

The Recession in Media:

Print and Online Coverage of the Nation's Financial Crisis

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TWC 521
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Introduction

2008 was the third-worst in the history of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, as the index fell some 33.84 percent during the course of the year. Into 2009, the trend has continued as the economy seems to still be looking for a floor.

The nation's newspapers and news magazines have sought ways to explain the economic crisis to their readers. While the intricacies of the financial markets can be difficult to explain, workers understand unemployment figures. Homeowners can appreciate stories about the suffering housing market and rising foreclosures. And investors fully comprehend today's realities as they watch the value of their retirement accounts dwindle to a fraction of what they were just a year ago.

To educate and inform their readers, editors and reporters online are using a mix of multimedia approaches in explaining and positioning the economic crisis in real-life, real-time examples. In print, newspapers and news magazines are offering a first-look at the economic crisis, and are urging their readers to further explore the subject online. Whether

TIME ARCHIVE



Above: Time.com.
Time Magazine has covered recessions for decades

it's a print story that explains sector-by-sector analysis of the local job market or a collaborative project on the Internet that shows how citizens feel about the economy, the media are making confusing concepts understandable, all while embracing social media's new role in daily life.

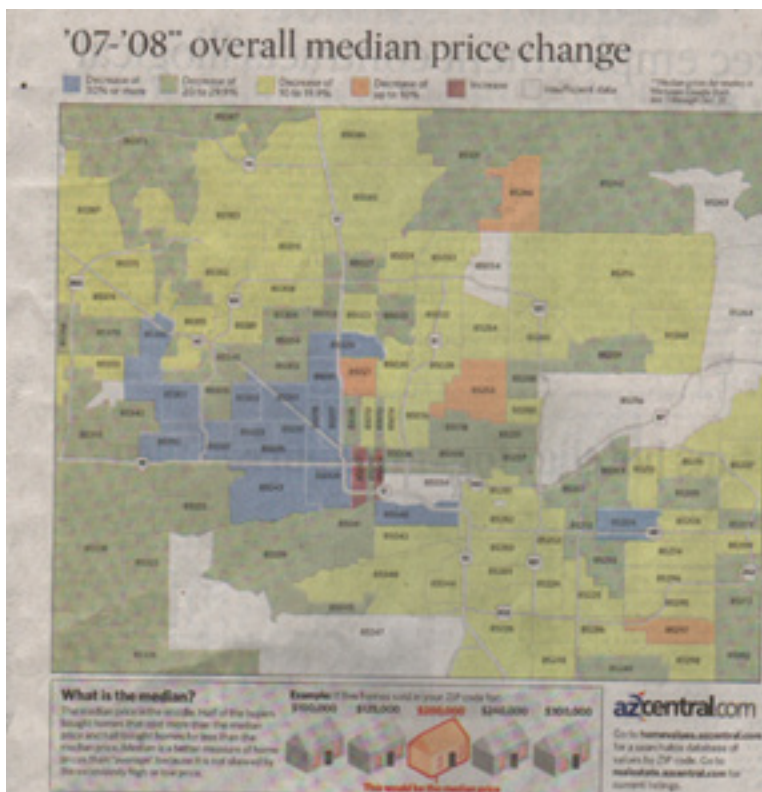
This report will analyze the coverage of the nation's economic crisis in both print and online forms and will compare the presentation of similar stories in the two media.

Content, context and design of selected economy-related stories appearing in both print and online in the *New York Times*, *Arizona Republic*, *Newsweek* and *Time* throughout the month of March were analyzed for this report.

Background: Changes in the Presentation of News

The role of the Internet in the presentation of news today is impossible to calculate. Even beyond the presentation of news online, the mere availability of online news has changed the ways news designers approach stories.

Informational graphics, “charticles” and photo-driven stories/essays are becoming common elements of today’s print newspapers. They are journalistic devices which help bridge the gap between print and online forms, attract readers to learn more in an online medium, and – eventually – begin an ongoing interaction between publisher and reader.



Above: Arizona Republic. Newspapers are turning to “charticles,” which are graphic-intensive stories that allow readers go get information through images rather than through solely text.

Multimedia

Picturing the Global Recession?



The Times wants to publish your photographs of the economic downturn in an online readers' album.

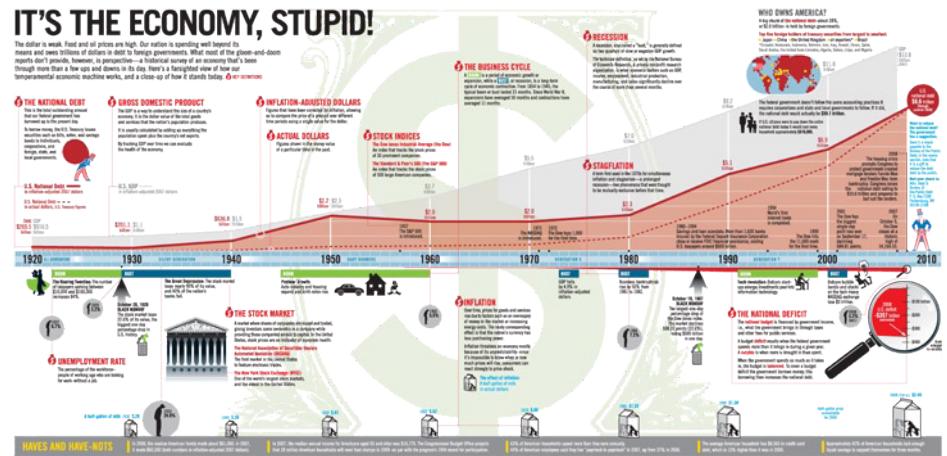


Left and Above: NYTimes.com. The New York Times' Web site features extensive multimedia presentations that allow readers to view slideshows, submit their own materials, or discuss stories with other readers.

Charticles and Graphics

Graphic designers have been impacting print journalism for decades. As computers provided more capabilities for illustrations and graphics, these artist-journalists began to change the way concepts appeared in print. Today, their importance is further being expanded online, as their work now has no physical (paper-size) boundaries and can be enhanced by hypertext. But as readers become more accustomed to reading news online and getting their information from a variety of sources, the convenience of the way that news is delivered is becoming more paramount.

