



THE EDWARD R. MURROW COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
LAWRENCE PINTAK, FOUNDING DEAN

FINAL REPORT

THE MURROW RURAL INFORMATION INITIATIVE:

Access, Digital Citizenship and the Obligations of the Washington State Information Sector

America needs “informed communities,” places where the information ecology meets people’s personal and civic information needs. This means people have the news and information they need to take advantage of life’s opportunities for themselves and their families. They need information to participate fully in our system of self-government, to stand up and be heard. Driving this vision are the critical democratic values of openness, inclusion, participation, empowerment, and the common pursuit of truth and the public interest.

Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities

*“Washington is a digital state
with a rural information ghetto.”*

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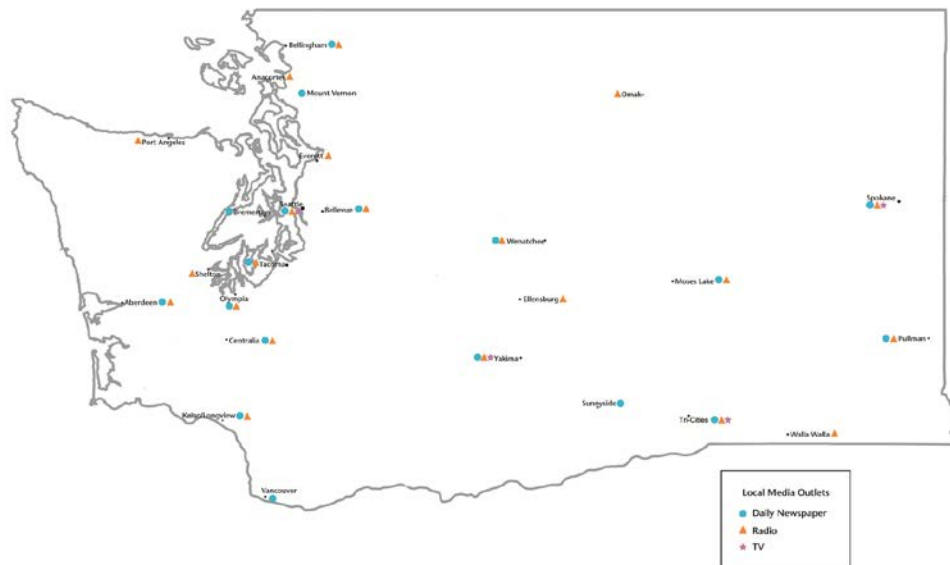
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The state of Washington is an information enigma. Some of the nation’s leading digital technology companies are headquartered in and around Seattle, yet vast areas of the state are starved of locally relevant public affairs news. Google and Yahoo are just two of the global Internet companies that have opened offices in the state, joining content giants like Amazon and MSNBC.com, yet only 20 towns have a daily newspaper, just 23 have radio stations with some form of local news, and TV is clustered in four cities with tightly defined coverage areas.¹ T-Mobile is headquartered in the state, yet mobile dead zones are common outside the major towns. Facebook recently opened a major office in Seattle, yet Washington’s use of social networking platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter is lower than many other states.²

In huge sections of Washington, citizens have little or no access to news about what is taking place in their own communities. The situation is particularly grim in areas populated by minorities and on some of the vast Native American reservations.

In short, Washington is a digital state with a rural information ghetto.

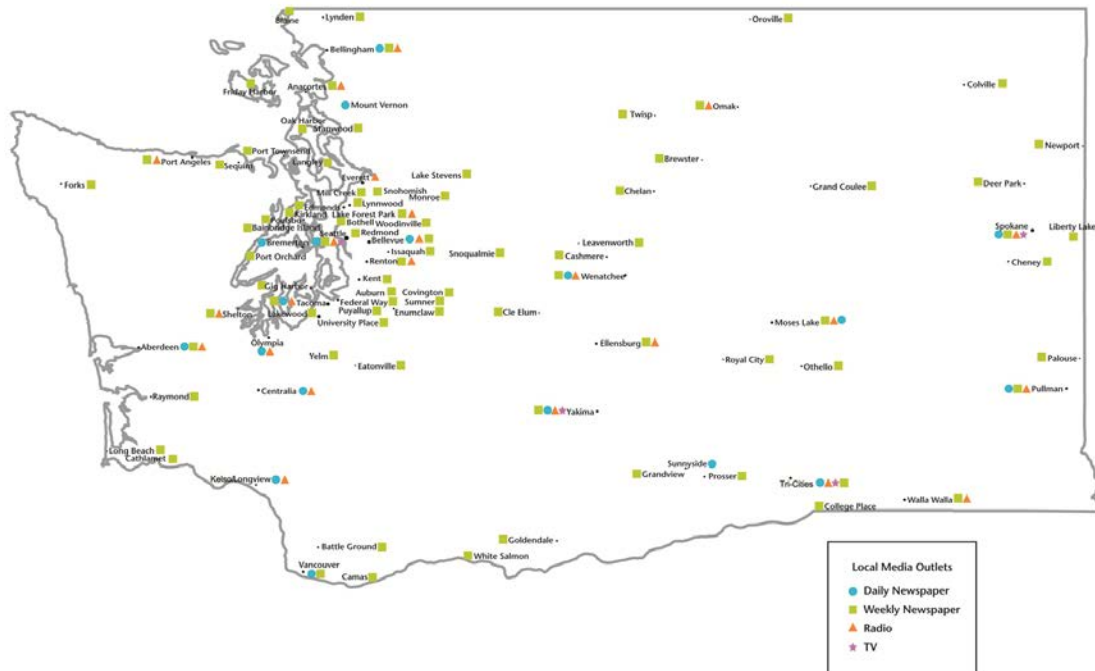


WASHINGTON STATE MEDIA DISTRIBUTION
(DAILY NEWSPAPERS, TV AND RADIO STATIONS WITH LOCAL NEWS)

¹ Based on data from the Washington Association of Broadcasters and the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association.

² Angela Wu, "Creating Opportunities for Washington: A report on broadband in Washington State," (Olympia, WA: Dept. of Information Services, State of Washington 2010). 14.

Weekly newspapers are made up of a mix of those providing substantial local news and others that are little more than shoppers, but even when weeklies are included, the landscape is very bare.



WASHINGTON STATE MEDIA DISTRIBUTION
(WITH WEEKLIES)

“There's no question that all media, including newspapers, have fewer reporters covering fewer towns than in the past 100 years,” says Michael Shepard, vice president of *The Seattle Times*.³ The collapse of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* was emblematic of both the demise of the two-newspaper town nationally and the challenge facing media in the Pacific Northwest.

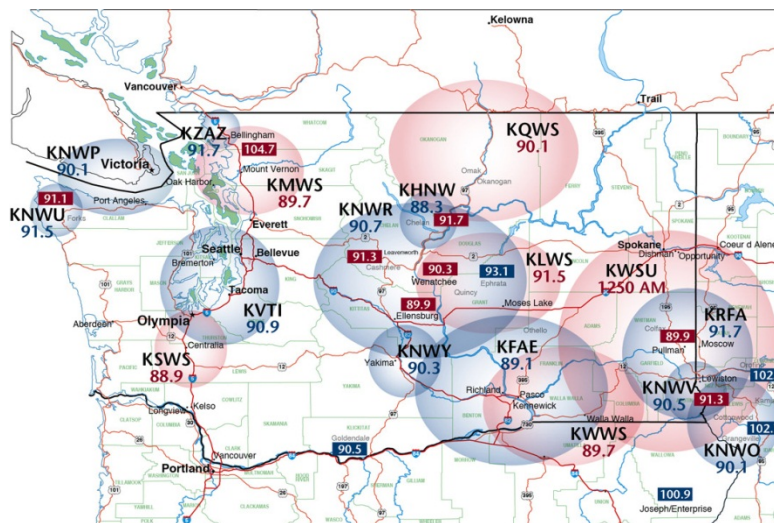
The stakes go far beyond whether individual reporters will have a job next week or whether particular media institutions will survive. They go to the heart of the democratic process. They also drill deep into issues of access to health information, to business competitiveness and to the state’s ability to educate its citizens.

³ Email correspondence, Oct. 14, 2009

PROJECT FOCUS

Given its rural location in the southeast corner of the state of Washington, hard up against the Idaho border, and its unique role as one of the state's most important providers of regional news through Murrow Public Media, which includes the 16 station Northwest Public Radio network, two PBS stations, the regional Murrow News Service and a student-staffed state capital bureau, the Murrow College chose to examine the issue of rural information access within the context of the FCC's *Information Needs of Communities* report.⁴ The project team took as its starting point this observation in the FCC report:

*[W]e find ourselves in an unusual moment when ignoring the ailments of local media will mean that serious harm may be done to our communities – but paying attention to them will enable Americans to develop, literally, the best media system the nation has ever had.*⁵



NORTHWEST PUBLIC RADIO COVERAGE MAP

The approach involved:

1. A roundtable symposium examining information access in rural and underserved communities and the obligations of the state's information and technology leaders; the gathering included state government officials, executives of the leading telecommunications providers, top newspaper editors and publishers, bloggers and ordinary citizens. Highlights will be broadcast regionally on Northwest Public Radio.
2. A research project assessing the information needs, news sources, public affairs knowledge, and social participation of a sample of rural and urban residents of Washington state.

⁴ The Murrow project is part of a nationwide initiative funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Knight Foundation to examine aspects of the FCC report.

⁵ Steven Waldman, "The Information Needs of Communities: The changing media landscape in a broadband age," (Washington, D.C.: Federal Communications Commission, 2011). 7.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Broadband penetration/adoption and information access are critical to the economic and political health of rural communities, fostering civic engagement and driving local economies. Local news coverage is the raw material that allows citizens to make informed decisions. High speed connectivity is the pipeline that links farmers and local merchants to global markets and allows the smallest, most distant town to become a corporate back office.

However, a triumvirate of challenges means that the potential for greater access is not being realized. These include:

- The shrinking coverage area of the state’s major news organizations and a dearth of local news organizations to fill the information gap
- A failure of state and local policymakers to understand the technology, its potential and their role in facilitating access
- A lack of digital literacy among some rural citizens

It is particularly ironic that at a time when the circulation reach of “mainstream” news organizations is dramatically expanding thanks to digital technologies, the physical areas regional newspapers and broadcasters are able to directly cover are being dramatically reduced by budget cuts that mean fewer “boots on the ground” outside the borders of the major metros. This means that even digitally-literate rural citizens who do have high-speed Internet access are often still without a source of local news.

A survey of Washington state residents carried out by a Murrow research team found that the lack of availability of local news and affordable access, especially mobile Internet access, is limiting availability of local news to rural populations, as well as rural adoption of online participatory news and discussion options.

Rural WA residents find it significantly more difficult to follow local news than non-rural residents.

The study compared rural and non-rural Washington state residents and compared Washington residents with national data in the 2001 Pew Internet and American Life survey.

Key findings:

- Rural residents find it significantly more difficult to keep up with local news than their non-rural counterparts.
- Rural residents are less frequent consumers of news media, both traditional and new, for local news than non-rural residents, even though they seek out broadcast and online news sources as often as urbanites for state and national news.
- Although there are no significant differences between rural and non-rural WA residents in accessing the Internet, in reading regional and national news on the Internet, in new-media skills or in cell phone ownership:
 - Rural residents are less frequent users of the Internet to access local breaking news than are their non-rural counterparts.

- Rural WA residents use search engines less than do rural adults throughout the country, and WA residents make less frequent use of Web search engines for local news than do adults nationwide.
- Significant numbers of rural WA residents are not using cell phones for news or for connecting with the Internet compared with urban residents.

