FREE DAILY NEWSPAPERS

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Launches: Portugal, Iceland Australia, Switzerland

mX goes northwest

Melbourne based free daily *Mx* launched a Sydney edition on Monday July 4th. The 28 page tabloid has a circulation of 50,000 and is published by the Herald and Weekly Times (*Herald Sun*), a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Limited, also publisher of national daily *The Australian* and Sydney's *Daily Telegraph.* The Melbourne edition, which has failed to make money so far, was launched in 2001. A Brisbane edition of *m X* will be launched before the end of the year. News Ltd chief executive John Hartigan said the company has business plans for "every Australian city".

Publisher John Fairfax competed in 2001 in Melbourne with *mX* with *Melbourne Express*. The paper was closed down after nine months, but the publisher now has started talks with Metro International about entering the free paper market in Australia together. Fairfax publishes the *Syndey Morning Herald* and the *Sun Herald* in Syndney (*The Australian* / *Fairfax Digital*)

5th Swis *20 Minuten* edition

On June 13, Tamedia, publisher of *20 Minuten* Switzerland, launched a St. Gallen edition with a circulation of 40,000. Other editions are in Bern, Zurich, Basle and Luzerne. Total circulation of *20 Minuten* in Switzerland is 420,000. In January 2005 Tamedia bought the remaining shares from Schibsted. The Norwegian publisher still owns the title in France and Spain. (*Oltner Tagblatt*)

Destak beats *Metro* by one day

Lisbons first free daily *Destak* (converted in November 2004 from a weekly free paper) launched on May 10 in Porto with a circulation of 30,000. A day later *Metro* reacted by also launching a Porto edition. Total circulation of *Metro* in Portugal is 140,000. Total circulation of *Destak* is 125,000. Circulation figures of paid papers for 2004 and 2005 are not yet made public it can be estimated that more than 30% of the Portuguese circulation consists of free papers.

Newspapers in Portugal (circ. * 1000)

	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05
Paid papers	686	556	614	595	571	571	571
Destak						100	125
Metro						100	140
Total	686	556	614	595	571	771	836
Estimated share of free dailies						26%	32%

Bladid Iceland 2nd

Since May 6, 2005, more than 75% of the total circulation in Iceland consists of free newspapers after the launch of the second free paper in the country: *Bladid* (=newspaper). 80,000 Copies of the new title are distributed door-to-door from Monday till Friday in Reykjavik and surrounding towns. The tabloid counts 32 pages and employs 30 people, publisher is Ár og dagar ehf. *Bladid* is the second free daily after *Frettabladid* (circ. 100,000), which was launched in 2001. (Ragnar Karlsson/Statistics Iceland)

Circulation & Readership

SF Examiner weekend edition

The *San Francisco Examiner* , owned by Denver millionaire Philip Anschutz, will raise the circulation of the weekend edition to more than 200,000 by merging with the *San Francisco Independent*. Weekday circulation of the *Examiner* is 100,000. The new weekend edition will also be delivered to the Peninsula as *Examiner/Independent* on Tuesday and Saturday. This will result in a circulation of nearly 400,000 on the weekend and almost 300,000 on Tuesday. (*Denver Business Journal*)

No Vacation for Metro Spain

The Spanish *Metro* editions will for the first time not close down during the month of August. Instead distribution will be more targeted at the coastal cities where many Spaniards will enjoy their holidays. *Qué!* will close down during the summer while *20 Minutos* and *Ahora* declined a comment on the matter. (*El Semanal Digital*)

Standard wins and loses

Total circulation of the *Evening Standard* went up in May 2005 with almost 10% to 426,000 compared to the same month last year. But this figure includes the 75,000 copies of the free *Standard Lite* edition. The paid paper therefore is actually selling less copies (–10% like in the previous years) than in the year before. (*Evening Standard*; *MediaWeek*)

