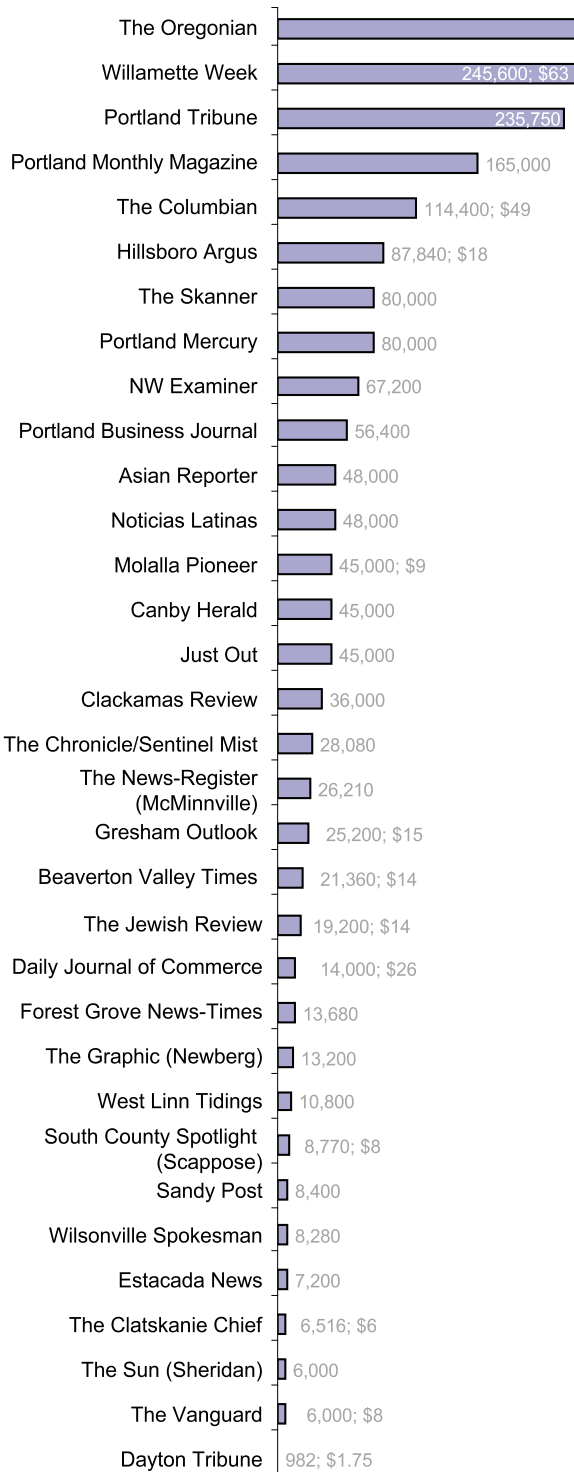


THE MEDIASHED

by Brian Vanneman



With all the information-overload that comes along with our modern digitized era—the blogging, podcasting, cable news networks, and listserves—who has the time anymore to engage in the almost nostalgic act of reading a newspaper? And what information could an old broadsheet possibly contribute to a world where news and opinions are more inescapable than informative?

Some broad trends are revealing. Between 2002 and 2005, daily readership of *The Oregonian*, the standard-bearer for print journalism in the metrocape, declined by 6.6%. And over the past decade, the average daily readership of newspapers in the state declined by approximately 1% per year.

But despite the anxiety that the above questions have caused in newsrooms around the country, the answers remain: The print media still deliver quite a lot of information to a substantial portion of the population. The Audit Bureau of Circulations calculates that more than 255,000 households receive and read *The Oregonian* on an average weekday in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties alone. That’s approximately 42% of all 603,405 households in the three-county region.


And as the chart on this page suggests, the six-county metrocape supports an eclectic mix of print media, including two dailies, dozens of weeklies, and numerous niche publications designed to appeal to different ethnic, cultural, and geographical groups. We counted 32 newspapers that specifically serve the region’s smaller cities and neighborhoods, but there are likely quite a few more.


The media range in readership size from Portland’s long-running daily to the nearly equally historic *Dayton Tribune*, which began publishing in 1912 and is now mailed weekly to an audience of just 490 Marion County households.

Indeed, many pundits argue that if the print media can beat other news outlets at anything, it is in delivering local news. The staff of *The Skanner*, which serves North Portland, says that there has never been more of a need for news that speaks to their majority-black audience. “A neighborhood paper has to be all local,” says Allan Classen, publisher of the *NW Examiner*. “Every expansion equals dilution.” On a larger scale, while newspapers in other metro areas have merged or disappeared, *The Portland Tribune* jumped into the local news business in 2001 to offer strong competition for *The Oregonian*.

In a region that emphasizes localism—from locally-grown food to neighborhood schools—it only makes sense that the news should do the same.

CHART 1. Print Readership and Ad Rates in the Mediascape

 Readership per issue of a given publication. (Note that daily or weekly media with the same readership per issue as less frequent publications can be expected to have a greater accumulated readership over time.)

 Ad rates for selected publications, in \$ per column inch.