Whether it's for convenience, or speed, or portability, the concept of "charticles" is becoming more common in newsrooms across the country. "For decades, news organizations have been seeking ways to stem the steady decline of newspaper circulation and woo those elusive 18- to 35-year-olds who are likely to get their news free on the Internet. Well, here's an equation that editors and designers in newsrooms ... are turning to: Chart



Above: Poynter.org. Nigel Holmes created this charticle to illustrate how the American economy works -- and fails. The poster became so popular, it was handed out at Starbucks as the economy began to suffer in 2008.

+ article = charticle. (Think Brad + Angelina = Brangelina, but not nearly as hot and quite a bit geekier)" (Stickney 36).

Charticles are devices that combine text, images and graphics and replace long-form articles. Nigel Holmes, a longtime graphic artist for *Time* magazine, created a graphic poster in October 2008 explaining the economic collapse. Entitled "**It's the Economy, Stupid,**" the poster contains a timeline that starts at 1920 and explains the intricacies of the economy. It aimed to distill a very confusing concept into a simple visual representation. "The timing of this is good," Quinn

wrote. "People everywhere are talking about whether or not this economy is as bad as during the Depression. This sure gives a good sense of what has come before."

In Quinn's article, Holmes explained that his goal for the graphic was to "create a cheat sheet for all of these things that you don't know about -- or that you think you know about -- words that people are sort of throwing around."

Indeed, graphics can communicate concepts that are difficult to grasp. But they also replace long-form journalism. After the 2006 midterm elections, the *New York Times* pub-

lished a series of graphics in print and online that analyzed voter data county-by-county. The visual was stunning and the *Times'* graphic editor said the map could have replaced a 3,000-word story.

“Perhaps only those readers with intense interest in the topic would devote the time and attention required to read the story,” Gilbert wrote of the graphic map. “... The trick is to render the journalism in both forms -- graphics as well as words -- as comprehensible as possible.”

That is not to say that readers do not want in-depth coverage and that the narrative nature of newspapers cannot translate to the online medium. Quite the contrary. According to Meyers, a recent study that analyzed readers' desires for reading stories both in print and online “proved that people are still interested in long-form content – even people who choose to read their news (only) online” (34).

Many journalism scholars would argue that WED, or the integration of writing, editing and design, are central to preserving the integrity



Above: New York Times Magazine
This article from the New York Times Magazine is an example of a graphic article. Rather than a text-driven analysis of property values, editors instead chose to use graphics and “blurbs” to convey the same message.

of journalism all while maximizing only smarter but faster and easier to the benefits of a particular medium. get through” (Reason).

Editors should come to the “realization that there is greater competition for (readers’) attention than ever before, and that this necessitates making the news report not

Personal Involvement

Citizens turn to their newspapers in times of success and crisis – it’s why papers print special editions when the local team wins a championship or a tragedy befalls a community. The newspaper provides documentation and permanence of momentous occasions in a community. But online, the news organization can further expand its reach: “The new medium presents opportunities that newspaper journalists are being asked to exploit: use of audio, video, and animated graphics. And ... the medium allows for greater activity and involvement by the reader and simultaneously allows the newspaper to monitor that activity, harness it, and respond to it” (Tremayne et al, 825).

In the Twin Cities of Minnesota, such an event occurred on Aug. 1, 2007, when a section of Interstate 35W collapsed over the Mississippi River. The Minneapolis Star Tribune, the largest newspaper in the area, hasn’t stopped covering the bridge collapse. Instead, it has



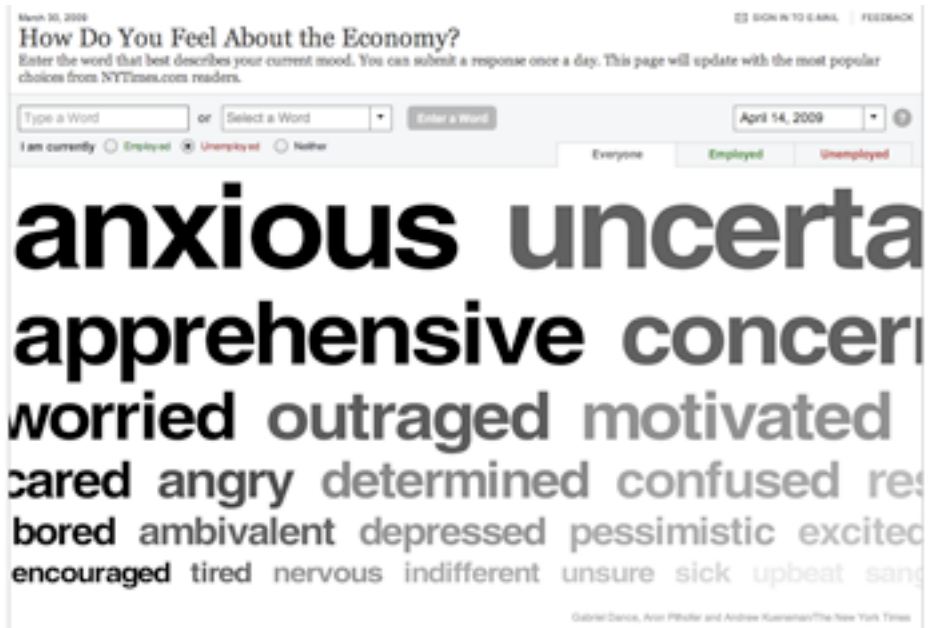
Above: StarTribune.com.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune created multimedia presentations to cover the tragic Mississippi River bridge collapse in 2007. Readers still return to the Web site to read updates and watch video interviews with survivors.

devoted its staff to continuing to cover the personal stories of the people on the scene and the families who continue to recover. Online, the paper has multimedia features including, photo galleries, stories, and video presentations of the tragedy before and after. A year after the collapse, the Star Tribune's reporters had tracked down owners of 78 of the 84 cars that were on the bridge during the collapse, and the paper's readers continued to [visit the site](#) to learn more about the human toll.