The Evening Standard is not the only 'casuality' of the free press. Rupert Murdoch admitted that tabloid *The Sun* lost 40,000 copies because of *Metro* UK. In May 2005 *The Sun* however, still sold 3.2 million copies and is the biggest paper by far in the UK. (*The Guardian*)

First official *Qué!* audit

The Spanish audit organization for the free press Publicaciones Gratuitas Ejemplares Distribuibles (PGD) confirmed that *Qué!* (almost) lived up to their own expectations. When the paper was launched, a circulation of one million was claimed. The official figure is only slightly lower: 955,377 daily copies, making *Qué!* the biggest Spanish paper until now. *Metro* and *20 Minutos* are not included in the research of this period but report circulations of 900,000 (*20 Minutos*) and 687,000 (*Metro*) themselves. *Mes Taragonna* had a circulation of 15,000, *Mini Diario Comunidad Valencia* of 45,000 and *Vivir Pamplona* 20,000. (*expanison.com* / PGD)

In readership *Qué!* is the 4th best-read paper in Spain according to the latest data from the readership audit organization EMG (Estudio General de Medios) with 1,972,000 readers per issue. First is the sports paper *Marca* (2,550,000), second *El Pais* (2,186,000) and third *20 Minutos* (2,129,000). *Metro* finishes just after *Qué!* with 1,828,000 readers. (www.hispanidad.com)

On April, 7 2005 *Qué!* started a campaign to get a new trial for the Spaniard Francisco (Paco) Larranaga, who was condemned to death in the Philippines after a trial which was critized by many parties. The publicity resulted in more than 120,000 signatures to get the condemned man a new trial. The European parliament and the Spanish government are now putting pressure on the Philippine Government to revise the verdict or to get Paco a new trial (see also www.pacolarranaga.com)

Toronto readers go for free

Paid newspaper *Toronto Sun* lost 13% of the weekday circulation in the six months prior to April 2005 compared to the same period in 2003/2004. Although the paper blames a higher cover price and less hockey news for the decline, analysts state that also the sharp competition from *24 Hours* and *Metro* have caused the drop in circulation. If that is true, troubles are far for over for *the Sun* because in April a third free paper, *Dose*, entered the market. (*Globe and Mail*)

Big in Amsterdam

After the launch of the new Amsterdam edition (circulation 125,000) of *Metro* a dispute broke out between paid newspapers (*Telegraaf*, circ. 111,000 in Amsterdam; *Het Parool*, circ. 61,000) and *Metro*. Who was market leader in Amsterdam? *Metro* launched a special website with data to prove it's claim. Metro also introduced a new 'typical Dutch' distribution method: the cargo bike. (www.nummer1inamsterdam.nl)

Publishers & Titles

€10 million for the first *Qué!*

Recoletos, publisher of sports paper *Marca*, financial paper *Expansión* and free daily *Qué!* reported a loss of €6.4 million in the first three months of 2005 compared to a profit of €4.4 million in the same months of 2004. The most likely suspect for the difference is the introduction of *Qué!* in the beginning of this year although the company also lost some money on the US operations. (*Marketing Directo*)

No profits for *24 Hours/Heures*

Qubecor announced in their Q1 results that *24 Heures/24 Hours* in Montréal and Toronto "cut their operating losses by $1.2 million and increased their revenues by 165% between the first quarter of 2004 and the first quarter of 2005. Free cash flow from operations was $31.0 million in the first quarter of 2005, compared with $8.6 million in the same period of 2004." In March Sun Media Corporation launched *24 Hours* in Vancouver. (Quebecor)

Warner Exec. Joins Metro board

Joshua A. Berger, Executive Vice President and Managing Director of Warner Bros. Entertainment UK joined the Metro Board of Directors on May 31, 2005. (Metro International)

The Board of Directors of Metro appointed Svenn Dam as President and Chief Operating Officer (COO). Dam joined Metro in 2001 and was responsible for the launch of Metro in Denmark. Most recently Dam has served as COO of Metro's European operations. (Metro International)

NY Times launches free weekly

After buying a stake in the Boston *Metro*, the *NY Times* begins exploring the free paper market itself by launching a business free weekly in New York called *Marketplace Weekly*, distributed on Thursdays with a initial circulation of 150,000. The paper will be distributed at 250 points to commuters. (*The Guardian*)

Plans & Rumors: Switzerland, Germany

Schibsted's second coming?

