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[To print or not to print—that is the question](#)

Every so often, a crazy thought pops into my head: what if [News & Events](#) was solely published on the Web? That's right—no printed paper version. The distribution boxes would all disappear and the HUB would have fewer deliveries to make.

While I've considered a few of the "pros" associated with producing [News & Events](#) solely electronically, there is, undoubtedly, great value in picking up an actual piece of paper.

Several years ago, the [News & Events](#) managerial staff decided to run the faculty/staff newsmakers section only on the Web in order to free up some space in the print version for additional feature and news stories. The number of complaints that our office received as a result of this action was unbelievable. People love to see their names and faces in the "paper." Although [News & Events](#) isn't a newspaper, it's RIT's next best thing.

I also enjoy seeing large, vivid photographs in the print version—an experience that could be diminished when viewing the same on a computer screen (and I like being able to actually show my mom and husband exactly what I do at the office.)

I'm interested in other people's thoughts on this subject—to print or not to print?

1. [Mike Saffran](#)
Mar22

Vienna, as you know, I've long been a strong proponent of the print edition, and I firmly opposed printing "Newsmakers" in the online edition exclusively, as we did once a few years ago. But I'm beginning to change my mind. Each passing day moves us closer to many things—one of them, I believe, is News & Events eventually becoming an online-only publication. Be assured, readers, that when it happens, we'll do it right. Just for starters, we won't follow the lead of my (and Vienna's) alma mater, which moved its equivalent publication online exclusively a few years ago. Whenever a new issue comes out, I receive an e-mail from my alma mater informing me that a new issue is available. And that's all it says. I'm offered no compelling reason to go and read the publication . . . and so I rarely do. We know there's always great content in News & Events, and so will our readers even before they "open it."

2. [Vienna](#)
Mar22

Mike - Thanks for your comment. You and I have talked about what it would mean to move News & Events online. And you're right - with every passing issue, there seems to be more reasons to do so. Has my blog truly opened this issue up for discussion with the "powers that be?"

3. [Silandara](#)
Mar22

I think News & Events could work as an online-only publication. It consistently gets the highest amount of hits of any of the University News web pages. People even download the PDF. But as much as I'm a web loving girl, I still like to have something in my hands to hold and read away from the computer.

4. [Justin Thorp](#)
Mar22

Hey gang! Vienna, I'll take you one further. I think its more than just doing away with print. It's doing away with the idea of a publication. To me, a publication is this idea of engaging in a one-way conversation where you open my head and dump stuff in. It works but only a to a point. The future is to form online communities around our ideas and the content we're trying to convey. In the book Cluetrain Manifesto, they talk about how "Markets are conversations." Look at the recent USA Today Web site redesign. Every single story has a comment box associated with it. They know that by turning their readers into active participants in the news community that their readers will turn into USA Today evangelists. Why not do a News & Events blog? You could publish stories as they come out. You wouldn't be constrained to only get information when it aligns with your publishing deadlines.

5. [Vienna](#)
Mar22

Justin - Thanks, also, for your comment. An online community related to News & Events is something that I haven't thought of. (As you know, I'm still ~~new~~ to this whole blogging business.) And I really like the idea about every story having a comment box to accompany it. We'd really have to examine the possibility of News & Events—online and "on the fly." This is one of those situations where we've always done it a certain way: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Or has USA Today really gotten in touch with the way people are getting their news, and engaged their readers to take news to another level. Is our "little" News & Events, and the constituent that make up our campus community, ready for this?

6. [John Fallaco](#)
Mar22

I think News & Events should become a monthly print edition, with breaking news being published daily on our Web site. The monthly print edition would then become a "best-of", compiling all of the best content from the Web and featuring even larger, sharper photography. We're all striving to make www.rit.edu/news a destination site for technology news. The best way to do that is to provide strong, fresh content on a daily basis—instead of repurposing News & Events (where some of the content is a week or two old as it is). And don't worry, Vienna. In this structure, we'd still need a managing editor :) But instead of producing a twice-a-month publication, you'd be editing and managing the online content.

7. [Justin Thorp](#)

Mar22

You're right John. You're going to need the fresh new content daily. An idea...instead of getting reporters to go out and cover the event, why not enlist the students? How many students already blog about their RIT experiences? How many students take photos of RIT events and put them on Flickr? You have an army of citizen reporters that can do the work for you and give you more content that you know what to do with. Why not take advantage of the situation? You'd probably event get a more holistic coverage of RIT because students may write or take photos of note worthy events that you guys aren't aware of. By highlighting some of the user-generated content monthly, you're giving the budding citizen journalists an incentive to participate.

8. [Justin Thorp](#)

Mar22

Have you looked at these lately? <http://technorati.com/posts/tag/rit?language=en> http://blogsearch.google.com/blogsearch?as_q=rit&lr=lang_en <http://flickr.com/photos/tags/rit/clusters/>

9. [Vienna](#)

Mar22

John - Uh, yeah - I wouldn't want to fuel any of these ideas, and then put myself out of a job. And Justin, I would say that there's some merit to your idea about having students actually participate more in the news-generating process. However, I would say that the writing should continue to be "top notch" and maintain professionalism. After all, we are RIT's PR office, and the publication, whether it appears online or not, should reflect that. Part of me believes that the actual news writing should be submitted by the seasoned professionals trained in this area. But, I think our staff would agree that we could always use more eyes and ears out there to dig out the great stories.

10. [Justin Thorp](#)

Mar23

By working with student bloggers and photographers, couldn't you stoke the flames of organic pr... word of mouth? Plus, I'd think there would be an audience you could reach with student blogs that can't reach with getting RIT in the evening Roch news or in the NY Times even. When students (or former students) wanna find out about what is going on at RIT, they talk to other students. I'd recommend checking out Ning (<http://ning.com>). It's a platform for creating social networks. It'd help in creating the vibrant online RIT community.

11. [Bob](#)

Mar26

Wow! Great discussion folks! Some may know that I have been a proponent of doing more online for years. In fact, about three years ago I felt "newsmakers" should go online. But I understand the argument to keep them in print. We've tackled big Web issues in the past 2 years (blogging, podcasting a new Web site, etc.) So now is a time to revisit the News & Events question. You have to have the right strategy. Let's not forget that print is still big. While companies like Gannett are now saying "Web first, print second", they are still building \$100 million printing presses across the country. Magazine sales are up. So print is still strong. What we will need is the right balance of print and Web. We can push more readers to the Web for extra content...and the idea of using students as part of our team is interesting. Lot's to chew on. This may make for a great discussion for one of our Cross Roads Breakfast Retreats...Maybe you can join us Justin.

12. [Justin Thorp](#)

Mar26

Bob, I agree. You can't neglect print. It is still a serious part of today's culture. But the thing is, it isn't part of tomorrow's. The MySpace generation is forming their media consumption habits right now and most mainstream media outlets aren't a part of their lives. Have you seen this recent meme? <http://www.techmeme.com/070325/p14#a070325p14> ... Bob, I'd love to hear your thoughts, on this blog, on the future of media and pr.

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