

The Cedar Rapids Gazette

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EXTRA

Celebrating 140 YEARS

[51,135 days]

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

HOW LOCAL NEWS OPERATIONS BENEFIT COMMUNITIES — PAGE 2

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GAZETTE'S 140 YEARS

1883

JAN. 10



Lucian H. Post



Elbridge T. Otis

The first edition of The Evening Gazette is printed — four pages, 3 cents a copy — by founders Lucian H. Post and Elbridge T. Otis, working from their office at 69 First Ave. East. The city had 10 other newspapers at the time.

1884

MARCH



Clarence Miller



Fred W. Faulkes

Clarence Miller and Fred Faulkes buy The Evening Gazette. Their family members will guide the paper for the next 100-plus years.

1885

NOVEMBER



The Evening Gazette's building on First Avenue East

The Evening Gazette moves to 58 First Ave. East on "The Gazette Block."

A PAST TO REMEMBER A FUTURE TO REPORT

Gazette's 140th anniversary prompts reflection on how local news operations benefit communities

By Zack Kucharski, The Gazette

Few companies — in any sector — reach the 140th anniversary milestone. Even fewer share their work product in the community each day. It's part of what makes Tuesday — the 140th anniversary of the first edition of The Gazette — so special.

While it's a day worthy of celebration, it also should be a call to action not to take local media for granted. The Gazette has played an important role in the growth and success of Eastern Iowa. We've done it as we tell the stories of our region — one day at a time.

The history of The Gazette is the history of Eastern Iowa. Our journalists have covered triumphs and successes, agonizing defeats and challenges. We ask questions at some of the most dark and difficult moments. And while we strive to always get our facts right, we sometimes fall short. While there's a common saying that the customer is always right,



Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds answers a question from Gazette Executive Editor Zack Kucharski during a question-and-answer session during the newspaper's annual Iowa Ideas Conference on Oct. 14, 2021, at The Gazette's office, 116 Third St. SE in Cedar Rapids. The two-day conference was moved online because of the pandemic. (Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette)

we operate in a way that sometimes alienates and upsets people that we also want to

support us. It has to be that way because we would lose trust and

credibility if we only offered information everyone agreed on. We strive daily to maintain

that very fragile trust, which hinges on accuracy and fair reporting practices and the hundreds of decisions that go into each story. We can't knowingly pursue news — or avoid it — because of our business interests. That is what has given us credibility and trust through the years — that our greater purpose is to help communities across Eastern Iowa grow stronger.

But the story of The Gazette is pretty darn unique, too. Local ownership and the focus on local news is what allowed The Gazette to stand apart from the more than 30 newspapers that were started in Cedar Rapids.

In the first edition of The Evening Gazette in 1883, L.H. Post and E.T. Otis said the edition — which sold for 3 cents and was one of 11 newspapers in Cedar Rapids, a city of 10,000 at the time — was their "earnest endeavor to publish a paper worthy of the support and confidence of the people."

► FUTURE, PAGE 10S



The Gazette Gives Back has proudly awarded \$3.9 million in in-kind advertising to more than 140 area non-profits since 2015.

In 2023, 41 area nonprofits will share \$525,000 of in-kind advertising from The Gazette to reach and enrich our local communities.

thegazette.com/givesback

"Every single person we reach is an opportunity to change or save a life."

– Foundation 2

"Being able to connect with our community through Gazette advertising is critical to the success and longevity of the agency."

– YPN

"Helping spread awareness of our programs, resources and events."

– Alzheimer's Association, Iowa Chapter

1888

DEC. 5

The Evening Gazette moves to 85-87 First Ave. SE, now the site of Cedar Rapids City Hall.

1904

JAN. 9

The Evening Gazette celebrates its 21st anniversary by printing 108 pages, the biggest edition ever published in Iowa.

1919

JULY 12

The first aerial photograph of Cedar Rapids is published, showing the downtown, the Cedar River and several bridges.

1921

NOV. 28

A comics page is added.

1925



The Evening Gazette moves into a new building on the corner of Third Avenue and Fifth Street SE, its headquarters for the next 95 years.

1927

APRIL 18

The Evening Gazette buys The Republican and changes its name to The Evening Gazette and Republican.

Serving the COMMUNITY

By Vanessa Miller, The Gazette

A century ago this month, throngs of Cedar Rapids men and women seeking fame and even fortune crowded a snow-covered Second Avenue SE outside the 730-seat Palace Theatre, hoping for a shot at stardom.

The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette had run an exclusive announcement reporting that Hollywood filmmakers were coming to town to make a movie, and locals could audition for principal roles and extra parts.

“You have a chance for fame and fortune right here in Cedar Rapids,” the Evening Gazette reported Jan. 8, 1923. “You need not go to Hollywood to be ‘discovered.’”

Forty years before that wintry report excited a community of avid readers reliant on the paper for news on neighbors, lawmakers, community leaders, weather, events, births, deaths and athletes young and old, The Evening Gazette on Jan. 10, 1883, put out its first edition.

It cost 3 cents and delivered national and local headlines about a “disastrous fire” in Milwaukee that might have killed “Tom Thumb”; smallpox “raging” in Virginia; and a steamer collision in Europe that officers and crew “managed with great coolness.”

It also came with a note introducing itself to the community and laying out its vision.

“The new newspaper venture in Cedar Rapids, The Evening Gazette, is before you this afternoon,” according to the column. “Its publishers do not think it necessary to enter into an elaborate statement of what The Gazette will be, but pass this point by saying that it will be their earnest endeavor to publish a paper worthy of the support and confidence of the people of this locality.”



Gazette copy desk editors work at 10:01 p.m. Aug. 11, 2020, to finish putting out the newspaper at Color Web Printers in southwest Cedar Rapids. Downtown Cedar Rapids — and all of Linn County — was without power after the Aug. 10 derecho, and the newsroom and other operations relocated to the printing plant, which had a large generator. Despite connection issues — the editors in the photo are plugged directly into the servers — The Gazette never missed a day publishing a paper or updating its website. (The Gazette)

By setting its price at 3 cents, the paper aimed to be accessible to all, “the mechanic and laborer as well as the merchant and banker.”

“While endeavoring to give a fair reflex of the current news of the day, as well as carefully prepared miscellany, The Gazette will make a special effort to attend fully to its local department, making that feature such that it shall be a

welcome visitor at the fireside of every family in the city. Its publishers hope and believe there is a corner for them in the newspaper field of Cedar Rapids, and they enter that field full of courage, believing they will stand or fall as they deserve.”

One hundred and forty years later, The Gazette stands.

Although it looks vastly

different from that inaugural 1883 edition, lined with front-page ads for “fine shoes” and “Gregory Stark, ‘The boss’ Cigar Dealer.”

Today, many readers see Gazette stories and ads on handheld screens and computers that early Iowans couldn’t have fathomed. They browse news about fires, weather, events, car crashes, elections, meetings and court hearings

as they happen in real time.

Readers leap with a swipe of their finger from today’s news to related articles from years ago in only seconds — paying for the product without ever handling actual cash.

But while many features of 21st century journalism would be unrecognizable to publishers more than a century ago,

► COMMUNITY, PAGE 4S

‘It shall be a welcome visitor at the fireside of every family in the city’

The Gazette stands behind its founding mission 140 years later

Congratulations to the Gazette on your 140th Anniversary

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1927	1930	1932	1936	1936	1945	1947
APRIL 24 The first Sunday morning edition is published.	APRIL 14 The first Picture Page appears.	JUNE 3 The Evening Gazette and Republican changes its name to Cedar Rapids Gazette.	FEB. 2 The paper adds "the" to its name to become The Cedar Rapids Gazette.	MAY 5 The Gazette wins the Pulitzer Prize for community service after exposing corruption in state government related to gambling and liquor sales.	AUG. 14 The Gazette publishes an extra to announce the end of World War II.	NOVEMBER The Gazette launches KCRG-AM radio and KCRK-FM, the area's first FM station.

COMMUNITY

► FROM PAGE 3S

many of its tenets and objectives remain the same: to tell the truth, inform readers, connect communities and enrich lives — while holding officials accountable and providing a forum for questions, criticism and compromise.

"The earliest journalists firmly established as a core principle their responsibility to examine unseen corners of society," reporters Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel laid out in their book, "The Elements of Journalism."

