

"Where would we find the most subscribers — how could we determine where or how to pattern our routes? Simple. We just took the country road map and started out, up and down each and every mile of road, counting every farm home, marking them on the map, even to the side of the road on which the house sat."

— L. GILFORD EDEN,  
Circulation Manager,  
New Castle, Ind.,  
*Courier-Times*

## CHAPTER 2

# Sources of Circulation

**P**OPULATION, as the basic source of circulation, regulates the sale of newspapers in the areas where people reside, congregate and commute.

Development of the circulation department will vary according to these main factors:

1. Density of population.
2. Needs of the people.
3. Trends that influence changes in factors 1 and 2.

## POPULATION DENSITY INFLUENCES CIRCULATION

Circulation will be greatest near the source of publication, and radiate from there according to conditions prevalent in each locality. Mechanics of distribution are more easily handled in thickly populated areas where family units are heavily concentrated, where people tend to purchase papers as they go to work or to shop, during their downtown lunch hours and on their trips home. But people in suburban areas, small towns, on farms and ranches are just as eager for news, and the circulation manager needs to develop every possible opportunity presented in his area.

## Expanded Coverage Has Some Advantages

Certain conditions create exceptions to the geographical limitations, and a newspaper's circulation sometimes extends far beyond its immediate trade area.

During both World Wars, papers were sent to service men in all

parts of the world. Weekly newspapers supplemented or substituted for thousands of Sunday letters from parents and kept soldiers up to date on happenings at home. Many daily newspapers offered mail subscriptions to service men at reduced rates, considering it a patriotic service to disregard profit in such cases. The Elizabeth, N.J., *Daily Journal* (circulation 49,614, population 112,817) allowed a 30 per cent discount on all subscriptions to service men in the United States and overseas.

Even as persons sail the seas, newspapers for them are printed on shipboard. Sensitive wireless instruments pick up news bulletins flashed through the sky; operators record world happenings, weather predictions, sports statistics and stock market quotations; and passengers receive the latest news as the sun rises over the sea. A total circulation of more than 2,000,000 copies in a single year is claimed by newspapers of six ocean liners.

Persons who have lived long in a community have the local newspaper follow them when they move away. This is particularly true if the newspaper is a weekly, because the cost is little and the paper is received at convenient reading intervals. In this way former residents keep in touch for years with people with whom they once were associated. Vacationers frequently have their home town papers forwarded to them; this seldom adds revenue to the newspaper, for handling costs are high, but it does build good will and loyalty that pay dividends in other ways.

Some metropolitan dailies have subscribers in every state and in countries abroad. The Sunday issue of the *New York Times* (circulation 1,189,213, population 7,891,957) is read in all parts of the nation and in many foreign lands. The *Denver Post* (circulation 254,120, population 415,786) is delivered to all sections of its "Rocky Mountain Empire." The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (circulation 310,243, population 856,796) boasts its "Forty-ninth State," a section covering large areas of several states. The *Chicago Tribune* (circulation 935,943, population 3,620,962) and the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* (combined circulation 497,784, population 521,718) have newsstands and carrier organizations in many cities and towns far from their publication bases. Then, too, there is the *Christian Science Monitor*, with readers all over the nation and copies available at all bus and railway stations. The Corn Belt dailies, which carry farm and general news of interest to all agricultural people, also have readers far outside their individual trade areas. Not all papers seek subscribers in such distant fields. Out-of-town circulation is of little value to the average newspaper except to give prestige.

#### **"Home Base" Coverage Brings Most Revenue**

Buyers of advertising space place high value on "home base" coverage. Robert E. Ryan, media buyer for Foote, Cone & Belding,

Chicago advertising agency, said at the Annual Circulation Managers' School at the University of Kansas: "Make every effort to develop circulation where it will pay off best for your newspaper. Remember that scattered circulation is costly and not as merchandisable as strong local coverage."

Robert Peele, advertising director of the Topeka, Kans., *Daily Capital* and *State Journal* (combined circulation 87,363, population 78,791) told circulation managers at the same meeting that advertising men look for density of circulation and that, from the advertiser's standpoint, the value of the subscriber is inversely proportionate to the distance he is from the town of publication. The close-in part of the newspaper's circulation is of more value than any other part and may be developed more easily and more economically. For this reason, small weekly newspapers which thoroughly cover a limited area are good media and hold their own with the large city dailies which also serve their territory.

