Sui Generis: Tobacco Sponsorship Advertising and Canadian Campus Newspapers

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Abstract: This article examines tobacco sponsorship advertising in 18 college and university newspapers in Canada from 2002 to 2004. It documents the financial value of tobacco advertising in the year before the federal ban on this form of advertising, which began in October 2003. Tobacco spending formed nearly half of these newspapers’ national advertising revenues. The paper examines advertising revenue and publishing output in the year following the ad ban. While national ad revenue fell 28% in 2003-04, this did not adversely affect newspaper operations: the newspapers published 1.4% more pages—and more issues—in 2003-04 than in the previous year. In accounting for this anomalous finding, the paper discusses the sui generis nature of campus newspapers, which embody elements of commercial and non-profit media, while remaining an under-researched and under-theorized area of communication studies.

Keywords: Tobacco advertising; Campus media; College/university newspapers


Mots clés : Publicité de tabac; Médias universitaires; Journaux étudiants

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**Introduction**

Tobacco sponsorship grew in Canada following the federal government’s move to impose severe restrictions on cigarette advertising in 1997. These curtailments included a ban on transit and outdoor advertising—in addition to the existing ban on broadcast advertising—and extensive restrictions on the content of newspaper and magazine advertising. As a response to these legislative changes, tobacco sponsorship spending rose from $15.9 million in 1995 to $63 million in 2003 (Health Canada, 2004b; Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, 2001). These expenditures supported a wide variety of sporting and cultural activities, among them auto racing, tennis, golf, theatre, book readings, and music festivals. Print advertisements featured prominently in this enterprise, nominally intended to promote tobacco-sponsored events or funding programs but which also served as *de facto* brand advertising, circumventing the ban on tobacco product advertising. Ads for the “Team Player’s” CART racing squad or du Maurier Arts cultural programs incorporated colours, brand iconography, and lifestyle imagery to evoke the packaging and popular associations of Player’s and du Maurier, Canada’s top-selling cigarette brands.

By the early 2000s, tobacco sponsorship advertising had become a staple of campus and entertainment weekly newspapers in Canada. These publications offered what cigarette marketers increasingly wanted: a readership of mostly 18- to-30-year-olds, who typically used the publications to chart the weekend’s entertainment. Sponsorship ads, like those for du Maurier’s “Red Seat” and Benson & Hedges’ “Gold Club Series,” promoted tobacco-funded concerts, club events, and music festivals (Krewen, 2002). Such “event marketing” mirrored wider North American trends toward stepped up cigarette promotions in college student bars, in fraternities, and at campus events (Farrell, 2005; Halperin & Rigotti, 2003; Hammond, Tremblay, Chaiton, Lessard, & Callard, 2005; Katz & Lavack, 2002; Lantz, 2003; Sepe & Glantz, 2002). Tobacco marketers today target 18-to-24-year-olds as the key “entry-level” demographic, a fact supported by the 28% smoking rate for those 20 to 24 years of age, the highest rate for any age group in Canada in 2004 (Adlaf, Gliksman, Demers, & Newton-Taylor, 2003; Health Canada, 2004a).

This article examines the frequency, distribution, and financial value of tobacco sponsorship advertising appearing in 18 Canadian campus newspapers in 2002-03. It draws primarily on data supplied by Campus Network, an advertising brokerage specializing in campus media that handled national advertising for the 18 newspapers. In 2002-03, tobacco companies spent more than $530,000 on advertising in these newspapers, comprising 49.8% of national advertising revenues at the papers, by far the largest source by product sector. One company dominated, with Imperial Tobacco accounting for 98% of these expenditures. At the time, Imperial Tobacco also controlled about 60% of the Canadian cigarette market and was the most active in targeting under-30 consumers.

The federal ban on tobacco sponsorship advertising that took effect on October 1, 2003, presented serious financial challenges to the newspapers. In the following year, their national advertising revenues fell by an average of 28%, with one newspaper experiencing a 70% decline; for 15 of 18 newspapers,
income from national advertising declined in 2003-04. In general, university newspapers fared better than college ones. Since advertising-supported media typically scale back editorial content in response to advertising losses, one would expect reduced publishing output at these newspapers after the tobacco ad ban. But the opposite occurred; the total number of pages printed by these papers increased by 1.4% in 2003-04, as did the number of issues.

