



newspapers in  
hampton roads

# Newspapers In Hampton Roads: Competition, Coverage And Issues

Every morning, Monday through Saturday, more than 290,000 residents of Hampton Roads receive a daily newspaper printed in the region. Meanwhile, every Sunday of the year, more than 347,000 area residents are recipients of locally produced newspapers, according to Editor & Publisher Market Guide 2002. Chances are quite good that readers of either the Norfolk-based Virginian-Pilot or the Newport News-based Daily Press will be treated every day to solid journalism, compelling photography, visually pleasing page layouts, plus editorials and columns that bring local issues to life for both consideration and pleasure.

**Annual evidence shows that when the Virginia Press Association issues awards for daily newspapers throughout the Commonwealth, numerous staff members from both papers are recognized for their achievements in writing, design and photography.**

Chances are equally good that readers of either newspaper will be reasonably familiar with the same international, national and statewide issues. The Roman Catholic cardinals' summit with Pope John Paul II, the latest turn of events from the West Bank, the gripping news of more terrorist activities planned by members of al-Qaida and the return of the USS Cole to Hampton Roads have been featured prominently in both newspapers.

Readers of both papers also can count on news of how Old Dominion University's women's basketball team performed against the University of Connecticut, or how the Norfolk Tides fared against the Richmond Braves in a doubleheader, or how well the Tribe of William and Mary played football against New Hampshire.

Readers further stand a reasonable chance of ascertaining – based on “lifestyle” coverage – what is happening on a regular basis at the Virginia Air and Space Museum in Hampton, the Norfolk Botanical Gardens, Busch Gardens in Williamsburg or the Verizon Wireless Virginia Beach Amphitheater.

But, that is where the duplicate coverage tends to stop. **Woe to the reader who searches for news from the communities “on the other side of the water.” A resident of Newport News who wants news of Virginia Beach is likely to be disappointed if she reads the Daily Press. Similarly, a resident of Portsmouth who wants to know more about Hampton is not likely to be able to satisfy that need by reading The Virginian-Pilot.** Judging from the data of the Audit Bureau of Circulations (the national agency that examines and disseminates circulation data to advertisers, advertising agencies and publishers), neither newspaper sells many papers on the other side of the water. Few residents of Hampton Roads subscribe to both newspapers.

As a part of this review, we examined the local news coverage of both newspapers. **What's especially ironic about the findings is that both papers have expressed editorial support in the past for looking at the many cities and counties of Hampton Roads as one region. Both have taken the time to applaud the efforts of regional cooperation and both have chastised elected officials and other policy makers for not finding more ways to work together.**

By way of illustration, the two dailies have expressed concern about the plethora of economic development agencies in Hampton Roads and questioned whether all of these organizations are necessary. They have even challenged those same economic development entities to avoid efforts that would simply relocate firms from one community to another.

News executives from both The Virginian-Pilot and the Daily Press, however, do not see a contradiction in editorializing for regional issues while simultaneously covering only the local news and politics on their side of the water. They insist their newspaper first and foremost must maintain a unique local value to its readers. And, they believe this is what sells.

Generally, any sharing of a news story from the other side of the water is the result of reporting by the Associated Press (even though a few times – albeit short-lived – each paper assigned a reporter to cover its rival's territory). Few bylines in

either paper precede news stories reporting on issues from the other side. These few exceptions typically involve sports, business or higher education.

Clearly, there are many opportunities where news parallels could be drawn, but the papers rarely consider an approach to an issue from a community outside of their primary circulation areas, even though the other side of the water lies within the geographic region labeled as Hampton Roads.

**Gloucester and Virginia Beach, for example, have both recently examined the issues surrounding the implementation of year-round school. Surely, Norfolk and Newport News must share common issues as urban areas. Likewise, Chesapeake and Williamsburg face similar traffic congestion problems during the summer months. Nonetheless, most readers are not made aware of this, or if they are, it is not because they have read their daily newspaper.**

Of the two newspapers, the Daily Press historically has been more likely to cover a story – at least sports- or lifestyles-related – from the other side of the water than has been The Virginian-Pilot. Experienced readers believe The Pilot previously covered more Peninsula activities – at least those related to science and technology – when it employed a full-time science writer in the mid-1990s.

