

"As a circulator you are a sales specialist. It is your job to know what you have to sell, who your readers are, what they read and why. With such facts at your finger tips, you can do a better sales job."

— H. PHELPS GATES,
Circulation Manager,
Christian Science Monitor

CHAPTER 4

How the Circulation Department Is Organized

IN MOST INDUSTRIES, selling, delivering and collecting for the manufactured products are entirely separate responsibilities carried out by separate crews. But in a newspaper organization these three details, connected with circulation, usually are supervised by a single individual or are carried out in a single department equipped and manned to give the closest attention to all three.

On a weekly newspaper, the publisher often finds it advisable to be his own circulation manager, selling his paper, closely directing its delivery and doing most of the collecting. A weekly newspaper with most of its circulation by mail and sales at newsstands requires a different set-up than one needed by a daily paper depending practically 90 per cent on carrier delivery.

On a small or medium-sized daily, certain members of the circulation department are mainly responsible for selling, others for delivery, and still others handle the collecting, but a majority of those connected with the circulation department perform some part of all three duties.

On a large newspaper, a person familiar with all elements of circulation operation heads the department, and persons under him direct sales, delivery and collections. Each has a definite responsibility, but even the person who sells subscriptions exclusively is always conscious of the important bearing that careful delivery has on the permanent results to be obtained from his work, and the collector operating on a commission basis is interested in increasing sales for the benefits accruing to himself from an enlarged list of subscribers.

This combination of responsibilities again is illustrated by the newspaper carrier-salesman, who is as diligent in selling and collecting as in delivering. In addition to delivering the paper each morning or evening to the 50 or more homes on his route, he makes regular calls each week to collect from his customers and to obtain orders from persons who are not already subscribers.

"Because of this three-part responsibility of selling, delivering and collecting," says the Texas Circulation Managers Association in its book, *Newspaper Circulation*, "the circulation department of a newspaper must be ever active. To rest on past accomplishments or ever to feel satisfied with the volume of circulation enjoyed, or with the service rendered, invites disaster. There can be no weak links in the circulation organization. Every member of the department must be constantly on the alert to obtain more circulation and to improve and extend the service. This applies to the circulation manager on down to the junior clerk."¹

TEN FACTORS INFLUENCE CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT SETUP

Because of the variety of conditions that may exist within communities and newspaper plants, no uniform pattern of organization for handling circulation can be devised. The personnel required and the division of responsibilities depend largely on:

1. Number of papers distributed.
2. Manner of handling papers.
3. Equipment for handling and accounting.
4. Size of territory to be covered.
5. Bulk of the paper to be delivered.
6. Time of going to press.
7. Transportation facilities available.
8. Variation in local conditions.
9. Reader acceptance.
10. Management's interest in circulation.

Amount of Circulation Affects Organization

Publishers of weekly newspapers with small circulation and with delivery mainly by mail ordinarily feel that they do not require the services of a full-time circulation manager. At the Red Bank, N. J., *Register* (circulation 15,535, population 12,743), circulation is handled by a full-time clerk and a part-time collector, supervised by the business manager (see Fig. 4.1). In the office of the Stafford,

¹ Texas Circulation Managers Association, *Newspaper Circulation*, The Steck Co., Austin, Tex., p. 69.

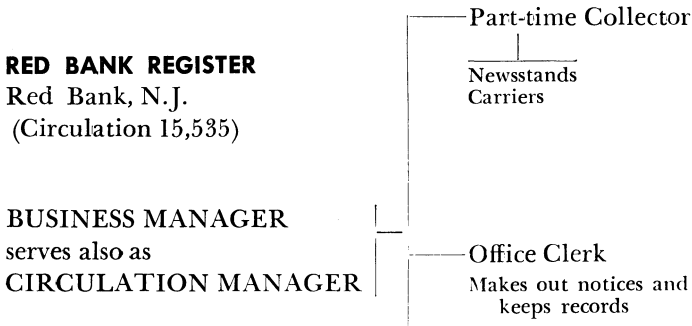


FIG. 4.1 — Showing how the Red Bank, N. J., **Register**, a large weekly, manages circulation when much of the delivery is by mail.

Kans., *Courier* (circulation 1,302, population 2,005), an office girl spends about two hours each week sending out expiration notices, follow-up letters and circulars. The selling, delivering and collecting are done almost entirely by mail. A bookkeeper in the office of the Rock Rapids, Iowa, *Lyon County Reporter* (circulation 2,936, population 2,640), does practically all the work pertaining to circulation, which consists mainly of mailing out notices when subscriptions are due.