WATCHDOG

To achieve that watchdog goal, news organizations must maintain independence, according to the American Press Institute.

The Gazette, for more than a decade, has been 100 percent employee-owned. The company transitioned from a family-owned enterprise to an "employee stock ownership plan" in 2012 and since then its Cedar Rapids holding company, Folience Inc., has diversified by acquiring other brands — including manufacturers like Life Line Emergency Vehicles in Sumner.

Meanwhile, many of today's newspapers and broadcasters remain owned by national companies like Gannett, Alden Global Capital and Sinclair Broadcast Group.

Regardless of ownership, the American Press Institute stresses journalists and the publications they write for "show an ultimate allegiance to citizens."

"A commitment to citizens is an implied covenant with the audience and a foundation of the journalistic business model," according to the institute. "Journalism provided 'without fear or favor' is perceived to be more valuable than content from other information sources."

The Gazette over its years has fulfilled that mission through Pulitzer Prize-winning crime reporting and investigations of City Hall and lawmakers, government systems and laws, organ transplants, sex offenders, prostitution rings, manufacturing plants, farming regulations, schools, universities and the administrators who lead them.

Its reporting has shed light on policy violations, impermissible practices, civil rights violations and money misuse — propelling audits, external investigations and meaningful change.

And, in times of emergency, The Gazette has served as a go-to source for digestible details on what occurred, imperative information on the impact, resources for those in need and specifics on how to help.

DEPENDABLE IN DISASTER

On Nov. 2, 1991 — years before campus shootings became a tragically familiar occurrence — reporters for The Gazette stepped into the aftermath of a terror rarely seen at the time and shared survivor stories with their surrounding community.

Under a banner headline, "5



A victim is removed from Van Allen Hall after Gang Lu, 28, a disgruntled physics student at the University of Iowa, shot and killed four people and injured a fifth on Nov. 1, 1991, after failing to win an academic award. (Gazette archives)



The front page of the first edition of The Evening Gazette on Jan. 10, 1883, had no pictures, but it provided national and local news and advertising. (Gazette archives)



The "Epic Surge" photo by Gazette photojournalist Liz Martin wraps around the front and back covers of the June 13, 2008, Gazette, showing the Cedar River surrounding May's Island and downtown buildings in Cedar Rapids.

killed at U of I," a staff photo showed a rescuer removing "one of the victims of a shooting rampage from Van Allen Hall at the University of Iowa."

"God, I was in there the whole time," one graduate student told Gazette reporter Lyle Muller. "This is like the safest place in the world I've ever been. I'm still in shock."

Almost two decades later, on June 13, 2008, bold black letters set the historical record of an "Epic Surge" in Cedar Rapids, backdropped by the two-page photo that showed the thousand words it replaced — the Cedar River drowning bridges and streets and submerging the historic Linn County Courthouse and Cedar Rapids City Hall.

In the weeks, months and years after the historic flood, Gazette reporters churned out thousands of articles telling hundreds of stories of Eastern Iowans and their recovery efforts, failures and successes — connecting community resources with those in need and inspiring neighbors to pitch in.

"Not a single life was lost in the disaster," Cedar Rapids City Manager Jeff Pomeranz and flood recovery administrator Joe O'Hern wrote to The Gazette for the flood's

five-year anniversary in 2013.

"More than 1,400 residents participated in the Neighborhood Planning Process in 2009," he said. "More than 1,300 housing units have been created, including hundreds of new single-family homes, and more than 2,300 housing units were repaired."

Jump ahead another decade-plus, The Gazette — like every other media outlet — found itself covering a different kind of disaster: a pandemic that shuttered communities, overwhelmed hospitals and killed millions, including more than 1 million in the United States and more than 10,400 in Iowa.

Early in the virus' spread, The Gazette began making its own COVID-19 calculations and graphics, showing weekly and monthly trends in cases, deaths and hospitalizations by age group and county, among other things. When the state decommissioned its coronavirus data site Feb. 16, 2022, The Gazette collaborated on an Iowa Newspaper Association project to launch an ongoing Iowa COVID-19 data website.

And in the midst of the pandemic, on Aug. 10, 2020, Eastern Iowa was further crippled by a powerful derecho that caused more than \$11 billion in damages — with Cedar Rap-

ids hardest hit.

The Gazette's post-derecho reporting kept the community informed on storm damage, power outages, cleanup resources and needs — with more than 1 million views of its online coverage in the two months after facilitating a regional recovery that captured national attention and admiration.

Even with power and internet outages downing computers and printing resources, Gazette staffers in the moments after the storm found a functioning generator and connected a string of computers while reporters hit the streets, talking with residents with upended cars, trees through roofs and crumpled grain bins.

"They couldn't access the wires, email or the internet, but 30 miles away, the Iowa City bureau had a connection," The Poynter Institute wrote about The Gazette's derecho coverage in the midst of a pandemic. "One staffer drove there and started pulling pieces of the news, putting them on a thumb drive and heading back to Cedar Rapids to get them on the page."

In the end, The Gazette didn't miss a single edition, although Executive Editor Zack Kucharski told Poynter, "It

hasn't been easy."

GIVING BACK

On top of its service through words on newspaper racks, door steps and computer screens, The Gazette has fashioned itself a literal town square — launching in 2016 the Iowa Ideas conference, aimed at bringing together thought leaders, officials, lawmakers, experts and everyday Iowans to discuss and debate issues facing the state and possible solutions.

The most recent session in October tackled health care worker shortages; name, image and likeness changes for collegiate student-athletes; a rise in domestic abuse; and growing mental health needs. Speakers included legendary Hawkeye wrestling coach Dan Gable and new Hawkeye women's wrestling coach Clarissa Chun, along with musician and humanitarian Simon Estes, who grew up in Centerville.

The Gazette — a leading newspaper in a state viewed as central to the American political machine — also regularly hosts a "Pints & Politics" event, bringing community members together over happy hour to discuss and debate current and future political topics across the political spectrum.

And — embodying its role as a community member — The Gazette annually prioritizes service through volunteer efforts, sponsorships and a "Gazette GivesBack" program. With help of sponsor Collins Community Credit Union, the giveback program provides more than \$525,000 in free advertising credits yearly to select Eastern Iowa non-profits.

"The Gazette's importance for the community is so obvious to me," said Diane Langton, who worked as a Gazette proofreader and librarian from 1971 until retiring in 2016. She now writes the Time Machine history column.

"The paper and its leaders have been instrumental in the growth and development of the community at large," she said. "A perusal of the archives shows many of our industries and institutions have benefited by support from The Gazette."

On a personal level, The Gazette has made a deeper impact on millions of readers over its century-plus — capturing, for example, the triumph of a high school football championship, devastation of an untimely death, success of a new business venture or joy of a holiday rite.

"Neighbors" of The Evening Gazette in 1883 predicted as much in producing notices to their own readers that L.H. Post and E.L. Otis were joining forces to launch a paper in Cedar Rapids.

"It would be hard to find a better team," according to one notice.

"With ample means and sterling integrity behind them," another wrote, "they are bound to make the new venture a success."

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"Journalism provided 'without fear or favor' is perceived to be more valuable than content from other information sources."

American Press Institute

1949

MAY 28

The Gazette publishes its last extra (until the 9/11 attacks in 2001) on a guilty verdict in the sensational Rutledge “love triangle” murder trial.



1953

OCT. 12

The Gazette launches KCRG-TV from the Miller Building, First Avenue and First Street SW. The station moves to Second Avenue and Fifth Street SE in 1975 and is sold to Gray Television of Atlanta in 2015.

1973

Electric typewriters replace manual typewriters, an interim step before newsroom desktop computers are installed.



1975

NOV. 1

The first Saturday morning Gazette is published.

Putting together a STORY

Journalists show up, listen to different viewpoints, verify information to tell stories about the communities they serve

By Grace King, The Gazette

Relationships are what Marissa Payne, The Gazette’s city government reporter in Cedar Rapids, relies on when writing her stories.

Payne said she knows it’s asking a lot from people to have confidence in the reporting process, especially when they don’t see the time spent building those relationships, interviewing and fact-checking. She works hard to gain the trust of her sources and learn what’s important to her audience, showing up in-person as often as she can and meeting regularly with city officials for coffee and lunch.