### **NEWSPAPERS MUST MEET NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE**

Keeping alert to the needs of the people and finding ways to reach them promptly are important responsibilities of the circulation manager. In every community where a newspaper is published there are opportunities to expand circulation; even within limited areas, there are six groups to whom circulation sales efforts may be directed profitably:

1. Residents of the newspaper's city or town and suburbs.
2. Residents on rural routes and in other towns of the county.
3. Other residents of trade territory, probably in several adjoining counties.
4. Business executives and professional men.
5. Newcomers to community.
6. Transients and single-copy buyers.

### **Suburbs and Outlying Towns Need Local Coverage**

On the outskirts of every city are residence sections populated with persons just as news-hungry as those in any part of the incorporated area. Some suburban sections become definite community centers with well-developed business districts, a community newspaper and a Chamber of Commerce. The metropolitan newspaper, with its wide coverage of world, national and state news, its variety of features and its large volume of department store and food store advertising, appeals to suburbanites. Many suburban residents will subscribe for both their local community newspaper and the nearest metropolitan newspaper because they may derive direct benefits from each.

In the circulation area of most newspapers are a number of small towns, whose many residents visit and shop in the larger town where the newspaper is published. These are "hot spots" for circulation de-

velopment. If the newspaper has correspondents who regularly contribute community news, and if the newspaper occasionally sends its feature writers there to obtain stories using many names of residents, the circulation department has good opportunity to reap a harvest of subscriptions. But despite large circulations developed by metropolitan papers in small communities, the local weeklies or small dailies meet this competition by carrying more intimate news, sprinkled with human interest stories about local personages, and more detailed accounts of school, church and community activity.

The Harriman, Tenn., *Record* (circulation 3,246, population 6,389) increased its circulation by 860 in a little over a year by carrying hundreds of names in every issue. Making a special effort to have each resident of its community featured in an item at least once a year, its society editor used the mail subscription file, the telephone directory and the city directory in contacting residents for personal mention.

Good work done by forty-one correspondents who send in news from a wide area, has brought the Colfax, Washington, *Gazette-Commoner* (circulation 3,805, population 3,057) many subscribers outside its county and state. "We have upped our out-of-state subscription rate to \$5.00," says Bill Wilmot, the publisher, "and they still take the paper."

Harrison Conover, publisher of the Springville, Utah, *Herald* (circulation 1,630, population 6,475) claims that his weekly paper has a higher coverage than that provided by each of three dailies which circulate in the same area. "This is due," he says, "to the fact that my paper carries news that is closest to the hearts of most of the people and publishes more news about people the readers know."

By careful and thorough coverage of local news the Plant City, Fla., *Courier* (circulation 3,827, population 9,230) increased its circulation by 500 in two years, despite the competition of three dailies. Certainly a circulation gain of better than 16 per cent in so short a time is a creditable showing for a small weekly.

### **Farmers Want the News**

Persons residing in rural areas are anxious to be kept informed concerning news and important activities in their community. Furthermore, farm news and features are of interest to many urban dwellers of the same community who have farm acquaintances or interests.

"A typical farm family in Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan or Wisconsin is as highly educated as any that live in suburban or urban areas," says Willard P. Horsman, circulation manager of the Bloomington, Ill., *Pantagraph* (circulation 38,586, population 36,127), which circulates in the rich agricultural belt of central Illinois. This fact was revealed in two readership surveys made by the *Pantagraph*.

Mr. Horsman contends also that the farmer has as much average purchasing power as his city neighbor and is just as particular about the kind of a newspaper he reads. His habit is to judge critically between two or more newspapers. The *Pantagraph's* circulation records indicate a turnover in subscriptions from farm areas as high as 15 to 18 per cent each year.

Ordinarily a farmer is served best by a morning newspaper delivered to him by mail on the day it is printed. However, many farm homes have evening papers delivered to them by motor carriers for day-of-issue reading.

Mail bags filled with newspapers, going to postoffices for rural route delivery, and brightly painted tubes with the name of a newspaper in clear black letters posted before homes along the highways bear strong testimony to rural readership and circulation department enterprise. The tubes not only reflect a good sales job by the circulation department, but they themselves become "little salesmen," making neighbors who are not subscribers feel that they, too, should join the circulation ranks of the newspaper already popular in their community.

