E-Editions and why capturing and reporting reader location data is so important for advertisers and may be the future of the industry

By Jeff Beardsworth
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The epiphany occurred for me during a lunch meeting nearly four years ago with some colleagues I was working with on a marketing project. I don't remember exactly how, but the discussion shifted to newspaper websites and how one of the lunchers from outside of the industry mentioned that she looked forward to reading her local newspaper 'every week' on the newspaper s website. While I wasn't the least bit surprised that she was getting her local news online, what did surprise me was how she framed her comment. She specifically referenced reading **'the paper'**, not a website, and that she did it 'every week.' I had questions. Why weekly? Isn't the value proposition of a website for a weekly newspaper the fact that it can be updated daily? Hourly? As breaking news occurs? Isn't that what readers want? Isn't that where the revenue is?

As it turned out, it wasn't any of those things that had her rushing to the St. Albert Gazette's website every Thursday morning. It was the fact that she could get her hands on the latest full version of **the newspaper** via the E-edition. It was the first time that I had somebody express to me a clear preference for the digital twin of the printed newspaper over the posted content approach adopted by most publishers.

My lunch date, it turns out, is not an outlier. Today the very same trend she reported has a visible context in data with multiple readership studies confirming that nearly one-third of Canadians are reporting that they read an E-edition each week. With that kind of momentum, the need for publishers to have a comprehensive E-edition strategy has never been more apparent. The urgency becomes even more obvious when the reading habits of younger generations is



highlighted by these studies and shows a growing preference for the E-edition format with engagement levels at least equal to or slightly higher than the printed format. Moreover, the E-edition readership numbers are inching ever closer to those for posted content-oriented websites with that segment. Future readers of newspapers are also showing their preference for E-editions.

Critically, while the data confirms that a transition to online readership has indeed been occurring, the transition perhaps hasn't occurred in a way that forces publishers into adopting the Google model of pricing that we've been convinced is the only option.

That model was invented by Google and built on a foundation that is profitable for Google but not for anyone else. In fact, what the data suggests is quite the opposite - the existence of a pathway into the future that preserves the existing revenue model used by newspapers for decades while at the same time, offering the potential for reduced expenses.

Similar studies conducted in the UK and Germany seem to have uncovered the explanation for the growing popularity of E-editions. According to those studies, newspaper readers have a clear desire to read their newspaper as the familiar curated package of content (including advertising).

They put value on the job of editors and designers, preferring the deliberate design and structure of the traditional newspaper over the doom-scrolling experience inherent in most posted content-oriented websites. This is great news for publishers whose revenue opportunities are largely tied to the traditional newspaper revenue model.

So, too, is the fact that it's been the experience of AdCanada, thus far, that **advertisers view the E-edition as an extension of the printed newspaper**.

They will consider its circulation as either additional to the printed newspaper or a replacement for it. Moreover, they are accepting of traditional newspaper ad rates **as long as publishers can provide them with equivalent data to quantify and qualify the E-edition audience** as we can currently for the printed version.

Specifically, how many copies are circulated or distributed each week? And, where are those copies going?

One of the long-standing misconceptions about how advertising campaigns come together for community newspapers is that numbers alone drive ad spending. In other words, "the higher the circulation of my newspaper, the more likely it is an advertiser will notice and want to include me on a campaign."

The same misconception applies to community news websites. "The more page views or visits I get to my website, the more attractive it will be for advertisers."

In reality, beyond the numbers, advertisers look for two things:

1) Will the message reach the audience I'm tasked with reaching?
2) Can it be proven?

Publishers who are focused on those addressing those two prerequisites today, stand a very good chance of managing a successful transition to a profitable, online future.

A study conducted earlier this year amongst 94 publishing executives in Germany identified E-editions as the biggest growth opportunity for publishers.

Moreover the study also underscored the importance of investing in and positioning the E-edition as a core product moving forward.
(https://nmc-mic.ca/2026/03/12/new-research-from-germany-identifies-epapers-as-biggest-growth-opportunity)

The potential for the E-edition to become something more than simply the digital replica of the printed newspaper is tremendous.