The organizational setup for circulation in the office of a daily newspaper with less than 10,000 subscribers also is quite simple. The circulation manager will perform many of the duties that on larger papers would be handled by two or three men. Additional help will consist probably of two assistants and approximately 50 carriers. An assistant manager will supervise the carriers, and an office clerk will keep books and handle correspondence.

A survey of 66 Midwest daily newspapers by Willard P. Horsman, circulation manager of the Bloomington, Ill., *Pantagraph* (circulation 38,586, population 34,163) revealed that only six of 21 newspapers in the 3,000 to 10,000 circulation class had district managers. On the smaller newspapers it was common practice for the circulation manager to be city carrier supervisor or district manager along with performing the duties of bookkeeper, sales manager and sometimes office boy.

A larger force is required to handle a daily circulation above 12,000, although many responsibilities still may be centered in a single person, thereby holding the staff to a comparatively small number. This is the situation at the Kewanee, Ill., *Star-Courier* (circulation 12,754, population 16,821). Each member of the circulation force performs in several capacities (see Fig. 4.2).

K. L. Buckley, circulation manager of the *Star-Courier*, supervises 75 city route carriers, takes care of all mail subscriptions and correspondence, makes and files all circulation reports, keeps the ABC

KEWANEE STAR-COURIER

Kewanee, Ill.

(Circulation 12,754)

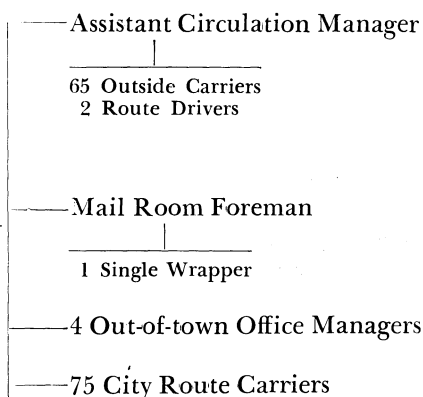
CIRCULATION MANAGER

FIG. 4.2 — Showing Divisions and Personnel required for the Circulation Department of a middle-sized daily, the Kewanee, Ill., **Star-Courier**.

records and supervises the offices in outside towns, in addition to performing his regular executive duties.

His assistant circulation manager supervises 65 outside carriers, runs the stamping machine in the mail room, makes out bills for carriers, sends out renewal notices to mail subscribers and holds himself in readiness for any other detail that may require attention.

Two route drivers play an important part in taking *Star-Courier* papers from the press and sending them on their way to subscribers. One of these assists the mail room foreman during press run, later drives a route to outside towns and delivers "complaints" after his run is completed. The other driver, in addition to delivering on his route, bundles papers and makes signs for newsstands and street racks. Both drivers collect from news dealers to whom they deliver papers.

Another person on the *Star-Courier* circulation staff takes copies to persons who failed to receive papers due to faulty delivery and at mailing time handles the "single wraps," papers that must be wrapped singly when only one paper is mailed to a town. Usually several copies in each mailing must be handled in this way.

The *Star-Courier* has offices in four small towns of its circulation area — Princeton, Galva, Toulon and Cambridge. In charge of each office is a person who looks after circulation, news and advertising obtained from persons in the district.

Even on newspapers of more than 30,000 circulation may be found persons with dual responsibilities in the circulation department or in the mailing room. At the Battle Creek, Mich., *Enquirer-News* (circulation 36,972, population 48,666) the mail-room foreman serves also as transportation manager, supervising all truck drivers as well as all mailers. The mailers count and stamp all bundles for mailing and label bundles for delivery. The drivers deliver over 500 bundles of papers daily throughout the city and outlying districts.

Manner of Handling Helps Determine Personnel

The press run alone does not determine the personnel requirements of a newspaper's circulation department. Even in a city of medium size, the way the papers must be handled determines how many carriers will be required and how much bookkeeping and record keeping will be done in the business office.

The Gary, Ind., *Post-Tribune* (circulation 51,558, population 133,911) is organized particularly to give good home delivery service (see Fig. 4.3).

Working under the circulation manager are an assistant manager, a city manager, suburban manager and a newsstand and street sales manager. The city manager has under him 10 district managers, 10 district captains and 620 carriers. The suburban manager, who supervises circulation in the outlying areas, has under him 3 district managers who direct 130 boys in selling, delivering and collecting.