“We’re not doing this in a silo. We’re out in the field, studying the things we’re writing about and informing the public,” said Payne, who said she is “genuinely curious” when asking questions.

When working on a story, Payne said, she approaches topics analytically and tries to be transparent about her intentions.

Her story ideas often come from city council agendas, public comments, community organizations and conversations with residents.

“Often, I can see both sides of an issue,” she said. “Especially in our current political climate, I feel like people have a set opinion and point of view. If our news report doesn’t align with their existing beliefs, it’s upsetting to them. They don’t understand why we framed a story a certain way.”

“It’s fair to hold us accountable or ask questions of us if there’s a lack of understanding of our work,” said Payne, who often talks to readers about her reporting process.

“Being a journalist is not an easy job. We do this because we care about our communities.”

The Gazette’s investigative reporter, Erin Jordan, is looking for “high-impact stories,” often when a regulatory body didn’t work the way it should have and, because of that, something happened that was not good for Iowans, she said.

Many of her stories are “document heavy,” she said. She gathers data from state or federal agencies, or communication trails like emails obtained through public information requests. From there, she interviews officials and the people impacted by

the story.

Jordan wants to “hear all sides” of a story and also report on potential solutions.

“We’re not putting something out there that’s half-baked,” said Jordan, commenting on the time and energy Gazette reporters put into verifying information. “We have a high threshold of what we require before we put information in articles.”

“That time is our salaries,” Jordan said. “There’s a cost associated with the work we do. It’s hard when people don’t put a value on that and don’t want to support it with a subscription — online or print.”

FEWER REPORTERS

Joy Mayer, director of Trusting News, which works to empower journalists to demonstrate credibility and earn trust every day, said being a news consumer is “overwhelming and complicated.”

Reporters need to have a “more honest conversation” with their readers about how they tell their stories and why, she said.

News organizations cannot cover as many stories as they used to, Mayer said. While readers may assume this is because reporters don’t care, it’s really because there are fewer reporters than there used to be.

Research suggests readers think the local news business “is in fine shape,” Mayer said. “People would be more likely to pay for the news if they understood the situation is not as rosy as people think.”

With less advertising revenue, news organizations are relying on revenue from subscribers more than in the past, Mayer said.

Reporters also need to examine their “blind spots” by asking their community whose voice is missing in their reporting, what journalists get wrong and what people want to read about, Mayer said. They “owe answers” to their community about why they are prioritizing what stories are covered, she said.

READER ADVOCATE

Gazette copy editor Rae Riebe said reporters can miss things because of downsizing. “That’s why it’s so important to engage the public and get them to call or email when they know something,” she said.

Riebe has worked a cumulative of 30 years at The Gazette, bringing decades of experience to the newsroom. She

specializes in writing funny headlines when it’s appropriate, she said. She considers herself an “advocate for the reader,” working to “make things clearer” by adding explanations or rewording a sentence.

“Our mission today is to give the most complete and accurate reporting we can with our time constraints,” Riebe said. “I’ve had people accuse us of being a party paper. ... We’re a paper that presents different viewpoints.”

Riebe prepares content for the inside pages of the newspaper, finds stories from the wire and proofreads the pages before they go to print. She also works on special sections for The Gazette, including Hoopla, a weekly entertainment section.

DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Stephen Schmidt, a digital editor at The Gazette, said he tries to get “as many eyes on the reporter’s work as possible.”

For a long time, Schmidt said, it felt like The Gazette’s print and digital products were “competing with each other.”

“Often, they’re completely different audiences,” he said. “A lot of our paper readers might not care the website exists, and a lot of our digital readers maybe haven’t opened a newspaper in years.”

When reporters are finished with a story that is breaking news or competitive, they inform Schmidt, who gives the story a quick read and publishes it online as quickly as possible. The story is then circulated on The Gazette’s social media channels. It is later edited for print.

“You’re trying to be urgent, and also steady with it. You don’t want to introduce inaccuracies. You have to juggle a lot in a very short period of time,” Schmidt said.

Schmidt is working on ways for The Gazette to reach digital audiences more intentionally.

One method is a daily podcast and newsletter. He’s also thinking about how to engage younger audiences by considering whether The Gazette would be a good fit for YouTube or TikTok, short-form, video-sharing apps.

“There’s a lot of noise out there, and (news) is maybe not the most sexy or glamorous stuff,” said Schmidt, who calls himself a “cheerleader” to help the audience “get to the excellent work we do.”

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Erin Jordan interviews Curt Zingula at his farm in September 2018 in rural Marion. Jordan, The Gazette’s investigative reporter, said reporters spend time verifying information they put in their stories. “We’re not putting something out there that’s half-baked,” she said. (The Gazette)

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1977

JULY 7

The Gazette's letterpress is replaced by an offset press, the latest innovation in printing.



1979

JULY 19

The paper changes its name to The Gazette, reflecting the paper's regional and statewide coverage.

JUNE 29

The Gazette becomes a morning paper.

1981



The Gazette opens an Iowa City Bureau at 2 Rocky Shore Dr.

1981

1982

JULY 4

Publication of a weekly Neighbors section begins. It is incorporated into the Community section in March 2003.

TELLING STORIES

Reporters add digital skills to traditional toolbox

By Tom Barton,
Gazette Des Moines Bureau

Stories connect us. They enrich, they contextualize, they shape and inform the world around us. They spark social movements.

And for 140 years, The Gazette has told the stories of Iowans, recently like that of the Westerns, a Black family that's farmed in Iowa for 158 years, making theirs likely the only one of about 1,700 Iowa Heritage Farms owned by a Black family.

Or of Johnny Ray Delgado and his girlfriend, Mary Sand, part of a growing population of homeless individuals in Linn County living outdoors, a population that has more than tripled in three years.

One Gazette reader said that article and its pictures make the unseen seen.

"The large color photo of Johnny Ray Delgado and Mary Sand is beautiful and heartbreaking," wrote Gretchen Reeh-Robinson of Mount Vernon. "Delgado and Sand are living in a tent in 'a little-known village of homeless people' in Cedar Rapids. Elijah Decious writes to make 'homeless people' real, and their front page presence brings them inside our homes."

How those stories are told and reported has changed dramatically over the decades — more so over the last 20 to 30 years — with the rise of 24-hour news channels, the internet, social media and digital technology shifting storytelling to a more all-encompassing experience, said Roy Peter Clark, who has taught writing at The Poynter Institute, a Florida nonprofit dedicated to media studies, to students of all ages since 1979.

"Stories enrich our experience," Clark said.

Story is and has always been an integral part of the human experience, he continued. And while research suggests the global attention span is narrowing due to the amount of information that is presented to the public, people still are interested in a good story, as evidenced by the rise and popularity of long-form conversation podcasts and complex, binge-worthy docuseries on streaming services and the lure of long-form journalism online, Clark said.

For The Gazette, that's meant delving into podcasts, and developing interactive maps, graphics and timelines as well as videos and short, daily newscasts to enhance visual storytelling, said Executive Editor Zack Kucharski.

He pointed to the paper's coverage of the 2008 flood, the 2020 derecho and its series on Little Mexico, a Cedar Rapids neighborhood razed in the 1960s to build Interstate 380. The projects combined aerial drone photography, historical maps and photos and videos to create interactive maps and short documentaries.

"You used to have to touch and hold a big newspaper," Kucharski said. "Well, now most people that are accessing our website are doing it from their smartphone. And so how



Rod Boshart, then the manager of The Gazette's Des Moines Bureau, listens to Iowa House Speaker Pat Grassley while interviewing him Dec. 19, 2019, in Grassley's office at the Capitol in Des Moines. (The Gazette)

you prepare stories and how you think about the information that you want to share is different.

"You're watching the short-term videos, and those YouTube shorts are immensely popular," he said. "The newspaper that's known for context has to find ways to weave all of that information into a tighter attention span because our readers are competing for time."

CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

Reporters, too, have had to adjust as different technologies come online.

Rod Boshart formerly managed The Gazette's Des Moines Bureau, covering the Iowa Legislature, state government and politics until his retirement in 2021. During his roughly 40-year career, he went from dictating stories from the campaign trail over the phone to editors to filing stories on a laptop.

