

# Free Daily Newspapers

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Launches	Plans	Closures	Austria	Research
Free Toronto evening paper (p. 1)	Evening Standard goes free (p. 1-2)	Lithuania, London, Switzerland, (p. 2)	Frees officially audited (p. 3), battle goes on (p. 5)	User Generated Content (p. 8)

## A dozen US free locals closed last year

Free local papers were traditionally strong in the US, particularly in Colorado, California and New Hampshire. In the beginning of 2008 there were 40 different local titles published in the US.

Now, less than two years later, only 24 remain, a dozen of those closed with the last 12 months or converted to a non-daily schedule – one free daily (Bluffton Today) converted to a paid model.

- The East Valley Tribune (AR) went to a three-days-a-week schedule.
- Today's Local News (CA) went to a two-days-a-week schedule in 2008, became a Sunday-only publication in January 2009, and closed in May.
- The Marco (Daily) Eagle (FL) is published three days a week since December 2007.
- Siglo21 (MA) went daily September 2008 but back to weekly in 2009.
- The Daily News (CA) closed editions for San Mateo, Redwood City, Burlingame and Berkeley.
- The Daily Post in Francisco closed in January.
- The SF City Star closed in March.
- The Eureka Reporter (Humboldt County, CA) closed in November 2008.
- The Tahoe Daily Tribune (CA) went to three-days-a-week schedule in February
- The Grand Junction Free Press went three-days-a-week this year.
- The Manchester Daily Express (NH) closed in February 2008.
- Bluffton Today (SC) went paid in December 2008.
- The Nashville City Paper (TN) went semi-weekly in April 2008.
- The Kitsap Free Daily (WA) 'temporary suspended circulation' in November 2008.
- Link (Hampton Roads, Virginia) closed December 2008.

Total circulation of the US locals dropped from 600,000 end 2007 to less than 300,000 now. Also some metropolitan free papers closed down in the US (BostonNow, Baltimore Examiner, Quick Dallas, Hoy in LA & NY, The Buzz in Salt Lake City) but smaller papers seem to be hurt more by the recession.

In total, US free circulation dropped from 3.3 million in 2007 to 2.4 million now. One of the reasons could also be that some of these papers were published by smaller entrepreneurs that did not have the resources to survive a recession.

In other markets free local papers also suffered. Particularly in Spain were many local free papers were published, the recession led to closures. In Canada, however, Black Press is still publishing more than a dozen local papers.

## LAUNCHES

### t.o.night Toronto

Toronto mayor David Miller and City Councilors Paula Fletcher and Gloria Lindsay Luby received the first copies of Toronto free evening paper t.o.night. There will be 100,000 copies distributed Monday to Friday in the center of town.



The paper is printed full-colour on coated, magazine paper. It will be handed out every Monday to Friday from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. near Toronto's public transit stops by retro-branded "Newsies" (35 student jobs).

In the morning Metro (279,000) and 24 Hours (260,000) are available in Toronto.

## PLANS

### Evening Standard converts to free

After 180 years London's Evening Standard will become a free daily on October 12. Circulation will go from 250,000 to 600,000 copies, and to 750,000 by the end of the year.

In August the Evening Standard had a circulation of 236,000, 51% of that already being handed out for free, which makes the move somewhat less revolutionary.

The fate of free evening paper London Lite, the near-monopolist after the closure of the London paper two weeks ago, is still uncertain, but it will very likely merge with The Evening Standard, meaning in fact that it will be closed down as the former paid brand seems to be stronger.

Last year London Lite made a loss of £20m according to the Guardian.

Alexander Lebedev bought 75% of the ES in January, 25% is owned by Associated Newspapers, owner of London Lite. "The London Evening Standard is the first leading quality newspaper to go free and I am sure others will follow," Lebedev told The Guardian.

This is not quite true. In 2006 the Manchester Evening News went free, meaning it was free in the city center although it was still paid in other areas. The example of MEN is not that encouraging as the paper cut down circulation recently on all but two days a week.

In the US the San Francisco Examiner, founded in 1865 was converted to a free daily in 2003. In Hong Kong economic daily The Standard went from paid to free in 2007. Also the Beijing Daily Messenger, The Sun (Malaysia), Hoy (Chicago, NY & LA), All Dia (Dallas),

Diario de Caracas (Venezuela), Jornal de Londrina (Brazil), La Hora (Chile), Diario Occidente (Colombia) and Curentul (Bucharest) moved from paid to free. The question remains what 'quality' is, but the Evening Standard is not the first that made the move.

