

THE DAILIES

OLD FORMATS, NEW CHALLENGES

BY ANDREW TYNDALL

Reporting the Arts II has taken a fresh look at newspapers across the United States. And once again we have found that the arts maintain a well-established niche in metropolitan dailies. Their arts and lifestyles sections—the backbone of which is the television listings grid—are part of the well-rounded regular daily fare, running alongside business and sports and backing up the news pages. And at these newspapers the weekend arts supplements—with a strong dose of full-page advertising—play a leading role among the papers' weekly feature sections.

When *Reporting the Arts* appeared in 1999, we found these two sections printing a robust number of arts and culture articles. Both small and large papers were especially successful when they wrote about events in their backyards, whether the opening of a new museum, a performance by a local musician, a show by an avant-garde artist or the efforts of a civic group.

Since then the prominence of the arts sections—stated as a proportion of each newspaper's total number of pages—has marginally grown, with only a few exceptions. Yet in nearly every one of the newspapers we monitored, the newsholes for A&C coverage—the actual space

dedicated to the field, measured in column inches—have declined.

How can this be? How can the arts be more prominent in newspapers yet less fully covered?

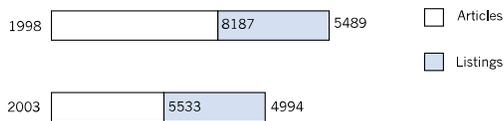
The answer is simple. Newspapers as a whole have shrunk in the past five years. The A&C beat has taken a hit along with the rest of the journalistic departments. While arts sections have been more successful than news or business at withstanding cutbacks, they have been less successful than sports, whose position in the newspaper pecking order has improved dramatically.

METROPOLITAN DAILIES

ARTS JOURNALISTS HAVE adopted various survival strategies to maintain viable coverage in a shrinking world. In October 2003 we revisited the same 10 cities we studied five years earlier—Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Houston, Miami, Philadelphia, Portland, Providence and the San Francisco Bay Area—to observe what has changed in the communities' cultural life and local media coverage. We have once again analyzed each community's main news publications, looking at the same 15 papers we studied in

Arts-and-Culture Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to articles and listings



October 1998 along with two additional titles. Together the publications yield a second snapshot of how news organizations around the country are covering culture and, more important, how their approaches to arts coverage have evolved over the years.

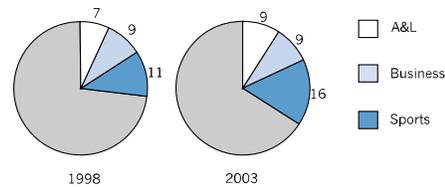
Our findings reveal a varied picture of the ways the different publications have adjusted to the sometimes widespread cuts in the amount of overall space allotted to arts coverage:

- Some newspapers slashed their story count, running many fewer articles; some cut the length of stories to make the same number of articles fit in a smaller space.
- Some beats—especially movies, television and the decorative arts—suffered bigger cuts than others, such as music, performance and publishing.
- Some newspapers shifted their effort from journalism to listings; others relied less heavily on staffers and more on syndicators and freelancers; many transferred resources from the daily A&L sections to their weekend supplements.
- Some newspapers, whose effort on the arts beat was exceptional five years ago, have now cut back to merely average.
- A few newspapers suffered business disasters, and their arts coverage—along with every other journalistic element—was decimated.

While specific coping mechanisms vary widely among papers—as the examples of the papers analyzed in this study show—the years 1998–2003 have proved challenging ones for arts coverage. Looking forward to the next five years, we believe the outlook for the weekend arts supplements is stable. At the daily sections we found straws in the wind of looming radical change.

Prominence of Daily Sections

percentage of overall pagination assigned to A&L, business and sports section



BUSINESS CUTBACKS

No newspaper we studied has made a major increase in its commitment to covering arts and culture over the last five years. Only one—the *Chicago Tribune*—registered even a marginal increase in the size of its overall arts newshole. None increased the number of column inches assigned to A&C articles, as opposed to listings.

Of the 15 newspapers we tracked, the biggest cutbacks in A&C coverage took place at the *San Francisco Examiner*. Arts enthusiasts should not take that personally, however. For, since 1998 the newspaper has been sold and gutted in its entirety. Slashing cuts also occurred across the bay at *The Oakland Tribune*, which laid off 7 percent of its staff and halved the space it allocated to arts journalism.

Meanwhile in Colorado, *The Denver Post* and its rival the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* ended a century-old newspaper war, formed a joint operating agreement and scaled back weekend publication. The space for A&C journalism at both papers fell by about a third—yet at the same time the prominence of their arts sections in the overall pagination count actually increased.

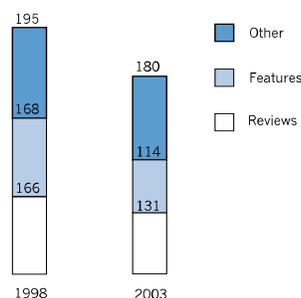
ABOUT THESE CHARTS

1998 averages are based on 15 newspapers.