Additional stories, photos, press releases, features, sections are all things that can be incorporated into an E-edition, without incurring additional costs, to help create a market for the E-edition.

For free distribution print products, this opportunity is significant.

Readers continue to receive the printed version in their mailbox or newsstand for free each week, but if they want an additional 8 pages of content that didn't make it into print that week, it can be made available as an E-edition exclusive for a modest annual subscription to the E-edition, the 'Strathmore Times PLUS' as example.

While it's yet to be confirmed if E-editions are guaranteed to be the future of local news publishing, there's enough evidence pointing to them needing to be, at least, a big piece of the puzzle.

The Local Ink E-Edition Initiative Was Developed Specifically for That Future

Unlike most other E-Edition platforms that were built primarily with the reader experience at the core but neglect the needs of advertisers, the Local Ink E-edition platform was built from the bottom up.

While keeping the reader experience as one of the priorities, the main focus was to address the needs of advertisers and publishers, as the news media industry transitions further online and the requirement for data and analytics, grows.

With the First 150 phase of the initiative now well underway, Local Ink has achieved the critical mass of titles needed in order to start building out the analytic capabilities of the platform.

At the top of the priority list was the development of functionality that allows Administrators and media sellers the ability to access location-specific data for readers of participating community newspapers.

This is the level of detail needed to drill well beyond the amount of data available from Google Analytics and aligns with the granular 'community' level, geo-target data that drives ad campaigns at the agency level.

Figure 1 (below) illustrates a snapshot of data extracted from Local Ink at the community level. Each community listed in the image identifies a community from which a single reader is located, the postal code associated with that community, the X,Y coordinates of the community and the publication the reader accessed. Where the data becomes compelling for an advertiser is with the additional information that we are now able to glean on that readers habits. Local Ink provides data on the number of issues read by that reader, how many times they read, the average time spent reading by that reader as well as some subscription details.

Figure 1

Advertiser Reader Report

Local Ink Ltd.

Advertiser Ad Canada
Downloaded 11th Sep, 2026
Report period All time
Region filter Canadian readers with postal codes
Readers 103
Subscriptions 302