Other administrative officials in the *Post-Tribune's* circulation department are the promotion manager, the chief clerk and the mail-

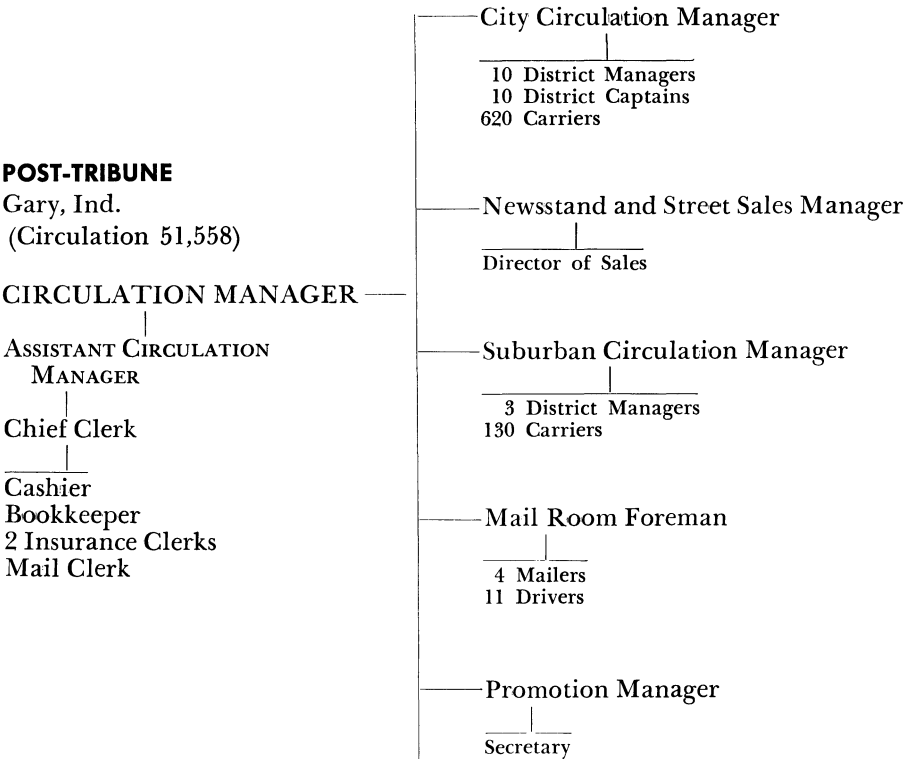


FIG. 4.3 — Divisions and Personnel of Circulation Department of the Gary, Ind., *Post-Tribune* illustrate needs of increasing management to handle increased circulation.

room foreman. A secretary assists the promotion manager in the preparation of promotion material and in setting up activities with the carriers and street salesmen. The chief clerk, who takes care of all money receipts and expenditures, bookkeeping, record keeping and correspondence, is assisted by a cashier, a bookkeeper, a mail clerk and 2 insurance clerks handling 25,000 reader service policies which are sold in combination with newspaper subscriptions and for which collections are made at the same time as for subscriptions. In addition to supervising all work pertaining to mail circulation, the mail-room foreman also handles all complaints regarding delivery service. In handling the mail he is assisted by 4 mailers and 11 drivers.

"Our circulation problems in Gary are not typical of a newspaper our size," says W. C. Todd, circulation manager. "Only 1.4 per cent of our circulation is by mail. Our district managers double as mailers or drivers."

Much Depends on Equipment

Modern equipment in the mailing room and in the circulation accounting department helps to reduce personnel. The time-saving qualities of mechanical equipment are recognized in the offices and plants of many weeklies and small dailies as well as by the metropolitan press.

When the Santa Rosa, Calif., *Press-Democrat* (circulation 30,445, population 17,902) installed a semiautomatic bookkeeping machine in its circulation department it reduced its office staff 50 per cent and gave to its district men a bonus of time to be used in developing routes (see Chap. 17).

Situations vary from newspaper to newspaper. When a greater portion of the newspaper's circulation is delivered by mail, fewer carriers are required but more clerks are needed in the mailing department. Considerable correspondence is required also for the handling of renewals, but perhaps no more than is needed to maintain relations with outside carriers and dealers. There must also be sufficient clerks to handle phone calls on "starts", "stops" and "complaints." No employee should be rushed or overworked to the extent that efficient service and courteous attention to details are neglected.

Extent of Territory Affects Personnel

The extent of the territory in which the newspaper circulates has a strong bearing on personnel and delivery equipment. Large newspapers employ fleets of trucks and sometimes airplanes to make deliveries in outlying areas — the number depending on the distances to be covered and the stops to be made. While the circulation department personnel remains much the same the year around, it may expand or shrink at certain seasons of the year and it naturally increases when new territories are opened and special campaigns are planned.

Newspapers with circulations of approximately 100,000 require a large number of district managers, roadmen, truck drivers, carriers and office clerks. Every area in which the newspaper circulates must be given efficient carrier service and all possibilities for expanding the newspaper's circulation must be recognized. As circulation grows, more clerks and bookkeepers are required to put out the increased number of statements, letters and reports.

