Thank You For 70 Years!
This Isn’t Goodbye

I’ve been thinking about this note for some time now. So much, in fact, that that sentence is among few I haven’t deleted or rewritten. What do I say about an institution that’s existed for nearly twice my life, while I have only been a part of it for a handful of years? Thankfully, I was able to get a lot of help from our community, as well as our editors—past and present. You will see that as you make your way through the issue.

For all intents and purposes, this is the end of this quirky little newsletter. However, this is by no means the end of the community min has proudly been a part of since 1947.

In more tangible terms, min will live on through its sister brand Folio: and Folio: has shared a wealth of resources for several years, so from a business standpoint this makes sense. But that doesn’t make this easy. I assure you, none of us here take this lightly. Yet, we are extremely excited about where things go from here. We truly believe we are now better positioned to serve you and Folio:‘s extended community. We will fulfill that promise with a strong commitment to journalism, peer-to-peer insights and award programs that recognize the brilliant work you do daily.

On a more personal note, I want to quickly reflect on what min has meant to me.

I joined my parent company Access Intelligence in February 2012 as a 30-something intern. This was a career change for me, which is another story for another time. I was hired to help out a group of brands that included both Folio: and min. For the first few weeks I was chugging along, writing bylines for Folio:, and doing other intern work. Then one day, out of nowhere, I was contacted by former min managing editor, Greer Jonas. Greer indicated she had an important, but small project she needed my help with ASAP. In hindsight, it wasn’t so small. Moments later I got about 35 emails with attachments. These files included nebulous numbers that made absolutely no sense at the time along with a strange 12-page pdf that looked like it had been written on a typewriter 100 years earlier. If you’ve been reading min for more than a few years you probably know all this was. If not, I will spare you the suspense: it was raw boxscore data and an issue of min.

For decades min’s currency was its boxscore—a series of reports with brand-by-brand, year-over-year, ad page counts. For several months I toiled away reaching out to publishers for their data and then entering all of it into a spreadsheet so it could appear in each week’s issue. Between the weekly and monthly titles we tracked hundreds of magazines and it was all done manually by one or two people. It was some undertaking, to say the least.

Looking back, the boxscores were more than just a data report though, they were part of an implicit community pledge to share vital business intelligence. Sure, some of it was for the purpose of bragging rights, but that wasn’t the fundamental objective, transparency was. At the time I thought the boxscores were antiquated madness with a broken workflow. I was wrong. (Well, maybe not about the workflow.) And likewise, when it came to this newsletter, well, I didn’t understand it at first either. But I do now.

In my mind this newsletter has been the collective consciousness of this industry and its people. It’s been a weekly destination to catch up with the folks you know, and hear about how they are succeeding (professionally and personally). It’s been a celebration of the good, and sometimes an optimistic spin on the bad. It’s been a part of your community.

I feel fortunate for having a small place in this legacy. And am grateful to be a member of this community. And although I will miss this newsletter, I will not mourn this as a death because we all have great things to look forward to ahead.
One More Idea for the Road: Audio Is Not a Sideshow

*The New York Times* launched its own audio app this week. Technically this may be a small thing, because it simply allows the user to start *NYT* podcasts from a page and listen outside the app. And I say bravo for the effort, but good luck to users finding anything but “The Daily,” even on the pages where the other podcasts are most relevant.

This reminds us of an ongoing frustration with podcasting. When it comes to audio, the spirit is willing but the flesh weak among publishers. Few sites are taking their own excellent audio programming seriously enough to treat it as relevant, insightful editorial. Even *Slate*, which has one of the largest and best podcast libraries, and should know better, still siloes its audio under a podcast tab rather than integrating it with the full flow of front page content.

How do you do it better? Look at *Vox’s* *ReCode*, where the site regularly reports on revelations from its own great podcast interviews that are hosted by the inimitable Kara Swisher and no-fluff fast-talker Peter Kafka. When *Groupon*’s founder advises fellow ousted CEOs never to admit they were fired, it’s news. *ReCode* does a full text story, embeds the podcast, pushes it to the front page. Other sites turn their best interviews into transcripts, letting the user decided whether to lean back and listen or scan and pan quickly. The content then becomes searchable as well.