### **Expanding Trade Territory Increases Circulation Opportunities**

Newspaper circulation widens as a city's trade territory expands. Highway developments and improvements often open up new business fields. A good example of this is in western Missouri, where Jackson and Clay Counties are separated by the Missouri River. For many years the only way the residents of one county could enter the other county was by a tedious, roundabout trip through Kansas City or by a freight ferry at a point where two dirt roads met at the river. Finally a modern steel toll bridge was erected and the dirt roads were paved to provide a desirable direct route between Independence and Liberty, the county seats. Later the toll bridge was taken over by the state and became free. Merchants and newspaper publishers at Independence and Liberty instantly began cultivating a new, wider and more valuable trade territory.

A change in train schedules also may permit delivery of a paper on the day it is published in an area which previously had received the paper a day late. When such favorable situations develop, the newspaper must quickly take advantage. Changing conditions develop new opportunities and lengthen a newspaper's prospect list.

### **Business Men Benefit From Newspaper Guidance**

The business district is an area that can be solicited regularly with profit. Many business and professional men, who receive the paper at their homes, are candidates for a second copy at their downtown offices or stores. Dealing with the public, they like to receive the

news fresh from the press for a quick glance at the headlines. A more thorough reading of the paper takes place when they arrive home in the evening.

Certain material in the newspaper often is wanted for business files. A merchant or a manufacturer may find in the news columns a good lead to a large order or a business contract. He may want also to clip from the paper the ads of his competitors.

Lawyers particularly watch newspapers for legal notices. Clippings of official announcements are made for their files. Real estate and insurance men keep informed regarding property transfers and business changes. They gain business by watching the newspapers.

All these may be served by a carrier in the business district, or by a street salesman. Many street salesmen have standing orders to hold copies or deliver and collect daily from a number of business and professional men and these guaranteed sales assure a basic profit.

### **Newcomers Seek News and Advertisements**

Coming into every community each week are new residents, eager to learn about their new community — its schools, churches and business institutions. Sample newspapers left at their doors for a few days and followed with personal calls usually result in orders for continuous delivery. Business men in many cities finance what is known as the "Welcome Lady" or the "City Hostess," who calls on newcomers as quickly as they arrive and makes them acquainted with the products or services offered by the sponsors. She presents gifts from these firms and a cordial invitation to patronize them. The newspaper is one of the firms most likely to be represented by the "Welcome Lady," and the gift in that case usually is a week's or a month's free subscription.

Among newcomers to a community each year are school teachers, to whom the circulation department may point out the advantages of reading the newspaper regularly; it enables them to become thoroughly acquainted with the community, gives them an insight into the outside activities of their students, acquaints them with offerings at the local stores, and helps them bring down to earth in the classroom the subjects they teach.

### **Transients and Single-Copy Buyers**

A circulation department has not reached its maximum efficiency until it has made a thorough survey of its community to ascertain places where the paper may be placed on sale by single copies. Some surprising outlets may be discovered. Immense opportunities are provided at newsstands, on street corners, at the exits or entrances of factories, bus and railway stations, lobbies of motels, hotels and larger restaurants, and at all other places where people pass or congregate.

Vacationers swell greatly the circulation totals in resort areas, where managers frequently offer newspapers as courtesies to their guests or provide racks from which they may be purchased.

### TRENDS NEED TO BE WATCHED

While studying circulation sources a publisher needs to watch developments within his community and the general economic and social trends which affect circulation. Among these are:

1. Increase in population and density of family units.
2. Movement from agricultural areas to urban centers.
3. Rapid flow from urban to suburban areas.
4. Increasing rate of literacy.
5. Increase in longevity.

### Population Growth Gives Opportunity for Circulation Expansion

Since 1850, population has increased rapidly in the United States, steadying down in recent years to an annual increase of around 1 to 2 per cent. Other interesting comparisons between population, households, and newspaper circulation are revealed in Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, prepared by Robert Lear, Jr., for a Master's thesis at the University of Missouri, showing the changes in newspaper circulation, population and number of households during a recent decade.