Any attempt to explain this paradoxical finding is hampered by the paucity of scholarly research on campus newspapers and the corresponding lack of conceptual frameworks governing this media category. This is a notable blind spot in the mediascape, for little scholarly work exists on the editorial content and production processes of the 1,000-plus campus newspapers in North America. There are no dedicated scholarly works on campus newspapers. Works on alternative media do not cover the subject, and the topic is largely absent in studies of mainstream media. (Atton, 1999, 2002; Downing, 2001; Howley, 2005; Khiabany, 2000; Langlois & Dubois, 2005; Gibbs, 2003; Packard, 2006; Rodriguez, 2001; Waltz, 2005). This omission arguably owes to the sui generis nature of campus newspapers, which defy easy classification within existing media categories. Campus newspapers embody elements of both alternative and mainstream media, characterized as they are by both volunteer labour and professional managers, operating subsidy and advertising sales force, community service, and commercial enterprise. The first part of this article describes, largely through the use of quantitative data, the financial dependence affecting campus newspapers at the hands of tobacco interests and advertiser power. In contrast, the article’s second half explores how structural features of campus newspapers—their hybrid embrace of commercial and non-profit media features—engender forms of independence, which helped shield them from adverse consequences typically associated with advertising losses in commercial publishing.

Quantitative findings

The study examined 11 university and 7 college newspapers published between September 1, 2002, and August 31, 2004, a total of 1,112 issues. Eleven of the newspapers were in Ontario, five in Alberta, one in Manitoba, and one in Nova Scotia (see Table 1). Fourteen of the papers were published weekly, two bi-weekly, one twice weekly, and one—UWO’s Gazette—appeared four times a week. The bulk of publishing took place during the academic year (early September to mid April), with most papers on hiatus during the summer months. Circulation levels ranged from a high of 17,000 at the University of Toronto Newspaper to a low of 3,000 at the University of Lethbridge Meliorist (Canadian Advertising Rates and Data, 2003).

National advertising for all of these newspapers was handled by Campus Network, an advertising brokerage specializing in campus media. Formed in 1970, the Toronto agency counts four full-time and two part-time employees. The company solicits and secures national advertising (e.g., Ford, McDonald’s) for affiliated newspapers, working for a contracted rate. Campus and local advertising (e.g., area bars, restaurants) are typically secured by the individual newspaper. Campus Network officials co-operated with this study by providing financial data and general information on the operations of student newspapers. For the
2002-03 academic year (September 1 to August 31), data from Campus Network was used to count and classify tobacco sponsorship ads in the 18 newspapers, none of which had policies prohibiting tobacco advertising.

Tobacco sponsorship advertising was ubiquitous in 2002-03, with 297 ads appearing in print, an average of one every 1.8 issues. All were full-page, four-colour ads, the most expensive type sold by campus newspapers. One company predominated: Imperial Tobacco’s du Maurier Arts ads formed 58% (172) of the total, while its “Team Player’s” ads comprised 40% (119). Rounding out the roster was Rothmans, Benson & Hedges, which ran just six “Gold Club” ads.

The ads were spread evenly among the newspapers, an average of 16.5 ads per newspaper. Only two newspapers diverged widely from this figure, a fact explained by frequency of publishing. The highest tally (25) was for the