After the disaster of the Cologne newspaper war (1999-2001), which resulted in the end of Schibsted's *20 Minuten* in Germany, the Norwegians are again thinking about invading Germany with a free paper. Their partner this time is RTL, the commercial broadcaster owned by Bertelsmann, although they are also speaking with the Holzbrinck Group, publisher of two 'cheapies' in Germany (*News* and *20 Cents*). The new paper could be introduced first in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Cologne, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Stuttgart and the Ruhr-area. Editions for Munster, Bremen, Hanover, Karlsruhe and Nürnberg could follow. (*Der Spiegel Online*)

Meanwhile every major German publisher is preparing for the invasion after Metro already made it clear that they would start a German edition. Alex Springer (*Bild*) and *WAZ* (Essen) both announced that they would probably also launch a free paper when a foreign publisher would do the same. (*FT Deutschland*)

In Cologne where DuMont Schauberg participated in the newspaper war, this publisher launched *Direkt*, a cheap tabloid (50 cts). Sales are low (5,500) but the paper could be converted to a free one when Metro or Schibsted tries to invade the market. Another possibility, uttered by publisher Konstantin Neven DuMont is that several regional publishers launch a free paper together. (*Die Tageszeitung / FTD*)

In Berlin the Gruner + Jahr publisher Berliner Verlag (*Berliner Zeitung*, *Berliner Kurier*) is also prepared for *Metro* or *20 Minuten*. The publisher has spend three months preparing a free daily that will be put on the street only when another publisher will try to enter the already crowded Berlin market. (*Der Kontakter*)

20 Minuten / 20 Minutes

Tamedia, Publisher of *20 Minuten* Switzerland is again considering moving the concept to the western (French speaking) part of Switzerland with editions for Lausanne and Geneva. Tamedia already started negotiations with marketleader Edipresse (*24 Heures, Le Matin, Le Temps, Tribune de Geneve*) in Lausanne.

Site update: papers in Mexico, Greece & Spain

Another free paper was 'discovered'. *El Noveo Siglo*, published since 2001 as a weekly in Guadalajara, Mexico. In 2004 it was converted to a daily paper, it has also a weekend edition. Circulation is 40,000.

A second 'discovered' free paper is *City Press* in Greece with editions in Athens (circulation 110,000) and Thessaloniki (circulation 15,000). The paper is published since 2003. It is the third paper in Greece when readership is concerned, *Metro* (with only a Athens edition and a weekend edition in Thessaloniki) is in sixth place.

Some news is coming up about *El Crack 10*, which seems to be a Spanish free sports daily (or weekly?), but I have not found anything substantial about this paper yet. It had 92,000 readers this year but exists probably for more than two years now; Barcelona seems to be the hometown of this paper.

PGD (Spain) reports also that the circulation of the free *Daily Malaga* will soon be published. No news about this publication is available yet.

Research

Reactions to *Metro* France

In Media, Culture & Society, Vol. 27, No. 3, 353-369 (2005) appeared a article by Lynne Wilcox (Aston University, Birmingham) on "Metro, info, haro! Fierce reactions to regime competition in the French newspaper industry".

Dutch only: ANMI Workshop

Op 22 augustus geef ik een workshop over "Gratis dagbladen en nieuws op het internet - het nieuwsmenu van jongeren onder de loep" tijdens de ANMI Summerschool in Amsterdam. Informatie en inschrijving via www.anmi.nl.

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