

“Funnel Time” in the Heartland: Shifting Temporalities and Changing Materialities at the *Omaha World-Herald*

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The digital transformation of Nebraska’s *Omaha World-Herald* offers a counterfactual: whether the newspaper industry’s transition to digital news would have been so jarring had a newspaper kept up a tradition of multiple print editions. In 2016, the newspaper ended its “all-day” publication cycle of both a print morning and print evening edition to prioritize digital news and the morning newspaper. The unique affordances of this particular case and its local culture of production bring together questions of time, materiality, and geography. Introduced is the concept of “funnel time” as a way to understand the multidimensionality of time as experienced by journalists and as captured in news objects.

Keywords: digital journalism, temporality, materiality, geography, news ethnography, funnel time, extreme/divergent cases, cultures of production, news objects

In March 2016, the *Omaha World-Herald* (*OWH*) in Nebraska announced that it would be moving from an “all-day” print newspaper, one that printed both a morning and an afternoon newspaper, to a once-a-day morning print edition and a revamped 24/7 digital news site. Publisher Terry Kroeger’s (2016) note to readers positioned the newspaper as a historical anachronism: “You might find it interesting to know that the *OWH*, as near as we can tell, is the only remaining ‘all day’ subscription-based newspaper in the world” (para. 3). With a few exceptions, morning newspapers have been the norm for decades in the United States. In fact, by the 1980s, the vast majority of afternoon newspapers had closed, consolidated with a morning newspaper, or switched their publishing schedule to the morning (Benjaminson, 1984). Curiously, in Omaha, in 2016, 30,000 residents, a third of total print subscribers, were still getting an evening newspaper; 8,000 of them subscribed to both morning and evening editions. Although there has been a call to move beyond newsroom ethnographies (Zelizer, 2018), this atypical case of a legacy newsroom in transition engages with a larger theoretical discussion about the changing nature of technology, time, and materiality, offering much needed “temporal reflexivity” (Carlson & Lewis, 2018) in studies of news innovation.

Scholars of new media have observed that digitization and new technologies have significant consequences for creative workers (including journalists). Chief among these concerns are the perception and reality of temporal acceleration, the need for reskilling and the fragility of labor, the creation of low-value content to respond to digital churn, renegotiations of ephemerality and permanence, and a

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reorientation of one's autonomy in a postcapitalist society (e.g., Deuze, 2005; Irani, 2015; Wajcman, 2014). Journalism studies generally reflect these larger theoretical trends, devoting substantial attention to the growing list of economic, cultural, technological, and political threats to the field and to news workers (e.g., Avilés & Carvajal, 2008; Boczkowski, 2005; Deuze, 2013; Domingo et al., 2015; Hanusch, 2017; Klinenberg, 2005; Larrondo et al., 2016; Le Cam & Domingo, 2015; Michelstein & Boczkowski, 2009; Robinson, 2011; Ryfe, 2013; Usher, 2014).

However, the *OWH* serves as a counterfactual: If a newspaper waited until digital culture was well established to abandon a print production schedule that kept up an all-day deadline intensity, how might journalists' relationship to time, to their work, and to what they produce change? And moreover, why did this change take so long? What was it about Omaha that enabled this delayed temporal shift? In this case, the newspaper was not just "late" to end its evening edition, but it did so in the midlife of the digital era. The city itself—a mid-sized Midwestern city in the United States—is often overlooked as "flyover country" by coastal urbanites and international visitors (Kendzior, 2018), but this is precisely what is of scholarly interest: Omaha's temporal patterns and geographic affordances are vastly different from research conducted on news in global megalopolises, in large regional centers, or in hyperlocal contexts. In addition, the *OWH*'s institutional history departs from many U.S. newspapers; the newspaper still has substantial representation of self-declared "old timers" who remember the era of hot type and 13 editions. Between 2009 and 2016, more recent hires also experienced the closure of four separate print editions with distinct geographic framing, distribution, and deadlines. This enables a comparative assessment of change that encompasses a more distant and a more recent past.

With this context in mind, using data gathered from ethnographic fieldwork at the newspaper, the article offers three interventions. First, the concept of "funnel time" is developed as a counter to the prevailing notion of time as linear acceleration. Funnel time helps explain the coexistence of divergent temporal practices and shifting temporal affordances of objects and its eponymous name is a recall to the American heartland's propensity to tornados, funnel clouds, and land spouts (reverse funnel clouds). Second, the article reinforces the importance of studying how the local contingencies of time, geography, and culture structure technological adaptation, responding to Wahl-Jorgenson's (2019) call for "nitty-gritty empirical work" that pays "attention to the complexities of networked interactions in communities that are geographically bounded but globally connected" (p. 8). Third, it asserts the value of the divergent or extreme case in qualitative research. The article begins with a review of the theory and research driving the inquiry, moves to the method and the case, and then discusses findings and implications.

