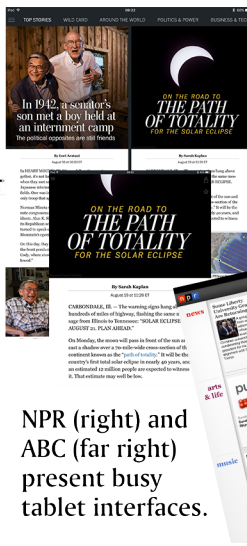
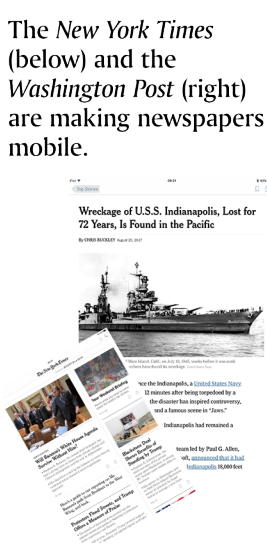




The Changing Face of Websites in a Mobile Age

CHANGES IN THE NEWS BUSINESS HAVE LESSONS FOR THE REST OF US. IF YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS TO COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE, HAVING A WEBSITE THAT DOESN'T PLAY WELL ON A TABLET OR A PHONE IS A DISADVANTAGE.

The *New York Times* (below) and the *Washington Post* (right) are making newspapers mobile.



Al Jazeera is horizontal.



NPR (right) and ABC (far right) present busy tablet interfaces.

The *New Yorker* (above) takes full advantage of the medium, while *Time* replicates the print version.

The way we obtain news has been changing. The number of people who get most, or even some, of their news from printed newspapers has declined drastically over the past 30 years. Television is still in the top position, but not for long. A Pew Research project shows that just under 60% of Americans *often* get news via television. About 38% cited on-line resources, 25% said radio, and just 20% mentioned print newspapers.

Clearly that's why newspapers are doing everything they can to find a way to make on-line delivery profitable. Larger newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* are doing fine, but newspapers in smaller cities are struggling.

The *New York Times*, for example, now has 3.3 million paid subscribers and revenue from the digital side is about \$442 billion. Revenue from the print business is still more than double that from digital, though. It's possible, perhaps

likely, that newspapers will become fully digital operations over time.

Newsweek tried that, but then had to return to a print version. The printed magazine is priced realistically at \$140 per year while the digital-only version is \$40. *Time Magazine*, however, seems to have the equation backwards: \$40 per year for print and digital, \$30 for print only. Just printing and postage probably cost more than that.

Television's top position won't last. The Pew Research project showed that 85% of those over 65 often get news from television and only 20% cited on-line. But look at the 18-29-year-old demographic: Under 30% cite television as a prime source of news and 50% said on-line. The survey was conducted early in 2016.

In 2013, 54% of the respondents in a similar survey said that they obtained news from digital resources at least some of the time. By 2016, that share had increased to 72%.

So clearly the future for the news business is digital. Not all digital news sites are equally usable, though. The illustrations here are all from an iPad Pro with a 10.5-inch screen. That makes the device about the size of a magazine and the resolution is 264 pixels per inch. As a result, the digital display is at least as good as what can be produced by 4-color process printing used for magazines.

The *New Yorker's* presentation on a tablet is the best I've seen. The table of contents appears just as it does in the magazine. Tapping one of the section headlines or story headlines navigates to that section or story, but you can also page through the magazine by swiping to the left. This could be cumbersome because the magazine has many long-form articles that fill many pages.

Swiping left or right navigates forward and backward one article at a time. Once an article is open, scrolling down reveals the full content.



This is a perfect solution that uses the tablet's capabilities to the reader's advantage. For example, I typically skip "Goings on About Town" because the information is useful only to those who are in New York City. Had the designer maintained a typical magazine page format, moving to the next section ("Talk of the Town") would take 13 swipes.

The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* take completely different approaches to presenting a newspaper in electronic form. In the *New York Times*, the front page looks nothing like the newspaper. Instead, it contains information about the dozen or so articles deemed most noteworthy. An icon reveals a list of sections.

The *Washington Post* places two articles side-by-side. Each column scrolls independently of the other and additional items appear as the user swipes to the left. As with the *New Yorker*, each of the articles is in a single scrollable column. Those who prefer a wider text block can tap any column to make it full screen.

Time magazine maintains the look and feel of the print publication, which might be a bit chaotic for a small screen.

Broadcast news organizations seem not to have mastered website design to the extent that traditional publishers have. NPR displays lots of equal-size boxes so that it's unclear which items

might be more noteworthy. The BBC takes a similar approach.

ABC Television's on-line presence needs to provide access to entertainment programs and news, so the user has to drill down from the top just to get to the news section.

Making Your Website Accessible

Two terms are important to understand: Adaptive and responsive. Both attempt to fit the contents of the website into whatever size window the site is being viewed on. Responsive design is fluid, while adaptive design has two or more explicit sizing options and jumps between them as the display window changes.

In practice, it's more complicated than that, of course. A lot more complicated. Consider, for example, TechByter.com. On a monitor that's 1280 pixels wide, all content is present and nothing wraps. The "Spare Parts" section is in a column on the right. At 960 pixels, the standard menu disappears and is replaced by a menu icon and both columns are considerably narrower. At 740 pixels, the layout is no longer sufficient to maintain two columns, so "Spare Parts" moves to the bottom of the page. The site will display acceptably on any screen down to about 440 pixels wide. No current hardware has a screen that small.

If you'd like to see what your website looks like on various devices, visit <http://quirktools.com/screenfly/> or <http://whatismyscreenresolution.net/multi-screen-test>, enter your site's URL, and choose a device. Ω

Support Net Neutrality

Some see this topic as political, but net neutrality is really a high-stakes money issue. It appears that the heads of some big internet service providers see a huge financial payoff from dividing internet users.

Consumer Reports recently asked "Do you think it's okay for your internet service provider — the company, such as Comcast or Verizon, that connects you to the internet — to decide what websites you can visit or to determine which streaming services will look best on your smart TV?"

The magazine followed up with this: "If the answer is *no*, you're probably in favor of net neutrality."

It really is just this simple:

- You have agreed to pay an internet service provider to deliver *any content you want*, reliably and without delay. You pay the internet service provider a fee each month to do this.
- You visit free sites such as YouTube or Vimeo and paid sites such as Netflix to view content you want.
- The sites such as YouTube, Vimeo, Netflix, and hundreds more fulfill their part of the bargain by sending content to you.
- The internet service provider fulfills its part of the bargain by delivering the content you have paid them to deliver.

That's the way the internet works now, but the Federal Communications Commission's net neutrality rules are under attack.

Now is the time to speak up if you value the internet. Regardless of who says what, it's likely that the FCC will vote to dismantle net neutrality rules.

Writing to your representative or senator might be a way to retain a system that, while far from perfect, at least is designed to ensure that ISPs deliver the content we've paid for.

Delay at everyone's peril. Ω