

Table 11
Persons with Whom Managing Editors
Negotiate for Larger Newshole

Persons or Combination of Persons	% of	
	No. of Managing Editors	Managing Editors
Business manager or advertising department executive	22	18
Combination of publisher and other executives	19	16
Production manager or other production personnel	18	15
Publisher only	17	14
Combination of general manager and other executives excluding publisher	14	12
General manager only	12	10
No negotiations— managing editor makes decision	6	5
Editor only	4	3
Other	9	7
Total	121	100

Table 12
Types of News for Which Managing Editors
Are Most Likely to Negotiate for Additional Space

Types of News	Managing Editors Negotiating		Managing Editors	
	No.	%	No.	%
Scheduled events	30	24	35 ^a	29
Late-breaking stories	27	22	32	27
Both	50	41	39	33
Other	16	13	13	11
Total	123	100	119	100

At first glance, the table seems to indicate that 35 of the managing editors were successful in negotiating extra space for scheduled events even though only 30 said they negotiated. What this indicates, however, is that some managing editors who negotiated for both types of news were successful with only one.

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ABSTRACT

In a national survey conducted during 1973 and 1974, 160 managing editors answered a questionnaire concerning the newshole policies of their papers. According to the survey, the typical daily newspaper in the United States uses slightly less than 45% of its space for nonadvertising content, reflecting little change since a 1957 survey. Larger newspapers tend to have larger newsholes in terms of actual column inches, although the percentage of the newspaper devoted to news is smaller than that for smaller-circulation newspapers; more newsholes are allocated to local news than to news from other places. Methods of determining the allocation of space have changed little in 18 years, but newspapers with greater news potential are more likely to have a standardized (fixed minimum) newshole. Most managing editors report satisfaction with present newshole policies. (Tables of findings are included.) (JM)

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An ANPA
News Research Center Study

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Indiana University Bureau
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**Newshole Allocation Policies of
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An inflationary spiral of newsprint costs has caused widespread concern about news space allocation policies of U.S. newspapers¹, but a national survey conducted during the winter of 1973-1974 suggests little change has emerged in basic newshole policy. The proportion of the average daily newspaper allotted to news is about the same as when Casey and Copeland studied the matter in 1957.² Methods of determining the amount of space given to news also appeared to have changed little during the last 18 years, but the greater the news potential of a newspaper, the likelier the paper is to have a standardized (fixed minimum) newshole.

These conclusions are drawn from a mail survey of a representative sample of 160 managing editors who returned the questionnaire. The survey was commissioned by the News Research Center of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. The questionnaire was sent to a stratified, random sample of newspapers selected by circulation size from the 1973 Editor and Publisher Yearbook. The structured questionnaire, developed in consultation with managing editors from several midwest newspapers of various sizes,³ was returned by 46% of the managing editors queried. Checks on the data from the respondents suggest the sample is highly representative.⁴

Characteristics of the Newshole

According to the survey, the typical daily newspaper in America uses slightly less than 45% of its space for

non-advertising content on the average day, about the same as reported by Casey and Copeland in 1957.⁵ There is, however, wide variation. Some newspapers devote as little as 23% to newshole while others place the figure as high as 73%. Sunday newspapers set aside more for non advertising content. On the average, Sunday editions split 50-50 between advertising and non-advertising material.

The average newshole on a typical weekday is 4860 column-inches. The average Sunday newshole is 8927 column-inches, nearly double that of weekday newspapers. Again, there is wide variation on these measures.

Most weekday newspapers contain 14 to 48 pages. (See Table 1.) As might be expected, the figures are somewhat higher for Sunday newspapers, with nearly half of them running more than 70 pages.

Table 1
Typical Number of Pages in Newspapers^a

No. of Pages	% of Newspapers	
	Weekday	Sunday
12 or fewer	19	--
14-28	37	15
30-48	30	13
50-68	9	23
70 or more	4	48
Total	99 ^a	99 ^a

^aThe table does not add up to 100% because of rounding.

