

Report: Media Circumstances of Super Local Areas in the United States in the Digital Age

-Focusing on Bozeman, Montana,

A City in the Northwestern United States*

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SHIBATA Atsushi

NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute
Media Research & Studies

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1. Preface

It is said that the fundamental of the United States is in the local community. Once, Tip O’Neil, the Lower House Speaker at the time of President Ronald Reagan, said “All politics is local.” It means the most important thing even for the members of the U. S. Congress is to listen to what their local people have to say, and contribute to the places where they are from. This is the basics of the U.S. politics. The failure to do so can mean a defeat in an election. In June 2014, in his bid for re-election, Republican House Majority Leader Eric Cantor lost the Republican primary in his state of Virginia. He had been considered a leading candidate for the House Speaker. The Speaker of the House of Representatives is the second in the U.S. Presidential line of succession after the Vice President, if anything should happen to the President to make him unable to continue to serve in this office. The politician of such a standing was defeated by an unknown first-time candidate, because, in many media analyses, he failed to take local interests into consideration. This shocked the U.S. political circles a great deal.

This principle, “the fundamental is in local community,” is the same for media such as newspapers and broadcasting. The number of newspapers in the United States has been falling due to a business slump and the impact of the Internet. But still, more than 1,300 newspapers are published now.¹⁾ And almost all of them are local newspapers, except for a few such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*. The famous *the New York Times*, *the Washington Post*, and *the Los Angeles Times* all started as local newspapers, as their names indicate.

The same can be said about broadcasting. Let’s take a look at public broadcasting in the United States. Radio broadcasting began in the 1920’s, and television broadcasting in the 1940’s. All this started with small broadcasting stations launched one after another in many states. To organize those independent stations, Public Broadcasting Service, PBS, was established for television in 1969, and National Public Radio, NPR, for radio in 1970. We can see both radio and television stations have their roots in local communities. They have later been organized into the nationwide networks of PBS and NPR. This is contrary to public broadcasting in Japan and Britain. Both NHK in Japan and BBC in Britain started, when their

headquarters with powerful authorities were established in the capitals. Then, local broadcasting stations were launched one after another under the headquarters. It is the usual practice at NHK that decisions are made at the headquarters, and are given to its local stations in a “top-down” manner. In the United States, the autonomy of local stations is respected. Decisions on programming and management are made at local stations and are conveyed to the nationwide headquarters in a “bottom-up” manner.

Local media are important in the United States. But not much is known about them in Japan. In recent years, we are hearing a great deal about digitalization and diversification of media in that country. But this is mostly about what big media enterprises in urban areas are doing. We hardly hear anything about moves within local media.

I myself had been working at a number of local stations for the first 20 years at NHK. A typical local NHK station consists of basic work units such as for broadcasting, engineering, business, and general affairs. It has about 100 employees, and is covering news in one entire prefecture where it is located. Just as at any local commercial station, its staff members are working with pride and confidence that they are the ones who are supporting broadcasting services in their region.

Then, several years ago, I was assigned to my current post in charge of media in the United States. Since then, I have been doing field research in urban areas in America. But at the same time, I had always wanted to look into the current situations of media in local areas, the foundation of the United States. For that matter, I wanted to go not to medium-sized cities, but to truly small local towns. I considered it important to see the situations at such places, when digitalization is fundamentally changing the media landscape.

But the United States is a vast country. I cannot go to many regions. So, I decided to focus on one place not known to many Japanese, but considered to be “a typical local town” in America. That led me to the state of Montana in the Northwest. There, I wanted to know:

- With what objectives, ideals, and thoughts in mind are people in media broadcasting or issuing newspapers there?
- What do they think of the dramatically changing media environments, and how are they trying to respond to that?

- How are viewers, listeners and readers using the various forms of media available to them?

I considered that to know these can give us insight, when we think about local media in Japan. Though the scope of my field research may have been limited, I hope this report will shed some light on the media situations in “super local areas” in the United States.

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2. Bozeman, Montana

Why did I choose the state of Montana? I would like to explain. There is an important indicator in the United States to define a television market. It is DMA, Designated Market Area, compiled by Nielsen Media Research Company.²⁾ Based on this indicator, the United States is divided into 210 broadcast markets. People living in one market can receive the same television offerings. On top of the DMA list with the largest number of audience households (not populations) is New York (7460-thousand). The second is Los Angeles (5660-thousand), the third, Chicago (3530-thousand), the fourth, Philadelphia (2960-thousand), the fifth, Dallas-Fort Worth (2650-thousand), and the sixth, San Francisco -Oakland-San Jose (2510-thousand). Each area is named after its major city. But as is seen on the fifth and the sixth, the names of two or more cities are given to one area in some cases. This indicator is used for broadcasters' marketing strategies. It is also used as basic data for various surveys conducted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the regulatory and supervisory authority over broadcasting.

