

SILENT PRESSES

Many print magazines and newspapers face a terminal future.

How will this influence the future of communication?



By Robert Brown, Steve Freeman
and Linda Mastaglio

We're all touched... ... in one way or another by an economy turned sour. But many career journalists and those who work in print media positions face a more traumatic present and a potentially more turbulent future than most. Imagine what it was like for a buggy maker when the Model A began mass production in the early 1900s. New paradigms and processes and technology collapsed their traditional business model. Today, buggy makers still exist, but the profession has dramatically changed from what it was in its peak years a century ago.

This analogy is not unlike the challenge faced by today's communications professionals. Journalists, publishers and the sources of news (PR pros) are, in effect, buggy makers who need to define transitions and make new plans as they face their own uncertain future.

The intent of this paper is to help communicators look at the future and consider where the newspaper/magazine industry might be in 10 or 20 years. Will there even be print publications? Will there be reporters and editors? What will the landscape look like for media professionals? Will everything simply be online? Exploring these questions is critical to those who intend to participate in the communications professions in the decades to come.

Harsh Truths

"Sadly, any newspaper that sheds its print edition will lay off a lot of people. Pressmen, drivers, everyone in the circulation department – all gone," comments Steve Outing in the January 28, 2009 issue of Editor & Publisher. "For a large newsroom, a lot of journalists will lose their jobs, perhaps one-half to two-thirds. (I hope I'm being pessimistic, but I doubt it.) A leaner news operation will probably mean a significant thinning of newsroom middle-management ranks. A smaller advertising department is likely."

Time Magazine, as recently as March 9, 2009, stated that it's possible that eight of the nation's 50 largest newspapers could cease publication in the next 18 months.

Roman Kikta, a venture capitalist and managing partner of Genesis Campus Funds and Mobility Ventures, in Dallas, TX is an acknowledged expert on market trends and the role of technologies on society from an anthropological, sociological, and psychological perspective. He is the co-founder of Global Wireless Holdings (GWH), E-Life, Inc., SpeedLink Communications, and ChangeAgent Media. He is also a contributing editor to www.nowpublic.com. Kikta predicts that while a few major national or regional newspapers (i.e., the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and so forth) will remain in print form, within 20 years most local newspapers and magazines will only be online.

Mike Orren is the president and founder of Pegasus News, the largest single-market pureplay local news and information site in the United States. He has also launched the nation's first neighborhood-level, location-aware mobile advertising model. Before launching Pegasus News, Mike worked as a publisher for American Lawyer Media. Orren agrees with Kitka that there will be some print newspapers and magazines for at least the next 20 years. "There will be some, and you will pay for them; but they will be expensive and targeted at older people," he says.

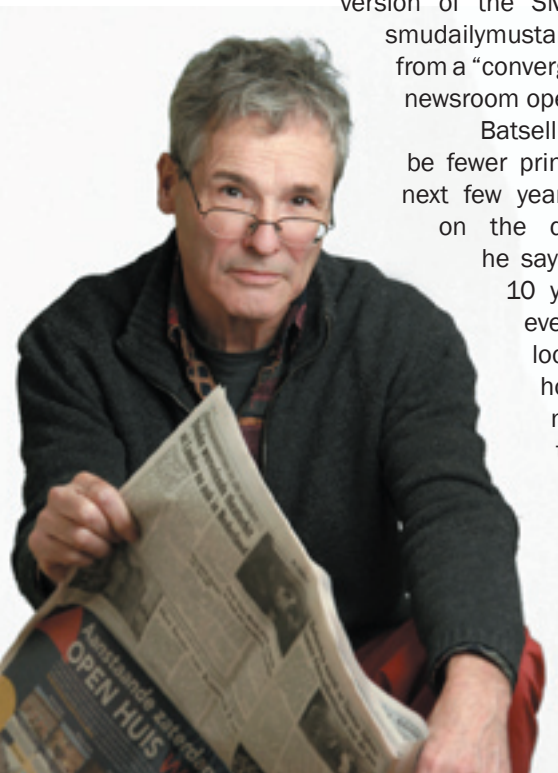
The recent decision of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer to stop printing and go to an online-only daily edition strikes close to home for Jake Batsell, Assistant Professor, Division of Journalism at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. For years, Batsell worked as a reporter for the "PI's" rival, the Seattle Times. "The PI was the morning newspaper, and we were the afternoon paper, which meant that I would come in at 5:30 every morning and chase the stories they had just published." Batsell



says while during that stage in his career, the PI represented the competition, he is “very sad” to see the end of the print version of this 146-year old newspaper.