"...Readers still spend hours at a stretch with the site, trying to comprehend the whole event. Staffers have never stopped updating the site with the status of victims' recoveries" (Dickenson Quinn).

Through the Internet, a newspaper can reach out to the community and become a reflection area where citizens can relive the moment, share their thoughts and interact with one another. It's part of the evolution of the newspaper. "Instead of the closed, static product, newspapers have been evolving into an open, dynamic service that not



Above: NYTimes.com.

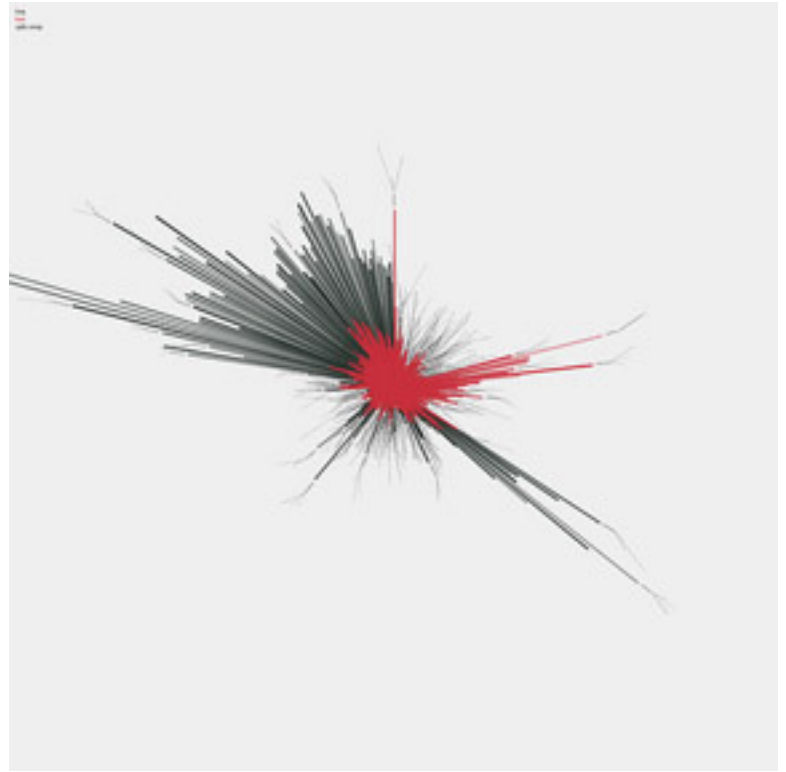
The New York Times has created online areas where readers can post their feelings about the economy. Rather than providing just news coverage, the site instead gives readers a chance to interact with their community and see how the recession is affecting people's emotions across the country.

only breaks the time paradigm of the twenty-four-hour news cycle, but also absorbs the multimedia dimension" (Tremayne et al, 825-826).

Usability

As the newspaper and information industry adapts to today's interactive environments, some news providers are taking extraordinary leaps in making their content available and relevant – in a word, usable. The *New York Times* Company introduced an API (or Application Protocol Interface) in February 2009, which allows Web developers access to more than 2.8 million articles published by the newspaper since 1981.

Indeed, newspapers are continually finding new and more innovative ways to interact with their audience. From message boards to blogs, the interactivity of Web 2.0 is establishing a new relationship between newspapers and their readers. According to Tremayne et al, this is part of an evolution of journalism. “Another part is the new relationship between reader and newspaper, and between reader and reader. Evident across the years of this study was a growing voice for readers, even on the front pages of online newspapers. Much of this came in the forms of local blogs, a feature increasingly apparent on news Web

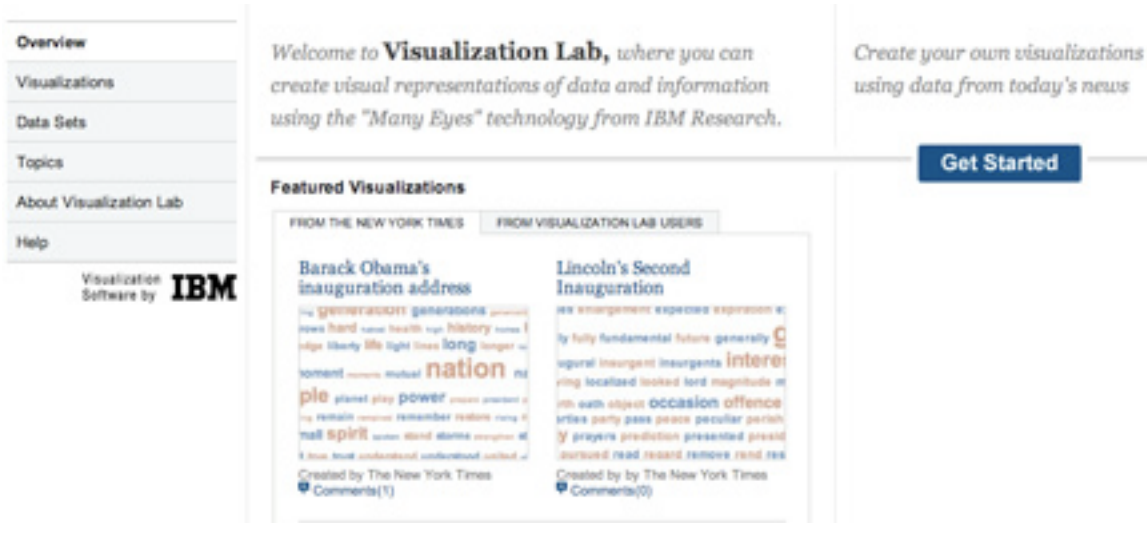


Above: Blprnt.com.
Artist Jer Thorp used the New York Times' API to create this visual representation of the Times' use of the words "Iran" and "Iraq" since 1981. From this graphic -- which is designed like a clock -- we can see that Iran was covered heavily in the early 80s (think noon to 3 o'clock) and that Iraq became a focus of coverage from the 90s on (10 o'clock to noon).

sites. Interaction, debate, and social networking are becoming visible components of online news. The ‘service’ that news sites increasingly provide, beyond the reporting that remains the primary mission, is the bringing together of citizens in a way different than last century” (836).