"It was a gradual, step-by-step from typewriter to Radio Shack laptops," which would show only five lines of text and required connecting an acoustic coupler to the phone's receiver and pressing "send." Copytakers on the news desk would put their phone into another acoustic coupler linked to a computer. The laptop's modem would then read the report and convert every character typed into a beep, similar to Morse code, and the computer at the news desk would then convert and upload the text.

Then came the internet, smartphones and social media, leading to the rise of an instantaneous, never-ending news cycle.

In 2017, when former Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad resigned to become U.S. ambassador to China, Boshart found himself faced with utilizing new skills and new technology he never thought he would have to use to tell the story of Branstad's historic 22-year, five-month

run as the longest-serving governor in U.S. history.

Boshart, the longtime dean of Iowa Statehouse reporters who began his career as a reporter for the United Press International wire service, drove with an intern to Branstad's hometown of Leland, where the intern shot photos of the family farm where Branstad grew up and downtown Leland. Boshart compiled audio and video clips of the former governor's old law partner and others to help tell the story of the farm boy-turned-political icon.

While routine for reporters today — who grew up with smartphones in their pockets that are now equipped with 12-megapixel, ultrawide and telephoto lenses and capable of shooting and editing high-definition video — it was a large departure for the traditional, shoe-leather reporter.

Boshart recalled the contrast with a story he wrote just a few years before about Robert D. Ray's archives offering a rare look into the former Iowa governor's tenure. It was more of a traditional, straightforward news story that included a chronology and collection of photos of Ray's time as Iowa's chief executive from 1969 to 1983.

With the Branstad story, Boshart saw the incorporation of audio and video clips as a "new way to look at (the story) in a different way, and I thought it was effective."

"I think it's better storytelling," Boshart said. "It was multidimensional and almost like being ... a broadcast (radio), video and a print reporter all in one."

While time consuming to do all that, "it made you think differently about how you approached (the story) since you didn't before worry about what something looked like or sounded like," Boshart said. "It was forcing an old dog to learn new tricks."

The end result, though, he

said, could not be argued with.

"With a newspaper story, you can paint a picture, but this ... I thought it was a really effective way to communicate a story and bring it to life," Boshart said. "It was both exciting, but also challenging and frustrating in some ways."

And while the mode of reporting has "exponentially improved," the mechanics and basics of writing and formulating a story is the same as the first journalism class he took in 1979, Boshart said.

"They've helped in the reporting process," The Gazette's Kucharski said of new digital technology. "I think the majority of the staff now wonders what it would have been like to report pre-Google and internet days. And so, you know, the process of news gathering has changed, and that's going to continue to happen."

USING SOCIAL MEDIA

University of Iowa Professor David Dowling studies digital media and technology. His research focuses on digital journalism's pivot toward increasingly immersive forms of storytelling — from podcasts to virtual reality and interactive documentaries.

"I think, to some extent, if you get into a medium like podcasting, you're going to feel a lot more vulnerability by the reporter," Dowling said. "You'll feel a lot more of their presence in the story. Just listen to Michael Barbaro (on the New York Times' "The Daily" news podcast). His halting delivery has been parodied wonderfully by "Saturday Night Live" and other places. But to be sure, there's something extraordinary about that (which others are now mimicking). And that is a humanized reporter that can actually play a role in the story and be in a story, but not interfere with it and ruin it, but to actually make it more transparent, more honest and more fair,

which is more deeply contextualized and richly analyzed, which is really the goal of higher quality news."

Social media, as well, has become an invaluable tool for newsrooms to generate story ideas, monitor news, track trends, engage with readers and brand and distribute content to different audiences.

"A lot of people will throw up their hands and say, 'Oh, the sky is falling. Social media has polarized us (and) created so much hate speech, etc.,'" Dowling said. "And it's very easy to point to the downsides and the drawbacks of social media leading the news cycle. Frankly, we can see the problems with that. But the other side of the coin is ... conscientious and thoughtful, mindful, intentional — slow even. Surveying of the media landscape through social media can lead to incredibly effective agenda setting for any news organization."

He pointed to Unicorn Riot as a "poster child" for the use of social media and reporting.

The nonprofit media collective came to prominence in May 2020 in the course of protests over the killing of George Floyd by a white police officer in Minneapolis. Founded by a group of journalists dissatisfied with traditional media coverage of protests against racial injustice and police shootings of Black people, the collective sought to provide an alternative mode of protest coverage.

"They used social media the best to cover the (Black Lives Matter) protests of any news organization," Dowling said. "I'm not alone in saying that. The New York Times said it. The Washington Post said it. ... It's because they put the mic in the hands of people in the community, and they let them speak for themselves. ... So they didn't go to the police or government officials who have a giant voice already."

He said it showed "powerful journalism" that lacks an authentic, community voice "doesn't have legs, doesn't have traction, without social media."

STICKING TO THE FUNDAMENTALS

Kucharski, though, stressed that the fundamentals of reporting and storytelling — accuracy, objectivity, context, relevance, succinctness and impact — have not changed.

"It's just adapting to use the new technology, use the new tools available," he said. "The tried and true things still work. There's a method to all of them. Sometimes it's just coming up with the new flavor or understanding. How do we apply some of that, the logic or the critical thinking, while incorporating that technology?"

"... You still have to sort through and figure out what is good information. This organization has done it for 140 years, and we will continue to do that going forward. ... And we'll work hard to figure out how to ethically and responsibly incorporate that into what we do each day."

Comments: (319) 398-8499; tom.barton@thegazette.com

"I think the majority of the staff now wonders what it would have been like to report pre-Google and internet days. And so, you know, the process of news gathering has changed, and that's going to continue to happen."

Gazette Executive Editor Zack Kucharski

1983

The Gazette buys the Spencer and Cherokee daily newspapers and the weeklies in Storm Lake and Alta in 1983, selling them in 1986.

1984

SEPT. 8

Iowa Farmer Today begins publication as a statewide weekly. It is sold in 2004.



1986

An employee stock ownership plan is created, with Gazette employees holding about 44 percent of the company's stock as part of a retirement plan.

1987

The Gazette opens a commercial printing division to print the Daily Iowan, the student newspaper at the University of Iowa, and other commercial orders.

1987

APRIL

The Gazette becomes one of the first newspapers in the nation to offer a telephone news service — CITYLINE — to supplement traditional news coverage.



Former Gazette Photo Director Paul Jensen captured images of Pope John Paul II when he visited the Living History Farms area in Urbandale on Oct. 4, 1979.

CAPTURING MOMENTS

Images cut across language, capture history in the making

By Gazette Visuals

We share the stories of Eastern Iowans using photos, videos and multimedia.

Photojournalism is a universal language.

It can cross borders of language, culture, ethnicity — even literacy. A good writer can describe a scene to put the reader into the moment. But the reader still needs to be able to read — and understand the same language — as the writer.

Images have the ability to transport viewers to the moment and place where it was made, often taking readers to places they have never been or seen.

“A photograph freezes that moment,” said Paul Jensen, a former Gazette director of photography.

“In most ways, a photojournalist puts it out there. It’s in print and they don’t necessarily see the impact on readers,” he said, recalling one time when readers collectively did get to interact with a display of photos from the historic flood of 2008.

“When we put together that gallery display (at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art) and invited all those people to come and look at it — it was just really powerful,” Jensen said. “To see people standing in front of those photographs, maybe with tears running down their faces. I remember, particularly, one guy standing in front of a giant photograph and he was pointing at his house. That’s powerful.”

Jensen, who started at The Gazette as an intern in the summer of 1975, counts the



Liz Martin, former Gazette senior photographer and photo editor, captured poignant moments as floodwaters from the Cedar River threatened homes. In this photo, Sheila Goad (left) is comforted by her sister Deb Bute, of Cedar Rapids, on June 20, 2008, after they found one of Goad’s pets dead in her Time Check home in northwest Cedar Rapids. Goad and another sister, Shawn Crippen, lived in the home and left behind five pets in the mandatory flood evacuation.

photo coverage of the Flood of 2008 as one of the most memorable stories during his tenure as director of photography.

Liz Martin, former Gazette senior photojournalist and photo editor, echoes Jensen.

