

Free Daily Newspapers

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Launches	Online	Closures	Germany	City AM
Evening Standard free after 182 years (p. 1)	Examiner & Politico expand (p. 3)	Spain, Ukraine, Switzerland (p. 2)	10 free dailies since 1997, all closed (p. 2)	# 1000 for business daily (p. 4)

Issue 50: FDN Barometer returns

In this anniversary issue, the FDN Barometer returns. Checking circulation for all 250 titles took up some time while presenting the data in a logical way was also a problem. From this month on, I will cover a different set of data, but also more data, starting with circulation since 1995 for all continents.

World free daily circulation, daily copies (*1000)

	Europe	Americas	Asia/Aust/Afr	Total
1995	231			231
1996	249			249
1997	558			558
1998	918			918
1999	2.711	180		2.891
2000	5.292	1.779	495	7.566
2001	7.371	1.907	765	10.043
2002	8.345	2.212	2.008	12.565
2003	8.778	3.097	2.922	14.797
2004	11.010	3.384	3.770	18.164
2005	15.375	5.028	4.407	24.810
2006	24.267	6.204	5.853	36.324
2007	26.890	6.832	8.097	41.819
2008	25.272	7.128	9.270	41.670
2009	21.354	6.712	8.915	36.981

As can be seen from the table, circulation went down already slightly in 2008 – particularly in Europe. In 2009 circulation in all continents decreased. Total circulation is now (beginning of November 2009) down with 11% compared to end 2008. In Europe the drop was 18% so far.

LAUNCHES

London: Freeevening Standard

The Evening Standard moved to free distribution after being paid for 182 years. In the last years, however, already half of the 250,000 copies of the paper were being distributed for free. Circulation of the free Standard will be 600,000 to start with, growing to 750,000 around the end of 2009.

Two crucial questions, however, remain: will the Free Evening compete with London Lite or having the market to itself; and is the 600,000 / 750,000 a realistic target?

The position of the Associated Newspapers' operated London Lite was a mystery in the first weeks after the launch – although a closure now seems to be only a matter of time. The Guardian suggested on November 2 that the last issue of Associated Newspapers' free evening paper London Lite "hits the streets in a month".

When the company sold the majority of the Evening Standard to Russian entrepreneur Alexander Lebedev, both parties failed to make a deal of Lite. Lebedev should of course demanded that the paper would shut down, which would be beneficial to Associated as well, as the Lite accumulated massive losses for the company.

Associated Newspapers has been talking to the 36 staff members of the newspaper about changes that "may result in closure" of London Lite. Steve Auckland, managing director of Associated Newspapers Free Division, said: "Despite reaching a large audience with an excellent editorial format, we are concerned about the commercial viability in this highly competitive area."

Even when Murdoch's thelondonpaper shut down, no deal was made on Lite – while the relaunch of the Evening Standard could have been the third occasion for a deal. With competition, a relatively expensive model as the Evening Standard will still be making losses – at any circulation.

Second, how realistic is it to distribute 600,000; let alone 750,000 copies of a free paper? Newsstands will not be used in the beginning, meaning only distributors will hand out the paper. Not only is this very expensive; there is also a change of saturating the market and trying for "quantity" instead of "quality" readership.

But will extra copies increase readership? The examples of London Lite and thelondonpaper might be instructive. Both papers had almost the same number of readers in the last survey: 1.1 million – but Lite's circulation was 400,000 against thelondonpaper's 500,000.

The Evening Standard might not be the first or the only free quality paper nor the first or only that made the move from paid to free, it is still the only one printing three different editions during the afternoon. This is of course also making it a rather expensive model (together with a huge staff and 64 pages daily).

The secret of successful free papers, in most cases, is having a small staff, spending as little as possible on printing and distribution (and having no competitors). But maybe the Standard will be the exception.

Punto Medio Merida

On June 29, a new free morning tabloid, Punto Medio, was launched in the Mexican city Merida (Yucatan Peninsula). The circulation of the 24-page (16 in color) paper is 20,000.

