

# King: bring down newspapers' 'walls'

By ANAMARIA BELL  
Of the Emerald

## News, advertising cooperation urged

Newspapers are divided by different — and sometimes competing — departments, and "today, the biggest wall of all exists between news and advertising," Robert King, of the Minneapolis Star and Tribune, told a conference of newspaper publishers Friday.

King, advertising vice-president and former editor, delivered the annual Eric W. Allen memorial lecture to the EMU Ballroom crowd of members of the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association (ONPA). The lecture was a part of the two-day 59th annual ONPA conference held at the University.

King, who worked thirteen years in news before switching to the advertising department, discussed "The two views of newspapers, advertising and news."

Pertaining to the split vision of newspapering, King said he used to view journalism as an institution, but now he sees it as a business — "one which must produce three-fourths of its revenue on its value in the marketplace as an advertising medium, not as an institution."

"As a news person, I tended to judge quality in terms of good writing, breadth and depth of coverage and courage in the face of official or community pressures," King said.

"As an advertising person, I will fight for ethical or constitutional principles, but if I don't fight the marketplace judiciously my 'jail' could be a replacement as an advertising channel by one or more of our vigorous competitors," he declared.

We should make decisions as a total newspaper," King said. "All of us should feel that we are working for a complete enterprise, not a news company, an



*"The biggest wall of all exists between news and advertising."*

Robert King

Photo by AnaMaria Bell

advertising medium, printing company or distribution system," he said.

King said that in Minneapolis advertisers were invited to attend seminars with newspeople in order to induce direct communication between the two and possibly adopt new policies.

"In our role as a newspaper, we often print news which our advertising customers do not like. That can be judged as good journalism... or as biting the hand that feeds us," King exclaimed. He went on to say that whatever it may be, he believes it is a contradiction.

He explained that when he was an editor, he felt responsible for a good newspaper.

"I was so concerned about what the circulation department was doing wrong in not selling more of such a 'darned good product.' Now I feel responsible for bringing in the revenue which makes our newspapers go. That's heavy, and the report card is there for all to see on a weekly basis."

King commented that many

good reporters view newspapers as a business in the negative sense.

"We have taught in the schools and reinforced on the job that advertising and news are indeed separate," he said. He added that he felt the two actually complement each other.

King brought up an age-old journalistic question: "Should any advertiser, large or small, have influence over news decisions?"

"The crucial differentiation we have in a highly competitive marketplace is that of the news, and the credibility which goes with it for readers of news and advertising alike," King said. "If we lose it, the news department

becomes no more than expensive overhead. In my opinion, most advertisers really don't want us to lose that distinction as honest reporters either."

The less sophisticated advertisers will often trade a news story for an ad, he explained.

"What they do not understand is that their ads get much better results in newspapers with large numbers of readers who trust the news and advertising they pay to receive."

King said the more sophisticated advertiser tends to view the news environment as being quite important.

"He doesn't like news which puts business in a bad light, especially his business. He wonders why we do not publish more 'good' news."

"This is definitely a good attitude because it calls for an honest exchange of views between customer and the news department," he explained.

King said he was offering "two cents worth of information from an editor who has gone commercial." He encouraged news and advertising heads to work closely together in order to arrive at sound business decisions that will benefit all of their goals.

He stressed that both must listen to their readers as well as "dust off" readership surveys.

"Years ago, the list of great American newspapers was compiled by experts in the journalism profession. Today, that list is being compiled from the dollar ballots of readers and advertisers."

"To the extent that we listen to them, and resist the short-term temptation to sell off our integrity as honest news producers, we will build a substantially healthy future both as institutions of our society and as business enterprises."

King polished off his lecture saying that upon his return to Minnesota, he would teach the people to say "Oregon" correctly.



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### Alcohol series sets speaker

Lowell Grabau, a psychologist with the Lane County Mental Health Alcohol program, will be the featured speaker at the next Community Alcohol Education program Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. at the Central Presbyterian Church, 15th Avenue and Patterson Street.

Grabau's topic is "Underlying Psychological Mechanisms of Alcoholism."

The free program is part of the weekly series coordinated by the Lane County Council on Alcoholism, designed for the general public.

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