Since many of the region's most important science- and technology-related entities (the Jefferson Lab, NASA, the wind tunnel, the Applied Research Center, etc.) are housed on the Peninsula, it makes sense that regular news datelines on their activities should originate from there. However, after The Virginian-Pilot chose to do away with its full-time science writer position, its coverage of these activities diminished.

While Old Dominion University and Norfolk State University are covered closely and thoroughly by The Virginian-Pilot's education team, it would be rare for a Southside reader to catch more than a glimpse of what faculty and students are up to on the campuses of Christopher Newport University, Hampton University and Thomas Nelson Community College. The College of William and Mary receives a bit more coverage. Nonetheless, more often than not, if The Pilot does mention these schools, it is typically a comparative reference in a roundup piece on all of higher education. With respect to institutions outside of Hampton Roads, The Virginian-Pilot does give more attention to academic achievements at the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech.

By contrast, the Daily Press does give Old Dominion University more coverage than, say, Christopher Newport University receives from The Virginian-Pilot, though its coverage of Norfolk State University is minimal. The Daily Press also will venture to the Southside to cover a nationally known business speaker at an event such as the Economics Club of Hampton Roads, though in recent times it has become more reluctant to follow stories across the water.

**This provokes an intriguing question. Would one newspaper change some of these coverage patterns, or would reporting requirements and circulation zones nonetheless guarantee the status quo? The answer depends upon the identity of the experts to whom you talk.**

If there were but one dominant daily newspaper in Hampton Roads, this paper would without question be the largest Virginia-based paper. According to the Editor & Publisher Market Guide 2002, The Virginian-Pilot is the leader in a close race with the Richmond Times-Dispatch for the honor of being Virginia's largest daily newspaper. The Pilot sells about 1,000 more papers than the Times-Dispatch during the week and about 3,000 more on Sunday.

However, if the circulation of The Virginian-Pilot and the Daily Press were combined, daily circulation would approximate 290,000 and Sunday circulation would approach 350,000. Even so, while this impressive number no doubt would entice national advertisers to make additional media buys here, it still would not move the new united "Virginian-Press" newspaper into the Top 20 U.S. daily newspapers by circulation. The 20th-largest daily newspaper in the country, The San Diego Union-Tribune, holds that spot with a circulation of 370,000 daily and 439,000 on Sundays.

The Virginian-Pilot's current circulation places it in about 55th place nationally. It sells more papers than The Cincinnati Enquirer and the Las Vegas Review-Journal, but trails such papers as the St. Paul Pioneer Press and The Daily Oklahoman. For further perspective regarding Hampton Roads regional papers, the Washington Post has more than 760,000 daily subscribers and more than 1 million on Sundays. Thus, many (especially those in Northern Virginia) argue that it is the Washington Post,

not The Virginian-Pilot or the Times-Dispatch, that is the Commonwealth's largest and perhaps most influential paper where Virginia affairs are concerned.

Relatively few large metropolitan areas are served by a single, dominant newspaper. Among the newspapers so situated are The Buffalo News, The Portland Oregonian and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. These newspapers clearly cover, and purport to speak for, the entirety of their respective regions. That this is true is a function both of each newspaper's peculiar history and respective geography. Yet, there are not many other similar examples, even though there have been attempts by many newspapers to achieve this status.

One of the country's better-known regions is Florida's Tampa-St. Petersburg, home to two of the Top 50 U.S. newspapers. The St. Petersburg Times ranks 28th with a daily circulation of more than 325,000, while The Tampa Tribune is the 49th-largest paper with a daily circulation of 213,000. Both newspapers have spent millions of dollars at various stages in only modestly successful attempts to recruit subscribers from the other side of the water in that region, while still attempting to maintain their current readers. Both papers compete for news stories in certain communities and on certain issues, but for the most part, the majority of readers they reach remain residents of the city listed on their flag.

Dallas-Fort Worth and Minneapolis-St. Paul have also waged circulation wars over the years, but frontal assaults usually don't work. The Dallas Morning News went after the Fort Worth Star-Telegram in lucrative Arlington County by establishing the companion Arlington Morning News, but it eventually pulled back its Arlington coverage into the Morning News. A journalism faculty member from the University of Texas at Austin, who requested anonymity, said the lesson others should draw from Texas is: "When both newspapers are well-funded, the hometown team will probably win."