The number of households or occupied dwellings has increased, jumping from 37,450,000 in 1945 to 46,893,000 in 1955. The Census Bureau reported a total of 48,700,000 by March 1956, an increase of about 5,000,000 since 1950. The number of families in this country also increased by 3,500,000 within the six-year period. According to Census Bureau estimates, there were 38,300,000 married couples in the

TABLE 2.1  
ESTIMATED POPULATION 1945-55\*

| Year                      | Estimated Population | Gain<br>(per cent) |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1945 .....                | 139,928,000          |                    |
| 1946 .....                | 141,389,000          | 1.04               |
| 1947 .....                | 144,126,000          | 1.94               |
| 1948 .....                | 146,631,000          | 1.74               |
| 1949 .....                | 149,188,000          | 1.74               |
| 1950 .....                | 151,683,000          | 1.67               |
| 1951 .....                | 154,360,000          | 1.76               |
| 1952 .....                | 157,022,000          | 1.72               |
| 1953 .....                | 159,629,000          | 1.66               |
| 1954 .....                | 162,414,000          | 1.75               |
| 1955 .....                | 165,248,000          | 1.74               |
| Average Yearly Gain ..... |                      | 1.67               |

\* From *Statistical Abstract of the United States*

TABLE 2.2  
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS 1945-55 \*

| Year                      | Estimated Households | Gain<br>(per cent) |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1945 .....                | 37,450,000           |                    |
| 1946 .....                | 38,183,000           | 1.96               |
| 1947 .....                | 39,107,000           | 2.42               |
| 1948 .....                | 40,532,000           | 3.64               |
| 1949 .....                | 42,182,000           | 4.07               |
| 1950 .....                | 43,554,000           | 3.25               |
| 1951 .....                | 44,656,000           | 2.53               |
| 1952 .....                | 54,504,000           | 1.90               |
| 1953 .....                | 46,334,000           | 1.82               |
| 1954 .....                | 46,893,000           | 1.21               |
| 1955 .....                | 47,788,000           | 1.90               |
| Average Yearly Gain ..... |                      | 2.47               |

\* From *Statistical Abstract of the United States*

TABLE 2.3  
DAILY, SUNDAY CIRCULATION, NUMBER OF NEWSPAPERS, 1945-55\*

| Year                      | DAILY         |             |                               | SUNDAY                 |             |                               |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
|                           | No.<br>Papers | Circulation | Gain<br>or Loss<br>(per cent) | No.<br>Papers          | Circulation | Gain<br>or Loss<br>(per cent) |
| 1945 .....                | 1,749         | 48,384,188  |                               | 485                    | 39,860,036  |                               |
| 1946 .....                | 1,763         | 50,927,505  | 5.26                          | 497                    | 43,665,364  | 9.54                          |
| 1947 .....                | 1,769         | 51,673,276  | 1.46                          | 511                    | 45,151,319  | 3.43                          |
| 1948 .....                | 1,781         | 52,285,297  | 1.20                          | 530                    | 46,308,081  | 2.76                          |
| 1949 .....                | 1,780         | 52,845,551  | 1.07                          | 546                    | 46,398,968  | .19                           |
| 1950 .....                | 1,772         | 53,829,072  | 1.86                          | 549                    | 46,582,348  | .40                           |
| 1951 .....                | 1,773         | 54,017,938  | .35                           | 543                    | 46,279,358  | -.65                          |
| 1952 .....                | 1,786         | 53,950,615  | -.12                          | 545                    | 46,210,136  | -.15                          |
| 1953 .....                | 1,785         | 54,472,286  | .97                           | 544                    | 45,948,554  | .57                           |
| 1954 .....                | 1,765         | 55,072,480  | 1.10                          | 544                    | 46,176,460  | .49                           |
| 1955 .....                | 1,760         | 56,147,359  | 1.94                          | 541                    | 46,447,658  | .58                           |
| Average Yearly Gain ..... |               | 1.50        |                               | Average Sunday Gain .. |             | 1.71                          |

\* From *Editor & Publisher International Year Book*

United States in 1956, of which 1,300,000, or 3.3 per cent, did not maintain their own households. This compares with 2,000,000, or 5.6 per cent, without their own households in 1950.

Naturally this growth in population and increase in family units has resulted in a remarkable development of newspaper circulation. During the period from 1850 to 1950, newspaper circulation increased more rapidly than population. But in 1951 the circulation of daily newspapers increased only .35 per cent while population the same

year increased 1.76 per cent, according to estimated figures. In 1952 the circulation of dailies fell .12 per cent below that of 1951, while population went up 1.72 per cent. In the years since then, circulation has begun to climb again, showing increases of .97 per cent in 1953, 1.10 per cent in 1954 and 1.94 per cent in 1955. These changes have come within a decade although the number of newspaper publishing units in the United States has varied little during this period. Comparisons over a century show daily newspaper circulation has increased 108 per cent while population has increased 55 per cent.