These findings point to a lack of locally relevant content, not a lack of skills or interest among rural Washingtonians.

The news access study, along with data provided by the Washington state Broadband office, served as the starting point for the Roundtable symposium discussion. And while those taking part in the symposium represented an array of sometimes conflicting interests, there emerged an overarching consensus that they share a common obligation to bring light to the state’s digital information black holes.

These findings point to a lack of locally relevant content, not a lack of skills or interest among rural Washingtonians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the challenges of rural information access, the project participants recommended that the Murrow College take the lead in forging an alliance between the various stakeholders – grassroots organizations, telecommunications industry, government officials, the media and regional foundations – to pursue steps designed to bolster rural news reporting and increase awareness of and access to high-speed broadband.

Based on the participant input, a review of the research findings and conversations with other stakeholders, the Murrow College proposes the following initiatives:

THE WASHINGTON RURAL NEWS CONSORTIUM

The project will facilitate training/content partnerships between “mainstream media” and citizens who can provide reporting from rural areas beyond the news footprint of existing news organizations. This may include:

- Journalism training for aspiring “community journalists” carried out on a regional basis in the orbit of each of the major metros in partnership with each market’s dominant local media and technology providers
- An infrastructure for community news partnerships with established media organizations modeled on *The Seattle Times*’ network of alliances
- Funding from a combination of community, regional and national foundations, along with news organization partners

MURROW NEWS BAROMETER

An annual report on the status of information access in Washington state, examining:

- The health of the WA news media
- News awareness among WA citizens
- The state of high-speed broadband penetration

DIGITAL AWARENESS INITIATIVE

A grassroots campaign to:

- Educate state legislators⁶
- Educate local policymakers
- Encourage digital literacy campaigns in rural areas

The goals of these projects directly fit the objectives outlined in the 2010 report of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy:

- Maximize the availability of relevant and credible *information* to all [Washington state citizens] and their communities;
- Strengthen the *capacity* of individuals to engage with information; and
- Promote individual *engagement* with information and the public life of the community.⁷



Lawrence Pintak
Founding Dean
The Edward R. Murrow College of Communication

May 25, 2012

⁶ The Murrow team has been asked by Rep. John McCoy to brief WA state legislators during the next session.

⁷ *Informing Communities*. XI.

2. THE INFORMATION NEEDS ROUNDTABLE

Rapporteur:

Benjamin Shors

In the Pacific Northwest and across the country, the expansion of broadband Internet in the past decade has fundamentally reshaped the information landscape in rural areas. But the potential of high-speed Internet in these communities cannot be fully realized without an informed and digitally literate citizenry, a low economic barrier to access, and a vibrant, digitally knowledgeable press corps.

In 2009, the federal government made a significant investment in America's rural communication infrastructure: \$7.2 billion to develop broadband Internet access in unserved or underserved areas. The money, which was appropriated through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, has improved network capability and expanded infrastructure across the country, including Washington state.

Washington state's broadband network now stretches from the foothills of the Cascade Mountains to fertile farmlands in central and eastern Washington. Today, more than 96 percent of the state's households have Internet available to them, although it arrives at varying speeds and affordability.

The growth of Washington's network of public and private Internet infrastructure has also expanded the audience reach of news organizations, from metropolitan dailies to large-market television stations to rural newspapers and monthly publications.

However, as broadband access grew and online audiences steadily climbed, the simultaneous decline in print advertising revenues forced the state's newspapers to retrench, cutting staff, shrinking the footprint of the print editions, and, critically, dramatically reducing the size of the region they are able to cover. Meanwhile, many radio stations were absorbed by conglomerates that eliminated local news in favor of more cost-effective national program streams. The result: more and more citizens are relying on a smaller and smaller press corps at legacy media outlets and increasingly vast sectors of the state have no journalistic boots on the ground. Ongoing layoffs threaten to further undermine access to news and information in Washington communities, where even in the best economic times countless communities went uncovered by the news media.

In April 2012, a panel of 31 journalists, broadband industry experts, policymakers, citizens, and academic leaders met to examine the role of broadband access in facilitating the flow of information in rural communities. The panel emerged with a set of conclusions to help guide policymakers, journalists, and broadband industry experts.

MAPPING THE MEDIA TERRAIN

In the Pacific Northwest and across the country, the expansion of broadband has led to dramatic jumps in online readership of news organizations, from metropolitan dailies and television stations to rural weekly newspapers.

For example, the state's largest daily newspaper, *The Seattle Times*, circulates 300,000 Sunday newspapers, but its online network of sites tallies more than 6.9 million unique visitors each month, according to Michael Shepard, senior vice-president of business operations for the *Times*. That's up 36 percent from 5.1 million unique visitors in 2009, according to data from Omniture provided by the *Times*.

"We have a much greater potential audience and real audience than we have ever had," Shepard said.

But behind that online audience is a paradox: more and more readers are accessing information produced by fewer and fewer reporters who are able to cover less and less ground. This narrowing of what is considered “local” to the paper is particularly evident at news organizations that traditionally had a footprint that crossed state borders.

“The success of our two Idaho blogs ... speaks to the issue of access to local news in rural areas.”

—Gary Graham, editor, *The Spokesman-Review*

From its headquarters in Spokane, *The Spokesman-Review* once circulated from northern Oregon across Washington and into western Montana. It maintained bureaus in Sandpoint, Idaho, and Pullman, Washington, and reporters routinely traveled through remote areas, like rural northeastern Washington, in pursuit of stories.

In the past decade, the newspaper has dramatically shrunk the size of its northern Idaho bureau in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, replacing staff reporters with citizen bloggers. Today, two of the newspaper’s top three blogs cover Idaho, not Spokane, said Gary Graham, editor of *The Spokesman-Review*. Meanwhile, Spokane television stations frequently air stories “from our northern Idaho bureau” that are simply rewrites of *Spokesman-Review* articles.

“I think the success of our two Idaho blogs – which far surpass our Washington blogs -- speaks to the issue of access to local news in rural areas,” Graham said.

The Spokesman-Review’s shrinking footprint isn’t unique among Washington news media; decreasing print revenues have driven down the size of newsroom staff. Outlying bureaus, roving rural reporters and journalists covering state politics are among the casualties.

At the state Capitol of Olympia, the press corps has shrunk 80 percent in the past 10 years, according to Greg Lane, president and CEO of TVW, the state’s public access television station, leaving just a handful of reporters.

“It’s that regional reporting and state coverage that is getting squeezed,” Lane said.

To try to address that issue, *The Spokesman-Review* hopes to partner with rural publications in the area to provide supplemental reporting, Graham said. Similarly, on the west side of the state, *The Seattle Times* has teamed with more than 50 community news partners, expanding both content and access for the reader to diverse voices in the Seattle-Tacoma metro.

But those community partners often face the same financial challenges – on a smaller scale – as their legacy media partners. Online publication may have opened a new platform for alternative media voices, but quality journalism costs money, according to the media experts.

“Closing the digital divide does not an informed citizenry make. Someone still has to pay the reporter.”

—Michael Shepard, vice president, *The Seattle Times*

“Closing a digital divide does not an informed citizenry make,” Shepard said.

“Someone still has to pay the reporter.”

In rural areas, which have long relied on weekly or monthly news publications, broadband access – as well as emerging web and mobile platforms – provides the opportunity for publications to produce and update content on a daily basis, according to Bill Will, executive director of the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association. Digitally savvy rural journalists can quickly publish breaking news, enhancing their value and relevance to the community.

“Local advertising is the lubricant of the local economy; we (journalists) are the oil in the engine,” Will said. “We are a community watchdog, but we’re equally as important as an economic indicator of the community.”

Nationally, online advertising revenues have failed to keep pace with the explosion in online readership, or even to stanch the loss of traditional print advertising. Last year, reductions in print advertising revenue outpaced digital gains by 10 to 1, according to the Pew Research Center’s 2012 State of the News Media.

Although digital advertising grew 19 percent last year, print advertising declined 9 percent, far outstripping the digital gains, according to the report.

“We are a community watchdog, but we’re equally as important as an economic indicator of the community.”

–Bill Will, Washington Newspaper Publishers Assoc.

Newspapers with circulations under 25,000 showed much a slower decline in print advertising – about one-third the rate of the decline seen at papers above 50,000 circulation. In mid-size cities and small towns, traditional print publications appear to face less competition for local news and the advertising dollars that can result.

In Lewiston, Idaho, on the Washington-Idaho border, *The Lewiston Tribune*, circulation 25,000, has managed to maintain its circulation numbers since the 1990s, despite seismic industry-wide decreases during the past two decades.

The Tribune was the first newspaper in the continental U.S. to require online viewers to pay for content, according to A.L. “Butch” Alford, Jr., the newspaper’s former editor and publisher. In the early 1990s, *The Tribune* briefly offered free online content, only to see circulation numbers drop. The resulting pay model allowed the company’s newspaper to retain the bulk of its circulation – a rarity for modern newspapers, Alford said.

“In the model of trying to publish quality journalism, you have to have revenue,” Alford told the panel.

But few Northwest newspapers have managed to move behind the pay wall or maintain print circulation numbers. Several panelists said the dreary national data is in line with the experience of Washington media outlets: greater online viewership but decreased print advertising revenue.

“We have lots of business-model questions; we need a business-model solution,” Will said. “Five years ago, there was a debate of free versus pay. The pay model has emerged the winner.”

Shepard said that while the pay model is gaining traction in certain small communities, it faces unique challenges in the state’s metropolitan areas because of the proliferation of online digital outlets.

“We have this concept that ‘information wants to be free.’ We therefore don’t have to pay anyone to prepare it,” Shepard said. “In markets like ours, where it is highly competitive, you still have concerns about pay wall.”

An estimated 100 newspapers nationally are expected to move to digital subscription models, joining 150 publications that currently have subscription models, according to Pew's 2012 State of the News Media report. Graham said *The Spokesman-Review's* Web site will move to a metered, pay model in 2012.

Metered models, such as those in place at *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, may slow the drop in print revenues and help monetize digital properties. But newspapers across the country, as well as in the Pacific Northwest, are still searching for new revenue models. In the 2012 Pew report, more than 40 percent of newspapers reported the development of non-traditional revenue models, from consulting to event planning to the sale of new business products.

As publisher of *The Community Current*, Becky Dickerson has experimented with alternative funding models in tiny St. John, Wash. The 1,000-circulation paper has remained profitable, relying on traditional revenues such as local advertising and paid birth announcements. In recent years, Dickerson has also requested donations from readers; she estimates that 60 percent of mailings lead to a donation.

That model has long been in place in public radio, said Kerry Swanson, station manager of Northwest Public Radio. He said more than one million charities operate in the U.S. with a cumulative annual donation of \$1.4 trillion.

"[W]e need the donor community to really look at the innovative news nonprofit space. This isn't a journalism pledge; it's a healthy community pledge."

—Matt Rosenberg, Public Data Ferret

"We've always thought of ourselves as the nonprofit arm of the media world," Swanson said. "Maybe we should be the media arm of the nonprofit world."

Emerging media outlets may provide some help to local news organizations. Matt Rosenberg is founder and executive director of Public Eye Northwest, a Seattle-based nonprofit that — as part of its mission —

curates public documents and data and produces original stories for publication.

"We need mainstream media to stay strong, but I think at the same time ... we need the donor community to really look at the innovative news nonprofit space," Rosenberg told the panel. "This isn't a journalism pledge; it's a healthy community pledge."