Distribution (Monday – Friday) is through several points in the city, among them hospitals, restaurants and universities. The publisher also owns the weekly magazine La Revista Peninsular.

In Mexico other free dailies are published in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterey. Total circulation is 500,000.

Universal closed in June

Universal, a free daily launched in 2005 and distributed on all flights of Spanish airline Iberia, has closed down already on June 17 of this year. Circulation was around 50,000. The crisis on the Spanish advertising market forced owners La Información (Diario de Navarra) and El Vigía to close the paper, although the management realized a 25% cost cut. Almost 40 people lost their job with the closure according to PRNoticias.

La Gaceta paid relaunch

Spanish business paper La Gaceta de los Negocios changed its formula from a pure economic paper to a more general paper and changed its title to just 'La Gaceta'. The change is the result of a change of ownership when it was bought by multimedia group Intereconomía. The new owner was active on TV, radio and Internet so far, owns a magazine but lacked a newspaper. (AFP)

La Gaceta de los Negocios was mainly distributed for free to businesses (like the other business dailies Cinco Días and El Economista). The new formula will probably end this distribution. The cover price will be €1,50.

20 Minutes close Romandie edition

The Romandie edition of 20 Minutes will be terminated at the end of November according to editor Tristan Cerf in Klein Report. Only editions for Geneva and Lausanne will remain. In the 20 Minutes, some 'magazine' elements of Le Matin Bleu will be integrated. Le Matin Bleu itself was already closed down at the end of September when the first step of the take-over of publisher Edipresse by 20 Minutes publisher Tamedia was approved.

Ukraine without free dailies

No free dailies were handed out at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti subway station entrance in Kiev last week. Checking websites and journalists confirmed that there are no free dailies in the country anymore.

At the end of 2008 there were still four titles available. 15 Minut (KP Media) launched in 2006 and grew to six editions and a circulation of 270,000 at the end of 2008. Obzor (Telegraaf Media Group) launched in 2004 as a 3-times-a-week paper and went daily in 2007. Free evening paper Veчерkom (by paid daily Segodnya) started in April 2008 while Puls Kiev launched in October. Joint circulation was around 500,000 according to claims of the publishers (there is no official circulation audit).

Both 15 Minut and Obzor closed in December 2008, and probably also Veчерkom shut down during that time. Some months later Puls stopped publishing; their last issue is from March 13. The recession but also the heavy competition between the four papers caused problems.

Since some months a two-times-a-week paper, Tochka (point) is the only paper that is free available, although paid paper Blik was heavily sampled.

Last German free daily closed

German quality newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung will close its 'light' edition, SZ Primetime, because the company goes through another round of cost cuts. Four people will lose their job. The A4-sized afternoon paper was launched in January 2007, and counted 12 to 16 pages. It was distributed with a circulation of 13,000 to Lufthansa business class travelers.

With this closure, the last remaining German free daily has vanished. Since 1997 ten free titles have been launched in Germany, some only lasted a few months, others more than 12 years:

- ICE-Press (Der Spiegel Verlag, ICE-trains), 1997-1999
- Handelsblatt am Abend (Holtzbrinck, trains, airlines), 1997-2009
- 15 Uhr Aktuell (Berlin, Hamburg, Munich) 1998-2000
- 20 Minuten (Schibsted, Cologne), 1999-2001
- Köln Extra (Axel Springer, Cologne), 1999-2001
- Kölner Morgen (DuMont Schauberg, Cologne), 1999-2001
- FTD Kompakt (FT Deutschland, trains) 2003-2006
- Business News (Holtzbrinck) 2006-2007
- die Sportzeitung (DSV/Lufthansa, airlines) 2006-2007

With this closure, and with Lithuania, Ukraine and India losing their only free daily, the number of countries with free dailies dropped from 59 in 2008 to 55 in 2009.

