4 percent

TIME PAGINATED: The majority of the 25 respondents, 76 percent, said their newspaper had become paginated in the last 5 years; some noted that full pagination had been attained just prior to the survey. Twelve percent said pagination began in the last six to 10 years; 4 percent started paginating in the late 1980s; while 8 percent said pagination arrived in the early 1980s. As several respondents noted, the newspapers have been at various levels of pagination through the last 20 years.



**STAFFING:** A full staff among the respondents ranged from three people to 42 full-time and 10 part-time employees. Some also reported more nontraditional staff arrangements, for example, reporters also perform traditional news desk duties. Only one respondent reported losing no staff members in the last year; some respondents reported losing up to 15 staff members. In all, 100-103 copy editors left the 24 newspapers that responded to the question, for an average loss of about 4 copy editors per responding newspaper, with a median of 3. The 24 newspapers reported hiring 93-94 copy editors in the last year. One participant did not respond to the question.

Twelve respondents, 50 percent, said hiring copy editors is "very difficult." Thirty-three percent said hiring is "difficult;" and 17 percent said hiring was "moderate." One participant did not respond to the question.

**COPY HANDLED:** Most of the copy editors in the survey handled state, national, world and business copy. One participant did not respond to this question.

- State: 92 percent
- National: 83 percent
- World: 83 percent
- Business: 83 percent
- Features: 46 percent
- Editorial: 46 percent
- Sports: 25 percent
- Web: 8 percent
- Other: 8 percent cited such things as zoned copy, obituaries or specific features-style content

**DESK DUTIES:** Seventy percent, or 16 newspapers, reported handling editing and layout duties. Thirteen percent, or three newspapers, noted that the editing and layout duties on the copy desk were divided by shifts. Thirteen percent, or three newspapers, cited separate desks for layout and editing duties. And 4 percent, or one newspaper, responded that fronts were handled separately.

**SKILLS:** All 25 respondents look for grammar/spelling skills in potential hires. Ninety-six percent--24 respondents--seek previous news experience. Ninety-two percent look for headline skills, with AP style coming in fourth with 88 percent.

- Grammar/spelling: 100 percent
- News experience: 96 percent
- Headlines: 92 percent
- AP style: 88 percent
- Layout experience: 84 percent
- Pagination experience: 60 percent
- (tie) graphics software and Web skills: 8 percent
- HTML: 0 percent

### **Follow-up Questions**

Please take a moment to answer these quick questions.

Newspaper name:

Your e-mail:

1. Copy editors use which of the following to edit copy?

Mac  PC  Other

2. Those doing layout use which of the following?

Mac  PC  Other

3. If you currently are seeking to fill a position, please mark which type of position is open.

Editing only  
 Layout only  
 Combined editing and layout position  
 Not hiring

4. Comments or questions?

Thank you for your time.

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[Top](#) [Survey](#) [Follow-up Questions](#)

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*For comments or questions,  
e-mail [Amy Moulden](#)*

APPENDIX E  
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent

We are conducting a study to identify issues that newspaper copy editors face in performing their jobs, especially as it relates to pagination. This in-depth interview is being supervised by Dr. Leonard Tipton, Professor in the Journalism Department, at the University of Florida, College of Journalism and Communications. If you have any questions about this interview, he can be reached at. . . . If you have questions about research participants' rights, you may call the University of Florida Institutional Review Board at 352-392-0433.

If you agree to participate all of your answers will be confidential to the extent provided by law. You will not be identified in any way. We are not asking for your name or any identifying information. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. You may stop at any time without consequence. The in-depth interview will be approximately 2 hours. The in-depth interview will be audiotaped. The audiotapes will be kept in a locked cabinet in the faculty offices until they have been transcribed, and then they will be destroyed. Your voice will be identified on the transcripts by a number; we are not collecting identifying information. Only the principal investigator will have access to the transcripts.

There are no anticipated risks for participating in this interview, but your participation will be beneficial in identifying issues copy editors face on the job.

I have read the information provided above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the discussion session as described. I have been told that the session will be audiotaped.

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

APPENDIX F  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is your past experience with pagination?
2. Tell me about editing and pagination issues at your current newspaper.
3. How are editing and pagination related to each other at your newspaper?
4. After a normal night at work, how do you feel about your job?
5. Do you think that you will stay in copy editing?
6. Is there any type of continuing education that might be helpful to you as an editor?
7. Do you feel that colleges are preparing copy editors for today's news desk?

APPENDIX G  
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORM

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: M                      F

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time in current position: \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you spent as a copy editor? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you spent in journalism? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of pagination system do you use currently? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a degree in journalism or mass communications? Yes                      No

If so, what level?              Bachelor's                      Master's                      Ph.D.



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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Amy Moulden is a Lakeland, Florida, native, born in 1972. She received her bachelor's degree from the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida in 1994. She had several copy editing internships at Florida newspapers, including one through the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund's editing internship program.

Her first job included copy editing and design work at a midsize newspaper that used pencils, paper, pica poles and proportion wheels. While there, the newspaper underwent the transition to a pagination system that brought separate desks for editing and design. She left to pursue a master's degree in mass communication at UF. While taking classes, she continued working as a copy editor at a newspaper where editing and design duties were part of the job.