Having experienced firsthand tumultuous changes in journalism in the past decade, Batsell is now committed to helping journalism students prepare for a future in a changing world. He has been instrumental in developing a multi-media version of the SMU daily newspaper, smudailymustang.com, which is run from a “convergence” or multi-media newsroom opened last October.

Batsell thinks there will be fewer print newspapers in the next few years. “Newspapers are on the decline everywhere,” he says. “I’m not sure that 10 years down the road every city will have a local newspaper. I hope so, but maybe not. The newspapers that survive will be more specialized and cater to an elite audience. It breaks my heart, because I was a kid who first got interested in journalism by reading the box scores in the daily newspaper.”



What Happened?

In 1990, if you bought food at the grocery store, you probably paid cash or wrote a check. Today, more often than not, you swipe a card instead, to either debit the money from your bank account or charge the goods to a credit card. We didn’t think about this phenomenon, necessarily. We didn’t think long and hard about the option of moving from cash or check to electronic transactions. We just moved in sync with changing times and technologies.

The same type of logic can be applied to the move from print newspapers and magazines to online media.

Kikta sees the decline of print media as a result of the emergence of a digital society where everything now has a sense of urgency. For example, he says, “I remember working in offices when people generated printed paper memos. You would get the memo usually a day after it was written, and then you would have a day or so to respond. Nowadays, when people send you an e-mail, they usually expect an immediate response. People want information today as it happens. By contrast, the news in today’s newspaper is already 24 hours old.”

Scott Bennett is a veteran journalist and public relations professional. Through reinvention, he is now the president of the management consulting firm Change Agent Media as well as a partner at the venture capital firm Mobility Ventures.

Bennett doubts that print newspapers are on their way out, at least in the near term. He says the real problem is that

although many papers are still profitable, they are laden with debt. “It’s a little premature to predict their demise,” Bennett says, “but they do have this crushing debt burden so they have to take measures to deal with it.”

As newspapers continue to scale back costs, Bennett predicts that many newspapers will stop publishing daily. Instead they will rely on an online version to cover daily news, and print one or two weekly publications. “You’ll probably see newspapers printing and distributing an entertainment guide on Thursdays for use that weekend, and a Sunday Living magazine containing more in-depth, ‘think’ and ‘opinion’ pieces,” Bennett adds.

Orren thinks that local newspapers will eventually be primarily online, and will begin to step down from daily print operations “within the next few years.” Like Bennett, Orren predicts that local papers may publish a weekly or twice-weekly printed supplement, but the majority of their news reporting will only be available online.

“Even in good times, papers lose money on Mondays and Tuesdays. It’s been a matter of pride with most newspapers to keep publishing daily, but with the amount of debt burden most are now facing, they no longer have this option,” Orren says.

Regarding magazines, Bennett says he does not see much future for the print versions of the news weeklies like Time or Newsweek. Nevertheless, he does see an ongoing niche for specialty magazines with art and photo layouts, such as nature, art, or photography magazines. He provides a caveat though: “I think there are too many of these kinds of magazines out there, and there will definitely be a thinning of their ranks. The quality publications will remain, at least until reading devices such as the Kindle or the new device Fujitsu is coming out with have developed enough to faithfully render in color the full-page text and graphics of these higher-end magazines.”

How We Use Our News

The difference between online and print publication is visually distinct; but the greatest difference lies in how we use and absorb the information we’re given. In a newspaper, people look for news that interests them. They don’t necessarily look at a paper to gain specific information. Many people read the headlines and then make a conscious decision whether or not to read the entire article, the first few paragraphs, the subtitles, or nothing at all. Online, this type of reasonably abstract pick-and-choose-your-news behavior is not as easy to do. For example, on the front page of today’s Dallas Morning News, there are 29 options of things to read or items that push you to open the paper, such as a teaser headline that is followed by a notice for you to read more about that item on page A7. In contrast, if you go to www.dallasnews.com, the online version of the Dallas Morning News, the home page has over 200 options.