## Kaiser Hans dreams of expansion

Hans Dichand, the 88-year old owner of Kronen Zeitung, the absolute market leader in Austria, dreams about expanding his Kronen Zeitung to the former parts of the Austrian-Hungarian Kaiserreich.

In the Kronen weekend section 'Live' he said that launching free versions of his popular tabloid in the former "Kronländer" would be a very good idea because there is still an Austrian-feeling in those areas. (Der Standard)

These Kronländer are several Southern and Eastern European countries. Publishers in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Russia, Croatia, Italy, Serbia, Ukraine, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Romania should watch their backs.

## OBITUARIES

### 15min to 3-day schedule

Free Lithuanian paper 15min moved from a daily to three-days-a-week schedule Monday October 5. Circulation on Monday, Wednesday and Friday will be increased from 65,000 to 95,000.

The paper was launched in 2005 in the capital Vilnius, in 2006 editions for Kaunas and Klaipeda were added. Norwegian publisher Schibsted first bought a share in the company and took over the whole operation later. The unstable advertising market is said to be the reason for the move. (Opinjia)

### Edipresse Tamedia merger

The Swiss Federal Competition Commission (COMCO) approved the merger between Edipresse and Tamedia without conditions. Tamedia will first acquire 49.9% of the share capital of Presse Publications SR S.A. (PPSR) at the beginning of 2010. PPSR comprises the main media activities of Edipresse in Switzerland.

Tamedia will increase its holdings by another 0.2% in 2011 and take over the remaining shares in 2013. In return Edipresse will receive Tamedia's shares and become a major shareholder of the company. As a result both French language free dailies merged.

Le Matin Bleu, launched four years ago in the French speaking part of Switzerland, printed its last edition Friday September 25. The paper had a circulation of 230,000 and a readership of 560,000. It was published in two editions for Geneva and Lausanne.

Tamedia said that a 'new' 20 minutes (circulation 220,000; readership 526,000) will combine the "best of both editions". Joseph Crisci, director of Le Matin Bleu will be leading the new paper while the editor in chief of Le Matin Bleu, Tristan Cerf, will be the editor of 20 Minutes.

Around ten people lost their job. The staff of Le Matin Bleu protested against the sacking without properly following procedures. Neither the staff nor the union was consulted on the matter. (Persoenlich)

Total Swiss free circulation dropped from 2.1 million in 2007 to less than 1.2 million now. Earlier ".ch", Cash, and three editions of 'News' were closed.

## thelondonpaper

Friday September 18, the last edition of thelondonpaper was published. Since 2006 the paper distributed around 500,000 daily copies in London and had 1.1 million daily readers in 2009.

Free papers come and go at a rapid pace, but because this one was owned by Rupert Murdoch, "mr. Big & Ugly Media" himself, the closure got maximum exposure. I am not saying that "1.1 million people can't be wrong" but the general sentiment in the UK press smells like "gloating". David Prosser in The Independent is typical:

*Indeed, the surprise with The London Paper is that it has survived this long, especially as the title was launched for no real commercial reason other than to get up the noses of Daily Mail & General Trust, owner of Metro and London Lite.*

Prosser also suggested that thelondonpaper and London Lite should have merged, something earlier advocated by The Guardian's Roy Greenslade and by Peter Preston in the Observer.

I covered this before and my analysis of the London newspaper war is not that of Murdoch spoiling the market for poor innocent Associated Newspapers. It a permanent and often dirty battle with all parties (Associated, Murdoch, Desmond) involved in spoiling (Metro, Standard Lite, London Lite), exclusive contracts (Metro's subway contract), legal actions (Office of Fair Trading complaints), huge discounts and accusations of bogus circulation.

A search on Twitter with thelondonpaper reveals that most people who tweet on it don't like the paper to go.

- Can't believe @thelondonpaper is closing down! How long have I been away for?!
- They said it wouldn't last – they were right! Get your souvenir last ever edition of #thelondonpaper tomorrow.
- last issue of thelondonpaper tomorrow, I'm going to miss that newspaper
- RT @ashleybmarc: R.I.P. thelondonpaper...thank you for all the goodtimes...as of tomorrow you are no more I'll miss you... KMT @ having ...
- "It's so sad! thelondonpaper IS London! I was thinking of moving there. Now I'm not so sure."

### East Valley Tribune threatened

As Freedom Communications, publisher of the Orange County Register filed for bankruptcy September 1, it could take (former) free daily East Valley Tribune with it in its downfall.