Always at the bottom of the DMA list, the 210th, is Glendive, a town in Montana. It has about 4,000 households. Five other areas in Montana on the list are also near the bottom, from the 170th to the 200th. Among them, even the area with the largest city of Missoula has only about 110-thousand households. Montana is vast. A population of about one million is living in an area almost as wide as Japan. It is "a sparsely-populated expansive area," an image of the typical Wild West for Japanese.

At first, I thought of visiting and covering Glendive at the bottom of the DMA list. But I thought it would be difficult to do so, considering my schedule. It takes several hours to go from the airport to Glendive by car. So, I looked for other candidate places. I finally decided to go to Bozeman, one of the seven major cities in the state, and the 187th on the television market list. There are several reasons for this. It has a public broadcasting station, MontanaPBS. It also has a commercial broadcasting station, KBZK (affiliated with CBS), the oldest and the largest broadcasting station in the state. And it is the site of Montana State University (MSU).

Montana is located in the northwestern part of the mainland United States. It is the third state to the east from the Pacific coast. The northernmost on the West Coast is the state of Washington. Its largest city, Seattle, is the home for an American Major League team, the Mariners, where Japanese baseball player Ichiro used to belong. Next to it to the east is the state of Idaho, and then, the state of Montana. It borders with Canada in the north. To its east are the states of North Dakota and South Dakota. Down to the south is the state of Wyoming. Within Montana, the Rocky Mountains run from the north to the south. Its area is the fourth largest after Alaska, Texas and California. Its main industries are the agriculture and livestock industries. Because Montana is the northern entrance to the Yellowstone National Park, the tourist industry is also important.

For many Japanese, it may be difficult to grasp an image of “Montana in the Northwest.” It is not in the East, where New York is. Nor is it along the West Coast, where California is. And it is not in the South, either. But some may remember Montana is the place where that heart-warming story of “The Horse Whisperer” took place, the 1998 movie directed by and starring Robert Redford. There was also that movie, “A River Runs through It,” released in 1992, which made a young actor, Brad Pitt, famous. That story also took place in Montana. Montana is where a magnificent nature and the cowboy culture still remain. Ethnically, more than 90 percent of its population is white. But it is also home to many Native Americans. There are seven reservations for them in the state.



As for relations with Japan, Mr. Mike Mansfield, an expert on Japan who served as the U.S. Ambassador to Japan for more than 10 years, is from Montana. In this connection, Montana State and Kumamoto Prefecture are in sister-city affiliation.

Bozeman, where I stayed for this field research, is one of the seven major cities in Montana. (The other cities are Helena, Billings, Butte, Missoula, Great Falls and Kalispell). It is the fourth largest city in the state with a population of about 40-thousand. (The largest city, Billings, has a population of about 100-thousand.) Bozeman has an international airport which is used by many visitors to the Yellowstone National Park, and is home to Montana State University. The airport is clean and well-organized. When I went out of the airport building, I was greeted with “the big sky.” It is a hearty welcome from “the Big Sky Country,” the nickname of the state of Montana. From there, I headed for my first destination, a public television station, MontanaPBS.

3. A Public Television Station, MontanaPBS

~ "Chronicling its community" ~

Yet another reason to have chosen Montana is that it is the state where the last PBS station so far in the United States has been established. It is my purpose to see how the last comer to the world of public-service broadcasting is being operated.

In the United States after World War Two, there was a move separate from commercial broadcasting. Educational institutions such as universities and local governments established non-profit television stations one after another that would offer educational broadcasting. Such a move came first in urban areas along the East Coast and the West Coast. But it tended to take more time for such a move to spread in the West, where populations are smaller.

In Montana, MSU took the initiative and launched "MontanaPBS" (with its call sign KUSM) on its campus in 1984. That was the birth of so far the last PBS station in the entire United States. In 2014, it celebrated its 30th anniversary. In 1997, it opened another station at the University of Montana (UM), also a state university (with its call sign KUFM). The UM is in Missoula in western part of the state. Currently, this PBS station is operating with two stations and a number of unmanned stations.

"MontanaPBS" occupies some corners of the ground and the second floors of MSU's building for audio-visual education. There, it has its office, studios, and program transmitting facilities in a compact way. The United States switched to terrestrial digital broadcasting in June 2009, opening the way for multi-channel broadcasting. So, MontanaPBS is now broadcasting on five channels. They are MontanaPBS HD (the main channel for comprehensive programming), MontanaPBS Kids (for education and programs for children), MontanaPBS Create (for livelihood, life-long education, etc.), MontanaPBS World (for news, documentaries and other



MontanaPBS in the MSU building

current affairs programs), and the channel for relaying debate at state legislature. Create and World are passing through the broadcasts of PBS in Washington D. C. in its entirety. The relaying of debate at legislature is purchased from a specialized distributor.