CIRCULATION

Metro US now 5th in circulation

With 591,000 circulated copies, Metro US is now the 5th largest newspaper in the US after the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, the NY Times, and the LA Times but before the Washington Times (583,000) according to a press release by Metro US.

The sources for the two sets of data, however, are different as the paid newspapers are audited by the Audit Bureau of Circulations, while the Metro data comes from the Certified Audit of Circulation report (only available to members) so the method differs. ABC measured April-September 2009 and showed an average decline of more than 10% compared to last year.

20 Minuten Friday circulation

The weekend magazine 20 Minuten Friday, published by Tamedia (free daily 20 Minuten, paid daily Tages-Anzeiger) increased circulation from 155,000 to 172,000 on Friday 30 October when the magazine celebrated its first anniversary.

The second increase this year will bring in some 50,000 new readers according to the publisher. Because almost all copies are taken, the publisher thinks the extra copies will also find their way to the public. (Persoenlich)

UK free papers stable circulation

In the first month without the competition of free daily Thelondonpaper, competitor London Lite did not increase circulation in September. The free afternoon paper by Associated Newspapers distributed a little over 400,000 copies like in all previous months of 2009.

Associated's morning paper Metro increased its circulation only slightly with 8,000 copies to 1,338,000 after the holiday month of August.

Business free daily City AM also increased circulation after the 'slow' months of July and August. It distributes 100,000 now, more than in the previous months but less than in April and May.

Overall the average circulation over the first nine months is stable compared to 2008: 1,335,000 for Metro; 401,000 for London Lite and 98,000 for City AM. (The 600,000 copies of the Evening Standard will be added in October.)

READERSHIP

Swedish readership 2009

According to Orvesto research May–August 2009 Metro has 661,000 readers in Stockholm, 284,000 in Göteborg, 273,000 in Skane and 409,000 in the rest of Sweden.

In total 1,560,000 people read the free daily, making it the best-read paper in the country. This is somewhat less than the 1.6 million readers in the same period of 2008. The reason is probably that Metro cut circulation of the national 'Riks' edition, which lost 50,000 readers. In other markets the readers went down with only a few thousand.

City Helsingborg has 48,000 readers, City Landskrona 20,000 while in Malmö/Lund 125,000 people read City.

ONLINE

Politico expands online

Robert Allbritton, owner of Washington based website and free daily Politico is going for the Washington market with a local website. Allbritton owns two local TV stations and will merge the new site with the websites of these stations. The new website, that will employ no less than 50 journalists will be headed by Washington Post veteran Jim Brady according to The New Republic.

The Politico operation, however, is financially supported by the free Politico newspaper. So the next plan could be to do a similar trick with the new website, not only competing with the Washington Post (online) but also with its free daily Express.

Examiner goes north

Canadian cities Calgary, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver got their own local Examiner news-website. Clarity Media, the Denver based operation by billionaire Philip Anschutz, already operates 150 local news sites in US, and also publishes free daily newspapers in San Francisco and Washington.

The local Examiner websites use content from so-called 'examiners', local bloggers who cover special areas in their community. These examiners are paid on basis of the online visits. Already more than 18,500 examiners are active for the US operations. (Denver Business Journal)

According to the Globe & Mail, the group is planning to expand to the UK as well.

Why have a website?

In the beginning of 2008 Dutch free daily Spits merged its website with NieuwNieuws, a spin off from the popular GeenStijl blog. The new website was called Spitsnieuws. Almost everybody was happy. The former NieuwNieuws now had more visitors than ever, getting visitors from GeenStijl like they always did, but also from the former Spits website. Spits was freed from the non-profit-making online operation.

After almost two years, some of the journalists think that having a newspaper without a website is not a very good idea. Because SpitsNieuws has its own editor-in-chief, the Spits staff does not have their own online presence.

From now on, Spits is online again. Two blogs: Page2 with news from the newspaper, and Meningen (Opinions) with journalists' blogs. According to Spits editor-in-chief Bart Brouwers on journalism researcher's Alexander Pleijter blog, the reason to go online again, has some

business reasons but the main reason is emotional, journalists want to be online these days.