In the beginning of this year, the paper went from a daily to a 4-days-a-week schedule (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday) and started to distribute separate free local editions for Mesa, Chandler, Gilbert and Queen Creek with a total circulation of 100,000.

In May 2009, the paper dropped the Saturday edition, meaning it's not a 'real' newspaper anymore (published four days week at least).

## CIRCULATION

### Swiss frees increase circulation

According to the last WEMF data over the first 6 months of 2009 and the last 6 of 2008, free circulation of Swiss market leader 20 Minuten again increased. The paper distributes now 766,000 copies – 536,000 in the German speaking part, 230,000 in the French speaking part. The increase, however, is less compared to previous years.

French free daily Le Matin Bleu (closed down September 25) distributed 232,000 copies. News (Tamedia) is not included in the research.

Free evening paper Blick am Abend distributed 225,000 copies, thereby overtaking its paid mother Blick that distributed 215,000 copies. The new markets of St. Gallen and Luzern are not yet included. (Persoenlich)

All Swiss paid papers lost circulation in 2008/2009 compared to the previous period.

### Dutch 2009-I circulation

With an average circulation of 529,000 in the first 6 months of 2009, Metro is the Dutch free newspaper with the highest circulation according to auditing organization HOI. In 2008 the circulation of Metro was 533,000.

Spits is second with 456,000 copies, which is 6% more than in 2008. Third free daily is De Pers with 274,000 copies, down from 367,000 in 2008.

Total Dutch free circulation is now 1.3 million, against 1.4 million at the end of 2008 and 1.9 million in 2007.

### Cuts at Spanish free dailies

The three remaining Spanish national free dailies are cutting down circulation in 2009. Leading free daily 20 Minutos has an average circulation of 760,000 in the first 7 months of 2009. In the whole of 2008 this was 870,000 while in 2007 it was more than a million.

ADN and Qué! have been shutting down editions, which explain a major part of their circulation cuts. Qué! distributes 685,000 copies in 2009; 844,000 in 2008 and 950,000 in 2007. ADN has an average circulation of 655,000 in 2009. Last year circulation was 795,000 while in 2007 it was 955,000. (PRNoticias)

Total free Spanish circulation is 2.6 million, against 3.9 million in 2008, 4.4 million in 2007 and 4.9 million in 2006.

### Danish frees cut circulation

Two of the three remaining Danish free dailies, 24timer and Urban, cut circulation compared to 2008. Only MetroXpress has the same circulation in the first half of 2009 (228,000) as in 2008 according to auditing organization DO. Urban (Berlingske) distributed 203,000 copies on average in 2008 against 162,000 in 2009. 24timer, owned by Metro International, has a circulation of 180,000 in the first half of 2009 (224,000 copies in 2008).

Total free circulation in Denmark is now 570,000 (around 30% of total newspaper circulation). In 2006 this was almost 2 million (more than 60%).

Both free dailies of Metro International are now distributed in all major cities, in the future the publisher will target the titles to specific areas. Two thirds of the circulation of 24timer will be distributed in western Denmark, while Metro will distribute 60% in the east. (MediaWatch)

### The 0.05% "gain"

Normally I would not blog on monthly UK circulation data as they all seem stable on a monthly basis – which is the reason I usually only report on the yearly data.

But as some UK media (see for instance The Guardian) seem to make quite a thing from the fact that Rupert Murdoch's free evening daily thelondonpaper showed a small increase in its last full month of circulation we should look into the details.

Auditing organization ABC has reported strikingly similar circulation figures for Metro (average 1,334,00 in 2009), London Lite (401,000) and thelondonpaper (500,000). The exception in the stable circulation story is City AM. The free business paper has a rather jumpy circulation.

thelondonpaper printed in August on average 253 copies more than in July, leading to a 0.05% increase in "circulation". This is of course totally irrelevant – for advertisers readership data is what really counts. Both London Lite and thelondonpaper had a readership of 1.1 million with London Lite having more readers per copy.

### De Pers expansion plans

Dutch free daily De Pers, cutting circulation in the last years from 500,000 to 200,000; is planning to increase circulation again, although it hasn't revealed yet when the increase will take place and how many copies it plans to print in the future.

Since May this year the paper is only available in the Western part of the country after it made a deal with regional publisher Wegener on printing, advertising and distribution. Publisher Ben Rogmans is now thinking according to Dutch website Sprout about publishing again in more province capitals and in university cities.

