

Herald Tribune gets new name for digital age

PARIS, FRANCE: A chapter in newspaper history drew to a close on Tuesday with the renaming of the 125-year-old International Herald Tribune, amid a time of unprecedented upheaval for print media.

Editions of the paper that rolled off the presses early on Tuesday featured the publication's new name - the International New York Times - although it retained its distinctive Gothic font masthead.

Richard Stevenson, the paper's editor in Europe, told AFP there would be nostalgia for the old title but that its "DNA" remained unchanged.

"A couple of words in the name of the paper are changing (but) this paper's name has changed multiple times throughout its history," he said in an interview.

"The name change on the print newspaper does nothing to change the DNA of the operation here. It is simply bringing more of the resources of The New York Times to the mix," he said.

The Paris-based IHT was co-owned by The New York Times and Washington Post from 1967 until 2003 when the Times became its sole owner and restyled it as "the global edition of the New York Times".

With a circulation of about 226,000 in 2011, it was printed at 38 sites and distributed in more than 160 countries.

Reinventing itself

Stevenson said the rebranding had been necessary as part of the company's drive to reinvent itself for the digital age.

"(It's) something that says to our readers all over the world that we are one news organisation capable of covering the world on any platform - print, digital - in any time zone," he said.

The rebranding comes as many newspapers worldwide struggle with the economic consequences of failure to find a new business model to counter changes in the way people consume news.

Stevenson said The New York Times' decision three years ago to charge for some online content had been crucial to its transition.

For a long time the "assumption" was that news should be free, he said, but that much of the industry had started to wake up to the danger of giving away content.

With 700,000 digital subscribers already in hand, and growing demand for news that could be delivered via people's mobile phones, he said the future of the printed newspaper could not be guaranteed.

"We love print, we would love to keep print going as long as possible. I don't think it's a matter of predicting something, it's not up to us. The marketplace will decide and we will respond."

But he added: "As long as there are enough readers who want to buy a print newspaper - and frankly advertisers who want to advertise in it - we will publish print newspapers."

Renaming not welcomed by all

Founded by publisher Gordon Bennett, the IHT began life as the European edition of his New York Herald newspaper catering for American expats in Paris.

It was known as the New York Herald Tribune in 1960 when actress Jean Seberg appeared in Jean-Luc Godard's film "Breathless" selling copies on the Champs-Elysees.

Some Twitter users expressed regret about the name change. "A sad day for expats," said one, while another tweeted: "All IHT had to do was redesign. The name change to 'New York' signals a new provincial thinking and outlook."

But Stevenson said he believed readers of the IHT would adapt quickly.

"Newspapers are always evolving, there are always changes in them and I truly believe that the things that people are nostalgic about the International Herald Tribune will be just as present in the paper that starts appearing under the name International New York Times," he said.

"What you love about the International Herald Tribune will be in the International New York Times," he added.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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