Costs are low, both websites run on WordPress software, while there will be only one part-time staffer, working from Colombia (to avoid expensive night work).

New City website and webTV

Italian free daily City (RCS group, Corriere della Sera) launched a new website with a special City web TV feature. Everyday at 12.30 and 16.30 there is a news broadcast on City TV. Antonio Rosa comments Monday and Thursday on sports; Alessio Guzzano reviews movies (weekends) while Tuesdays and Thursdays new celebrity gossip (people) items will be broadcasted.

City launched in 2001, and now has nine editions. Circulation is around 800,000 – readership is almost 2 million. It competes with Leggo, Metro, E Polis and DNews in most of these markets.

PEOPLE

Samways & Bryant move up

Metro International appointed Maggie Samways to global editor-in-chief. She worked for Metro US since 2003 and was editor-in-Chief for Metro US from 2006 on. Since last year she managed the central editorial desk in London.

Jeremy Bryant has been appointed as global director of logistics. He has been with Metro since 2002 and has held various roles within the distribution function. He has been involved in the launch of a number of Metro's all over the world. In the past five years, he was responsible for executing and implementing new printing and distribution channels throughout the Group.

Former Metro editor moves to PR

Sakari Pitkänen, the former editor in chief of Metro International, who suddenly left the company in July, got a new job as PR consultant for Swedish PR agency Prime. Prime is, according to Sakari on his blog:

They are young, smart and seems to have fun at work. They challenge things in the PR industry. A bit like Metro does in print. (...) Boundaries between what we today regard as journalism, advertising and PR will be moved and sometimes merge.

PUBLISHERS

Metro International Q3 results

Metro International announced net losses of Q3 2009 of €8.6m and of €27.5m in the first 9 months of 2009. In 2008 the company made a profit in these periods. The adjusted net revenues declined with 8% in Q3 and with 11% in the first nine months. Total, unadjusted, revenues declined with 26% and 25% in Q3 and the first 9 months.

The sale of Metro Italy, the start of the Ecuador franchise (15% owned by Metro) and the partnership with Springer in Hungary were the main changes for Metro in the last months. CEO Per Mikael Jensen declared:

Metro International's operational sales adjusting for currency movements and closed and divested operations has dropped year-on-year by only 8 percent. This is partly a result of the fact that we are performing better than most of our competitors in our European markets and that steady growth continues to be recorded in our emerging markets. It is therefore pleasing to show that we are on the right track in order to meet our long-term strategic goals.

TITLES

15min goes 2.0 and underwater

In September 2009 free Lithuanian paper 15min went from a daily to a three-days-a-week schedule. The decline in the local advertising market (45-50%) caused publisher Schibsted to take drastic measures. The paper now distributes 93,000 copies on the days it is published.

The 15min website attracts 60,000 daily, 205,000 weekly and 600,000 monthly unique users. The citizen journalism site IKRAUK is doing well, getting around 10,000 daily visitors and many news feeds from the users as well. 15min also launched a Facebook page, getting 7500 fans in the last three months.

The most curious innovation, however, is the underwater laminated 15min paper, which is being used in the Vichy aquapark in Vilnius, people can read news while laying in Jacuzzi. The park gets 15min files; print and laminate these themselves and offer these to their visitors.

MediaCorp integrates newsroom

Free newspaper Today, TV station ChannelNewsAsia, radio channel 928LIVE and the websites of these operations, owned by Singapore's MediaCorp, will integrate newsroom operations. The new newsroom, called the NewsHub, will produce content for all platforms. The integration started with the sports desk, the central newsdesk joined on October 1. (EditorsWeblog)

1000 for City AM

London free business daily City AM celebrated its 1000th paper with a special anniversary issue counting 44 pages. Celebrities like prime minister Gordon Brown, London mayor Boris Johnson and Virgin-CEO Richard Branson congratulated the paper. In a special section the history is told and the successes (scoops, readership) of the paper are featured as well. Not mentioned are the shelved plans for expansion in the UK and beyond.

