

Newspapers are still good as gold

by Kim Reed

Newspapers aren't dinosaurs in the age of the digital revolution, says Clive Nelson, business manager for Fairfax Sunday Newspapers.

"It was predicted that television would be the death of radio, video would be the death of cinema, and DVD would be the death of video," says Nelson, who claims there is still a strong role for newspapers which serve the needs of their communities.

But in an arena where publishers are fighting for readership and more publications are available online, is there room for concern?

Nelson doesn't think so. He says if newspapers were invented today, they would be considered just as fantastic an invention as the internet.

"A newspaper is portable. You can roll it up, take it to the beach ... and line the cat's litter box when you've finished reading it."

"A newspaper is portable. You can roll it up, take it to the beach, use it to a light fire, swat a fly and line the cat's litter box when you've finished reading it. You don't need a mains adapter and the pages don't crash on you.

"It's a fantastically functional thing that you can dip into time and time again. It's an inherently sociable tool as well. You can hand it across the breakfast table and say, 'Gee, look at this.'

"A newspaper is a wonderful invention in that sense and I don't think it has ever been surpassed by anything else."

The Australian-owned

Fairfax NZ Ltd purchased Independent Newspapers Ltd in July 2003 and is considered New Zealand's largest media company. The company's assets include nine daily newspapers, two national Sunday papers, lifestyle magazines, community newspapers and an online division.

Nelson oversees the business management of Fairfax's national Sunday newspapers, the *Sunday Star Times* and *Sunday News*.

He says Sunday is "a different kind of day".

"The literature I've read suggests that most online papers get big hits on Monday mornings and slump on Sundays.

"I think it's because most people are away from work. They don't have access to computers on the weekend or don't want to be sitting at a computer on a Sunday."

The idea that many younger readers access their news online doesn't bother him.

"I think the threat posed by electronic media is balanced against the need to meet the market with the title. The fact that our papers come out on a Sunday and perhaps cover stories that you wouldn't see elsewhere is our point of difference."

Fairfax's marketing figures show that the *Sunday News* is the third-biggest selling newspaper in New Zealand, with more than 500,000 readers nationwide.

"The *Sunday News* has, I think, some of the youngest readers in the county. The average age of the *Sunday News* reader is lower than that of other newspapers, and that's done by having a heavy concentration on entertainment and sport."

With the recent announcement of a \$7 million deal between Fairfax NZ Ltd and



TelstraClear for voice and managed internet services, one wonders if Fairfax has plans to be more aggressive in the digital world.

Nelson will not comment but refers to Fairfax's existing online division which manages its website, www.stuff.co.nz, where articles from all Fairfax titles, including the Sunday publications, can be accessed at no charge.

"A newspaper is a wonderful invention in that sense and I don't think its ever been surpassed by anything else."

He does admit that a newspaper's inherent weakness is that it can't compete with new media's immediacy to deal with news in "real time".

But he says that story selection and targeting readership is the key.

"Improvements in technology

have helped us overcome some of the traditional limitations," he says.

"Our printing presses and distribution networks are more sophisticated than ever before. The real strength of newspapers is their ability to service the needs of some very specialised communities of readers and advertisers. We have titles which target some unique markets, both geographically and in terms of demographics.

"And newspapers are very good at explaining, adding background information, graphics and images and presenting data in a digestible form."

Since the advent of dotcom companies, there has been much discussion about the rise of new media. Some pundits bet on the demise of the newspaper.

Arnold Kling, economist and entrepreneur, says the newspaper industry will die in the next 20 years. He gives several reasons, such as younger people are not reading newspapers compared to previous generations and wire services provide much of the reporting for newspapers.

In the article, *Newspapers in the Digital Age*, on the *Online Journalism Review* website, Arthur Sulzberger, publisher of the *New York Times*, says:

"Newspapers cannot be defined by the second word - paper. They've got to be defined by the first word - news. All of us have to become agnostic as to the method of distribution. We've got to be as powerful online, as powerful in TV and broadcasting, as we are powerful in newsprint."

Bill Drewry, who tracks the publishing industry for Credit Suisse First Boston, says there is room for newspapers and online media to work together.

"Newspapers should begin to include new users of their online products along with traditional print circulation in their calculations of their customer base," he says in an article on the Poynter website.

Clive Nelson has been a journalist for 18 years. Originally from Manchester, UK, he moved to New Zealand seven years ago and became editor of the *Sunday News*. Promoted in June 2004 to business manager for Fairfax Sunday Newspapers, he now manages the *Sunday News* and *Sunday Star Times*.

After his formal education with the National Council for the Training of Journalists in Darlington, UK, he began his career working for local daily newspapers in Northern England and later freelanced for the *Sun* and the *Daily Express*.

From 1991-1995 he was a reporter on *Today*, the UK News Ltd tabloid and travelled throughout the world covering the royal family and major news stories.

Prior to arriving in New Zealand, he was features editor on the British national tabloid, the *Sunday Mirror* from 1995-1997.

Film fete shows 'real' side of people in the Middle East

by Dean Campbell

A film festival showing an alternative to the mainstream media's portrayal of Middle Eastern people is to hit Auckland this September.

Festival director Nadra Zarifeh is bringing the *Date Palm Film Festival* to Auckland's Capitol Cinema for the first time. Zarifeh says there are not many films of this type shown in New Zealand.

"The main objective is to show a human side to people in the Middle East and North Africa, as opposed to the harsh portrayal in mainstream media," she says.

The festival features six feature films, three documentaries, and happens in Auckland from September 16 to 20.

This year's films come from Iran, Israel, Palestine, Morocco,

Egypt, and Tunisia.

The first festival was held last year in Wellington only. This year the festival expands to include Auckland and Christchurch.

"We had an amazing response last year. We had people call us from Auckland when we were on National Radio saying, 'Why isn't this happening in Auckland?' Well, here it is."

Zarifeh says she was motivated to start the festival after observing the effects of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

"It's easy to generalise about a culture you don't know about - particularly in light of the heavy US slant in the mainstream media. The terrorist label of Arabic people is untrue."

Zarifeh highlights one film in the festival - *Brothers and Others* - which shows people of Middle Eastern and Asian

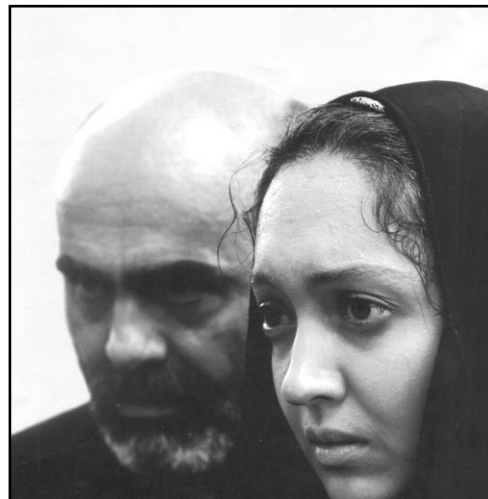


descent imprisoned without charge as suspected terrorists in America.

The films are unlikely to get released in the mainstream, and Zarifeh says it is important for New Zealanders to try to see them.

"New Zealand is involved in this area of the world - politicians are embroiled, people are working over there, and many people travel through there."

"People over there don't want war - they're just trying to live their lives, put three meals on the table a day, just like us," she says.



THE TRUE FACE OF MIDDLE EAST: Scenes from two of the films shown at the festival giving another view on life in the Middle East.