It is important to keep the organization as simple as possible and the authority direct, even though the number of details to be cared for are enormous. The Fresno, Calif., *Bee* (circulation 95,552, population 91,669) has been unusually successful in this respect (see Fig. 4.4). In order that authority may flow evenly and promptly through the ranks, the circulation department is divided into five main sections: (1) city circulation, (2) country circulation, (3) trucks and routes, (4) promotion, and (5) office. Over each division is a manager responsible to the circulation manager.

The city circulation department makes contracts with new carriers, maintains delivery service, collects for papers and promotes new circulation in the residence area. It also supervises sales at newsstands. The manager of this department has under him 11 district managers, 4 rotate and vacation district managers, one home delivery supervisor, 450 city carriers, a street sales manager, 10 all day vendors, 20 afternoon street boys and 5 women newsstand drivers. The women drivers make delivery to and supervise sales at 200 stands in the city. They are in business for themselves, buying the papers at wholesale and selling them to the stands at a profit for themselves.

The country circulation department makes contracts with agents in larger cities of the area and promotes agents' carriers. It also makes contracts with carriers in suburban areas, directs carriers, maintains service, collects from agents and promotes new circulation. In this work the country circulation manager is assisted by 4 roadmen, 35 motor route drivers who serve subscribers in the rural areas, and 2 stenographers.

The trucks and routes department is headed by a dispatcher who directs 5 main truck drivers, 33 contract truck drivers who haul papers to many points in the country districts, and 5 company employee drivers who haul all city newspapers plus loads to the rural area for distribution to relay drivers.

The circulation office handles all starts, stops and complaints; takes in all circulation cash over the counter and prorates all paid-in-advance subscription money to carriers and dealers. The office manager is assisted by 9 full-time office girls and a part-time night stand-by, who receives complaints by phone.

The assistant circulation manager serves also as promotion manager. Two girls, under his direction, prepare all promotion material for the circulation department.

FRESNO BEE

Fresno, Calif.

(Circulation 95,552)

CIRCULATION MANAGER

CIRCULATION SECRETARY

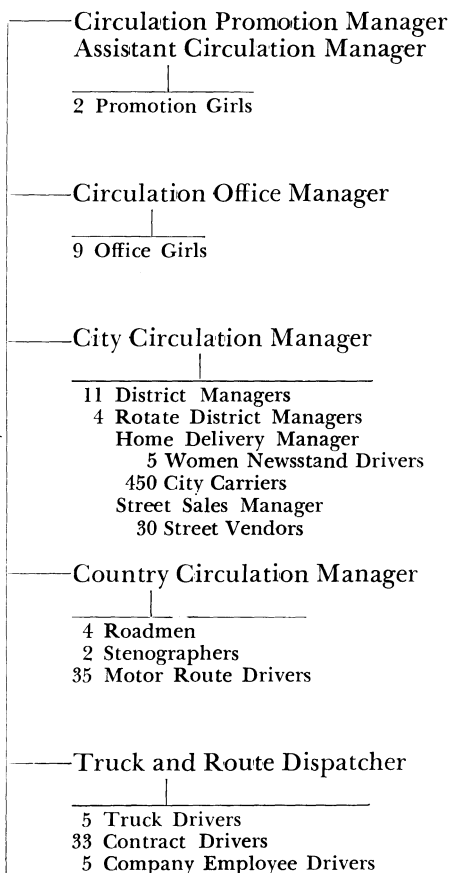


FIG. 4.4 — Divisions and Personnel of Circulation Department of the Fresno, Calif., *Bee*, show coordination between five main divisions.

Size of Paper Affects Delivery Speed

The number of sections and pages the paper contains also affects the extent and speed of delivery. A bulky newspaper requires different handling from one of a few pages. The sections must be stuffed one within the other at rapid speed. Unless proper equipment is provided for this, extra personnel is required. When papers are composed of many sections a real burden falls on the mailing and delivery departments. Carriers are forced to handle fewer papers in a load and to make more trips or have assistance in covering their routes.

A metropolitan newspaper, which has lately installed the newest and speediest stuffing equipment, at one time employed 70 inserters to put *Parade* magazine and the colored comic section into the sections of its Sunday paper.

For a newspaper like the Des Moines, Iowa, *Register and Tribune* (combined circulation 355,089, population 177,965), located at a state capital and covering news from all areas of the state, the organization to handle circulation is quite extensive (see Fig. 4.5). Deliveries are made to homes, carriers, newsstands, and dealers located many miles from Des Moines. A large sales organization and active promotion department are maintained to keep the circulation at its high level and to increase it in areas where it is not at the saturation point.