2003 averages are based on 17 newspapers

Story Count

number of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)

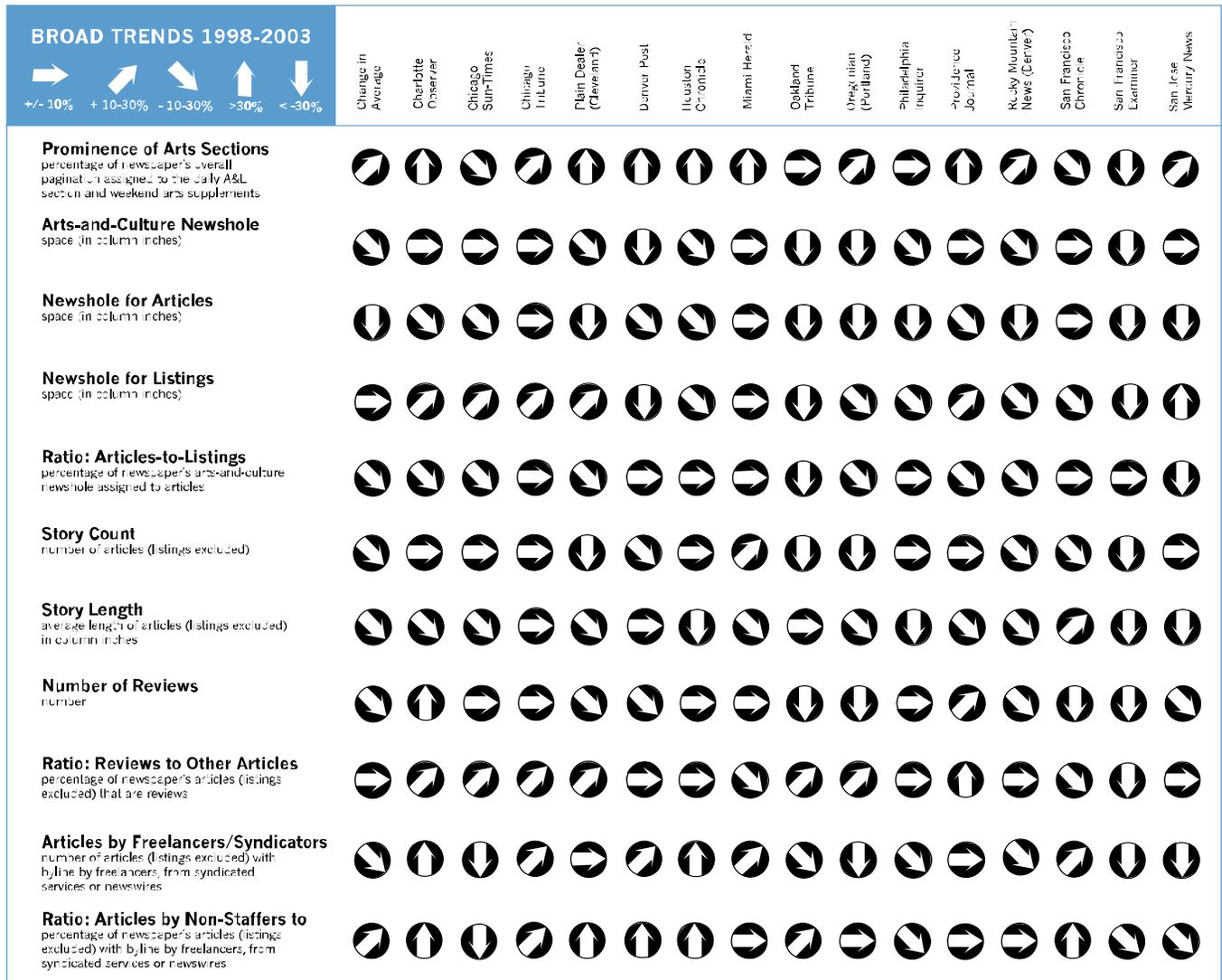


THE SHRINKING NEWSHOLE

There were four other newspapers that exacted significant cuts in their A&C newsholes, leaving them at least 20 percent smaller than in October 2003. In Portland *The Oregonian*, which was a leader in music and movie coverage in 1998, cut both beats in half, falling to well below average. *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland halved the number of articles filed with a staffer's byline and abandoned its unique arts-specialist Entertainment section. Following industry trends, it merged arts and culture with lifestyle in the aptly named new section Arts & Life. As a consequence, the volume of its daily A&C journalism was cut in half. *The Plain Dealer* ended the leadership role it played five years ago; by October 2003 its daily contribution was merely average.

The Philadelphia Inquirer and *Houston Chronicle* maintained their story counts at substantially the same levels as five years ago—the *Chronicle* actually published slightly more A&C articles—yet reduced their average length by a third. The upshot was that both newspapers cut back their newsholes from above average in October 1998 to merely normal in October 2003. And at the *Chronicle* there was a pronounced shift in the workload—away from staffers to using syndicated fare from the wire services instead.

It should be noted that the cutbacks at four of these newspapers—*The Oregonian*, *Oakland Tribune*, *The Plain Dealer* and *Houston Chronicle*—are overstated somewhat. Each title failed to include one edition of its weekend arts supplements when sending that day's paper to



our coding operation and was unable to respond to our repeated requests for a back-up copy. Their A&C coverage is proportionately underrepresented. However, the missing sections would have accounted for only a small fraction of the overall cutbacks we found at these newspapers compared with five years earlier.

HOLDING STEADY

The resources devoted to A&C at the remaining seven newspapers, though, remained substantially the same, with the papers' overall news-holes no more than 10 percent smaller than when we measured five years earlier. These examples of stability ranged from big-city titles—the *Tribune* and *Sun-Times* in Chicago and the *Chronicle* in San Francisco—to the medium-size *Miami Herald* and *San Jose Mercury News*, to titles in two of the smallest cities in our study, *The Providence Journal* and *The Charlotte Observer*. All seven newspapers spent less space on A&C journalism than they did five years earlier—but six (all except the *San Francisco Chronicle*) compensated by increasing the volume of their listings data.