**Paul N. Pohlman, associate dean of the Poynter Institute (a St. Petersburg, Fla., school for journalists, future journalists and teachers of journalism), doubts that one newspaper would serve his region or any region, including Hampton Roads, better than two. He argues that two dailies in most regions are typically more likely to have greater resources than one large paper. Therefore, he believes that local coverage in a market such as Hampton Roads could suffer with the elimination of one news source.** Against this, many resources appear to be used for duplicative purposes in "two daily newspaper" regions. That is, the two papers devote money and people to the same issues. Large newspapers seem better disposed to undertake substantive studies and examinations and to send reporters outside of their regions.

Some supporters of multiple newspapers believe that competition produces superior journalism and that this causes newspapers to specialize and produce better coverage. This would appear to have some validity if one considers the coverage of local news stories.

Ultimately, however, many newspaper experts say citizens anywhere can gain more regional information (or any other kind of information) simply by expressing that need to editors, publishers and ownership groups. Public groups have the right to encourage different coverage by insisting that their news media look at the entire region when reporting on issues. Newspapers are, after all, businesses and they exist to turn a profit. Hence, they are likely to respond favorably only if news of regional issues is seen as something their reading public actually desires.

**It is interesting that the Hampton Roads Partnership, whose board includes representatives from both The Virginian-Pilot and the Daily Press, has not spent much time promoting regional newspaper coverage. Nor have the regional chambers of commerce expended much capital on this topic. These organizations apparently do not see increased newspaper coverage of regional issues as critical.**

However, inevitably, one must ask the hard commercial question: Would more coverage of Chesapeake in the Daily Press, or some additional reports about Newport News in The Virginian-Pilot, sell more newspapers or attract more advertising? Perhaps, but those results are not obvious. We may have something resembling a "Catch 22" situation with respect to regional coverage. Publishers and news executives are disinclined to increase coverage unless they can be assured of selling more newspapers, but arguably they can't sell those additional subscriptions until they change their coverage.

What is clear is that this is an issue to which both newspapers have given considerable thought. **Both newspapers believe they currently are making intelligent decisions with respect to regional coverage, and it is difficult to argue that these decisions are not profit-maximizing in nature.**



# A History Of Daily Newspapers In Hampton Roads

One of Hampton Roads' regional newspapers traces its origins to the end of the Civil War. The other is as old as its home city. Both papers were shaped by a savvy, energetic "Colonel" who was the William Randolph Hearst of Hampton Roads early last century, and both papers were brought to prominence by prominent local families. The dominance of The Virginian-Pilot on the Southside and the Daily Press on the Peninsula is the product of colorful newspaper wars and mergers pursued by aggressive newspapermen reacting to changing market forces. And, it is market forces that today appear to dictate maintenance of the status quo. **The Virginian-Pilot and the Daily Press may skirmish at the edges of their circulation areas (for example, in western Hampton Roads), but they seldom attack each other on their rival's home turf.**

That was not always the case. Modern newspaper history here dates back to the end of the Civil War. No local newspapers survived the Federal occupation of southeastern Virginia, but not long after the war's end, five new journals sprang up. One was the Norfolk Virginian, begun by a group of printers and editors from Petersburg who published their inaugural morning edition on Nov. 21, 1865. In a prospectus printed in its early issues, the Virginian touched on issues that continue to be compelling today: economic growth and regionalism. "We design that the VIRGINIAN shall be especially devoted to the advancement and prosperity of Norfolk and her sister city (Portsmouth), and the large section of Virginia whose interests are common with theirs," the paper said.

Even as it pushed its agenda, the Virginian struggled to survive in the latter half of the 19th century against competition from a host of other newspapers, including the morning Landmark and the afternoon Public Ledger. In 1884, the Landmark complained that Norfolk's 25,000 people (half of them African American) could not support the four dailies and four weeklies. Still, by 1896, seven dailies were serving the 60,000 residents of Norfolk and Portsmouth, with the real competition being between two morning papers, the Virginian and the Pilot. In 1898, those two dailies merged.