To do all this and take care of other circulation details, the department has six divisions: (1) traffic, (2) mail subscriptions, (3) city circulation, (4) country agencies, (5) country carriers and dealers, and (6) daily rural weekly pay and Sunday farm delivery.

The traffic division handles all transportation matters. It consists of a traffic manager, an assistant traffic manager, 2 clerks, and 412 contract truck drivers.

The mail subscription division promotes the sale of and handles the records on paid-in-advance mail subscriptions. The crew of this division consists of a manager and assistant, one field supervisor, 30 commission salesmen, and 19 persons working in the office.

The city circulation division handles all circulation in Des Moines and immediate vicinity. The force there consists of the city circulation manager, a zone manager, 13 district managers, 26 branch managers, 9 clerks, 816 carrier-salesmen and 16 motor carriers.

The country agencies division takes care of circulation in 49 larger outside cities. In this division are a manager and assistant, 4 traveling superintendents, 56 agency managers, 4 persons working in the office, and 3,412 carrier-salesmen.

The country carriers and dealers division handles the circulation for all other towns and villages with a force consisting of a manager and 2 assistants, 4 field executives, 22 district sales managers, 10 persons in the office, 63 motor carriers, and 3,107 carrier-salesmen.

The rural weekly pay and Sunday R.F.D. division directs the circulation of the Sunday *Register* in rural territory. The crew consists of a manager and 2 assistants, 3 field executives, 26 farm service supervisors, 6 office clerks, and 1,266 farm service route salesmen.

The entire circulation department personnel of the *Register and Tribune* consists of 76 salaried employees, 56 agency managers on commission, 30 subscription salesmen on commission, 7,336 boy carrier-salesmen, 1,329 adult route salesmen, 412 contractors on truck delivery service, 61 field supervisors, 13 field executives, and 18 office executives and assistants.

Press Time Also a Factor

Newspapers may increase circulation by adjusting their going-to-press time to make convenient the use of available transportation facilities. Dailies ordinarily issue two or more editions: an early one