“So many years later, it all feels like a blur: Photographing people evacuating their homes in Czech Village and Time Check overnight and into the next day, coming back after the floodwaters receded with the search and rescue crews, and continuing my coverage as residents returned to their homes ... and yet, I remember every single face, the pressure of floodwaters on my leaking waders, holding back tears as one homeowner searched for their pets and as a mother bent down to hug her daughter,” Martin said.

“I also remember the generosity and openness of so many, who let us into their homes to

share a brief glimpse of their lives, and then returning to those same families five years later, and then 10 years later,” she said.

Gazette photojournalists have had a front-row seat to history — whether that was Pope John Paul’s 1979 visit to Iowa, or then-U.S. Sen. Barack Obama announcing his presidential candidacy for the 2008 election, the Flood of 2008 and the 2020 derecho.

Photographers have captured moments in time and delivered them to inform readers.

“That would be a neat ticket to ride at Disneyland because you do get a front-row seat to history,” Jensen said.

Jensen points to the installation of a Goss Metro printing press in 1977, and its capability of printing color photographs, as taking The Gazette into a new realm of regularly print-



Paul Sueppel (left, facing tree) of Iowa City, leads members of his family Nov. 15, 2016, in singing “O Christmas Tree” as they draw close around one of the trees chosen by the family at Handley’s Holiday Hillside tree farm in Solon. At the time, the Sueppels had been singing the Christmas carol and dancing around their chosen trees for more than 35 years. (Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette)

ing color instead of black-and-white photos.

“The Gazette invested in taking their readers along for the ride,” he said. “When we got that Metro press downstairs, that was capable of doing significant amount of four-color work, that was the point in time when we added people to the photo staff.”

With the new press came trips to Brazil and Argentina for stories on connections to Iowa agriculture, covering the war in Bosnia, an eight-page special section on missionaries to Haiti.

“We had it. We needed to use it, and we could do it,” Jensen said.

Current senior photojournalist Jim Slosiarek recalls photographing the Sueppel family in 2016 gathering around a Christmas tree, with patriarch Paul Sueppel singing “O Christmas Tree” at a

tree farm in Solon. The family had been singing the carol and dancing around their chosen tree for more than 35 years when the photo was taken.

“It’s a moment the family has performed for over 35 years and probably has become commonplace to them,” Slosiarek said. “A curious photographer on a routine Black Friday assignment happens upon the scene of at least 15 Sueppel family members singing and dancing and records the moment. The photo is printed on page one of the next day’s newspaper.”

“Fast-forward six years to the same tree farm and the same photographer. He happens to meet some Sueppel family members. He learns that patriarch Paul Sueppel passed away in early August 2022. A grandson of Sueppel points to that 6-year-old photo, and says, “That’s me!” with a smile.”

1989

1994

1995

1999

2001

JUNE 15

The Gazette acquires the Community News Advertiser, a weekly publication in Coralville.

AUGUST

The Gazette launches FYIowa, an online bulletin board service. It becomes GazetteOnline.com in October 1995 and is now TheGazette.com.

AUG. 21

The Gazette and KCRG-TV9 move their Iowa City office to 301 E. Market St.

JULY

The Gazette begins regular use of a new, three-story Goss Universal 70 press at Color Web Printers, a new printing facility at 4700 Bowling St. SW. In January 2000, it is printing 3 million Sunday comic sections for King Features Syndicate.



SEPT. 11

The Gazette publishes an extra to report the terrorist attacks on the United States; 75,000 copies are printed and sold on street corners for 50 cents each.



The Gazette's 'bittersweet' PULITZER PRIZE

Investigation led to indictments, but most tossed because of editor's tactics

By Lyle Muller, for The Gazette

Here's a place you didn't want to be in the 1930s: Verne Marshall's crosshairs.

Marshall, the Cedar Rapids man who drove an ambulance for the French army during World War I.

Marshall, editor of the Cedar Rapids Gazette from 1932 to 1941 and the driving force behind the newspaper's only Pulitzer Prize.

Marshall, who later became a national leader of the No Foreign War Committee during World War II and

"managed to alienate virtually everyone he encountered in this effort," as author Jerry Harrington wrote in his 2017 book, "Crusading Iowa Journalist Verne Marshall: Exposing Graft and the 1936 Pulitzer Prize."



Verne Marshall

The Gazette was awarded the 1936 Pulitzer for public service because of Marshall's bulldog — some called it obsessive — drive to expose corruption in Iowa government related to illegal gambling and liquor sales.

Marshall's accusations shot all the way to then-Iowa Attorney General Edward O'Connor while Marshall also managed to constantly harangue then-Gov. Clyde Her-ring during the 1930s.

Harrington's book gives all the details of Marshall's drive against corruption but also how Marshall's prickly personality tarnished him.

Harrington's book goes into intricate detail about how Marshall, a cigar-smoking champion for what Marshall believed to be right, started to suspect something fishy in



This is the plaque The Gazette received in 1936 after winning the Pulitzer Prize for public service. The investigation by Gazette Editor Verne Marshall led to resignations and indictments, though most of the indictments were thrown out of court because of Marshall's involvement in the investigation. (Gazette archives)



The front page of the May 5, 1936, Gazette announces the newspaper winning the Pulitzer — and the Iowa Supreme Court justices tossing out most of the graft indictments that resulted from Editor Verne Marshall's investigative stories. Marshall insisted the Pulitzer vindicated the indictments. (Gazette archives)

Des Moines after state agents raided a canning factory in Cedar Rapids in 1934. Turned out that the factory was a front for an illegal bar that had illegal slot machines.

When Marshall asked himself how this could happen, the only logical answer to him was that someone in Des Moines was looking the other way when it came to unauthorized liquor sales and gambling.

Marshall's investigation led him to Sioux City, an unlikely place for a Cedar Rapids newspaper some 270 driving miles to the west. But Marshall believed, Harrington notes, that he could connect dots there to Des Moines.

Marshall was right. He learned that law enforcement officials in Sioux City were taking bribes to allow liquor to be sold at establishments that did not have the required, authorized state stamps, that illegal gambling was taking place, and that consent was coming from Des Moines.

Marshall's reporting forced Iowa's Democratic

Party chairman to resign. It also forced Woodbury County's county attorney and Sioux City's public safety commissioner to resign and, Harrington points out, helped end the attorney general's political career at the state level.

It also resulted in some 50 indictments, although most did not result in convictions.

Reports that Marshall published in The Gazette produced pushback from the government officials he accused, including accusations that Marshall improperly was influencing a grand jury looking into the allegations. That, in turn, produced pushback from Marshall.

"Whoever says or implies that ... is a deliberate liar," Marshall stated in a front-page column.

BITTERSWEET

The Gazette learned on May 5, 1936, it had won the Pulitzer Prize for public service.

The announcement's timing was bittersweet, though, because the Iowa Supreme Court

ruled the same day that cases stemming from Marshall's investigation against Iowa First Assistant Attorney General Walter Maley and others were being tossed out of court.

In its ruling, the Supreme Court took a dim view of the fact that Marshall had paid \$700 — about \$15,000 in today's dollars — to Woodbury County's special prosecutor — former Iowa Attorney General Horace Havner — for trial expenses and to help amass evidence for the case.

Havner denied receiving any Gazette compensation to prosecute the defendants, and Marshall, who had made thousands of dollars in other payments as well to help build the case, said he didn't bribe investigators. Rather, he said, he paid expenses that the case accrued.

Thus, you have an iconic May 5, 1936, Gazette front page — the newspaper was delivered in the afternoon with the headlines "Gazette Pulitzer Winner" and "Graft Case Indictments Wiped Out" stacked at the top of the page. No sur-

prise, the Pulitzer got the main headline.

Marshall wrote that the prize vindicated the indictments.