While, in general, circulation increased more rapidly than population in the United States, that was not the situation in certain areas of the country. An analysis of circulation in relation to population in some states shows marked differences in the amount of circulation in proportion to adult population. This difference in states and the slowing up in circulation gains for the nation as a whole since 1950 indicate that something more than numbers of people has a bearing on circulation.

### **Studying Relation of Population to Circulation**

Comparing a newspaper's circulation with the population of the city in which it is published affords an interesting study, although a comparison of circulation with number of families gives a truer picture. But a circulation that is larger than the population of the town looks mighty good on paper and is usually accepted as evidence of strong circulation coverage. In fact, a circulation equal to more than 50 per cent of the town's population is considered highly creditable.

If a publisher will use a directory of the newspapers in his state, compare his own paper to others in the same class as to ratio of circulation to population, he either will come to a higher appreciation of his own newspaper's circulation or be convinced that he should do something toward increasing it.

### **WEEKLY PAPERS REACH HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION**

The circulations of weekly newspapers generally run to higher percentages of population than the circulations of small and medium size dailies. A study of weekly papers in Vermont (Table 2.4) reveals that each of two papers of that state has almost 1,000 more subscribers than persons residing in the town where published — the *Poultney Herald* (circulation 2,500, population 1,685) and the Randolph *White River Valley Herald* (circulation 3,056, population 2,223). Other weeklies with circulations greater than populations are: *Bradford United Opinion* (circulation 1,100, population 725), *Fair Haven Era* (circulation 2,500, population 2,058) and *Woodstock Ver-*

TABLE 2.4  
POPULATION-CIRCULATION COMPARISONS OF VERMONT WEEKLIES

| Newspaper    | Population | Circulation | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| No. 1 .....  | 1,252      | 763         | 69         |
| No. 2 .....  | 1,289      | 1,046       | 81         |
| No. 3 .....  | 1,326      | 1,762       | 132        |
| No. 4 .....  | 1,470      | 1,399       | 95         |
| No. 5 .....  | 1,678      | 1,091       | 65         |
| No. 6 .....  | 1,696      | 1,290       | 76         |
| No. 7 .....  | 1,916      | 983         | 51         |
| No. 8 .....  | 1,995      | 1,632       | 82         |
| No. 9 .....  | 2,262      | 1,018       | 45         |
| No. 10 ..... | 2,275      | 1,910       | 84         |
| No. 11 ..... | 2,724      | 1,928       | 71         |
| No. 12 ..... | 3,614      | 2,616       | 72         |
| No. 13 ..... | 3,881      | 3,183       | 82         |
| No. 14 ..... | 4,940      | 3,527       | 71         |

*mont Standard* (circulation 1,754, population 1,326). Fourteen other weeklies in the state have high percentages, indicating that most Vermont weeklies serve wide rural areas surrounding the towns in which they are published.

#### SMALL DAILIES MAKE GOOD SHOWING

A study of daily newspapers in Iowa (Table 2.5) reveals that newspapers in towns of less than 10,000 population have highest circulations in relation to population; cities with 25,000 population or greater, have the second highest; and cities between 10,000 and 25,000 have the lowest.

For the fourteen Iowa daily newspapers published in towns with less than 10,000 population, the population range is from 3,763 to 7,858, with an average of 6,430. The circulations of daily newspapers in these towns range from 3,612 to 6,451, the average being 4,961. One paper has a circulation that exceeds the population of the town in which it is published. Four others have circulations larger than 75 per cent of the towns' populations. The newspapers in this group, in fact, have an average circulation equal to 72 per cent of the average population.

