

MINNPOST

2012: A Year of Stability and Growth

MinnPost celebrated its fifth birthday this year with a redesigned site, another small surplus, and continued growth in readers and donors.

The site had about 12.5 million page views in 2012, up 13%. Pages viewed by Minnesotans rose 12.6%, to 8.5 million. That's 130% higher than in our first full year of publishing, 2008.

Visits to the site by Minnesotans rose 2.3% to about 3.8 million. The average Minnesota visitor looked at 2.25 pages per visit, up 10%, thanks in part to easier navigation made possible by site redesign in February.

Site traffic on the three days surrounding Election Day 2012 was triple what it was for the same days in 2008.

Other areas of rapid growth include mobile traffic and social media engagement. More than 20,000 follow us on Twitter (up 40%) and 7,000 like us on Facebook (up 24%). We have more than 26,000 followers on Tumblr.

In year 5, we significantly expanded our journalistic ambitions. Eric Black's series on the Constitution, "Imperfect Union: The Constitutional Roots of the Mess We're In," and the Sharon Schmickle/Steve Date series on "Casinos on Indian Reservations: The New Buffalo?" were groundbreaking examples of MinnPost's approach. Our newsroom received six Page One Awards for excellence in journalism from the Society of Professional Journalists. *A report on journalism highlights of the year starts on page 2.*

Responding to that coverage, our base of individual donors continues to expand. More than 560 people donated for the first time in 2012, and we had a total of 2,063 donors for the year, up more than 8% over 2011. Perhaps most important for our long-term viability, two-thirds of those donors were sustaining members – which means they give automatically every month or year, or they have donated for three or more years in a row. *Sustainers have an S after their names on the donor list. For more about sustaining membership go to www.minnpost.com/support.*

For the third straight year, MinnPost posted a modest surplus, this time \$19,228 on spending of \$1,492,008. Overall revenue was \$1,511,236, with gains in donations and events offsetting a decline in advertising revenue. Foundation grants remained stable at about 20% of revenues. *Our financial report is on page 4.*

A few other highlights of 2012:

- Almost 900 people attended MinnRoast 2012 at the Pantages Theatre. Gov. Mark Dayton, Sen. Al Franken, gubernatorial candidates Tom Emmer and Tom Horner, St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, MPR leaders Jon McTaggart and Dave Kansas appeared on stage along with MinnPost journalists and other media personalities.
- A Fifth Anniversary Celebration on November 12 at Solera attracted 35 sponsors and 300 attendees. *MinnPost Milestones 2007-2012 compiled for the anniversary are at the end of the report.*
- The four-year growth capital campaign to Take MinnPost to the Next Level passed \$630,000 in total pledges.
- We established a new Earth Journal Circle to support expanded coverage of the environment, energy and related issues with three-year funding by a small group of committed donors. *Founders are listed on page 4.* We hope to establish one or two more groupfunded beats starting in 2013.

Our staff and board recently conducted a strategic review, and we decided that our strategy going forward is to focus primarily on deepening relationships with the more than 60,000 people who read MinnPost at least twice a month, and secondarily on continuing to add additional readers who care about Minnesota.

To strengthen relationships, we will expand opportunities for readers to contribute content to the site and engage with interactive data, and we aim to make it easier for visitors to find additional content.

We will also experiment with ways to attract new readers. An expanded Google grant will give us up to \$40,000 a month in free advertising on Google Search, up from \$10,000 a month last year, which we'll use to attract visitors searching for specific content.

Heartfelt thanks to our hard-working editors, technology and business staff, journalists, advertisers, sponsors, Board of Directors, Advisory Council, MinnRoast and Fifth Anniversary sponsors, comment moderators and other volunteers. And extra thanks to all our donors, from Copy Boys and Girls to Media Moguls. Your names are listed starting on page 10.

If you haven't yet become a donor, please consider this a personal invitation to join the MinnPost family. Your support makes courageous, independent journalism for people who care about Minnesota an ongoing reality.

Journalism Highlights of 2012

State and national elections dominated the news of 2012, and MinnPost journalists provided readers with lively analysis and insights on those events.

In Minnesota, we paid close attention to a watershed political year that included the fight for control of the Legislature and vigorous campaigns by both proponents and opponents of two controversial constitutional amendments – one banning gay marriage and the other dealing with voting procedures.

On the legislative front, we teamed reporters Cyndy Brucato, Doug Grow and James Nord on a special interactive “Battle for Control” project that identified and spotlighted 28 key “swing races.” Our reporting indicated that the DFL was poised to regain control of both chambers, which they lost in 2010. Our results showed the DFL winning 9 of the 12 Senate races and 14 of the 16 House swing races to take back control.

