

ASBP 2019 Survey Synopsis

February 13, 2019

Twenty-two surveys were returned.

- Alabama
- Alaska
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- California
- Canada
- Florida
- Georgia
- Iowa
- Kansas-Nebraska
- Maryland-Delaware
- Missouri
- New Mexico
- Minn.-Wisc.
- North Carolina
- Northwest
- Oklahoma
- Penn/South Jersey
- Texas
- Tennessee
- Utah-Idaho
- Virginia

Total Circulation: 305,610

- **Print: 276,562**
- **Digital: 29,408**

Seven Papers: Digital Only

- CNBC Horizon
- Florida Baptist Witness
- The Christian Index (Georgia)
 - Iowa Baptist E-News
- Baptist Digest (Kansas-Nebraska)
- BRN United (Pennsylvania-South Jersey)
 - Utah-Idaho E-News

Circulations vary greatly.

- Circulation of print publications range from 22 to 57,000.
- Circulation of digital publications range from 52 to 8,000.

Print frequency varies greatly.

- Two: Weekly
- Six: Biweekly
- Two: Monthly
- Three: Quarterly
- One: Bimonthly
- One: 3X per year

Number of state paper staff members and budgets vary.

- Number of staff members ranges from one part-time person (on more than one state paper) to 11 full-time and 9 part-time staffers on one state paper.
- Incomes range from \$0 to \$1.7 million.
 - Advertising income ranges from \$0 for several state papers to \$200,000 for two state papers.

Number of pages varies from 8 to 40.

- One: 40 pages
- Two: 32 pages
- Two 24 pages
- One: 20 pages
- Two: 16 pages publications;
 - Three: 12 pages
- Three: Varying number of pages
 - One: Did not respond

Print subscription price structure varies.

- Three: All free
- Three: All paid
- Eight: Combination of paid and free, with five having substantially more paid subscriptions and three having substantially more free subscriptions.
 - One: Did not respond.

Language Editions

Two state papers indicated they provide their news in a language other than English:

- Portraits (Arizona) has a Spanish print edition.
- CNBC Horizon (Canada) has a French digital edition.

Editorial Freedom: To Have or Not to Have

- 75% freedom. 100% freedom is only possible when we are independently funded.
- It's healthy, explicitly guaranteed in the convention's bylaws.
- We are blessed with editorial freedom. We strive toward edifying work.
- Mostly unfettered, but measured in a sense that publishing some unflattering stories about the convention would result in diminished support from the convention and the churches ...Our newspaper will do so when necessary and suffer the consequences to expose corruption and seek truth.

Editorial Freedom (cont.)

- We are encouraged to share positive stories that directly influence or pique the attention of the Baptists in our state.
- Nearly total.
- I choose the stories that we run with no interference from my convention director. My executive director will share his opinion with me, but he allows me to make the final decision.

Editorial Freedom (cont.)

- Editor is the final say on what is printed and what happens on the editorial page.
- Our publication doesn't do a lot of hard news, and while I have a column, I don't write editorials. So, we don't often step on toes.
- Few newspapers (secular or religious) truly have editorial freedom. All papers report to someone or some entity. I have freedom to tell the stories that need to be told with common sense factored in. There are some stories that Baptist editors simply can't tell, such as those related to personnel or privacy issues.

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Three state papers exist as separate agencies
(rather than being owned by the state convention):

The Alabama Baptist

Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

Louisiana Baptist Message

Challenges

- Denominational fatigue/frustration/boredom —
Lack of denominational loyalty
 - Perceived relevancy of state papers
- Competition with everything else — Breaking through the noise of other media
- Rising costs and diminishing income — Inability to monetize the web to pay costs of producing quality content
 - Reliance on volunteers to get news — Getting great staff

Challenges (cont.)

- Leadership understanding the relevancy of the state paper
 - Reaching people in the pews, not just the pastors
- Capturing attention of younger readers — Communicating with older audience through digital only
 - Writing content that's relevant to culture
- Reporting faithfully without sowing discord/disunity
 - Vast area to cover

Opportunities

- Help Christians grow in faith.
- Encourage Christians in their churches and lives.
 - Provide resources.
- Share the news and stories of Southern Baptists.
 - Develop advertising marketing strategies.
 - Engage audiences online.

Opportunities (cont.)

- Use new media tools.
 - Be niche reporters.
- Cover news thru Christian worldview.
 - Boost CP.
- Share the truth and Good News in a dark time — Truth in post-truth era.
 - Uphold credibility.
- Timely/immediate posting of stories/videos/photos.

Primary role

- Central communications hub for all Baptists.
 - Fair look at news.
- Content that enhances lives of Christians.
- Share hard news/Fulfill public relations role.
 - Inform, inspire, involve.
- Sharing news that won't be found anywhere else.

Primary role (cont.)

- Tell the truth about Christ, our churches and the culture.
- Fill a historic role, keeping a record of what God is doing.
 - Connectivity between churches.
- Telling CP story of Southern Baptists accomplishing more together.