

NNA: The Twelfth Decade & Beyond

Journey through the National Newspaper Association's history



"This year will be a game-changer for us. I know we are up to it, and that we will emerge stronger and better positioned for the next era of community newspapers."

- Cheryl Kaechele, NNA president, 2009-2010
Regarding the organization's economic challenges

At the 1999 NNA convention, the association established the Ben Franklin Award to honor a postal employee who had made significant contributions to community newspapers. Each state association participated in the award by selecting a state winner, and the national Ben Franklin Award winner was chosen from among the state winners.

In 1997, NNA partnered with the University of Memphis journalism department to offer online journalism programs for rural newspapers. Employees at community papers could access the classes online, and courses included topics such as feature writing and advertising sales.

1997

1999



In 2001, the association canceled its annual convention and trade show, scheduled for Sept. 12-15, because of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Arlington, VA, and the plane crash in rural Pennsylvania. It was the first and only time in the association's history that the yearly convention and trade show did not take place.

The association worried that the attacks would lead to the government placing a tighter grip on information. According to an editorial in Publishers' Auxiliary, the association's trade publication, "if Osama bin Laden seizes our freedom of speech, he has stabbed at the heart of America even more effectively than the terrorists aboard those doomed planes could ever have done."

2001

NNA launched its Great Ideas database, which allows community and rural newspapers to share innovative business models and plans for conducting better journalism.

2004

The Internet age and newspapers

Rural and community newspapers realized the impact of the Internet during the 1990s. Between 1996 and 1997 alone, the number of people who used the World Wide Web skyrocketed. During a 1997 newspaper conference in Houston, TX, Hearst Corp.'s George Irish predicted that "the Internet, like radio nearly a hundred years ago, is an invention that promises instantaneous two-way world-wide communication."

But many papers faced financial trouble as more media became available online for free. As some predicted the death of newspapers, studies conducted by NNA revealed that many people still find value in reading their newspapers. According to NNA's fourth annual readership survey, 79 percent of readers said they would rather look through newspaper ads than watch ads on television, 53 percent of community newspaper readers will never go online for local news, and 73 percent of community newspaper readers will read all or most of their paper. The study suggests that rural and community news remains relevant in the lives of many people.

NNA unveiled a Members Helping Members online forum on nnaveweb.org that allows community newspaper editors and publishers to communicate and give advice to one another.

2005

At the 2007 national convention, the NNA established the Daniel M. "Dan" Phillips Leadership Award in honor of the award-winning writer and photographer who died in 2005 at age 47. The award honors community newspaper leaders 23-40 years old. Phillips was the association's president in 1999.

2007



Former NNA president Steve Haynes shakes hands with President George W. Bush during one of the association's annual government affairs conferences.

NNA announced it was about \$108,000 in the red. "While staff has reduced expenses each year, revenue has dropped faster and further than the cutbacks," NNA Treasurer Elizabeth (Liz) K. Parker wrote in the 2008-2009 annual report. "We are only as strong as our membership."

A majority of the association's revenue (67 percent) is derived from membership dues. NNA also typically earns revenue from its annual convention and trade publication.

2009

But NNA got busy trimming its budget in 2010. By the middle of the year, NNA's deficit was expected to reduce by half of what was projected, to a little more than \$50,000. NNA officials also expected 2011 to be more financially stable than previous years.

2010



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Presidents of NNA's twelfth & thirteenth decades

1. R. Jack Fishman of Lakeway Publishers in Morristown, TN, 1995
2. Roy J. Eaton of the Wise County Messenger in Decatur, TX, 1996
3. Dalton C. Wright of the Lebanon Daily Record in Lebanon, MO, 1997
4. Lockwood Phillips of the Carteret County News Times in Morehead City, NC, 1999
5. Daniel M. Phillips of the Oxford Eagle in Oxford, MS, 2000
6. Diane Everson of the Edgerton Reporter in Edgerton, WI, 2001
7. Kenneth H. Rhoades of the Enterprise Publishing Co. in Blair, NE, 2001
8. Jeff M. David of the Livingston Parish News in Denham Springs, LA, 2002
9. Robert F. Sweeney of the Villager Newspapers in Denver, CO, 2003
10. Mike Buffington of the Jackson Herald in Jefferson, GA, 2004
11. Jerry Reppert of Reppert Publications in Anna, IL, 2005
12. Jerry L. Tidwell of the Hood County News in Granbury, TX, 2006
13. Steve Haynes of the Oberlin Herald in Oberlin, KS, 2007
14. John W. Stevenson of the Randolph Leader in Roanoke, AL, 2008
15. Cheryl A. Kaechele of Kaechele Publications in Allegan, MI, 2009