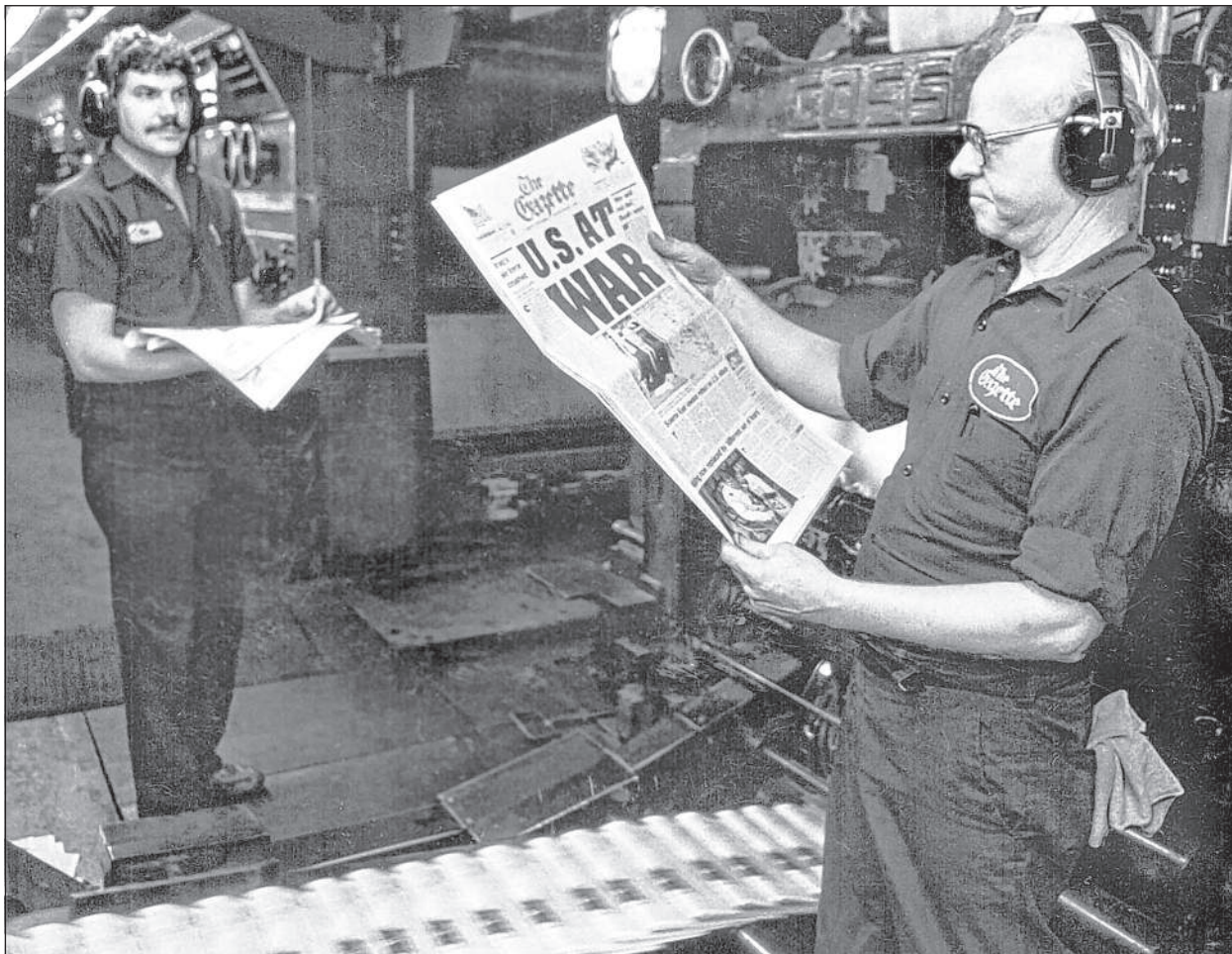
WORLD WAR II

In Harrington's book, he also reports on how negatively Marshall — the World War I veteran — became viewed for his opposition to U.S. involvement in World War II.

He makes note of what William Shirer, a Coe College graduate and author of "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich," said was Marshall's fanaticism in his opposition to the U.S. becoming involved in a European war.

And he makes note of others whom Marshall rubbed the wrong way, such as members of President Franklin Roosevelt's administration and one-time ally and aviation pioneer Charles Lindbergh.

Lyle Muller is former editor of The Gazette and former executive director-editor of Iowa Watch/Iowa Center for Public Affairs Journalism in Iowa City. This article is excerpted from a 2017 book review he wrote for The Gazette.



Loading rolls of newsprint on The Gazette's letterpress in 1960 were Jerry Fleming (front) and Marty Kucera. (Gazette archives)

LEFT: Pressmen Rion Heeren (left) and Dan Heiderscheid inspect printed copies of The Gazette on Jan. 17, 1991, as they come off the Goss Metro Press. The headlines told of American military operations that began "Operation Desert Storm," part of the Persian Gulf War in Kuwait and Iraq. (Gazette archives)

2004

2005

2008

2012

2016

NOV. 25

The Gazette's e-edition launches, offering the first digital Gazette subscriptions.

FEB. 1

The Gazette and KCRG-TV9 move their Iowa City office to Old Capitol Town Center. It closes in October 2018.

JUNE

The Gazette and GazetteOnline provide coverage of the "Epic Flood" from its downtown office, relying on generator power for almost a month. The flood coverage wins the national award for deadline reporting from the Society of Professional Journalists.



The Gazette Company transitions to a 100 percent employee-owned news operation.

OCTOBER

The Gazette hosts its first Iowa Ideas Conference in Cedar Rapids. The project is honored with the Iowa Newspaper Association's Bill Monroe Innovation Award in 2017.

CONNECTING

Finding the balance in fast-paced world: Report quickly but verify

By Trish Mehaffey, The Gazette

Technology significantly changed the newspaper industry in the 1990s with the development of the internet and the "World Wide Web," which allowed journalists to track down sources, interact with readers and provide endless research and information that was only one click away.

Newspapers were the first to embrace the web early, but this also came with many challenges over the last three decades to learn what information to trust from the vast number of websites created over the years.

Reporters could access information much faster and "there is all kinds of raw data available, only keystrokes away, which is a good thing — but there is also wrong information out there," said Fred Bayles, emeritus professor with Boston University in Massachusetts and former national correspondent for the Associated Press.

"We can now find anybody, even those hard to find," said Bayles, who has been a journalist for 30 years, including reporting on the Gulf War, the Exxon Valdez disaster and the O.J. Simpson murder investigation.

CHALLENGES OF TECHNOLOGY

Bayles, in a phone interview, said he sounds like the old guys once "grumbling" in the newsroom about those new electric typewriters back in the day. But new technology has made it more difficult to distinguish legitimate sources from fake ones, especially in recent times when sifting through social media information.

"It is less shoe leather out on the streets, but it also opens the gates for mischief — fake witnesses (during news events)," Bayles pointed out as an example.

"Sometimes, going down the street knocking on doors gives you a much better source and understanding of a situation."

The 24/7 news cycle puts pressure on newspapers and broadcast outlets to be the first before all the facts are vetted or more was learned, A. Randall Wenner, coordinator of Broadcast Journalism Facility and instructor at Syracuse University in New York, said during a phone interview.

"There were classic mistakes made along the way to find a balance," said Wenner, who was a reporter and broadcast producer for 12 years and has been journalism instructor for 30 years. "I think most realized the philosophy should be not to be the first, but to be the first with verified



Nick Rohlman, Gazette photojournalist and a certified remote pilot, operates a camera drone Dec. 5 as he photographs the delivery of a floodgate along First Avenue East in downtown Cedar Rapids. (Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette)

information and facts." Bayles agreed, recalling what happened during the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, when suspects were wrongly accused because of speculation on social media and by other sources, and news outlets felt pressure to crank out continuous coverage.



A. Randall Wenner

Wenner said there also had to be a mindset change for media outlets on being "first" and realizing they had to reveal their "exclusive" information as they were giving it to viewers and readers.

"Fewer news stations were holding big stories for the 6 p.m. broadcast," Wenner said. "Now, we tweet out a nutshell or teaser to keep the interest of viewers."

MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISTS

The industry could keep up with the demand only by embracing more technology, Wenner said. Reporters had to become multimedia journalists. Besides writing for print and digital platforms, they now had to learn to shoot videos and use audio clips to highlight those actual voices in their stories.

In broadcast, those reporters had to learn to write longer-form articles for their digital sites, and print reporters had to adapt some of their longer-form writing to shorter pieces because many viewers have time only for quick summaries and are now consuming that news through smartphones.

In a short time, different platforms were developed, along with social media sites, that journal-

ists could use to posts snippets of their stories and link to a newspaper's or broadcast station's website to engage audiences — people not being reached through those outlets' websites alone.