Time, Place, and the Digitized Journalist

Given new technologies and other associated pressures of late capitalism, theorization about time has been pervasive in communication, sociology, and beyond. More broadly, Harvey's (1989) "space-time compression" and Giddens' (1991) "time-space distancing" reflect the idea that new technologies increase the speed at which we are connected, diminishing the effect of physical distance. Castells (1996/2011) adds that digital technologies (e.g., the Internet) are responsible for accelerating the speed of communication as well as amplifying the quantity of information available. The concept of "Internet time" has taken hold, with

new technological developments changing the world faster than any previous technological developments pre-Internet (Karpf, 2012).

Also connected to this conversation about temporal acceleration is a question about the specificity of places: Scholars squabble about whether we have lapsed into "placelessness" (Augé, 1995; Relph, 1976), or whether the particular material affordances of places matter more than ever (Appadurai, 1996; Sassen, 1999). Some argue that, in fact, poor places, rich places, big cities, and so forth have all started to resemble each other, typologies rather than unique locales with their own specific material contingencies. The effect of electronic communication on the compression of space has the effect of what Carey (1998) describes as "the world simultaneously comes together and falls apart" (p. 326): We dissociate our experience of being emplaced even as we are more linked together. As Barnhurst (2016) argues, the speed of news, the live broadcasting of television, and commercial imperatives mean that we experience place, both mediated and unmediated, as simulacra. What the case of the *OWH* offers, then, is a way to bring together these questions of temporal acceleration and place-based specificities within the context of news production research, probing whether digital journalism's narrative of temporal acceleration and disempowered journalists might have ignored nuances and differential outcomes.

Temporal Orders and Digital Journalism

Scholars argue that the rise of the Web eviscerated patterned and predictable news routines in favor of a constant, unyielding, digital deadline shared by all news outlets given that any outlet (or anyone) at any time can publish online. Of course, "immediacy" has been a core value of journalism since even its early modern forms (Schudson, 1981). However, nonmedia historians may overlook that it was not uncommon for one newspaper to have multiple print editions to keep pace with ongoing developments or that afternoon newspapers served a similar purpose (Benjaminson, 1984). The "stopwatch" culture of broadcast news (Schlesinger, 1987), accelerated in a cable journalism era, reflects that different media have had to deal with their own time pressures.

However, "immediacy" also emerges as a core, if not defining value, of online news (Deuze, 2005). As Reich and Godler (2014) write of digital journalism,

We conceptualize the reporters' time schedule as a meta-constraint, embodying developments such as dwindling workforce, homogenization of news content across media, and technological innovations which cause both necessary and unnecessary accelerations in news production. (p. 607)

In journalism, particularly for legacy newspapers transitioning to a 24/7 digital environment, the perceptions of ruptured temporal patterns have memorably been called a "news cyclone" (Klinenberg, 2005), with the "hamsterization" (Starkman, 2010) of journalists responsible for low-value, regularly updated content, thanks to the perceived unyielding demands of ASAP digital journalism (Usher, 2014). Findings have indicated isomorphism about the powerful ways in which new technologies have disrupted professional journalism, with minor variations based on specific contingencies (e.g., organizational structure and culture, digital strategies, the type of innovation, ownership structures; Lowrey, 2011). In some cases,

a compulsive emphasis on speed enables journalists to retain a perception of professional autonomy (Reich & Godler, 2014; Usher, 2018), although there are dubious consequences for the quality of the content itself (Saltzis, 2012).

Journalists' ownership of their time is critical to their autonomy and authority. However, digital journalism takes a particularly dark turn when full-time journalists feel unable to control their own workflow, story selection, economic futures, and even the dynamics of their relationship with their readers (Wahl-Jorgenson, 2015). The reaction to overwork, churn, speed, and fragility has been particularly visible as digital journalists seek to unionize (Freedman et al., 2018). In response, the "slow journalism" movement seeks to recognize new modalities of time that are also possible in digital news to advance beyond the narrative of linear acceleration; like the slow food movement, journalism can be slowly crafted with care in digital form (Le Masurier, 2015), although the practicalities of incorporating this into a newsroom remain challenging.

Anany (2016) makes a critical intervention, arguing that this question of whether journalism has or has not sped up thanks to digital advances is beside the point; what matters is that both the speed of actions and the perception of this speed are a "temporal assemblage" cocreated by both people and nonhuman actors. However, as Barnhurst and Nightingale (2018) argue, time is increasingly elusive for journalists, particularly as they try to map "clock time" against a modernist logic in which past, present, and future blend together. Moreover, time is socially constructed: Whereas clock time presumes a measurable linearity, time is also a cultural and a social sensibility. Barnhurst and Nightingale offer a reminder to think critically about the material and the social conditions of the transformation of digital journalism and coexistence of multiple temporalities.