Quite brilliantly, *NPR* has made it a practice of having its hourly short news broadcasts available at the tap of a play button on its sites and in its apps. Many magazine publishers are already generating this sort of material for testing *Amazon* Echo’s daily briefing feature. Like *NPR*, sites should be embedding it at the top of the page. It gives your media brand an incredibly engaging audio track while they peruse your other content.

This isn’t hard. Just start thinking of your audio programming as content, as the literal voice of your brand that can keep a user engaged on your site. Then integrate this idea into newsletters, mobile alerts, related content links and promotions. Believe me, as your readers start relying more on audio assistants, ambient computing, smart speakers, in-car connectivity, and more, you will wish you had spent more time thinking about how your brand voice carries beyond the screen.
70 Years of Moments that Redefined the Media Industry

A timeline of turning points since min’s debut issue in 1947.

Since the Media Industry Newsletter published its debut issue in 1947, America has seen 13 presidential administrations, 17 Yankees’ World Series titles, and more than 10,000 episodes of ABC’s “All My Children.”


Today, seventy years later, protests by athletes have sparked a heated national conversation over America’s treatment of minorities, high-definition cameras have become a basic expectation on the devices we carry in our pockets, the internet has all but eclipsed television as the primary source of news for Americans of any age, and the executive branch of the U.S. government loudly and repeatedly portrays the media and the Hollywood film industry as political enemies.

But as history repeats itself, no one can deny how much the media industry has evolved since min first began chronicling the publishing world’s ups and downs, comings and goings, and winners and losers. In the spirit of looking back to look ahead, let’s reflect on just some of the biggest turning points over that 70-year evolution.

1953 – TV Guide and Playboy magazines publish their first issues, followed by Sports Illustrated a year later.

1956 – 82.6% of American households tune into the Elvis Presley’s first appearance on “The Ed Sullivan Show.”

1956 – The first transatlantic telephone cable system, laid between Oban, Scotland and Clarenville, Newfoundland, goes into operation.

1961 – John F. Kennedy holds the first presidential press conference to be broadcast on live TV.

1963 – JFK is assassinated, prompting what would become the longest uninterrupted news event in U.S. television for the next 40 years.


1967 – Congress authorizes the creation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.


1969 – The first permanent ARPANET link is established between researchers at UCLA and Stanford, laying the technical foundation for the modern internet.

1969 – Millions around the world watch live as Neil Armstrong becomes the first human to set foot on the Moon.

1970 – Approximately 100 women stage a sit-in at the offices of Ladies’ Home Journal. Three years later, it names its first female editor, Lenore Hershey.


1974 – People magazine publishes its first issue.


1987 – The FCC eliminates the Fairness Doctrine, ushering in a new era of political talk radio.

1989 – Tim Berners-Lee invents the World Wide Web, which goes on to become the primary tool through which billions of people interact on the internet.

1991 – The heavily televised Persian Gulf War ushers in a new era for live TV news coverage, particularly through the emergence of CNN.

1995 – Craig Newmark launches the free online marketplace Craigslist.


2001 – Millions of Americans watch as the September 11th attacks unfold on live TV.

2004 – Harvard University student Mark Zuckerberg launches TheFacebook.com, which goes on to attract over one-million registered users in its first year.

2007 – The iPhone debuts, fundamentally changing the mobile phone industry.

2008 – Barrack Obama uses social media and the web to make history by becoming the first African-American President of the United States.

2009 – The largest global financial crisis since the Great Depression reaches its climax as the Dow Jones Industrial Average closes at a 12-year low.

2010 – Image-based social network Instagram launches, followed a year later by Snapchat.

2010 – Facebook and Twitter play a major role in the coordination of a major uprising across Northern Africa and the Middle East, which would become known as the Arab Spring.

2013 – Edward Snowden leaks classified information to journalists at The Guardian and The Washington Post, revealing widespread global surveillance programs run by the NSA.

2016 – Real estate mogul and reality TV star Donald Trump is elected president of the United States, after a campaign that relied heavily on both social media and Americans’ changing media consumption habits.
Milestone Apps Still Teach

Looking back on the apps that have shaped mobile media.

