



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

LEARNING LAYER

More incumbents win after Post closes

The closure of a local newspaper leads to a drop in local political engagement, economists at Princeton University said after studying the 2007 closure of the Cincinnati Post. Even though the bigger Cincinnati Enquirer remained, researchers found that fewer people voted in local elections after the Post died. In addition, fewer candidates ran in opposition to the incumbents. As a result, the incumbents had a better chance of being returned to office.

In a [blog post for Newsosaur](#), Alan Mutter reported the following: *“If voter turnout, a broad choice of candidates and accountability for incumbents are important to democracy, we side with those who lament’ the decline of newspapers, said economists Sam Schulhofer-Wohl and Miguel Garrido, who conducted the study.”*

Research questions for short papers:

- * What other newspapers have closed in the past 10 years? Were similar studies done with similar results? Why does even a modest drop in local voting matter? Do you think the results are temporary or permanent? Why or why not?
- * What are newspapers doing, other than cutting staff, to keep their businesses viable? Hint: Start with [this post](#) by Newsonomics writer Ken Doctor. Do you think those measures will work? Over the short or long term?