Wegener director Joop Munsterman said earlier that he thought De Pers would be the largest newspaper in the Netherlands in the future although he also did not reveal any details of the plan.

## READERSHIP

### Österreich 3<sup>rd</sup> in Austria

The first Austria Media-Analyse research that included free dailies in Austria revealed that after Kronen Zeitung (2,919,000 daily readers) and Kleine Zeitung, free/paid paper Österreich is now the third paper in the country with 684,000 readers, before Kurier and Der Standard.

The other Austrian free daily, Heute, was only researched in the three provinces where it is published. In Vienna is second (500,000 readers) after Kronen Zeitung (575,000 readers) but before Österreich (331,000 readers).

In Niederösterreich (around Vienna) it occupies a joint third place (140,000) together with Östreich (139,000) after Kronen and Kurier. In Oberösterreich (Linz) Österreich is 3<sup>rd</sup> (98,000), while Heute is 5<sup>th</sup> 40,000).

According to the Regioprint 2009 research (with different results) the free weekly Wiener Bezirksblatt is the best-read paper in Vienna with 601,000 readers per issue, reaching 42% of the population. Paid daily Kronen Zeitung is 2<sup>nd</sup> with 561,000 readers (39%) while free weekly Bezirksjournal is 3<sup>rd</sup> with 528,000 readers (37%).

Free bi-weekly Wiener Bezirkszeitung has 457,000 while free daily Heute is the fifth paper with 455,000 readers – both reach 37% of the Viennese, meaning Heute is the second daily in the city now.

Free/paid daily Österreich has 304,000 readers while paid daily Kurier reaches 247,000 people on a daily basis.

### Metro Canada 1.2 million readers

The latest (2008/2009) Canadian NADbank readership survey shows that Metro now has almost 1.2 million readers in Canada (1,180,000 to be exact). Almost 40% of these readers are in Toronto (456,000), a quarter (260,000) in Montreal. With a circulation of 800,000 each Metro is read by 1.5 readers.

Competitor 24 Hours / Heures – published in the same markets as Metro (except that Metro has a Halifax edition, 43,000 readers) – has 880,000 readers (1.3 readers per copy). Only in Vancouver 24 Hours (3rd) has more readers than Metro (4th).

In Toronto Metro is now the second paper after The Star but before The Sun, 24 Hours is 5th, after Globe & Mail but before the National Post.

In Montreal Metro is 3th, 24 Heures is the 5th paper. In Ottawa Metro is 4th, 24 Hours 6th. In both Calgary and Edmonton Metro and 24 Hours are behind The Herald and The Sun.

Both Metro and 24 Hours saw print readership increase compared to 2007/2008. Most paid papers saw a small decrease in print readership.

NADbank also surveyed online readership. The number of weekly online readers of free papers in almost every market is very low compared to the weekly print readership. In Toronto for instance Metro has 915,000 weekly print readers while the online edition reaches 81,000 readers – 70,000 don't read the printed paper.

Paid papers perform better when online and print are compared: The Toronto Star has a weekly print audience of 1.9 million and 680,000 online weekly readers.

### Free Dutch dailies 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>

With 1.9 million and 1.8 million readers, free Dutch dailies Metro and Spits are the second and third best-read dailies in the Netherlands after paid paper De Telegraaf.

De Telegraaf is losing readership over the last years. Five years ago the paper reached almost 19% of the Dutch 13+ population, in 2008/2009 this was down to a little over 15%. Metro went in the same period from 9 to 13.7%; Spits now reaches 12.3% against 11.7% five years ago.

Third free daily De Pers had 875,000 readers on average (down from 960,000 after a circulation cut), making it the 5<sup>th</sup> paper after paid paper AD.

### Agora's Metro 3<sup>rd</sup> in Poland

Metro, the free daily published by Agora in Poland is the third best-read paper in the country, reaching 7.6% of the Polish population. First is Springer's tabloid Fact (14.8%), second Agora's paid paper Gazeta Wyborcza (14.4%).

All Polish papers lose readers over the years. In 2007 both Fact and Gazeta Wyborcza reached 19 to 20% of the population, while Metro reached between 8 and 9%.

### Frees rescue French readership

Newspaper readership in France decreased marginally with 0.3% when July '08/June '09 is compared with the previous research period Jan/Dec '08. In total 24 million French read a newspaper; 4.5 million read a free daily.