### Table 1: Campus network newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>School (U= university; C= college)</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
<th>Cost of Full-Page Colour Ad</th>
<th>Number of Tobacco Ads 2002-03</th>
<th>Tobacco Ad Revenue 2002-03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>University of Toronto, (Mississauga)</td>
<td>U 5000</td>
<td>$1,273</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$21,641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etcetara</td>
<td>Humber College</td>
<td>C 5000</td>
<td>$1,228</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$19,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflector</td>
<td>Mount Royal College</td>
<td>C 10000</td>
<td>$1,722</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$20,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>St. Mary’s University</td>
<td>U 10000</td>
<td>$1,629</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$26,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrobang</td>
<td>Fanshawe College</td>
<td>C 3500</td>
<td>$1,413</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$21,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meliorist</td>
<td>University of Lethbridge</td>
<td>U 3000</td>
<td>$1,196</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$19,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brock Press</td>
<td>Brock University</td>
<td>U 10000</td>
<td>$2,088</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>$39,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cord</td>
<td>Wilfrid Laurier University</td>
<td>U 6000</td>
<td>$1,578</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$26,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nugget</td>
<td>Northern Alberta Institute of Technology</td>
<td>C 3500</td>
<td>$1,597</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$25,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projector</td>
<td>Red River College</td>
<td>C 3500</td>
<td>$1,360</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$20,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td>U 17000</td>
<td>$3,060</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$48,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Queen’s University</td>
<td>U 9000</td>
<td>$2,188</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$39,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazette</td>
<td>University of Western Ontario</td>
<td>U 10000</td>
<td>$2,344</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$58,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheridan Sun</td>
<td>Sheridan College</td>
<td>C 5000</td>
<td>$1,189</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$17,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emery Weal</td>
<td>Southern Alberta Institute of Technology</td>
<td>C 4600</td>
<td>$1,463</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$21,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silhouette</td>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>U 10000</td>
<td>$2,587</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$38,805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontarion</td>
<td>University of Guelph</td>
<td>U 10000</td>
<td>$2,124</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$36,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauntlet</td>
<td>University of Calgary</td>
<td>U 12000</td>
<td>$1,827</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$31,059</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total     |                                   |             |                           |                               | $533,494                |

Source: The Campus Network
University of Western Ontario Gazette, which published four times weekly, while the lowest figure (12) was for the bi-weekly Mount Royal College Reflector. This pattern of evenly distributed advertising indicated a blanket media buy by Imperial Tobacco (or its advertising agency), without target marketing considerations involving location, university-college designation, or student body makeup, as is often the case with national advertisers in campus media (Robert Price, official media buyer, Campus Network, Interview, July 9, 2004). It is noteworthy too that the 58% ad share by du Maurier, then Canada’s leading cigarette brand among women, approximates the female percentage of students at Canadian universities (58%) and colleges (55%) (Statistics Canada, 2004a, 2004b).

Tobacco firms spent $533,494 on advertising in these 18 newspapers in 2002-03, their largest single source of national advertising. The cost of a full-page, four-colour ad ranged from a low of $1,189 at the Sheridan College Sun to a high of $3,060 at the University of Toronto Newspaper, with an average price of $1,796. These prices were determined by such factors as circulation, page size, and colour printing costs charged by the newspapers’ printers.

As seen in Figure 1, tobacco expenditures formed a large share of national advertising revenue. For 11 newspapers, it constituted more than half of this revenue source, reaching a high of 63% at the University of Toronto (Mississauga) Medium. On average, 49.8% of national advertising came from tobacco coffers; colleges and universities exhibited similar levels of tobacco dependence, 52% and 48%, respectively.

Figure 1: Tobacco’s share of national advertising revenue, 2002-03

Source: Campus Network.
National advertising is one of four typical sources of revenue for campus newspapers, with the others being local advertising, campus-based advertising, and student government subsidies. To illustrate, budget figures from the Queen’s University Journal, one of the larger newspapers (circulation 9,000), provide the following revenue breakdown for 2002-03: local advertising (50%); national advertising (22%); campus/classified advertising (13%); student government subsidies (15%). Similar financial data for other newspapers could not be secured, owing to concerns over privacy and proprietary information. But at smaller newspapers (circulation under 5,000), national advertising’s share of overall revenue was generally higher, typically between 40% and 50%. This was largely because these newspapers could secure less local advertising (Guy Lussier, Advertising Manager, Red River College Projector, interview, November 17, 2004).

Tobacco’s share of national advertising revenue was higher at smaller newspapers. The 10 newspapers in which tobacco spending represented more than half of national advertising revenue had an average circulation of 6,000. At the remaining eight newspapers (50% or less), the comparable circulation figure was 9,700. Since average circulation at college papers was much lower than at university papers—5,014 vs. 9,272—college newspapers were generally more dependent on advertising revenue from tobacco companies than were university papers.

**Figure 2: Percentage change in national advertising revenue, 2002-2004**

Source: Campus Network.