Temporal Objects

More generally, scholars have shown that communication technologies evolve, take on new use cases (Jenkins, 2006), and establish different social-information systems (Meyrowitz, 1986). Similarly, scholars have established that the news object/product/technology can embody temporal orders that shift over time.¹ There is strong historical support for shifting temporal affordances in news objects. For example, the "press-radio war" differentiated newspaper journalism from radio, with newspapers becoming more comprehensive as radio offered immediate news updates (Jackaway, 1994). Going "live" with real-time images has continued to be a major claim to television's relevance, but television also becomes a critical source of history and memory (Scannell, 2009). O'Sullivan, Fortunati, Taipale, and Barnhurst (2017) find that print and digital might be thought of with more continuity, with each form evolving to include aspects of the other and put forward the idea of "media materiality" as a way to think about the newspaper as an object and as an institution.

Other research generally suggests that print has become increasingly associated with permanence (Gitelman, 2014; Usher, 2014). Whereas the public worries about the right to be forgotten, digital archivists

¹ The shorthand *news object* is used here given the connection of the term to the line of research on "objects of journalism" and the social construction of technology.

underscore the ephemerality of digital news thanks to linkrot and unmarked updates, among other challenges (Hansen & Paul, 2017). Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger (2015, 2018) develop the concept of "temporal affordances," or the "temporal constraints and possibilities of media technologies" (2018, p. 1047); however, they are specifically looking at content—and find, contrary to expectation, that print narrative structure is more future-oriented, whereas online is more past-oriented. The *OWH* offers a unique opportunity through which to look at shifting temporal affordances of both news objects as well as journalistic routines: elucidating changes for news workers and for news objects as they adjust to faster or slower paces and expectations for content.

Shifting Temporalities in Specific Places

A call to bring together place, materiality, and temporality in news production research is warranted; certainly, there has been sufficient scholarship on each of these concepts alone, or even in tandem, but rarely all three at once. One difficulty in doing so has been the persistent muddying of the terms *space* and *place*, in journalism studies and communication, as well as in their conceptual "home" disciplines of human geography and cultural sociology (Adams, 2009)—consider Castells' (1996/2011) effort to designate the "space of places" and the "space of flows." If place, as geographer Tuan (1977) argues, is a "center of felt value" (p. 138), a site of cultural meaning that is physically, materially, and temporally instantiated (Gieryn, 2000), then space might be thought of as abstract or the extension across which capital and commodities flow (Taylor, 1999).

Certainly, there is research in media sociology about the connection among place, time, and news routines, from the classic news ethnographies (Fishman, 1988; Tuchman, 1980) to more recent work that explores the connection among news producers, news consumers, and local media ecologies (Anderson, 2013; Robinson, 2018). Journalists are presumed to have a critical place-making role, which is contested and negotiated by audiences (Gutsche, 2014; Hess, 2015). But when it comes to news innovation, the specificities of place can often be ignored in favor of more generalizable categories, for example, what is happening to "hyperlocal journalism" (Koniczna, 2018) or how "local news" is changing (Franklin, 2005), with the term *local* suffering acute definitional blurriness (Ali, 2017). Similarly, research into the rise of locative and mobile journalism (Goggin, Martin, & Dwyer, 2015; Schmitz Weiss, 2015) considers the "spaces" of news and information flows; although the research is often connected to a case study, geographic specificity is ignored. Place is a backdrop to action rather than "a force with detectable and independent effects on social life" (Gieryn, 2000, p. 466). One possible reason for this may be a failure to examine non-Western newsrooms, which might prompt different findings about the relationship between digitalization and local culture (Wasserman & de Beer, 2009).

However, how places inform changing cultures of news production within the newsroom has received less attention. Ali (2017) proposes a revised theory of localism to show the role of media policy on news, and Youmans (2017) makes an important intervention in his study of Al Jazeera, showing how newsroom priorities are influenced by external local cultures. However, front and center conversations about local perceptions of time and place and their impact on news production are largely missing. A study of the *International Herald Tribune* hints at the importance of this question: Despite constant and near-instant opportunities for digital connection, the difference between time zones in Hong Kong and New York

(headquarters of *The New York Times*) impacted the coordination of news production (Usher, 2015). Places have their own local culture of time (whether you can show up late to a meeting; if the bars stay open late) and their own geographic specificities (traffic, sprawl, public transportation), among other place-based differences (e.g., cultural sensitivities or demographics). The temporal and place-based concerns and their effect on local cultures of news production merit renewed attention given the larger connection to theories about space/time compression. Thus, two research questions guided this research, the first more specifically rooted in the case, and the second, driven by the theoretical concerns outlined above:

RQ1: How might the counterfactual of the OWH, which kept an all-day print production schedule well into the digital 24/7 era, challenge the prevailing scholarly understanding about digital change in newsrooms, particularly with respect to perceptions of temporal acceleration, overwork, and diminished news quality?