More journalists started covering events in real time to keep up with that immediate information demand. Some started liveblogging criminal trials, political debates, legislative and local city decisions and votes and sporting events.

Bayles included liveblogging as a new journalist skill in his 2011 "Field Guide To Covering Local News" — cops, courts, schools, emergencies and government. He highlighted the liveblogging of criminal trials that a Gazette reporter started doing in 2009, along with a few other newspapers.

Some of the live coverage had hundreds of viewers each day following the high-profile murder trials, including Mark Becker, who killed Parkersburg/Appleton Coach Ed Thomas in 2009, and Jerry Burns, who was convicted in 2020 of killing Michelle Martinko in 1979 in Cedar Rapids.

Bayles described the blogs as "creating a virtual spectators' gallery where viewers can follow a trial, comment, lament, question and vent in real time." He said he viewed covering trials or other live events, such as a rally, in real time as valuable to readers because it provides transparency and they can watch the event as it unfolds.

Wenner said another skill some journalists have embraced is developing a podcast, which continues to become more popular. Others, besides journalists, also use podcasts to focus

on a variety of genres, including true crime, sports, politics, education, personal wellness, religious, science and history.

The Gazette has a Gazette Daily News podcast and its sports writers started doing podcasts about 10 years ago, including the On Iowa Podcast.

The smartphone, as it upgraded and changed over the years, has provided multiple tools for journalists.

"Everybody has a tool in their pocket," Wenner said. "It's second nature for the younger journalists because they grew up with the technology."

Journalists had to develop more skills by learning how to shoot a good photo and video from the scene and also capture quality sound to

attract viewers and hold their interest. They also needed to learn editing skills for these tools, Wenner added.

The phones also have provided an opportunity for citizen journalists or activists to share information — which can be good and bad, Wenner said. It provides more voices — or perspectives — but could be confusing to the viewers because they may not be able to distinguish a trained journalist from someone who is presenting just one side of an issue.

A journalist learns the best practices, journalism ethics and writing techniques to present an unbiased and balanced piece, he noted.

"We (journalists) learn by doing," Wenner said. "It doesn't happen by just picking up a tool

and using it. You have to have storytelling skills and build that trust."

Wenner said this is an "exciting time" for journalists because there are now so many different ways to tell a story.

He does see a challenge down the road to tell in-depth stories because some readers won't devote or have the time to commit to those. A younger generation wants those quick, new blurbs.

He said he has trouble getting his students to read longer articles.

Wenner said he hopes that will change as the students get older and have different experiences that will spark an interest in learning more about their communities.

Comments: (319) 398-8318; trish.mehaffey@thegazette.com

CONGRATS
to The Gazette on celebrating
your 140th Anniversary!



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2016

DEC. 2

The Gazette buys the Fairfield Ledger, Mount Pleasant News and Washington Evening Journal, and their free weekly publications, from Inland Media Co. In 2019, the Southeast Iowa Union regional paper is formed, publishing four times a week, with the individual titles publishing one day a week.

2017

JAN. 1

Folience, The Gazette's parent company, is formed to diversify the company beyond media holdings.

2020

AUG. 10

Gazette operations shift to Color Web Printers after a derecho knocks out the city's power grid. The facility's large generator powers the newsroom for two weeks and the big press for 50 days. Not a single edition is missed.

2020

AUGUST

Gazette headquarters move to 116 Third St. SE from 500 Third Ave. SE, its headquarters for 95 years.

2021

AUG. 24

Color Web Printers closes, printing its last Gazette at the Bowling Street plant. Printing of the newspaper moves to Gannett Publishing Services in Des Moines, and the Goss press and building are sold.

A FUTURE TO REPORT

► FROM PAGE 2S

That commitment — still delivered each day in print and now on digital platforms anywhere in the world — has never changed.

In today's media landscape, we're one of three employee-owned media companies in the United States. We've maintained our editorial independence — never being part of a chain of papers or a hedge fund — throughout our history. That matters, as it gives us the ability to focus on matters of local importance. As a community partner, we're used to wearing many hats: connector to business and information, sharer of information that holds officials accountable; provider of information and feedback that can be used to shape the community; organizer of forums for ideas and discussions to improve our communities. And, sometimes, we just strive to entertain.

CHALLENGES, FUTURE

We face the same headwinds as other newspapers and media organizations, and it's difficult to deny those winds have been pretty strong in recent years. The economic and technological revolutions have each applied their own pressures. The executive summary of the 2022 State of Local News by Northwestern University summarizes the

landscape clearly:

- Since 2005, the country has lost more than a fourth of its newspapers (2,500) and is on track to lose another third by 2025.

- There are 50 percent fewer newspaper journalists than there were in 2008, the year epic flooding swamped Iowa.

- Roughly one-fifth of the country lives in a news desert — a community without a newspaper or in danger of becoming one.

While we're tremendously proud of The Gazette's history, the future is what matters most. Just as it has throughout history, our future depends on our community understanding how and why we do things and making sure we're always in a position to ask critical questions of the community and its members. Gathering information and sharing opinions have real costs, and if people just assume we'll always be there, that's not the case.

Would you miss The Gazette if it were gone? The answer should be yes. This has nothing to do with whether you like reading a print edition or whether you agree with a columnist. The Gazette's impact goes beyond simply covering local news. Multiple studies have shown the link between strong media companies and economically vibrant commu-

nities. Losing local newsrooms like The Gazette's is a threat to democracy. The loss of a local newspaper has political, social and economic impacts. It also increases the chance that misinformation and disinformation will spread more freely without an authoritative voice that finds and reports the facts. In communities where there isn't a credible source of local news, voting rates decline, the cost of taxes and goods go up, with increased levels of corruption in government and business.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Historically, The Gazette has played a role in educating people and building community. It's come through coverage of government bodies or editorials suggesting specific courses of action. Our 1936 Pulitzer Prize came as a result of reporting about corruption in state government. We started the annual Iowa Ideas Conference in 2016 to take deeper looks at challenges and opportunities facing our state. We've created programs that provide in-kind advertising for area nonprofits, and we've created free access to our website at public libraries in Linn and Johnson counties. We've made our decades of archives available through the Cedar Rapids Public Library.

The Gazette has connected local businesses and custom-

ers since the launch of its first edition. Advertisements for Banker G.F. Van Vechten and Pharmacist W.F. Severa were among the nine large ads on the front page of the Jan. 10, 1883, edition. While newspaper advertising has long provided most newspapers about three-quarters of their revenue, those numbers are a fraction of what they once were. It's compounded because roughly 75 percent of all digital advertising goes to just two companies: Meta and Google. Local media — radio, television, online and print — fight for the remainder.

Finally, The Gazette takes national and state stories and adds local context. We strive to explain how conditions here may or may not be similar to events elsewhere, or how lessons learned elsewhere can apply to our communities. The Gazette spends thousands of dollars each year seeking the release of public records, advocating for government transparency at all levels.

CONVERSATIONS THIS YEAR

In the period of economic, social and technological disruption that we're living in, a newspaper's job has never been more important. Our 140th anniversary won't just be a celebration of achievements. We are planning several events throughout the year meant to help better

explain how and what we're doing, and why that matters to our region. We'll be hosting events and conversations with our team — past and present — to share more of our history and our processes and to talk about why these matter in a democracy. We'll also be examining and discussing trends in the industry and how they impact us, our readers and our communities.

As we celebrate our 140th anniversary, we are humbled by the trust you place in us each time you turn to The Gazette for news you can trust. We thank you and request your continued support.

When The Gazette celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1983, it created the slogan, "A past to remember, a future to report." For all the changes we've seen in the past 40 years, that slogan still works today. As does the promise we first made Jan. 10, 1883: to publish a paper worthy of the support and confidence of the people.

Zack Kucharski is executive editor of The Gazette, where he began as a correspondent more than 20 years ago. He was honored as a 2022 Master Editor-Publisher by the Iowa Newspaper Association, where he is a board member and chair of the government relations committee. He was recognized with an Iowa Freedom of Information Council Friend of the First Amendment Award in 2021. Kucharski is a graduate of the University of Iowa, where he is an adjunct and member of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication's Professional Advisory Board.

A look at some historic pages

1929



1937



1941



1963



1968



1969



2022

APRIL

Gazette Print Distribution Center opens at 5255 Rockwell Dr. NE.