I started my decade of app reviews a month after the iPhone’s launch, when Facebook started experimenting with what we then called “web apps.” One look and it was clear to me it was game over. Mobile was the internet we’d been waiting for.

Here, rather than as a nostalgic exercise, it’s worth recalling the milestone apps of the last decade precisely because they remind us of the fundamental appeals of mobile that all publishers should keep front and center now and forever.

Instagram: Its design and meteoric rise underscored several key aspects of mobile all at once. First, it told us that mobile was visual. Users already knew this because they themselves had made the camera the device’s killer app. But publishers needed Instagram to show how the inspiring, shareable image is the real currency here. Not surprisingly, magazine brands and masters of the image-text equation like Nat Geo, Vogue, and Playboy were among the most followed media brands. But most of all, Instagram proved an important counterpoint to Facebook and Twitter’s atrocious user experiences.

BuzzFeed: Ok, so prettiness isn’t the only mobile-first essential. BuzzFeed was and is still pretty ugly. But its cacophonous feed of breaking news interwoven with recipes, endless listicles and puppies decimated all of our notions of context, environment and compartmentalized modes of engaging media. Welcome to the mosh pit. This site and app changed our understanding of how “the kids” were ready to absorb their information. They don’t need your damned feature wells and “departments.” They will sort it out for themselves.

Amazon: This is the app that brought down a retail empire, and so should probably be regarded as the most economically consequential entity on mobile. It successfully challenged Google as the default search engine for products. It demonstrated the sheer economic might of pushing the right product info (including UGC) to the retail point of decision. Consumer Reports used to fantasize about being that go-to in-store source. Amazon made it so compelling with a unified and personalized view of the customer. Your identity, history, tastes and shopping cart all followed you across every screen.

Financial Times: In a daring move early in The App Store’s life, The Financial Times bailed. Eschewing Apple’s 30% app fees for in-app subs and the limitations of discovery in the walled garden of apps, it got smarter, faster about the mobile web than just about anyone else. Its FT.com still stands as a web app that lives up to the name. It reminds us that some users and some mindsets still crave consistent, focused, media environments to secure their trust and loyalty. And being in The App Store may not matter at all.

Angry Birds: For better or worse, this is the game that showed us mobile could build new media brands that extended off of a phone. More than that, it had a genius mobile interface. The joy of touch cannot be overestimated in the appeal of mobile. Angry Birds showed how simple physics-based mechanics and a tight interface that tied physical touch and movement to action, could be endlessly absorbing.

There was always a deeper message to mobile. Its small screen, basic kinetic interface, visual skew, personal scale, and person-to-person connectivity all tie the user to the media in unprecedented ways. The adage that “mobile is personal” may mean more than we ever imagined. Mobility weaves media into the very fabric of routine and real-time living in ways that are radically different from how we consumed “mass media” in the last century. The media will need to change just as radically. The scary, intriguing reality is that we don’t know yet what shape these necessary forms will take.
Digital Isn't a Disruption; It's a Revolution
Reflections of my 20+ years covering the evolution of digital media.

I started covering the digital transformation of media over a quarter century ago, first as a college professor and then as a columnist and reporter in 1993. The biggest misnomer about those years was that somehow technology “disrupted” traditional business and media consumption models. Hand-wringing about start-up culture and its assaults on the values, quality and revenue of legacy media miss the point. The commercialized internet and all it wrought was at once a product, an accelerator and enabler of trends that were already developing in the culture. This has been a genuine revolution, not a mere “disruption.”

Magazines struggled to digitize largely because they were structured top to bottom in the very mass media century with which Americans were becoming disenchanted. From the rise of cable TV in the 70s, to the demographic clustering of the population in the 80s and 90s, the center was not holding in America. The top-down aspirational tone of magazine media was not a good fit for an emerging ethos of clustered, participatory pop culture.

As much as editors tried to pivot towards “embracing” their audience rather than leading it, other digital media sources understood the shift sooner and better. As a culture, we were looking more for esteem and validation than for aspiration. The internet didn’t suddenly, magically “empower” consumers to drive the media and marketing bus. The internet took off as a cultural phenomenon when users saw in it what they were looking for—a more direct and unmediated route to the like-minded, to information and news they liked and to one another. Our faith in media institutions was already disintegrating. The many magazines that sought just the right format, revenue model and distribution scheme to make the digital transition work for them were missing the point. This was not just another distribution vehicle. This change represented a shift away from institutional authority of all kinds.