The reason for the stability, however, is the growth of free readership, which increased with 2%. National and regional newspapers lost readership according to the latest AudiPresse EPIQ research. Compared to July 2007 – June 2008 total readership increased, with the free dailies (+4%) and the regional press (+2.6%) contributing mostly to that. The national press gained 1%.

20 Minutes now has 2,745,000 readers (2,721,000 in 2008; +1%) which makes it – again – the best-read newspaper in France. Metro is second (2,534,000 readers – 2,483 in 2008; +2%), now surpassing L'Equipe

(2,400,000 readers against 2,587,000 in 2008). Fourth is Le Parisien/Aujourd'hui with 2,252,000 readers.

The free Plus-papers in Marseille, Lille, Lyon, Bordeaux, Montpellier, Paris, Nantes and Nice have 1,587,000 readers in total (+7%) while free evening paper Direct Soir now has a daily audience of 1,156,000 (+13%).

The report on the French readership data contained one curious item where the reading time of the different sorts of newspapers was covered. The average reading time of a free daily was 29 minutes, against 32 minutes for a national daily and only 25 minutes for a regional daily.

### Again more readers for 20 Minuten

Swiss free daily 20 Minuten is – again – the best-read newspaper in Switzerland and has – again – increased its readership. According to the 2009-2 readership data from WEMF (Persoenlich) the paper now has 1,417,000 daily readers (1,365,000 in 2009-1). The impact of the closure of free dailies Cash and .ch seems to be rather minimal.

Second in German speaking Switzerland is Blick with 649,000 readers. Free dailies Blick am Abend (358,000 readers) and News (334,000) are on places 6 and 7.

In the French speaking part free daily Le Matin Bleu (now closed) was the best-read paper with 559,000 readers before free paper 20 Minutes (526,000 readers). Paid paper Le Matin is third with 246,000 readers.

### MetroXpress best-read paper

The latest Danish TNS readership data (first six months 2009) show that MetroXpress is again the best-read paper in the country, before paid paper Jyllands Posten and Politiken. In the previous period Jyllands Posten was the best-read paper.

Free dailies Urban and 24timer follow on places 4 and 5. Urban gained readers compared to 2008-II but lost compared to 2008-I. 24timer was stable the last 12 months but has 100,000 readers less than a year ago.

## ADVERTISING

### Spanish papers lose ad revenue

Spanish dailies lost 20% of ad revenue in 2008 compared to 2007. Market leader 20 Minutos lost more than average with 28% (down from 43 to 31 million). (PRNoticias)

Although free papers in Spain have the highest circulation, their ad-share is low. The four national free papers are on positions 7 to 10 in the top 20. Their share of newspaper advertising is only 9%. For a part, however, this can be attributed to the fact that the frees don't publish in weekends when advertising is usually high.

The paper with the highest income (38 million) and a lowest loss (-7%) is Metro, a title that closed down in the beginning of 2009. ADN lost only 4% while Qué! was down 25%. The ad revenue of all four papers was around 40 million each in 2007 and between 31 and 38 million in 2008. Not clear, however, is whether these are "net real revenues" data or the official rates data.

### Metro/Svenska Dagbladet package

The Swedish edition of Metro has introduced an advertising package together with paid daily Svenska Dagbladet in Stockholm whereby almost 800,000 readers are reached by a Sunday ad in SvD and a Tuesday ad in Metro. Schibsted, the publisher of Svenska Dagbladet, has a minority stake in Metro Sweden. (Resumé)

## Metro CEO sees improvement

Per Mikael Jensen, CEO of Metro International, told the Danish website MediaWatch that he sees the market for his newspaper improve. Advertising was down 18% in the beginning of this year, but the level now is around 11% according to Jensen. Since January, there have been improvements every month. Metro raised advertising rates with 50% according to Jensen.

### ONLINE

## iPhone app for Metro Canada

Metro Canada introduced English language mobile versions for the iPhone and the Blackberry. The French version will be available later this month. The app offers news, entertainment and sports, while readers can comment on stories, get their puzzle answers, and check movie showtimes. Also movie trailers and news videos are featured on the mobile platform.

There were 2-D barcodes in the printed newspaper that readers can scan with their mobile phone to access more information on specific subjects. Guinness used this technology for a promotional action whereby readers could win trips to Dublin.

## Metro International's online target

According to the Danish media news website MediaWatch Metro International will focus more aggressively on its online operations in the future. In 2016 the publisher wants the online revenues to match those of the paper operation. The company is looking for a new director of Metro Interactive who would be responsible for that goal.