MAPPING THE DIGITAL TERRAIN

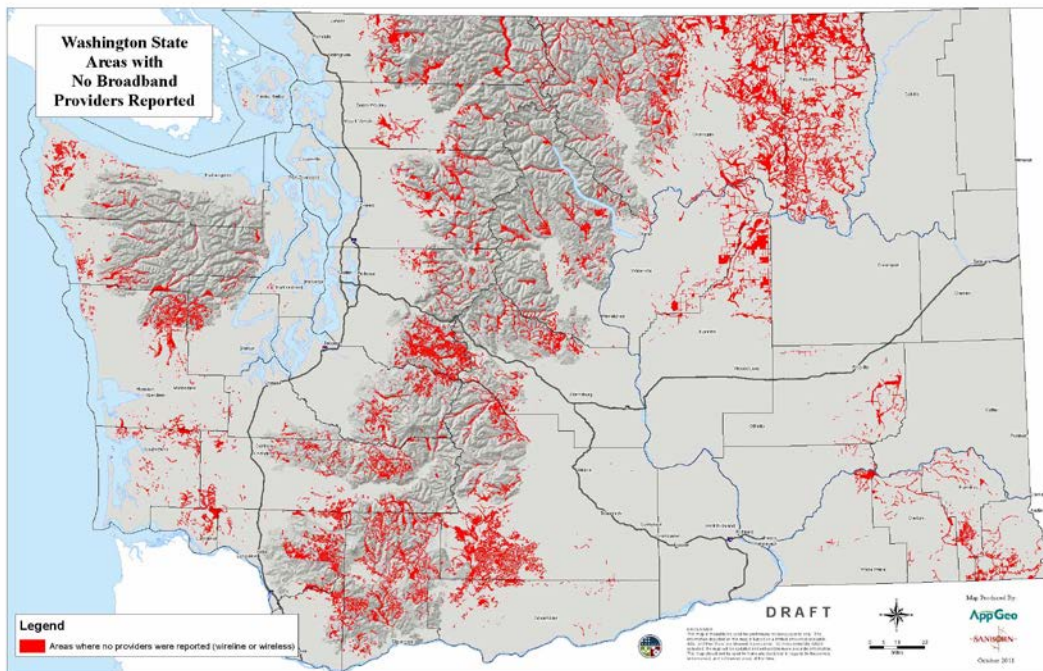
In the northeastern corner of Washington, one of the state's few broadband holes remains.

In Ferry County (population 7,551), about 80 percent of households are unserved by broadband, according to the state report; the county also trails the state in almost every major economic indicator, according to 2010 U.S. Census data.

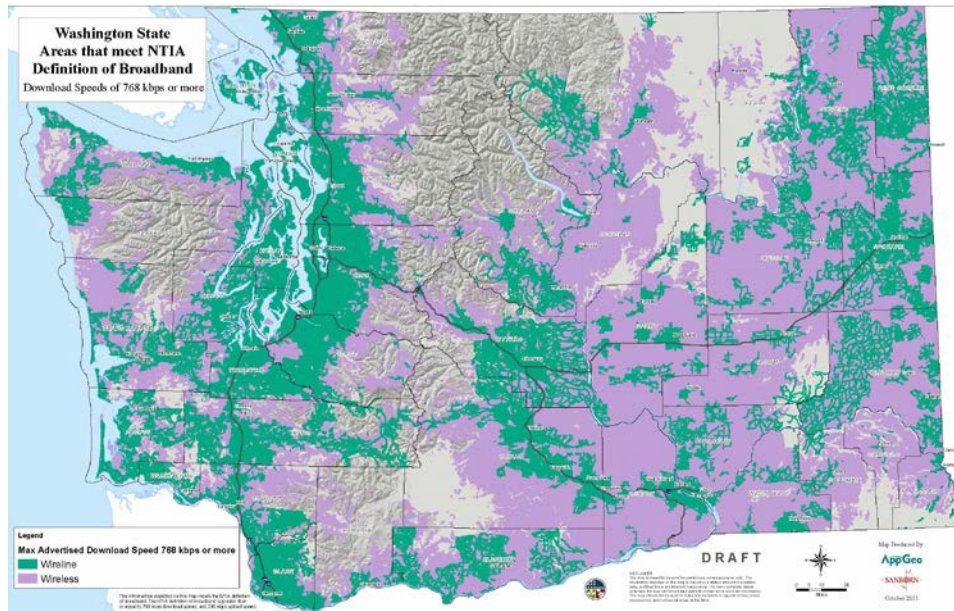
About 3.8 percent of Washington households have no broadband access, and the problem is particularly evident in rural communities. But those holes are rapidly filling as public and private investment continues to develop broadband infrastructure, particularly to schools, libraries, government agencies and medical clinics.

In small towns like Republic and Blyn, Northwest Open Access Networks, or NoaNet, is expanding high-speed Internet in 2012. NoaNet, a nonprofit group of 12 public utility districts, has focused on "middle-mile" connectivity to the state's rural areas.

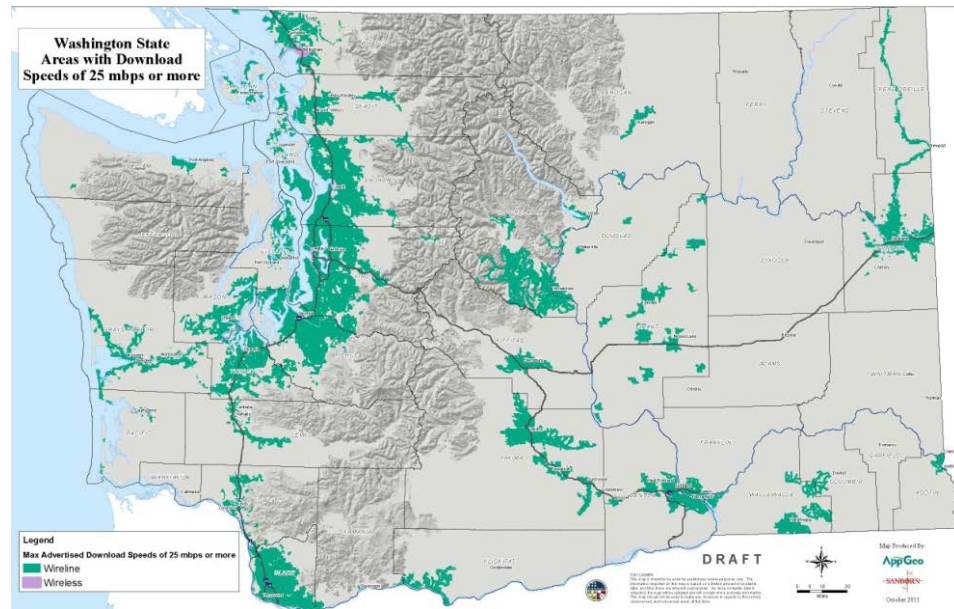
Today, more than 96 percent of Washington households have broadband available to them at a rate of 3 megabits per second, according to the state's 2011 Annual Report on Broadband in Washington. That speed is fast enough to stream a movie, but not fast enough to conduct high-definition telecommunication like real-time video conferencing, the report said.



SOURCE: WA STATE BROADBAND OFFICE



SOURCE: WA STATE BROADBAND OFFICE



SOURCE: WA STATE BROADBAND OFFICE

"The new digital divide is speed," said Frieda Ray, outreach and communications coordinator for the Washington State Broadband Office.

Washington has one of the country's highest rates of broadband adoption at 77 percent, as well as a relatively small disparity between metropolitan and rural users, according to the state's broadband office. But adoption of broadband does not mean citizens and businesses are maximizing its potential, experts say. Many citizens and

businesses are unable to recognize or realize the transformative potential of broadband, according to Angela Wu, founder of MIO, a nonprofit that works with tech-savvy youth interns to help small businesses develop an online presence. Technology skills, Wu said, create “digital privileges” that may only be available to savvy, informed users.

“This growing class of citizens is on one side of the ‘digital divide’ – first defined as the ‘haves vs. have-nots’ and now further refined as ‘digital adopters vs. digital natives,’” said Wu, former broadband policy and programs director for Washington state.

As broadband penetrates even the most remote reaches of the state, rural communities and citizens may not have the digital skills necessary to access news and information, Wu said. In rural communities, where digital literacy often trails that of metropolitan areas, broadband availability does not equal Internet accessibility. Barriers to access in rural areas include the dearth of digital knowledge in smaller communities, as well as economic costs and geographic isolation.

“If communities need to become digitally literate, then how can they accomplish this, given today’s economic realities?” Wu asked the panel.

In other words, as faster Internet arrives, rural municipalities and citizens must determine how and where it will intersect with small-town life. At rural libraries, online use has exploded in recent years as rural citizens attempt to learn and navigate the new digital world. Rural small businesses are tapping into the broadband network to market everything from organic produce to cattle to handmade quilts.

But in many areas with high-speed Internet, citizens and small businesses are not equipped with the digital skills to tap into its potential.

“Even when broadband is available, people often aren’t taking advantage of it,” Monica Babine, senior associate at Washington State University’s Program for Digital Initiatives. “The access is getting faster and better and more available, but we still have a huge role in educating the public about accessing this.”

The issue isn’t limited to rural areas, Wu said. In Seattle’s famous Pike Place Market – situated in the heart of the city’s bustling downtown – more than one-third of vendors aren’t online, Wu said. Even when provided with affordable broadband access, businesses don’t fully understand its potential value, Wu said.

*“The access is getting faster and better and more available,
but we still have a huge role in educating the public.”*
–Monica Babine, WSU Program for Digital Initiatives

Those themes are mirrored in the state’s rural communities, where technology has only recently emerged among the public as a transformational platform for businesses and communities.

“Local communities gather around a local coffee shop and talk about a variety of issues, but they don’t talk tech,” Wu said. “They don’t know about each other’s tech activities, so they operate in silos instead of sharing knowledge and resources and learning from each other.”

Many rural users flock to local libraries, which have become digital hubs for rural users in the last decade. In Colfax, Wash., the Whitman County Rural Library District serves 15,000 people in 14 towns with populations ranging from 130 to 2,900.

“We are busier than ever,” said Kristie Kirkpatrick, director of the library district. “Traditional book circulation is dropping, but online use is through the roof.”

Many citizens visit rural libraries not only to access broadband Internet, but also to *learn* how to access online information. Libraries have become digital hubs for rural residents who have been left behind by the revolution in the technology industry.

Whitman County’s library district provides Internet access to each of its 14 branches at a cost of \$90 per month at each site – a cost that can strain a community’s economic resources, Kirkpatrick said.

“If we finally get ... broadband to our towns, are we going to be able to afford it?”

–Kristie Kirkpatrick, director,

Whitman County (WA) Library District

“If we finally get this technology – this broadband – to our towns, are we going to be able to afford it at an individual level but also at a municipal level?” Kirkpatrick asked.

As quickly as the state builds its broadband infrastructure, new technologies are emerging. Companies like Verizon Wireless and AT&T are now aggressively building faster networks for 4G LTE technology. (In Germany, under a stipulation to improve rural broadband, companies first provided LTE coverage to towns with 5,000 or fewer residents; only now in the spring of 2012 is it expanding into metropolitan areas, according to *Germany Trade and Invest*.)

“The primary focus is always going to be on the network – that’s our lifeblood,” said Dan Youmans, president of AT&T Washington. “We provide the best coverage and capacity that we can.”

In Washington, the most significant growth in speed has occurred in the state’s major population centers such as Seattle, Spokane, Tri-Cities, and Vancouver, according to the state’s broadband office. Betty Buckley, executive vice president of the Washington Independent Telecom Association, said the industry has planned more than \$500 million in broadband build-out in the next few years.