Lawson Munchaster, ex-Metro International's vice president for global sales, launched City AM in 2005 in the London city centre. Munchaster raised £10m for the operation. Biggest investor was Boudewijn Poelmann's Blue Bull; Poelmann was chairman of the Dutch lottery and co-founder of Independent Media, the company behind the Moscow Times, a free paper launched in 1992, now published by Sanoma.

City AM was thinking about new editions for Edinburgh, Leeds, Bristol, Manchester and Birmingham in March 2006, later autumn 2007 and 2008 were mentioned for new launches. The paper also wanted to expand to Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Tokyo, New York, Paris and Amsterdam. In London circulation increased from 70,000 at the start to 100,000 now.

From October 2007 to March 2008, City A.M. made a profit of £47,000 before tax (€60,000). The revenues were £3.5m in that period. In 2008, however, the publisher made a loss of £754,000. City AM had journalists edit their own copy, resulting in six subeditors losing their job in 2008. Also two sales people were let off.

The e-paper version of City AM is not really state-of-the-art. Navigation is difficult, online reading pretty hard. There is also no archive or pdf download.

Heute plans weekend edition

Austrian free daily Heute is planning a Sunday or a weekend edition for Vienna according to director Eva

Dichand in an interview in Die Presse. According to Der Standard the decision will be made in February, meaning that the weekend edition could be launched in Q2 2010.

Circulation will be comparable to the weekday circulation of 350,000. Competition with part free / part paid paper Österreich will increase and will force Österreich to move to an all-free model according to Eva Dichand.

At the same time, rumors emerged that Hans Dichand; Eva's father-in-law and the 50% owner of Austrian market leader Kronen Zeitung is involved in Heute (which he can't do without consent of the owner of the other 50%: German publisher WAZ). The son of Günther Havranek (who controls through a foundation the majority of the Heute shares) said to magazine News that his father was keeping an eye ("Kontrolleur") on Heute for Dichand. Havranek later denied this while Eva Dichand called it rubbish ("Blödsinn").

Metro Sweden's Obama scoop

Before the official announcement, the Swedish Metro predicted that the Nobel Prize for Peace would go to Barack Obama. It was not a leak or speculation that made Peter Lindholm write the story in Metro Sweden on the Thursday night. It was a smart analysis of the guest list and line-up of the Oslo Nobel Peace Prize party that made him realize that everything pointed to Obama.

On the list, that is available before the prizes are announced, were Obama supporters like Will Smith and his wife Jada Pinkett, while Donna Summer, Wyclef Jean, country singer Toby Keith, Puerto Rican singer Luis Fonsi, and Mail artists Amadou & Mariam, who played at his inauguration, performed at the party. The combination of all these names made it clear for Lindholm that Obama was the likely winner.

RESEARCH

German research on free papers

A German thesis, "Phänomen Gratiszeitung – Untersuchung zu einem neuen Pressetypus" by Christoph Wolf (Freie Universität Berlin) covers not only the free daily history and several issues concerning free dailies, but also gives a detailed overview of all German adventures with free dailies.

Although there are now no free dailies in Germany, the country was one of the first with free dailies (15 Uhr Aktuell in Hamburg, Berlin and Munich already between 1998 and 2000) while there were several attempts later to start free dailies. The most famous being the Cologne free newspaper war in 1999-2001. A mail to Christoph Wolf <wolf.christoph /at/ web.de> will probably get you the thesis as a pdf file.

EVENTS

Zurich: 19-21 November

At the "Journalism Research in the Public Interest" conference in Zurich I will present a paper with one of my colleagues on Blogging on Dutch media websites. <<http://project.zhaw.ch/de/linguistik/jrc.html>>

Lisbon: 23 November

I will present at the seminar Broadband Media. Changing times, Changing Media in Lisbon: <<http://iscte.pt/>>

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