## Metro Holland launches trainee-site

Dutch free daily Metro launched TraineePartner, a website where students with a finished higher education – universities or technical universities (HBO) – can find traineeships. Partners that are offering traineeships are for instance ING, Tele2, Fortis, IBM, NS and Essent.

## 20 Minuten goes local

20 Minuten, the leading Swiss free daily, launched their hyper local news website. The start page shows a Google map with flags for places with news. Clicking on a flag takes the reader to the community and news items. Source for the stories is in most cases press agency SDA.

Although the site covers the whole of Switzerland (including French and Italian speaking parts), it is only in German. The French version does not have a local site.

## Examiner.com buys NowPublic

Vancouver-based citizen news site NowPublic.com has been sold to Philip Anschutz's Examiner.com, a chain of more than 100 local newssites where citizens are responsible for the majority of the news. The Examiner also operates free dailies in San Francisco and Washington. Anschutz's Clarity Media Group is reported to have paid around \$25 million for NowPublic that was launched in 2005. (NewsLab.ca)

### PEOPLE

## New editor *Blick-am-Abend*

Michael Perricone will take Markus Helbling's position as editor in chief of Swiss free evening paper *Blick-am-Abend* (Ringier) on December 1. Perricone worked for the *Tages-Anzeiger* and also for TV, he was correspondent for the Swiss TV in the Far East and Africa.

### PUBLISHERS

## Austria: Heute versus Österreich

Two major free dailies are competing in Austria: all-free *Heute* (circulation 470,000) and free/paid *Österreich* (123,000 free copies and 110,000 paid ones). I picked up both papers in Vienna to compare the contents. *Österreich* has a small tabloid format (34 \* 26 cm) – *Heute* is even smaller: 30 \* 22.5 cm.

*Österreich* counted 32 pages – with less than 6 pages ads, an 8 page color supplement (no ads) and an 8 page Money special (1 ad page). Not counted were ads for *Österreich's* own services. *Heute* – 40 pages – contained 9 pages of ads. Both free dailies had two pages of "paid content" by Austrian railways, included in the ads.

Magazine News contained an interview with *Heute* publisher Eva Dichhand and WAZ-manager Christian Nienhaus. WAZ is 50% owner of Austria's leading paid paper *Kronen Zeitung*, owned for the other 50% by Eva Dichhand's father-in-law Hans Dichhand. Officially, however, there is no relation between *Heute* and *Kronen* as WAZ does not allow Dichhand to participate in any other paper.

Although the relation between Hans Dichhand (*Kronen*) and WAZ has been 'cool' to say the least – Nienhaus and Dichhand's daughter-in-law Eva seem to be on speaking terms, also because the *Heute* publisher showed no interest to attack *Kronen* in any way: "we are a takeaway product, nobody will end their subscription because they read *Heute*."

*Heute* will introduce four Vienna regional editions for smaller advertisers once a month.

## Metropol teams up with Springer

Two very unlikely bedfellows, Metro International and German publisher Axel Springer, will join forces in the Hungarian press market.

Springer publishes regional newspapers in Hungary as well as a Sunday paper, a business paper and magazines. Metro International owns free daily *Metropol* (290,000 copies). Together the publishers aim to reach 1.3 million daily readers in Hungary.

In January 2010 *Metropol* will move to the smaller half-Berliner format like *Metro* in the Czech Republic.

A sample of the new *Metropol* half-Berliner was handed out at the conference of the Hungarian Newspaper Association MLE. The 'regular' tabloid was also available at the conference.

## Spanish publishers cut workforce

A survey by the Spanish Association of Free Press (AEPG) under 240 publishers of free publications (monthly, weekly, daily) reveals that half have reduced the workforce in the past year. Furthermore, data indicate that among businesses that made staff cuts, 1 in 5 let go between one third and half of the staff.

Almost 80% blame dropping advertising revenues because of the recession for the problems. Half of the publishers have seen a drop between 30 and 50%.

According to PRNoticias, the three national free dailies *20 Minutos*, *ADN* and *Qué!* have sacked nearly 200 people while the closure of *Metro* involved 150 staff members.