I interviewed the representative of MontanaPBS, General Manager Eric Hyypa.³⁾ Mr. Hyypa is 41 years old. He was born in Illinois and was bred in Montana. After graduating from MSU, he began to work for MontanaPBS. His father played a leading role in establishing the station 30 years ago. He inherited his father's work, and has been doing his utmost to make the station's broadcasting even better. He has been serving as its GM since five years ago.

Mr. Hyypa says MontanaPBS has two missions. One is to broadcast programs for nationwide viewers sent from the PBS headquarters. The other is to produce and broadcast special programs and documentaries on local history, heritage, culture, art and such. This is, in his words, to look at the changes taking place at the community and to chronicle them.

From our perspectives in Japan, we tend to think that local PBS stations are also offering "live news broadcasts" every day. But situations are a little different in the United States. Local commercial and public-service stations are playing a kind of complementary roles. Commercial stations are delivering in detail moves and events in the community (flow programs). Public television stations are mainly broadcasting long special feature programs that they produce periodically (stock programs).

Every month, MontanaPBS is sending program guides for the next month to its supporters (called "members") who are donating funds. The guides show that in addition to nationwide programs sent from the PBS headquarters, the station is broadcasting a combination of new local programs and some of the local programs that were popular in the past. Since local PBS stations are not broadcasting news, there are basically no major changes to program scheduling, even if an unexpected event should occur. This gives local PBS channels, including those in Montana, an impression of "steadiness." You can watch their programs with a serene state of mind. But they lack dynamics and excitement seen so often in



MontanaPBS
GM Eric Hyypa

commercial television.

I was given an opportunity to watch a number of programs produced by MontanaPBS recently. “Butte, America” is a story about the past and the present of Butte. Butte is a town that flourished for its copper mining at the beginning of the 1900’s, and was said to be “the biggest town in the West.” “Fort Peck Dam” is about the construction of a colossal dam over the mighty, but wild and unpredictable Missouri River. The project was one of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal policies. The program tells us how the construction was completed, though with heavy casualties. “Indian Relay” tells about bareback-horse racing still being held from time to time among Native Americans. It focuses on three teams of young men competing fiercely putting their tribal pride at stake. Considering their themes, you may wonder if broadcasting these programs “now” can be warranted. But all of them deal with something that is deep-rooted in the communities of Montana and forms essential part of their history. And the programs are made so superbly that they can be watched and enjoyed repeatedly. Such programs are made by producers belonging to the station or jointly with freelance producers.

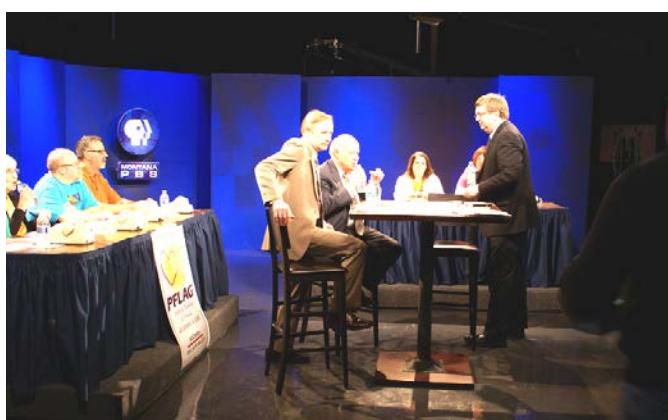
Then, what about the budget and the organization of MontanaPBS? According to the annual report for 2013, the annual budget for that fiscal year was 5 million 900-thousand dollars. Of the amount, 40 percent came from grants from the two universities, and 35 percent from donations from citizens and funds from local companies. These are two pillars of the station’s income. The rest is subsidies from the federal and the state governments. The scale of the budget is said to have been just about the same for the past several years.

As for the number of employees, KUSM in Bozeman has 25. Seven are producers and those involved in making programs, seven in engineering, five in charge of donations and funds, and the rest in charge of general affairs, public relations and accounting. There are also about 20 part-timers. KUFM in Missoula has eight, all as production staff. The station has in all a few more than 30 employees with its two bureaus combined. Large-scale PBS stations in New York and Washington D. C. have more than 200 employees each. A middle-scale station in Denver I visited had about 60. With a total of about 30 employees at its two stations, MontanaPBS is operating with considerably fewer employees than one local NHK station in

each prefecture. But perhaps, local PBS stations in the United States may not need so many people. They concentrate on making stock programs, scheduling programs, and transmitting them. They do not make day-to-day news programs, which require a substantial number of staff.