The revolutionary development of the *Times*' API makes the news-

paper's product re-usable, viable and creates an interaction between the newspaper and Internet users throughout the world. “More than a technical change that makes geeks' hearts go pitter-patter, the *Times* announcement represents a change in how a news organization handles its most important asset: the journalism it has created over the years. By untethering its archives from its Web site, the *Times* can spread its



Left: NYTimes.com. The New York Times' Web site features a "visualization lab" where readers can create visual representations of the news and share them with other readers. The Times also has a database of visualizations created by its own staff. The concept gives an extra dimension to the news.

journalism -- and its influence -- all over the Web." (Meyers) And the move had almost immediate effect: less than a week after the release of the *Times* API, Jer Thorp, a Canadian artist, had used the service to create **visual representations of Times coverage**. His analysis of the frequency of uses of "Iran" and "Iraq" in coverage dating back to 1981 provides a distinct visual impression that reading never could; the application allows users to extract deeper meanings from stories and coverage.

"The *Times* also is handing people the tools to do extensive and precise media criticism," Meyer said. "An interested programmer could create word clouds of the *Times*' business

coverage in the years leading up to the recent housing crisis, and see the relative frequency of topics like sub-prime mortgages and investments."

This is part of a phenomenon that Palser calls "a growing form of digital journalism that lets the user manipulate data to create his or her own story" (Palser 48). The *Times*' Web site has **a page dedicated** to "visualizations" and allows users to present their own.

Coverage of the Financial Crisis

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, the United States entered a recession during the first quarter of 2008. It would take a year, however, for the nation to fully realize the dire state of the economy and the impact it would have on the daily lives of Americans. Journalists were charged with the task of explaining the crisis and disseminating complex concepts such as credit default swaps and sub-prime mortgages to everyday consumers.

While everyday numbers were easy to grasp – the Dow Jones Industrial Average plummeted from 10,831 to 8,451 from October 1 to 10 in 2008, and with it fell the investment accounts for millions of Americans – the bigger picture was much more difficult to comprehend. But through combining traditional storytelling techniques with the use of multimedia tools online, newspapers were able to use their print and online products as interactive, educational devices that helped readers understand the economic crisis in a personal way and begin to take action on their own.

Charticles alone would not completely provide the information readers needed, just as narrative could not give readers the ability to express their feelings about the matter. “Readers want one of two things. They want to get their need-to-know info quickly and in an understandable way. Charticles can handle that. But readers also want to be told stories in longer, captivating ways, in compelling traditional narratives” (Stickney 39). In these examples of coverage during the economic crisis, we find news organizations combining both narrative and charticle to provide readers with complete access to data and meaning. While news organizations take different approaches to accomplishing this, some more successfully than others, it is apparent that the goal is to provide comprehensive information in a variety of formats.



The image shows a screenshot of the 'Multimedia' section on the NYTimes.com website. It features several interactive stories and graphics:

- INTERACTIVE MAP: Geography of a Recession**: A map of the United States showing unemployment rates, updated as of January. Includes a 'Related Article' link.
- GRAPHIC: The Stimulus Plan: How to Spend 878.7 Billion**: A detailed look at the final package passed by Congress. Includes a link to the 'Final Bill (pdf) Part One: Appropriations | Part Two: Tax Package'.
- INTERACTIVE FEATURE: Tracking the 8700 Billion Bailout**: How the money from the Troubled Asset Relief Program is being doled out to banks, insurance companies and others. Includes a 'Progress' bar showing \$379.8 billion of \$446.8 billion.
- INTERACTIVE FEATURE: How the Government Dealt With Past Recessions**: Since the Great Depression, presidents have tried many methods to fight recessions. Three economists explain what worked and what didn't. Includes a bar chart.
- INTERACTIVE GRAPHIC: Credit Crisis Indicators**: Five ways to measure the recent disruptions in the credit markets. Includes a line graph.
- INTERACTIVE FEATURE: 10 Weeks of Financial Turmoil**: A look at recent events that have shaken the world's financial system. Includes a photo of a trading floor.
- INTERACTIVE FEATURE: On the Trading Floor**: Vilas Bajaj, who covers finance for The Times, offers an interactive tour of the New York Stock Exchange. Includes a photo of a trading floor.

Above: NYTimes.com. The New York Times' Economy page online provides access to several multimedia stories, maps and interactive graphics.

INSIDE BUSINESS

Just laid off? If you're knocked down, pick yourself back up, starting with these 25 tips.

IN CAREER BUILDER

Resume makeover. A quality resume, tailored to the position, might make the difference.

AT AZCENTRAL.COM

Tools to take control. Go to economy.azcentral.com for updates, and follow Chad Graham's jobs blog.

Arizona economic snapshot

Jobs
Unemployment
Unemployment rate
Initial unemployment claims
Housing market
Taxable sales

Initial unemployment claims, year-over-year, percentage change by month



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Above: Azcentral.com.

The Arizona Republic sends readers from its paper version to its online version through "calls to action" (top graphic). Online, readers can look through charts and other graphics to analyze the economic status of the area.

Recession Coverage: Charticles and Graphics

On March 1, 2009, the *Arizona Republic* newsprint edition featured a cover story and two-page inside spread analyzing the job market throughout the state. The cover featured a graphic showing that the state's unemployment rate was 7 percent in January and had risen sharply from 5.6 percent in August. Interestingly, unlike many *Arizona Republic* articles in this study, the paper version included no references or “calls to action” that sent readers to Azcentral.com. A two-page inside spread has vignettes on employment statistics in 11 different fields from information to transportation. But the story vanished off Azcentral.com within a few days and was unavailable without purchase after seven days. Clicks on the “jobs” links on editorial portions of Azcentral.com instead bring the user to careerbuilder.com the newspaper’s partner for classified advertising.