Meanwhile, on the Peninsula, the first edition of the Daily Press was published on Jan. 4, 1896, less than two weeks before Collis P. Huntington's railhead became the incorporated city of Newport News. Editor and manager Charles E. Thacker promised "the best paper ever published on the Peninsula – a paper worthy of the growing city of Newport News." Apparently, these were nobler intentions than that of the Daily Ticket, one of at least eight newspapers to precede the Daily Press on the Peninsula. According to one account, two sisters founded the Daily Ticket in 1895 to qualify for the free passes that railroads often gave to newspaper editors. The sisters reportedly wanted to visit their ailing brother in Florida.

Early on, the Daily Press was the dominant morning newspaper on the Peninsula, but it also had much competition, primarily from the Evening Times and the Morning Herald, founded as separate newspapers on April 3, 1900, by the Newport News Publishing Co., with Samuel L. Slover as publisher.

Slover, the son of a Tennessee court clerk, was the dominant force in Hampton Roads journalism in the first half of the 20th century, at one time or another owning or controlling six of Virginia's largest newspapers. As a young man of 19, Slover successfully managed a state political campaign and then was hired to sell advertising for the ailing Knoxville Journal. He soon became general manager, doubled the paper's circulation and personally paid off the Journal's \$36,400 debt when it still failed despite Slover's best efforts.

It was in 1896 when the 22-year-old Slover arrived in Virginia, where he saw opportunity for an enterprising entrepreneur in the state's crowded field of struggling newspapers. He asked Joseph Bryan of the Richmond Times for a loan to jump into the Norfolk market, but Bryan instead hired Slover to sell ads on commission. However, by 1900, Slover was in the thick of the Peninsula's newspaper wars. One year later, declaring Newport News a "pre-eminently afternoon field," Slover merged the Times and Herald into the afternoon Times-Herald, promising "the snappiest, liveliest newspaper, certainly in this city." For the next six decades, Slover's combined afternoon newspaper would remain preeminent on the Peninsula, but Slover himself would have other fish to fry on the Southside.

**In 1905, Slover bought the Norfolk Ledger for an estimated \$50,000 and briefly changed the company's name to Norfolk-Newport News Publishing Corp. It was perhaps the only time in Hampton Roads history that a single newspaper company had a major presence on both sides of the water.** But it was short-lived. Slover soon sold his interest in the Times-Herald and Walter S. Copeland resigned from the Richmond Times-Dispatch to become president and editor of the Newport News afternoon daily.

Col. Slover, as he came to be known, wasted little time in shaking up the Southside market. He immediately suggested a partnership with James M. Thomson of the Norfolk Dispatch. Thomson declined initially, but by the next year the papers were merged into the new Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch. The Ledger-Dispatch's main competitor, The Virginian-Pilot, also made a move by taking over the Norfolk Landmark in 1911.

By 1910, the Daily Press had serious financial problems, and Charles Thacker sold out to George and Henry Schmelz, prominent bankers who had helped finance the paper's first 14 years. In 1913, the Daily Press consolidated with the Times-Herald, with Copeland as co-owner and editor. The Daily Press created two equal classes of stock each worth \$25,000. Copeland owned one class; the Schmelz families primarily owned the other.

In "Salt Water & Printer's Ink," an account of the Norfolk newspapers, Lenoir Chambers wrote that the history of newspaper publishing in Norfolk was "one long story of newspaper consolidation. The economics of publishing was ending the multi-newspaper era." The same obviously applied to the Peninsula. By the second decade of the 20th century, the Peninsula and Southside were essentially two-newspaper towns. Both had a morning and an afternoon daily. Although the Peninsula's two newspapers were owned by the same company, they maintained separate news and editorial staffs, while sharing photo, circulation and advertising departments. In South Hampton Roads, The Virginian-Pilot and the Ledger-Dispatch remained separate competing newspapers until 1933, when Slover merged the two companies. However, like the Daily Press and the Times-Herald, the two Norfolk newspapers retained news and editorial independence, and competition between the two staffs continued unabated.