RQ2: How might local contexts of temporality, materiality, and geography impact how journalists experience digital change and the temporal affordances of news objects?

Method and the Methodological Value of the *Omaha World-Herald*

The *OWH* is an example of a “divergent case” or an “extreme case.” Case studies are often selected for confirmatory reasons or reasons that explore cross-case variation of similar observable characteristics; however, an extreme case is one that is so far outside what is commonly observed that it can help probe the various rationales for conditions and contexts that have led to generalizability thus far (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Whereas some scholars have cautioned against a creep toward novelty in communication research, which Benson (2017) argues results in a “new descriptivism” that “prevent[s] any gesture toward systematic critique, patterned observation, and generalizable explanation” (p. 27), others point out that a quest toward generalizability may lend itself to consensus thinking and conservatism (Bimber, 2003). A comparison with natural experiments in quantitative research helps reinforce the extreme case’s utility: A comparison or a control through which to measure change builds reliability and external validity, particularly when it offers the chance to compare the absence or presence of cause or condition as found in the real world (Dunning, 2012).

Although Omaha was not in a time capsule, its publishing model had been; in fact, it was only between 2009 and 2016 that the newspaper went from five distinct editions to three to two to one. Unlike other cities, the afternoon newspaper was never a separate newspaper with a separate staff. Instead, the *OWH*’s journalists were responsible for updating their own articles for subsequent print editions; there was never a lapse into an end-of-day once-daily print deadline. A second major difference is that the *OWH* has little intermedia competition: Its Sunday circulation of 170,000 and a newsroom staff of about 150 dwarf its nearest competitor in the state capital, the *Lincoln Journal Star* (circulation 70,000; Nebraska Press Association, n.d.). Although Omaha is ranked around the 40th largest city in the United States, its designated market area for TV has a fairly small footprint (74th in the United States; Lyons Public Relations, 2017), and *OWH* journalists said they were not overly concerned with competition from local news outlets, unlike in other metropolitan areas in the United States (Usher, 2016a). A third key difference is the *OWH*’s relative labor stability; until 2011, it was employee-owned, when it was bought by hometown billionaire Warren Buffett. At the time of research, the

newspaper's institutional memory remained remarkably intact for U.S. newspapers, although perhaps less so when compared with European ones (Weaver & Willnat, 2012).

To gather data, I conducted eight days of immersive fieldwork, employing hybrid ethnography, which relies on high-intensity, short-term fieldwork combining interviews, observation, document collection, and photographic documentation, aiming at saturation because of the intensity and triangulation of data rather than the duration of the research (Usher, 2016b). Between July 12 and 20, 2016, I conducted 46 interviews with reporters, copyeditors, top-level newsroom editors, and business executives. Observations included attending 18 news meetings and a self-described "old timers" roundtable; shadowing the breaking-news team, online staff, and the newspaper delivery process; and socializing off-site with journalists. Participants were given the opportunity to opt in and are named unless requested otherwise. Data were analyzed according to qualitative data analysis practices: back-and-forth theoretical and empirical engagement to derive codes, concepts, and themes. Member-checking was conducted to ensure the accuracy of data collection. The evening edition is referred to here by the multiple names called in the newsroom: the afternoon edition, evening edition, PM, and metro.

Findings

The experiences of journalists at the *OWH* push back against the argument that journalists experience digitalization as a linear process of temporal acceleration. Thus, funnel time is conceptualized as a way to explain the shifting temporalities journalists experience and the changing temporal affordances of news objects. Just as a funnel cloud goes from a large swell to a narrow column, funnel time reflects how time can go from expansive to compressed, traveling in uncertain pathways. However, time, like a reverse funnel cloud (or a land spout), can also go from narrow and compressed to expansive. Time is seen as a challenge to journalism—there is never enough—but, as Barnhurst (2011) alludes, time is not always experienced as acceleration; in fact, time in news narrative has expanded. Funnel time is a way to think about how the experience of the pacing of time can accelerate and decelerate, as it is experienced by the way people move through the world (in this case, journalists), from their work to where they live, as well as a way to think about the shifting temporal affordances of (news) objects. To provide the adequate context for this conceptual development, findings are organized first with a focus on the role of place, and then address the shifting temporalities of news work and news objects.

