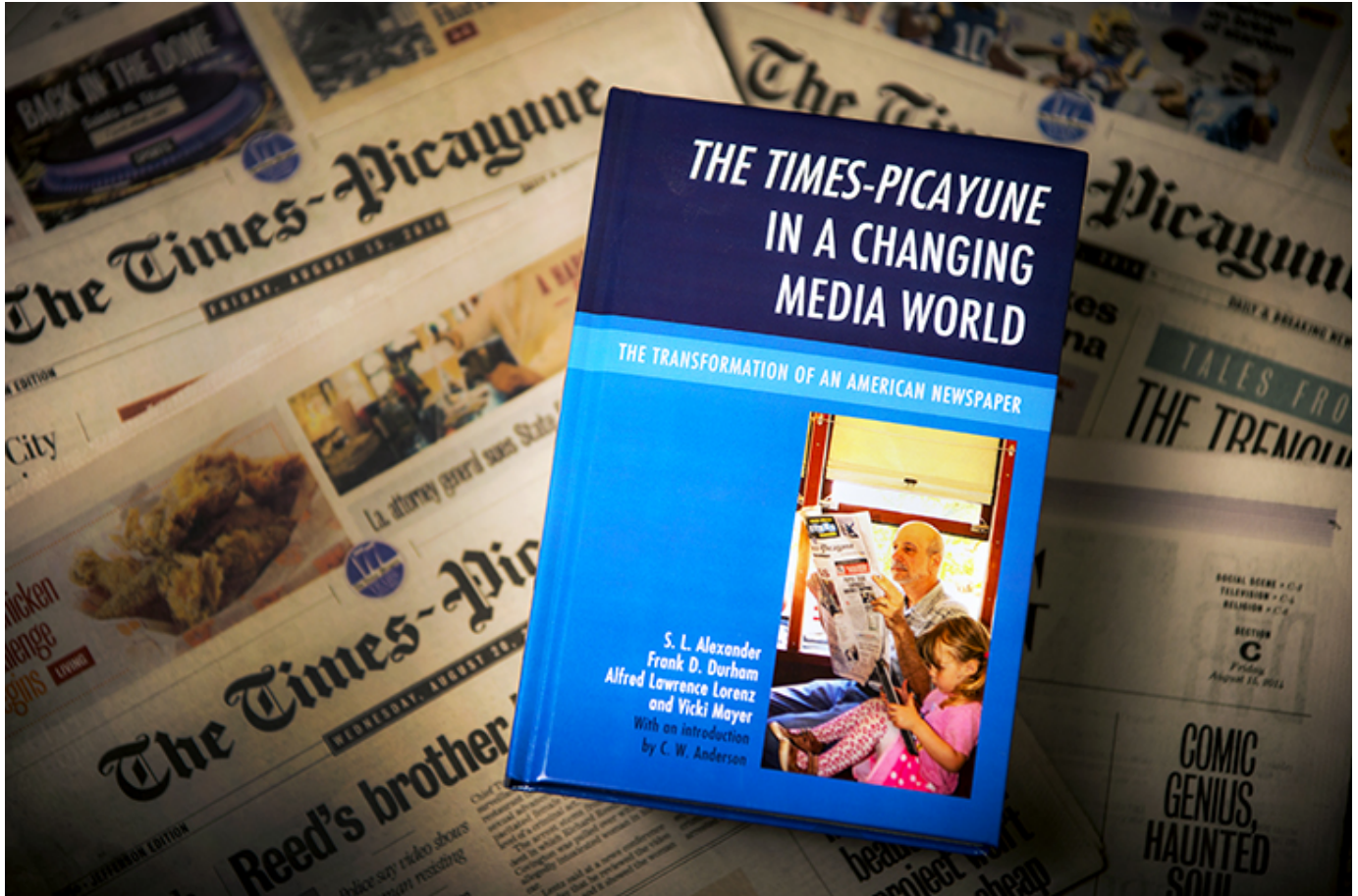


The "Times" are a-changing

August 21, 2014 11:00 AM Mary Cross

mcross3@tulane.edu



Communication professor Vicki Mayer co-authored *The Times-Picayune in a Changing Media World*, examining the journalistic cost of moving from a daily print edition to digital news. (Photo by Ryan Rivet)

In fall 2012, Advance Publications forever changed how New Orleanians receive news. The company shifted the focus of *The Times-Picayune* from printing daily newspapers to generating digital content, downsizing the production of the daily paper to three days a week and laying off more than 200 newspaper employees.

In a book published this summer, [*The Times-Picayune in a Changing Media World: The Transformation of an American Newspaper*](#), Tulane University communications professor [Vicki Mayer](#) determines the journalistic cost of building a new foundation in

the digital landscape, while co-authors S. L. Alexander, Frank D. Durham and Alfred Lawrence Lorenz chronicle the history of *The Times-Picayune*.

Mayer investigates the digital transition's impact on the quantity and quality of news coverage.

The Times-Picayune historically has had dual roles as a media industry, says Mayer. "It's been the local voice and a harbinger for what's to come nationally."

Collaborating with 11 students from her fall 2013 media analysis course and one [service-learning](#) assistant, Mayer conducted a content analysis of the publication's print and digital formats.

Comparing content running three days a week for four consecutive weeks in October 2011 and 2013 (one year before and after the end of the paper's daily distribution), the group studied changes in the quantity of stories, the quality of stories in terms of hard and soft news, and reporters' reporting efforts in terms of the number of sources.

Among the findings, Mayer concludes that both 2013 print and digital editions of the paper contained more stories than the 2011 print version on any given day. The digital editions were comprised of a large amount of soft news, appearing in over 80 percent of iPad stories, over 40 percent of web stories and over 20 percent of mobile phone stories. The number of sources used also decreased in 2013 across all platforms.

Pleased with the students' contribution, Mayer says, "(At Tulane), undergraduates are empowered to do professional academic research vital to the community they live in."

"It's the local voice and the harbinger for what's to come nationally." -- Vicki Mayer, communication professor