



Written by [John F. McManus](#) on August 1, 2018

## Newspapers Are Dying

There is no more ominous indication that the America newspaper industry is dying than the recent announcement by the *New York Daily News* that it had just laid off half its staff. Such a move by the newspaper that boasted in the 1940s that it had the largest daily circulation in the entire nation is remarkable.

Seventy-five years ago, the everyday circulation of New York's most popular newspaper was just short of two million. Today, with the nation's population more than double what it was in 1940, that once-dominant and certainly enviable newspaper circulation stands at 200,000. That's an astounding one-tenth of its reach of its booming years. Noteworthy too is the fact that the population of the New York City and its surroundings, its market, has risen dramatically.



To be sure, New York isn't the only locale where newspapers are in trouble, or have even died. Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* no longer publishes a print version. Likewise, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and the *Tucson Citizen*. In Detroit, New Orleans, and elsewhere, the long-established newspapers aren't "daily" anymore; they are published only several days each week.

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Many have offered reasons for the collapsing condition of the newspaper industry. Answers offered include: There's an aging population; reading has declined; many more people can't read; advertisers have found more lucrative ways to spend their money; television has attracted the former newspaper subscribers; and the Internet has become the source of news for many. Of course, the final of these suggested causes for the decline voids the possibility of several of the others being a culprit. If people don't or can't read, the reading material on the Internet is of no use to them.

Lost in most of the comments about this dramatic change is that a huge chunk of the people don't trust newspapers anymore. Instead of facts that might help them to understand something, they get a steady ration of partisan and slanted opinion that is deceptively presented as objective reporting — not just on the editorial page (where opinion is expected) but on the front page as well. When that happens, people have a right to be "turned off."

The most compelling reason why people won't spend their money for newspapers boils down to, "Why pay for something that's free via the cell phone or the computer?" Yes, former newspaper customers have concluded that much of what arrives from electronic sources of news is dishonest and cannot be trusted. But there's no expenditure for it; and they still keep their cell phones and computers. If offended by either or both of those, they'll just shut their electronic gizmo off.



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We haven't mentioned another obvious cause of newspaper decline: the belief shared by many that what they buy in a newspaper is "fake news." Once convinced that what is being paid for is unreliable (deliberately "bogus"?), regaining the trust formerly held is extremely difficult, likely impossible.

Newspapers aren't alone in struggling and even disappearing. *U.S. News & World Report* ceased print publication. Other magazines are losing customers and many of them will likely be gone before too long.

Any reader of this column who doesn't already know about *The New American* magazine ought to give it a serious look. My own association with this direct opposite of "fake news" began with its launch in 1985. Loyal subscribers will tell anyone that its accuracy, perspective, and guts make it unique. In short, there's nothing like it. And Americans who do want to read a worthwhile publication would be wise to give it a try at [thenewamerican.com](http://thenewamerican.com).

*John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#), the parent organization of The New American magazine.*



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