A majority of newspapers (61%) use an eight-column format. About 18% use a combination of six and eight columns and about 12% have adopted the six-column page exclusively. A small minority (6%) use nine columns.⁶

Regardless of circulation or newshole size, the overwhelming majority of non-advertising content that managing editors classify as news falls into the "local" category. Financial, state and international news receive the least space. (See Table 2.) An analysis of a representative sample of newspaper pages by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau would seem to indicate, however, that newspapers give larger proportions of their space to state/national, international, sports and financial news than the managing editors think they do.⁷

Table 2
Estimated Space Devoted to Various
News and Editorial Categories^a

Type of Content	% of News Space
Local	75
Sports	6
National	4
Women's	4
International	3
Editorials	3
State	3
Financial	2
Total	100

^aManaging editors estimated the number of column inches devoted to each category on a typical day. The percentages are based on the total for these categories.

Most managing editors appear to be satisfied with newshole size for their newspapers, but more than a quarter complain that it is too small, and a few say it is too large. (See Table 3.)

The editors were asked also how they thought the average reader viewed newshole size. The estimates correspond closely to the editors' own opinions. (This study does not, however, include a measure of readers' opinions.)

Table 3
Managing Editors' Opinions and Perceptions of
Readers' Opinions About Newshole
Size on a Typical Weekday

Size of Newspaper	Managing Editors' Opinions		Managing Editors' Perceptions of Readers' Opinions	
	No.	%	No.	%
Much too small	6	4	5	4
Too small	37	26	34	24
About right	95	66	93	65
Too big	4	3	8	6
Much too big	1	1	2	1
Total	143	100	142	100

An even larger percentage of managing editors thinks the size of their Sunday newshole is "about right." Again, editors' perceptions of readers' opinions about the adequacy of newshole size closely parallel their own opinions. (See Table 4.)

Table 4
**Managing Editor's Opinions and Perceptions of
 Readers' Opinions About Newshole
 Size on a Typical Sunday**

Size of Newspaper	Managing Editors' Opinions		Managing Editors' Perceptions of Readers' Opinions	
	No.	%	No.	%
Much too small	1	2	1	2
Too small	10	19	10	19
About right	39	75	36	68
Too big	2	4	5	9
Much too big	0	0	1	2
Total	52	100	53	100

Methods for Determining Newshole Size

The most widely used method for determining newshole size is the fixed-minimum approach, the allocation of a specified minimum number of column inches for non-advertising content each day. The number of newspapers using the fixed-minimum policy, however, appears to have declined during the last 18 years. Casey and Copeland reported in 1957 that 54% of U.S. dailies used a fixed-minimum system,⁸ while the present study places the figure at 41%.

Approximately 26% of the newspapers use a sliding-percentage formula that varies the proportion of advertising to non-advertising space with the number of pages. Another 7% use a fixed-percentage formula and 26% use some other method.

Newspapers with a fixed-minimum newshole seem to have a greater potential for gathering and publishing news than those using other methods of space allocation. Those with this standardized system score higher on a "news potential index" developed by two media researchers, Wayne Danielson and John Adams. The index gives a newspaper a score of one or zero for either having or not having the following attributes: an estimated weekday newshole of 2500 inches or more; an estimated editorial staff of 75 or more; three or more news

services; publication seven days a week, and morning publication. The higher a newspaper's score, the greater its news potential.⁹

The size of the fixed-minimum newshole of newspapers which have a minimum varies widely, but the average is 1914 column inches per day. Some newspapers set aside as little as 352 column inches for news, while others go as high as 4725. (See Table 5.)

Table 5
Minimum Newshole Size Distribution
of Fixed-Minimum Newspapers

Minimum No. of Column Inches	No. of Newspapers	% of Fixed- Minimum Newspapers
Fewer than 600	4	7
601-900	3	5
901-1200	7	12
1201-1500	3	5
1501-1800	11	19
1801-2100	8	13
2101-2400	10	17
More than 2400	13	22
Total	59	100

When the newshole size exceeds the fixed minimum, 41% of the newspapers employing a minimum use a sliding scale to determine the size. Another 13% use a fixed percentage for the excess. The rest use a variety of other systems.

Most of the managing editors, (58%) of newspapers which use a fixed-minimum system say they do so because it guarantees adequate news coverage. Another 18% think it provides a well-rounded newspaper, while only 3% say it is conducive to better production schedules. The remaining 21% list a variety of other responses.