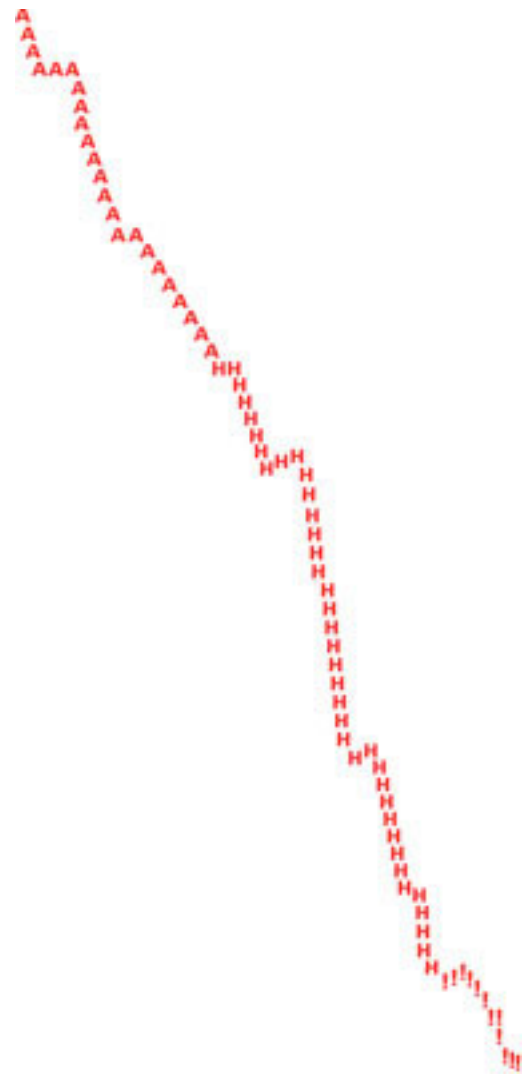
The *Times* would often mix its content with both emotional narratives and concrete analysis of the economy. “Are We There Yet?” was a cover story in the *Times*’ “Week

in Review” section on March 15, 2009. In this case, we can see first-hand the way that design can impact a story. In print, the story features an attention-getting graphic by Paul Sahre that looks like a downward-turning stock chart in all red – upon closer look, it becomes clearer that the chart is actually the word AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH. Inside, the story features three

black-and-white charts that illustrate ways to ascertain whether the economy has bottomed out. But online, the story doesn’t have the same attention-grabbing aspect: The Sahre graphic is there, but you have to look especially closely to see the text within the graphic. Instead, the graphics are made paramount and can be viewed by forward clicking from one to another.



Above: The Arizona Republic. The Arizona Republic uses charts and graphics to help explain local economic conditions.



Clockwise from top: New York Times, NYTimes.com, and NYTimes.com.

The New York Times' evaluation of economic indicators and how they can prove when the economy has finally bottomed out is a good representation of presenting news in both print and online. In print, the story's design immediately communicated a feeling that times are tough; but online, the story immediately began with interactive charts and graphics (right). The main graphic for the print version is made paramount while online, that graphic was minimized.

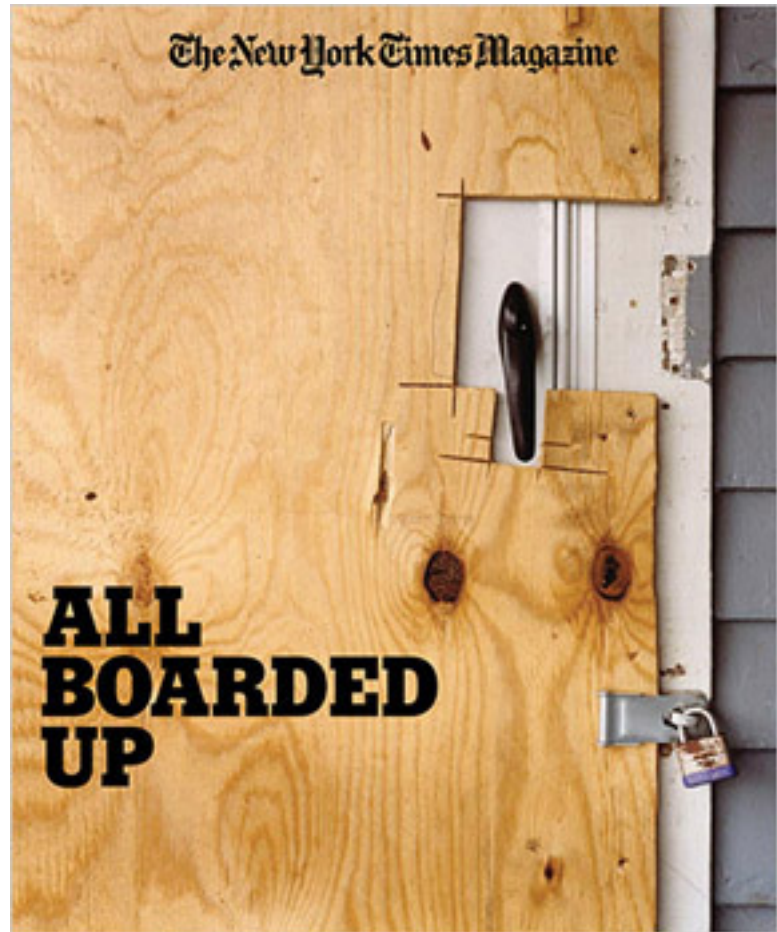


Recession Coverage: Personal Involvement

The cover story of the March 8, 2009 *New York Times Magazine* “All Boarded Up” took an emotional approach in reporting on the nation’s foreclosure crisis. It follows a Cleveland-area city councilman and a housing court judge who were watching the neighborhoods in their communities disintegrate before his eyes. Instead of charts and graphics, the story features half-page photos of boarded up and abandoned buildings: urban blight is the norm.

“Even Victorian mansions are vulnerable to vandals and squatters: For months, Pianka helped keep watch on a 19th century Victorian down the street. One neighbor paid for the electricity so the vacant house would be protected against vandals by an alarm system. Pianka shoveled the snow in the winter and often parked his car in the driveway so it would appear as if someone were living there” (Kotolwitz, 35).