## Metro incentive program

Metro International shareholders approved:

- "a new long-term incentive program (the "LTIP") (...) in order to retain and motivate selected key individuals within the organization."
- "eligible participants to the LTIP will be invited to invest a percentage of their base salary in fully paid A Shares or B Shares in the capital of the Company and to that end, will be granted a number of options to acquire such fully paid A Shares or B Shares in the capital of the Company"
- "Categories of people that are covered by the LTIP proposal: 13 selected executives of Metro (including the CEO, the CFO, Executive Vice Presidents, and other senior management roles)"

## 20 Minuten Friday

In the first 6 months of 2009, Swiss Publisher Tamedia (free dailies 20 Minuten and News) saw its revenues go down with 16% compared to the same period in the previous year. The most positive development is the 20 Minuten Friday magazine. According to Tamedia's Martin Kall in Persoenlich, readership – especially among women – is developing better than expected.

Free daily News's position in Zurich will not change according to Kall, even after it closed down the editions in Berne and Basle.

## Metro Ireland lost €14 million

Accumulated losses of Fortune Green, publisher of Metro Ireland, were €13.8 million at the end of 2008. The Irish Times and Associated Newspapers are each holding 45% of the shares – 10% is owned by Metro International. (Irish Independent)

As the losses in 2008 were almost 3 million, it's safe to say that another 3 million will be added to the total losses in 2009. The paper was launched in October 2005. The Irish Competition Authority currently investigates the merger between Metro and Herald AM.

## TITLES

## Metro Photo Challenge

On October 5 the third Metro Photo Challenge was launched. It is a worldwide competition whereby readers (and professionals) can upload photo's.

Prizes are a trip to one of the Metro-cities and a chance to publish photo's in all Metro's worldwide. The themes this year are People, Places and Climate Change.

## Metro Berlin

Polish publisher Agora surprised Berliners with a German language edition of their free Metro paper last Wednesday. The 30,000 copies of the 12 page paper were targeted at Germans and filled with tourism information – and a little sting towards German publisher Axel Springer, Agora's biggest competitor in Poland. (new-business.de)

## Another free blog paper

Spanish free newspaper organization AEPG discovered another free paper with blog content: Oblogo, distributed with a circulation of 15,000 (not daily) in Buenos Aires.

Earlier this year the Printed Blog (US) closed down while the BlogPaper started in the UK. In France, the paid magazine Vendredi also uses material from blogs.

## Metro new design

Metro France introduced the new design on August 30, after the paper reappeared after their seven-week holiday break. Denmark (MetroXpress) introduced the design on September 3, its 8th birthday. Both Metro International (Publimetro) editions in Mexico, Mexico City and Monterey, introduced the new design on September 18.

Also my 'own' Metro in Amsterdam introduced a new design. The new Metro will contain more 'own' news. More than 70% of the content now is produced by the Metro staff, either in the Netherlands or coming from the London News Desk.

All editions will use more international content in the future. According to Gobaal editor and chief of Metro World News, Maggie Samways on Danish media news website MediaWatch, 20% of the content of the Metro editions will have to come from their international news service Metro World News, which will hire two extra journalists.

Monday, September 14, Metro US also introduced the new design. On FishBowl NY editor Tony Metcalf said: "Heightened expert analysis, commentary, powerful pictures and reader views will enhance Metro's editorial core keeping the news dynamic, fresh and interesting."

## ColoradoDaily.com

The Colorado Daily, the oldest still surviving free daily in the USA, underwent an extreme makeover since I last checked the website in 2008. The paper started in 1892 as student newspaper Silver & Gold, and changed in 1953 to Colorado Daily. In 1972 it moved off campus after a dispute on the editorial policy on the Vietnam War and became a free community paper.

Publisher Front Range Publishing went bankrupt in 2001, after which Randy Miller bought the paper. Miller sold the Colorado Daily to Scripps in 2005. In 2006 Scripps and MediaNews formed a joint venture, Prairie Mountain Publishing, to publish the paper. In the beginning of 2009 Scripps sold its share to Dean Singleton's MediaNews, also publisher of paid daily the Daily Camera.

The Colorado Daily was one of the few free broadsheets being published, but moved now to a compact (23 \* 28 cm) format. Instead of the old Colorado Daily name it now uses the ColoradoDaily.com name for the newspaper.

The paper has a readership of 28,000 and serves the Boulder community and the University of Colorado.

## Kjell Aamot in Germany

Kjell Aamot, ex- CEO of Norwegian media company Schibsted warned German publishers again: "we were kicked out of Germany (Cologne, 2001) but some other company will try it within the next 10 years." He added that fear of cannibalization can be lethal: "when you don't do it yourself, somebody else will." The ex-Schibsted CEO also said that his former employer probably won't be the one to start again in Germany.

