BACKGROUND
In the past year alone, circulation of the largest daily newspapers declined 1.9%. This decline reflects the 20-year trend in newspaper circulation and is due, in part, to the increased use of the Internet and other forms of media (cable, satellite, etc)[1].

As users continue to choose online news sources, it is imperative to understand factors that contribute to improving the overall online reading experience for news.

Participants of the **Reading Online News: A Comparison of Three Presentation Formats**[2] lab test were able to read news articles significantly faster while maintaining high reading efficiency of articles that were presented in a 95 characters per line format (other formats tested were 35, 55, and 75 characters per line). Participants indicated a strong preference for either the short (35) or long (95) line lengths, and showed most comprehension with the long (95) line length.

Despite the fact that there were no differences in satisfaction scores, a line length that supports faster reading could impact the overall experience for users of online news sources.

A successful user experience can be into the user's conscious/subconscious impression of the following:
- ease of finding information
- being visually pleasing
- promoting comprehension
- satisfaction with the site
- looking professional

Credibility is very important on any news website; the top 4 reasons users lose faith in a web site are:
- Dead links
- Outdated information
- Distracting animation
- Slow download time.

Keep in mind that these items are from the user's perspective. For example, if they know that a timestamp indicates "freshness" of the content, the omission of a timestamp will imply that it's dated information.

PERSONAS

Suzanne
Suzanne was an avid news consumer in her late 20's – she read the newspapers, industry/trade magazines, Newsweek Magazine, and Cosmopolitan. Felt that reading a broad range of publications kept her well informed in a variety of subjects – an important investment of her time as she cultivated her career growth.

Five years ago, Suzanne, confident in her role as a billable consultant, had found the need to be efficient with every quarter hour of her time/day. She religiously subscribed to and

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[1] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2005/05/02/AR2005050201457.html By Annys Shin, Washington Post Staff Writer; Tuesday, May 3, 2005; Page E03
[2] Software Usability Research Laboratory (SURL), a service division to the Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) Laboratory at Wichita State University

read the industry leading publication, and tucked the occasional Marie Claire magazine in her carry-on to thumb through on long plane trips. After allowing the daily newspapers to pile up, waiting to be read, she finally cancelled her newspaper subscription; with the depressing tone of the news, she didn't want to start each day depressed about the future.

Now 37, Suzanne starts her day at work scanning the headlines at several online news web sites. If she heard about a news story on the radio during her commute to work, she'll look for that story to see what other details were omitted. She has each news site bookmarked, but rarely uses it; the URLs are easy to remember, and her browser finishes the address before she knows it. Suzanne usually will visit her local newspaper's web site, CNN, and a couple of the major network's sites. She has a log in for each, but doesn't sign in unless prompted, and doesn't always sign in when prompted – unless it's for a good reason. Logging in for customized news seems more like a liability, as she might then miss "something important." She knows that by scanning the page for the first few lines after the headline, she can immediately decide if it is worth clicking on to read more.

When there is a local news story that seems to draw national attention, Suzanne will go to CNN also, to see what they might have in terms of a news article on a more global level. After searching and reading what is written on CNN and the other networks' sites (ABC, CBS), she will go back to her local news site to continue her daily scan of the local headlines.

Depending on the day of the week, Suzanne will check for the local entertainment. When she is traveling to another city for business, she will check that the local newspaper's website to do some research on restaurants and the weather.

Peter
Peter is a pilot who flies for a business jet service. After serving in the Army for 8 years, he is doing what he always wanted – flying all over the country, with a schedule that brings him to many different cities, into both smaller airports as well as international airports. While he has mixed feelings about the war in Iraq, he's is a self-described loyal American, whose job is to believe in his President. He asserts to his friends and colleagues that he has the history to know what he is talking about – after all, he also served overseas, and has conversations with executives and business people on a daily basis about their view of the world.

Peter is divorced, and has 2 children who are 8 and 11. He's a conscientious and involved father. He has friends in many of the cities that he flies to – from high school, college and the Army. He is dating one woman currently, who shares some of his passions for golf, dancing and comedies.

Peter has a laptop that is his navigation tools for work. He has a wireless connection, and subscribes to TMobile. He can access his email and surf the web from the airport, Starbucks or the hotel. Yahoo is his home page, and also his email service, His browser has all of his personal bookmarks. Peter will often have to spend a night in a city before going on another flight, so uses his laptop to check his email, the news, and vacation packages that include golf and hotel – since he can fly on almost any airline for $50 or less. He prides himself on being very well informed and making sure that he is objective in his views, so makes a point of visiting sites that are known to be liberal as well as conservative. He has several websites bookmarked that he starts with each day, and follows the links from each of those websites to "understand" other viewpoints. DrudgeReport, FoxNews, and The Weekly Standard magazine's website are all part of his web browsing ritual, and he receives updates on his cell phone from all three.

Peter understands that it is his duty to be calm and moderate when working, just as he understands that it's his responsibility to set the record straight when someone does not have the right facts. He's been known to respond to blogs on those news websites that skew the news, to make sure that the other readers and posters can have the truth.

When Peter scans the news websites' home page, he prefers the read the headlines and first paragraph. When Hurricane Katrina hit the east coast, he checked the photo gallery on MSNBC regularly to see what new photos had been added.

Resources Used

Study on how frequent Internet news readers went about perusing news online by Stanford University and The Poynter Institute
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