

# USA Today tests online edition at colleges

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(AP) -- Penn State, Indiana and Missouri are the first schools to participate in a USA Today initiative meant to test how students respond to electronic versions of printed newspapers.

The "e-Edition" is free for students, faculty and staff. [USA Today](#) says it's identical to the newspaper's [print edition](#) but with additional interactive and exclusive content. For instance, the Penn State edition, which officially launched last week, includes a university-themed story selected and written by the school.

Newspapers across the country have been searching for new sources of revenue and readership as they battle the explosion of free online news sources. While newspapers typically make their Web sites available for free, many have been selling access to digital replicas of print editions. Students could be a key target group given the comfort they've had growing up with the Internet and technology.

Students must remember to go to the e-Edition site each day, or sign up for a daily e-mail that would link to stories, said Bill Mahon, vice president of university relations at Penn State.

Penn State was picked as a partner because it was the first school to have a program promoting [newspaper](#) readership among college [students](#) in 1997, Mahon said. USA Today still is involved in that program.

USA Today last month reported the worst erosion in readership in its 27-year history, dropping more than 17 percent to an average [circulation](#)

1.9 million. It was surpassed as the nation's top-selling newspaper by The Wall Street Journal, whose average Monday-Friday circulation rose slightly to 2.02 million - making it the only daily newspaper in the top 25 to gain readers.

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