David Conn, vice president of State Regulatory and Policy for T-Mobile USA, said technology alone may not bridge the state’s digital divide. As networks become faster and faster, rural communities may continue to lag behind urban areas, much the same way availability, adoption, and digital literacy traditionally have lagged in smaller communities, several panelists said.

“Implicitly or explicitly, until the riches and opportunities enabled by broadband are available to everyone, we effectively perpetuate the digital divide,” Wu said.

SEEKING SOLUTIONS: WIRING WASHINGTON

The demand for broadband Internet continues to grow rapidly, doubling every nine to 10 months, according to Steve Wood, vice-chairman of the Washington Technology Industry Association, the country's largest state technology trade association.

"There are clear solutions technically to provide increased broadband," Wood said. "You have the possibility to get broadband Internet access at your home, but even at \$9.95 a month, you may not be able to afford it ... The technology is going to be way ahead of the political issues and the socioeconomic issues."

Federal grants totaling \$165 million are helping expand fiber across more than 1,500 miles of the state, according to the Washington State Broadband Office. The state office is also funding up to \$300,000 a year for communities to develop local and regional broadband plans. Private companies like CenturyLink and Frontier Communications have spent tens of millions of dollars to expand wireless technology in the state.

Rep. John R. McCoy, chair of the state House's Committee on Technology, Energy and Communications, said education must follow upgrades to the state's technology infrastructure. Many legislators and public officials lack the understanding to address the technological challenges facing the state, McCoy said. Indeed, in the Washington Senate, no committee exists specifically to deal with technology issues.

"Decision makers today do not understand the technology, so that's why we have a problem," McCoy told roundtable participants.

McCoy said policymakers – as well as small businesses and citizens – too often fail to understand the potential rewards of that state's broadband infrastructure. "I'm a strong believer that economic development follows those trucks that are laying fiber optics down the highway," McCoy said.

McCoy said the ongoing need for digital expansion and upgrades presents economic opportunities for both blue-collar and white-collar employees.

*"Decision makers today do not understand the technology,
so that's why we have a problem."*

–Rep. John McCoy, chair, WA State House
Committee on Technology, Energy and Communications

"There is enough capacity to turn out the engineers that we need in the university system," McCoy said. "But we also need more technicians who have come the [career and technical education] route ... these cables don't string themselves and you don't need a college education to string cables."

For rural communities and journalists, those cables represent promise. More information – global, national, and local – is migrating online. Communities and citizens have a need for journalists, businesses, and nonprofits that can make sense of the mountain of digital data, said Matt Rosenberg of Public Data Ferret.

"Often times what people want is information more than news," he observed. "We could capitalize on information that governments are putting online, but who comes along and does anything with it?"

News, Rosenberg said, is adding context to the information. Swanson of NWPR agreed.

"Without a curator," he said, "information is almost impossible for people to make sense of."

3. SURVEY RESULTS: LOCAL NEWS CONSUMPTION

Research team:

Douglas Blanks Hindman, PhD
Michael Beam, PhD

OVERVIEW

The health of Washington’s local news media is not strong; neither is local news consumption.

The combination of broadcast media deregulation and consolidation has reduced, or even eliminated, local news coverage in many small towns and rural areas. Regional daily newspapers have limited news about rural communities to the “quaint or quirky” (Shepard, 2012, April 4, remarks during The Murrow Information Needs Initiative roundtable discussion). This reduction in rural coverage coincides with the elimination of regional correspondents and the long-term trend of a pullback of the non-metro circulation of metropolitan dailies (Shepard, 2012, April 4; Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1986).

The most ubiquitous sources of local news are community newspapers and local radio stations. Both have reduced news staffs over the past 30 years in response to declining revenues and audiences (Waldman, 2011). Newspaper revenues in 2011 were less than half of 2008 levels (Edmonds, et al., 2012). The median full-time radio news staff size for all markets in 2010 was 1 employee (Papper, 2011).

Local television stations, the preferred source of news cited by U.S. adults (Edmonds, et al., 2012) have turned their news departments into profit centers which now produce nearly half of all station revenues (Papper, 2011). Stations have added newscasts, primarily in the early morning hours, to capture additional revenue. But news staffs have declined as stations struggled to upgrade to digital transmission and as veteran reporters have been replaced by entry-level novices (Schwanbeck & Schwanbeck, 2011, April 22). In spite of these adjustments, local TV revenues, when adjusted for inflation, are at a 15-year low (Edmonds, et al., 2012).

In Washington state, fewer reporters and local media outlets produce less information upon which citizens may act. Crucial links among news media, citizen participation, and community cohesion are threatened by a diminished local news presence (Yamamoto, 2012).

What is missing is news affecting the lives of citizens at the local level.

News coverage of small, rural communities has diminished in direct proportion to the proliferation of news coverage of large, metropolitan areas and national-level stories. The multiplicity of national-level sources of news, such as cable news channels, political blogs, and Twitter feeds, creates the impression of a larger news hole; however, the content filling that hole tends to be a repetitive stream of accounts of national-level political maneuvering, crisis-oriented coverage of national and international events, or videotape of fires, crimes and disasters.

What is missing is news affecting the lives of citizens at the local level.

As part of the Murrow College’s examination of rural information needs in Washington, a team of Murrow researchers set out to benchmark the impact of local news in the state. The main questions raised in this study are:

- How do Washington state citizens view the health of local news?
- Do rural residents view local, state, and national media differently than do non-rural residents?
- Are Washington state residents different from citizens elsewhere in the U.S. regarding their use of local news media?
- Are rural Washington state residents at a comparative disadvantage relative to rural citizens across the nation in access to local news and information?
- Do Washington state citizens use online and mobile media to compensate for the lack of traditional sources of local news?
- Are rural and non-rural residents of Washington state different in terms of political knowledge and civic participation?

To answer these questions, the researchers fielded a survey of Washington state adults from March 21 to April 27, 2012 (see Methods section below). This study includes an analysis of the findings from that survey. For comparison, the paper includes analyses of specific items that were repeated in a national survey fielded by the Pew Center for the People and the Press in January, 2011 (Pew Internet and American Life, 2011, January 1).

The findings are grouped into four main sections:

- A. *Media usage and local news:* Citizen evaluation and frequency of use of traditional, Web-based, and mobile-media sources of local, state and national news
- B. *Frequency of News Access:* About a variety of local topics
- C. *Online and News Media Participation:* Frequency of sharing local versus state and national information online via a variety of new media
- D. *Political Knowledge and Social Participation:* Washington state adults’ political knowledge and social participation, with comparisons between rural and non-rural residents

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

- Both non-rural and rural residents find it easier today than five years ago to keep up with local news, but non-rural residents find it significantly easier than their rural counterparts.
- Rural residents are less frequent users of news media, both traditional and new, for local news than non-rural residents.
- Rural participants are seeking out broadcast and online news sources as often as urbanites for state and national news.
- Although there are no significant differences between rural and non-rural WA residents in accessing the Internet, in reading the news on the Internet, in new-media skills or in cell phone ownership:
 - Rural residents are less frequent users of local breaking news than are their non-rural counterparts.
 - Rural WA residents use search engines less than do rural adults throughout the country, and WA residents make less frequent use of Web search engines for local news than do adults nationwide.
 - Significant numbers of rural WA residents are not using cellular phones for news or for connecting with the Internet compared with urban residents.

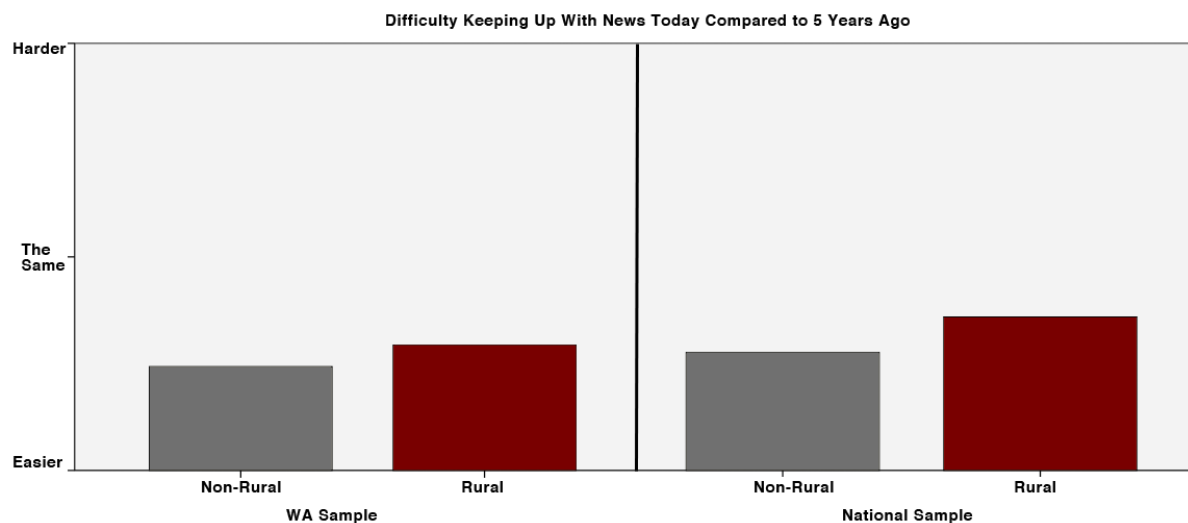
These findings point to a lack of locally relevant content, not a lack of skills or interest among rural Washingtonians.

DETAILED FINDINGS

MEDIA USAGE AND LOCAL NEWS

The first question that was raised, first by the Pew Internet and American Life (2011, January 1) U.S. survey, and again in the 2012 WA state survey was whether or not rural and non-rural respondents perceived a difference in the local news environment compared with five years earlier.⁸

The figure below shows that WA rural and non-rural residents were significantly different, with non-rural residents finding it easier to keep up with news about local communities than rural residents. Overall, WA adults found it significantly easier to keep up with news about local communities than did U.S. adults (Appendix: Figure 1).⁹



These results require a somewhat nuanced interpretation. Overall, respondents considered it between “easier” and “the same” as five years ago in keeping up with information and news about one’s local community. This would seem to indicate that respondents do not perceive a problem with the availability of local news and information. However, the systematic tendency of non-rural residents to score closer to the “easier” category than

⁸ For this analysis, “rural” is defined as the response to the question, “Which of the following BEST describes the place where you now live?” Those who chose “A rural area” were categorized as “rural” and those who chose “A large city,” “A suburb near a large city,” or “A small city or town” were categorized as “non-rural.”