When I visited, MontanaPBS was going to make a rare live broadcast, and I was invited to observe it. It is a program called “a Pledge Drive.” All the PBS stations across the country are broadcasting their “pledge drives” to seek donations from viewers. MontanaPBS is broadcasting such a program for a week twice a year. On such an occasion, the station broadcasts popular local programs, and during a number of intermissions, Mr. Hyypa, the GM, appears on the screen live and talks with local guests, stressing the significance and merits of PBS. And he seeks support (donations) from viewers. In the studio is an array of telephones to accept the offers of donations. Citizen volunteers who support PBS are there to accept phone calls.

This is a familiar scene for viewers in the United States. Some viewers are critical of repeated on-air entreaties for donations. They say PBS is always asking for money. But as a person working for public broadcasting of a different system in Japan, I keenly felt that this is the foundation of public broadcasting in the United States. It stands on individual people’s donations (good will). The way the program is presented and the studio itself are far from being refined. But local people are there in the studio. And the head of the PBS station politely explains what public broadcasting is doing for local people, and seek their support.



A scene from the studio for “Pledge Drive”

I realized that the accumulation of small amounts of funds from people is making public broadcasting possible.

Mr. Hyypa’s immediate and largest challenge is how an FCC’s plan to hold a spectrum incentive auction in 2015 will affect public broadcasting.⁴⁾

Montana is vast. So, there are many

communications towers and relaying translators, which are playing the key role in transmitting electric waves sent from broadcasting stations to audiences. Depending on changes in frequency bands (called repacking) next year, many of such facilities will have to be revised or relocated. This can force local stations with tight budgets into going off the air in some areas. Public broadcasting has been aiming at offering terrestrial broadcasting free of charge to all the people. This includes minorities, the poor and the socially-disadvantaged, who cannot afford pay-television systems. Mr. Hyypa and others are trying to persuade related offices in Washington D.C. to take some budgetary measures. But they say it is hard to get the federal government to see local situations. This is a difficulty so common to local stations all over the world.

All told, I have got an impression that MontanaPBS, though small in scale, is being operated smoothly and steadily, under the leadership of energetic Mr. Hyypa.

4. A Commercial Television Station, KBZK

~ Terrestrial Broadcasting

as “the Information Infrastructure for a community” ~

Then, I visited a commercial television station affiliated with CBS, KBZK. In Montana, there are a number of commercial stations affiliated with CBS, NBC, or ABC-FOX. KBZK began broadcasting in 1953, the earliest in the state. It is also the largest in scale there.



A commercial television station, KBZK



KBZK executives

From the left, Mr. Metzger, Mr. Sherer, Mr. Saunders

The building housing KBZK is about ten minutes' drive from downtown Bozeman. It's a one-story building spreading lavishly over a wide area. Here, I heard from its General Manager, Jon Saunders, News Director John Sherer, and Sales Manager Greg Metzger. 5)

Mr. Saunders is from Montana. He stressed with confidence that among various forms of media, it is terrestrial local broadcasting that is contributing most to the local community. It is often pointed out that the Internet and the development of information-communication apparatus are reducing the relative importance of terrestrial broadcasting. But Mr. Saunders said rural areas like Montana are several years behind urban areas in terms of broadband Internet access. And he stressed if a natural disaster occurs, it is terrestrial local broadcasting that can steadily offer crucial information to the community.

To do that, the KBZK officials say they are putting stress on local news and public-affairs programs for the community. On weekdays, they are broadcasting local news on three time frames, from 5:30 to 7:00, from 17:30 to 18:30, and from 22:00 to 22:30. In the morning on Sundays, they broadcast a nationwide political debate program made by CBS, "Face the Nation." Then, they air "Face the State," a 30-minute program geared for the local region. This program consists of interviews, VTR's, and various other segments depending on themes. Recently, it featured a veteran Senator from the state, Max Baucus, who has been appointed as the new ambassador to China.

I watched their local news several times, while I stayed there. My impression is that they are putting stress on sports. They are giving considerable amounts of time with images to basketball matches of not only universities but also of senior high schools. They may have some pragmatic reasons for this. They have to fill broadcasting time for news at a place where not much news is likely. But still, I was impressed with their confidence and enthusiasm that taking up events in their community in detail serves its residents.

Mr. Saunders says KBZK has about 250 employees in the entire state. One third of them each are either in broadcasting, engineering, or sales. Its headquarters is in Bozeman. It also has its bureaus with studios in three other cities, Billings, Great Falls, and Missoula. About 80 people involved in news reporting are stationed at its four bureaus, and are closely following what is happening in the entire state.