Local Cultures of Production

In contemplating why this historic anachronism of the evening edition had persisted in Omaha for so long, findings support the importance of situating analysis of cultures of production in local contexts. Journalists said they were surprised, even five months after the change, how regularly they encountered community members disappointed by the end of the evening edition. They gave two explanations for the longevity of the evening edition: Omaha's diurnal rhythms and its geographic affordances. As long-time metro columnist Mike Kelly explained,²

² All interviews in the article were personal communications. The collective date range for these interviews was from July 12 to July 20, 2016.

For one thing, Omaha is an early-to-work place, people leave for work at 7:30 in the morning and get to work, and since they start so early they get home earlier, and part of the tradition of the Midwest and Omaha wanted [was] an evening paper.

Morning newspaper delivery was unlikely to reach subscribers before they left for work, so evening delivery made sense as people in Omaha still had adequate leisure time for reading news when they came home. Moreover, it also meant that "the newspaper was not sitting in the driveway with the house looking vacant," explained David Hendee, regional reporter.

Other journalists also pointed out a feature of the city that had kept the costs of circulating an evening edition lower far longer than in other metropolitan areas. For whatever reason, the city's growth patterns avoided creating traffic congestion found elsewhere. Omaha is known by locals as a "20-minute city": One can drive across Omaha without traffic in approximately 20 minutes. This meant, as print product distribution manager Dennis Cronin explained, that afternoon delivery was feasible because clear roads kept the cost of trucking low and the lack of traffic enabled on-time evening delivery. Likewise, journalists said afternoon papers did not feel out of date in Omaha because the city simply had "less happening during the day," as one put it, so after the morning bustle, no major news events were likely to happen, and the evening newspaper remained timely. As features editor Dave Elesser explained, "There's just a lull, of a general sort in the middle of the day. . . . I think that's maybe reflective of the tempo of life in this part of the country."

The newspaper also reflected local temporal norms when it came to sourcing practices. In many large cities in the United States, high-level sources are on-demand for journalists; in fact, sources increasingly seek to control messaging by preemptively tweeting before speaking with journalists. Omaha, however, had not yet moved to embracing the same kind of always-on-work schedule enabled by digital tools. For example, now-executive editor Melissa Matczak wished the newspaper had done more breaking-news coverage of a local Black Lives Matter rally: "There was a huge feeling like we should be like other media nationally, reporting all night and updating . . . but we're not going to call the police chief of Omaha at night." Even if the *OWH* wanted to do continuous breaking news, its coverage was limited because even the police chief's "off-duty" time needed to be respected (a sentiment to some journalists that might seem quaint). However, journalists also noted that the police chief and other city officials accommodated the afternoon edition, often arranging in advance with editors for embargos on press releases to accommodate the deadline. Overall, news routines in Omaha embedded, enabled, and reflected the city's unique temporal, cultural, and geographic characteristics—from perceptions about the rhythms of city to its geographical affordances to source–journalist relations. The multimodality of funnel time can begin to be seen with a common "clock time" set against different experiences of time as slow and fast depending on context.

Funnel Time in News Work

Most newsrooms do not have the institutional memory of journalists who remember afternoon newspaper production, which forced a midday deadline and constant work to meet it. Even fewer journalists can remember multiple editions and their deadline pressure. However, in Omaha, a small but critical mass of long-time staff still remains ("old timers") and has a perspective of the evolution of time pressure in

journalism that is likely difficult to find in any contemporary U.S. newspaper: They remember continuous pressure to produce content, albeit for print rather than digital. Younger journalists also witnessed the difficulty of producing a print afternoon edition and were thus able to consider how eliminating afternoon print production might expand rather than contract time pressure. The old timers' distant-past experience with multiple print deadlines editions and the near-past experience of younger journalists, then, provide a unique perspective about temporal acceleration in digital news production. Findings support the concept of funnel time; rather than a narrative of continuous acceleration in a digital environment, journalists' experience of time pressure was mollified when print midday deadlines ended.

Afternoon Deadlines, Afternoon Pace

Journalists argued that the longevity of the afternoon edition and multiple editions had prepared the newsroom for the 24/7 digital deadline pressure. In fact, some journalists thought the hard deadlines provided more guidance than the fuzzy deadline of "whenever" and "now" online updating offered. A political journalist at the paper for 15 years recalled,

There is no set deadline [now]—before, we had our morning, our afternoon, our bulldog, our Lincoln, the Iowa, we hit those deadlines . . . and in a real sense, it was easier, you had a target deadline you knew . . . when you came in here, you knew that you had to turn a story for the afternoon deadline, which was hard and fast.