We also provided comprehensive coverage of the two amendments, with Beth Hawkins detailing behind-the-scenes strategy that led to a national first as Minnesota became the only state to reject a gay marriage ban. Meanwhile, James followed the contentious debate over the voting amendment, which also went down to defeat.

Washington correspondent Devin Henry concentrated on Minnesota’s congressional races, closely following developments in the state’s most competitive race – the 8th District – and chronicling the defeat of incumbent Chip Cravaack. Another GOP incumbent, Michele Bachmann, was nearly beaten, and Devin and Eric Black tracked and analyzed the sometimes strange developments in that race.

The past year included an important presidential election, of course, and Eric was assigned to analyze that contest. As Election Day drew near, Eric blogged almost every day on the race, offering readers context and analysis on what the candidates were saying and debating on the campaign trail. Eric’s presidential debate analyses were among our most popular articles.

It was a year of government gridlock in Washington, as the White House and Congress fought over the budget, taxes and almost everything in between. Devin covered the debate over the debt ceiling and fiscal cliff, focusing on Minnesota’s congressional delegation.

And Eric took on the issue of gridlock, producing a provocative series of articles about obstacles the U.S. Constitution presents in dealing with the problem. The series, which also was published on Huffington Post, resulted in a flood of thoughtful reader comments about the big flaws in our constitutional system.

One of our most ambitious efforts of 2012 was a five-day series of reports – articles, videos, photographs and graphics – by Sharon Schmickle and Steve Date on gambling on Minnesota’s Indian reservations. It’s been almost 25 years since casino-style gambling came to Minnesota’s reservations, and Sharon and Steve set out to determine how gambling profits changed the lives of tribal members. For months, they toured the state, visited reservations, talked to tribal leaders and others, and saw for themselves the consequences – intended and unintended – of casinos on reservations. They produced a substantive and honest account that drew praise and thanks from readers.

Several grants enabled MinnPost to focus on specific issues in 2012.

- Sharon Schmickle and Gregg Aamot profiled Minnesotans who’ve demonstrated leadership skills in the ongoing series “Driving Change: A Lens on Leadership,” funded by the Bush Foundation.
- Eric Nathanson, John Fitzgerald and Peter Schilling produced historical articles for our Minnesota History project in collaboration with the Minnesota Historical Society. The MHS partnership also includes an ongoing weekly publication of MNopedia.org entries, curated by web producer Tom Nehil.
- John Fitzgerald’s weekly “News from Greater Minnesota” column is part of our commitment to coverage of rural Minnesota funded by the Blandin Foundation.

This past year, MinnPost’s interactive team completed approximately 30 stand-alone projects, in addition to a number of graphics and sortable charts to supplement articles. We documented our process in a handful of how-to articles, releasing our code and projects into the open source community.

Interactive highlights of 2012 included the Live Election Results Dashboard (one of our most

successful projects to date), an animated map of Nice legislative election explorer, and a game that allowed **Journalism Highlights, continued**

readers to try their hand at passing the Minnesota GRAD math test. Our highest traffic project – the live election coverage – received 71,000 page views with an average time on page of 6:52. Overall, in 2012, time on page for interactive projects was 20 percent higher than the site average.

Other highlights in 2012 include:

- We added a talented and engaging writer – Marlys Harris – to MinnPost’s crew of regular beat bloggers. Marlys took over our Cityscape blog and, with a critical eye for good urban design and provocative views on urban life, she’s been a huge hit with our readers.
- David Brauer expanded Braublog beyond media coverage, analyzing state politics and political polling. David also continued to contribute lively media coverage throughout the year on issues ranging from Viking Chris Kluwe’s busy media year to newspaper circulation patterns.
- Beth Hawkins’ Learning Curve followed education developments, including topics as varied as bullying in high schools and the characteristics of odds-beating schools.
- Susan Perry’s Second Opinion column covered health-related angles on news events, ranging from the hazards of having a gun in the home to myths about vaccines.
- Cynthia Boyd’s Community Sketchbook documented the struggles of the poor and those working to help them in a difficult economy.
- Former Star Tribune business reporter Liz Fedor joined MinnPost to write a biweekly column about business and government.
- Economist Louis Johnston sorted out and analyzed one of the year’s most complicated stories – our weak economy – in his column Macro, Micro, Minnesota.

- Karen Boros and Joe Kimball beefed up coverage of Minneapolis and St. Paul City Halls with frequent reports in their Two Cities blog.
- MinnPost continued to partner with the University of Minnesota’s School of Journalism and Mass Communication, working with Chris Ison’s advanced reporting class by publishing the students’ stories and offering internships for some promising future journalists.
- Ron Meador’s Earth Journal covering the environment, energy and related issues expanded from once weekly to twice as a result of an innovative groupfunding initiative. *Earth Journal Circle Founders are recognized on page 4 of this report.*
- MinnPost’s primary arts coverage moved in a new direction in 2012, adding three regular features: Pamela Espeland’s twice-weekly Artscape column, Amy Goetzman’s Books coverage, and Andy Sturdevant’s weekly column called The Stroll.
- Community Voices, MinnPost’s commentary and opinion section, expanded to six days a week in 2012 and showed considerable growth in page views. The section featured pieces from a wide variety of authors and perspectives on current topics of broad interest in Minnesota.

