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BORDER JOURNALISM IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE

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Introduction

The past decade brought an unprecedented level of public attention to the U.S.-Mexican border, contributing to new trends in regional and cross-border news coverage. Starting with NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, many English-language news media organizations beefed up their border coverage with stories on immigration, drug trafficking and the environment. U.S. correspondents in Mexico City and small border towns documented the intricacies of U.S.-Mexico relations on a national and local level as an equally vibrant movement of academic discourse developed during the same time period.

This new coverage bolstered Mexico's status as a global player, while also opening the country up to sometimes embarrassing outside scrutiny. The New York Times won a Pulitzer Prize in 1998 for a series of reports about drug trafficking that ranged from the development of Tijuana's narco-juniors to the collusion of two Mexican governors with a major cartel. El Paso Times journalist Diana Washington Valdez wrote extensively about the unusual cases of women murdered in Ciudad Juárez as it became an international story. San Diego Union-Tribune reporter Diane Lindquist detailed NAFTA's impact in border communities for more than a decade. These stories, and those of their colleagues, helped to define border coverage in the NAFTA era.

Yet, nearly fifteen years since NAFTA went into effect, the fate of border journalism is in question. The U.S. news media is now struggling to sustain comprehensive coverage in many areas due to a radical shift in the way that people receive and exchange news and other information online. Steep declines in advertising revenue and serious competition from online forms of communication are forcing many news organizations to retrench and consider new ways to appeal to their audience, such as focusing more on local news coverage. As a result, the number of foreign news correspondents has declined about 30 percent in recent years, according to a study compiled through Harvard University's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.

While these developments are affecting all aspects of news media coverage, this brief explores the impact on border journalism along the California region, specifically along the San Diego and Tijuana corridor, where the two cities make up the largest border metropolitan area with a combined population of about five million. It outlines the economic challenges faced by the news industry, particularly the newspaper industry, and the online news alternatives that are emerging. Finally, the brief considers the possibility of outside groups such as citizen journalists —ordinary residents with an interest or specialty in border topics— and academia taking a greater role in mediating and integrating discourse on border affairs.

The Rise of Border Journalism

In a narrow sense, border journalism is geographically anchored to news and events along the 1,961-mile U.S.-Mexico border. Yet, border journalism encompasses a wide range of topics from immigration to Mexican foreign affairs. U.S. border journalists often seek to add another dimension by portraying the border region as an extended part of their local communities, and providing a human perspective on life along the border. As a result, border coverage is constantly shifting from being a local story to being a national one. Sometimes national-local dimensions overlap, as when the National Action Party (PAN) won the Baja California governorship in 1989, defeating the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in a watershed moment in Mexico's democratization.

Audience and geographic proximity to the border often dictates the scope, nature and intensity of border news coverage. For example, the border is very clearly integrated into many aspects of the El Paso Times' coverage. That is because the U.S. city of El Paso, with just over 600,000 people, is seen as an extension of the much larger Mexican city of Ciudad Juárez, with 1.3

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million people. Acknowledging this close relationship, their main local news section is called "Borderlands." Reporters regularly integrate border news into their coverage, though the paper also has a border reporter specialist based out of El Paso. The San Diego Union-Tribune's border coverage reflects a different relationship: the cities grew up separately and did not share the kind of strong cultural and family ties evident in other border cities. Unlike El Paso, where Latinos comprise 77 percent of the population, they represent only 25 percent in San Diego.

San Diego's size and proximity to the border nonetheless made it a place where media groups made border coverage a high priority. A case in point is the evolution of the Union-Tribune's border coverage. For many years, San Diego had two newspapers: The San Diego Union, a morning paper, and The San Diego Tribune, an evening paper, and both were published by the same company since 1901. Through the 1970's, border coverage was sporadic and typically centered around large breaking news stories and entertainment pieces. One notable exception was a story published in the Union in 1979 about corruption within the Baja California federal police force. The story created an outcry from government officials in Mexico, where the media at that time rarely, if ever, touched on such delicate matters.

