

and sparked interest in media coverage about party tourism and sport tourism that was not adequately addressed by the chapter's four paragraphs analyzing the *Quad-City Times'* content.

That said, the author's preface offers a sociological view of the history, culture and function of the Mississippi River, the towns that abut it and the Midwest in general. He contextualizes the history, economy and social structures of the two towns that host Tug Fest. The author's discussion of community festivals as tourist attraction and economic boon in Chapter 1, *The Making of Place and Identity in the Midwest*, resonated with this native Midwesterner.

Re-examining the UK newspaper industry. Marc Edge. New York: Routledge, 2023. 136 pp. \$49.59 hbk. \$21.59 ebook.

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Marc Edge's 2022 book titled, *Re-examining the UK newspaper industry*, is a well-researched book that provides a concise, history lesson about the state of newspapers over the last three centuries as well as meaningful insights about business models and major consolidation trends in the United Kingdom.

In the preface, Edge explained the COVID-19 pandemic that spread around much of the globe in 2020 accelerated changes already underway in the industry "such as e-commerce, remote working, and online news consumption" (ix). His assessment that advertising and not copy sales has been the key driver for profits is on point. Furthermore, his view that websites in the internet age have siphoned off traditional print revenues in advertising speaks truth to power. While the costs to produce most digital news products are far less than the operational costs associated with news printed products, it would have been nice to see more discussion about how digital advertising is reshaping the industry and evolving career options. For those who may not be familiar with U.K. business operations, Edge does a solid job of analyzing and summarizing financial statements. Incorporated entities are required to file annually with Companies House in the United Kingdom. Tables in Chapters 4 and 5 provide easy-to-read summaries for key indicators such as turnover, EBITDA (earnings, before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) plus margins for the time frame spanning from about 2006-2021 in most cases.

The six-chapter book is an intriguing read with chapter titles ranging from "A Digital Dark Age for Newspapers" to "What If Newspapers Aren't Dying?" Sandwiched in between the first and last chapters, Edge documented how media consolidation has been a part of UK history dating back to the 18th century as well as interesting milestones in the late 19th and 20th century proliferation of the press. For example, the *Daily Mail* was the first British newspaper to run full-page ads in 1896, and the *Daily Mirror* was launched as a "tabloid newspaper for women run by women" (p. 52) in 1903. The *Herald* became the first newspaper with more than 2 million circulation in 1933. The UK version of the *Metro*, the free commuter tabloid, was launched in 1999 and celebrated its 25th birthday in 2024. In 2010, Rupert Murdoch was an early adopter of the "hard" paywall for *Times* content (p. 21).

Edge also summarized three Royal Commission on the Press reports produced in the three decades after World War II amid concerns about ownership concentration, “bias, political favouritism and the suppression or distortion of the news” (p. 58). Like Edge, political economy of media scholars would argue suggestions to reduce media consolidation appear to have fallen on mostly deaf ears and led to more profits for media barons. In 1969, Murdoch purchased the *Sun*, and he is credited with breaking the unions in the 1970s. His company acquired *The Times* in 1981. According to data from the Media Reform Coalition, Murdoch’s News UK had 32.1% market share in 2020 circulation (p. 71) and was second in circulation market share to DMG Media, which had 38.3% market share that same year.

Edge cited dire predictions about the demise of newspapers made by the *Economist* and media analyst Claire Enders. For example, Enders predicted in 2009 that “up to half of” 1,300 titles will close in the next five years, (Brook, 2009)” (p. 15) and “seven national newspapers would close by 2014 as 80% of their readership and ad revenue vanished” (Rusbridger, 2018, p. 16). Contrary to those predictions, in Chapter 4 Edge offered a deeper dive into the national press circulation and market share by citing reports published by the Media Reform Coalition in 2021. For example, the three largest national newspaper weekly groups by circulation and market share are DMG Media with nearly 12 million national newspaper weekly circulation in 2020, News UK with about 10 million national newspaper weekly circulation in 2020 and Reach with about 6 million national newspaper weekly circulation in 2020 (p. 71). Those three conglomerates represent almost 90% combined daily and Sunday circulation in the United Kingdom, which is up from 83% in 2018 and 71% in 2015 (p. 71). DMG Media is tied to the Harmsworth Family & Trust and key titles in their portfolio include *The Daily Mail* and *Metro*. News UK is a subsidiary of News Corp UK with strong ties to Rupert Murdoch and major titles in the portfolio include the *Sun* and *The Times*.

As for the provincial or local/regional press in the United Kingdom, Edge cited that market segment peaked “about 1900, according to Curran (2003), when there were 196 local dailies and 2072 weeklies” (p. 82). Just as there has been major consolidation among national newspapers, the same holds true for the number of companies publishing local newspapers. For example, Edge cited research by the Media Forum Coalition that shows three companies (Newsquest, Reach and JPI Media) owned a cumulative 69% of local newspaper titles in 2021 (p. 90).

Although the internet and tech companies such as Facebook and Google have been major disrupters, Edge concluded “the business model for newspapers is hardly broken and in fact remains robust” (p. 101) given that the top three provincial newspaper groups posted margins ranging from about 14% to 25% in 2021. While past success does not guarantee future success, clearly more attention needs to be paid to young audiences, notably Gen Z and Millennials who have become accustomed to free news.

References

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