

Survey: 22 pct of Internet users ditch newspaper

April 30 2009, By ANDREW VANACORE , AP Business Writer

(AP) -- Sure, plenty of readers are turning more to the Web for newspaper and magazine stories, but are they giving up on print altogether? In many cases, yes, according to a recent study by the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication. It found that 22 percent of Internet users have canceled a print subscription because they could get the same product online.

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Not that nostalgia for the printed page has died altogether. The survey found that 61 percent of [Internet users](#) who read newspapers offline would miss the print edition if it disappeared. That's up from 56 percent a year earlier.

The findings add some dimension to industry figures released this week showing newspapers losing circulation faster than ever. Average newspaper sales tumbled 7.1 percent in the six months from October to March from the same period a year earlier, according to an Audit Bureau of Circulations analysis of newspapers that had reported in both periods.

Some of that decline, as newspapers are quick to point out, comes from cutting back on what they consider less-profitable circulation - bulk copies delivered to hotels, for instance.

But the Annenberg study suggests a more rapid and permanent shift, according to its authors.

Jeffrey Cole, head of the Annenberg School's Center for a Digital Future, recalled his prediction nearly 10 years ago that print newspapers would soldier on for another 20 or 25 years.

"We always thought it was a generational thing," he said. "It turned out I was an optimist." Cole says the flight of advertisers from daily newspapers - a trend exacerbated by the [recession](#) - is likely to usher printed news into the past over the next few years.

Already this year some newspapers have shut down, eliminated publication days or cut delivery to a few days a week.

Cole said one thing is certain for anyone over 30: "When the printed [newspaper](#) goes away, breakfast just won't make sense."

The random survey of 2,030 people ages 12 and up was conducted April 9 to June 30, 2008, and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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Citation: Survey: 22 pct of Internet users ditch newspaper (2009, April 30) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-04-survey-pct-internet-users-ditch.html>

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