One thing Mr. Sherer in charge of news said was particularly interesting and inspiring. This is what he said. Bozeman and its neighboring Butte belong to the same DMA (television market), an area where the same television channels are offered. But the two cities are completely different. Bozeman is a rising “cowboy town” that has flourished for the past 20 years. Butte is a declining “mining town” with its peak 80 years ago. So, residents’ temperaments are different. Those living in the two cities are not particularly in good terms with each other. So, he says the station is paying particular attention to cover news equally in the two cities and to report it in a balanced way. He says the word, “local,” means different things for different people and areas. Difference in histories, geographical features, ideologies and identities makes local areas different. Mr. Sherer said local media have an advantage in that they can cover news with this awareness, and offer detailed information that its community really needs.

They stopped short of telling me the exact amount of KBZK’s annual budget. But they said naturally the amount would be considerably larger than at any local PBS station. According to Mr. Metzger, who is in charge of sales, 94 percent of his station’s revenue comes from advertising. The two-thirds are from local companies, shops and stores including small-scale car dealers and dentists. The remaining one-third is from companies operating nationwide. Online advertising revenue is increasing, but it accounts for just about five percent of the total. More than 90 percent is still from advertisement on television. He said that because of a business slump for the past several years, competition with other commercial broadcasters over local advertisement is becoming keener.

To conclude the interview, I asked how they are dealing with digitalization and what they think about the future of local television. This is their reply. KBZK considers its website on the Internet as an important platform, and it now has two producers specialized in the web.

The general trend in media companies nowadays is to reduce veteran journalists who get higher pays, and to employ young journalists well versed in digital technology. But KBZK is doing the opposite. Recently, it employed three journalists in their 40's from newspapers. In a way, they are in the prime of their careers. What Mr. Saunders and others consider the most important is people who can make attractive stories out of local materials. There are many who can handle digital technology well. But there are not many journalists who can expertly cover news and write good stories. They say the only way to survive in the digital age is to secure good human resources and keep on offering attractive contents.

About the future of television, they say there are many unknown territories about it yet. But they say on-going debate about digitalization in urban areas does not exactly fit Montana, where there is such an expansive land. Expanding broadband Internet access will be an inevitable future. But they say the importance of terrestrial local broadcasting in Montana will remain unchanged at least for some more time.

5. A Local Newspaper, Bozeman Daily Chronicle

~ Local newspapers reflect their communities. ~

During my visit in Montana, I really wanted to visit local newspaper publishing companies. I have been visiting broadcasting stations, large and small. So, I have some idea about them. But I had never visited local print-media companies before.

There are local newspapers in major cities in Montana: Billings Gazette in Billings, Bozeman Daily Chronicle in Bozeman, Missoulian in Missoula, Helena Independent in Helena, and Great Falls Tribune in Great Falls. In Japan, local newspapers are usually meant for



The building of Bozeman Daily Chronicle

readers in prefectures where their offices are. In the United States, many of them are for readers in one city, one town, or one community. Their circulation volumes are usually ranging from tens of thousands to several hundred, much smaller than those of local newspapers in Japan. This means they are more deeply rooted in local areas. I visited Bozeman Daily Chronicle (hereinafter Chronicle). It has a circulation of about 16-thousand, not many. But it is a time-honored local newspaper with a history of more than 100 years.

When I visited the newspaper company, I was surprised at its huge building. I had imagined a relatively small office. Actually, it was an expansive one-floor building as big as two Japanese-high-school gymnasiums combined. Later, I found that one-third of the building is a printing plant.

I was greeted by the president and publisher, Stephanie Pressly. First, I asked her about the situation of her company. She said, “Community newspaper tends to reflect the health of community.”⁶⁾



Ms. S. Pressly, President
and Publisher of Chronicle

Ms. Pressly is from California. She had been mainly in management at a number of newspaper publishing companies in some states in the West. Seven years ago, she was invited to be the publisher of Chronicle in Montana. Her husband, a newspaper reporter, is from Montana. Back in those days, there were not many female corporate heads. Her career in this business amounts to 25 years. She says her husband is now “the stay-home dad.”

Up until around 2007, when she came to Chronicle, the economy of Bozeman had been in a good shape. But immediately after that, there was the “Lehman Shock,” the economic downturn precipitated by the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy in 2008. Then, the onslaught of the Internet came. All these forced the newspaper publishing business into a difficult age. Subscribers and advertisement decreased. The company had to cut down on expenses and pay for employees. She says the situation is stabilizing now. But she says that for seven years, she has been working to make the company’s operation even more efficient, while taking action to respond

to a move for digitalization.