The second most common form of newshole determination, used by 26% of the newspapers in this sample, is a percentage formula that varies with volume of advertising. There is wide variation in the proportions of space that newspapers using this system are able to set aside for non-advertising content. (See Table 6.) For example, 15% of these newspapers could never give more than 29% of their space to non-advertising content, while 19% of them could never give less than 65% of their space to such content.

Table 6

Minimum and Maximum Newsholes (as % of total space)
for Sliding-Scale Newspapers^a

% of Space Devoted to Non-Advertising Matter	% of Newspapers Which Use a Sliding-Scale	
	Largest Newshole	Smallest Newshole
29 or under	15	11
30-34	11	19
35-39	5	5
40-44	11	8
45-49	11	3
50-54	13	14
55-59	3	8
60-64	18	13
65 or over	13	19
Total	100 (N=38)	100 (N=37)

^aExample of how to read the table: The figures in the top row mean that 15% of the newspapers using a sliding scale for determination of newshole size could never produce a newspaper that contained more than 29% news, while 89% (100-11) could never produce a newspaper that contained less than 29% news.

A percentage formula that remains fixed regardless of the volume of advertising is utilized by 7% of the newspapers. These newspapers average 44% non-advertising matter, but some carry as little as 25% and others as much as 55%.

Table 7

Additional Methods for Determining
Newshole Size^a

Methods of Determination	No. of Newspapers
Minimum news needs are always met	8
Whatever is left after ads are in	6
Fixed minimum number of pages used	6
Number of pages based on ad needs	5
Cooperation between ad and news depts.	3
Managing editor calls for what's needed	2

^aManaging editors of newspapers that did not use a fixed minimum or percentage formula for determining newshole size were asked to explain their systems.

The 32% of the newspapers that do not use fixed-minimum, sliding percentage or fixed-percentage methods of newshole determination list a variety of other systems. Responses range from using a fixed number of pages for news to using whatever space the managing editor calls for on a particular day. (See Table 7.)

The specific system for determining the newshole size is not static. Only 19% of the managing editors say their newspapers never revise the formula. (See Table 8.) Interestingly, 10% added notes to the questionnaire saying that the newsprint shortage had prompted revision of the formula.

Table 8
Frequency of Revision of Newshole
Determination System

Frequency of Revision	No. of Newspapers	% of Newspapers
Quarterly	4	3
Semi-annually	5	4
Annually	18	13
Every 2 to 5 years	15	11
Never	26	19
Other	66	49
Total	134	99 ^a

^aPercentages do not total 100 because of rounding.

The titles of the participants in newshole policy revisions vary greatly from newspaper to newspaper. The most common practice is for the decision to be made through consultation of the publisher and executives from both the advertising and news departments. This is the case at 31% of the newspapers. The publisher participates in some way at more than half (58%) of the newspapers. (See Table 9.)

A majority of the managing editors take part, with varying roles, in the formula revision. Some 26% say they negotiate for the news department during the deliberations, while 30% say they participate in an advisory role. Another 10% report that they are instrumental in making the decision, while 3%

Table 9
Participants in Newshole
Formula Revision

<u>Participants</u>	<u>No. of Newspapers</u>	<u>% of Newspapers</u>
Publisher and news and advertising executives	38	31
General manager and some combination of executives	28	23
Editor and some combination of executives excluding general manager and/or publisher	17	14
Publisher and news executives	14	11
Publisher only	8	7
Publisher and combination of executives including news personnel	7	6
Publisher and combination of executives excluding news personnel	4	3
Editor only	3	2
General manager only	3	2
Total	122	99 ^a

^aPercentages do not total 100 because of rounding.

say they are simply informed about the decision. The remaining 30% fall into the broad category of "other" that represents a myriad of roles in the formula revision process.

Regardless of the system used, 68% of the managing editors know the newshole size for their weekly editions at least one day ahead of deadline. Editors for Sunday newspapers have more lead time, however. About 76% know at least one day ahead.

A majority of the managing editors appears to be satisfied with their newspapers' methods of determining newshole size. About 28% call their system highly adequate, 63% say it's adequate and 9% think it's inadequate.

However, 11% (or one out of nine managing editors) say they would prefer another system. About half of these say they want a system that will give them more autonomy in determining the size of the newshole, and the others say they don't have any system but would like one.