SHRINKING ARTICLES

A major factor in the across-the-board reduction in the amount of space devoted to journalism on the arts is that newspaper articles have grown shorter. For A&C pieces the approximate average length dropped from 15 to 13 column inches. Some papers cut their average by as much as 5 inches. Only the *Chicago Tribune* and *San Francisco Chronicle* bucked the trend. The A&C beat may not be unusual in this regard: Other sections of the papers may also have adopted a pithier approach. It was outside the scope of our study to make that comparison.

Similarly, it may be that newspapers have simply cut these column inches from their news-holes, or they may have kept the space but replaced text with bolder headlines, snazzy graphics and larger photographs. Our study simply measured the space designated for writing about A&C. On that basis, articles have shrunk.

Nevertheless, shorter articles do not necessarily mean fewer pieces. We have already mentioned that the *Houston Chronicle* had a higher story count than five years ago; so too did *The Miami Herald* and *The Charlotte Observer*. The totals at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Providence Journal* were substantially unchanged.

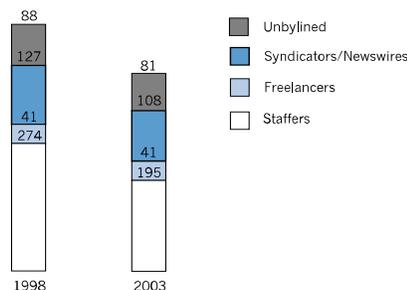
OUTSOURCING

Generally speaking, the newspapers' own staffers were not so lucky. There were cutbacks in the number of bylined articles at all the papers we tracked except for *The Miami Herald*.

Some of the slack was taken up by wire services, and the resultant shorter articles led to an increase in unbylined material. One group that survived relatively unscathed, understandably, was freelancers: they increased their story count at 10 of the 15 newspapers we monitored. The *Chicago Tribune* was the freelancer's best friend five years ago and increased those assignments in October 2003, averaging almost five articles per day, a 27 percent increase.

Story Bylines

number of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded) filed by staffers, freelancers and articles taken from syndicators and wire services



MOVIES AND TELEVISION HARD HIT

Coverage of movies and TV has been especially hard-hit during this period. One obvious explanation is that these beats absorbed the lion's share of the space reduction, since they were the places from which significant space could still be cut.

In October 1998 all but one of the newspapers devoted more resources to movie journalism than to any other single artistic discipline. Back then, because of the voluminous TV listings grid, every newspaper devoted more overall space—articles and listings combined—to television than to any other beat. In two, TV was tied with movies.

By 2003 movies were the leading journalism beat at only eight of the newspapers, and TV was relegated to overall second place in four of them. The grid itself was usually not cut back drastically. For given the proliferation of programming on TV, that would be difficult. At only three titles did the grid suffer erosion in excess of 30 per-

cent. Instead, TV writers took the hit. They suffered a 30 percent cutback in column inches at 12 of the 15 newspapers we tracked.

LOCAL ART FORMS SPARED FROM CUTS

By contrast, coverage of local art forms suffered smaller cuts. For unlike television, movies and other products of national media and entertainment conglomerates, much of the music and almost all theater and the performing arts that newspapers cover are created locally. Papers therefore found themselves uniquely qualified to cover them, and they continued to do so.

This was one example where we observed a reallocation of resources instead of outright cutbacks. In nine of the 15 newspapers we tracked, either music or the performing arts or both attracted larger newsholes for articles than in 1998.

NETWORK COVERAGE IS A CASUALTY

TV is a key consideration as newspapers decide how much prominence to give to their daily A&L sections in relation to their weekend arts supplements. The TV program grid—containing information that is at once timely and fleeting—is the indispensable backbone for the daily A&L section. And five years ago that skeleton was fleshed out with well-rounded reviews, features, news and gossip.

The decline of TV as a central A&C beat over the past five years is one of the major findings—one might say, surprises—of this study. Only the *San Francisco Chronicle* increased the size of the newshole it allocated to television journalism. Some TV pages trimmed the story count, while others simply cut the article length. All this came at a time when the major networks were steadily losing audiences.

A notable casualty was articles dealing with daytime drama, a staple of the broadcast networks. The voluminous syndicated soap opera story-line synopsis was regularly featured in nine of the newspapers we studied five years ago, but in only four in October 2003. TV reviews were not singled out for cutbacks. Their volume was reduced in proportion to all other TV journalism, accounting for an average of 21 percent of the TV newshole five years ago and 19 percent in the current study.

MOVIES: FEWER ARTICLES, MORE LISTINGS

The absolute volume of movie journalism was larger than the television beat at every newspaper we monitored both five years ago and in

2003. However, starting from a larger base, the size of the cuts leveled at movie writing was in many instances greater—and unlike TV, movie reviews did receive a disproportionate share of the cuts.

Newshole for Listings

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture listings



Yet the trends in movie coverage were less dismal than for TV as several newspapers changed their approach to the movie beat by substituting articles with listings, in the form of unbylined thumbnail reviews with accompanying theater showtimes. The *San Jose Mercury News* led this trend, transforming its movie content in five years from 64 percent articles (36 percent listings) to 74 percent listings (26 percent articles). The *News's* movie listings were actually more voluminous than its TV grid. Following in the same direction, although in less extreme fashion, were *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland and *The Providence Journal*.