Other journalists postulated that because the newspaper had never managed to slip into a once-a-day routine like other newspapers, it had a distinct advantage in transitioning to breaking news for the Web. Ben Vankat, the head of online, noted,

The advantage [of the PM] was that we didn't have to train people how to write stories in the morning. A lot of other papers had a 6 pm deadline to write the story . . . and then they would freak out if they had Web content to write every day. Really it hasn't been that difficult for us. . . . I think people had been doing it long before.

The longevity of staff was seen as a benefit rather than a hindrance to cultural change. Mike Reilly, former executive editor, argued,

When I was first here there were four morning editions and one evening edition. There are people here who remember 8–9–10 editions . . . we were prepared for the digital before the Internet existed . . . in the local area, the evening edition was the biggest one we had . . . if a story broke in the morning, people were not used to eating lunch, and if a story broke in the evening, the reporter wanted the story to get even bigger play in the morning.

In fact, illustrating the concept of funnel time, following the end of the afternoon edition, some journalists worried that the pace of news production would slow down (in part, perhaps, because of the Midwestern afternoon lull). Key editors issued a guidance memo to journalists about how keep the pace of news flowing. Reilly wrote,

Colleagues, with the end of the metro, it's a good time to revisit how fast and how well we post content on Omaha.com. The metro print deadline built in morning deadlines for online. We need to continue, and in some cases, improve the flow of news to online throughout the day.

The six-point memo proceeded to lay out various deadline reminders, from how to pace breaking news to when to use push alerts. Thus, the counterfactual of whether a newspaper would have been better equipped for the transition to the 24/7 Web had it never dropped multiple deadlines for different print editions, we learn that yes, it would have been. The perceived demands of speed and efficiency cannot just be blamed on digital journalism pressures; in fact, digital journalism can give journalists an expanded sense of time, enhancing support for the concept of funnel time.

Autonomy and Expanded Time

In fact, the prevailing reaction to the end of the evening edition was a sense of relief; online deadlines offered flexibility rather than make-work to feed the beast, illustrating funnel time, the perception of time moving from slow to fast to fast to slow. Much research faults digital journalism as responsible for "hamsterization" and, often, low-value work. Instead, in Omaha, the print product was the cause of churn and make-work, not digital journalism. Although 30 years ago, as some journalists remembered, the evening edition was the newspaper's pride and joy, as the evening edition declined in importance, the pressure to make the paper seem "new" became dreaded make-work.

Deputy metro-regional editor Deb Shanahan reflected how the evening edition had changed:

It was kind of a burden. It changed over the years. I remember times we would consciously start a new centerpiece for the PM and it was much different. It wasn't just breaking news but it had to be more metro-focused. The morning had more of an out-of-state flavor and the afternoon was metro-Omaha focused.

She noted that over time, added value became churn:

You delayed working on the next [story] because you were spending the morning making adjustments to the afternoon paper that were just not significant . . . for a long time, [we had] reporters [that] were like AP reporters, where they would re-top stories between editions whether there was anything new or not.

Another journalist who had been at the newspaper for 25 years said, "The problem with the evening paper was that you had to artificially rewrite stories and bury the news story." What this meant was that by the end of the evening edition, "there was a little churn for churn sake to make it look refreshed," as Matczak, executive editor, admitted.

In fact, to many journalists, the immediacy of the Web enabled updates to be published as they were relevant rather than because they were needed to meet the print deadline. One self-professed old

timer noted, "If it's online, at least you have to add some news, but you were required to rewrite a story whether or not you had something to add." Mike Kelly, metro columnist, added, "Some of what we did was just make-work. Why are we doing this if we don't have a new angle? . . . Hopefully on the Web we are actually providing new information." Ending the evening edition gave journalists the sense that digital updates would not be make-work, updates for the sake of updates, but would instead provide added value.

Physical Paper, Physical Churn

In each edition, not only was the content supposed to be different, but so was the physical layout. This meant repackaging existing stories into new layouts. In some cases, this might be deceptively simple, like switching the front-page centerpiece story or photo. Even basic adjustments to syndicated content were required: The evening edition had the U.S. advice column Dear Abby, but the morning edition had Ann Landers, and some comics were different. As the evening edition declined in importance, the requirements for the physical production of the print paper also came to be seen as more and more make-work, particularly given the ease of adjusting the Web site. As Kevin Cole, a breaking-news reporter, explained,

There were a lot of people on the copy desk—it would be 11:30, 11:45 and we'd keep sending over fires, shootings, traffic accidents, city council updates [as close to deadline as possible], but we had to do layout, write another headline, give it another read through. For the afternoon, you'd have to change out the page . . . on the Web, once a feature is up, you don't have to mess with it. If we do redo the layout versus redoing it online, that's a physical feature that's really hard.

