

DANIEL
ZARCHY

The Endangered Newspaper

Last year was a landmark year for many reasons. We saw everything from the presidential election and the Beijing Olympics to in-depth coverage of Heath Ledger's untimely death. But in 2009, as much as these same reporters try to stay on the other side of the story, newspapers have been headline news — and not in a good way.

Our country's oldest and most venerable journalistic institutions are hurting. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* is in bankruptcy, the *Rocky Mountain News* has closed its doors, and even our own *San Francisco Chronicle* gasps its last breaths; student newspapers are left in somewhat of a gray area.

This week we've seen the *Oregon Daily Emerald*, University of Oregon's student newspaper, go on strike in protest of what they see as a violation of their editorial independence by its board of directors. The original decision by the board, to hire a publisher with a good deal of power, came as part of sweeping changes intended to help the *Emerald* live within their means.

The specific details of the *Emerald* strike are far too nuanced for me to take a stance just yet; after all, as the old saying goes, "If your mother says she loves you, check it out." Still, as the world of professional journalism crashes down around those who hoped to one day be paid for putting pen to paper, this debate brings up a sad truth.

The *Emerald* is deeply in the red, and is being forced to make some tough decisions. *City on a Hill Press* is actually not doing too badly financially; as the economy continues to hurt, our advertising revenue — our main source of income — has stayed fairly strong. We haven't yet had to cut our distribution or reduce our frequency of publication: fates some of our fellow UC papers have suffered.

The demand for professional journalism will never go away, and despite the thousands upon thousands of news blogs popping up claiming to be the "future of journalism," nothing is that simple. Most major newspapers — those with the resources to send correspondents to Washington or fund long-term, investigative projects — are going the way of the dino-

saur, and nobody is stepping up to fill their places.

We're coming to rely on fewer and fewer official news sources and citizen journalism attempts to fill in the cracks.

Still, we need newspapers, and we need to have papers that recognize their place and mandate in society, to inform the public about matters relevant to them, and to put in the time and effort it takes to get to the bottom of stories. While having more than one publication working on a story can be beneficial — competition forces reporters to dig deep — most papers need to recognize what they should concentrate on, and consumers should demand what they want to see in their local papers.

As everyone jumped to try to be the first to announce Clinton's appointment to Secretary of State, or to opine on President Obama's Iraq evacuation timetable, in-depth local reporting has fallen by the wayside.

Locals need to support their local papers not out of obligation, but out of a need for information. Newspapers that undergo rounds of editing, fact checking and a commitment to impartiality still produce the best journalistic content.

Though many lament the drop in subscriptions and advertisers as effects of the economic crisis, papers have been failing in their mission. As children of the Internet age, we know the first rule of economics in our bones, something that the newspaper industry as a whole has failed to acknowledge: people will not — ever — pay for something that they can find for free.

To survive, a local paper needs to provide something more than a dressed-down version of a story from NYTimes.com. It needs to provide a local window into our community.

Newspapers shouldn't be a charity, and subscribing shouldn't be an altruistic act. Support your local paper, but push for them to deserve your business. Make it known what you expect, and hold them accountable. A world with a vibrant journalistic industry is better for everyone, and an interested, proactive public is the key.

EDITORIAL

A Hard Rain Needs To Fall

Despite last month's rainfall, the city of Santa Cruz is facing a critical water shortage, along with the rest of the state.

Central Valley farms and residents who depend on state and federal water supplies are up a creek, and there's no paddle in sight. Although the Monterey area and Santa Cruz are doing well by comparison, California is in a state of emergency.

And water conservation is not just the solution; it is the future.

If necessity is the mother of invention, then it's necessary to reinvent the American and Californian lifestyle. Twenty-minute showers, half-empty wash loads, and other reckless acts of disregard for the value of water are no longer acceptable. The time to reconcile humanity's irresponsible consumption of natural resources is now past.

In the face of such scarcity of our most valuable resource, priorities need to be reevaluated. It is up to the consumer to decide whether indulging oneself in a bath is more important than affordable produce, for this is the decision we are faced with.

With the absence of state and federal support, many of California's farmers who produce fruits and vegetables for our state and the rest of the nation will face the dire financial implications of massive underproduction due to the lack of water.

California is the nation's No. 1 exporter of fresh produce. Hence, if no compromise can be made in regard to the allocation of water to the state's farms, the nation will face soaring prices in the grocery store and food scarcity.

Countless jobs will be lost, the numbers of which are impossible to determine due to the volume of undocumented workers who participate in the agricultural industry. Small farming towns will wither.

Our nation of consumers often neglects pursuing responsible behavior in favor of a blissful ignorance of the consequences of their actions. Golf course greens and shopping mall fountains monopolize water for aesthetics that would better serve us in

more practical applications. Consumerism contributes to a mindset that water is a luxury to be taken for granted. People do not cope well with the idea that the substance second only to oxygen in importance to our existence is a precious gift that is not to be squandered.

Conscientious living does not require that everyone forfeit common comforts; it involves making the decision every day to take a shorter shower, using efficient appliances like water-saving showerheads, and collecting excess water and putting it to use watering plants.

Californians have already compromised the quality and quantity of fresh water in the state by acting irresponsibly in waste disposal, the consequence being a bacterial contaminant present in our fresh water. *Giardia* has made fresh water in California not potable.

The time has come and passed for Californians to recognize the consequences of their actions. Water conservation is a program that must be prioritized in order to secure the integrity of California's present agricultural industry and the future of the state's well-being.

City on a Hill Press would like to congratulate its staffers for their recent awards from the California Collegiate Media Association

Best News Feature, **First Place:** "Fixed-Gear Fever," by *Jeremy Spitz*

Best Back to School/Orientation Issue, **First Place:** *Primer 2008*, by *Primer Staff*

Best Photo Illustration, **Second Place**, by *Phil Carter*