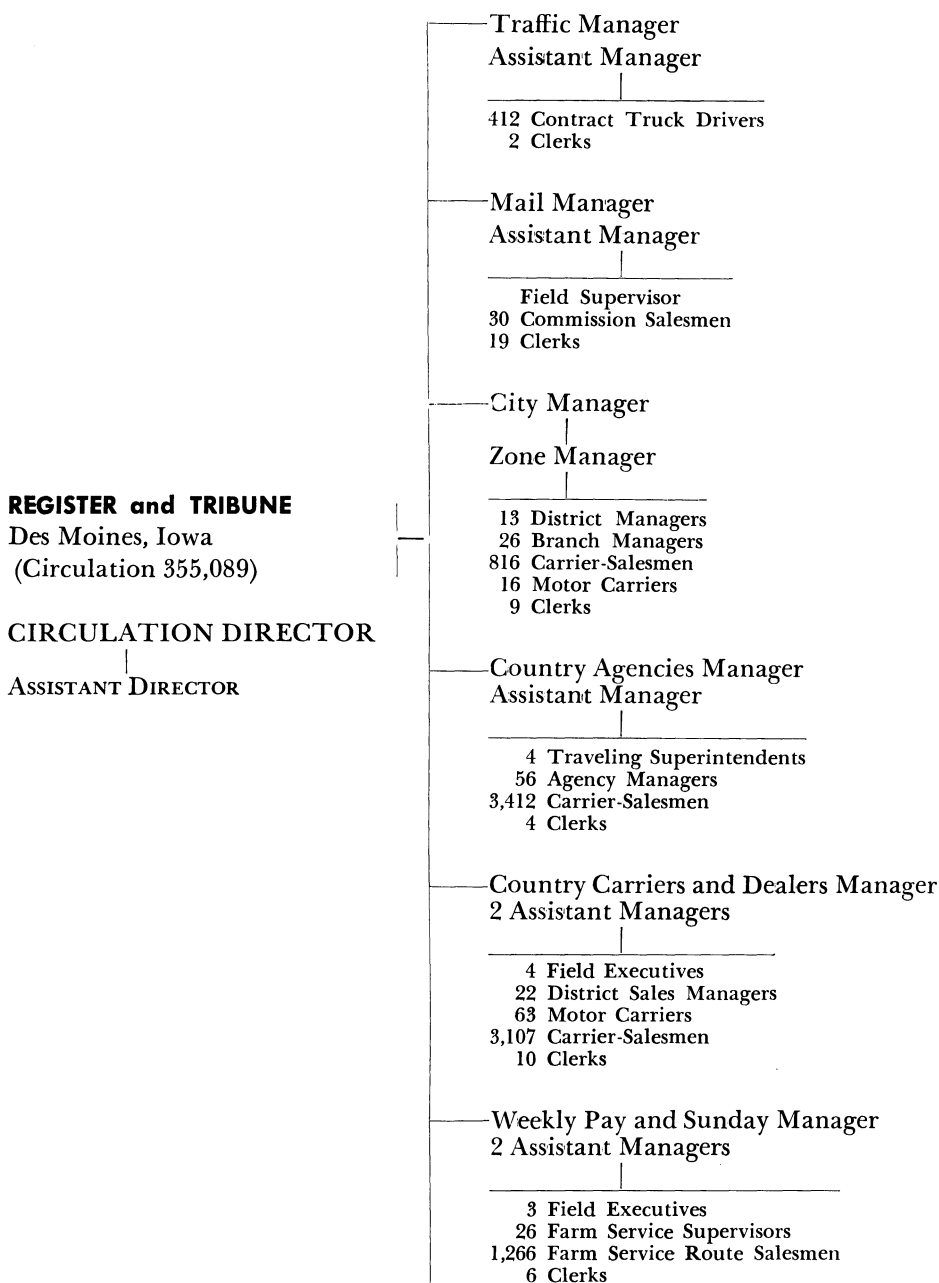


FIG. 4.5 — Divisions and Personnel of Circulation Department of the Des Moines, Iowa, **Register and Tribune** reflect the needs of newspapers distributed over a large geographical area.

for the mail and for trucks that carry papers to distant points, and a later one containing more up-to-the-minute news for delivery to homes in the immediate area and for street sales.

Getting the paper out to all readers as rapidly as possible is a task which requires much planning and coordination. For the Houston, Tex., *Chronicle* (circulation 202,888, population 596,163) it represents the combined efforts of 1,200 independent carriers, 300 news vendors, 250 newsstand and drugstores, 15 traveling representatives, and over 1,500 distributors in the outlying districts.

The later a newspaper can go to press, the more late news it can carry to its readers and the easier it becomes to hold circulation volume. The Jefferson City, Mo., *Post-Tribune* and *Capital News* (combined circulation 13,868, population 25,099) go to press from 2 to 3 hours later than St. Louis papers which come into the area. They make a strong plea for subscribers on the claim that they carry more late news than other papers serving the territory and still reach readers as early as any competitor.

While coverage of late news is important, readers like to receive their papers as early as possible and carriers of evening papers must have sufficient time to reach homes before dinnertime. If the paper has a very late going-to-press time and the span of time for delivery is brief, the routes must be shorter and more carriers are required. So the advantages of a late or an early press time are determined by local conditions.

Must Consider Available Transportation

Satisfactory delivery service is a vital factor in building and holding circulation. This, however, is no great problem for weekly newspapers delivered by mail. Subscribers in all parts of the county would prefer to receive the paper on the same day it is published, but will accept it any time within the week.

Day-of-publication delivery is almost imperative with daily papers. In some cities trains and buses on regular schedules may conveniently carry most of the afternoon issue to the outlying sections served by the newspaper, while in other cities with no established transportation facilities it may be necessary that the newspaper have its own trucks.

One can well imagine the problem that faces the circulation department of a newspaper at the national capital, where the newsstand demand is great and where the papers go out to the various embassies in the capital and to the nation's representatives in various nations of the world, in addition to a great number of individual subscribers in Washington and all parts of the United States.

Careful study is made of all available transportation in order to provide quickest delivery of the Washington, D. C., *Post Times-Herald* (circulation 382,456, population 802,178). Distribution begins when automatic conveyors deliver the papers in units of 25 or 50

(depending on size of edition) from the presses to the mail room where they are dispatched to the various distribution systems. Those which go by mail are addressed by machine and sent on to the post-office. Those which go to the city distributors are bundled by an automatic tying machine, as are those which go to the suburban and rural distributors, where they are in turn distributed to the carriers and subscribers. Approximately 75 per cent of the readers receive home delivery.

Over 40 mailers are employed in the mail room. Each day the circulation department sends to them galleys of names and addresses, some containing names of individual mail subscribers and others, names of distributors and the number of papers to go to each. Thousands of copies are sent daily to libraries, schools, colleges, educators, and business and professional leaders in all parts of the country. At the same time trucks are speeding papers to close-in points, and trains, bus lines and air lines are carrying copies to distant points.

Local Conditions Create Varying Needs

Circulation departments often are compelled by local conditions to break away from uniformity. The number of divisions within the department sometimes is increased in order to create competition within the carrier group or to provide particular service for subscriber groups.