**After the advertising ban**

There is scant research on tobacco advertising bans and their subsequent effect on specific media carrying such advertising. When Canada proposed a sweeping ban on tobacco advertising in 1971, lobbying by magazine, newspaper, and advertising interests effectively killed the initiative (Robinson, 2004). Kjell Bjartveit (1998; Bjartveit & WHO, 2003) has shown that Norway’s 1975 ban on tobacco advertising did not adversely affect newspaper and ad agency revenues, despite dire pre-ban predictions from both groups. Similarly, there are many recent studies documenting the minimal or even beneficial effects of smoke-free laws on bar, restaurant, and hotel revenues (Bartosch & Pope, 2002; Cremieux & Ouellette, 2001; Glantz & Charlesworth, 1999; Huang, De, & McCusker, 2004; Hyland &

Table 2: Page counts of university and college newspapers, 2002-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>School (U) = University (C) = College</th>
<th>Number of Issues 2002-03</th>
<th>Total Pages 2002-03</th>
<th>Average pages per issue 2002-03</th>
<th>Number of Issues 2003-04</th>
<th>Total pages 2003-04</th>
<th>Average pages per issue 2003-04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brock Press</td>
<td>Brock University (U)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrobang</td>
<td>Fanshawe College (C)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etcetera</td>
<td>Humber College (C)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silhouette</td>
<td>McMaster University (U)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflectors</td>
<td>Mount Royal College (C)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nugget</td>
<td>Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (C)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Queen’s University (U)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1044</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projector</td>
<td>Red River College (C)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>St. Mary’s University (U)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheridan Sun</td>
<td>Sheridan College (C)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emery Weal</td>
<td>Southern Albertan Institute of Technology (C)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauntlet</td>
<td>University of Calgary (U)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontarian</td>
<td>University of Guelph (U)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meliorist</td>
<td>University of Lethbridge (U)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>University of Toronto (U)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>University of Toronto (Mississauga) (U)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazette</td>
<td>University of Western Ontario (U)</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1062</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1,164</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cord</td>
<td>Wilfrid Laurier University (U)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>555</td>
<td>10612</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>10,756</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the 12 months following the ad ban, national advertising revenue at the newspapers fell by an average of 28%. All but three newspapers experienced revenue losses in 2003-04, with the steepest declines occurring at college papers, which comprised four of the five worst performers. The top five performers were all university newspapers (see Figure 2). Colleges, as a whole, experienced a 39% decline, and universities lost 21% of national advertising. All seven college papers suffered losses, as did 8 of 11 university newspapers.

Without detailed budget information for each newspaper it is difficult to determine how much, if any, of the lost national advertising revenue was recouped from other sources, such as local advertising or student government fees. What is apparent is that newspapers generally avoided consequences normally associated with steep advertising losses: there were no reports of staff layoffs, production cutbacks, shorter press runs, or major editorial changes. The one consistently noted change by advertising managers involved the reduced use of colour on the front page (a four-colour ad allowed editors to print, at no extra cost, colour on three additional pages), but none believed that this had an adverse effect on their newspaper’s “pickup” rate.4

As a general rule, commercial publications reduce editorial content in response to advertising losses, since printing and distribution costs generally require adherence to prescribed editorial-to-advertising ratios to ensure commercial viability. But this did not transpire with the campus newspapers. A page count of all issues published by the 18 newspapers in 2002-03 and 2003-04 shows increased activity during the latter period, when 144 more pages were published, a gain of 1.4%. The average number of pages per issue rose from 19.1 to 19.3, and the total number of issues edged up from 555 to 557 (see Table 2).

Surprisingly, newspapers that suffered steep advertising losses showed large gains in published output. The University of Lethbridge Meliorist, which lost 70% of national advertising, boosted its page count by 34% in 2003-04. The Red River College Projector experienced the third-worst advertising loss but increased its published output by 14%. College newspapers, which as a group lost 39% of national advertising, counted 4.4% more pages in 2003-04, compared to 0.02% for university newspapers (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th># of issues 2002-03</th>
<th>Total pgs 2002-03</th>
<th>Average # pgs per issue, 2002-03</th>
<th># of issues 2003-04</th>
<th>Total pgs 2003-04</th>
<th>Average # pgs per issue, 2003-04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>2787</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>2910</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>7825</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>7846</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

