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Jewish Journalism
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cyber onslaught, folding in 2003 after losing half a million dollars. After the city’s Jewish Times followed suit not long after, writers for both papers prevailed upon longtime journalist Donald Harrison, editor of the Heritage, to try his hand at an exclusively online edition.

Thus was born The San Diego Jewish World, which attracts some 2,500 visitors a day and is managing, with minimal advertising—predominantly from synagogues and Jewish communal organizations—to stay alive.

How does Harrison hold on with an estimated $1,000 a month in ad revenue, much of which he plows back into computer hardware?

“Love,” quipped Harrison, who donates his time to the enterprise. He also credits the 50 or so writers who volunteer their talents, both in San Diego and in remote “bureaus” in Israel, England and Australia, among other locales.

David Portnoe knows from fiscal woes, but the editor of The Jewish Community Voice of Southern New Jersey paints a slightly less gloomy picture of the local scene.

“Our ad revenue in the last three years was down by a third, but we haven’t been as hard hit as other papers,” said Portnoe, “Most of what I’ve read indicates that we’re doing better than the general press.” Partly, that’s a function of demographics, the local journalist said.

“Our readers are a little older, so less people are flocking to online sources” for their Jewish news, Portnoe said. “We’re also attractive to advertisers, in terms of readers’ ability to spend money.”

Still, he feels the same pressures his colleagues nationwide face, and his approach has been similar to theirs: Minimize expenses and maximize revenue streams. For The Voice, this has meant cutting staff—from two full-time production workers to one full-time and one part-time; from a fulltime bookkeeper to a part-time, and so on—while exploring new special sections and ad promotions.

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