In Iowa cities with populations between 10,000 and 25,000 the daily newspaper's circulation comparison with population is much less favorable than it is in towns under 10,000. In the 10,000 to 25,000 population category are ten cities ranging in population from 11,124 to 22,898, with an average population of 15,436. Five of the ten have circulations less than half the populations of the towns in which they are printed. Daily newspapers published in these towns vary in circulation from 3,246 to 12,815, the average circulation being

TABLE 2.5

## POPULATION-CIRCULATION COMPARISONS OF IOWA DAILY NEWSPAPERS

| A. Towns Under 10,000 Population        |            |             |            |
|---|------------|-------------|------------|
| Newspaper                               | Population | Circulation | Percentage |
| No. 1 .....                             | 3,763      | 3,612       | 96         |
| No. 2 .....                             | 4,307      | 4,341       | 101        |
| No. 3 .....                             | 5,086      | 4,147       | 81         |
| No. 4 .....                             | 5,902      | 4,122       | 69         |
| No. 5 .....                             | 6,174      | 3,984       | 64         |
| No. 6 .....                             | 6,231      | 5,253       | 84         |
| No. 7 .....                             | 6,480      | 6,451       | 99         |
| No. 8 .....                             | 6,938      | 3,975       | 57         |
| No. 9 .....                             | 7,299      | 4,916       | 67         |
| No. 10 .....                            | 7,446      | 5,631       | 75         |
| No. 11 .....                            | 7,611      | 4,482       | 58         |
| No. 12 .....                            | 7,625      | 5,290       | 69         |
| No. 13 .....                            | 7,705      | 4,921       | 64         |
| No. 14 .....                            | 7,858      | 4,558       | 58         |
| Average .....                           | 6,430      | 4,691       | 72         |
| B. Towns of 10,000 to 25,000 Population |            |             |            |
| Newspaper                               | Population | Circulation | Percentage |
| No. 1 .....                             | 10,309     | 4,875       | 47         |
| No. 2 .....                             | 11,124     | 7,810       | 70         |
| No. 3 .....                             | 12,164     | 5,923       | 48         |
| No. 4 .....                             | 13,572     | 7,419       | 56         |
| No. 5 .....                             | 14,334     | 3,246       | 22         |
| No. 6 .....                             | 14,954     | 6,243       | 48         |
| No. 7 .....                             | 16,144     | 9,540       | 58         |
| No. 8 .....                             | 19,041     | 9,736       | 51         |
| No. 9 .....                             | 19,821     | 12,815      | 64         |
| No. 10 .....                            | 22,898     | 6,002       | 22         |
| Average .....                           | 15,436     | 7,363       | 47         |
| C. Cities Over 25,000 Population        |            |             |            |
| Newspaper                               | Population | Circulation | Percentage |
| No. 1 .....                             | 25,115     | 19,772      | 78         |
| No. 2 .....                             | 27,212     | 11,339      | 41         |
| No. 3 .....                             | 27,980     | 24,930      | 89         |
| No. 4 .....                             | 30,379     | 22,605      | 74         |
| No. 5 .....                             | 30,613     | 20,415      | 66         |
| No. 6 .....                             | 33,631     | 18,431      | 54         |
| No. 7 .....                             | 45,429     | 20,509      | 43         |
| No. 8 .....                             | 51,223     | 38,653      | 75         |
| No. 9 .....                             | 65,198     | 48,906      | 75         |
| No. 10 .....                            | 72,296     | 60,037      | 83         |
| No. 11 .....                            | 74,549     | 29,514      | 39         |
| No. 12 .....                            | 83,991     | 62,374      | 74         |
| Average .....                           | 47,301     | 31,457      | 66         |

7,363. The highest circulation is equal to 70 per cent of the town's population, and the lowest circulation is equal to 22 per cent, with the average equalling only 66 per cent.

On the same comparison basis, newspapers in Iowa cities with populations above 25,000 make a better showing. Seven of the twelve papers in this circulation category have circulations that are in excess of 70 per cent of their towns' populations. The percentage range is from 39 to 89, with an average of 66 per cent. Populations of towns in this group range from 25,115 to 83,991 and the circulation span of newspapers is from 11,339 to 62,374. There are only two papers with circulations less than 50 per cent of their towns' populations.

The Des Moines *Register* and *Tribune* (combined circulation 355,089, population 177,965) located at the capital, and with a combined circulation extending to all parts of the state, are not included in the above table because the condition in Des Moines does not conform to that of any other Iowa city with a daily newspaper.

