

It's true, newspapers aren't going away

It's been a heck of a couple of weeks for someone in my profession. It seems you couldn't go more than a couple of days without reading about some cuts or closures at this newspaper or that.

Then the finger-pointing started with media giants bickering back and forth with a senseless glee that only served to make newspapers, all newspapers, look like we're fiddling while Rome burns.

Let me assure you, Rome is not burning. There may be smoke and the occasional flame, but there's no need for any of us to start running for our lives.

As optimistic as I am about the future of newspapers, I am not naive about the state of the industry. Revenue is down in most places from traditional sources such as advertising and subscriptions. Page counts are lower. Fewer and smaller stories make it into the paper. The gravitas a newspaper delivered merely by the heavy "thump" it made landing on your doorstep or kitchen table is a mere ringing in the ears in most places.

Given all those problems it really does sound like the barbarians are at the gate.

Then what the heck do I have to feel optimistic about?

I'd like to believe that from reading my musings you've concluded that I have enough brains in my head not to eat paint chips, dig before I call or deliberately put myself in a precarious employment situation. But I also believe that you're too smart to just take my word for it.

First on the revenue side: in 2014 Canadian newspapers brought in over \$2.6 billion in revenue. Yes, that is less than they did in years past, but it's still nothing to sneeze at. Further, our share of online ad sales (the key area for growth) keeps going up and up. Will it keep growing that way forever? If I knew that I'd be living on a private Island somewhere.

However, what may surprise you is that the majority of Canadian newspaper companies aren't mired in debt, and most are profitable.

Then there's the fact that people, and I mean lots of people, still read newspapers. The most recent industry figures state that 81 per cent of Canadians read a newspaper last week. Why? Because people want what newspapers bring them.

At the moment there is no source for local news, truly local news, like a newspaper. TV and radio do their best, but are limited by high production costs, the time available to broadcast and often the need to report news from beyond the community's border. Bloggers, including those on social media, can do an excellent job of getting the basics of a story out fast, but since it's a hobby for most (unless they're independently wealthy) these reporters tend not to stay around in the long term.

But newspapers have been here for the long haul. Papers, like those of **[INSERT LOCAL PAPER NAME]**, will always have an important place in the minds and hearts of citizens because you can't find what we do anywhere else.

And that's why as long as people love their communities, I'll always have a home at a newspaper.

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