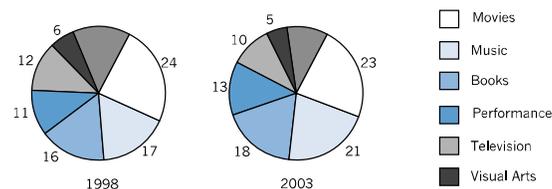
A MIXED PICTURE FOR OTHER ARTS BEATS

There were no such overarching trends in the coverage of most other arts disciplines. Music, despite the travails of the recording industry during the past five years, experienced no equivalent setbacks as a topic for journalism. Coverage suffered cutbacks at some newspapers, saw stability at others and at several received increased attention, especially at *The Miami Herald*.

A trio of performing arts stories boosted out-of-town coverage of that field: the tiger mauling at *Siegfried & Roy's* Las Vegas show, the starv-

Journalism on Arts Disciplines

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole for articles (listings excluded) assigned to coverage of movies, music, books, performance, television and the visual arts



ing-in-midair stunt by David Blaine in London and the Bolshoi Ballet's feud over its supposedly fat dancer. However, most metropolitan newspapers devote disproportionate space to reviews and features of the local theatrical and performing arts scene. News stories—even headline-grabbing ones such as these—tend to be less detailed, and so their occurrence had only a small impact on overall performance coverage.

Books continued to be the most review-heavy of all arts disciplines. In this area, too, some newspapers increased coverage, notably *The Charlotte Observer*, and others cut back. Of all disciplines, publishing was the one where the implosion at the *San Francisco Examiner* left the biggest void compared with five years ago, when the *Examiner* abandoned the joint release of its weekend Datebook section with its crosstown rival the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The *Chronicle*, now working alone, made no such cutbacks and is still a leader in books coverage.

SPACE: A LUXURY AT LARGE PAPERS

Our study looked at both large newspapers based in big cities and medium-size newspapers whose readership was more regional in scope. Obviously, bigger newspapers offered more coverage of A&C than the smaller regional ones. Of the newspapers we studied, the *Chicago Tribune* and *San Francisco Chronicle* carried the most column inches in October 2003. They were similarly ranked first and second five years earlier.

Their extra coverage, though, is a function of their overall bulk rather than a greater proportionate commitment to the A&C beat. What those two biggest newspapers were able to provide that the other metropolitan dailies did not was coverage of the more esoteric so-called high arts. Thus, of the 17 newspapers we studied in 2003, the *Tribune* and *Chronicle* had the most stories on such topics as local theater, jazz, opera, fiction book reviews, painting and photography. And as we observed five years ago, both newspapers carried regular architectural articles, a beat virtually ignored elsewhere.

Interestingly, their leading role did not extend to all disciplines. Classical music was most heavily covered by Cleveland's *The Plain Dealer* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the two papers that were the leaders in 1998. *The Miami Herald* wrote most frequently on dance, the *Houston Chronicle* on haute couture, *The Charlotte Observer* on libraries—and *The Providence Journal* led all other newspapers in its coverage of museums and sculpture.

BLEAK TIMES FOR DECORATIVE ARTS

Of all the art forms we looked at, the decorative arts underwent the most drastic cuts, proportionally speaking. Back in 1998 the economy was booming and such topics as haute couture, interior design, furniture, arts-and-crafts, artisan wares and objets d'art were routinely covered in nonarts feature sections.

By October 2003 the stock market bubble had burst, and recovery from the resulting recession had not yet kicked in. Perhaps the decorative arts, consisting of high-priced pieces to be bought with the discretionary income of the affluent, are more sensitive to economic cycles than other areas of the arts. For whatever reason, they suffered a steep decline in coverage. At such papers as the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Houston Chronicle* and *The Charlotte Observer*, these beats have been virtually eradicated.

DAILY SECTIONS

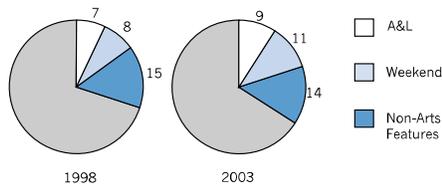
In our 1999 study we outlined the two different ways newspapers presented the arts—focusing either on daily or weekend specialist sections. The daily presence relied on the so-called A&L section, which also goes by such titles as Living or Life or Arts & Lifestyle. As noted, the backbone of these areas is the TV program grid, movie advertising and editorial matter. Weekend sections, meanwhile, typically appeared in the form of a pullout supplement, often in tabloid format, containing both articles and listings with a longer shelf life.

The two sections have retained a stable position in the papers during the past five years. Together they accounted for 16 percent of an average newspaper's pagination in 1998, growing slightly to 19 percent in 2003. This apparent growth merely meant that they shrank at a slower rate than other sections, except for sports, which increased their average size from 11 percent of a newspaper's pages to 16 percent. In the four tabloid newspapers in our study—*San Francisco Examiner*, *Philadelphia Daily News*, Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* and *Chicago Sun-Times*—sports was far more dominant, larger than the daily A&L section and the weekend arts supplements combined.