For many people, this selection is overwhelming. As a result, rather than use the news as a form of entertainment where you read the paper to see what you don’t know, many people use the online version solely to search for specific information, like traffic reports or stock prices or sports scores. They may not even look at the rest of the online publication. Other readers, however, come from the opposite direction. Some people who would never bother to pick up a newspaper are highly engaged in learning through online publications.

As newspapers become news without papers, it's prudent to stop and remember the original intent of what a newspaper is (or was) and what value it is intended to create. To find a reputable description of a newspaper, consider today's most visited free encyclopedia, a site which didn't even exist until 2001. Today, the name Wikipedia is as common to our brand name lexicon as Kleenex, Dairy Queen, American Idol, and iPod. According to Wikipedia, this is a newspaper:

A newspaper is a publication containing news, information and advertising, usually printed on low-cost paper called newsprint. General-interest newspapers often feature articles on political events, crime, business, art/entertainment, society and sports. Most traditional papers also feature an editorial page containing columns which express the personal opinions of writers. Supplementary sections may contain advertising, comics, coupons, and other printed media. Newspapers are most often published on a daily or weekly basis, and they usually focus on one particular geographic area where most of their readers live... Despite recent setbacks in circulation and profits, newspapers are still the most iconic outlet for news and other types of written journalism.

Avid paper and magazine readers appreciate the medium as a tactile experience as well as an intellectual one. "I still skim the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times, and the Dallas Morning News every morning because I am of the generation where this was our morning ritual," Kikta says. "Even so, I find myself relying more each day on online news sources such as Google or Yahoo." Even though Kikta says he receives about two dozen print magazines every month in the mail ("I'm a voracious reader," he confesses), he finds himself increasingly turning to the online versions of the same magazines. "Instead of having these magazines cluttering my desk and office, it's just easier to go online and quickly find what I want to read."

There is a flip side, however, to every proverbial coin. Bennett refers to his 24-year-old son. "Even though he is constantly online," Bennett says, "he recently told me that he prefers a printed magazine when reading something more in-depth." It will be interesting to see if the next generation finds the novelty of print media more compelling than Twittered headlines on their cell phones. Time alone will tell if youthful interest in print media is a trend, a personal preference, or perhaps a passing fad.

The New Primadigm¹

According to Steve Outing, there is potential for "a quality product that's actually better than the old newspaper's—because its reporters have completely cast off we-tell-you journalism in favor of the news-is-a-conversation model, where readers have relationships with their favorite journalists."

In addition, in deference to the format and function of internet news, articles are tending to be shorter, but with linked references to the comments and opinions of others. "I am seeing less news analysis and opinion pieces," Kikta says. "The print media is recognizing their readership's behavior has changed—their attention span is shorter." He says he's also seen this occurring on blogs, commenting that 200-word entries are increasingly becoming the norm.

A lot of screaming (biased ranting) takes place on the Internet, in blogs, chat rooms, and other forums; newspaper reporters and editors have credible professional experience in creating informed, measured explanation and analyses. Therefore it's logical that journalists will still be needed to develop credible content.

Three Issues Marketers Need to Consider

If you're planning to be a corporate marketing leader in the next 10 years, then you need to think about these issues now.

1. What sustainable new business models will be created to support local news coverage?
2. If one of your marketing department success indicators is how many articles you place in publications, what new measurement alternative could take its place? Will online articles have equal or greater perceived value to employees, clients, and senior management?
3. Is it time for you to suggest management invest in a Director of Social Media? Who on your staff is monitoring and engaging with rogue Websites, Twitter, Digg, Flickr, Facebook, the blogosphere, wikis, competitor Websites, client Websites, MySpace, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.?

¹Primadigm is a composite word created by the authors of this paper to express a new type of paradigm: prima, meaning something new and digm meaning thought/model.

The Pros and Cons of New News Journalism

Old News World	New News World	Result
Reporters push content out to readers requiring no reader response.	Reporters encourage reader involvement through blog responses.	Allows for enhanced balance in reporting because more views, opinions, intellects & resources can offer input.
"We-tell-you" journalism	"News-is-a-conversation" model	Interactive medium allows information greater exchange and expansion.
Information is published the day after it is written.	Information is shared in real time.	Higher level of relevancy for current events/ breaking news
News was vetted for truth and accuracy by editors, senior editors, managing editors, and publishers prior to printing.	Vetted information is reacted to via blog postings and article comments by people whose information is not necessarily fact-checked or confirmed.	Opportunities for misinformation and misrepresentation of facts increase.
Content is media driven and users make reading choices based on what types of stories are available.	Search functions allow users to make reading decisions before viewing available content, thus going directly to the topic of their choice.	Removes the 'push' of information to the reader and allows the 'pull' of information by the users to more directly define what gets read.