Currently, the company has a staff of about 100. Three fourths of them, 75, are full-time employees. The rest are part-timers. Among the 75, one-third each is for news reporting and editing, sales, and printing. Delivery is contracted out. The 25 news staff consists of eight reporters, 15 editors, and two camera persons. She says it is rare for a local newspaper to have two full-time camera persons, when many others are reducing theirs. The eight reporters have their beats in city politics, police, the economy, sports, education and such. Many of them are in their 20's. They tend to switch newspapers in two or three years to grade up their careers. So, there is a high turnover among them. On the other hand, those in charge of editing who also make layouts and designs of papers are in their 30's and 40's, and tend to stay with the company for years.

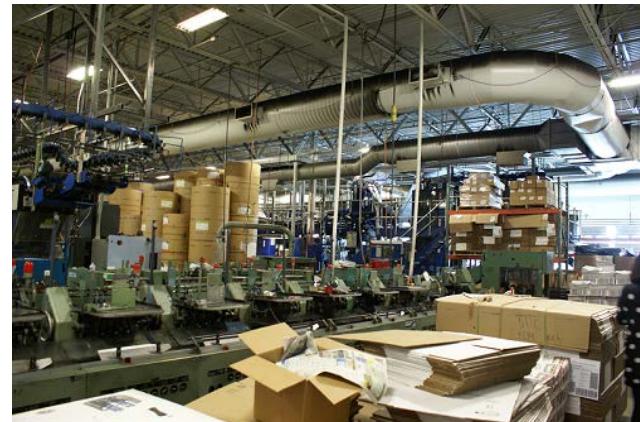
Its circulation is 16-thousand. This means a half of the households in the community are subscribing to this newspaper. A monthly subscription is 15 dollars. About 70 percent of its articles are covered by its own people. The remaining 30 percent are purchased from news agencies. She says the company is working to increase its own articles.

Whether big or small, the biggest challenge for newspaper publishers is “digitalization.” Media are diversifying, and newspaper readership is shrinking. How can they shift from paper to digital platforms, while securing revenue? Newspaper publishers are seeking various ways. As part of such efforts, Chronicle introduced a billing system to its web-site users two years ago. Among major newspapers, the New York Times is a forerunner in this respect. At Chronicles, people can access all its articles on the web for five dollars a month. Now, it has about two thousand contractors. Also, in October 2013, it stopped publishing its paper version on Mondays to cut its expenses. (The digital version is renewed on Mondays as on any other days in a week.) Readers’ reaction was severe. But Ms. Pressly says this was a decision to maintain the current system of news coverage without reducing its reporters.

As for its homepage on the Internet, editors in charge are renewing articles every hour. The marked difference from its paper versions is that 45 percent of the access on the Internet is from outside the state. This is considered to be because people visiting the Yellowstone

National Park are accessing its web site to get local information.

As for the methods of covering news, Ms. Pressly is working to launch a news reporting network that can be called something like “Montana News Wire,” together with about 90 large and small newspaper publishers in Montana. Such a network will enable publishers to mutually distribute their coverage of news and share it. This is aimed at reducing costs of covering news and enriching contents. In the big wave of digitalization, Chronicle is trying various ways to make itself fit for a new media age.



Chronicle’s printing plant

After the interview with Ms. Pressly, I was taken to the printing plant. About 20 people are working there. A large printing press, purchased at the cost of three million dollars, is printing newspapers through 16 processes. It is capable of printing up to 45-thousand copies per hour. The two biggest expenses for a newspaper publisher are said to be “printing” and “delivery.” How true! That is what I felt, looking at the machine at work. I can see printing does cost money and manpower. It requires intricate printing machines and professionals to handle and maintain them. And it requires paper, too. The company says that recently, it is getting harder to get rolled paper in America, so it is importing it from Canada. A big trend for



Printed Newspapers

the future is, of course, to abolish the use of paper altogether, and shift to the web. But the company says this is not without problems. One is what to do about the job security of printing-press operators. Another is the fact that the company’s printing plant is functioning as “the printing shop” of the entire community, including

schools such as MSU, local companies, and stores. What to do about that?

As my last question, I asked Ms. Pressly what she believes newspapers should safeguard at this age of digitalization. She cited three key words: “the habit” (people’s habit to get news from newspapers), “in-depth reporting” (reporting with backgrounds and ‘why’),” and “a chronicler” (a recorder of the history of the community). Newspapers need to respond to and maintain residents’ habit that they have been getting news from newspapers for a long time. And they need to report not only on just what happened, but also on its meaning and background in depth. And they need to record and preserve news in the community. I was told that Chronicle has been storing all the newspapers it issued so far, and that local people often visit its office to look into the community’s past.

Ms. Pressly says 80 percent of the news that people read on the Internet come from newspapers. She says people may be able to get world news on the Internet, but that it is only through local media that they can get to know what is happening in their community. She says it is the local media’s responsibility to fulfill this role.