The relatively constant size of the daily A&L sections belies the erosion of their content. Their TV listings grid remained in place, but there was less A&C journalism to flesh it out. Only four of the 15 newspapers we studied compensated for the across-the-board erosion in television jour-

Prominence of Arts and Feature Sections

percentage of overall pagination devoted to daily A&L sections, weekend arts supplements and non-arts feature sections



nalism by increasing their A&L section coverage of other arts beats.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* was an exception. Its Datebook section picked up much of the slack left by the *San Francisco Examiner* and its television coverage actually increased. Elsewhere, the Living section at *The Charlotte Observer*—which was minuscule five years ago—and *The Miami Herald's* newly launched Tropical Life produced more daily A&C journalism than they did in 1998. Both accomplished this by expanding non-TV coverage. In Charlotte the number of pieces on classical music and theater increased, while in Miami it was popular music and dance. In Denver the *Rocky Mountain News* increased the size of its daily section while discontinuing Sunday publication.

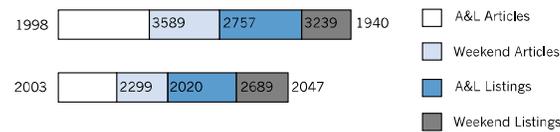
WEEKEND SUPPLEMENTS

By contrast, four other newspapers increased their commitment to A&C journalism on the weekends. *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland and *The Providence Journal*—which launched its Thursday tabloid Live in the intervening years—both boosted the level of their weekend journalistic output from substantially below average to middle of the road. And both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times* shifted their focus to the weekends. The weekend newsholes at the two newspapers were the two largest we monitored. As a result, both Chicago papers as well as *The Providence Journal* increased their count of reviews. The two Chicago newspapers were the only local ones in our study to file at least 200 separate reviews during October 2003. And while *The Providence Journal's* total was still below average, it registered the biggest increase since 1998.

At the majority of newspapers, however, the increased emphasis on the weekends came from an effort to deliver listings rather than journalism. Of the 15 local newspapers we tracked, 11 increased the ratio of listings to articles in

Daily and Weekend Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture in daily A&L sections and weekend arts supplements



their weekend newsholes, and 10 increased the actual volume of listings. A pair of Bay Area newspapers—the *San Jose Mercury News* and *The Contra Costa Times*—was preeminent as listings providers.

ADVERTISING

One reason behind the increase in the relative prominence of weekend arts supplements has nothing to do with journalism. Advertising-only sections are now less prevalent. And almost every newspaper has reformatted its sections so that advertising is more integrated with editorial matter. All but three of the 15 reduced the proportion of pages devoted to advertising-only sections. This means that editorial sections, including the weekend arts supplements, automatically take up a large share of the total pagination.

Using a simple measure of the volume of full-page advertising, these weekend supplements are much more ad-heavy than the daily A&L sections. For example, assigning a rule-of-thumb of at least 10 percent of an entire section being devoted to full-page ads, the weekend supplements at 12 of the 17 newspapers we monitored in October 2003 qualified. The daily A&Ls reached that 10 percent mark only at three of the papers.

IS THE FUTURE ARTS OR LIFESTYLE?

Our study indicates that the underpinnings of the weekend arts supplements are sturdy. They have relatively heavy ad support and a growing system to generate complementary listings specializing in movies and, to a lesser extent, music and performance. Their longer shelf life make them amenable to the longer-form feature-preview-review format of journalism—as opposed to shorter breaking news and gossip—which accounted for 46 percent of all articles published in October 2003 but 69 percent of the A&C journalism newshole.

For the daily A&L sections the future is less clear cut. They have less full-page advertising support than their weekend equivalents and a growing disconnect between their massive listings provision and their eroding daily journalism.

At *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland, one of the newspapers to make the heaviest cuts in the past five years, its daily A&L section was reformatted to conform to industry norms. Back in October 1998, *The Plain Dealer* separated arts from lifestyle by publishing two separate sections, Entertainment and Lifestyle. Those two beats have been collapsed into Arts & Life. With *The Plain Dealer* throwing in the towel, the stand-alone specialist daily arts section—undiluted by lifestyle features—was nowhere to be found in the metropolitan newspapers we studied. In October 2003 we found it only at *The New York Times*, and even there it had only half the prominence of five years earlier.

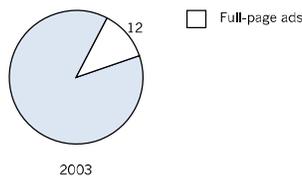
Our study suggested two possible futures for the daily A&L section. At *The Philadelphia Inquirer* its Magazine has disappeared as an A&C section on two of the five weekdays, offering Health/Science instead on Mondays and Home/Garden on Fridays. The trend at *The Inquirer* is to offer a proliferation of weekly feature sections and to undercut the place of the arts in the traditional daily troika of sports-business-A&L.

The Miami Herald has taken the opposite tack. It has slashed the volume of advertising-only sections from 18 percent of pages to zero. In its place the *Herald* increased the pagination for its daily A&L section from 6 percent to 14 percent of the newspaper's entire output when it launched the tabloid *Tropical Life*. With 13 percent of its pages sold as full-page ads, no other metropolitan newspaper in our study attracted such financial support to its daily A&L section. As for content, *Tropical Life* is still an arts

section, but not dependent on TV. It increased its story count, compared with five years ago, and increased its focus on the local music scene and dance.

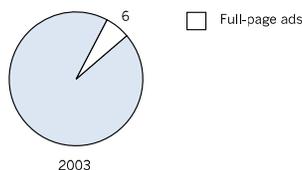
Advertising Support for Weekend Arts Supplements

percentage of pages in weekend arts supplements filled by full-page advertising



Advertising Support for Daily A&L Sections

percentage of pages in daily A&L sections filled by full-page advertising



The big decisions about arts journalism at the metropolitan dailies over the next five years will be how to resolve the role of the TV grid within overall feature coverage. Should the arts take a leadership position in daily local coverage, with other feature beats folded underneath its banner? Or is the arts one important weekly feature beat among many varied lifestyle themes, any of which can accommodate a TV grid without needing to make room for arts journalism? *The Miami Herald* points toward the former, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* toward the latter.