These results—lower ad revenues and increased publishing—may seem counterintuitive, but only if campus newspapers are conceptualized as part of advertising-supported, commercial media. Although advertising revenue and full-time, salaried advertising managers exist at most campus newspapers,5 the sector does not readily conform to the commercial media model. Most importantly, student volunteers, not paid employees, perform most of the editorial and production
tasks. Hence, salaries and benefits, sizeable budget lines for commercial publishers, are not major cost factors. During peak operations, the newspapers can increase labour output without incurring overtime and related costs. Whether motivated by “labour of love” or resume building, volunteers at campus papers shield these organizations from labour market pressures and employer financial obligations. Campus newspapers also receive direct subsidies, either from student governments or university administrations. Space for editorial offices and production facilities is provided free or at below-market rates (Corrigan, 1998).

College and university newspapers experience less marketplace competition than do commercial magazines and entertainment weeklies. Universities and colleges typically have only one campus-wide newspaper, not counting faculty papers like those for engineering or law. Campus newspapers in small and mid-sized cities seldom compete directly with entertainment weeklies, which predominate in larger cities like Toronto or Calgary. Even in these cities, universities or colleges can adopt policies favouring campus newspapers over others, for example by restricting the number of distribution racks for outside media (Bodle, 1994, 1997).

Might, then, campus newspapers be classified as a form of alternative media? While there is no firm consensus on the definition of alternative media, certain characteristics are cited more than others. Alternative media is non-commercial, where ideas and their dissemination are valued more than profits. Ideologically, it usually leans toward the political left, positioned somewhere on the spectrum between social progressivism and activist radicalism. It maintains ties with grassroots groups and movements, providing a voice for those in the “alternative public sphere” who feel underserved or marginalized by mainstream media discourses. It attracts little advertising, relying instead on subscription fees, newspapers or subsidies from supportive or affiliated organizations (e.g., trade unions). Volunteers, alongside small numbers of paid staffers, provide much of the publication’s labour needs. Press runs are generally low, and, given the precarious finances of these operations, publishing ventures are often short-lived (Atton, 1999; Atton & Couldry, 2003; Comedia, 1984; Downing, 2003; Packard, 2006). Atton offers an additional criteria for defining alternative media, emphasizing its “transformatory potential . . . as reflexive instruments of communication practices in social networks.” Alternative media is as much about the process of participatory cultural and civic production as it is about editorial content or subject matter (Atton, 2002).

Given these criteria, campus newspapers would seem an unlikely candidate for inclusion in alternative media. Campus newspapers arguably do not provide a consistent voice for marginalized elements on campuses; their large readerships—which nearly always exceed those of “official” university or college administration newspapers—coupled with their propensity to report on areas also covered by urban dailies (movie reviews, sports, etc.) suggest a mainstream orientation more so than a counter-hegemonic one. Campus newspapers are not fleeting, short-lived ventures, but rather secure, capitalized ventures with publishing histories dating back decades and in some cases to the nineteenth century. Their content, too, when it is unconventional, is more suggestive of playful irreverence or satirical conceit than it is of sustained political critique.
The papers do not routinely promote programs for fundamental social change, nor is their reporting generally informed by alternative news values. To wit, the editorial operations at the UWO *Gazette* were recently overhauled in response to national criticism over misogynist content in the newspaper (Leeder, 2007). With two exceptions—volunteer labour and operating subsidies, in this case from student governments—the defining attributes of alternative media generally would not seem to encompass campus newspapers in Canada. That said, campus newspapers represent a peculiar hybrid of community service and commercial enterprise, whose publishing operations depend far less on maintaining consistent advertising levels than is the case for commercial newspapers or magazines.

Campus newspapers are unique or unusual in other ways. Although advertising-supported, they are not covered by standard media monitoring organizations like Nielsen Media, NadBank, or the Audit Bureau of Circulation. As such, independent information concerning circulation size, readership levels, or advertising revenues is not available. As free “pickup” papers, they have no sales records, or related sales tax receipts, that could be used to measure before-and-after effects of an ad ban. There is no central database, or physical site, that archives Canadian campus newspapers, a fact that requires researchers, in most cases, to visit the individual college or university to access back issues. Campus newspapers remain an important, if underappreciated, media category for young adults, but notable barriers stand in the way of their systematic study, which may explain the paucity of scholarly research on this topic.