Online, the story appears in the **exact same format**. The same photos that appeared in the story are available in a slideshow But in the online version, there is a nota-



Above: NYTimes.com
The New York Times’ Web site often publishes materials online exactly -- or almost exactly -- as they appeared in print.

tion that takes readers to a **special page directed completely to the paper’s coverage of foreclosures**.

This page is not connected to the *Times* Business or Economy sections. It stands alone and contains related photo slideshows, videos of President Obama speaking about the housing crisis, and the chance to search more than 1,000 foreclosure-related articles.



for an annual market (CWE) and local housing options. "They don't have a gun," he had learned. He explained that mortgage loans enough to cover wages because it would mean more prison time should they be caught. Even in CWE's, there are rules.

Finally, we found himself and bread piled in the kitchen and down stairs. "The crap we deal with," Brancatelli muttered to himself. He stopped a phone with his colleague and sent an e-mail message to the city's Building and Housing Department, urging the department to send someone to secure the house. He also drew that one or three times a day. But finding a collection of notes like this is of particular concern, even the past year there have been more than 400 lines in his yard, all in vacant houses. The fire department used to station but has not caught anyone. The general belief is that the lines are not either by squatters trying to start wars or by mischievous kids. Brancatelli, though, wonders about it if it might be squatters who don't like the light on their block. "Maybe I'm overthinking it," he says. More likely, he's guessing. He would like to see more of these houses just disappear.

This is Brancatelli's consistent worry of the abandoned houses should be used. There is no one to sell or to inspectively see that they have little value, so they have been sold at their market and are in other danger. There are an estimated one million lender-owned properties nationwide, and an average each house sits empty for eight months, a length of time that is only growing. Domestically, though, it costs roughly \$6,000 a house. This even says, Loretta Lynn borrowing a mortgage someone doesn't give the city a number of boarded homes. First, the city told them that wouldn't be fine, but only if the company came up with money to pay for the necessary demolition. The transaction never occurred.

Last summer, Congress appropriated \$1.4 billion in emergency funds for cities to acquire and rehab abandoned properties. The additional \$1 billion

will be available under the recently enacted economic stimulus package. The legislation was drafted by the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. In Cleveland and a handful of other cities had to lobby hard to convince Congress that "subsidies" to their cities meant tearing down homes — not constructing them. Last month, Cleveland said it planned to use more than half of its \$25.5 million allotment to create 3,700 homes. This presents an opportunity to manage the city, to assess the situation and provide a space for the new. That's the idea money sets in motion, an incentive to the private sector. Cuyahoga County is also establishing a land bank, a public entity that can acquire distressed properties and hold on to the land until improved economic times allow for redevelopment. The county hopes to purchase banks to acquire their distressed properties, which the land bank would then use, as well as growing some abandoned properties in the suburbs, which the county could eventually restore and sell.

Other cities — including Minneapolis, Youngstown, Detroit and Cincinnati — have just made it into a third of their neighborhood stabilization funds for demolition. "As programs start vacant for longer periods of time," says Joe Schilling, a founder of the National Future Properties Campaign, "it's inevitable that cities in some of the fast-growing communities, they'll have to look at demolition." Phoenix, for instance, has set aside a quarter of its grant money to tear down abandoned homes.

Cleveland may use some of these demolition dollars on houses now owned by the federal government. Between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and another like Future Mac and Freddie Mac, the federal government has owned of roughly a thousand abandoned properties in Cleveland. Among the most from the house with the number inside one a one-and-a-half story vacant property owned by HUD, which had guaranteed the lot mortgage. On the lower porch, a large picture window was wide open, but Brancatelli, whose car never through the front door. Going on a bench, he punched the numbers on the address on the lockbox. The meter was gone, as was the paper piping. HUD usually sold this house — for \$1,000 — but didn't realize the new owner that the house had been condemned. "They changed the house," Brancatelli growled. "It's this kind of stuff that drives me nuts."

A few weeks ago Brancatelli persuaded HUD to let the street out of his purchase. Then HUD offered to sell the city a distressed property, including this one, for \$100 each. You might think this was something to celebrate. Brancatelli, though, is not. As he sees it, the city will now have to pay some of its emergency HUD financing to demolish houses that HUD was responsible for.

As the city's emergency fund has become one of accounting complaints directed to one way or another from the foreclosure crisis. In November, Zachary Ruff, who operates the yard near State Village, received a pleading phone call from Cuyahoga County. He is a contractor and a third-time divorcee who lives near a vacant house. Cuyahoga County told Ruff that as he was leaving for work at 7 a.m. morning, the ground was low living areas window and instead a pair of eyes staring back at him from behind the door in a window dark over there. Ruff had the house secured, but within days the boards were pulled off. Cuyahoga County then purchased a parcel that the new owner would be given. The local police commander calls her regularly, but to make sure everything is OK, someone has been assigned with others to walk. Last summer, while Cuyahoga County was doing work, someone stopped to let back into the hallway to neighbor across the street who was thinking to let back into her house. They walked to her and she brought him. This neighbor is gone now. Another homeowner, by every morning, the others up a paper, and then the



One end of a row of houses in Cleveland boarded up. Many of the properties are boarded up and abandoned, with few signs of life.

down" the school. Brancatelli crossed himself. "I hope so," he mumbled. "Papers and their persistence are pretty much all Brancatelli has to get on their feet. Cleveland is riding from the foreclosure crisis. There have been roughly 10,000 foreclosures in two years. For all of 2007 before it was considered to be the high foreclosure rates in parts of California, Nevada and Florida, Cleveland's rate was among the highest in the country. It's now 10th among metropolitan areas. Vacant houses are not a new phenomenon in the city targeted by the closing of American steel mills. Cleveland has long been an industry. With better manufacturing jobs to attract workers, it has lost half its population since 1960. Its poverty rate is one of the highest in the nation. But in all these years, nothing has approached the current scale of crisis.