AS FOR THE NATIONALS

WHEN IT CAME TO the national papers, *The New York Times* once again led all others in arts and culture coverage. The volume of the Gray Lady's output remained greater by an order of magnitude than at any of the metropolitan newspapers we monitored. This was especially true when contrasted with the diminutive coverage at the two other national dailies, *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*. The *Times's* newshole for arts and culture journalism was more than twice as big as those at any of the metropolitan newspapers in *Reporting the Arts II*, except for the *Chicago Tribune* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

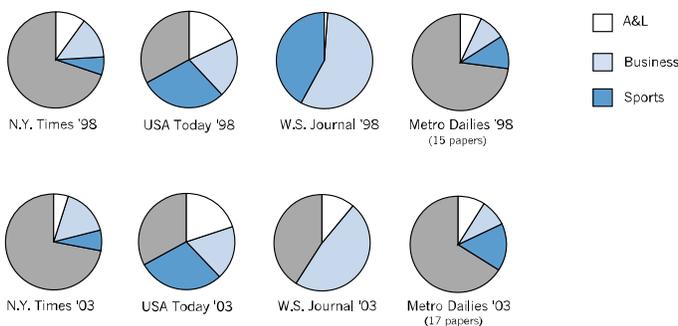
THE NEW YORK TIMES

Compared with figures from October 1998, the overall coverage at the *Times* stayed roughly the same size. Its volume of listings went up slightly while its newshole for articles went down, but its total number of articles increased. There were almost 1,000 A&C pieces published by the paper during October 2003. This larger number of articles in a smaller overall newshole amounts to a shorter average article length, a trend seen across the country. Even after the cuts, however, the average article in the *Times* was longer than at any local newspaper we studied.

The *Times's* mix of artistic beats was unlike that found at any metropolitan newspaper, and it has changed little in the past five years. The *Times* was the only newspaper we monitored to devote more space both to the performing arts and to books than to any other single arts discipline. And popular music received a lower priority than average. It was the only newspaper to file more articles on classical music than on pop and

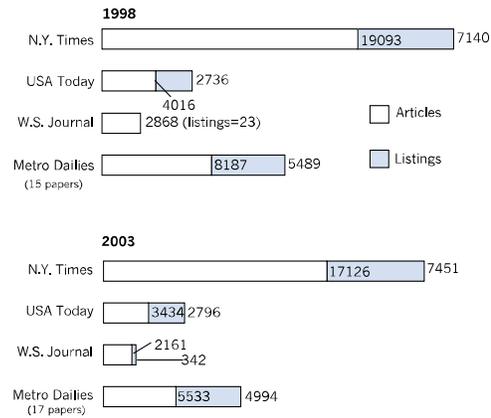
Prominence of Daily Sections

percentage of overall pagination assigned to A&L, business and sports section



Arts-and-Culture Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to articles and listings



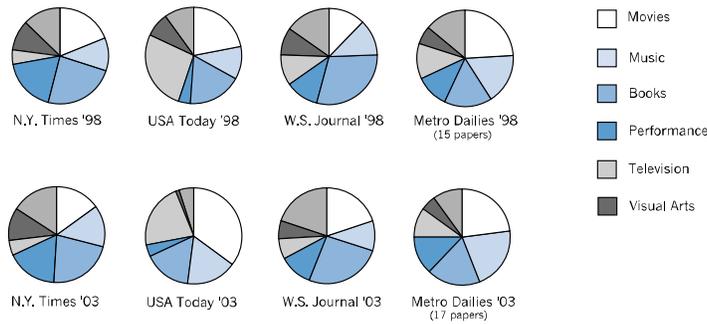
rock. Television, it seems, was treated as an afterthought. The *Times's* overall story count on the performing arts remained constant compared with five years ago, with a slight change of emphasis—there was more on theater, less on dance and opera. In addition, the *Times* led in coverage of both the visual and the decorative arts. The paper's story count for photography and architecture was more than double that of any other newspaper in our study; its coverage of painting has almost doubled compared with five years ago.

As at the metropolitan daily newspapers, we found cutbacks at the *Times* in movie journalism, with a large reduction in the volume of movie reviews. There was, however, no reduction in TV journalism corresponding to the ubiquitous trend at other newspapers. Back in 1998 TV represented an already low 5 percent of the paper's A&C newshole for articles. It has not changed since.

Nevertheless, such is the massive volume of the *Times's* overall A&C effort that even those beats that receive a small share of the newspaper's attention proportionately are still huge in absolute terms. For example, its "tiny" TV coverage consumed more column inches than at every metropolitan newspaper we monitored except for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Its "low" proportion of listings was more massive than at all but two metropolitan newspapers.

Journalism on Arts Disciplines

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole for articles (listings excluded) assigned to coverage of movies, music, books, performance, television and the visual arts



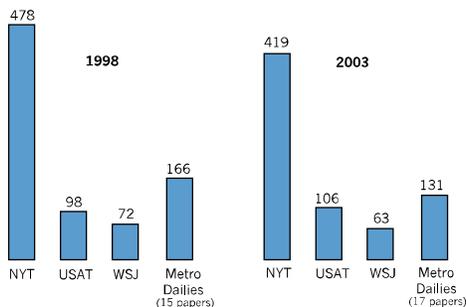
Its “reduced” journalism on movies was second to none. Only in its coverage of pop-and-rock music was the *Times* not the leader. Its story count in October 2003 was no greater than the average at the 17 metropolitan daily newspapers in our study.