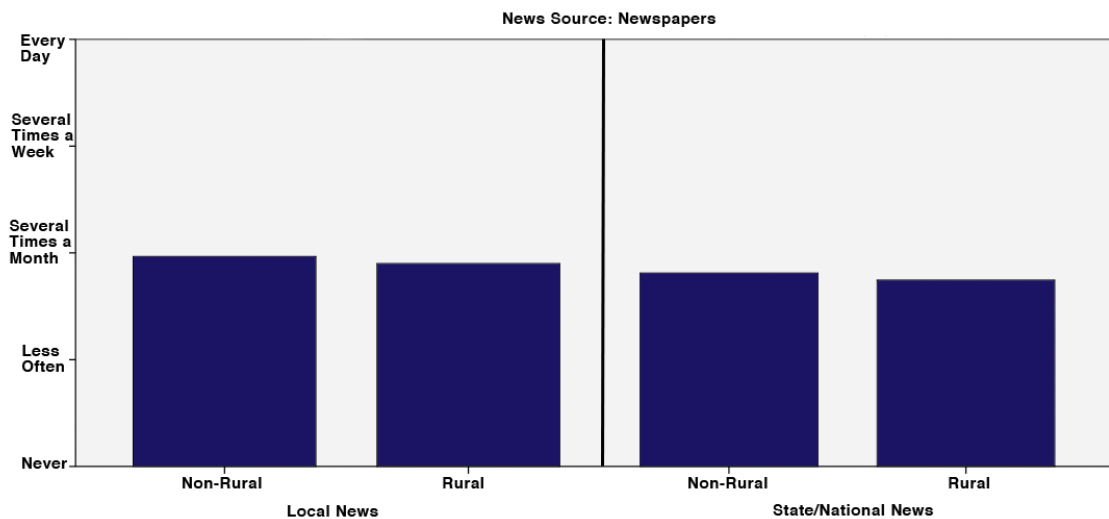
⁹ A note about the figures shown in the text and in the Appendix: when the text refers to a comparison as showing “differences” between groups, those refer to statistically significant differences. Given the large sample sizes in the WA (N: 994) and U.S. (N: 2250), even differences that may appear small in magnitude may be statistically significant. We reserve the term “no difference” to those that do not reach statistical significance. The statistical analyses are available by request from the authors.

rural residents of both WA and U.S. suggests there are significant geographic-based differences that require further analysis.

As the following results will demonstrate, the disparity between rural and non-rural residents persists in items regarding the frequency of obtaining local news from traditional and new media. These differences disappear, for the most part, in measures of frequency with which they access state and national news media.

• **NEWSPAPERS**

As shown in the below figure, rural and non-rural WA residents report nearly the same frequency with which they obtain local news from the print version of a local newspaper.



For all respondents, the average frequency of using a local newspaper is “several times a month.” This is a reasonable response for rural residents who rely on weekly newspapers. However, for non-rural respondents with access to a daily newspaper, “several times a month” is quite low, perhaps reflecting the declining circulation of metropolitan daily newspapers.

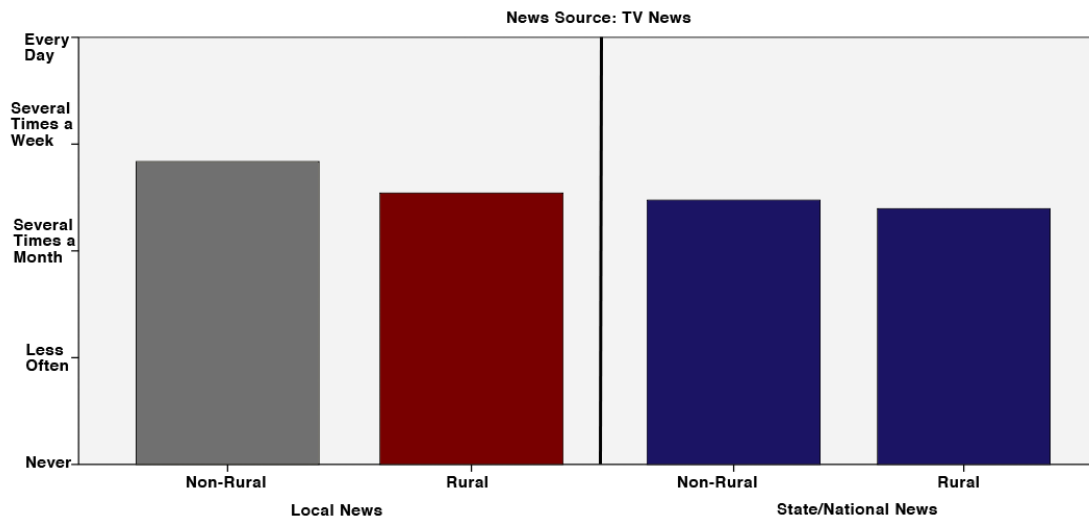
The similar frequency by which rural and non-rural respondents access local newspapers for news about their local communities points to the important role served by local weekly newspapers in the lives of rural residents.

The advent of newspaper Web sites is often posed as a geography-bridging technology to erase the rural penalty in access to local news (Hindman, Ernst, & Richardson, 2001). The results in Appendix Figure 2 show that citizens across the nation report accessing the Web site or mobile site of a local newspaper almost as frequently as they access the print version: several times a month.

The pattern of differences between rural and urban residents, both in WA and U.S.-wide, also appears in Appendix Figure 2. This shows that rural residents in WA and the U.S. make less frequent use of the Web site of a local newspaper for local news than do non-rural residents. In general, however, WA residents make significantly more frequent use of local newspaper Web sites than do U.S. adults.

• TELEVISION

Television is the most frequently cited means by which U.S. adults obtain news “yesterday” (Edmonds, et al., 2012). The results from the WA survey are very much in keeping with that finding; the average frequency of obtaining information about one’s local community from local television news broadcasts is closer to “several times a week” versus “several times a month” for local newspapers. The figure below also reflects the tendency of local news broadcasts to focus on metropolitan communities. Rural residents from WA are significantly less frequent users of television for local news than are non-rural residents; no significant differences between the two groups on state and national news.



When comparing Washington residents with U.S. adults, Appendix Figure 3 shows that rural WA residents are significantly less frequent users of local television news than are U.S. adults and U.S. rural residents. The likely explanation is the concentration of local television stations in four main metropolitan markets in WA (Seattle-Tacoma, Spokane-Coeur d’ Alene, Yakima and Tri-Cities (Pasco, Kennewick, Richland), as along with the domination of southwestern WA by stations based in Portland, OR, which leaves many non-metropolitan communities underserved.

Television Web sites do not necessarily result in more local coverage for rural audiences. Reflecting this lack of local relevance, rural WA residents are less frequent users of local television news Web sites than are rural residents across the nation.

• RADIO

A mainstay of local news reporting has been the local radio station. Accordingly, rural WA residents are no different from non-rural residents in their use of local radio. However, Appendix Figure 5 shows that WA residents are less frequent users of local radio than are U.S. adults, perhaps pointing to a general lack of local radio news from WA radio broadcasters. Respondents report accessing local news from radio “several times a month,” which is about the same rate at which they read local newspapers. This seems low for a medium that has the potential for up-to-the minute coverage of local news.

Appendix Figure 6 shows that, nationally, rural residents are less frequent users of radio Web sites than are non-rural residents, and the same holds for WA residents of rural versus non-rural areas. Washingtonians in general are

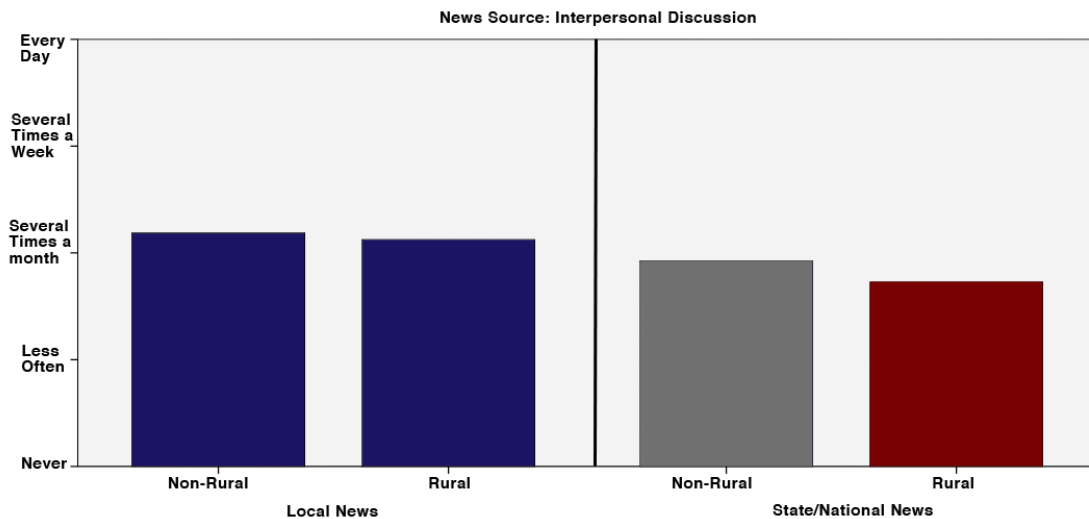
less frequent users of radio Web sites than are adults across the nation. The frequency is between "less frequently (than several times a month)" and "never."

The emerging pattern is that rural residents are, in effect, voting with their feet by walking away from local television and radio to a greater extent than their urban counterparts. The effect holds, and in some cases is amplified, for Web-based versions of the local media. In spite of apparently small differences in magnitude, the pattern is persistent. The following findings for emerging sources of local news reinforce the pattern established above.

• **INTERPERSONAL DISCUSSION**

Common-sense explanations for the lack of rural reliance on local sources of news suggest that individuals living nearby a small population spread the majority of news via interpersonal discussion and gossip (Hindman & Yamamoto, 2011). This assumes, however, that all individuals are connected with the frequently small and insular power structure of rural communities. Instead, decisions made affecting local citizens are often announced after resolution in closed-door sessions, thus preserving the outward appearance of consensus, while limiting public participation in community decision-making (Hindman, 1996; Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1970).

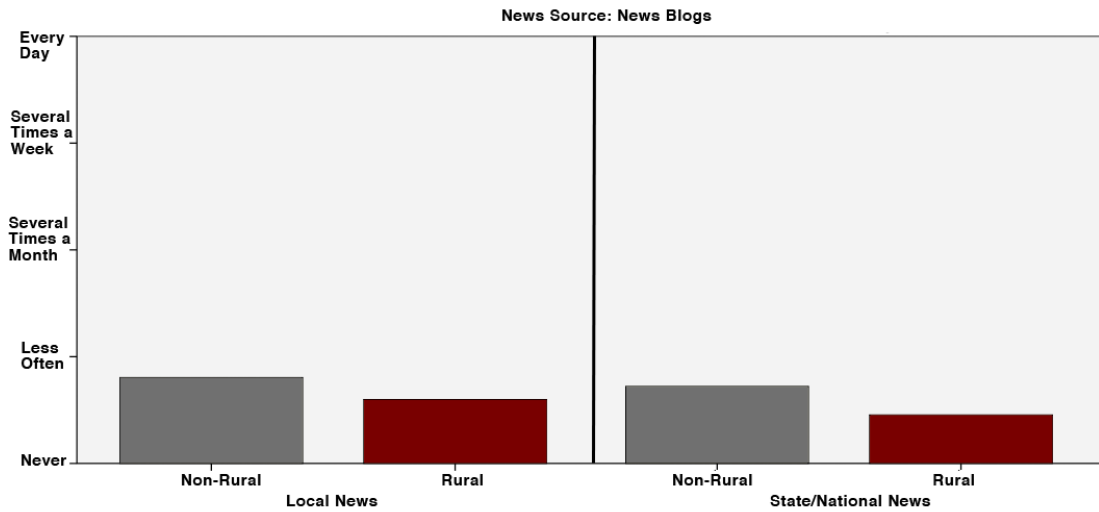
The current study shows that rural citizens are not more reliant on interpersonal discussion for information and news about local communities than are their non-rural counterparts. Instead, the below figure shows there were no significant differences regarding local news via interpersonal discussion. Further, WA rural residents were less frequent users of interpersonal discussion for state and national news than were non-rural citizens.



• **NEW MEDIA**

One might expect that place-bound residents who are underserved by traditional media would compensate via access to new-media news sources, such as locally relevant blogs or social network sites. However, new sources of information for local news are not being accessed as frequently as traditional sources, including the Web sites of traditional sources such as radio news.