Community	Postal code	Latitude	Longitude	Publisher	Title	Edition	Issues reac	Sessions	Avg read time	Sub. start	Sub. end	Subscripti
Holyrood	A0A 2R0	47.3582642	-53.1376832	Caribou Publishing	The Tofield Mercury	The Tofield	3	7	4m 43s	28th Feb, 2026	27th Feb, 2	1
Havelock	K0L 1Z0	44.5429982	-77.8974669	3259545 Manitoba Ltd.	Neepawa Banner	Weekly Ed	3	3	1m 36s	14th Oct, 2025	14th Oct, 2	1
Ottawa	**K1A 0B1**	**45.3757806**	**-75.6904064**									**4**
				Driftwood Publishing Limited	Gulf Islands Driftwood	Wednesdc	7	9	4m 55s	8th Jul, 2026	10th Jul, 20	
				OhBeDeEs Holdings Ltd.	Hometown View	Tuesday	1	1	10m 22s	9th May, 2026	11th May,	
				Grasslands News Group Ltd.	Yorkton Marketplace	Marketpla	0	0				
				Grasslands News Group Ltd.	Yorkton Marketplace	Marketpla	0	0				
Ottawa	K1J 6B9	45.4619614	-75.6171912	3229379 Manitoba Ltd.	Baldur Glenboro Gazett	Baldur-Gle	14	26	10m 37s	20th Aug, 2025	20th Aug, 2	1
Ottawa	K2K 2R3	45.34516	-75.9362376	Driftwood Publishing Limited	Gulf Islands Driftwood	Wednesdc	2	2	4m 21s	6th Jun, 2026	25th Nov, 2	1
Ottawa	K2S 1H2	45.2754396	-75.922773	Your Southwest Media Group	Oyen Echo	The Oyen	18	38	30m 40s	28th Apr, 2026	28th Apr, 2	1
Ottawa	K2S 1R2	45.2634233	-75.9401393	Lake Shore Community Publishi	Nipigon-Red Rock Gaze	Weekly Ed	1	3	4m	9th Aug, 2026	9th Aug, 20	1
Pelham	L3E 0C7	43.0436952	-79.2836324	Vermilion Voice Ltd.	Vermilion Voice	Vermilion V	24	33	9m 58s	24th Mar, 2026	24th Mar, 2	1
Mississauga	L4W 2J8	43.6405036	-79.5977407	Interlake Graphics	Carman-Dufferin Standc	Carman D	3	12	5m 13s	18th Aug, 2026	18th Aug, 2	1
Burlington	L7L 4B3	43.3742591	-79.756285	Interlake Graphics	Selkirk Record	Selkirk Rec	8	8	4m 58s	17th Jul, 2026	17th Jul, 20	1
Toronto	**M1N 1N8**	**43.6816799**	**-79.2811425**									**3**
				3229379 Manitoba Ltd.	Baldur Glenboro Gazett	Baldur-Gle	4	14	2m 56s	23rd May, 2025	23rd May,	
				OhBeDeEs Holdings Ltd.	Hometown View	Tuesday	6	9	1m 23s	12th May, 2026	12th May,	
				Interlake Graphics	Stonewall Teulon Tribune	Stonewall T	7	26	1m 35s	3rd Jul, 2026	3rd Jul, 202	
Toronto	M2J 1H2	43.7735575	-79.352012	Caribou Publishing	The Lamont Leader	Lamont Le	21	23	4m 39s	9th Apr, 2026	9th Apr, 20	1
Toronto	**M4W 3C7**	**43.6740459**	**-79.389054**									**5**
				The Independent Printers Ltd.	Independent	Thursday E	6	9	5m 29s	1st Jan, 2026	31st Dec, 2	
				Interlake Graphics	Selkirk Record	Selkirk Rec	9	16	3m 30s	20th Aug, 2026	20th Sep, 2	
				Lake Shore Community Publishi	Terrace Bay-Schreiber Ne	Tuesday	8	19	1m 45s	25th Jun, 2026	25th Jun, 2	
				Interlake Graphics	Winkler Morden Voice	Winkler Mo	8	10	1m 34s	26th Aug, 2026	26th Sep, 2	
				Grasslands News Group Ltd.	Yorkton Marketplace	Marketpla	14	16	2m 25s	10th Jul, 2026	10th Jul, 20	
Toronto	**M5V 1B7**	**43.636495**	**-79.4005771**									**2**
				Caribou Publishing	The Lamont Leader	Lamont Le	5	7	6m 15s	25th Jun, 2026	25th Jun, 2	
				Grasslands News Group Ltd.	Yorkton Marketplace	Marketpla	10	17	4m 36s	25th Jun, 2026	25th Jun, 2	
St. Jacobs	N0B 2N0	43.5453433	-80.5771737	Grasslands News Group Ltd.	Yorkton Marketplace	Marketpla	1	1	9m 35s	24th Jul, 2026	24th Jul, 20	1
London	N5X 2T1	43.0169306	-81.2635843	Caribou Publishing	The Community Press	Communit	1	1	1m	26th Aug, 2026	26th Aug, 2	1
Essex	N8M 2X6	42.1537553	-82.8855961	Interlake Graphics	Carman-Dufferin Standc	Carman D	10	10	7m 55s	2nd Jul, 2026	2nd Jul, 20	1

Another priority for Local Ink was the requirement to provide 'audit' data to aggregate readers based on their community for each participating newspaper.

This data can now assimilate directly into the audit data for the printed versions of each newspaper to arrive at a 'true' accounting for each publications TOTAL distribution.

One of the challenges faced by many newspapers currently (particularly free distribution titles) **is that the only metric that exists to qualify engagements with the E-edition is a "Page View."**

Page Views, as we know, are one of the metrics that feeds into the Google model of online advertising.

It is not one easily monetized for newspapers.

The solution that has been incorporated into Local Ink to address this challenge is the need to convert 'Page Views' to 'Subscribers'. Subscribers as we know, IS a metric that is used by the newspapers industry to help quantify our audiences and generate revenue. In order for a reader to access a publication inside the Local Ink platform, they first must 'subscribe' to that publication, which in turn then allows for the ability to qualify in the same way we can with our print circulations.

