

# Australia's Fairfax to charge for online content

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The mastheads of Australia's major newspapers published by the firm Fairfax. The media company has said it will begin charging for online content in the increasingly cut-throat newspaper environment as it reported a return to profit.

Australian publishing giant Fairfax Media Friday indicated it would begin charging for online content in the increasingly cut-throat newspaper environment as it reported a return to profit.

Fairfax said its digital network audience had grown 18 percent over the past year and it now had 30 million unique users a month, with its online business the group's fastest-growing segment and second-most profitable.

The subscription-only online version of its flagship business publication, the Australian Financial Review, had strong revenue gains, and Fairfax said it now planned to roll out paid content across its online and emerging mobile platforms.

"We will pursue... greater sharing of editorial content and collaborating across print, online and mobile, more integrated selling and monetising our content online and on emerging platforms," Fairfax said in a statement to the Australian Stock Exchange.

Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, the company's major competitor, has already introduced paid content in Britain and is expected to expand the service to Australia later this year.

Murdoch has described tablet devices such as the [iPad](#) as a "game-changer" for news organisations and said charging for content and launching across mobile platforms was the right strategy for future growth.

Fairfax, which also has media interests in New Zealand and the US, has already launched smart phone and tablet applications for a number of its products and moved all of its newspapers online, including 160 regional publications.

"Over time the [iPhone](#), iPad and other e-reader platforms will enable us to distribute our content to new audiences or migrate existing audiences from the papers," it said.

Fairfax reported an annual [net profit](#) of 282 million dollars (250 million US), rebounding from a 380 million dollar loss a year earlier as advertising revenues rallied seven percent and the firm shrunk its debt.

"Our strong and stable management has made our business more

efficient and improved our brand in print, online and broadcasting," said Fairfax CEO Brian McCarthy.

"We are also well positioned for growth in the mobile applications area."

The company's shares gained 4.41 percent to 1.42 dollars in a moderately higher market.

Fairfax publishes The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age and owns a national radio network as well as magazine titles. Its major rival is News Limited, an offshoot of Murdoch's [News Corp.](#)

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