An overwhelming majority of the managing editors find that they need extra space on at least one day during the typical month. That is, 93% say they negotiate for additional space at least once a month, after the size of the newshole has already been determined. Some 55% of the managing editors try for extra space three or more times per month. They say they are usually successful. (See Table 10.)

Table 10
Managing Editors' Negotiations
for Additional Space

Frequency of Negotiation During Average Month	Managing Editors Negotiating		Managing Editors Negotiating Successfully	
	No.	%	No.	%
Occasionally, but an average of less than once a month	8	7	7	7
1-2	43	39	44 ^b	44
3-4	36	33	31	31
5-6	16	15	13	13
7 or more	7	7	6	6
Total	110	101 ^a	101	101 ^a

^aPercentages do not total 100% because of rounding.

^bAt first glance, the table seems to indicate that 44 managing editors were successful at negotiating for added space once or twice a month even though only 43 of them negotiated that often. What this shows, however, is that some of the managing editors who negotiated more than twice a month were successful only part of the time.

When the managing editors need additional space, they negotiate with various combinations of newspaper executives. Only 5% are able to make unilateral decisions to increase newshole size. (See Table 11.)

Managing editors are equally likely to negotiate extra space for scheduled events and late-breaking stories when needed. (See Table 12.)

Data about the proximity of stories for which managing editors request additional space provide few surprises. About 64% say they are most likely to negotiate a larger newshole for local stories. (See Table 13.) Only 31% say they are most likely to seek additional space for all types of stories.

Although only 5% of the managing editors say they can unilaterally increase news hole size by pulling out advertising when extra space is needed, 52% say they have the authority

Table 13
Proximity of News for Which Managing Editors are Most Likely to Negotiate Additional Space

Proximity of News	Negotiations		Successful Negotiations	
	No. of Managing Editors	% Managing Editors	No. of Managing Editors	% Managing Editors
Local	70	64	75 ^b	68
State	0	0	0	0
National	4	4	5	5
International	1	1	0	0
All of Above	34	31	31	28
Total	109	100	111	101 ^a

^aPercentages do not total 100 because of rounding error.

^bAt first glance the table seems to indicate that 75 of the managing editors successfully negotiated for more space for local news even though only 70 said they negotiated. What this shows, however, is that a few of those who negotiated for all types of news were successful only with local. Also, two more managing editors answered the question about success than answered the question about number of negotiations.

to authorize additional pages without negotiation. Of those with such authority, 59% use it fewer than six times a year, while 31% use it from 7 to 25 times. Another 11% say they authorize additional pages about once every two weeks.

Adding pages, however, is only one of the managing editor's options for handling late-breaking stories after the newshole is filled. The most frequently used methods are the displacing of other news or the removal of house ads. As might be predicted, the least used option is pulling a paid ad. (See Table 14.)

Table 14
Managing Editors' Use of Options for Handling
Late-breaking Stories After the Newshole is Filled^a

Managing Editors' Options	% of Managing Editors Using Options							
	Never	Frequency of Use in 1973-74						
		1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-51	More than 51
Paid ad pulled ^a (N=73)	70	15	8	3	1	0	1	1
House ad pulled ^a (N=94)	4	45	20	22	10	3	12	14
Other news displaced (N=85)	5	5	14	8	7	15	15	31
Pages added (N=101)	9	35	29	9	4	4	8	3
Story used later ^a (N=70)	13	10	17	4	6	4	17	29

^aExample of how to read the table. The figure in the upper-left corner means 70% of the 73 managing editors responding to the question never pulled a paid ad in order to obtain additional space for news. The next figure in the top row, however, means that 15% of the responding managing editors pulled a paid advertisement one to five times.

The newsroom, of course, is not alone in needing additional space on occasion. Nearly every managing editor reports that his newspaper's newshole was changed (presumably reduced) at least once during the past year because of advertising department needs. This was almost a weekly occurrence at 19% of the newspapers. (See Table 15.)