**Three families would oversee the growth and expansion of Hampton Roads' newspapers through the 20th century. On the Peninsula it was the Bottom and Van Buren families; on the Southside it was the Battens.**

The Bottom family entered the Peninsula's newspaper scene when Raymond B. Bottom and his father-in-law, the prominent funeral director and businessman William Rouse, bought a major interest in the Daily Press and Times-Herald in 1930. Eight years later, William R. Van Buren, son-in-law of banker George Schmelz, joined the newspaper as treasurer and news editor upon his retirement from the Navy. Van Buren, Bottom and Bottom's wife, Dorothy Rouse Bottom, ran the papers' business and editorial activities, as later did their sons, William R. Van Buren Jr. and Raymond B. Bottom Jr.

On the Southside, Slover, who had no children, passed on his newspapers to his nephew Frank Batten Sr., who became The Virginian-Pilot publisher in 1954 at age 27, not long after returning home from graduate school. Batten Sr. eventually took over the entire company, and was succeeded by his son, Frank Batten Jr., late in the century.

Both companies grew and diversified through the mid- and late-20th century. The Newport News company took over radio station WGH-AM, and in later years moved into industrial electronics, a shopping mall and cable television. Slover acquired WTAR-AM, the state's first radio station, and launched WTAR-TV, the state's second television station.

The Norfolk company also bought other newspapers. In 1962, the Portsmouth Star was absorbed into the Ledger-Dispatch, forming the Ledger-Star. One year later, when Virginia Beach merged with Princess Anne County, and South Norfolk and Norfolk County formed the new city of Chesapeake, the Norfolk-based newspapers found themselves the hometown newspapers of four cities: Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. The Virginian-Pilot published an advertising salute to the cities of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. The Portsmouth edition of both The Virginian-Pilot and the Ledger-Star was revamped into a Portsmouth-Chesapeake edition, and each paper named a metropolitan editor to oversee area-wide coverage. Each paper's editorial page foresaw some form of metropolitan cooperation for the future. The Ledger-Star advised in an editorial: "What old Ben Franklin said of the colonies is equally true of Tidewater's people. We can either hang together or, economically, we will surely hang separately."

However, the reality was that the Norfolk newspapers were serving four separate and distinct cities. This was made evident when the papers started publishing and distributing the Beacon, a tabloid insert that focused specifically on Virginia Beach news. It was the first of a string of targeted tabloids.

**In the 1960s, Frank Batten's company acquired daily newspapers in Roanoke, Va., and Greensboro, N.C. In 1967, with the company expanding beyond newspapers, its name was changed to Landmark Communications, referencing the old Norfolk Landmark that had been absorbed by The Pilot. Over the last few decades, Landmark acquired a string of local community papers, moved further into broadcast and launched The Weather Channel.**

Change also came to the Daily Press and Times-Herald. Eventually, the two papers' news, sports and lifestyle departments were merged. Then in 1986, nearly a century after the first Daily Press hit the streets, the two newspapers and the company's affiliated businesses were sold to the Tribune Co. for \$200 million. Thus ended more than a half-century of Bottoms/Van Buren control. In August 1991, the Tribune discontinued publication of the afternoon Times-Herald. With afternoon dailies becoming an endangered species, Norfolk's Ledger-Star also ceased publishing in August 1995.

Today, consolidation has left Hampton Roads with two major morning dailies, one for each side of the water. While The Virginian-Pilot and the Daily Press are not content to sit pat, don't expect any major newspaper wars between them. Essentially, the two papers have distinct and separate geographical markets. The Virginian-Pilot's primary market consists of South Hampton Roads' five cities: Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Chesapeake and Suffolk. It also distributes via home delivery on Virginia's Eastern Shore, in northeast North Carolina and in rural areas of Virginia outside Suffolk. The Daily Press's core market is the Peninsula, including Newport News, Hampton, York County, James City County, Williamsburg and Gloucester County, as well as in zones south of the James River, in the area of Western Tidewater. The paper's secondary market includes New Kent, Charles City, Matthews and Middlesex counties.

Still, over the years there have been limited assaults and continuing skirmishes between the two newspapers. A number of years ago, The Virginian-Pilot tried offering home delivery in Williamsburg but pulled back when the initiative proved too expensive. On occasion, the Daily Press tried going into South Hampton Roads with home delivery with essentially the same results. "We simply don't provide the depth of local coverage in each other's back yards," Virginian-Pilot circulation and marketing director Pam Smith-Rodden says. "So we can't pull in the circulation numbers."