Cole said he was relieved not to have to adjust his work product to meet the hard space limits of a print newspaper. He said, "If I didn't have enough space, I'd have to cut it [the story], but you don't have to mess with it online." Micah Mertes, a younger staffer, explained that the print production process was far more bureaucratic and labor intensive:

There are so many extra steps of a [print production] process. You have to consider your editor and their editor and the copy editor and the designer . . . the print process for longer stories can be grueling, whereas online is not like that. There is some process, but it's certainly moving faster.

Some of the younger journalists in Omaha were particularly pleased by the end of the evening print edition. As Alia Conley, police reporter, noted, "I am relieved we don't have it any more," and noted that writing and posting quick breaking-news updates online were "almost easier than having a formal story [for the afternoon edition] that needs to be very concise and new off the top." Erin Duffy, the Omaha Public Schools reporter, also thought print required more formal writing style and discipline: "It was difficult how much writing you could develop for noon edition. . . . I'd have 6–8 inches, and you'd have to narrow down the story. . . . I feel more flexibility putting some stuff online." The young journalists found length limitations and hard deadlines imposed by the print production process more difficult than more flexible word counts and timing of the Web.

The evening edition resulted in churn-for-churn's sake; journalists faced pressure to not only have something new in the newspaper, but also had to make sure that what they produced fit the print paper's specific particular space and layout considerations. Having an open-ended, digital deadline rather than a set, print afternoon deadline unburdened journalists, many of whom argued that the Web enabled flexibility; and in fact, it provided as-needed digital updates rather than the artificial updates of print and would actually make their work better. Churn journalism, particularly when done for the sake of building readership, generally has been regarded as a distinctly digital phenomenon. Yet, as Omaha shows, there is nothing special about news production routines for print journalism itself that leads to more thoughtful work product; print journalism can also be filled with same kind of low-value churn journalists also hate to do in digital newsrooms. The shifting temporal expectations of print and of online news showcase funnel time, as perceptions of time expand and contract. There is nothing about the materiality of print or the digital materiality of the Web that mandates a particular type of content or workflow, a reminder worthy of rearticulating.

Funnel Time: Permanence and Ephemerality

Newsroom studies of print newspapers adjusting to their digital reality find that the print product is increasingly seen as a "daily news magazine" and as the final historical accounting of the day's events. However, in Omaha, journalists recall treating print as unfinished, and in fact, print was once seen as flexible and amenable to updating as digital journalism is often seen today. The case shows that negotiations of permanence and ephemerality have little to do with the material form of news itself (or the materiality of an object more generally), and everything to do with the cultural context in which the news objects' materiality is valued and understood. These shifting temporal affordances reflect funnel time rather than linear acceleration and progression toward the ephemeral; news objects change in the ways that they are expected to reflect time.

Rich Mills, a long-time copy editor, said the end of the evening edition changed how he thought about print's permanency:

We'd say that's good enough, I'll try my best, and they can do better in the PM. It was not our only chance in print . . . it was kind of hard, those editions, but then again you could get it right later, you'd say, it's only the bulldog, it's only the Iowa . . . and now there's a little more pressure.

The sports editors were particularly cognizant of the ability to update the print paper as well as its temporal limitations. They were able to get updated sports news into subsequent editions over the course of the day; on the other hand, games that were unfinished at press time were written as such. As sports editor Graham Archer explained,

We've been a little spoiled, having four editions was good because we could keep getting more news in . . . but in paper, if the game were late, you'd have a big picture of the seventh inning and now you can go online to read the full report.

For many journalists, 9/11 was a crowning moment to display how print could offer shifting notions of permanence. The newspaper remade the entire front page for the evening edition with a photo from earlier that morning that showed the towers being struck. Other than newspapers that published extra editions, this was a rare example of a newspaper able to modify and update its print for same-day documentation of the attacks. The print paper had been flexible enough to provide an updated but permanent historical record.

Nonetheless, as print updates became increasingly make-work rather than meaningful editions, print's capacity for flexibility and permanence clashed. Joanne Stewart, metro editor and former evening edition editor, noted,

You'd have to have something that we'd say was a final thing [in print], even as the event was ongoing, which made it feel old. The churn was an incomplete sense of history and that was not good to have in print. It was old, poor-quality history versus a good permanent product.

This tension was even evident in the way the newspaper was archived. In the era of multiple daily editions, the news librarian explained that there was no "complete" print version, and so each version of a story would be archived, both digitally and in print. Her work became much easier when there was only one print version to archive.

