

Publisher Goes Off-Shore for Editorial Talent

St. Louis, July 3 (AP)--St. Louis Wrote-Mismatch publisher Mike Shuck confirmed today that the newspaper has eliminated 75% of the paper's local editorial staff in a bid to create what the company calls "new efficiencies in news gathering." Shuck confirmed press reports that reporters and copyeditors scattered in Pacific Rim countries, including Siberia and China, have been hired in recent weeks.

"Journalists have trouble understanding the transformation of the business, but we think our readers are way ahead of the rest of us," Shuck said. "The expansion of fiber optics allows for coverage of nearly everything, even from remote distances."

Asked how a non-native speaker could cover the Cardinals, the local baseball team and a storied franchise, Shuck answered, "All you need is a video camera in the front of the stadium recording the pitch count. You can get the rest--scores, batting order and the like--from Internet sources."

"We did a careful job search for this," Shuck added, referring to the paper's new sports reporter, "and we found a foreign exchange student in rural Cambodia who lived in Milwaukee for eight months. He attended a few ball games and learned the basics. We've got video from You-Tube confirming that he can throw papayas and cocoanuts and understands the strike zone."

Shuck was reminded that two of the last four Cardinal games included reports that Manager Tony La Russa had won games "in bottom of third with a home run."

Shuck defended his Cambodian reporter aggressively. "Sit Sith Sin didn't know that managers cannot participate in the batting order or play on the field. Cambodian baseball is a bit different from ours. Owing to the extreme heat out there, they only have three-inning games. But he knows ours are nine."

"There's going to be a learning curve here for all of us. But I don't think the fans care that much about details anymore, or even have the time. You know, the team isn't really doing very well. I think we need to be up-front about that. If the team is losing, does it really matter how long the games last, or how each one is lost? Actually, I think La Russa should be happy to be credited with a home run."

"He couldn't hit worth a damn when he played for Detroit."

The Wrote-Mismatch joins a lengthening list of news organizations that have turned to off-shore help for reporting and editing the news. The Des Moines, Iowa Sentinel has assigned the police beat to a Russian reporter in Irkutsk. A report filed from Russia two weeks ago indicated that the local police chief had been replaced with a German shepherd.

It was the other way around.

Sentinel editors, conceding the mistake, insisted that foreign-based coverage of local events was little different from sending correspondents abroad to cover foreign affairs. Managing Editor Lindy Linsey said the publication was simply reversing the order of things. "If we can send reporters to Irkutsk to cover Irkutsk, someone in Irkutsk can cover us," she said. "It's a violation of the First Amendment to prohibit that."

Reporters in St. Louis, informed of the changes in personnel, had intended hunger strikes to protest the firings. A Lao reporter was assigned to cover the story from Vien Tien. Because of the time zone difference, the impact of the hunger strike was muted.

The entire staff was removed in dehydration before the story was published.

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