### **Farm People Are Moving to Cities**

Another population trend that has had remarkable effect on newspaper circulation is the movement from agricultural areas to urban centers. In 1910 the rural population totaled nearly fifty million and comprised 45.7 per cent of the total population of the United States. But this was greatly changed within the next quarter-century, despite a "back to the soil" movement in the thirties, and there has been a steady shifting of population from country to town. Between 1910 and 1940, urban communities had a population increase of more than 32 million while rural communities experienced a net increase of slightly more than 7 million.

This trend from the country to the city brought more people, volume and percentagewise, within the limits of effective distribution by the daily newspaper. People residing in cities could be served more easily, promptly and economically than those in rural areas. Carrier organizations and newsstands could serve city dwellers on the date of publication while distribution to country readers was time-consuming and expensive.

### **Shift From Cities to Suburbs Apparent**

While the general trend of population from country to city continues, there is another trend of more recent years which is having noticeable effect on circulation—the rapid population increase in suburban areas. Wanting to avoid congested conditions, yet still enjoy the entertainment, daily newspaper delivery, cultural and shopping advantages and the full busy life offered by the city, some are moving to residence districts in the more open spaces where they may live in quiet, peaceful surroundings, and where they may relax, garden, and participate in small community friendliness.

This trend has caused new areas to be incorporated and has brought population increases to towns located near large cities. While this has increased the circulation of large city papers to a certain extent, it has also developed for them some competition in the way of "throw-away" papers containing principally local pictures and advertising. Many of these throw-aways, however, are short-lived, but often when one discontinues another springs up in the same locality within a few months to make inroads on advertising and circulation that otherwise might go to well-established newspapers.

The drift of population from the congested city areas to the nearby villages and suburbs also has caused the launching of small weekly and daily papers in these newly organized areas and also has given additional circulation to weeklies in expanding nearby towns. While the total circulation of suburban papers is less than that of downtown papers in the same area, the suburban papers have had a greater circulation increase within the past ten years than the downtown papers. Shortages of newsprint and the discontinuance of "extras," have been partially responsible for the lower rise in circulation of the larger papers. When it is difficult to obtain newsprint, fewer pages are printed and less effort is put forth to increase circulation. Radio and television have eliminated almost entirely the possibility of "news beats" by newspapers and "extras," which always resulted in increased sales.

### COMPARING SUBURBAN AND METROPOLITAN INCREASES

The circulation situation regarding suburban and large city papers is revealed in Table 2.6, compiled by *Business Week*, comparing the

TABLE 2.6

CIRCULATION COMPARISON, DOWNTOWN AND SUBURBAN NEWSPAPERS \*

| City               | Downtown Papers |            | Suburban Papers |           |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|-----------|
|                    | 1945            | 1954       | 1945            | 1954      |
| New York .....     | 5,099,379       | 5,437,705  | 413,873         | 766,134   |
| Chicago .....      | 2,840,448       | 2,545,626  | 29,250          | 63,396    |
| Philadelphia ..... | 1,695,437       | 1,535,955  | 75,540          | 100,506   |
| Los Angeles .....  | 1,372,717       | 1,234,498  | 75,622          | 151,598   |
| Detroit .....      | 1,189,445       | 1,310,578  | 99,544          | 118,774   |
| Baltimore .....    | 592,098         | 620,996    | 10,009          | 25,073    |
| Cleveland .....    | 629,985         | 752,431    | 38,978          | 56,977    |
| St. Louis ..       | 552,766         | 679,360    | 54,855          | 69,448    |
| Washington .....   | 725,337         | 779,804    | 15,035          | 29,352    |
| Boston ....        | 1,627,740       | 1,474,428  | 86,851          | 97,614    |
| Total .....        | 16,325,352      | 16,371,381 | 899,557         | 1,478,842 |

\* From *Business Week*, Feb. 5, 1955, p. 136

1954 circulations of downtown newspapers and neighboring suburban papers with those of 1945.

This shows that in some areas, particularly Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Boston, the suburban papers have been gnawing away at the downtown papers' circulations. In Chicago and Los Angeles, the downtown papers experienced a decrease in circulation of 11 per cent between 1945 and 1954 while suburban papers in those areas had a circulation increase of more than 100 per cent. The Philadelphia suburban papers had a gain of 33 per cent while downtown papers experienced a loss of 9.5 per cent. The combined circulation of Boston newspapers also dropped considerably while the suburban-published papers picked up circulation. One paper in particular, the Quincy, Mass., *Patriot-Ledger* (circulation 41,931, population 83,385) accounted for the bulk of the suburban rise, increasing from 27,988 in 1945 to 37,681 in 1954.