That’s not to say media brands cannot re-establish trust and authority with followers. But it will need to be done with new kinds of transparency and personal connections. One of my earliest arguments about digital media back in the 90s was that media wanted this platform to behave more like TV, magazines or newspapers. But users were treating it more like a telephone. Email was always the killer app here, and personality-driven formats always worked best. That person-to-person connection has always been tough for a traditionally aloof, often effete, magazine culture to grasp let alone execute.

I can’t pretend to know what forms a post-mass-media media take across fragmented channels. There are glimmers of models I find exciting. Companies like Axios and The Information show how collectives of journalists and editors may be able to build brands around the trust they have established individually with readers. The New York Times’ recently acquired Wirecutter reviews site demonstrates an almost-painful level of transparency in order to define (not just establish) the kind of authority they represent in the market. Mobile apps like NewsPicks suggest ways in which some traditional editorial trappings may combine with social curation of news. The incredibly novel and entertaining Trivia HQ blends live programming events, a personable host, social interaction, push messaging, TV, and brevity in ways so much more interesting than anything we saw from Facebook Live or Watch.

All of these most interesting projects I see right now are connecting with users because they are so obviously being driven by people and not entities. The writers and editors of these new media are not proxies of a “media brand.” The “brand” is a proxy for the people who make the content. Whatever shape future media may take, I believe this much will be true. Audiences have used digital technologies to effectively disintermediate government, commerce and media because they came to trust one another more than they did institutions. Media that don’t’ get that and continue to think they can just build new brands online by mastering data and distribution, new native ad formats or pivoting to video/AR/VR/Smart speakers/OTT, etc. are stuck in the fantasies of 1995 and have learned nothing. Revolutions are not disruptions. They run much deeper and require a fundamental re-trenchment of how media, editors, writers and advertisers connect with the people they serve. This is a time where we need imagination at least as much as we need more data.

I left an academic role of charting media history for critiquing the internet because I knew that was where the action was and where history was unfolding before my eyes. From my days as editor of min’s New Media Report in the mid 90s to today, it has been my privilege and joy to cover the revolution from within. To the thousands of you I have interviewed, argued with, chronicled and cajoled—thanks for the ride of a lifetime.
People: What Really Made min Matter
Former editor-in-chief Steve Cohn, reflects on the newsletter’s 70-year run.

I was privileged to be editor of Media Industry Newsletter for 30 of its 70 years. It was a good run for both.

My first issue was on June 18, 1986, stated “Vol. 39, No. 24,” but the earliest back issues in our Manhattan offices at 145 East 49th Street (now a luxury apartment building run by Best Western) were from the late-1970s. For whatever reason, they were not saved before my first boss, Bill Barlow, acquired the newsletter in 1975. But I later learned that min started in 1947, when magazines were booming in the post-World War II economy. There was a brief period when the name was changed to “Magazine Industry Newsletter,” but “Media” returned because of the attempt to attract subscribers from newspapers, radio and television, which, with magazines, were the landscape in 1986.

Still, magazines were the soul of min because of the advertising-page boxscores, which were there from the start. In the pre-digital era, the weeklies’ and biweeklies’ numbers were obtained by phone, while requests for the monthlies were sent by postcard (later by fax machine). The return rate (by mail and by messenger) was impressive, but the work done by my administrative colleagues to get all the data in by our deadline was yeoman.

The boxscores were why we could charge $172 for a subscription in 1986, and the sum sequentially rose to over $1,000 by 2017. Along with the boxscores, our staples included best- and worst-selling covers on the newsstand (started in 1978 by my first colleague Marty Singer, who divided his time between min and BusinessWeek’s PR department until leaving for Folio: in 1993), an annual launch review with Samir Husni, and July and January reviews of the women’s-fashion magazines’ in September and March previews’ ad pages.

