ONE

Definition of the Project

A climate for evolution

■ Five years ago, SND produced a newspaper entirely on Macintosh computers at its annual workshop in Austin, Texas. It was heralded as a desktop publishing milestone. This year, an electronic edition of the *Chronicles* is planned for the workshop in Kansas City.

■ Since 1992 when the *San Jose Mercury News* introduced *Mercury Center* on America Online, nearly a dozen other major metropolitan newspapers have joined forces with on-line computer services to distribute news electronically.

■ The Associated Press has converted all of its member newspapers to a photo and graphics all-digital transmission system via satellite.

■ Nearly one third of all major newspapers are offering "audiotext;" news, sports, stock market, and weather "hot lines" as well as other specialized topics such as soap opera updates and classified and personal advertising to users who guide themselves to relevant information via phone.

The newspaper industry is changing. Economic and social shifts are forcing newspapers to literally "redefine themselves." The identity crisis has many of the nation's major dailies wondering about the services they provide, their roles in their communities and their niches in the rapidly changing information industry.

"We are at the beginning of a time when the newspaper as it is historically viewed will take on a broader role," says Cathleen Black (1993), the president of the Newspaper Association of America.

Industry-wide introspection has already begun. In order to accommodate readers with less time, more responsibilities and more diverse interests, some newspapers are finding that they must diversify to produce more than just a paper product. In fact, newspapers, with their access to news services, strong community ties and teams of information gatherers (reporters), are positioned uniquely well to segue into a role as an electronic information service.

While the threat of extinction forces print media into unconventional collaborations with the computer, telecommunication, and broadcast industries, it creates a pathway to the future through a first generation of products. Currently, the most promising examples are a result of blending new media concepts with existing technology, or new technologies with traditional information services.

These harbingers of an information revolution are the progenitors of what could become a new medium— information networks.

Markets are rapidly converging while competitive universes are broadening. Distinctions between various media are blurring and alternative modes of distribution are making old market definitions meaningless. There is no longer a newspaper industry. Those are merely competing products in the same market — the $1.5 trillion-a-year communication and information market.

McNamara, NewsInc. Sept. 1992.

Interactive newspapers: A brief history

During the past year, electronic newspapers have become vogue. Since 1992 when the *San Jose Mercury News* introduced *Mercury Center* on America Online, several major metropolitan newspapers have joined forces with on-line computer services to distribute news electronically.

The concept of electronic newspapers is not new. An API conference in 1988 invited 22 newspaper designers to design a newspaper front page for the 21st century. More than half of the prototypes were electronically delivered. Eleven featured an interactive database and six eliminated the pressroom.

Some universities have managed to make their student newspapers available on the Internet using gopher servers. Still, users generally agree that the convenience and speed that ought to be possible with such networks has not yet been realized. Mosaic, an information browser for the Internet, is increasing in popularity because it integrates hyperlinked text, graphics, audio and full-motion video in an easy-to-use interface.

Some newspapers have decided to forge partnerships with commercial on-line companies and introduce electronic products while the on-line industry is in its infancy. Obviously, there is great risk with such an approach. While these newspapers may become the leaders in the gigantic information industry of the 21st century, they may also be the first casualties mainly because they are ill-prepared.

The concept of using research to plan and produce a product is an important part of electronic delivery for the newspaper industry. While most publishers realize the importance of demographics, interface and information processing issues are becoming more important than ever.

NCSA Mosaic is a computer program designed for servers that are part of the World Wide Web (WWW), but can also link into Gopher servers and FTP sites. Mosaic allows users to navigate to other text documents or activate photos, sounds and full-motion video by clicking on the appropriate hyperlinked text or icon.

Signs of the times

SAN FRANCISCO — The *San Francisco Examiner* and *San Francisco Chronicle* are working on a joint online service, code-named *the Gate,* which it could launch as early as June 1994, according to NewsInc.

Though pricing and timetables remain imprecise, the newsletter said the subscription-based service would provide full Internet access, bulletin boards hosted by notables, real-time conferencing, as well as a premium-priced personal clipping service and access to the newspapers' archives.
Media Express
April 27, 1994

ATLANTA — *Access Atlanta,* the upcoming electronic edition of The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution,* may become Atlanta's "on ramp to the information superhighway," said publisher Dennis Berry, The N.Y. Times News Service reports.

But it won't be the off ramp for the printed newspaper, he said. Speaking at the public unveiling of the new service yesterday, Berry said *Access Atlanta* would instead be a "powerful supplement" to the paper. Starting Sunday, *Access Atlanta* will be delivered over Prodigy, an on-line network of home computers. While it has been dubbed an electronic newspaper, *Access Atlanta's* success may hinge on the ways it will differ from the printed paper.
Media Express
March 11, 1994

Information design and electronic newspapers

As newspapers expand into the electronic media market, they will need the aid of professionals trained in a combination of disciplines to plot and guide the transition from traditional newspaper to interactive media. The study of information design combines psychology, design and journalism in anticipation of a new medium that is immediate, interactive and intuitive.

Mass communication will be more massive than ever. Unfortunately, the message will have more opportunity than ever to be misinterpreted. Electronic newspapers' immediate, non-linear information delivery will require changes in planning, preparation and packaging of the news.

In order to capitalize on interactive access to information, publishers, editors and designers will need to understand human information processing abilities and limitations. Because people read differently on screen, reader behavior may become an influential consideration for news selection and presentation, allowing editors to monitor what stories are read, when, and by how many people.

Finally, the reader's quest for knowledge should be facilitated by an intuitive interface that allows colossal information databases to be browsed effortlessly and appropriate information located and acquired quickly. The "deep" information structure and "surface" information presentation should reinforce each other and lead to information delivered in the most salient format possible.

I believe information designers with a background in journalism, psychology and design will be well-prepared to refine information into compelling, coherent units or packages and aid newspapers through the evolutionary transformation to electronic delivery.