

## Read all about it! Or not.

Contributed by Barry Koltnow, MCT  
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They tell me that print is dead. They tell me that nobody reads anymore, and that newspapers and magazines are going the way of the dinosaur. They tell me that you're probably not even reading this. However, if you are reading this, they tell me that you're probably reading it online. They tell me that print is dead.

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However, if you are reading this, they tell me that you're probably reading it online.

Reading online has its advantages, but I enjoy the experience of turning a page. And I get a kick from sticking a coin in a box and pulling out a newspaper. Browsing at a magazine stand is my idea of a good time.

In fact, I was browsing at a magazine stand this morning.

I love browsing because you can pretty much figure out where we are as a culture from what you see on a magazine stand.

Of course, I don't believe everything I read on the covers of magazines. If that were the case, I would have to assume that Lindsay Lohan is the most important person in the world, and that anyone named Jessica deserves to be famous. I realize that sexy photos and screaming headlines are selling tools, and I assume that the content inside those magazines are much more substantial than they appear to be from the covers.

But the most interesting magazine I saw this morning had to be the September issue of Allure.

The cover features a kittenish, half-naked, dark-haired Britney Spears crawling toward the camera. The headline next to her face reads: "Clear, Radiant Skin: Erase Dullness, Dark Spots, Dry Patches."

OK, that might not have been the headline that went with the Britney story. It must have been the one that ran below the photo &mdash; "Britney Spears Tells Us Nothing &mdash; and Everything!"

The headline is not deceptive. It does not exaggerate. It not only describes exactly what to expect inside the magazine, but it went so far as to make a chilling, but nonetheless accurate comment on the future of our mass media. And you thought Britney Spears was only good for a few laughs.

Actually, this particular magazine has been getting a lot of publicity because of this story, or non-story as it turns out.

In case you don't follow these things, allow me to explain.

Britney &mdash; pop star, tabloid darling and mother-of-the-year candidate &mdash; apparently agreed to pose for the cover of Allure and to sit for a lengthy interview with writer Judith Newman.

For four days, Newman chased the pop princess around Los Angeles. On the first day, Newman was in a cab on the way to an interview location when a last-minute call from Spears' publicist postponed the interview and re-scheduled it for the next day.

The next day, Spears ditched Newman again. And so it went for the frustrated writer. She never did get the cover interview, and had to fake her way through a long piece on how she didn't get the interview. I've been there. I once had to fake a story on supermodel Cindy Crawford after her obnoxious publicist ended our interview session only three minutes after we started.

These fake stories can be fun to write, particularly if you are allowed to vent your hostility toward the interview subject, and the Allure writer did an exceptional job.

Her prose wasn't nearly as angry as mine would have been after four days of trying to nail down the elusive and inconsiderate Britney.

"As a sat in the hotel room," she wrote, "the blogosphere was reporting that Britney was at Neiman Marcus in Beverly Hills with a personal shopper and that she spent \$32,849. I had a really good Cobb salad from room service for \$25."

After being blown off on another day, Newman noted: "I was beginning to enjoy the great variety of Cobb salads in the

L.A. area."

When dealing with rude celebrities, it sometimes boils down to finding a good Cobb salad to pass the time.

Although I found Newman's piece worth reading, I'm sure the magazine would have preferred to have a cover story on Britney Spears in which Spears actually answered a few questions.

But Allure made the best of a very bad situation, and Britney got what she wanted, which must have been to treat another human being with the same contempt she treats her children, her mother and her employees.

While it would be easy to dismiss the Allure-Spears situation as an isolated incident, I am concerned that it may be more of a warning. Perhaps this is where we are headed in celebrity coverage.

I don't think it's unreasonable to suggest that we might be on the cusp of a new era that is long on photo ops and short on stories.

Will anybody miss these celebrity interviews? I'm not sure. They tell me that people aren't reading anymore. But why am I telling you? You're not even reading this.

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