## Metro Cardiff

Reading Metro in Cardiff made it clear that at least the Cardiff edition is totally national in its content. Local news is missing, even in the Metro Life section where you would expect some tips of what to do around town in the weekend. The only thing that is local, is advertising.

## Madrid frees combine distribution

PRNoticias reports that in Madrid free newspapers Qué! and ADN are handed out in some place by the same distributor. PR Noticias asked the distributor Grupo

Boyacá for comments, but the company declined to react to the news. In other Spanish markets the situation has not changed in terms of distribution.

## Toronto free newspaper 'war'

Toronto not only got a new free evening newspaper but it is also the scene of a battle between the two incumbent morning free newspapers 24 Hours and Metro. 24 Hours revamped their website for the six editions in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa, Calgary and Edmonton with the tagline "The world changes in 24H> So do we." Also the design of the paper changed on September 8, with the new 24H logo.

Website Marketing reported about the Toronto launch on September 8, presenting the new design by placing the 24H boxes on red carpets in "media industry-heavy regions of downtown Toronto".

With the new design and the launch campaign 24 Hours' owner Sun Media wants to steal market share from Metro in Toronto. (And spoiling the t.o.night launch as well.)

## New design for La Hora

Checking the website of Chile free paper La Hora, I discovered that the paper now has a full ePaper version online while also the design has been changed. (On the inside pages La Hora features also a Twitter news column by their readers.)

The paper was launched in March 2000, two months after Metro International started with an edition in Chile. A year later also an evening edition (La Hora de la Tarde) started – I am not sure whether this paper is still around). Publisher is Copesa, also owner of paid daily La Tercera.

La Hora was a paid paper from 1935 to 1951. In 1997 it relaunched as an afternoon paper and converted to a free morning paper in 2000. In 2006 it expanded distribution to Antofagasta, Valparaiso, Viña del Mar, Rancagua, Concepcion, Talcahuano, Temuco and Puerto Montt.

## Spits Twitter reviews

Dutch free newspaper Spits introduced the "twitspits" Twitter account for 140 character reviews by readers. Reader's reviews on films, cd's, dvd's, games, tv-programs, restaurants or shows should contain the #twitspits hashtag. The best or most original tweets will appear in the printed version of Spits.

## RESEARCH

### Filloux on free

On the Monday Note blog, former 20 Minutes founder and director Frédéric Filloux writes a very interesting piece on free versus paid newspapers and the problems concerning advertising, distribution, cannibalization and the consequences of the recession:

*In normal economic times (please consider the italics), if given the opportunity, I would start a new venture in the "Free" field tomorrow. Actually, I would go for a hybrid model: a highly targeted free publication (not mass circulation, variable costs are too difficult to recoup) and a "freemium" digital version on the internet and on mobile devices (i.e. free content but paid-for selected services). That, I think, is the killer combo.*

### Nordic media research

Published in 2008, updated in 2009 and available free online: the Nordic Media Market 2009; Media Companies and Business Activities, edited by Eva Harrie. The report covers the media markets in Denmark, Finland, Iceland,

Norway and Sweden. The report consists of three different sections:

- Staffan Sundin's "Media Ownership in the Nordic Countries. Current Trends".
- Statistics on markets, media, population and the economy for all markets.
- Media Market Analyses on newspapers, magazines, radio and TV.

Also a separate report on Swedish media, Den svenska mediemarknaden 2009, by Staffan Sundin, can be downloaded – this is in Swedish.

## UGC-research

Together with my colleague Mervi Pantti (Helsinki University) I published an article "Misfortunes, memories and sunsets: Non-professional images in Dutch news media" in the International Journal of Cultural Studies. The special issue of the journal was edited by Mark Deuze and John Banks.

The article is based on analysis of the websites of a dozen Dutch media (national and local TV news programs, paid and free newspapers), and interviews with editors of these media.

## EVENTS

### Moscow: October 8-10

At the Media Readings conference in Moscow, organized by the Moscow State University, I will present a paper about print media developments in Eastern Europe.

<http://www.journ.msu.ru/eng/conference.htm>

### KIEV: October 22-23

On 22 October I give a lecture in Kiev for the Matra project meeting sponsored by the EJC. On 23 October will talk to representatives of the press as well.

### Zurich: November 19-21

At the "Journalism Research in the Public Interest" conference in Zurich I will present a paper on Blogging on Dutch media websites.

<http://project.zhaw.ch/de/linguistik/jrc.html>

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