I enjoyed my visit to Chronicle very much. That is partly because many things about newspapers were new to me. But it is especially because I was impressed with the firm determination of Ms. Pressly and her officials to act for the future of newspapers with hope and optimism. This is when operating newspaper companies is said to be so hard.

By the way, Chronicle has published a best seller, “We Don’t Make This Stuff Up.” It is a collection of episodes on the police beat. The book was also introduced on nationwide newspapers, and more than 100-thousand copies have been sold so far. The tips that people bring to the police are not just about crimes or accidents. They are full of funny, moving, surprising, or a little strange stories. The book gives a glance into the way people are living in a place called Bozeman. That may be making people feel close to the book.

Returning to Ms. Pressly’s answer to my first question, I felt “the degree of the health” of Chronicle is very high as a mirror to reflect Bozeman as a community.

6. Radio

~ “Love and Passion are the Life of Local Radio.” ~

In a word, people in America listen to radio very often. In the latest nationwide survey by Nielsen, 92 percent of people 12 years old or above listen to radio at least once a week. This is quite different from Japan, where people are said to be distancing themselves from radio.

As for radio, I paid no visits to any particular radio stations during my field research this time. I interviewed with Mr. Dewey Bruce,⁷⁾ the chairman and CEO of Montana Broadcasters Association, MBA. The MBA is the branch in Montana of the National Association of Broadcasters, NAB, with its headquarters in Washington D.C. Mr. Bruce is 57 years old. He is from a small town called Glasgow in the north-eastern part of the state. He has been operating radio stations mostly in Montana for 35 years.

According to Mr. Bruce, there are 155 radio stations in Montana. Many of them are FM stations broadcasting mainly music, sports, and news. Recently, religious stations affiliated with Christianity are increasing in number, as they have stable sources of income such as donations. But there are yet no Spanish-language stations in Montana, though such stations are increasing along the West Coast, where a Hispanic population is rapidly growing. Radio stations in reservations for Native Americans are also serving as job opportunities and vocational training for residents.

What surprises us about media in America is that there are so many outlets for each type. The nation is wide, and that is one reason. As I have said earlier, there are more than 1,300 newspapers, more than 1,700 television stations, and more than 15,000 radio stations in America. If we divide them by the number of its states, 50, each state has at least 300 radio stations. Many cities and towns have more than one radio station. Though some stations are large, many of them could be something like what we call community radio from a Japanese viewpoint. One public radio station I visited in



Mr. D. Bruce, President

& CEO of MBA

the past was operated by fewer than 20 people, and I was impressed that many volunteers were helping its operations. Radio broadcasts do not require massive equipment or many personnel like television broadcasts. So, radio can be a familiar medium for both broadcasters and listeners. That is radio's advantage.

Before accepting the MBA chairmanship, Mr. Bruce had been running several radio stations. He says one of the most popular radio programs in local radio is relays of university sports. Relaying football, basketball or baseball games of MSU and the UM is important and indispensable as contents that can attract many listeners with small production costs.

Also, Montana is an agricultural state. So, local radio stations frequently broadcast meteorological information and news about natural disasters. These are important information that can directly affect people's livelihood and life. In this sense, radio stations are fulfilling a role as the "information lifeline."

Mr. Bruce told me about a heart-warming life-saving episode that took place more than ten years ago. On one winter day, a car carrying a father and a little boy was stranded in a heavy snow storm in a small town called Scobey. It borders on Canada, and had a population of about 800 then. To go to get help, the father turned on a radio and told his son never to change its channel or turn it off. Braving the storm, he managed to reach a farmhouse. He borrowed a telephone, rang up a local radio station, KCGM, and explained the situation. The person in charge immediately said to the boy over the radio, "Your father is safe. We will go to help you at once. So, keep the radio on." And he continued to encourage the boy over the radio. Mr. Bruce said this is a good example of how local radio can help people in the community.

Mr. Bruce said he once visited Glendive, the town on the lowest 210th on Nielsen's DMA list. And he described a local radio station in the town, KGLE, as something like "an old garage." But he said people there are working with "love for the community" and "passion for broadcasting." Mr. Bruce himself has been working for radio many years and his unlimited love for radio is so evident. Listening to what he was saying, I realized that a familiar saying that "love and passion support local radio" is not empty words.

7. Montana State University (MSU)

~ How are Students Using Media? ~

So far, I have been reporting mainly on senders of media. But during this field research, I also wanted to know about receivers. So, with the cooperation of an associate professor of anthropology at MSU, Tomomi Yamaguchi, I conducted questionnaires on students. I asked about 50 sophomores and juniors in her classes what kinds of media devices they have, among television, radio, personal computers, smart-phones and such, and how they are using them. The number and the categories of respondents are limited. So, this is basically to know a general trend of media use among some MSU students.