Who to Believe?

Citizen journalism is an interesting phenomenon that revolutionizes the way we gain knowledge. The term refers to public participation in collecting, reporting, interpreting, and disseminating news and information. "The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires," according to the report: *We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information*.¹

"Every journalist is a blogger, and a beatblogger, and a social network junkie."

***Steve Outing
Editor & Publisher***

Kikta says that such "crowd source" news sites allow for more "honest" reporting of news because all events have the potential to be covered by its scores of volunteer citizen reporters armed only with their eyes and ears and a wireless digital device. "Wireless is just another connection to the Internet, and the Internet is a level playing field. Anybody can become a reporter and can post stories. These stories may not all be necessarily of good quality, but they tend to make the news more honest, more democratic. No longer can a handful of media sources control what they wish to report on."

Bennett offers a different view. "Crowd journalism is a fad," Bennett

says. "Citizen journalism is okay but it will never have the quality provided by professional journalists. It's the same with bloggers. Bloggers are wonderful fact checkers, but they don't generate news, they simply comment on the news that others have generated. Somebody has got to generate the news that people need to rely on."

Bennett thinks we'll see the survival of two or three of the international news gathering agencies such as Reuters or Associated Press. "There will be consolidation and restructuring and we do not know yet how it will turn out," he says, "but people will still rely on these services to provide them the information they need, even if it is only online."

The Narrowing Funnel to the Bottom Line

Bennett blames many of today's newspaper publishers' problems on a lack of foresight and an inability to grasp soon enough the implications of the Internet. Instead he said, starting in the 1980s, many newspapers adopted the "bigger is better" strategy, acquiring rivals and bloating their staffs. Now, with the surge in printing and distribution costs—coupled with a decline in readership and subsequent advertising revenue—many newspapers struggle to stay afloat. "Many current newspaper managers were trying to preserve the past for too long," he says. "They were not looking to the future, and now they are paying the price."

While the situation is grim, Bennett says the smarter news

operations are readjusting their business models. "The days when newspapers could assign scores of reporters to investigative projects designed to win Pulitzer prizes are gone. Newspapers are discovering that they do not need huge staffs to cover the daily news online."

In addition, papers are discovering the online advantages that make the medium so attractive to advertisers. Kikta points to the inherent value of personalization and segmentation for online content delivery. "New (online) media can present information relevant to your interests," he says. "Traditional print media cannot do this. You must skim an entire newspaper or magazine to find the information you need. New media can deliver information to personalized segments, and this is very attractive to advertisers."



¹Bowman, S. and Willis, C. "We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information." 2003. The Media Center at the American Press Institute.

What's Happening?

The Christian Science Monitor's Web site changed when the daily print edition went totally online in April, 2009. Now the publication only prints one paper, on Sundays.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, founded in 1863, went from a print publication to an online newspaper on May 17, 2009. It was up for sale before going online, but there were no offers.

Amidst 23% population growth in the past two decades, U.S. newspaper circulation has dropped 20%. Craigslist is siphoning off \$7 billion worth of classifieds.

In 2008, magazines sales on newsstands fell 12%. Gross ad pages so far in 2009 have dropped 22%.

Time, Inc. magazines have reduced headcount through layoffs by 1,400 since 2004.

The Newspaper Association of America reports that ad revenues declined to \$45.4 billion in 2007, followed by quarter-by-quarter falls of 12 to 20 % during the catastrophes of 2008.

Orren says that the recent difficulties in the auto industry have had dire consequences for print newspapers, as much of their advertising revenue comes from car dealers. To make matters even worse, most of the rest of classified advertising, which is a main source of revenue for newspapers, has migrated to Internet sites like craigslist.

A further problem is that papers lose money on marketing their subscriptions. "Newspapers spend more money marketing subscriptions than they receive through those subscriptions," Orren says. Yet one reason subscriptions are still important enough to prop up is because advertisers want to see high numbers of "readers" or they won't advertise in the first place. Many mid-to small-size newspapers simply give away their products now and count the "distribution" as "readers."

