

What is, and what's no longer, in the P-I

Jim Fisher

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Whatever else the shadow of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer that premieres online today will be, it won't be a newspaper.

And that has nothing to do with the fact that it won't be published on paper, as the P-I was for 146 years before its last edition appeared Tuesday. Most newspapers in this country are published on the Web as well as on web presses these days, and although that hasn't immunized them from the financial pressures that killed the P-I, they are still producing roughly the same product they long have.

It is the news that will largely be missing from SeattlePI.com, the online product replacing the Hearst-owned newspaper. And what takes its place, no matter how valuable, is material that is in much less short supply these days than the information that results only from phone-working, pavement-pounding, source-grilling reporting.

The people who did most of that reporting for the P-I are among the 130 who lost their jobs Monday. The 20 who remain, to be joined by another 20 selling advertising, won't be "specific reporters," P-I reporter Joseph Tartakoff wrote.

Instead, "all staff are expected to write, edit, take photos, shoot video and produce multimedia, according to a statement from Michelle Nicolosi, who will lead the site as executive producer," he added.

Note that the new title for Nicolosi, an assistant managing editor at the P-I, sounds more like that of someone in the entertainment industry than the news business. That is not the only signal of what SeattlePI.com readers can expect. In a Monday preview of what they will see online, Nicolosi conceded there won't be much original reporting.

"We don't feel like we have to cover everything ourselves," she wrote. "We'll partner for some content; we won't duplicate what the wire is reporting unless we have something unique to offer; we'll continue to showcase the great content from our 150 or so reader bloggers; and we'll link offsite to content partners and competitors to create the best mix of news on our front page."

In addition, the publication will continue a partnership with TVGuide.com, begin a new one with Hearst magazines from Cosmopolitan to Popular Mechanics and

publish columns by politicians, both in and out of office. (One such column, appearing Tuesday by U.S. Rep. Jim McDermott, devoted almost as much space to lyrics by Bob Dylan as to words from the congressman himself.)

The new site will also feature such popular P-I fixtures as columnist Joel Connelly, sports columnists Art Thiel and Jim Moore, and editorial cartoonist David Horsey, whose work this page is proud to publish.

The prospect of such an assemblage might make the handful of employees now answering to Nicolosi giddy: "Literally, I'm getting e-mails from staff with the subject line, 'Woo!' And Tweets that read, 'I'm so excited about everything ... can't even describe the feeling.' " (This appeared the day most other P-I employees were packing their things and exiting the building.) But it invites this question: Do people really want a former newspaper that has forsaken not only paper but most of its actual news? - J.F.