The reduction in the number of reviews was most evident for movies but was also found for fiction books and the performing arts. This too needs to be placed in context. While on a daily average there were two fewer reviews filed in October 2003 than in the same month of 1998, the absolute volume was still enormous, with more than 400 in the entire month. And while the proportion of the newshole for reviews also fell from 53 percent to 42 percent, that 42 percent was still bigger than at any metropolitan newspaper we studied, even the review-heavy *Chicago Tribune*.

The major change at the *Times* since 1998 has been the downsizing in the relative importance of its daily Arts & Living section. In 1998 The Arts section accounted for 10 percent of the entire newspaper’s pagination. Yet by 2003 it had fallen to 5 percent. The daily arts section is smaller even than its diminutive sports section,

Reviews

number of reviews



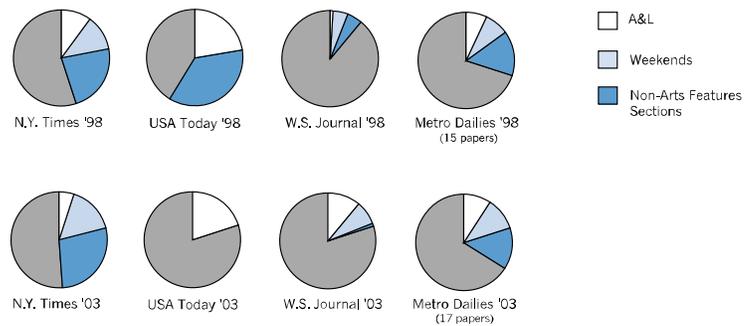
which, at 7 percent of the pagination, is much less prominent than at metropolitan daily newspapers.

The reduction in daily pages devoted to The Arts was reflected in its newshole. The monthly space for articles in the daily section was reduced from more than 9,000 column inches to less than 5,000. In October 1998 The Arts carried almost half the *Times*’s entire journalistic effort

for A&C; five years later it represented little more than one quarter. Only one metropolitan newspaper we monitored, *The Charlotte Observer*, ran a lower percentage of its overall A&C coverage in its daily arts and lifestyles section.

Prominence of Arts and Feature Sections

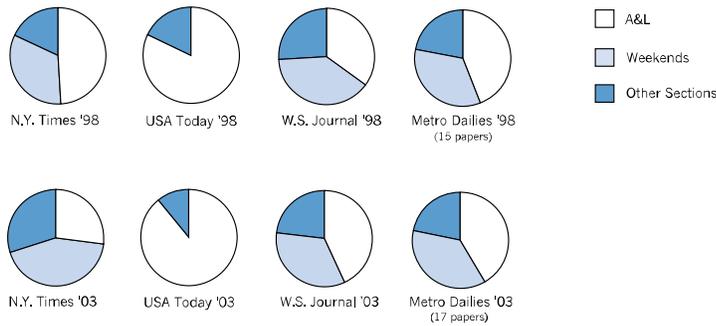
percentage of overall pagination devoted to daily A&L sections, weekend arts supplements and non-arts feature sections



Some of the *Times*’s daily arts coverage shifted to its daily news sections. The major change, however, appeared in its ballooning weekly feature sections. These sections—the weekend arts supplements plus the weekly nonarts features—comprised only 25 percent of an average metropolitan newspaper’s pages; at the *Times* they occupy 44 percent of the newspaper’s entire pagination, up from 35 percent five years ago. Of these, the weekend arts supplements—Friday’s Weekend, Sunday’s Arts & Leisure and Sunday’s Book Review—accounted for 43 percent of the *Times*’s A&C journalism, up from 33 percent in October 1998. The *Times*’s nonarts feature sections provided a home for architecture and the decorative arts: fully 82 of the 99 articles in these categories were found outside the specialist arts sections. No metropolitan newspaper ran as many as 30 such articles outside their arts sections.

Distribution of Arts-and-Culture Coverage

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole for articles (listings excluded) assigned to daily A&L sections, weekend arts supplements and other sections



A likely explanation for the small size of the daily arts section and the bulked-up weekend arts content is that it is a business-driven decision, not a journalistic one. A thoroughgoing problem found among the metropolitan newspapers was the mismatch between the pagination of the various arts sections and their full-page advertising support. Almost all had steady support at the weekends and skimpy revenues in the daily A&L sections. The *Times*, by cutting back its daily pagination so drastically, has avoided that problem and kept its editorial-to-advertising ratio in kilter (26 percent at weekends versus 21 percent in the arts). No metropolitan A&L section came anywhere close to The *Times*'s 21 percent. Only three surpassed the 10 percent threshold.

USA TODAY

Of the two other national daily newspapers we studied, neither *The Wall Street Journal* nor *USA Today* assigned a high priority to A&C. Both devoted a slightly smaller newshole to the beat than they did five years ago.

USA Today's specialty continued to be TV. Fully 48 percent of its overall A&C newshole—articles and listings combined—is assigned to TV. Only two other newspapers we studied exceeded 40 percent. *USA Today* was also the only newspaper to devote at least 20 percent of its A&C articles newshole to TV. The total volume of *USA Today's* TV coverage has changed little in the past five years—its grid was slightly larger and its space for articles accordingly smaller.