And in December, just when local officials thought things couldn't get worse, Cuyahoga County, which includes Cleveland, passed a record number of foreclosure filings. The number of empty houses is so staggering high that no one has an accurate count. The city estimates that 15,000 houses, or 1 in 15, are vacant. The county estimates that it's more likely 15,000. Most of the vacant houses are owned by lenders who have sold on the properties and by the individuals who are now struggling to pay up houses in bulk, so if they were trading in household cards.

Brancatelli and others — judges, the police, city officials, workers — are grappling with the wreckage left behind, although to tell the full story would be pointless. Even with President Barack Obama's plan to

help prevent foreclosures, the city is bracing for more, especially as more people lose their jobs. The city's unemployment rate is now 8.8 percent. However, on some streets in many houses are already vacant that once would have had an owner who was successfully avoided to stay. "It does happen as fast, and the pace is you really have little control," Brancatelli said one. "It's months on the street, and you try to prevent that avalanche." Working away from a house even makes a kind of economic sense when the mortgage far exceeds the home's value. Obama's foreclosure prevention plan does little to address that situation. Some outside investors have descended on Cleveland, they pick up properties for the price of a large flat screen TV and then try to sell them for a profit.

So much has defied conventional wisdom. It's what Brancatelli keeps telling us. A few months ago, he met with Luis Jimenez, a train conductor from Long Beach, Calif. Jimenez had purchased a house on Brancatelli's street on an old railroad line in Cleveland to make some money with the property. The property house has a long up-front of bad deals. Since 2004, it has been foreclosed twice and sold four times, for prices ranging from \$6,000 to \$1,500. Jimenez brought in the \$4,000. When Jimenez arrived in Cleveland, he learned that the house had been vacant for two years, mortgages had been paid the walls to get the copper piping, signed the note from the walls and returned the boiler from the basement. He also learned that the city had condemned the house and would now charge him to demolish it. Brancatelli asked Jimenez, "What was your thinking, buying a house vacant, from 2,000 miles away?" "It was cheap," Jimenez shrugged. He didn't want to walk away from the house, but he didn't have the money to restore. The property remains an empty

Above, left and right: New York Times Magazine. Rather than provide charts and graphics to explain the nation's economic crisis, the New York Times Magazine instead publishes stories with a personal perspective on home foreclosures. Images of struggling small business owners and boarded up homes convey emotion that could not necessarily be provided by facts or figures.

Recession Coverage: Usability

Time magazine profiled personal finance guru Suze Orman “the most trusted voice for millions of Americans suffering financial pain” (Kohlatkar, 32) in its March 16 edition. In print the story was a standard four-page spread. But online, *Time*’s editors added hypertext to the story, which linked readers to more content about the greater economic crisis or financial tools such as smart investment tips. Like many other publications, the “sharing” capabilities are astounding on

Time.com. Readers can link to an article from more than three-dozen different types of services and products. This also is the case with *Newsweek*, which also has a video feature on its site that shows podcasts from partner companies.

Usability is a common feature in articles that covered the financial crisis. News providers created stories that readers could personally use, such is the case for the *Arizona Republic*’s analysis of Phoenix-area property values by ZIP code that appeared on March 22, 2009. The paper focused on real estate throughout its print version, from

an A1 story discussing “bargains” (aka foreclosures) in the area to the Business section spread that showcased home value trends by each ZIP code in the area. The data are overwhelming on the page – two complete pages of charts and graphics. Readers were informed they could also obtain the same data [online at Azcentral.com](#) in a much savvier format.

The *Republic* is an excellent example of a publication that wants its readers to find more news online. Most section fronts feature “calls to action” for readers to further explore a topic online. While the daily

Business section is fairly shallow, the paper’s primary real estate and economy writers, [Catherine Re-
agor](#) and [Betty Beard](#), have blogs that they update almost daily.

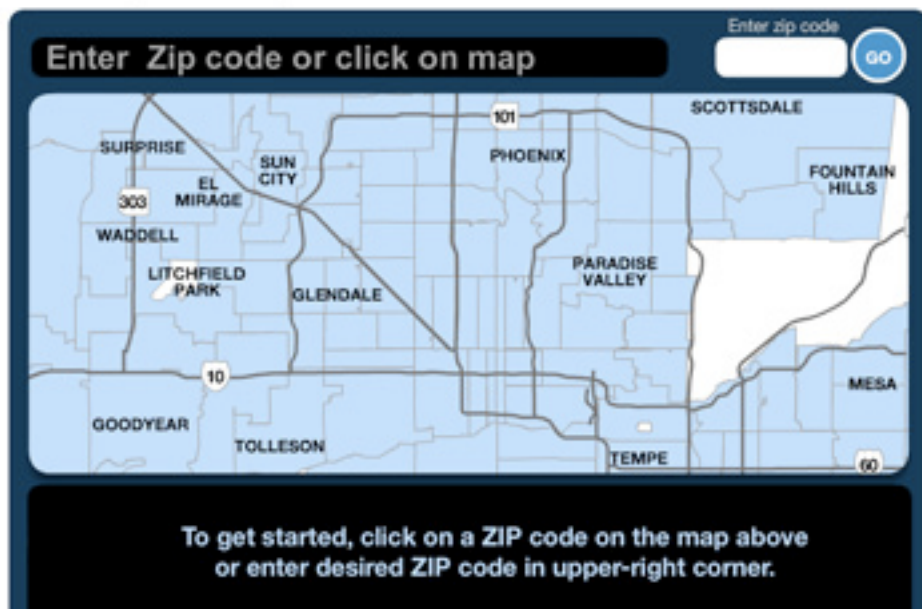
The *Republic* seems to have a point of view that places the Web site as the primary source for information; the *New York Times* is exactly the opposite. The print version features few if any references to the Web. Reporters’ e-mail addresses are not printed; there are no references to “find out more online.” Should a reader visit the Web site, he/she will be greeted with a variety of multimedia for further exploration, rang-



Above: Time.com. Online news providers allow their readers to share articles through dozens of different formats, including instant messaging, Facebook or Twitter.