Soon after the story ran, the Union named Diane Lindquist as its first border editor, from 1979 to 1981. She oversaw two reporters who tackled border issues, along with other assignments north of the border. Lindquist says their aim was "to employ the same kind of professional journalistic standards that the paper practiced on the U.S. side of the border." Lindquist encouraged her reporters to do stories that explored more news-based topics while also doing features "that offered insight about life and events in Baja California and, if applicable, their impact on San Diego." Interviewed for this brief, Ricardo Chavira, one of the reporters who worked with Lindquist, said that a "steady production of good stories on Baja and Tijuana politics, immigration and all manner of features brought the beat into focus." He and a team of other Latino reporters brought Spanish skills and an understanding of border populations from their own backgrounds. They produced a lengthy and unprecedented series of stories touching on all aspects of life along the U.S.-Mexico border. Nonetheless, the border was then seen very much as a local story for papers that were 100 or so miles from Mexico.

As NAFTA brought more national attention to the border, the Union and the Tribune merged in 1992. Both papers had opened separate bureaus in Tijuana prior to the merge. Rather than reduce the Tijuana staff, the united paper continued with two reporters. Lindquist became the paper's San Diego-based border business expert, covering the negotiations and potential impacts of the agreement.

San Diego was not the only region turning south during the NAFTA era. At the Arizona Republic, Graciela Sevilla was assigned to report from Hermosillo —the state capital of Sonora, about 170 miles south of the border— from 1995 to 1998. Her bureau was opened, according to Sevilla, because of "a perception that there were great opportunities for Arizona and Sonora businesses. And, indeed, there was a thriving collaboration among the business, academic and political communities of both states." The Republic later closed that bureau and opened a Mexico City bureau, extending its border coverage to include domestic affairs in Mexico.

The Republic, which is based out of Phoenix and is about three hours from the border, was not physically close enough to the border to integrate consistent Mexico border coverage to the extent possible along the San Diego-Tijuana corridor. From 2003 to 2004, the paper did place an immigration reporter in Nogales, Arizona, to report on shifting immigration patterns due to greater enforcement measures in the San Diego area. Other Arizona papers, like the Arizona Daily Star, which ventured more into Sonora, and the Tucson Citizen, also expanded their border coverage during this time. However, border reporting did not develop much in New Mexico, where the border is less populated.

In Texas, the major papers –The Austin American-Statesman, San Antonio Express-News, The Dallas Morning News and the Ft. Worth Star Telegram– faced logistical challenges due to the length of the Texas border and their own distance from the border. However, Chavira said that the Texas business community had a stronger sense of interest and solidarity with Mexico than their counterparts in California, which helped overcome the distance. The Dallas Morning News' coverage grew around a large bureau in Mexico City that at one point employed five reporters, including Chavira who served as editor. Along the Texas border, smaller papers like the Brownsville Herald and Laredo Morning Times actively covered the border as extensions of their own smaller and tight-knit communities, while some

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larger Texas papers assigned reporters for one-to-two-year stints along the border.

In California, the Imperial Valley Press —serving a mostly agricultural community with a weekday readership of about 13,500— also took a local approach to border news, though its stories on environmental and water issues often had national significance. In recent years, the Gringo Gazette —an English language paper in Baja California aimed at the tourist and U.S. expatriate community— gained attention for in-depth stories on coastal development and land issues affecting U.S. investors and buyers of ocean-view condominiums sprouting south of the border.

San Diego's proximity to Mexico enabled other U.S.-based media to create border beats. For example, KPBS radio's border coverage provides a rich audio element to border news and its "These Days" show includes a special call-in number for Baja California residents. The Los Angeles Times maintained a border reporter in San Diego, spending more time on in-depth news stories and less on daily developments. The Associated Press also integrates border coverage from their San Diego and Mexico City offices. Papers like the North County Times, based in Escondido, and the Orange County Register, in Santa Ana, incorporated their own distinct brands of border coverage, while a wide array of bilingual media options in Spanish-language radio and television stations and publications, such as La Opinion and NBC 7/39, serve the Latino community and other Spanish speakers.

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However, this brief highlights the coverage of the Union-Tribune more so than other news groups because no other English-language media organization in San Diego had the same level of staffing resources. At the height of its border coverage, the paper had an immigration reporter and a border business reporter, who were based out of San Diego. They also had two reporters based out of Tijuana who provided regular coverage of border issues with a unique Mexican perspective, such as the impact of immigration on Tijuana's urban development and efforts to save the shrinking population of the vaquita porpoise endangered by fishing practices. This border media news team, accompanied by a reporter in Mexico City who worked for the paper's parent company, endured as the largest English-language border news outlet until late-2007 when financial difficulties resulted in staff reductions.