They began in July 1993 when I wanted to see how Harper’s Bazaar fared on the first anniversary of the late editor-in-chief Elizabeth Tilberis. Pretty simple at that time because HB, Elle and Vogue filled the competitive set when beauty magazines such as Glamour, Cosmo and 1991 launch Allure were more endemic with cosmetics and toiletries. The distinctions ended with the intertwining of celebrity, beauty and fashion (brought about in part by the 1994 launches of InStyle and Marie Claire), and by 2014 we were tracking over 20 magazines.

What also set min apart was the credo first installed in me by Bill Barlow: Magazines are a people business. The writing was in the familiar, not the formal (nicknames were often used), and the goal was to crunch enough facts into a limited space in order to give subscribers a quick read. Headlines were less overview and more lead-ins to the text. We practiced what the late min columnist Tony Schwartz (creator of the anti-nuclear “Daisy Ad” used by Lyndon B. Johnson against Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential campaign) preached: Do more with less.

Tony wrote for min from the 1970s through the early-1990s. Advertising and marketing insights were provided by Ed Papazian from the 1980s through the early-2000s. And, of course, important to all of this was Steve Smith, whose digital media expertise has been invaluable since 1997. In the beginning, digital was a minor component (Remember when then-Time Inc. president Don Logan called the internet a “black hole” for magazines in 1994?), but its surpassing print would often make Steve’s work the lead min story in recent years.

My two most cherished colleagues were John Masterton, who edited min with me from 1993-2006 and made my copy coherent while producing great stories of his own. And Greer Jonas, who at her job interview in 1999 said that we would never have to worry about the boxscores again. It was a promise that she kept for 13 years, as her digital skills turned what was a chore into a pleasure. Greer’s versatility with numbers, IT and overall trouble-shooting were why we called her “Greer the Great.”

min survived many crises, economic and otherwise (we were threatened with lawsuits but none ever came to fruition), but we were not immune to the turbulence that impacted magazine media. The spirit of min continues in Folio; and may it prosper with help from a minsider or two.

Steve Cohn is the former editor-in-chief of min. During his 30-year tenure he was considered an expert in the business of magazines and was regularly called upon for his industry insights from publications that included The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Ad Age and others.
MIN ASKS

What have you loved about min?

We asked members of our community to share their thoughts and memories.

Steve Cohn, Former Editor-in-Chief, min

“My proudest moment at min came after the September 11, 2001, attacks. First, we were able to get the September 17 issue out in spite of a disrupted workweek. The 9/11 covers of Newsweek, Time, BusinessWeek, New York magazine, The New Yorker and People helped make it a keepsake. Advertising all but dried up in the fourth quarter (all of min’s boxscores contained a 9/11 footnote through September 2002), and the rumor mill percolated with speculation that the travel magazines were going to fold. Rather than call a publisher with another “What are you going to do?” question, I reached out to then-Travel + Leisure editor-in-chief Nancy Novogrod. She told me that she had rewritten her November editor’s letter to emphasize the positives and necessities of travel. Our excerpt on September 24 led to other editors following suit and our series continued through Thanksgiving.”

Bonnie Kintzer, President, CEO, Trusted Media Brands

“One of the many things that I always loved about min was that its editors, especially Steve Cohn, were steady hands at covering the media industry whether it was sailing on calm seas or navigating turbulent waters. Steve and the teams at min over the years brought valuable insights into how the business was performing, the innovative and sometimes colorful people who were changing the industry, the new products and platforms that were connecting with consumers, and what was the new benchmark for success. The most refreshing part, they always delivered it without hyperbole but instead with the trademark min personality—a little quirky, sometimes mischievous, but always honest.”

Steve Deluca, Senior VP, Publisher, Departures and Black Ink; Publishing Director, Travel + Leisure, Time Inc.

“min’s greatest achievement was to create a sense of community and camaraderie in the media industry. It was one of the few sources you could turn to find positive news about the brands and the people that made working in media so rewarding. I never received as many well wishes as I did when I was mentioned in min. Additionally, it’s honest, no snark reporting was a welcome reprieve in a sea of gossip.”

David Remnick, Editor-in-Chief, The New Yorker

“Reading min, I could always tell its writers and editors had a deep knowledge of the history of our business. It imbued the reporting, the analysis, the comings and goings of executives, everything. I’m going to miss it.”

