

API/SNI EVALUATION STANDARDS

Larger dailies (over 7,500 circulation)

1) Content Variety and Balance: Standard met when the content of the newspaper appeals to a variety of groups – diverse, young and old, men and women. Subjects reflect that diversity of interest and voice. The newspaper includes news of specialized interest, specifically items cited in the ASNE study, “The Power to Grow Readership,” as follows:

Sports, features, business, religion, parenting and family life, education, health, personal appearance, obituaries, food, entertainment (especially television), crime and courts and how we are governed.

Space devoted to those topics is balanced appropriately.

2) Content: Relevance to Readers: Standard met when stories and sections reflect urgency. Coverage is timely and in step with the needs of readers. Southern Newspapers, Inc., is a group of COMMUNITY newspapers. Therefore, the focus of our news organizations is on local news, as opposed to state, national or international news. Content should reflect the interests of each community’s diverse readership.

3) Helpful Service Information: Standard met when newspaper collects and publishes on an every-issue basis relevant calendar and service information, how-to guides, if-you-go features. Internet sites should supplement or expand printed information, providing data for readers to organize and prioritize their busy lives. The information should be organized in a logical manner and, whenever possible, presented in a standardized location to make navigation of the paper easier.

4) Enterprise Reporting: Standard met when the newspaper publishes at least once a week a deep enterprise story or report that builds from staff initiative. The idea goes beyond routine beats and assignments. The story adds depth and perspective. Enterprise reporting is an in-depth look at a major topic of community interest, and it involves independent research and multiple news sources.

5) Writing and Reporting: Standard met when stories are factually accurate, fair, libel-free and placed in the correct context, when best possible sources are used, when leads capture the essence of the news, when fresh and effective approaches are taken for routine information.

6) Copy Editing: Standard met when edited copy and headlines demonstrate basic competence in grammar, spelling and usage and are free of typos; when heads and copy are factually accurate and fair. Statistics, research, quotes and narrative are accurate, organized in the correct sequence, and provide accurate context and perspective. Information is properly attributed.

7) Headlines: Standard met when headlines capture the essence and tone of stories. The head writer recognizes the news peg and selects the headline based on the proper criteria, such as local impact, timeliness, prominence, uniqueness or conflict. Headlines are clear, crisp, inviting and easy to understand. Headlines avoid jargon and use descriptive words and details to add dimension. Word play is used sparingly.

8) Cutlines – Standard met when cutlines concisely, correctly and completely identify principals in the photo, when they go beyond the obvious by including pertinent background information and context, when they explain potentially confusing detail in the image.

9) Photos: Content and Display – Standard met when photos appropriately illustrate stories and provide important information. All photos are accurate representations of the situations they portray. Standard met when photos are properly exposed and cropped for maximum impact. Photo layouts identify key elements needed to tell the story. Photos are well designed, show life and action, and offer a variety of content, shape and detail.

10. Informational Graphics – Standard met when staff regularly uses a variety of graphic elements to enhance and explain stories. They include charts, maps, diagrams, pullout boxes, pull quotes and glance boxes. Graphics are sized appropriately and never used as simple decoration.

11. Reader Involvement and Participation – Standard met when readers are pulled directly into the newspaper through surveys, emails, and other solicitations. Multiple voices are heard regularly. Reader access to the newspaper’s columns must be welcomed in every issue by providing routine, standardized and clear invitations to submit material in all reader-participation areas from letters to church and club news.

12. Editorial Page – Standard met when the editorial package has a mix of opinion with editorials on local topics dominating the page. Those editorials should be clear, frank and positive in the sense that they provide solutions whenever problems are cited. They should reflect issues that are on the minds of local readers. Appropriate space is devoted to letters to the editor. Local columnists appear on the pages at least three days a week.

13. Layout and Design – Standard met when design is used as a tool to make things clear. Pages have a clear hierarchy of stories and a center of visual impact. Design elements and techniques are functional, furthering the communication of information to the reader. Wherever possible, regular features should be placed in consistent and standardized locations in order to make it easier for readers to navigate the paper. Special attention should be paid to the top half of page 1A to provide a compelling sales tool for single-copy readers

14) Self-promotion. Standard is met when a portion of each issue is set aside in a standardized location for promoting editorial or ad content or other features that demonstrate the publication’s value to readers, giving them a reason to buy and keep reading.

15) Advertising Content. Standard is met when ad content is clear, well-organized, professionally designed and demonstrates high print quality standards, especially when color is used.