Figure 2 is a snapshot of an Expanded Circulation Report that summarizes the location of E-edition subscribers for participating newspapers.



Figure 2

Expand Circulations — By Community

Local Ink Ltd. · One section per publication

Filters: All ads (no client, ad code, publisher, or title)

Period: 5th Feb, 2026 – 9th Sep, 2026

Melville Advance · E-edition 3

Community	E-edition
Cold Lake	1
Melville	1
St. Albert	1
Publication total	**3**

Altona Rhineland Voice · E-edition 9

Community	E-edition
Altona	2
Aubigny	1
Carman	1
La Broquerie	1
Morden	1
Selkirk	1
Stanley	1
Warren	1
Publication total	**9**

Baldur Glenboro Gazette · E-edition 74

Community	E-edition
Glenboro	16
Baldur	13
Brandon	8
Cypress River	8
Winnipeg	7
Belmont	3
Deloraine	2

While the Local Ink platform is now able to provide the community-level data that is so vitally important to advertisers, **it's the next layer of the reporting capabilities that offers the most promise as far as revenue generation is concerned.**

Traditionally, circulation data has been the only metric available to share with advertisers to help them quantify a newspaper's audience. While studies are conducted regularly to try and apply metrics such as readers per copy, read time etc., most of that data is anecdotal and can only be applied generally.

Not since ComBase, has there been newspaper-specific data that could be used to assess audience engagement numbers at the newspaper level. While Local Ink does create the opportunity to analyze those numbers, once again, for E-editions **it's also been designed to provide a level of reporting that until now, has not existed for newspapers: engagement with the ads inside the publication.**

Figure 3 is a snapshot of a Campaign Engagement Summary that in this case, isolates a single publication and a single advertiser to qualify the engagement with a 13-insertion ad campaign, placed by a single advertiser between March 20, 2026 and August 14th 2026 in the Melville Advance, a participating Local Ink publication. The report highlights the page the advertisers ad ran on, the number of times the page was read, the average read time of the entire edition, the average read time of the ad page as well as the clickthroughs on the ad and other clickthroughs in the edition.



E-Edition Engagement Campaign Summary

Local Ink Ltd.

Filters: All ads (no client, ad code, publisher, or title)

Insertion date:

Report Date: 11th Sep, 2026

Figure 3

Melville Advance · 19 rows

Issue	Ad Page	Reads/Views Ad page	Avg Read Time/Issue (m:ss)	Average Read Time/Ad Page (m:ss)	Ad Clickthroughs	Other Clickthroughs
20th Mar, 2026	15	2	4:55	0:23	0	8
27th Mar, 2026	N/A	1	7:46	2:19	3	8
17th Apr, 2026	N/A	1	11:30	3:26	1	2
24th Apr, 2026	N/A	1	6:03	3:24	1	1
1st May, 2026	4	45	10:51	2:39	2	2
8th May, 2026	12	28	14:50	1:21	5	3
15th May, 2026	26	39	7:52	1:07	3	4
5th Jun, 2026	21	61	11:56	3:50	0	3
12th Jun, 2026	3	34	5:26	2:57	2	5
19th Jun, 2026	4	55	7:31	1:06	5	3
26th Jun, 2026	8	53	4:55	2:36	4	3
3rd Jul, 2026	6	49	6:26	1:32	6	2
14th Aug, 2026	7	33	7:19	10:48	1	3
Publication total		**402**			**33**	**47**

The ability to report metrics specific to ad engagement is the foundation of the online advertising industry.

This is the only language that ad planners understand and relate to, and is not one that the newspaper industry has been able speak relative to our core product, the newspaper.

As someone who interacts with media planners regularly **I can say with a level of certainty that this lack of reporting is the exact thing that has resulted in the steady migration of advertisers away from the industry.**

The Local Ink platform has the potential to help steer some of those dollars back in our direction, while at the same time creating a wealth of other paths to a sustainable future.

For more information on Local Ink, please contact Jeff Beardsworth
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