David Carey, President of Hearst Magazines

“For decades, I have started each week with min—what’s new, who’s up, who’s down, key moves in the industry. For me, min made a large, complex business more interesting, more personal, and provided news and data that guided management and inspired teams. To min: Thank you!”

Gregory Gatto, SVP, Managing Director, Bonnier Corporation

“From its inception, min has been an ally to the ever-changing magazine publishing world. We have looked to min for updates on industry moves, insightful analysis and opinion and celebrations of great work. Their panels, talks, and awards ceremonies have always been great opportunities to connect with peers outside the office. Not only have they been a trustworthy source for learning, min’s staff has also always been a pleasure to work with. Wishing the team the best of luck with Folio.”

Michael Clinton, President, Marketing and Publishing Director, Hearst Magazines

“Before social media was a term, min played a role in keeping all of us connected. We learned the news of the business, the performance of different magazines and the coming and going of all of our talent. Plus, min added the human element for all of us to stay in touch on what people were up to at work and with their passions. min gave us history and perspective and a positive belief in our industry.”

Bob Guccione, Jr., Founder of Spin, Founder/Publisher Wonderlust

“Any death is sad, even after a long, stimulating, impactful and hopefully fun life. Even when we are prepared for it, know it’s coming. Even if you no longer are as close as you once were, have drifted away from each other. Doesn’t change the sadness. And so it is with min, now absorbed into Folio, preserved in spirit if not in flesh. And min was flesh—it was physical, it used to come stapled for chrissake! You can’t staple the Internet.

For decades it was important to all of us in the media, not only for it’s news, which of course most of us knew most of already, and not because of its gossip, which was always fun, never sour, but because of the quirky, very human way that news was discussed, analyzed and conjectured over. It wasn’t perfect or always complete, but it stimulated rather than concluded the conversation: it was exactly like a couple of industry folks chatting about the eternally churning media world. It left us informed and thinking: min did not do our thinking for us. Maybe it thought it did! But, gloriously, it didn’t. And Steve Cohn was immortal, the beating heart of min and as unique as Ring Lardner! He had his warm, steel trap mind that forgot nothing style. He didn’t always get the scoop, but he always got the humanity in the often amoral, sometimes immoral, machinations of an industry that usually thinks it knows more than it does. I miss it already.”

David Zinczenko, Founder, CEO, Galvanized Media

“I always enjoyed reading min every week. It felt like being at an exclusive cocktail party with the magazine industry’s smartest minds as they were chatting about the business and sharing their insights. Few outlets would take the time to really look at what made our industry tick the way that Steve and the team at min did and it underscored just how intimate and personal this business is and continues to be.”

Larry Burke, Chairman, Editor-in-Chief, Outside Magazine

“I looked forward to reading every issue with a cup of java in hand to start my week. The min staff, past and present, chronicled the most interesting people, company’s and events in the publishing and media industry with a unique journalistic style that I will sorely miss.

I’m confident the spirit of min will live on its new form. Thank you min-siders for the many decades of entertaining and informative coverage.”
Many years ago, min gave me my first editorial award as an editor-in-chief—I still have the trophy! I’ve enjoyed min’s inside view of the magazine media, and got to know all the key personalities as well as both the seismic moves and subtle shifts in our industry through Steve Cohn’s insightful weekly reports. Thank you for being both a watchful eye and an enthusiastic cheerleader for magazine brands in our ever-changing media environment.”

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“We love to know that min always has an overwhelmingly positive force in our dynamic industry. The newsletter always went beyond the news coverage to reveal the people behind the news in its friendly min way. We will miss it!”

“Many years ago, min gave me my first editorial award as an editor-in-chief—I still have the trophy! I’ve enjoyed min’s inside view of the magazine media, and got to know all the key personalities as well as both the seismic moves and subtle shifts in our industry through Steve Cohn’s insightful weekly reports. Thank you for being both a watchful eye and an enthusiastic cheerleader for magazine brands in our ever-changing media environment.”
Thank You!

min and Folio: Thank their 2017 Event Sponsors, Partners, and Loyal Readers!

Here’s to a successful 2018 for all our friends from the min and Folio: family. Sincerely,

From Our Family To Yours, Best Wishes For A Happy New Year!

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