Table 15
Frequency of Newshole Size Changes During
1973-74 as a Result of Advertising
Department Needs

Frequency of Newshole Change	No. of Newspapers	% of Newspapers
Never	7	5
1-5	17	13
6-10	27	21
11-15	15	12
16-20	8	6
21-25	11	9
26-51	19	15
More than 51	25	19
Total	129	100

News Potential Index

The data were analyzed to determine whether newshole policies of newspapers scoring high on the Danielson-Adams news potential index differ from those scoring low. As mentioned earlier, newspapers high on the index are more likely than others to use a standardized newshole. This means newspapers with a fixed minimum tend to have larger circulation, more staff members and more pages on a typical weekday than newspapers without a standardized newshole. Fixed minimum newspapers devote significantly more space to advertising, however, meaning that the proportion of space set aside for news is less than for newspapers using other newshole formulas.

There are several other differences between newspapers with the fixed minimum and those without. The fixed minimum newspapers tend to give a larger proportion of space to women's news, editorials and sports, but there are no significant differences between the two groups in the proportion of newshole allocated to local, state, national or international news.

The data also were analyzed to determine whether there were differences between newspapers with large fixed minimums and those with smaller ones. As might be expected, managing editors of newspapers with larger minimum newsholes are less likely than others to want to change their system of determining newshole size. The managing editors of newspapers with larger fixed minimum newsholes are also more likely than others to think their present newshole size is "about right" in the reader's opinion. Such newspapers also tend to score higher on the news potential index.

Publisher Participation In Newshole Formula Revision

The newspapers were divided into two groups on the basis of whether or not the publisher was involved in newshole formula revision. One might speculate that the publisher is more likely than others to keep a tight rein on newshole size because of economic considerations. In fact, the analysis showed no differences between news allocation policies of those newspapers with and without publisher involvement. The two groups were alike in size of newshole and the amount of newshole space devoted to various categories of news.

Group Owned vs. Independent

A similar analysis of ownership showed few differences between group-owned and independent newspapers. The newshole size and proportion of newspapers devoted to news are the same for both. Also, the analysis disclosed no quantitative differences in the types of news included in the newshole or the method for determining newshole size. The two groups scored about the same on the news potential index.

In fact, the only difference is a tendency for the managing editors of group-owned newspapers to serve in an advisory capacity or as a negotiator for the news department in discussions about the revision of the newshole formula. At non-group newspapers, the managing editor is more likely to make the decision himself. This difference may be the result of a larger, more complex organization for group newspapers.

The present analysis supports the results of an ownership study by Grotta in which independent and chain newspapers were compared on a number of quantitative factors. Grotta found no differences in newshole size, number of employes or amount of local coverage.¹⁰

Circulation Size

As mentioned above, large newspapers are more likely than smaller newspapers to have fixed minimum systems, and larger newspapers have larger newsholes. The proportion of the newspaper devoted to news, however, is less for larger newspapers than for smaller ones.

Also, larger newspapers give greater proportions of their space to state, national, international, financial and women's news than do smaller newspapers, and they devote more space to editorials.

Although there is no difference between large and small newspapers in frequency of negotiation for a larger newshole, managing editors at smaller newspapers are more likely to be successful in their efforts. When negotiating, managing editors at smaller newspapers are more likely to seek additional space for local news, while managing editors of large newspapers are more likely to negotiate for all other types of news. Small newspaper managing editors are more likely to be successful in negotiations for local news, and

editors from larger newspapers are more likely to achieve success with all other types of news.

Managing editors from small circulation newspapers are more likely than their counterparts from large circulation newspapers to view the audience as unhappy with newshole size. Also, editors of small newspapers are more likely to want to change their systems for determining newshole size.

Perceived Competition

Although there are few directly competing daily newspapers in the United States, there is competition from suburban newspapers and broadcast media. The questionnaire asked managing editors whether they perceive themselves as competing with other news-gathering agencies. The researchers then looked for differences between newspapers whose managing editors perceive serious competition and those whose managing editors do not.

Managing editors are much more likely to see themselves competing for news with other newspapers than with the broadcast media. (See Table 16.) When the question is

Table 16
Managing Editors' Perceptions of Competition
for News from Various Media^a

Amount of Competition	% of Managing Editors who see Competition from:		
	Radio	Television	Other Newspapers
Strong	9	16	29
Moderate	30	21	38
Weak	50	45	29
No competition	11	18	5
Total	100 (N=140)	100 (N=140)	101 ^b (N=140)

^aExample of how to read table. The figure in the upper left corner indicates 9% of the 140 managing editors responding see strong competition for news from radio.