DATA CENTER Valley Home Values

What is your home worth in this changing Arizona housing market? What about that home that you'd like to buy? Check the value of homes recently sold in the Phoenix, Arizona, area since 2003. Search for home in metro Phoenix, Pinal and Maricopa Counties.



Left: Azcentral.com
The Arizona Republic's Web site features easy-to-use databases that synthesize pages and pages of printed data into a single, searchable tool.

ing form video to charts and photo slideshows.

For example, the *Times*' magazine March 15, 2009 featured a photo essay – a form of a charticle – showing what types of properties in the New York area could be purchased for \$1 million. The same content appeared online in a slideshow, but [with a link to view more, similar content.](#)

Perhaps one of the most dramatic contrasts between print and online coverage exists in the March 23, 2009 issue of *Newsweek*. The cover

story “Stop Saving Now!” takes readers through the intricacies of the consumer-driven economy and explains, “for our \$14 trillion economy to recover and thrive, hoarders must open their wallets and become consumers, and businesses must once again be willing to roll the dice” (Gross 28). The story is followed by coverage of the banking crisis and the decisions facing the Obama administration and an investigation into the inner-workings of Swiss banks. The comprehensive narratives provide consumers with practical knowledge and even a bit of material to get their blood boil-

ing (Swiss banks), but it ends there.

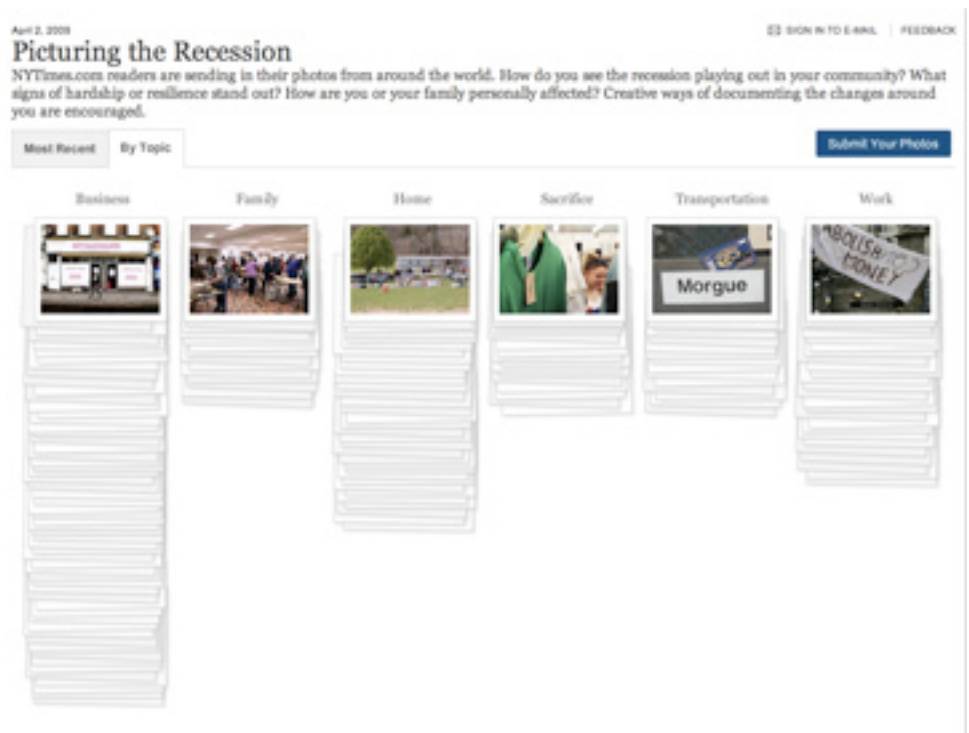
Online, the overall structure of the text is different. It's usable. Before the Gross article even begins – between the byline and the actual article – is an image offering readers suggested articles from editors, recommended articles, and articles about related topics (such as Citigroup). Hyperlinks within the text bring readers to other *Newsweek* stories about those very phrases, such as Rockefeller Center. Readers are provided with a link to video of an AIG executive testifying before Congress and two recession-related photo slideshow essays. Readers are faced with dozens of decisions they must make – Where to continue? To continue at all? To abandon the article? – Whereas in print, the choice was turn the page or put the magazine down.

Conclusion

From the analysis of these publications, we find that the online platform provides readers with extensive opportunities for collaboration and interaction. While the print medium provides outlets for emotional stories – such as the profiles of the neighborhoods being decimated by foreclosures – it is online where readers can go to share and further explore the subject matter. When a reader views a story online, he/she can view videos, post a comment, read a blog and create a “visualization” of other stories.

By just taking a cursory glance at the home pages of newspapers and magazines, we see that these sites are not simply portals for delivering the printed medium; rather, they are expanding the reach of the original product. Readers can share their thoughts and feelings, explore further into a topic, connect with people across the world, and use the information in new and inventive forms.

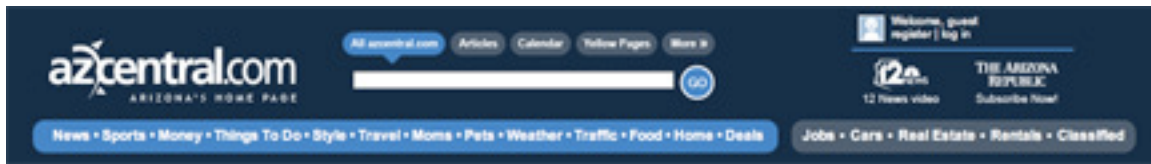
The serious nature of the economic crisis has forced newspapers and magazines to create new arenas for



Above: NYTimes.com.

The New York Times encourages readers to submit photos that represent their experiences with the economy.

readers to learn more. Similar to the Star Tribune’s coverage of the bridge collapse, consumers can find real-life, real-world content that relates to their everyday life. When in print, the news is information; when online, the news is usable.



Above from top: Azcentral.com, NYTimes.com, Time.com, Newsweek.com.
Media Web sites offer more than stories. They are portals to other sources of information -- such as Newsweek's partnership with television network MSNBC -- and offer the ability to interact with information.

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