**Many expected a major showdown in Western Tidewater south of the James River with the opening of the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge-Tunnel in 1992, but that never materialized, in part because the opening coincided with an economic recession.** "It's fairly quiet," Smith-Rodden says of the current situation. "We match each other box for box. However, the bulk of our news coverage is in the five cities. We don't have significant news staff covering the overlap areas. At this point, there isn't an overwhelming case to be made for expansion because physical distribution costs are so high. However, we are looking carefully at specific geographical areas. Chesapeake is growing. So is Suffolk, which has the greatest growth, but it is of a very small base."

Ernie Gates, editor of the Daily Press, argues that although full-scale frontal attacks haven't materialized, the two papers have and will continue to compete in the high-growth "suburban" areas of western Tidewater south of the James. And, it is there that the Daily Press is serious about increasing its penetration. Gates points out that during a number of instances in the past, the two papers had bureaus side-by-side in places such as Suffolk and Isle of Wight. "We have been competing head-to-head for many years. It comes and goes and ebbs and flows," Gates says. "I think this is really a long-standing thing. I think it's been going on intermittently forever." The result, he notes, is a distinct area from Portsmouth/Chesapeake/Suffolk borders all the way to Smithfield, where there is a blending of the circulations of the two newspapers.

**Executives from both newspapers – on and off the record – say there is no "gentleman's agreement" for peaceful coexistence between the two newspapers. However, a newspaper war just doesn't make financial sense for either paper.**

## Weekly Newspapers And Inserts

In addition to the two major newspapers published daily in Hampton Roads, residents can gain information through a variety of smaller publications, including community news and entertainment weeklies. The Virginian-Pilot's city tabloids (Chesapeake Clipper, Norfolk Compass, Portsmouth Currents, Suffolk Sun and Virginia Beach Beacon) cover each of the five municipalities comprising South Hampton Roads. Like most city weeklies, these publications pay specific attention to happenings within each of the region's individual cities. Regular features in all five tabs include community calendars, school briefs and "notable neighbors" features, among other topics of interest relating specifically to the cities each represents.





As these tabloids are included in each Virginian-Pilot subscriber's regular newspaper, they allow many Hampton Roads residents to explore in-depth coverage of their community through the familiarity of their regular daily newspaper. Circulation varies for each publication: the Beacon, 78,263; the Clipper, 35,936; the Compass, 39,103; the Currents, 27,533; and the Sun, 18,025.

**One of the most differentiated and interesting weekly newspapers in Hampton Roads is Port Folio Weekly, a newspaper covering politics, social issues and arts and entertainment in the region.** This free publication, with a circulation of approximately 38,000, is published every Tuesday and rack-distributed, predominantly in South Hampton Roads. It is also available online at [www.portfolioweekly.com](http://www.portfolioweekly.com).

Published by Landmark Communications and printed by The Virginian-Pilot, the Virginia Beach-based Port Folio is known in the region for its announcements and reviews of area concerts, theatre performances, art exhibitions, festivals and much, much more. Additional topics include columns on dining, health and fashion. In recent years, the publication has evolved from an arts and entertainment calendar into a broad-based publication providing news, information and opinions not typically found in the mainstream media.

Founded in 1988 and 1978, respectively, and published in Yorktown, The Poquoson Post and the York Town Crier cover community news in the city of Poquoson and York County. Although the two were for many years published separately, in early 2002 the publisher merged the two papers, listing both original nameplates as one on its front page. Circulation for the combined publication now totals 3,700. The weekly double publication still keeps news for each community separate, devoting the first half specifically to York County and the second to Poquoson. Coverage typically focuses upon local government reports, the combined area's four schools (primary, elementary, middle and high), local sports, arts and entertainment, and regular neighborhood news and announcements. State and national news are rarely covered except through stories which give the topic a hometown connection.



**Williamsburg's Virginia Gazette was founded in 1736 as one of the first newspapers in the South. The paper celebrated its long history with a 250th birthday in 1986 when it was recognized as the oldest newspaper in America published on a non-daily basis.** This semiweekly publication, which has been owned by the Daily Press since 2001, covers community news for the Greater Williamsburg area of Hampton Roads, including Williamsburg, James City County and upper York County. Regional and national news are regularly covered as well.

