

Seattle paper may have digital future

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Seattle Post-Intelligencer

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The P-I said some reporters on the staff of the newspaper had been offered jobs by Hearst on an online-only version of the daily. "The selections indicate the Hearst Corp.'s plan for such a website is advancing," it said.

The P-I, which was founded in 1863 as the Seattle Gazette, quoted two unidentified reporters as saying they were told they could expect formal job offers "if the website gets the go-ahead from Hearst's senior management."

Another reporter, Hector Castro, told the paper he had turned down the offer, which would have meant a salary cut and increased costs for health insurance.

"I got the definite impression Hearst does plan to go forward with the site, assuming the paper stops publishing," Castro said.

According to Hearst, Seattlepi.com, the newspaper's website, average four million unique visitors a month.

Hearst announced on January 9 it would pursue "other options" for the P-I, which has a daily circulation of 114,000, if it was unable to sell the paper within 60 days.

"These options include a move to a digital-only operation with a greatly reduced staff or a complete shutdown of all operations," Hearst said.

Hearst, which has owned the P-I since 1921, said the paper has had operating losses since 2000 and lost approximately 14 million dollars in 2008.

Like other papers, the P-I has been struggling with a steep decline in print advertising revenue, falling circulation and the migration of readers to free news online.

Last week, Colorado's oldest newspaper, The Rocky Mountain News, shut down, leaving the biggest city in the state with just one major daily, The Denver Post.

If the P-I shuts down, it would leave Seattle with just one major daily, The Seattle Times.

Hearst, which owns dozens of other newspapers and magazines in addition to the P-I, has also threatened to close the San Francisco Chronicle newspaper if staff there do not agree to "significant" job cuts.

As the recession worsens the already bleak advertising climate, a number of other struggling US newspapers have declared bankruptcy.

They include Philadelphia Newspapers, owner of the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Philadelphia Daily News, the Tribune Co., owner of The Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune and six other dailies, and the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

The 100-year-old Christian Science Monitor announced last year that it plans to end its daily print edition in April and become the first national newspaper to publish only on the Internet.

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