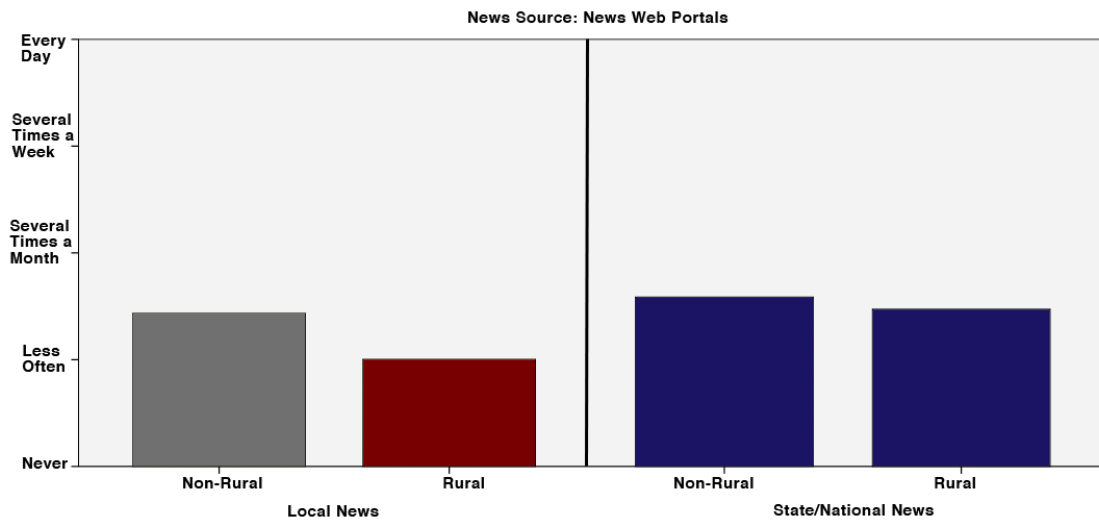
The below figure shows that rural citizens in WA are less frequent users of blogs for both local and national news.



Appendix Figure 7 shows that WA residents overall are more frequent users of blogs for local news than are U.S. residents. It also shows that rural citizens overall are significantly less frequent users of blogs for local news.

Interestingly, there are no significant differences between rural and non-rural citizens on the rate at which they access national news from social Web sites (not shown).

Repeating the pattern of rural WA residents accessing locally relevant news less frequently from both traditional and new media than non-rural WA residents, the below figure shows that rural WA residents are less frequent users of online news portals for local news.

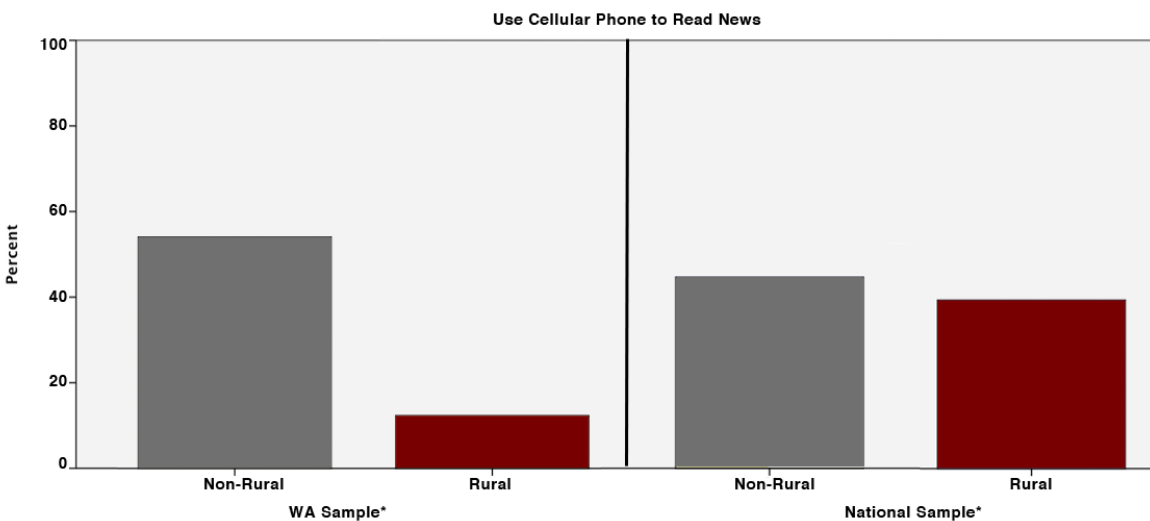


Again, a different pattern emerges in the above figure regarding the frequency of accessing information and news about state and national topics. The pattern is that non-rural and rural differences disappear when it comes to accessing state and national news. This supports the idea that the lower frequency by which rural residents access local news is not a result of a lack of skill or Internet access but, rather, the result of a lack of availability of locally relevant news.

Appendix Figure 8 repeats that pattern: Rural residents nationwide make less frequent use of Web search engines for local news than do non-rural residents nationwide. In spite of being in the state that is headquarters to Microsoft, creator of Internet Explorer and Bing, rural WA residents use search engines less than do rural adults throughout the country, and WA residents make less frequent use of Web search engines for local news than do adults nationwide. This is in spite of the fact that there are no significant differences between rural and non-rural WA residents in accessing the Internet, in reading the news on the Internet, and in owning a cell phone.

With cell phones becoming more ubiquitous than personal computers, one might expect that cell phones will become a technology that bridges the rural – non-rural divide. This does not appear to be the case, however, in Washington state. A significantly larger proportion of non-rural WA residents report using their cell phones to access the Internet than rural residents (47 percent non-rural vs. 25percent rural). This may point to a lack of access to high-speed mobile service in rural areas of the state.

As shown in the figure below, the apparent problem of a lack of access to high-speed mobile service in rural areas is exacerbating disparities in the way rural residents use mobile technologies. By a wide margin, rural WA residents are less frequent users of cell phones to read online news than are non-rural audiences (“How often, if ever, do you use your cell phone to read online news?”). A similar, though less dramatic, difference is seen in the national-level findings in answer to a dichotomous question, “Do you ever use your cell phone or tablet computer to go online for news or information about your community,” which showed 40 percent of rural residents versus 46 percent of non-rural residents answering “yes.”



FREQUENCY OF NEWS ACCESS

The following paragraphs reinforce the conclusion that rural and non-rural audiences are not significantly different in terms of their interests and abilities. Instead, rural audiences face structural barriers that are not of their own making, most notably, the lack of locally relevant coverage.

In general, rural and non-rural residents of WA do not differ in the frequency by which they seek local information about a range of topics, including: community or neighborhood events, such as parades or block parties; crime; taxes and tax issues; housing and real estate; schools and education; politics, campaigns and elections; other local governmental activity, such as council meetings, hearings or local trials; weather; job openings; zoning, building

and development; and social services that provide assistance with things like housing, food, health care and child care.

Not surprisingly, rural WA residents are less frequent users of local news about traffic and transportation as well as arts and cultural events, such as concerts, plays and museum exhibits.

Rural residents are less frequent users of local breaking news than are their non-rural counterparts. This is also not surprising given the tendency of rural areas to be relatively quiet. Regardless, with a dearth of local reporting, there is no reason for rural residents to seek local breaking news even if something happens.

ONLINE AND NEW MEDIA PARTICIPATION

Perhaps the strongest pattern of differences between rural and non-rural residents is shown in the use both groups make of new-media technologies that facilitate active participation in news creation and dissemination, discussed in the next section.

Rural and non-rural differences are amplified in measures of the frequency of sharing local, state and national news and information via new-media sources, with rural residents coming up short on nearly all indicators. Previous research indicates

Rural WA residents use the new media significantly less frequently than their non-rural counterparts.

that the vast majority of online news and discussion is linked to traditional news organizations (Dylko, Beam, Landreville, & Geidner, in press; Benkler, 2006). That is, online news users often link and discuss the news published by mainstream journalists, but do little gathering and disseminating of original news themselves. If there is an information disparity in local coverage, it is likely that there will also be a disparity in online local news discussion and participation as well. In addition to a lack of locally relevant information, a lack of affordable access to high-speed mobile Internet in rural areas of the state also poses an additional structural barrier.

Regarding local and state or national news, rural WA residents are significantly different from non-rural residents in their frequency of sharing local news via new media. In each case, rural WA residents use the new media with significantly lower frequency than their non-rural counterparts. The effect holds for online discussions, emailing links to local news stories or videos, tagging or categorizing online content, and posting news or information about their communities via social media.

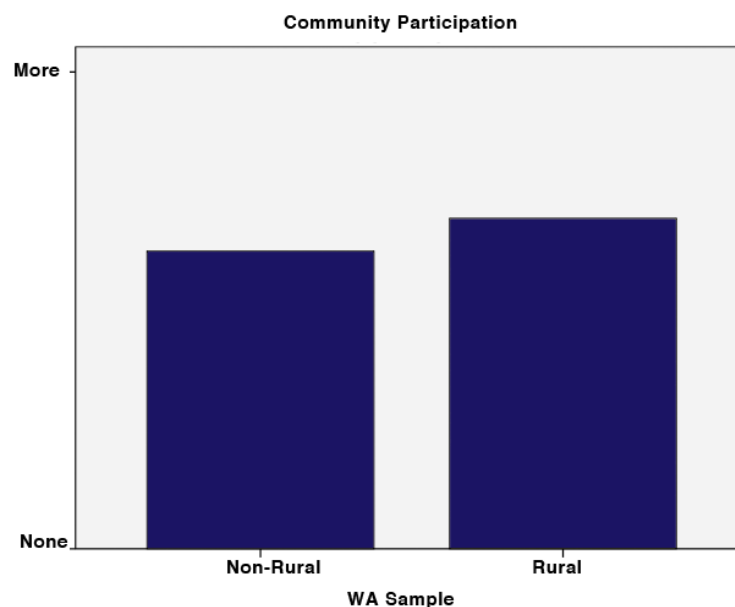
These findings point to the structural problem of a systematic lack of affordable mobile access in rural areas as well as a lack of news information created by journalists. However, a comparison of Internet skill (Hargittai & Hsieh, 2012) shows no difference between rural and non-rural participants. Combined with our findings from section 1, we conclude the lack of availability of local news and affordable access, especially mobile Internet access, is limiting rural adoption of online participatory news and discussion.

POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

The implication of a rural penalty in access to information and to broadband resources is a decline in social participation, and ultimately, a lack of social cohesion within rural areas (Yamamoto, 2012).

Surprisingly, in Washington state, there are no significant differences between rural and non-rural residents on a wide range of indicators of social participation including membership in religious or spiritual communities, adult sports leagues, youth organizations such as sports leagues, parents' association like PTA, veterans' groups, labor unions, service clubs, etc.

The findings are surprising in that national trends consistently show significantly more social participation among rural than non-rural residents (Hindman & Yamamoto, 2011). In this case, a lack of significant differences may point to a decline in social participation among rural residents.



A precursor to social participation, however, is knowledge of civic and public affairs. Informed citizens are more likely to participate in the life of their community.

One of the concerns regarding a lack of local news in rural areas is that those residents would be disproportionately uninformed about local issues. Rural and non-rural residents of WA showed no significant differences in political knowledge on a number of measures of national-level public affairs topics: knowledge of the components in the Affordable Care Act, that the U.S. Supreme Court is charged with determining whether a law is constitutional or not, which party is more conservative at the national level, the political party that is in control of the U.S. House of Representatives, the size of the majority required to override a presidential veto, and the title of the job held by Joseph Biden.

These findings support the observation that residents are not lacking in ability or interest in news. The proliferation of nationally oriented news has resulted in rural and non-rural citizens having equivalent levels of national political knowledge.