Batsell sees a possible scenario where daily news is published online and only one weekly edition is published on Sundays. "In 10 to 20 years, a Sunday New York Times might cost you \$20," Batsell said.

Where Will This Lead?

A possible winner of such a shift away from mid-sized metro dailies could be glossy, often free, regional monthlies focused on real estate, brides, entertainment, upscale lifestyles, etc. Business Week suggests that "a gazillion new independent online endeavors" will give reporters and editors new opportunities through blogs and comprehensive regional informational Websites.

And the need for news will not end.

Batsell says that despite the recent turbulences in the media industry, his main message to his students is that there is definitely a future for journalists and media professionals. He says that convergence journalism is based on the premise that today's journalists can no longer expect to have a career restricted to one media platform. Today's media professionals must be adept at presenting their stories in as many ways as possible, including digital media as well as traditional print.

He cites the example of the inauguration of President Barak Obama. "For the first time, more people watched the inauguration from Internet Websites than on broadcast TV. This shows that

there is more demand than ever for news; we just need to deliver it differently," he says. "I tell my students that this is a good time to start a career in journalism, because in 10 to 15 years, when they have reached the prime of their careers, the new business models will have been figured out."

"I can't predict how long this shakeout of the business will last. It's going to take much longer than six months or a year—I think it will be at least 5 years before the new business models start emerging," Batsell adds.

Batsell hopes that there is some Google-caliber mind out there working on a new business model for the dissemination of news; something akin to an iTunes model for the news industry. He clarifies, though, that he is only using the iTunes analogy as an example. "The iTunes model is based on popularity, and we don't want news based on popularity only—otherwise, our news would be dominated by stories about Britney Spears and videos of squirrels on water skis, while an important but not exciting story about, say, a local water bond vote, would be neglected," he says.

He notes that the New York Times recently issued a challenge to software developers to come up with a viable mechanism for monetizing information on the Internet.

We Are the Web

Orren says that media and communication professionals must now make a paradigmatic change in how they think of themselves: "Instead of thinking that we're on the Web, we now must think that we are of the Web."

What this means is that every business communication decision may have one or more World Wide Web (w3) components and these need to be added to the marketing and PR conversation every time an issue comes forward – whether a new project announcement, an office closure, or a corporate leader's upcoming speaking engagement. Audiences can be sliced and diced like never before. It's a new era of news delivery and computers and cell phones are the new delivery systems.

"The Internet is now a giant comment box," Orren says. He cites an example from his recent experience: Frustrated with the long URL he had to enter out on a state tax form, he sent out a brief

Twitter message to his 200 or so Twitter “followers.” “I sent a short message, sort of just thinking aloud, that the form should use the Tiny URL Web service in order to provide a shorter, easier-to-use URL,” he says. Within hours, Orren received a Twitter reply from the state employee responsible for the form. The state employee thanked him for his good idea and said he would make the change as suggested.

The Implications for Marketing and Public Relations

Orren says that marketing and public relations have become infinitely more complex in the Internet age. “It used to be that you would just write up your press release, fax it to your local media outlets, and hope it got published. Now the Internet allows you more opportunities to connect with your audience segments.”

Regarding the implications of the online revolution for public relations and marketing, Bennett sees a bright future. “The whole evolution of the Internet is good for PR [and marketing]. We now have a 24-hour constant flow of information, which is disseminated almost infinitely.” Unlike today, where news releases are pushed out to the media in hopes that a reporter might pick up the story, online dissemination allows the release to be viewed by any interested person.

Orren speaks of a new, rapidly dawning Internet age that he dubs “Web 3.0.” “Web 2.0 was all about cool interactive Websites,” Orren says. “Web 3.0 is characterized by the frenetic rise of social networking. With Web 3.0, it no longer matters where the information ‘lives.’ Once you post something, it will be quickly disseminated via social networks to those users who care about the information.”

To make sure their information is launched effectively into the social networks they wish to penetrate, Orren says that professional marketers should make sure their client’s Websites, Facebook pages, and other portals undergo search engine optimization

(SEO) by a qualified expert in this new field. “SEO is the most important investment you can make for your client,” he adds.