Research is also needed on how advertising losses affect media production and the role played by volunteer labour. This is especially important for newspapers, since printing requirements necessitate that newspapers increase or decrease their output in four-page increments. A loss of one ad page in a 24-page edition does not result in a 23-page edition; rather, editorial content will be added to produce a 24-page issue or existing editorial content will be axed to publish a 20-page version. What are the trigger points for this? Media researchers have not taken up these questions, nor have they examined how differing levels of fixed costs (salaries) and variable costs (paper) affect a publisher’s response to advertising cutbacks. To what extent does volunteer labour (“unfixing” certain labour costs) shield these newspapers from competitive pressures? Similarly, what role do unpaid internships, which are common in publishing organizations, play in the commercial viability of such enterprises?

While tobacco advertising has ceased in Canadian campus newspapers, it remains in other jurisdictions. A U.S. study found that 16% of campus newspapers had published tobacco advertising in 2001-02; and tobacco promotion in general maintains a widespread presence on American campuses (Farrell, 2005; Halperin & Rigotti, 2003; Hammond, Tremblay, Chaiton, Lessard, & Callard, 2005; Katz & Lavack, 2002; Lantz, 2003; Sepe & Glantz, 2002). Should campus newspapers in the United States or other countries seek to end tobacco advertising in their pages, the Canadian experience offers insight and direction. Smaller newspapers, being more reliant on national advertising, proved more dependent on tobacco revenues, and these papers should be targeted for assistance, financial or otherwise, should this be considered. Despite high levels of tobacco advertis-
ing in Canadian campus newspapers and significant declines in national advertising revenue after the ad ban, there was generally good news for the readers of these papers: no papers folded, none cut back their publication schedules, and after the ad ban there were more pages to read than there had been before the ban.

This outcome is less paradoxical when viewed alongside the unique characteristics of campus newspapers, notably those involving multiple revenue sources, volunteerism, and insularity from competition in the publishing marketplace. Tobacco advertising provided publishers with a steady and plentiful source of revenue, while subsidizing the use of colour on front pages, making their papers more visually appealing, if more ethically problematic. Relying on one source for half of national advertising carried risks, as seen among colleges whose national advertising revenue declined 39% after the advertising ban. But, as we have seen, this did not produce cutbacks in publishing or staffing. Insulated from much direct competition, subsidized by student fees, and produced mainly by volunteers, campus newspapers occupy a liminal space, operating outside of most marketplace forces while simultaneously serving as marketing vehicles for local and national advertisers.

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Notes
1. The study is based on 18 of 23 Campus Network–affiliated newspapers intended for student readers at Canadian colleges and universities. Excluded from this study were papers serving graduate students and/or students in specific faculties (e.g., law, engineering) and papers that typically carried less advertising and counted smaller circulation levels. Campus Network is the smaller of the two main advertising brokerages serving English-language campus media; the other, Campus Plus, represents about 100 newspapers.

2. Most of the remainder of the cigarette market was held by Rothmans, Benson & Hedges Inc. (22%) and JTI-Macdonald Corp. (12%). Similarly, Imperial Tobacco accounted for the lion’s share of sponsorship advertising spending (du Maurier Arts, “Team Player’s”) during the 1990s and early 2000s (Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, 2004).

3. Federal legislation passed in 1998 phased out tobacco sponsorship promotion over five years.

4. Interviews with advertising/business managers from the following campus newspapers: UWO Gazette (Alex McKay, November 10, 2004); Red River College Projector (Guy Lussier, November 17, 2004); Queen’s University Journal (Wayne Zhu, November 18, 2004); Northern Alberta Institute of Technology Nugget (Linda Campbell, November 19, 2004).

5. Small newspapers typically have only one full-time, paid position, usually an advertising manager, and larger ones generally have two to four full-time positions.

6. The definition of “community media” offered by Kevin Howley is similar to those for alternative media: “grassroots or locally oriented media access initiatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity” (2005, p. 2).
7. There are, no doubt, exceptions to this. This observation is based on my reading of four campus papers.

**Interviews**


McKay, Alex. (2004, November 10). Business Manager, University of Western Ontario *Gazette*.


**References**