Movies—the other quintessentially national art form—were the other area the paper covered disproportionately, occupying 35 percent of *USA Today's* newshole for articles, more than at all but one newspaper we monitored. By contrast its journalism on the performing and visual arts was

minimal. In the entire month of October 2003, *USA Today* ran only two articles on classical music, two on jazz, two on dance, three on the visual arts and none on opera.

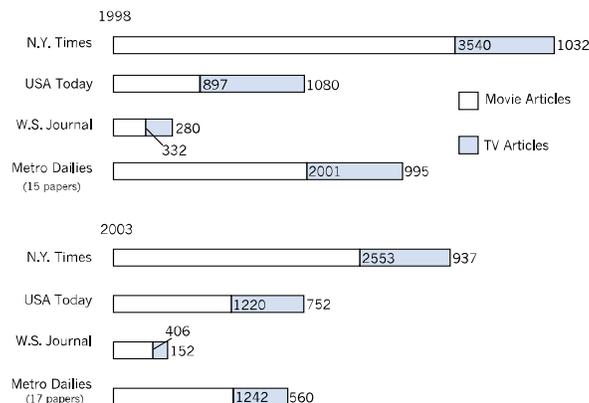
What distinguished *USA Today's* coverage was that it skewed away from reviews toward treating A&C as news. Only two newspapers published more news stories on the arts beat in October 2003, and *USA*

Today was one of only four newspapers in our study to run more news articles on the arts than reviews. The paper's reputation for brevity was also vindicated. While its total number of articles remained almost constant, the average length has shrunk. In 1998 *USA Today* was the only national or metropolitan paper to run A&C articles with an average length of less than ten column inches. By 2003 another inch fell off that average, bringing it down to less than half the average length found at the *Times*.

Since it appears only on weekdays and thus lacks any weekend arts section, *USA Today's* overall A&C newshole was tiny—smaller than all but two of the 17 metropolitan newspapers we monitored. However, comparing its daily A&L section, *Life*, with similar sections elsewhere, *USA Today's* effort was not so skimpy. Only the *Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* had bigger newsholes for articles in their daily A&L sections, though seven newspapers carried more voluminous daily listings.

Movies and Television Journalism Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to articles (listings excluded) on movies and television



The pagination structure for *USA Today* is simple. It has only four sections: News, Sports, Business and Life. Sports is king. In October 2003 it was larger than either Business or Life, as it had been five years earlier. With 29 percent of the pagination, *USA Today's* Sports section was much more prominent than in the metropolitan newspapers we monitored. Life is now marginally bigger, at 20 percent of the newspaper's pagination, and has switched places with Business during the last five years. Because of its simple structure—assigning the entire content of the newspaper to just four sections—Life was larger proportionately than any other daily A&L section in our study, and Business, too, was larger proportionately than any other except, obviously, for the *Journal*.

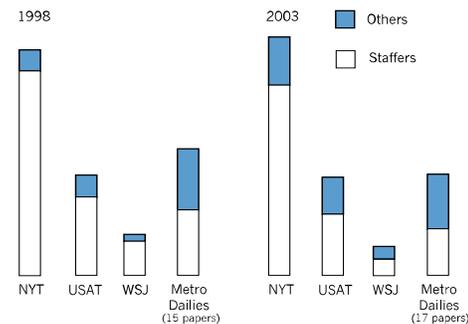
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Wall Street Journal has reorganized its section format since 1998. It introduced a daily Personal Journal and a Weekend Journal as a place for more arts, lifestyle and feature coverage. In practice, however, these changes made little difference in the volume of A&C coverage, which was small five years ago and a little smaller in October 2003. No metropolitan newspaper we studied ran fewer A&C articles. Only one devoted less space to them, and no newspaper had a smaller total A&C newshole for articles and listings combined.

For a newspaper with so many stock listings, the *Journal* avoided them when it came to the arts. Alone among all the newspapers we monitored, the vast majority of its A&C newshole was devoted to articles. Without a television grid, the *Journal* was the only newspaper in our study to

Story Bylines

number of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded) filed by staffers and others

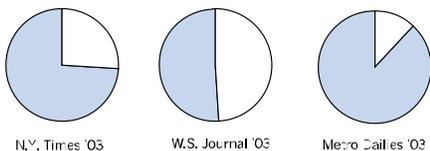


assign less than 10 percent of its overall A&C newshole to TV. Music, too, received a smaller share of attention than at any of the other newspapers. Instead the *Journal* assigned to book publishing, architecture and the decorative arts a higher proportion of A&C articles than did any other newspaper. Now, as five years ago, the overwhelming amount of the paper's book reviews consisted of nonfiction titles.

Going against the trend, the *Journal* was one of only three newspapers in our study to increase the length of its articles. With an average of almost 18 column inches, they were longer than at any other newspaper, even the *Times*. Several metropolitan newspapers in our study dealt with a shrinking A&C newshole by maintaining their story count and slashing the average length of articles. The *Journal* did the opposite. Its articles were slightly longer than they had been five years earlier. However, the daily average number of stories dropped from a meager six to a paltry four.

Advertising Support for Weekend Arts Supplements

percentage of pages in weekend arts supplements filled by full page advertising (USA Today is weekdays only)



Advertising Support for Daily A&L Sections

percentage of pages in daily A&L sections filled by full page advertising