Rural and non-rural WA residents also showed no significant differences in locally relevant knowledge including the names of their state's representatives to the U.S. Senate, their congressional district's representative to the U.S. House, and the names of their mayor and school superintendent.

In further analysis, however, locally relevant knowledge was shown to be predicted by the frequency of exposure to local news sources, even when controlling for demographic variables and place of residence.

These findings highlight the importance of local news in producing informed citizens, regardless of their place of residence; those who attend to local media the most have higher levels of locally relevant knowledge.

*Those who consume local media
have higher levels of locally relevant knowledge.*

The first section of this study has shown that rural residents, in general, attend to local media less frequently than their non-rural counterparts. Less frequent attention to local news among rural residents creates the potential for the emergence of rural vs. non-rural disparities in locally relevant knowledge. This potential disparity, should it occur, would not be the result of a lack of interest or a lack of skill but, instead, the result of a lack of local news in rural areas.

4. CONCLUSION

Broadband is a critical public infrastructure on par with public roads and highways. Public and private investments in broadband infrastructure will continue to provide faster access to the Internet, moving mountains of information at an ever-greater pace.

But broadband expansion does not ensure digital literacy. As infrastructure continues to improve, public officials and industry leaders must emphasize the importance of improving digital literacy and lowering economic barriers to broadband adoption, particularly in low-income areas and rural areas.

Without investments in digital literacy, the state’s digital divide may not be closed and, in fact, runs the risk of widening. And without an effort to refocus on local news coverage in rural areas, the state’s information black holes may never be filled.

The accelerating speed of technological developments requires a concerted effort to educate the public, policymakers and journalists about the promise held by the state’s expanding broadband infrastructure.

From rural towns to the state Capitol, public officials must understand the role of technology in facilitating an informed citizenry, driving economic development and shaping public education systems. If public officials, news media and communities do not take it upon themselves to learn about and grow with technology, then they

Without investment in digital literacy, the digital divide may never be closed; without a new focus on rural news coverage, Washington’s information black holes may never be filled.

effectively perpetuate the digital divide through inaction. As a result, the state may experience a greater separation between its most digitally informed citizens and cities, and those trailing in the wake of technological advances.

Further, emerging technology has the capacity to provide information, but news media are needed to curate that information, provide context and produce comprehensible content for rural communities. Indeed, more and more citizens are accessing state news online even as newsrooms at legacy media have shrunk.

In rural Washington, local news remains the backbone of community journalism. As broadband access and adoption continues to spread, rural journalists can make themselves even more indispensable to their communities. Rural journalists should routinely share best practices with each other and seek ways to receive new digital training in partnership with other professional media and the state’s journalism educators. They form the core of informed, literate rural communities in Washington.

5. ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

(By sector)

GOVERNMENT

1. McCoy, Rep. John. Chair, Technology, Energy & Communications Committee, WA legislature
2. Ray, Frieda. Broadband Programs Outreach Coordinator, WA Broadband Office

CITIZEN

3. Appel, Don. Whitman County library system Technology Administrator
4. Kirkpatrick, Kristie. Whitman County librarian
5. Laughy, Linwood. Retired rural school superintendent
6. Rosenberg, Matt. Public Data Ferret
7. Wu, Angela. Move-It Online (former policy and programs director, WA Broadband Office)

MEDIA

8. Alford, Butch. Publisher, *The Lewiston Tribune*
9. Dickerson, Becky. Editor/Publisher, *The Community Current Newspaper*
10. Graham, Gary. Editor, *The Spokesman-Review*
11. Lane, Greg. President, TVW
12. Shepard, Mike. Senior Vice President, *The Seattle Times*
13. Swanson, Kerry. Station Manager, Northwest Public Radio
14. Will, Bill. Executive director, Washington Newspaper Publishers Association

TELECOM

15. Buckley, Betty. Executive Vice President, WA Independent Telecom Association
16. Conn, David. Vice President, State Regulatory & Policy, T-Mobile USA
17. Doumit, Milt. Vice President of External Affairs and Public Policy, Verizon Wireless Pacific Northwest
18. Henson, Mike. Northwest Open Access Network (NOANET)
19. Main, Ron. Executive Director, Broadband Communications Association of WA
20. Wood, Steve. Washington Technology Industry Association
21. Youmans, Dan. President, AT&T Washington

CONVENERS (MURROW COLLEGE)

22. Shors, Benjamin. Clinical assistant professor
23. Atwood, Brett. Clinical associate professor
24. Hindman, Douglas Blanks. Associate professor
25. Hindman, Elizabeth Blanks. Associate professor
26. Pintak, Lawrence. Founding dean
27. Beam, Michael. Assistant professor

OBSERVERS

28. Anderson, Erin. Verizon Wireless
29. Wight, Kay. CBS, retired (Murrow alumna)
30. Pacheco, Keith. Verizon Wireless
31. Paeth, David. AT&T Alaska (Murrow alumnus)
32. Charlston, Scott. Verizon Wireless

6. RESEARCH METHODS

The Washington state adult sample was comprised of 995 adults age 18+ invited by Qualtrics and its online sample providers to participate in the survey in exchange for points that can be exchanged for rewards, such as money or items. The sample included an over-sample of 200 rural respondents to allow for sufficient statistical power for comparisons with non-rural residents.

Nearly 3,000 participants began the survey. Respondents were disqualified for: not completing the survey; taking too long or not enough time to complete specific items; or not meeting demographic targets such as age, WA residence or sex. The completion rate was 33.4 percent.

Panel members were randomly sampled from quota groups to produce a final sample that was comparable to the 2010 Washington state census parameters for age, sex and race.

As the table below shows, the WA sample was slightly lower in the youngest age category, with 9.8 percent in the 18-24 group versus 12.6 percent in the 2010 U.S. Census, and slightly higher in the WA 50-64 and 65+ age categories than in the 2010 U.S. Census.

The WA sample was comparable to the Census parameters for sex.

For racial categories, the WA sample had a higher percentage of Whites (82.6 percent vs. 77.3 percent) than the 2010 U.S. Census, and a significantly lower percentage of Hispanics (3.9 percent in WA versus 11.2 percent for the 2010 U.S. Census). Targeting a representative sample of Hispanics was not feasible with the budget devoted to the survey.

Due to the large increase in reliance of cellular phones and the Internet as primary communication outlets, especially for young people, random digit dialing is no longer a feasible method to reach a probability sample (Schaffner, 2011). There is ongoing debate in the survey science community about how to best resolve recent challenges to gathering representative samples. Matched quota opt-in Internet panels provide an alternative sampling method to reach members from a population. Some validating survey research has found little to no difference in terms of response quality when comparing opt-in quota samples to traditional probability sampling techniques (Sanders, Clark, & Stewart, 2007; Ansolabehere & Schaffner, 2011). Others have found higher levels of error in this comparison (i.e., Chang & Krosnick, 2009; Yeager Krosnick, Chang, Javitz, Levendusky, Simpser, & Wang, 2011).

Category	US Census+	WA sample
18-24	12.64	9.8
25-34	18.16	17
35-49	27.24	25.6
50-64	25.87	30.4
65+	16.09	17.2
	100	100
Male	49.8	49.2
Female	50.2	50.8

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White	77.27	82.6
Black	3.57	3
Asian	7.15	5
Hispanic	11.24	3.9
Other/mixed race		4.8
Median Household Income*	\$57,244	\$50K - \$75K

Sources: *U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact-Finder. Topics: People, Income and Earnings (Individuals). Geographies: WA. 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Interactive Population Search: WA – Washington. <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=53>

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8. APPENDIX

Figure 1. Difficulty of keeping up with information and news about your local community today compared to five years ago, by residence and sample.

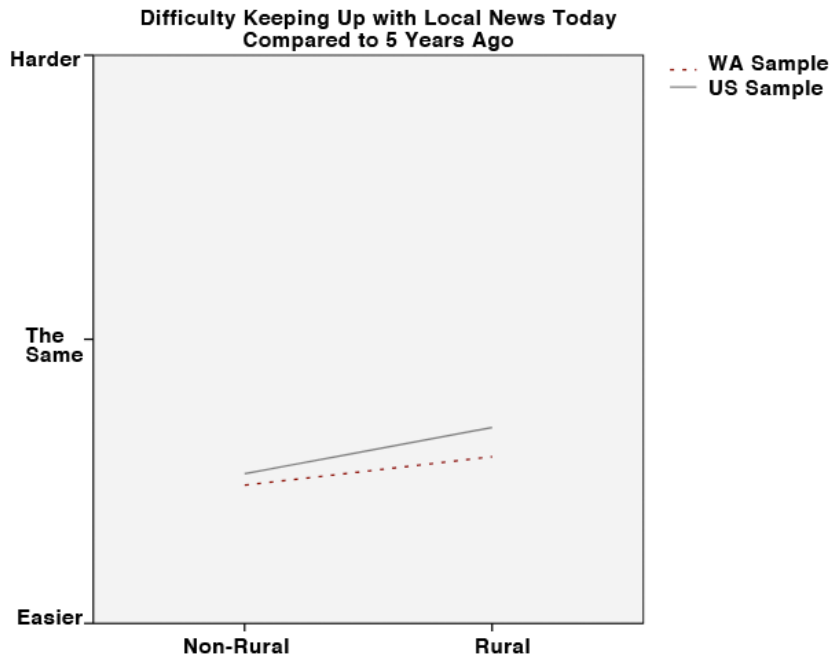


Figure 2. Newspaper Web site use for local news and information, by residence and sample.

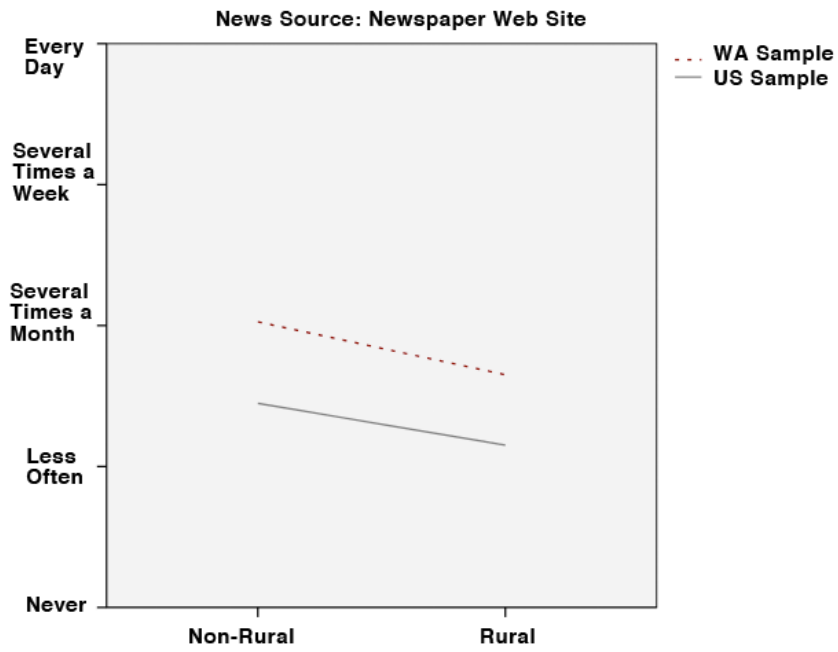


Figure 3. Television use for local news and information, by residence and sample.