The fifty students were almost evenly divided between men and women. About half of them were from the state and the other half from outside the state. All of them, except one, had television sets. One student had five sets at home. That is the largest number of television sets owned by one student. Those who had radio were less than a half. But three-fourths of the respondents said they do listen to radio, and the largest number of them said they listen to car radio. Music programs were popular. Many also tuned in to news programs by National Public Radio. All the respondents had personal computers. Also, all the students had cellular phones, most of them smart-phones. Two-thirds had tablet terminals, a half of which were digital book readers. Only several of them were periodically subscribing to newspapers, including those doing so on the web. Asked which devices they are using most often, personal computers and smart-phones came on top. Many were using personal computers to do class work and to watch videos. They were using smart-phones as communications tools on the Social Networking Service and such. The most favorite kind of the SNS was Facebook, followed by Twitter, Instagram, a site for sharing photos and videos, and Tumblr.

Asked how they are getting news, 80 percent said they are getting it on the Internet, using personal computers or smart-phones. The remaining 20 percent were getting it through television or radio. Many of them were getting access to news on the web sites offered by the New York Times, CNN, BBC, NPR, and Chronicle, a local newspaper. They were also getting news from newly-established sites such as Google, Yahoo! and Huffington Post.

The respondents' answers were roughly as had been expected. In a discussion with the

students, I found that almost all of them are using popular program-distributing services such as Netflix and Hulu, while many are also subscribing to various magazines. As a whole, young people are using digital media to a great extent. I keenly felt that the biggest challenge for media now is to produce and convey products of good quality to young people digitally.

8. In Closing

I covered an area as wide as the entire Japanese archipelago in less than one week. I was aware from the start that writing a report on such short field research was too bold an attempt. This is a time when we can obtain a huge amount of information on media in the United States on the Internet every day. This makes us feel as if we knew everything about them, even if we were living far away from America. But especially because of that, I considered it important to go to Montana. It is important to meet people working for local media there, to see their faces and talk with them, and to feel their “enthusiasm” on my own skin. So, I went to Montana.

This field research was also challenging to me. In the past, I had written reports on various aspects of the U.S. media, its public broadcasting, switching from analog to digital terrestrial broadcasting, the independent regulatory organization, spectrum auction, non-profit news media and so on. All these are, in a way, vertically-segmented themes. It was my first time to report on broadcasting in “regions or communities” from horizontal perspectives. And I enjoyed the challenge. I have found that here, too, how to respond to digitalization is an urgent task, and that all forms of media are repeating trial and error.

My research this time is far from sufficient. But I am happy with what I have found in Montana. That is because it has made me realize again that working for media is not just a matter of profit or loss. The United States is considered the center of capitalism. People there often talk about “business models.” For many people, gaining profits in business seems their utmost goal. But from what I have seen and heard in the United States, I strongly feel there are as many people in media who believe serving the public and promoting democracy are more important than anything else.

Many people I met in Montana told me about their love for their community and their work. Perhaps, they may have felt something in common with somebody who has come from Japan to observe their local media in action. There are indeed great concerns over the future of changing media. But as an overall impression, I have felt something very healthy in what I heard from them. I now know these are the people who are supporting local media in the United States. They are truly the underlying strength of the American society.

(Acknowledgement: I express my sincere gratitude for Associate Professor Tomomi Yamaguchi of Montana State University for a great deal of cooperation she provided for me during my field research in Montana.)

Notes:

- 1) Newspaper Association of America (NAA)'s data in 2011.
[http://www.naa.org/Trends-and-Numbers/Circulation-Volume/Newspaper-Circulation-Vo
lume.aspx](http://www.naa.org/Trends-and-Numbers/Circulation-Volume/Newspaper-Circulation-Volume.aspx)
- 2) Nielsen's DMA
[http://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/us/en/
docs/solutions/measurement/television/2013-2014-
DMA-Ranks.pdf](http://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/us/en/docs/solutions/measurement/television/2013-2014-DMA-Ranks.pdf)
- 3) Interview with Mr. Eric Hyypa (March 4, 2014)
- 4) Concerning the spectrum incentive auction in the United States, please refer to my "A Report on the United States, 2014: On Moves for the Spectrum Auction ~ What will Become the Use of Electric Waves in the Broadband Era."
(*The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research* (November 2013 issue), Broadcasting Culture Research Institute)
- 5) An interview with the three people at KBZK (March 5, 2014)
- 6) An interview with Ms. Pressly (March 5, 2014)
- 7) An Interview with Mr. Bruce (March 7, 2014)