The Gazette circulates 16,500 copies each Wednesday and Saturday morning. The paper is available online at [www.vagazette.com](http://www.vagazette.com).

The Smithfield Times, founded in 1920, is a weekly publication covering news and events in Isle of Wight and Surry counties. Like other city weeklies, this publication focuses specifically on community news issues such as city council and schools. Additionally, community leaders and residents are often featured. With an average circulation of 5,346, the paper is also available online at [www.smithfieldtimes.com](http://www.smithfieldtimes.com).

Boasting of chronicling life in "The World's Largest Peanut Processing Center" since 1873, the Suffolk News-Herald covers news and events for the city of Suffolk every Tuesday through Sunday morning. While the vast majority of coverage in the News-Herald relates specifically to Suffolk, the publication prints various national news stories written by the Associated Press. Sports coverage also expands to the national level. Circulation for the News-Herald is 4,048. The community newspaper is available online at [www.suffolknewsherald.com](http://www.suffolknewsherald.com).

Tidewater News, published by Byerly Publications, is the semiweekly community newspaper for the city of Franklin. Founded in 1905, the paper covers news relating specifically to its community. Regular features touch on city council news, school issues and notable members of the community. Regional and national news are covered in relation to the community. The 7,791-circulation newspaper is published on Thursdays and Sundays.

El Eco de Virginia, a regional Latino newspaper, is published biweekly from offices in downtown Norfolk. It recently celebrated its 10th anniversary and is the state's oldest Spanish-language newspaper. Topics of coverage in this free tabloid-style publication include opinion pieces, as well as local and national news, especially topics affecting the Spanish-speaking community. All articles are written in Spanish, as the paper specifically targets a bilingual Spanish/English-speaking audience.

**The Norfolk-based New Journal and Guide focuses upon the African American community and is one of approximately 300 such newspapers across the country. The weekly publication was founded in 1900 by the Supreme Lodge Knights of Gideon, a black fraternal order, and was originally called the Gideon Safe Guide.** The paper became the New Journal and Guide in 1992. Now in its second century of publication, the New Journal and Guide seeks to uphold its longstanding mission of serving as an advocate for the African-American community. With 25,000 papers distributed each Wednesday, the publication covers local news, predominantly in South Hampton Roads, as well as state and national news. All coverage gives insight into news and events as they pertain to the African American community. The paper is available online at [www.newjournalandguide.com](http://www.newjournalandguide.com).

Founded in early 2001, HR Monthly, the city and lifestyle magazine of Hampton Roads, seeks to "entertain, influence and challenge the readers of Hampton Roads and celebrate life in Southeastern Virginia," according to its mission statement. The glossy newsstand subscription publication covers area entertainment and lifestyle news. As a monthly publication, it takes less of a look at hardcore news, focusing specifically on feature stories of people and places in the region. The magazine's audience consists of 10,000 newsstand purchasers, plus 10,000 subscribers. HR Monthly can also be accessed via the Internet at [www.hrmonthly.com](http://www.hrmonthly.com).

Dolan's Virginia Business Observer provides weekly coverage of law, the courts, legal practice and commercial real estate activity in Hampton Roads. Established in 1963 as a court and commercial newspaper, the Virginia Observer, it changed its name after being purchased in 1997 by Dolan Media, a specialized business information company based in Minneapolis that publishes legal and business newspapers. Available at newsstands and through subscriptions, the Norfolk-based Dolan's Virginia Business Observer has a circulation of 1,500. It is available online at [www.businessobserver.com](http://www.businessobserver.com).

**Inside Business is a weekly business news publication with separate editions covering Hampton Roads and Richmond. Published by Landmark Communications, the 15,000-circulation newspaper focuses specifically on issues related to a variety of businesses in each of these regions. Coverage in Inside Business typically relates to**

**the business climate, market changes and new opportunities.** It often devotes special attention to ongoing business issues within the region and interviews of business and professional leaders. Approximately two-thirds of the publication's distribution is mailed as a free subscription, and the remaining copies are rack-distributed in high business-related traffic areas. The paper is also available online at [www.insidebiz.com](http://www.insidebiz.com).