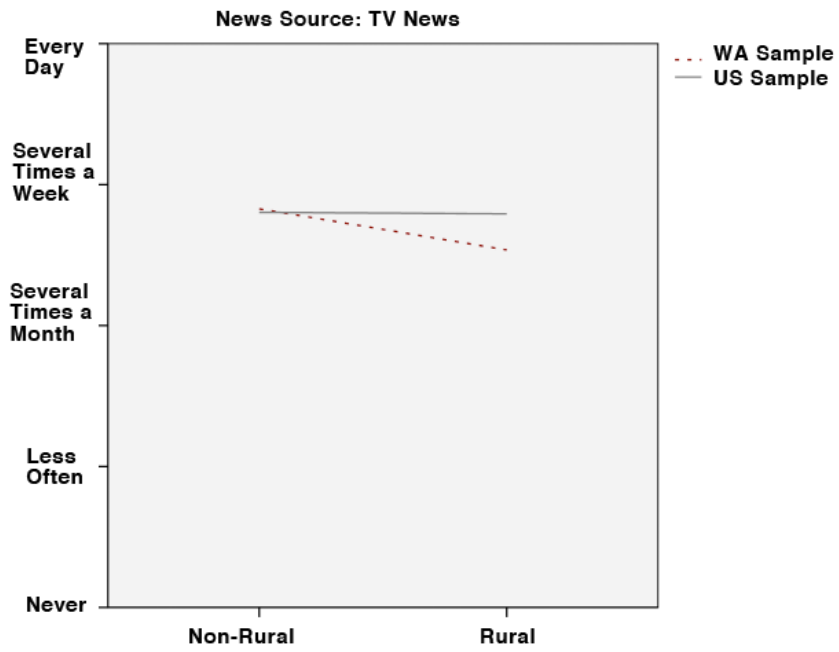


Figure 4. Television Web site use for local news and information, by residence and sample.

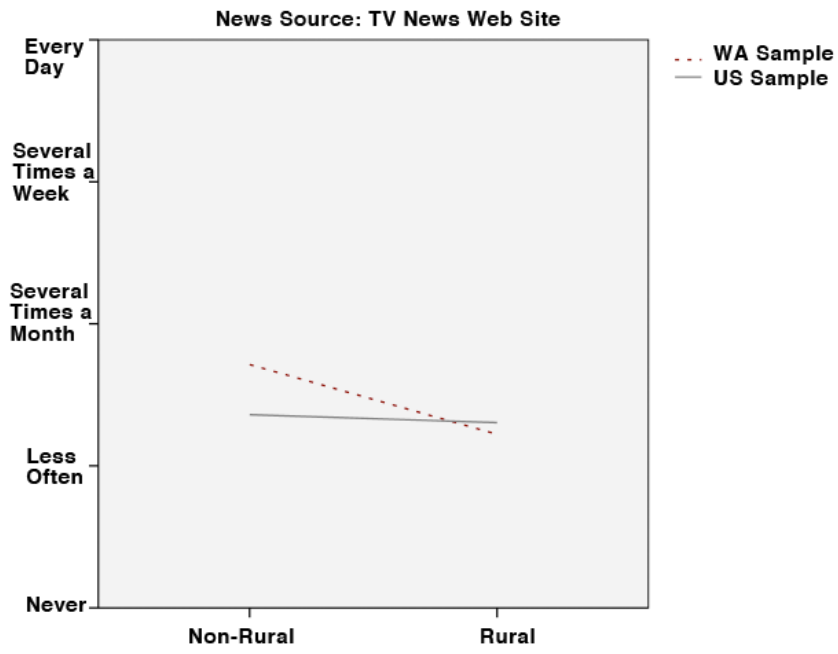


Figure 5. Radio use for local news and information, by residence and sample.

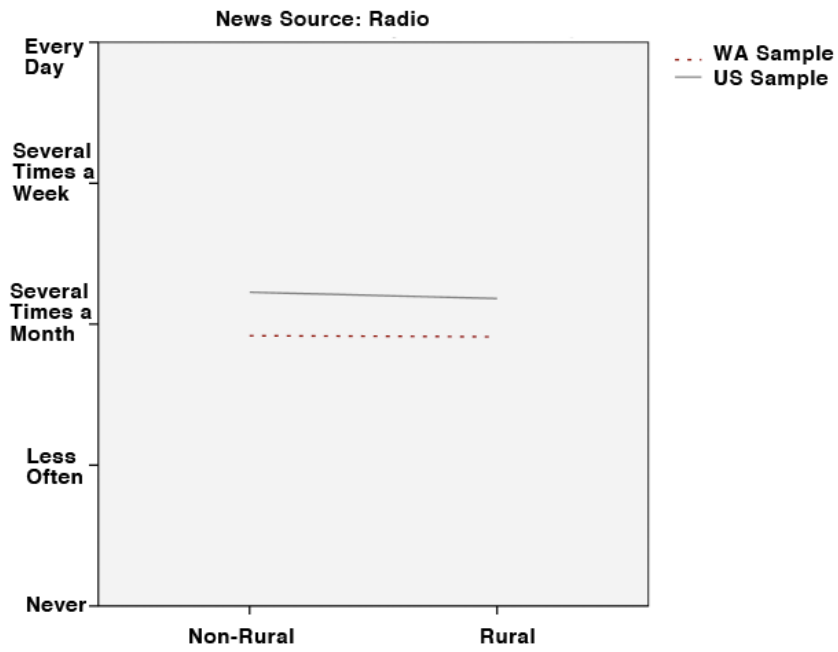


Figure 6: Radio Web site use for local news and information, by residence and sample.

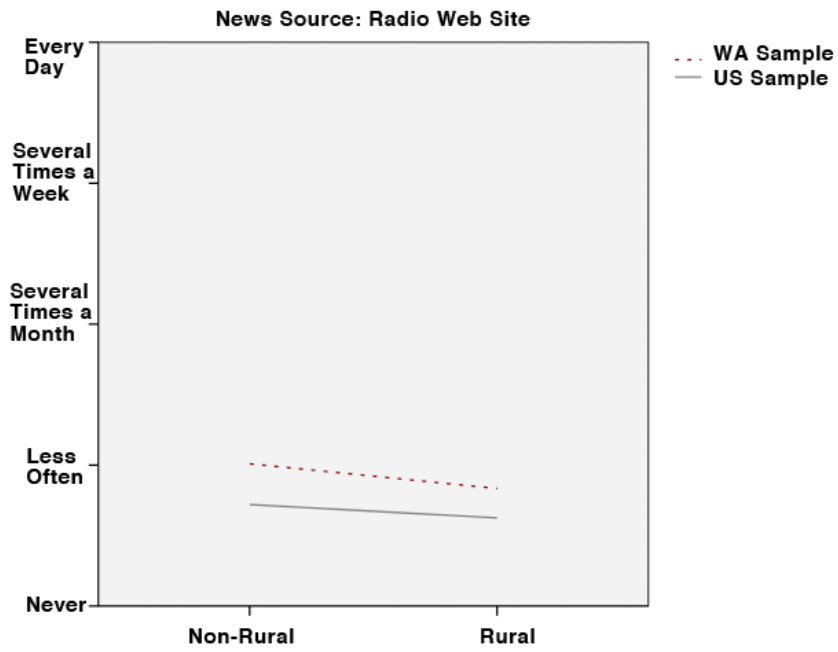


Figure 7. Use of blogs for local news and information, by residence and sample.

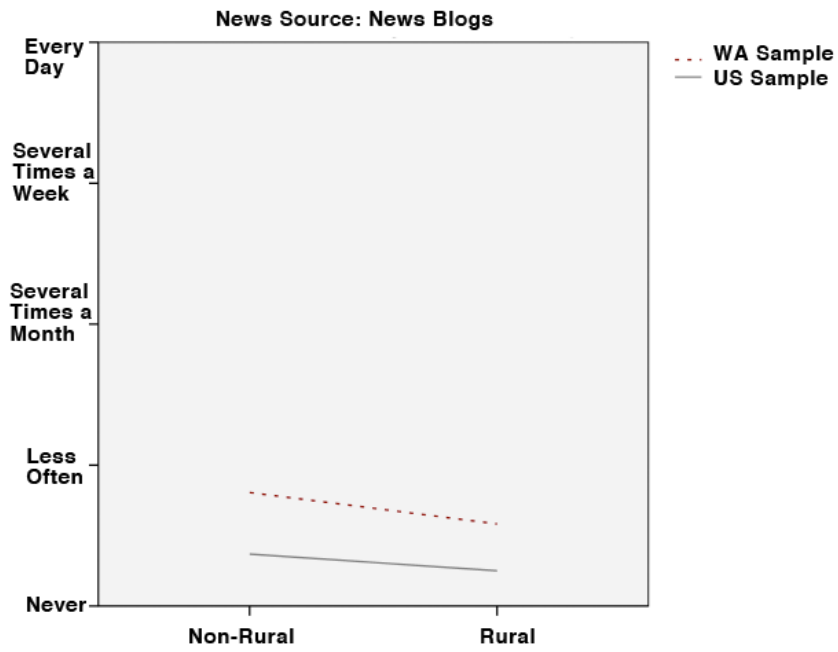
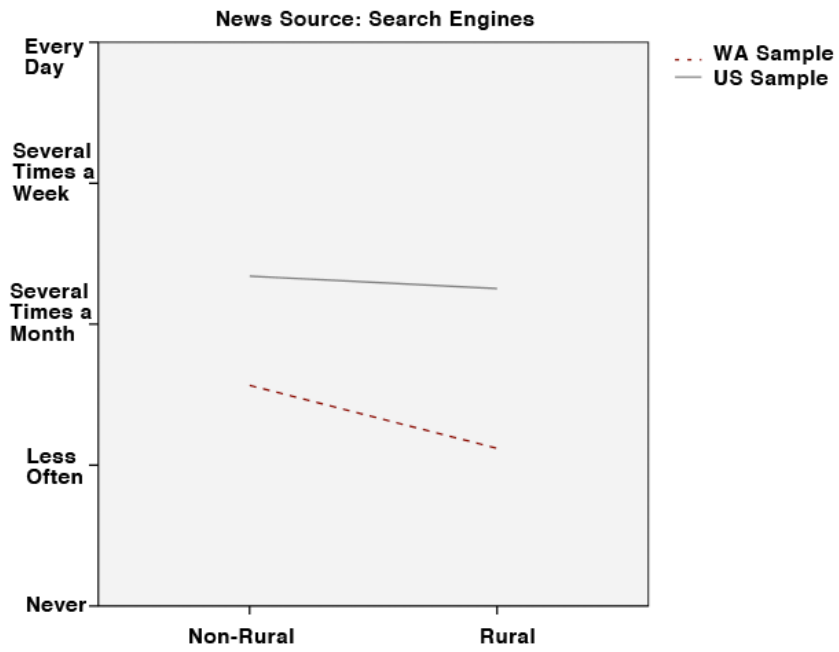


Figure 8: Search engine use for local news and information, by residence and sample.



9. ABOUT THE MURROW COLLEGE

The Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University is in a unique position to spearhead an effort to rethink the relationship between the traditional media, the state's digital drivers, the region's foundations and Washington's citizens:

- The college has the leading journalism program in the region, ranked fourth nationally for broadcast journalism (RTNDA), with a rapidly emerging multi-platform digital focus.
- Murrow operates what is probably the largest college-based nonprofit broadcasting organization in the country, consisting of PBS stations in two cities (<http://kwsu.org/>) and Northwest Public Radio (<http://www.nwpr.org/>), which broadcasts on 25 NPR stations and translators in Washington, Idaho and parts of Oregon.
- The footprint of these broadcast properties blankets the central and western portions of Washington state, which are the least covered by commercial media; and NWPR has a significant presence in the Seattle metro and northern coastal areas, as well as Olympia, the capital.
- WSU has four campuses across the state and an emerging presence in the town of Everett, about 30 miles north of Seattle.