2022

MAY 5

Folience, The Gazette's parent company, is named Employee-Owned Company of the Year by the national ESOP Association.



2022

MAY

The Gazette acquires the Clarion-Plainsman weekly newspaper, based in Richland, from Sycamore Media.

2022

AUGUST

The Gazette buys four weekly newspapers from Gannett — the Belle Plaine Star Press Union, Marengo Pioneer Republican, Williamsburg Journal Tribune and the Poweshiek County Chronicle Republican. A month later, it buys the Iowa County-based Hometown Current.

2023

JAN. 10

The Gazette celebrates 140 years of continuous publication.

IT'S ABOUT FREEDOM

Our founders would celebrate The Gazette

A press that investigates and criticizes government without interference is essential

By Randy Evans,
Iowa Freedom of Information Council

There is a big birthday coming up in Cedar Rapids, and while you may not make the connection right away, it ties in with one of the bedrock decisions in American history.

When our Founding Fathers were mapping out plans for what we know as the United States, they recognized how important it was to ensure that journalists have freedom to go about their work without government interference.

One of those Founders, Thomas Jefferson, offered this eloquent explanation: "A press that is free to investigate and criticize the government is absolutely essential in a nation that practices self-government."

This month's 140th anniversary of the creation of The Gazette provides a reminder of the Founding Fathers' recognition of the importance of strong news media.

The Gazette is more than merely a business. The information it gathers and disseminates is vital to the well-being of its community and this state.

Beyond telling readers what is going on, Gazette journalists are asking questions of their government leaders that might not get asked otherwise. The commentary in Gazette editorials and in staff and guest columns — even if some toes sometimes get stepped on — is an important sounding board for the people of Eastern Iowa and, increasingly, for digital customers well beyond The Gazette's hometown.

Very few people have the time to attend meetings of the city council, the local school board, the county board of supervisors, or planning and zoning committees. Very few people have the time to ask questions of these officials and state government leaders in Des Moines. Busy readers have little time to closely monitor how their tax money is being used, or misused.

That's where journalists step in, serving as the public's eyes and ears, examining questionable or controversial decisions, asking "why" or "why not" questions — all while keeping readers informed.

Week after week, Ga-



The Gazette's new centennial sign — noting the newspaper's 100th year — sits on a flat-bed trailer on Jan. 5, 1983, in front of The Gazette building on Fifth Street SE in Cedar Rapids before it's installed on the building's roof. The sign shows the centennial slogan: "A past to remember, a future to report." (Gazette archives)

zette journalists routinely shine their spotlight on state government and local governments in Eastern Iowa, informing people about important matters the public might not know about otherwise, and always asking "why?"

That's what The Gazette did a few years ago when the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City school district leaders refused to tell The Gazette — and parents, too — why an increasing number of elementary students there were being locked in so-called "seclusion rooms."

These small, padded enclosures were not supposed to be used as discipline for non-violent infractions. But in a troubling change in policy, administrators refused to tell The Gazette how many times the rooms were used or the reasons students were placed there.

The secrecy was preposterous. It kept residents from fully understanding what confronts teachers at a time in our history when violence and behavior problems among young people are growing.

When Iowa's three state universities made a U-turn on transparency in 2021 and began keeping information about some hiring decisions secret, The Gazette was there with its spotlight shining on the officials' actions.

For many years, the universities followed affirmative action hiring practices that were

intended to ensure a diverse array of qualified candidates is considered when jobs are filled. University administrators were able to seek waivers from affirmative action requirements under certain circumstances. But the documents justifying the hiring waivers had been available for public review, allowing people to know when and why the universities chose not to follow the traditional affirmative action practices.

The new policy of refusing to make those documents public was disclosed by The Gazette. In the height of irony, The Gazette found that one such job that was filled by bypassing the affirmative action process was the University of Iowa's hiring of an associate vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion.

The Gazette's reporting provided important information for readers, including this uncomfortable fact of life for university officials: If it is not an invasion of privacy for the public to know the reasons and rationale for a government employee being fired, then it certainly should not be considered an invasion of privacy to know why an employee is hired by a state university by skipping the customary hiring process.

The topics Gazette reporters dig into affect real people in significant ways. Consider Anthony Watson. The Coralville man stopped for gas a few years ago. Within

minutes, an Iowa City police officer pulled in to check a report of a reckless driver in the area.

The officer was convinced Watson was impaired by alcohol, marijuana, or another

controlled drug. But a series of field sobriety tests, two breathalyzer samples, a blood test, and a urine test all showed no evidence of impairment. Nevertheless, before his criminal case finally was dismissed, Watson had spent nearly three months in jail — losing his job and his apartment during that time.

Under the American system of justice, we do not lock people up on a hunch and then go looking for proof. But that is what happened to Anthony Watson. The public should hope the disclosures by The Gazette will keep such a travesty from occurring to someone else.

Take time to celebrate The Gazette's 140th birthday. And remember what Thomas Jefferson said, because journalists like those at The Gazette are important to the health and well-being of this place we call home.

Randy Evans is executive director of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council. He can be reached at iowaFOICouncil@gmail.com.



When information is needed most

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The Gazette

PROUDLY ENRICHING IOWA COMMUNITIES

“In this era of slashing local news to sharpen corporate profits or politicians dismissing fair and balanced reporting as fake news, I am especially grateful for The Gazette. We are very fortunate to be living in a community with such a prominent locally owned news source. I wish to congratulate and thank everyone at The Gazette for their tireless efforts to keep us informed.”



Josh Schamberger
President, Think Iowa City

“Congratulations to The Gazette for celebrating 140 years of service in our community. We are so thankful for their ongoing support of libraries and access to information, especially with the Love My Library campaign which gives every individual free online access to The Gazette when they visit their local library. Thank you!”



Amber McNamara
Cedar Rapids Public Library

“Congratulations to the Gazette on 140 years serving our community. The Gazette has been a great partner for the Iowa City Area Development Group (ICAD) in sharing the news of our economic development work in the region. Whether it is the Ed Tech Collaborative, regional workforce efforts, or business development, The Gazette’s ability to share information and tell the stories of our region is a valued asset that has never been more important.”



Kate Moreland
President of ICAD

“Congratulations to The Gazette on your 140th anniversary! We are grateful for your 140 years of service to our community and look forward to your continued partnership for 140 more!”



Kim Casko
President, Iowa City Area Business Partnership

“I have enjoyed working with the staff at The Gazette over the past four years on the Iowa Ideas Conference and other projects connected to mental health in our state. I appreciate so much their caring, professional attitudes and attention to detail. I commend The Gazette for leading this very important initiative. I believe it is vital to growth and progress in our state. Thank you!”



Peggy Huppert
Executive Director, NAMI Iowa

“The Gazette has been an integral part of our community for many years, and it has been our pleasure to collaborate with them to create awareness for the Eastern Iowa Honor Flight. Through the support of The Gazette, our non-profit organization has helped fulfill the mission of fostering a special day for thousands of veterans. Additionally, their generous communication has allowed us to involve the greater community in giving these veterans the “Welcome Home” they deserve. We truly could not celebrate success without them.”



Dick Bell
Board President, Eastern Iowa Honor Flight

“People seem surprised when I list a locally owned daily newspaper among the most prized assets of our community, right along with things such as a productive workforce, strong infrastructure and diverse economy. But The Gazette deserves its place on that list. It has had a profound and under-appreciated role in the growth and prosperity of this entire region. I’m also forever grateful The Gazette took a chance on a young, inexperienced journalist and opened the door for me to spend a lifetime in this remarkable place.”



Doug Neumann
Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance

“People can only survive when they rely on their own experiences and instincts, but The Gazette has allowed United We March Forward to THRIVE. Whether it’s the immigrant and refugee community or addressing food insecurity, our Cedar Rapids community is stronger through the shared experiences that The Gazette provides us each day. I am grateful for The Gazette and the whole team there. Free and local press is great for our community. You guys have helped our organization reach different audiences that have reached out to us because of the stories covered. I’m 100% that UWMF community recognition is also contributed by what you guys do. I am forever grateful.”



Mugisha Gloire
Executive Director, United We March Forward

A History to Remember

A FUTURE TO REPORT