The Border News Audience

Though NAFTA was initially treated as a business story, it brought attention to other border topics that reflected Mexico's ability to create a stable environment for investors. In few other places along the border did these stories play out as visibly as the San Diego-Tijuana region.

This became particularly clear in the early 1990s when Governor Pete Wilson's re-election campaign used images of Mexican immigrants running through neighborhoods and freeways. These images became fodder for nationwide media coverage, making San Diego the center of national attention for immigration policy. After the government built a series of barriers along the San Diego-Tijuana region, the same debates re-emerged in Arizona under the focus of media groups there.

Drug trafficking from Mexico also fueled interest in the border, with politicians warning that NAFTA would bring a surge of cross-border contraband. During the 1990s, the Tijuana region became a case example of the drug trade's infiltration of both law enforcement and of the city's finest families. Arellano-Felix drug cartel killings, which occasionally spilled over into San Diego County, received extensive coverage on both sides of the border. Stories that detailed the corruption in Mexican law enforcement agencies shed light on the massive power and money wielded by such groups.

Meanwhile, NAFTA's environmental impacts were also the focus of considerable debate during the negotiation of the free trade agreement, as increased economic activity promised to place greater pressure on the ecology of the borderlands. Even now, environmental and energy issues continue to challenge the development of the border region. Activist groups such as Wildcoast have focused on preserving Baja California's coastline and the peninsula's rich variety of plants and animals. Energy shortages in California and Mexico have led to the creation of new electricity and natural gas projects, while water and sewage issues have driven political discourse repeatedly on both sides of the border.

For ordinary border residents, such as U.S. tourists and Mexican residents who go shopping in San Diego, one of the most pressing issues has been the ability to get through the border quickly. Baja California's Secretary of Tourism estimates that the state logs 23 million tourist visits each year (repeat visits included).

Meanwhile, there is a substantial bi-national community of border residents who move fluidly across both sides of the line, whose lives are defined by the cross-border integration of work, school and family ties. They are typically bilingual Mexicans with special border crossing visas or dual citizenship. Different studies suggest that an estimated 40,000 daily

commuters cross the border to work in San Diego, and Baja California residents purchased about $1.6 billion of goods and services in San Diego County in 2002. In recent years, increased numbers of middle and upper-middle class Tijuanans have established second homes in San Diego County for public safety reasons.

Another key readership component includes academics that have an interest in Mexico and border studies. Though experts in their fields, they do not typically have the same opportunity as reporters to do daily cross-border interviews and research. Newspaper stories provide supplemental references and research ideas for their own academic papers and classroom instruction. This relationship is often symbiotic, since the media turn to them for quotes and other contextual background and statistics to supplement their own reports. The San Diego region's academic institutions developed a number of key institutions related to border issues that have become resources for reporters and avid readers of border news: the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of California-San Diego, the Center for Latin American Studies at San Diego State University, the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego, and the Tijuana-region's Colegio de la Frontera Norte, a border-focused think thank.

"Foreign media sometimes have an advantage in reporting stories that the traditional Mexican media may not have the resources or ability to cover…"

Challenges of Border Reporting

The complexity of the border creates a need for trained journalists to navigate through potentially dangerous situations and obstacles to obtaining information. Despite Mexico's efforts to function in a more democratic manner, power is still held by a few. Despite the passage of new freedom of information laws at the federal and state levels, much public information —particularly on security matters— remains difficult to access and utilize. A tradition of closed government and a lack of documentation often creates a vacuum filled by rumors and misinformation.

These challenges, which stem from Mexico's distinct historical and cultural development require a sensitivity for certain realities and unspoken rules that trace the limits of how far journalists can investigate matters in Mexico. Organized crime groups have infiltrated or intimidated Mexican police officials, and most public officials refuse to speak openly about specific drug cartel groups or leaders, or speak only on the basis of anonymity. U.S. news organizations often have concerns over the veracity of anonymous sources, so a large amount of rumored information does not make it into the U.S. media. In Mexico, in contrast, anonymous sources are used regularly, bringing a risk of possible backlash from criminal groups for both reporters and informants.