The Jacksonville, Fla., *Florida Times-Union* (circulation 142,257, population 204,517) divides the work in its circulation department into two main divisions, one taking care of city circulation and the other of state circulation, and each of these divisions has two sections. A total of 525 carrier-salesmen, divided into five sections, delivers papers in the city. The state circulation division is divided into two sections of about equal personnel with a division manager over each section. This provides more careful supervision of the various districts and gives opportunity for competition between the state and city groups. There are 19 districts in the city and 12 districts in the state. In addition to the city and state managers working under the circulation manager are an office manager, two carrier counselors and a clerical force of fourteen (see Fig. 4.6).

The circulation manager plans and directs the entire operation while the city circulation manager and the state circulation manager give special direction to activities in their respective divisions. The office manager supervises the clerical staff. Division managers plan and supervise the functions of a major division, while supervisors and roadmen direct activities in designated sections of the city and out in the state. District advisors are responsible for sales, service and collections in districts to which they are assigned. They give advisory service also to contractor carrier-salesmen.

Carrier-counselors on the circulation staff of the *Times-Union* are

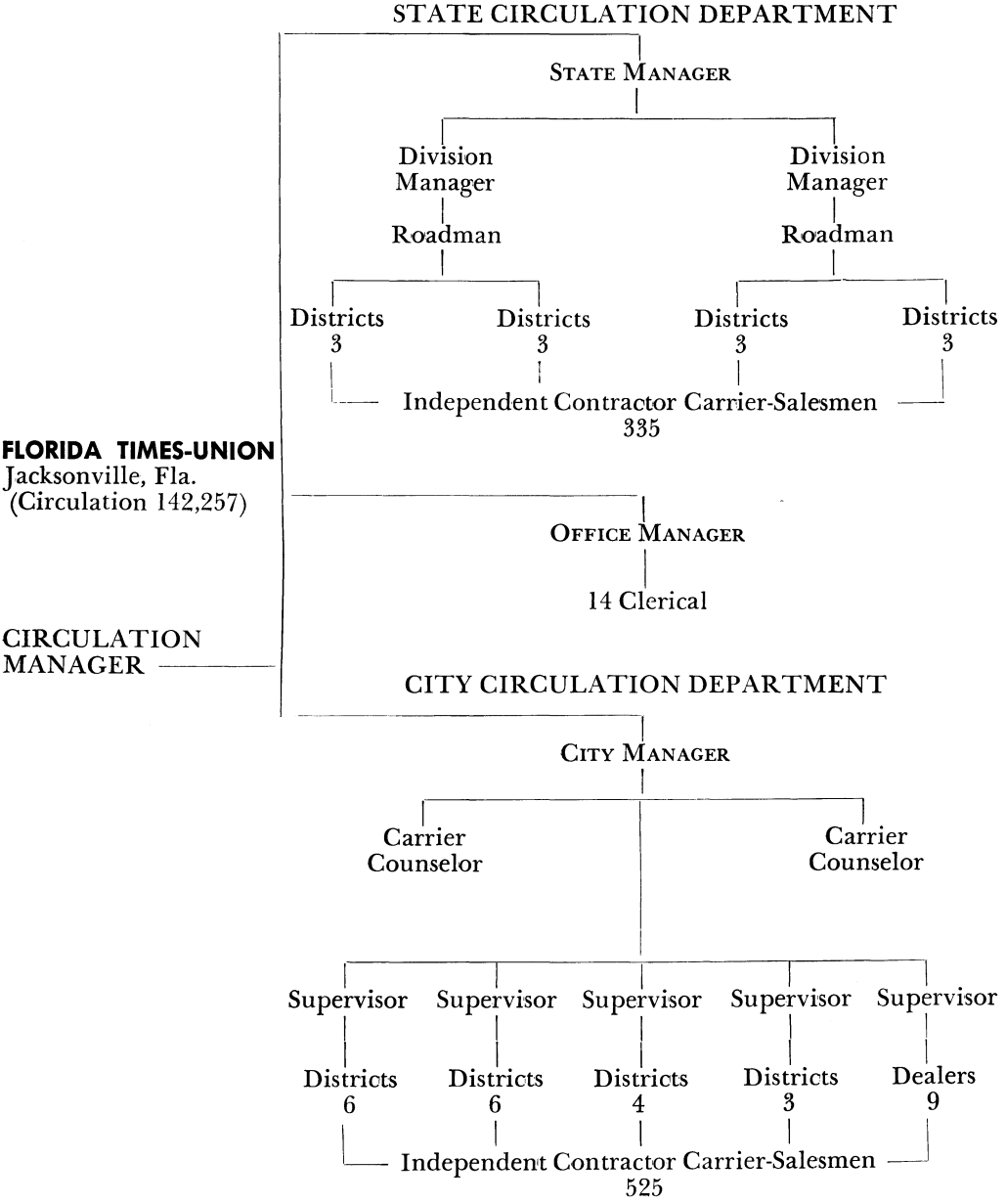


FIG. 4.6 — Divisions and Personnel of the Circulation Department of the Jacksonville, Fla., **Florida Times-Union** show a dual setup for city and state managers.