^bPercentage does not total 100 because of rounding.

rephrased to deal with perception of competition for advertisements, however, more managing editors (63%) see radio as providing strong or moderate competition. (See Table 17.)

Table 17
**Managing Editors' Perceptions of Competition—
 for Advertising from Various Media^a**

<u>Amount of Competition</u>	<u>% of Managing Editors who see Competition from:</u>		
	<u>Radio</u>	<u>Television</u>	<u>Other Newspapers</u>
Strong	15	16	26
Moderate	48	27	17
Weak	33	34	37
No competition	4	23	21
Total	100 (N=136)	100 (N=134)	101 ^b (N=132)

^aExample of how to read table. The figure in the upper-left corner indicates 15% of the 136 managing editors responding perceive strong competition from radio.

^bPercentage does not total 100 because of rounding.

Managing editors working for group-owned newspapers are more likely than others to see television as providing competition. Radio is viewed as a more serious competitor by managing editors from small newspapers than it is by managing editors from large newspapers. The latter finding probably results from the fact that radio is often the only competing news medium in a small town.

Also, managing editors of newspapers with a fixed-minimum newshole are more likely than their counterparts to perceive competition for news and advertisements from other newspapers.

Summary and Conclusions

The proportion of space set aside for non-advertising content in today's typical newspaper (45%) has changed little during recent years. Larger newspapers tend to have a larger newshole in terms of column inches, but the percentage of the newspaper containing news is smaller than that for smaller circulation newspapers. Managing editors say more of their newspapers' newsholes are allocated to local news than to news from other places.

Newspapers utilizing a fixed minimum system for determining newshole size tend to be larger-circulation newspapers

that rank higher on a news potential index than those using other systems. Fixed-minimum newspapers also set aside larger proportions of space for women's news, editorials and sports.

Although the fixed-minimum is the most popular method for determining newshole size, the number of newspapers using this system has slightly declined in recent years.

Most managing editors say they are satisfied with present newshole policy.

Footnotes

¹Mark Mehler, "Effects of Tight Newsprint Being Felt by Some Papers," *Editor and Publisher* (August 11, 1973) pp. 12-13. See also: Robert S. Chuck, "Ways to Conserve Newsprint, an ANPA Survey," *Newspaper Production* (May 1974), pp. 38-40.

²Ralph D. Casey and Thomas H. Copeland Jr., "Current News Hole Policies of Daily Newspapers: A Survey," *Journalism Quarterly*, 34:175-186, (1957). See also: Alan S. Donahoe, "Space Control by Newspapers: An Analysis and a Plan," *Journalism Quarterly* 33:278-286 (Summer 1956); and Ben H. Bagdikian, "Fat Newspapers and Thin Coverage," *Columbia Journalism Review* Vol. 12, No. 3 (Sept./Oct. 1973) pp. 15-20.

³We wish to thank George Gill of the Louisville Courier-Journal, Stu Huffman of the Columbus (Ind.) Republic, Steve Hofer of the Bloomington (Ind.) Herald-Telephone, Jack Backer of the Indiana Daily Student, and Dr. Galen Rarick of the News Research Center for their help in development of the questionnaire.

⁴For example, average weekday circulation from data in the 1973 *Editor and Publisher Yearbook* is 49,378, while the average for this sample is 50,781. Also, data from the *Yearbook* for the proportion of newspapers in various circulation categories correspond closely to those for this study, as do the figures for the proportion of morning and evening newspapers.

⁵Casey and Copeland, *Op. Cit.*, p. 176.

⁶All percentages reported in this study are based on the total number of responses to each question.

⁷See "News and Editorial Content and Readership of the Daily Newspaper," *News Research Bulletin*, No. 5, April 26, 1973, pp. 26-27.

⁸Casey and Copeland, *Op. Cit.*, p. 178.

⁹Wayne A. Danielson and John B. Adams, "Completeness of Press Coverage of the 1960 Campaign, *Journalism Quarterly* 38:441-462 (Autumn 1961).

¹⁰Gerald L. Grotta, "Consolidation of Newspapers: What Happens to the Consumer?," *Journalism Quarterly* 48:245-250 (Summer 1971).