Journalist casualties have been especially high at the Tijuana weekly Zeta, which was co-founded by Jesus Blancornelas in 1980. Zeta was "one of the first Mexican newspapers to challenge the decades-old system of bribes, kickbacks, and distribution of government advertising that had been used by the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to keep the Mexican press in line," according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists. Over the years, Zeta has aggressively covered the region's drug cartels and corrupt government officials, providing detailed accounts of their illicit activities, often from unnamed sources. The Arellanos were linked to two separate crimes against Zeta editors: The 1997 ambush on Blancornelas, which left his bodyguard dead and the 2004 killing of Zeta editor Francisco Ortiz Franco. Ortiz was gunned down as he sat inside his car, in front of his two young children. In both cases, the attacks likely stemmed from the paper's decision to publish sensitive information on drug cartel dynamics.

Foreign media typically take a more cautious approach to reporting on such matters, focusing more on explanatory articles or "sourced" stories with less reliance on problematic details. Nonetheless, U.S. news reporters do face scrutiny from the cartels. During the 1990s, when the Arellanos were consolidating their power base in Baja California and regularly threatening and killing top Mexican public officials, both U.S. and Mexican reporters were recognized by the cartel as a possible nuisance. The Union-Tribune's Greg Gross said that he learned after he left the beat that the Drug Enforcement Agency found his name on an Arellano list of what may have been possible targets. In an interview for this brief, Gross noted that the Arellanos probably did not appreciate the extra attention from the Union-Tribune's coverage, which brought even more attention from outside media groups. "The United States called itself fighting a 'war on drugs;' I figured it was my job as a journalist to give our readers a look at the enemy," Gross said.

Other U.S. reporters have had similar experiences. In 2007, the San Antonio Express-News withdrew Texas border reporter Mariano Castillo after learning of a plan to assassinate U.S. journalists writing about drug cartels in Nuevo Laredo, a Mexican border city that has experienced significant drug violence in recent years. Castillo was based in Laredo, Texas, but frequently traveled into Nuevo Laredo. Intelligence information indicated that hit men working for the Gulf cartel might have been hired to kill U.S. reporters in the United States.

The U.S. media have in some cases been able to report stories deemed too sensitive for traditional Mexican media. One of the most striking recent examples of this was in 2000, when Baja California officials announced the detention of a group of suspects linked to a drug group headed by suspected drug trafficker Ismael Zambada. The suspects had been arrested following a string of high-profile killings, including that of the city's police chief. There was no public mention that Zambada was an enemy of the Arellanos, or that the Arellanos had much to gain from the arrests. Yet, when the Union-Tribune and the Los Angeles Times reported that the murdered Tijuana police chief had been linked to the Arellanos, some Mexican newspapers attributed the information to the Union-Tribune's story rather than tackle the question directly themselves.

It is also worth noting the role of Mexican media in breaking certain border stories despite their own challenges. For many years, the Mexican press had a tradition of being co-opted by the ruling PRI government and relying on government-sponsored ads for their survival. Critical newspapers like Zeta faced repression but pushed for a more open media environment that gained traction when the PAN came to power in Baja California in 1989. Frontera, which started in 1999 with a visual and story style similar to USA Today, provided an alternative to other media groups with entrenched interests. El Mexicano daily newspaper, for example was viewed as pro-PRI, though over the years it has also adapted its reporting to include more dissenting voices. In 2002, Frontera's sister paper in Mexicali, La Cronica, reported that the Mexicali city government bought 50 cars from a car dealership owned by Baja California's governor without conducting a thorough bidding process. The paper also published stories alleging nepotism and other irregularities in the administration. The issue led to a condemnation from the InterAmerican Press Association when the government allegedly retaliated against the newspaper by withholding ads. Newspaper officials say the question over the nepotism questions was never resolved, though a government spokesman said it was.

Mexican and U.S. journalists find it difficult to access certain public information even though Mexican president Vicente Fox signed the country's first freedom of information act into law in 2002. The Union Tribune's inquiry into how the city of Tijuana paid for its highly sophisticated camera vigilance system was never answered, despite a public records request. Another request from the Union-Tribune on whether the city issued a permit for the demolition of its downtown bullring was denied, and officials refused to comment even as cranes started destroying the building.

