

# US newspaper circulation slide accelerates

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Newspapers are offered for sale at a newsstand in Union Station in Washington, DC in 2007. Daily circulation figures for US newspapers released on Monday provided more bad news for the embattled industry.

Daily circulation figures for US newspapers released on Monday provided more bad news for an industry battling the flight of readers to the Web and battered by a steep decline in advertising revenue.

Average daily circulation fell more than 10 percent in the April-September period compared with the same period last year, accelerating a slide that has led to bankruptcies, closures and cutbacks in newsrooms across the country.

Average Sunday circulation for 562 newspapers was down 7.49 percent.

The figures from Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) also confirmed

that The [Wall Street Journal](#) has become the largest US newspaper by weekday circulation, leapfrogging USA Today.

Of the top 25 US newspapers, the News Corp.-owned Journal was the only one to increase Monday-Friday circulation, gaining 0.61 percent to 2.02 million.

USA Today's circulation fell 17.5 percent to 1.9 million.

The Journal is one of the few US papers to charge readers online and Web subscriptions are counted in its circulation figures.

Two other top 25 newspapers, The Denver Post and The Seattle Times, also gained circulation but only after their competitors, The Rocky Mountain News and The Seattle Post-Intelligencer respectively -- closed down.

The New York Times remained the third-largest newspaper in the country but its circulation declined 7.28 percent to 927,851, the first time it has fallen below one million in more than 20 years.

Average daily circulation for 379 daily newspapers was down 10.62 percent at the end of September to 30.39 million from 34.0 million at the end of September 2008, according to the ABC.

The slide was greater than the 7.09 percent registered during the October to March period and the 4.64 percent decline during April to September last year.

The San Francisco Chronicle, whose owner Hearst Corp. threatened in February to close the daily if unions did not agree to steep cutbacks, suffered the biggest circulation drop, shedding 25.82 percent to 251,782.

Other big losers were the Newark Star-Ledger, down 22.22 percent to 246,006, and the Dallas Morning News, down 22.16 percent to 263,810.

The News Corp.-owned New York Post lost 18.77 percent to 508,042 while The Boston Globe, owned by the New York Times Co., shed 18.48 percent to 264,105.

The Los Angeles Times, owned by the bankrupt Tribune Co., saw its circulation fall 11.05 percent to 657,467 while the Tribune Co. flagship Chicago Tribune lost 9.72 percent to 465,892.

The Washington Post's circulation dropped 6.40 percent to 582,844.

Newsday, which announced plans last week to begin charging readers online, lost 5.40 percent to 357,124.

Rick Edmonds, a media business analyst at the Poynter Institute, a non-profit journalism school based in Florida, said he had been expecting particularly poor circulation figures for the six-month period.

"I thought they'd be especially bad this time, which does seem to be the case," Edmonds told AFP.

He chalked up the weak performance to several factors including the continued "movement over time from print to online."

Edmonds said there has also been a trend among some metropolitan dailies of "pulling back from trying to serve distant areas that are expensive to serve and don't have a lot of value to advertisers."

"In essence they're just letting that kind of circulation go," he said, citing the San Francisco Chronicle as a case in point.

"We're also looking at a period that reflects the economy itself being down," Edmonds said. "A lot of people are out of work, cutting back here and there, and at least some of these are going to be cutting newspaper purchases."

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