

Serious reasons for cutting back on the fun and games

Reduction in space for comics and puzzles gives us more space for news about our community

zles instead of two. The main reason for the change is to utilize more of our available space each week for local and community news coverage and less to running syndicated comics and puzzles.

This change should roughly give us about one more page each week to utilize for stories, photos and listings for news, events and activities in our community.

Over the last several months we have spent considerable time asking readers what they like about the Herald and what we can do better. Last week,



Gary L. West
SHADES OF GRAY

for example, we had the opportunity to attend the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce luncheon and hear from about 70 business and civic leaders in our community on some of their opinions about the Herald's news coverage and its value to them as a marketing vehicle for their businesses through advertisements in the paper.

So far, we haven't had anyone tell us that the reason they subscribe to the Hermiston Herald is because of our lineup on the comics pages. What people do say they want is more

local news, more news about good things happening in the community and some people have even said they want more news from the police beat.

So we are going to use one of the pages we used to use for comics to give you more information in print each week.

We hope this change won't be too disruptive, but we know people grow accustomed to regular features. If you are missing a particular type of puzzle, let us know, and we will see if we can find an appropriate substitute puzzle through our other comic/puzzle service, but keep in mind that adding something back will

likely mean eliminating something else, so be prepared to tell us which of the comics or puzzles you do not read and play.

We hope you find additional local coverage a better value for use and a better use of the space.

Soon, we will be launching our advisory group to dig even deeper into ways we can continue to make improvements in the Herald in hopes of making it even more valuable, interesting and informative to readers. So far, we have about five people who have expressed interest in participating, but more are welcome.

We plan to meet about

once a month to talk about the paper, the community and issues of interest in our area.

If you would like to participate in our advisory panel, there's still time to sign up. Just give me a call at 541-564-4532 or better yet email me at gwest@hermistonherald.com and we'll put you on our email list.

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Digital technology redefines newspaper publishing

By **STEVE FORRESTER**
EO Media Group

Editor's note: The following column was written by Steve Forrester, editor and publisher of The Daily Astorian and president and CEO of EO Media Group, which owns the Hermiston Herald.

pressed with the size of The Astorian's digital audience. Crindalyn Lyster, our corporate digital media director, notes that, "We are the leaders in our community on digital. No one competes with us in our markets."

We forget how young the Internet is. When Lyster started at The Astorian, our production process consisted of cutting strips of type and pasting them on to the page. Today she is our corporate digital media director. Based at the Chinook Observer, Lyster travels throughout our company. In Salem she has a staff of three including Travis Clark, Matt Neznanski and Debbie Evans. The editor of the Hermiston Herald, Gary West, is also part of our digital team.

Digital speeds our production process. It also accelerates our news cycles. Digital news delivery makes our weekly newspapers into dailies, and it gives our daily papers a 24-hour news cycle. When a national story breaks in one of our territories, digital allows us to keep possession of the story. We used to rely on the Associated Press to move big stories beyond our market boundaries. Today our digital sites and social media do that for us.

In the horrific Eastern Oregon fires, the Blue Mountain Eagle had a story of national interest. Through its website and social media, the Eagle's audience grew dramatically. The Eagle's "likes" on Facebook went from 3,463 to 5,335. The top day of the fire story was Aug. 15, when Facebook posts reached 175,332 people. During the fire, posts averaged 43,637 people per day, versus 2,146 prior to the fires.

Observes Lyster: "In 2007 we were dabbling in Facebook. Now we use it all the time. It is a big traffic driver.

Where are digital forces leading newspaper publishing? Plenty of consul-

When I give visitors a tour of The Daily Astorian, they are fascinated with the enlarged newspaper mastheads on our walls. Their names capture the history of our newspaper — from the 19th century Tri-Weekly Astorian forward.



Steve Forrester

Showing visitors our digital world is less romantic. It comes up when I get to a room that houses our file servers. When I succeeded my father 28 years ago, that room contained a mainframe computer that served the newspaper's first electronic newsroom system.

My dad's death was only 15 years ago, but he would not recognize the digital landscape in which we operate.

Some newspaper owners have been conflicted about the digital world. Just last week I read that a publisher is unplugging his Internet operations.

We have not been conflicted. Our board of directors and management have chosen a measured, incremental path into electronic publishing.

Advertising in our printed products and subscription sales remain our dominant source of revenue. But digital advertising sales are growing. The Astorian's advertising staff recently did a sales blitz. It had been seven years since our last big digital sales push. We made a major gain in digital sales. Our advertising representatives discovered that merchants in our communities have become more comfortable with the digital world.

The sales consultant who coached our sales staff, Mike Blinder, was very im-



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Local stories with national interest, such as the Canyon Creek Complex fire in Eastern Oregon in August, can reach people online and through social media.

tants are prepared to take our money to answer that question. Every week I see invitations to seminars and workshops on the topic. "Driving Digital Revenue" is the title of a November conference sponsored by Inland Newspaper Association.

Everyone is looking for that next big thing.

I agree with Lyster who says this about the future: "It's anybody's guess because digital changes every day. It's hard to know what that shiny object will be that sticks."



News of the Canyon Creek Complex fire spiked traffic on the Blue Mountain Eagle's Facebook page.

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<p>NEW HOPE COMMUNITY CHURCH 1350 S. Highway 395, Hermiston Sunday Worship Services English- Pastor Dave Andrus 9:00 & 10:45 am Spanish- Pastor Genaro Loreda 9:00 & 10:15 am Classes for kids during all services For more information call 541-567-8441</p>	<p>THE COUNTRY CHURCH Pastor James Becker 32742 Diagonal RD Hermiston OR 97838 Sunday School 10 am Worship 7 am Evening Service 7 pm Bible Study Wednesdays 7 pm Firestarter Youth Ministry (Ages 12-17) Monday @ 6 pm</p>	<p>HermNaz the best thing about Sundays 1520 W ORCHARD AVE Sunday Worship Service 10:30 am, Classes for kids @ 9:15 am SEEKING JESUS, SHARING LIFE, SERVING PEOPLE www.hermistonnazarene.org</p>	<p>LANDMARK BAPTIST CHURCH 125 E. Beech Ave. • 567-3232 Pastor David Dever Sun. Bible Classes.....10:00am Sun. Worship Service.....11:00am Sun. Evening Worship.....6:00pm Wed. Prayer & Bible Study...6:00pm www.hermistonlmbc.com</p>
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