Making a difference

"APME has always been one of our industry's leading organizations. Participation in APME is valuable to all editors who want to make a difference in their organizations and help shape the future of American journalism."

» **Glenn Proctor**, executive editor, Richmond Times-Dispatch

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Will we be 'dead' in a decade? Time to thrive in the digital age.

Google says there is a moral imperative to save our industry. Microsoft's CEO believes we'll be dead in a decade.

Digital chiefs of America's newspaper companies, meanwhile, are determined to turn our business back toward the impressive profits we once enjoyed — and they're designing new strategies for building audiences online.

All of this and much more will be aired in Las Vegas this September when we gather to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Associated Press Managing Editors.

APME believes it's time to stop lamenting what we used to be during the last century and begin running hard at what we can become in the digital age. This conference is all about:

» Great journalism
» Innovation and coming technological advances
» Improving social networking online
» Using databases for sophisticated storytelling
» Juggling it all while maintaining quality
» AP's new mobile news network
» Making climate change real on the local level
» Race and age in the presidential election

Las Vegas is one of the least expensive places in America to fly in and out of, and the Red Rock Casino Resort Spa affords us an off-the-strip venue that's at once beautiful and affordable. We've partnered this year with the international Society for News Design. Our longtime partners the Associated Press Photo Managers will, of course, offer programming on all things visual. And you can attend sessions from any of the three groups for the low conference price of $395.

DAVID LEDFORD

Our old friends at The Freedom Forum also will be in town with their usual dynamite program. The gracious host sponsor, the Las Vegas Review-Journal, will treat us to a superb opening night reception with food prepared by the restaurant of celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck.

The theme of this year's conference is 'Thriving in a Digital Age.'

If that's not exactly the way you're feeling about things in your shop, come to Vegas for some inspiration. If you've got it going, please come share your success.

See you at the Red Rock.

David Ledford is president of the Associated Press Managing Editors. He is also executive editor of the Wilmington (Del.) News-Journal.

Providing a network for victory

"Now more than ever we need to understand and share the large and small wins that every news organization achieves. Time to learn is more precious than ever. APME provides a wonderful network for this."

» **Cheryl Carpenter**, managing editor, Charlotte Observer

Great idea!

Each year, one of the most popular things at the APME conference is our "Great Ideas" book, which features examples of neat stuff being done by papers across America. It's worth the admission price alone. Here's a peak at a few of this year's "great ideas."

Twitter for Readership

The Telegraph, Nashua, N.H.: Damon Kiesow | managing editor / online

Newspapers have missed more than their share of chances to get in on the ground floor of new technologies. One reason is the reluctance to "waste" time on new things without a clear promise of a return on investment. When the Telegraph signed up for a Twitter.com account in early 2007, the paper had no idea if the Web- and SMS-based discussion services would ever become popular. In fact, the Telegraph had no idea if anyone outside of some hard-core early adopters would even care that it had an account. Almost 2,000 breaking news messages and 175 followers (subscribers) later, it is still a niche product, but usage is growing every day. The minimal level of effort required to support the service already makes it worthwhile, regardless of how many local readers eventually get signed-up. It is the classic low-risk, medium-reward project.

A major investment in watchdog reporting

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel:
Mark Katches | AME projects & investigations

The newspaper built from scratch a 10-person watchdog team that balances quick-hit investigations and more ambitious projects. A year later, investigative reporter Dave Umhoefer won the Pulitzer for local reporting. The newsroom also invested in Watchdog Online. It includes more than 50 watchdog reports, searchable data generating millions of page clicks, and a one-stop center for Wisconsin residents to check public records. Other features include a political watchdog columnist, two watchdog blogs, and a duo of consumer watchdog reporters who have uncovered dirty beer taps at local taverns and doctors who fail to screen kids for lead poisoning despite federal mandates to do so. See **jsonline.com/watchdog**

Commemorative pages online

The Arizona Republic: Randy Lovely | vice president, news

When the Phoenix Mercury won the 2007 WNBA championship, The Arizona Republic celebrated their victory with a commemorative page in the next day's sports section. Readers liked it, so the paper wanted to extend the concept to other championships. The Republic realized, however, that it would be impossible to devote the print resources to do a page for each of the seven state high school football championships. So, it created an online version for each game that readers could download and print out. The paper designed the pages so they could be printed at 11x17 (or smaller) rather than a standard newspaper page and still have impact. This particular softball poster generated more than 1,700 downloads and has proved to be the most successful one to date.