

NNA: The Tenth Decade

Journey through the National Newspaper Association's history

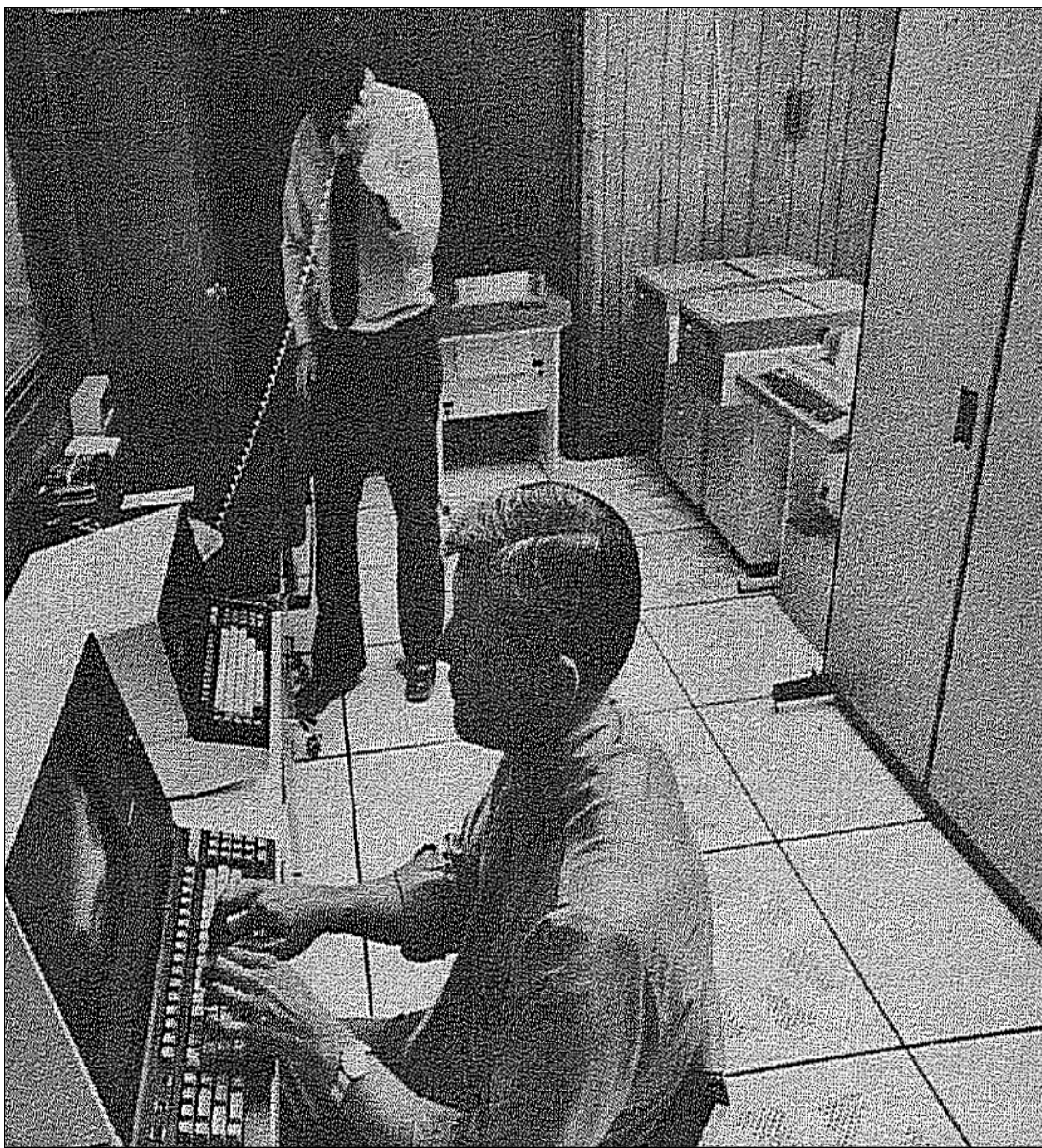
"We have a considerable distance to go. But much of that distance was made up by ... just a groundswell of enthusiasm from the people [at the convention], who really want to see us succeed and are willing to do everything possible to help us succeed."

-- Robert E. Bailey, NNA president, 1980
Regarding the organization's economic crisis



"The New Journalism of Hope chronicles the good and the bad, leaves readers fully informed with a sense of balance and about the world around them and with a feeling that they understand the issues of the day and can deal with tomorrow."

