

AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF FIVE  
SELECTED RURAL WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS

by GOR

JOSEPH RICHARD REPPERT

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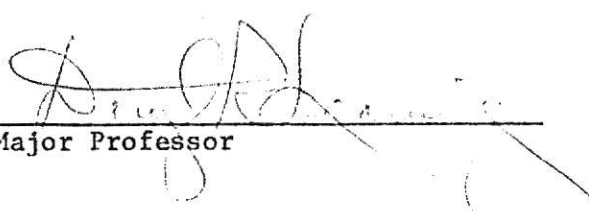
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Approved by:

  
Major Professor

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PURPOSE

I investigated business practices of five weekly newspapers in rural communities to determine if common or individual poor business practices were found and, if so, to consider solutions that would benefit many similar publications.

Only weekly newspapers with more than 2,000 paid circulation in primarily rural communities of under 20,000 population were studied.

One reason for the posited lack of advancement in the financial practices of weekly newspapers was the relatively small amount of research and investigative studies performed by their professional organizations or the academic community. Most of the investigative work done has been concerned with the editorial, not business aspects. This thesis seeks to help fill that void and to provide some reference material for future studies.

A detailed description of each publication is given along with an account of its financial success, or lack of it, during the past decade. The thesis deals with the total business operation of the newspaper and related sources of income, so profit and loss situations of the business are reviewed, and recommendations considered feasible for improvement are given.

## CHAPTER II

### DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTIES

The five Illinois newspapers studied were The Democrat, Pinckneyville; The Gazette Democrat, Anna; Metropolis News, Metropolis; News-Plaindealer, Sparta; and The Vienna Times, Vienna. All of the newspapers are published on Thursday except The Democrat which is published on Wednesday.

#### The Democrat

The Democrat, established in 1873, is edited and published by John A. Sheley. Its circulation is 2,700.

Pinckneyville's population is 3,085; Perry county's 16,400. County residents have annual total buying income of \$52,600,000; 1969 retail sales in the county totaled \$29,660,000.<sup>1</sup>

The main industries of Perry county are coal mining, agriculture, and light manufacturing. As in most southern Illinois communities, coal mining is a declining industry.

President John F. Kennedy proclaimed Perry county, along with all of the other counties involved in this study, as a poverty area. The failure of the coal industry combined with failure to attract new industry contributed to slow economic conditions in the area.

Editor and Publisher Sheley is 51 and a native of Pinckneyville. He purchased The Democrat from his father. The current Mr. Sheley withdrew from college to enlist in the U.S. Army during World War II. He rose to first lieutenant as a fighter pilot before returning home at the end of the war.

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<sup>1</sup>Advertising Rate Book and Newspaper Directory (Urbana, Ill.: Illinois Press Association, 1969), p. 25.