

LA Times, Washington Post breaking up news service

October 1 2009, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Business Writer

(AP) -- The Los Angeles Times and The Washington Post are breaking up their news service after 47 years, making it the latest casualty of the media upheaval driven by the array of alternative information and entertainment sources on the Internet.

The divorce announced Wednesday takes effect Jan. 1. Beginning then, the [Los Angeles Times](#) will distribute some of its best work through a news service jointly owned by newspaper publishers McClatchy Co. and the Tribune Co., the Times' owner.

The Tribune Co. has been operating under Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection since December. The financial duress before and after the bankruptcy filing led to staff cutbacks at the Times and the Tribune's other newspapers, including The Baltimore Sun and Hartford Courant, whose stories also were distributed through the Times-Post venture.

It's unclear whether the Tribune Co.'s troubles factored into the demise of the Times-Post service - a partnership forged in 1962 by two renowned publishers, Otis Chandler on the Los Angeles side and Philip Graham on the Washington end.

When the service started, newspapers were still highly profitable and the dominant news sources in their markets. But the number of people reading newspapers has been shrinking as more people turn to the Internet, leading more advertisers to shift their spending online.

The worst U.S. [recession](#) since World War II has drained even more ad revenue from newspapers, prompting both the Post and the Times to reduce the number of reporters and photographers feeding content to their news service.

Although they are smaller than they once were, the Times and Post still have large audiences. The Times is the fourth largest U.S. newspaper with a weekday circulation of 723,000 while the Post is the fifth largest with a weekday circulation of 665,000, according to the most recent figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Executives from the Times and the Post said they mutually agreed it was time to dissolve their marriage, although they didn't elaborate on the reasons for the decision.

But [Washington Post](#) Co. Chairman Bo Jones hinted the Internet played a role in the break up.

"As the news business and our newsrooms have evolved, the ways in which the organizations cover and distribute the news have changed," Jones said in a statement sent to the news service's subscribers. "We felt at this time it made sense for us to proceed separately."

Times Publisher Eddy Hartenstein said it was a "privilege" for the Los Angeles newspaper to package its stories with the Post.

The Times-Post venture distributed its stories to about 600 subscribers including newspapers and other media. The McClatchy-Tribune service that the Times is joining next year has more than 1,200 subscribers worldwide.

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