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Finally, Mexican readers sometimes criticize the U.S. media's coverage of border issues for what they see as an over-emphasis on immigration, crime and drugs. In recent months, the Union Tribune and other English-language media have been criticized for their coverage of widespread drug violence in Northern Mexico. In March 2008, a story by KPBS on Rosarito Beach's efforts to prepare for Spring Break revelers was attacked as having a negative slant. The Gringo Gazette also faced backlash for stories that were critical of Baja's real estate industry. Such criticism appears to stem from those with financial interests who worry about the media's effects on business and tourism, but may also relate to the fact that the complicated Mexico-United States relationship has not always involved partnership and goodwill.

Surviving the New Media Age

Comprehensive border coverage was something that news organizations could afford to do when there seemed to be little threat to the industry's future. The industry was built around a predominantly one-way communication model in which the audience played a mostly passive role in receiving information. Under this structure, the news media determined what was considered newsworthy based on what they believed their audience wanted or needed to know. Yet, the spread of the Internet meant that people could make these decisions themselves.

Acknowledging this shift from "push" to "pull," many media groups created their own online versions during the mid 1990s. These web sites basically replicated the content and communication style of traditional news media, and offered few new tools for the Internet's empowered citizens. Other on-line resources, like Craigslist, changed the way that people could buy and sell products through direct transactions instead of through paid newspapers' classifieds sections. Online communities have become hubs focused around specific interests, such as car racing, dogs and stay-at-home moms, providing information and content that is tailored to people's hobbies and priorities. Sites such as Flickr, a photo sharing site, and YouTube, a video-sharing site, allow anyone to share their own material with each other. Blogs now give people a platform to connect with others on the Internet and foment a wider discussion. These tools, and social network sites such as Facebook, are now forcing traditional news media to make their web sites more

interactive by including videos and reader contributions.

But such changes have not been enough for the media industry to hold its own against the massive wave of technological innovation. Newspaper circulation plummeted 18 percent from 2000 to 2004, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations. In 2005, about 1,900 newspaper jobs were cut, according to reports. With online advertising revenue generating just 7.5 percent of newspaper revenue, there is not enough to make up for the financial fallout occurring throughout the media industry. Declining revenue means less newspaper space for the kind of in-depth stories that have typically been the hallmark of explanatory border reporting. As people become accustomed to having instant information, newspapers are now reconfiguring their newsrooms to place a greater priority on breaking news and in regularly updating their web sites, which also squeezes resources from more comprehensive reporting projects.

The Internet is not entirely to blame for the problems, though it is a major factor combined with the news media's slowness to adapt to a quickly changing world. The American Press Institute, in its Newspaper Next 2.0 report, describes the current upheaval as an example of how new technology and ideas disrupt a traditional sector. Newspaper Next recommends that papers create new products that will make the media indispensable to their audience and create more interactive experiences that incorporate video, podcasts and even blogs.

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Papers like the Union-Tribune started training staffers to create multi-media projects for the paper's online sites, and they opened up online stories to reader comments. However, many media groups are grappling with how much to open their sites to outside voices. Comments posted on stories that deal with immigration issues can be particularly contentious, in some cases sometimes spreading information that is untrue or unsubstantiated. In these cases, reader contributions do little to foment intellectual debate or opinion sharing, and they only justify fears within the media of opening themselves up to the public.

Meanwhile, other voices are developing outside of traditional media circles that touch on the Baja California lifestyle. Expatriates and regular visitors have started blogs that depict their own personal experiences and include picture postings. "Stairs to Nowhere" (tijuanatales.wordpress.com) by Kinsee Morlan —who is also arts and culture editor at San Diego City Beat— includes photos of alleys, walls and other interesting Tijuana urban reflections. Another blog started by Nathan Gibbs —an online content producer for KPBS-San Diego— takes a multi-media approach by incorporating videos, music and photos (nathangibbs.com). These kinds of blogs are not news-based, but they provide a glimpse of Baja California that is rarely seen in traditional news media and they provide an opportunity to connect with people who are curious about the region. None of the other San Diego-based traditional media have a border blog, though SignOnSanDiego's entertainment blog, "The Street," incorporates photos and commentary by Derrik Chinn. Chinn has recently started his own blog, "¿Dónde Está Derrik?" (derrikchinn.blogspot.com).