Journalists ascribed more importance to the permanence of the single print edition that remained. The print paper had to have enough relevance and timeliness so as not to feel old, but it also had to be able to capture what journalists saw as their most critical way of establishing a historical record. This created a temporal juggling for journalists used to having multiple chances at recalibrating temporalities in print. Copy editor Sarah McAllister said she had to be careful that headlines for the print paper would hold up for the entire next day. She gave the example of writing a headline for a then-recent national news event: Five police officers in Dallas had been killed by a shooter, but in preparing the headlines for the next morning's paper, she explained, "I didn't want to put out how many police officers had been killed because it could have been different in the morning." She added,

It's more permanent, that's what I'm trying to say. This is the only edition we have left no matter what develops and this is the story our readers get for 24 hours. . . . There's no going back and changing it. We no longer have the luxury of the afternoon edition. Every selection is more important because when we had the afternoon edition we could update it.

The *OWH* shows the complexity of negotiating between ephemerality and permanence in various material forms of media. The case is a reminder to think more broadly about intersecting temporalities as funnel time, and the temporal flexibility of materiality, not just in news but writ large.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, I have addressed two questions. The first explored the extreme case/counterpoint: If newspapers had somehow never dropped all-day print deadlines, would the shift to digital journalism

have been so jarring? Second, how might the local context of place, temporality, and geography impact journalists' experiences of these changes and the temporal affordances of news objects? The history of the *OWH*'s culture of production is at once seen as archaic, but also is a recent, distinct temporal rupture, with changing temporal affordances impacting news work, news objects, and even perceptions of autonomy and control. Funnel time, like the instability of a funnel cloud, reflects this multimodal experience of time. Just as funnel clouds move in unpredictable patterns with unpredictable speeds and can have both narrow and wide tops and bottoms, funnel time is a way of thinking about the divergent ways time is experienced by people and the shifting temporal values assigned to objects. Barnhurst and Nightingale (2018) argue for the need to interrogate the social construction of time in journalism; funnel time extends their provocation: Time is experienced as both slow and fast within the same "clock" time and is more than simply linear.

The underlying issues professional journalists face are indeed seen widely in other creative industries: lack of control of one's future, the loss of autonomy over work, the undermining of expertise, and unrelenting temporal acceleration (Giddens, 1991; Harvey, 1989). Researchers on news innovation, particularly those paying attention to newspapers, have gotten caught up in this discourse and for good reason: Many journalists have indeed experienced great difficulty adjusting to the pace of digital journalism (Anderson, 2013; Boczkowski, 2005; Usher, 2014). An uncertain economic future, the rise of Twitter, and the growing importance of digital analytics in news decision making have only compounded this sentiment (Hanusch, 2017). However, it is as if scholars and journalists have forgotten that newspaper production was once far more immediate and on demand like the Web of today and also perceived as ephemeral and easy to modify. The counterpoint of the *OWH* reminds us that, indeed, there is nothing inherent to digital journalism that requires journalists to become "hamsterized" (Starkman, 2010), where news production proceeds as a "news cyclone" (Klinenberg, 2005). Different media can embody different dimensions of time without the media itself changing (Jenkins, 2006), and the temporal values assigned to the objects shift, as Jackaway (1994) found when studying the rise of radio.

In addition, this article shows the importance of local cultures of production, and as a result, suggests place is worth recentering in academic research more generally, particularly given larger sociocultural trends in which place-based differences are divisive. Indeed, the *OWH* reminds us of the importance of the ways that the specificities of geography, time, and materiality influence news production. Places have an agential role in structuring action (Gieryn, 2000). When it comes to news work, the unique characteristics of Omaha impact the temporal orders of news routines, from Omaha's diurnal rhythms to its lack of traffic to the newspaper's dominance in the local market to the newspaper's ownership and its strong institutional history. With both an evening and a morning print edition until 2016, the *OWH* is a historical anachronism that reminds us that local contexts matter.

Creative workers are not always made more vulnerable when their work is refashioned for digital processes. A few studies allude that this may be possible; among them is Petre's (2018) curious finding that Gawker journalists, rather than seeing themselves as slaves to Web analytics, felt curiously free and seized the ambiguity over their digital success as empowering chance, choice, and experimentation (although she suggests this might be false consciousness). More directly, the *OWH* research found that journalists felt unburdened when they no longer had to deal with all of the layers of processes and deadlines required to produce a print product. Journalists felt more autonomy, rather than less, as the low-value work had been

in print; digital journalism provided more flexible opportunities for writing styles and updates. The preoccupation with control over one's time and one's labor, with the aspiration of doing work that is meaningful, certainly has its origins in a predigital era. In a digital era, the presumption of loss needs to be balanced by the possibility of opportunity. Time should be studied with more flexibility and attention to geography and materiality, with the aim of teasing out shifts in temporality beyond the presumption of acceleration. Funnel time is a starting point. Like a funnel cloud, funnel time shows how objects and routines can be whirled around and uprooted and resettled in new contexts. Funnel time, then, reflects the possibility for shifting and multiple temporalities in specific locales; time can deviate, shift, slow, and go fast again.

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