women specially selected to contact parents of carriers, particularly junior carriers. These counselors explain to parents the contract terms, bill payment plan and route work desired. This has done much to increase parent cooperation and to improve public relations.

Adapting its circulation department to meet area needs, the St. Paul, Minn., *Dispatch* and *Pioneer Press* (combined circulation 214,768, population 311,349) operates in three divisions: (1) city circulation, (2) country circulation, and (3) mail subscriptions.

In the city circulation division are two home delivery managers, one motor route manager, one dealer and street sales manager in addition to the district managers. The home delivery managers supervise the activities of the district managers.

The motor route manager performs the same duties as the district manager, but handles adult carriers, who distribute via automobile. The dealer and street sales manager is in charge of distribution on street corners and through drug stores. He has two salaried street sales managers, and these work directly with street sellers and nine contracted distributors, who buy newspapers wholesale and resell to drug stores. Clerks in the office handle "stops", "starts", "complaints", etc., over telephone, and wait on the public at counter in addition to routine clerical work in the office.

In the country division are a country circulation manager, three area managers and twenty-one district managers. The area supervisors are over the district managers, working with them and making replacements when necessary. The country district managers' activities are much the same as those of the city district managers except that they are responsible also for newspapers sold through dealers and on the streets in towns throughout the territory. Agency operators are under contract to handle all distribution of papers in some of the larger towns. The district manager also directs carrier work in the smaller towns.

A traffic manager, working out of the country department, keeps his eyes on the entire trucking operation, making changes or creating new truck runs when necessary. All transportation is by leased contract haulers. If it were not for this arrangement, a larger traffic department would be needed. Seven clerical workers in this department perform the same duties as those in the city department with the exception, of course, that there is a greater amount of correspondence because the district managers are located outside the city.

In the mail subscription department are a mail subscription manager, two field supervisors and five clerical workers. Under the field supervisors are thirty-three mail subscription solicitors who sell direct to farmers on a commission basis. The field supervisors work directly with these solicitors in making sales. Generally, there is not too much of a distribution problem, as all copies are sent through the mails. Clerical help enters subscribers' names and addresses on galleys for mailing.

Reader Acceptance Influences Personnel

Reader acceptance is never the same in any two communities. It varies according to the competition existing and to the nationalities of the people residing in the area.

Competition induces a continuous battle for subscriptions, and the number of communities with more than one newspaper is growing less each year because of the large personnel and extra costs imposed by competition.

Educational standards and civic interests of persons residing in a community have their effect on newspaper circulation. Circulation problems of a newspaper in a manufacturing center are different from those of a newspaper in a college community. Persons of foreign extraction, particularly those who have come recently to this country, respond more slowly to newspaper readership than persons who have lived long in the community.

The Kansas City, Kans., *Kansan* (circulation 29,532, population 129,553) is read by many types of persons, so it must appeal to a divergence of interests. In one part of the city, the choice residential sections, the wealthier people of the metropolitan area have their homes. In another part live employees of the great meat-packing companies, and many of these can scarcely speak the English language. Efforts to add subscribers would prove almost fruitless in this area.

Aims of Publisher Affect Circulation

The aims of the publisher and the circulation manager and their attitudes toward efficiency in the newspaper organization help to determine the personnel in the circulation department. There are so many opportunities to make changes in this department that the circulation manager interested in details might easily allow his enthusiasm to create an organization involving unnecessary expense and cumbersome operation. On the other hand, a circulation manager with limited vision might not organize his department sufficiently to do a maximum job. Furthermore, he might be handicapped in doing so by a publisher or general manager who was unable to see the possibilities of circulation increase or who was more anxious to pay the stockholders an immediate dividend than to improve the quality of the newspaper and in the long run expand its influence.

The circulation department of a newspaper anxious to expand its business and influence must constantly look for new territory to cultivate. It must be organized to deliver the paper to all parts of the territory—within the city, in the suburban areas, out in the county, in the state, and to any part of the nation or the world where the paper may be wanted. It also must be organized to sell and to collect in all this wide territory. A tremendous job confronts the circulation department in developing new ideas, applying new methods and engendering interest and enthusiasm.