In addition to blogs, online social network groups are becoming gathering points for people with similar interests in an interactive environment. One example is Bajanomad.com, which was started by entrepreneur and frequent Baja traveler Doug Means in 2002. The site provides conversational forums for participants to exchange information under different categories, such as news, travel and politics. The main users are people who live in Baja California or travel there frequently, as well as people who are seeking information about parts of the peninsula they have never been to. Means says the first actual working forum for Baja California travelers was another group called Amigosdebaja.com, which was started in the mid-1990s. When the partners behind Amigosdebaja split up, many of those members gravitated to Means' site. Over the years, he said, the site's traffic has increased dramatically. Quantcast, a new media measurement service, estimates that Bajanomad.com gets about 2,100 unique visitors a month.

Because Bajanomad.com members reside in parts of the peninsula that get little coverage from U.S. media, the forums are often used to communicate information of interest to their particular regions. In this way, the site is becoming a hyper-local news source with information from readers on the latest potholes and military checkpoints. Means admits that the information is not vetted journalistically, but he believes the collective intelligence of its members provides some checks and balances by informally recognizing certain members as having more of a reputation for accuracy than others. Bajanomad members have been most effective in filling a need for real-time information on breaking news when there is little or no ability for the mainstream media to get to the scene. For example, when Hurricane John hit the Baja coast in 2006, members uploaded photos and information on the damage. Indeed, reporters are learning to tap into social network groups that are relevant to their beats. When a U.S. citizen was gunned down in her car while her husband drove through the Baja peninsula, about eight hours south of the border,

the incident was brought to the attention of U.S. reporters by Bajanomad.com members.

For the Bajanomad community, local news is a valuable commodity. "That's why they come to that site. People are able to get news by word of mouth, such as if they are looking for someone's Dad. They are looking for things that the Union-Tribune is not covering," says Means. At the same time, stories from the Union-Tribune, KPBS and the Los Angeles Times are regularly linked to from the site and become the subject of vigorous discussions on Bajanomad forum boards. Means says Bajanomad is a community like any other, with a range of personalities, opinions and styles. He doubts that mainstream media would have been able to conceive of such a project at the time he did because it implied a dramatically radical shift in producing and sharing information that contradicts the very essence of the media's existence. "Large corporations have a difficult time maneuvering and changing their directions because what they've done to that point is what has made them successful and no one wants to take a risk with that," he said.

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By 2007, traditional media groups were integrating more widescale multimedia strategies into their coverage and placing a greater emphasis on interactivity and breaking news, but the efforts could not stanch the financial bleeding and border coverage suffered. The Associated Press closed its border bureau, based out of Monterrey. The Arizona Republic retreated from its border coverage in Nogales. The Dallas Morning News drastically reduced its team of reporters in Mexico City. In December 2007, two Union-Tribune border specialists accepted a companywide voluntary separation, known more commonly as a "buyout," and the paper's border coverage was effectively cut in half.

In addition, the paper closed its Mexico City bureau when long-time correspondent S. Lynne Walker took a voluntary separation. The border reporters who stayed behind have been assigned to take on additional duties, as is the case for many other reporters on the reduced staff. There is no indication of when the paper may hire new reporters or if they may give up regular coverage in certain areas. At present, KPBS radio and the Los Angeles Times each maintain a border reporter based out of San Diego and the Associated Press continued integrating border coverage from San Diego and Mexico. In a sense, media with spottier coverage of the border had less to lose since they were already conducting their border coverage with minimal staffing.

What May Happen Next

The media-wide trend of declining circulation and advertising revenue does not appear to be subsiding. Media organizations are now realizing that they must drastically alter their own perceptions of what information is important to their readers and find new ways to better serve their audience, which has become increasingly fragmented and localized. Still there are many people with a vested interest in the border region, so demand for information will undoubtedly be met in one way or another. Here are some possibilities:

Collaboration with Spanish language media. Cross-language media collaboration has already been taking place to various degrees. Some television stations have teamed up with Spanish language stations to swap footage, and websites for English-language border media have links to Spanish media news sources. In addition, English-language news organizations, such as the Union-Tribune, created Spanish-language publications to target the Latino community. These kinds of collaborations, which reflect a range of cross-border media links and possibilities, may deepen as traditional English-language media face less resources. Most newspapers, however, are hesitant to rely too much on coverage outside of the paper's own newsroom staff and border specialists. In some cases, there exists legitimate concern regarding the quality and accuracy of material that comes from contributors or freelancers. As more papers experiment with input from citizen journalists, these attitudes may evolve and lead to more contributions from Spanish language media for English translation. The most likely application of this is in the case of human interest stories, which are usually less complicated or controversial than typical news stories. Another possible area is in breaking news stories where the demand for immediate information and images on the Internet creates more openness towards outside contributions.