Nine Volt, Hampton Roads' free music magazine, publishes biweekly with 20,000 copies rack-distributed at Hampton Roads record stores, concert venues, restaurants, clubs, colleges and universities. Typical Nine Volt content includes a calendar of local music events, as well as feature articles on bands and reviews of recently released CDs. The publication regularly highlights local talent. A small portion of its features is available at [www.ninevoltmag.com](http://www.ninevoltmag.com).

Tidewater Parent, a free monthly tabloid also published by Landmark, aims to provide Hampton Roads parents with stories and columns from local writers and experts, along with family events calendars and entertainment reviews to assist parents in raising children. Special attention is paid to local resources that might be of interest to families in the Hampton Roads region. Reaching nearly 40,000 readers, this publication is rack-distributed each month throughout both the Southside and Peninsula. The tabloid is available online at [www.tidewaterparent.com](http://www.tidewaterparent.com).

Hampton Roads is the most military-intensive large metropolitan area in the United States and hence it is not surprising that military newspaper coverage is extensive in both The Virginian-Pilot and the Daily Press. **The Virginian-Pilot, however, has taken a much more active role in publishing distinctive, specialized newspapers that focus upon the military.** The Flagship is the official newspaper of Naval Base Norfolk (though it circulates elsewhere) and is published by The Virginian-Pilot under a contract with the Navy. The paper is published every Thursday and distributed free of charge at locations on and off the base. In light of the significant number of military personnel stationed in Hampton Roads, The Flagship serves a critical need in providing specialized news and information for military members and their families.

Military Newspapers of Virginia, also a product of The Virginian-Pilot, publishes five newspapers (four weeklies and one monthly) under a government contract for various military installations in Hampton Roads. These include The Flyer (Langley Air Force Base), Jet Observer (Naval Air Station Oceana), The Wheel (Fort Eustis/Fort Story), Traveller (Fort Lee) and The Booster (Yorktown Naval Weapons Station). Total distribution for these publications is 47,500. Military Newspapers also publishes Soundings, a weekly independent newspaper covering Navy news in Hampton Roads for more than 20 years. Soundings is published every Wednesday and distributed in major grocery stores and at more than 300 additional locations throughout Hampton Roads. A Coast Guard edition of the publication is also distributed at 48 locations in the region.

## Final Thoughts

The world of newspapers in Hampton Roads consists of much more than the two major dailies, The Virginian-Pilot and the Daily Press. The region is blessed with an abundance of weekly, monthly and insert print news sources. Yet, to many, the major print journalism question in Hampton Roads is, "Would we be better off if we had one major newspaper in the region rather than two?"

We cannot answer this question. One dominant regional newspaper would yield increased clout and attract national advertising that the dailies now sometimes miss. Further, a single dominant regional newspaper probably would have the resources necessary to cover major national and international issues in greater detail, for example, by sending reporters to specific news locations outside of Hampton Roads. Sandra Rowe, a former editor of The Pilot who now serves as editor of Portland's Oregonian, the single dominant daily newspaper of that metropolitan area, says the Oregonian has become a newspaper of the Northwest, not just the paper of the city of Portland.

On the other hand, Hampton Roads' two daily newspapers situation almost certainly results in superior coverage of intensely local news on the Peninsula and Southside. Further, Paul Pohlman of the Poynter Institute argues that the total resources deployed to news coverage of all types by two dailies in one region exceeds that which would be seen with a single dominant regional newspaper. Presumably, this occurs because the circulation of the two dailies, and perhaps local advertising revenues, exceed that which would accrue to a single dominant regional daily. Finally, the implicit competition between

Hampton Roads' two dailies may result in superior and more aggressive coverage of certain issues. Neither newspaper wants to be scooped.

**Knowledgeable individuals report that in recent years there have been occasional discussions between the two newspaper organizations concerning purchase or merger. For various reasons, these overtures have come to nothing. It is not clear that the welfare of the region is tied in any meaningful way to the outcome of such discussions, if indeed they have occurred.**

Two newspapers or one dominant newspaper? *"Machts nicht,"* the Germans often say to describe situations such as this. It really does not seem to matter much.