*Business Week* explains the pull of the suburbs in this way: "As a rule, the suburbanite is still satisfied with the downtown paper after he moves. This satisfaction lasts until such things as children going to school, payment of local taxes, tough traffic conditions and water shortage make for more interest in immediate surroundings. The local paper, if it moves fast, can cover the stuff better than the downtown papers, which have the problem of sending more and more staff members farther out and trying to cover all the suburbs."<sup>1</sup>

These two movements of population — one from the rural to the urban areas and the other from the urban to the suburban — are of interest to all newspaper publishers and their circulation managers because they mean a larger proportion of the total population is coming to an intensive rather than an extensive market. This situation exists not only for metropolitan papers but also for weekly and small daily operations, because rural people are moving into small cities as well as into metropolitan areas.

### Increase in Literacy Aids Circulation

Another important factor in the steady growth of newspaper circulation has been the ever increasing rate of literacy — a faculty not as essential for listening to radio or viewing television. High percentages of increased newspaper circulation are found in those states where the greatest reduction in illiteracy has been achieved. Before small immigration quotas were established in the 1920's, many industrial cities contained thickly populated sections where few, if any, English language newspapers were read. Few such barren circulation spots exist today. Persons of foreign tongue who come here now soon learn to speak, read and write the English language. While

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<sup>1</sup> *Business Week*, Feb. 5, 1955, p. 137.

in 1870 twenty per cent of the people of the United States over the age of 10 were unable to read, by 1950 this number was reduced to three per cent.

Table 2.7 shows the population, daily newspaper circulation and percentage of literacy in the United States at the beginning of each 10-year period from 1850 to 1950.

TABLE 2.7  
POPULATION, CIRCULATION, COMPARED TO LITERACY IN THE U. S., 1850-1950

| Year       | Population  | Circulation | Percentage of Literacy |
|------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|
| 1850 ..... | 23,192,000  | 758,000     | ..                     |
| 1860 ..... | 32,443,000  | 1,478,000   | ..                     |
| 1870 ..... | 38,448,000  | 2,602,000   | 80.0                   |
| 1880 ..... | 50,156,000  | 3,566,000   | 83.0                   |
| 1889 ..... | 62,948,000  | 8,387,000   | 86.7                   |
| 1899 ..... | 75,995,000  | 15,102,000  | 89.3                   |
| 1909 ..... | 91,972,000  | 24,212,000  | 92.3                   |
| 1920 ..... | 105,711,000 | 28,232,000  | 94.0                   |
| 1930 ..... | 122,772,000 | 39,589,000  | 95.7                   |
| 1940 ..... | 131,669,000 | 41,132,000  | 96.5                   |
| 1950 ..... | 150,697,361 | 53,829,072  | 97.3                   |

### People Live Longer, Read More

Another condition which deserves attention with reference to newspaper circulation is the trend toward an older population. The median age in the United States is increasing each decade. This fact is dwelt upon by Philip M. Hauser and Conrad Taeuber in an article in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*:

"As a concomitant of the declining birth rate, the population of the United States, from decade to decade in the course of its development, has contained a larger proportion of older persons. The median age of the population in 1820 was 16.7; by 1920 it was 22.9 years; in 1940, 29.0 years. The proportion of persons 65 years of age and over increased from 2.5 per cent in 1840 to 6.8 per cent in 1940; whereas the proportion of persons under 20 years of age declined from 54.6 to 24.4 per cent. The changing age distribution of the population of the United States reflects the large decline in fertility and the increased average length of life."<sup>2</sup>

By 1950 the median age of population in this country was 30.4; and persons 65 years and older comprised 8.1 per cent of the total

<sup>2</sup> *American Academy of Political and Social Science. Annals.* Jan., 1945, p. 19.

population. While in 1940 persons under 21 years of age made up 36.3 per cent of the population, in 1950 they comprised only 25.3 per cent.

This trend toward an older population means that a larger percentage of the total population, which is increasing, will continuously enter the newspaper market. Older persons, always more intensive readers than youth, will provide the greater proportion of newspaper circulation.

The possibilities of circulation development depend upon compactness of population, the interests and wants of those living within range of newspaper influence, the efficiency of circulation departments and the extent to which newspapers contribute to personal interests and needs.