Creating more spaces for reader contributions. The J-Lab Project, which funds citizen media start-up projects, identified 700 citizen media sites in a 2006 report, "Citizen Media: Fad or the Future of News." These sites, in some cases, are posting hyper-local news from neighborhoods or communities and filling gaps in newspaper coverage. In other cases, citizens send photos or videos to mainstream news organizations during times of breaking news events. While the quality of this citizen-generated content may be questionable, a number of ex-journalists are also

experimenting with starting their own sites, which could bring a higher level of professionalism to the role of "citizen journalist." For example, working from his bases in Culiacan, Sonora and Arizona, former Arizona Daily Star reporter Michel Marizco started his own news service, Borderreporter.com, which is focused primarily on drug trafficking and border crime. In San Diego, journalist Diane Lindquist is starting Mexbiznews.com, a border web service focused on border business issues she covered previously at The San Diego Union-Tribune. Mexican journalists have also been starting their own news services on the Internet. The longest-standing one is Dora Elena Cortes' Agencia Fronteriza de Noticieras, at afntijuana.info, which provides extensive coverage of politics and drug trafficking.

Academic collaboration with media groups. Universities are providing training and research opportunities for journalists, and we may see an increase in financial assistance for in-depth journalism projects. Last year, UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism announced three fellowships for journalists "to help develop a new generation of investigative reporters in an era of cutbacks at major news organizations." One of the projects, about corruption along the U.S. side of the border, aired on Frontline/WORLD and resulted in a collaborative story with The New York Times. The University of Southern California's Institute of Justice and Journalism has held a series of border fellowships that bring reporters to the California and Arizona border for meetings with top scholars, researchers, and activists on both sides of the border. The fellows are asked to come up with a border story topic that they can develop more thoroughly during the one and two weeks they are traveling along the border.

A similar fellowship is sponsored by Arizona State University (ASU), with an emphasis on immigration issues. ASU has also been developing a comprehensive Borderlands Project, providing opportunities for student journalists to produce media projects with border angles. Some activities have included a student photojournalism project on children's lives along the border, thanks to a $50,000 grant from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, and a special edition, one-week newspaper produced in conjunction with students at the Instituto Tecnólogico y de Estudios Superiores in Monterrey, Mexico. The newspaper project documented the region's cross-border ties, and was funded in part by The Arizona Republic, Tribune Newspapers, the Society of Professional Journalists and USA Today.

Such examples show that universities are experimenting with journalistic projects. Professional media groups, however, have traditionally been wary about entering in alliances with other organizations because of concerns about maintaining impartiality and avoiding advocacy. Still, academia could develop projects to compile border-related stories, highlight significant border journalism, or even create border-specific reporting fellowships to encourage a continued output of quality reporting from the region. The scope and details of such possibilities are beyond the focus of this brief, though academics and journalists may have a common interest in fomenting educated discussions of border issues while avoiding advocacy and bias.

Conclusion

With rare exceptions, traditional news media groups no longer have the luxury to focus as much as they used to on border coverage. The future of border coverage, much like news coverage in general, will lie in the adaptation of new communication models that encourage greater audience interactivity and feedback while maintaining journalistic integrity through a trained staff. How this balancing act evolves remains to be seen, but the need for border information is not likely to disappear since the U.S.-Mexico border remains a highly relevant topic to policy makers, residents, and advocacy groups.

Author Biography: From 2000-2007, Anna Cearley worked as a border correspondent for The San Diego Union-Tribune. She was based out of Tijuana, Mexico and regularly covered drug trafficking and border crime topics. Her work on these and other cross-border issues earned her the Latin American Reporting award from the National Association of Hispanic Journalists in 2006. A graduate of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Ms. Cearley worked for the Dayton Daily News before being hired by the Union-Tribune in 1993 to cover local city government issues. After leaving the Union-Tribune in December 2007, she became a graduate student at the University of Southern California where she is studying the creation and management of online communities while also working for the university's media relations department. She has a border-themed blog called Across the Border (acrosstheborder.wordpress.com).