Another emerging trend is the use of short video infomercials to promote a business or service. “I’m starting to see more ads placed that consist of a 10 to 15-second video clip, with a link that takes you to the full-length 5 to 7-minute video,” Orren says. He also sees a move away from traditional online advertising such as the “ubiquitous and annoying” banner and pop-up ads and towards special promotions and contests, live events, direct e-mails, and email newsletters. In addition, the emphasis on social networking means that more must be spent on staffing and monitoring social networks.



Market Mavens Online

Orren says that marketers adjusting to the decline of print outlets should focus instead on getting their information out through as many Internet outlets as possible. “Use your own Web sites, create a Facebook page, use Twitter, or whatever. The important part is to get your information online.”

“Today’s media professionals have to be smart about technology, and find the best ways to follow what people are saying about your clients online,” Orren says. “For example, I can be sitting in my favorite coffee shop and send out a message that I think the coffee here is the best on the planet. My friends trust my opinion; I have credibility with them; so this is the best kind of marketing /advertising any business can get,” he says.

There are also promotional advantages in the technology itself. A

coffee shop in New York City recently started taking advance orders on Twitter and their business increased exponentially. “People love the ‘coolness’ of using the technology in a new way and have spread the word via Twitter to their friends,” Orren adds.

Questions You Must Answer

As marketing and communications professionals, you can’t afford to get caught in a situation that could endanger your brand, reputation, or perceived value. Be sure to take the following scenarios into your marketing meetings and find team solutions that will improve your potential to compete successfully both online and offline.

Scenario 1

Today, reporters are wearing their technology: video cameras, audio recorders, PDA’s, etc. Some are even allowed to post updates to their blogs without their content being vetted by a senior publication executive. What if a reporter snaps a photo of your project and writes something unflattering about the project and posts it to his blog? How will you know it’s out there? How will you respond to it in a way that will assure that readers get the full story? How will your senior managers respond to this type of publicity and its ramifications? It’s no longer as easy as writing a letter to the editor and posting a correction. Role play this scenario and determine how your marketing staff will react to an event like this.

Scenario 2

Using social networks is an effective way to get fast feedback on how your company is doing. However, tracking and responding to comments can become very labor-intensive. For example, if a company is receiving 400 mentions per day on Twitter and of these 398 are positive comments and two are complaints, what type of process do you need to create to decide which responses are worthy of response. Nevertheless, social networking tools such as Twitter and Facebook can help companies become aware of problems or successes more quickly. How will your marketing

⁴Fine, Jon. “When Big-City Papers Bite the Dust,” *BusinessWeek*, Oct. 6, 2008.

team monitor social networks? What processes will you develop for responding to positive or negative comments?

Scenario 3

Print publications are dropping like flies during a late-summer cold snap. However, there is more information posted online in the Internet “cloud” than ever before. What’s more, the art and science of Web analytics and search engine optimization is advancing by leaps and bounds every day. Absent your traditional trade publications, how will you ensure that your information gets to their target audiences? How will you define and segment your audiences in a meaningful way, and how will you evaluate the effectiveness of your efforts?



About the Authors

Robert Brown, ABC is an award-winning journalist and technical communicator. In 2001, he founded RDB Consulting Inc., a training and communications consultancy specializing in helping technology startups bring their products to market. Robert also worked for several years for Accenture as a change management consultant, and has held positions with Dallas Area Rapid Transit, the U.S. Department of Energy, and Texas Instruments.

Steve Freeman is an award-winning, veteran news and feature writer. He believes communication is the most fundamental and yet most pervasive of all management activities for any business or organization. Steve has co-authored three educational manuals for Book & Brain Reading, holds a master’s degree in communications management from Syracuse University, and is co-recipient of a first-place Illinois Associated Press award for news writing.

Linda Mastaglio, ABC is has been writing professionally for over three decades and has won many national and international awards for communication excellence. The owner of her own communication consultancy since 1996 (www.twi-pr.com), she has also written and edited books and owns a publishing company that develops stimulating art products for senior adults (www.twipublishing.com). Her byline has appeared in over 75 publications worldwide.

Linda and Steve are co-authors of *Vital Connections: Building Relationships with Key Stakeholders*, published by the International Association of Business Communicators, which was honored with an Award of Distinction from the 13th Annual Communicator Awards program. Details at <http://www.iabcstore.com>.