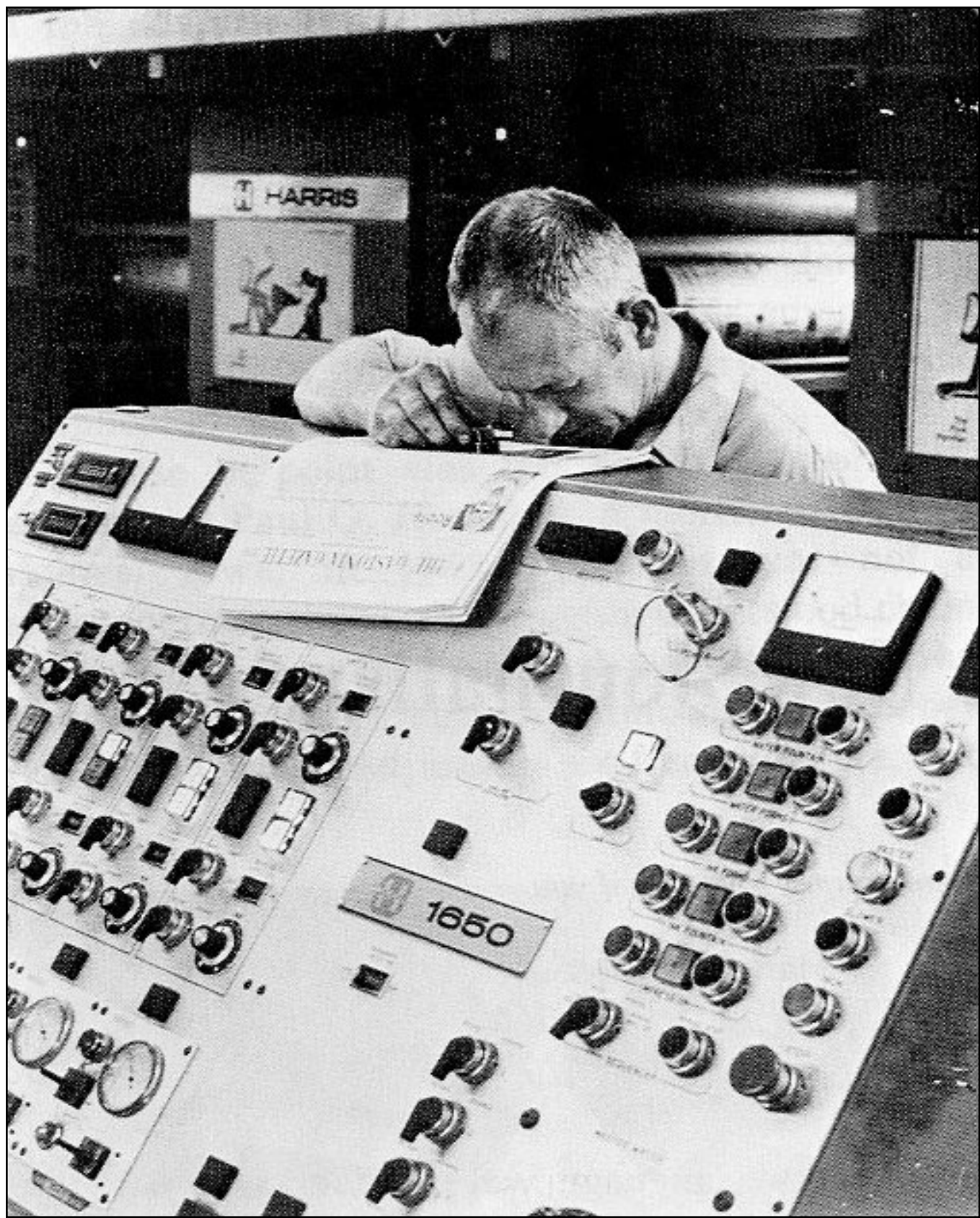
-- Allen Neuharth
Chairman and president of Gannett



Rise of the personal computer

Reporters could write their stories on a screen and backspace if they made a mistake. Editors could change the reporter's story on a computer, and information could be stored on floppy disks instead of in filing cabinets. Computers also were used to set type and keep accounting and subscription records. For example, the Plymouth Review in Madison, WI, kept its circulation records on note cards, and the roughly 7,000 pieces of cardstock became cumbersome and caused some billing errors. The paper solved much of this problem by creating an electronic record of subscribers. Futurists at the time even predicted newspapers would be delivered to people's homes by fax or as text on people's television screens.

A survey published this year found that newspapers spent about \$250 million on expanding and modernizing their businesses, according to the Aug. 1, 1977, issue of Publishers' Auxiliary.



Above: Reggie Britton, pressroom foreman of the Gastonia (NC) Gazette, examines a new pressroom control panel popular in the late 1970s.

Economic woes hit the National Newspaper Association again. NNA invested in several experimental attempts to increase revenue. Those investments fell flat, and the association needed to cut \$200,000 from its expenses in the upcoming budget.

At the annual meeting, the association's leaders proposed a long-term plan that cut costs within its five major spending areas, including its yearly convention, journalism contest, government affairs conference, and trade publication, Publishers' Auxiliary. During this crisis, the association also replaced its executive vice president with W. Melvin Street from the New York State Publishers Association. By the end of NNA's 10th decade, finances were back on track.

Other journalism changes

NNA's 10th decade was a time of increased newspaper mergers and declining family ownership in papers. Also during this era, several newspapers began creating ethical codes and standards for their newsrooms. Newspapers also increased the sizes of their text to about 9-point to accommodate people who had trouble reading smaller print.

1976

1977

1977

1977

1980

Presidents of NNA's tenth decade

1. William E. Branen of the Burlington Standard Press in Burlington, WI, 1975
2. George A. Joplin of the Commonwealth-Journal in Somerset, KY, 1976
3. Harold Hudson of the Perryton Herald in Perryton, TX, 1977
4. James W. Gill of the Hemet News in Hemet, CA, 1978
5. William C. Rogers* of the Blade in Swainsboro, GA, 1979
6. Robert E. Bailey of the Buhl Herald in Buhl, ID, 1980
7. George J. Measer of the Bee Publications in Williamsville, NY, 1981
8. John F. McMaster of the Ayer Public Spirit in Ayer, MA, 1982
9. James H. Roberts of the Blade in Fairbury, IL, 1983
10. Eugene D. Johnson of the Press Publications in White Bear Lake, MN, 1984

* No photo available