MinnPost’s newsroom received six Page One Awards in 2012 for excellence in journalism from the Society of Professional Journalists. Awards went to Sharon Schmickle, Beth Hawkins, Ron Meador, Doug Grow, Cynthia Boyd and Jeff Severns Guntzel, with a team award to Joel Kramer, Corey Anderson, Kaeti Hinck and the newsroom.

Roger Buoen, Managing Editor

Susan Albright, Managing Editor

Financial Report

MinnPost recorded revenues of \$1,511,236 in 2012, down less than 1% from 2011. This included \$472,425 in membership donations, \$362,191 in sponsorship and advertising, \$309,500 in foundation grants, \$180,411 in gross receipts from MinnRoast and other events, \$155,594 in growth capital campaign donations, and \$31,115 in other revenue.

Expenses for 2012 were \$1,492,008, down less than 1% from 2011. The surplus for 2012 was \$19,228, compared to a 2011 surplus of \$21,669. This is MinnPost's third consecutive modest annual surplus. Cash on hand at year end was \$187,164, compared to \$160,713 in 2011.

Foundation support received in 2012

- Elmer L. & Eleanor J. Andersen Foundation – \$1,000 in support of general operations.
- Blandin Foundation – \$50,000 to continue expanded coverage of rural Minnesota.
- Central Corridor Funders Collaborative –\$20,000 to support Cityscape.
- Fredrikson & Byron Foundation – \$1,000 in support of general operations.
- The McKnight Foundation – grants of \$65,000 and \$7,500 for general operating support, plus \$15,000 for Cityscape.
- Northwest Area Foundation – \$100,000 to fund a partnership with the University of Minnesota School of Journalism and Mass Communication for a series about predatory lending practices.
- Pohlad Family Foundation – \$25,000 for technology improvements.
- The Saint Paul Foundation – \$25,000 to support Two Cities Blog.

Earth Journal Circle Founders

Founders have pledged to support environmental coverage for three years at \$1,000-\$5,000 per year.

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- Minnesota Monthly, promotional partnership
- Minnesota Newspaper Association, partnership allowing MNA members to republish state government and Washington bureau stories from MinnPost at no charge
- University of Minnesota College of Continuing Education, MinnPost Asks co-presenter
- UCare, major sponsor, supporting Second Opinion

MinnPost is a nonpartisan, nonprofit online journalism enterprise launched in late 2007.

We publish Monday through Friday, with a limited edition on Saturday, at www.minnpost.com. Content is available at no charge.

MinnPost's message to the community is

simple. High-quality journalism is not just a consumer good, and we can no longer depend only on the private sector to provide it. High-quality journalism is a community asset, the underpinning of democracy, community and quality of life.

Join the thousands of donors whose support makes MinnPost an ongoing reality.

MinnPost is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit and donations are fully tax-deductible. Donations are welcome online at <http://www.minnpost.com/support> or by mail at MinnPost, 900 6th Ave SE, #220, Mpls 55414.

Become a sustainer! MinnPost's sustaining members provide a dependable, ongoing source of funding while reducing administrative costs. Your contribution is automatically charged to your credit card or deducted from your checking account each month (or once a year). Your membership continues uninterrupted until you request that we discontinue or change it. For more information, contact Ashleigh Swenson at aswenson@minnpost.com.

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For purposes of this list, we have combined donations made January 1, 2012 through January 8, 2013 for membership, the growth capital campaign to Take MinnPost to the Next Level, MinnRoast and Fifth Anniversary sponsorships and tax-deductible ticket purchases.

Donations in memory, honor or appreciation of someone are listed at the end of the report.

If we have inadvertently omitted your name, or listed you in the wrong category, please email members@minnpost.com to let us know.

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In memory of Kathleen H. Corley
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In honor of Aaron Maloff
Lenore Brugger

In honor of Gar Hargens
Scott Wilson

In appreciation of help from Janice Gepner
Tim and Susanna Lodge

MINNPOST MILESTONES 2007-2012

2007

- MinnPost assembles a team of editors from Star Tribune, Pioneer Press and City Pages, and writers from print and broadcast media
- Office opens mid-September
- November 8 – Site launches on a Clockwork content management system
- MinnPost launch gets national attention with coverage by The New York Times, others
- David Brauer starts BrauBlog on media, also the Daily Glean
- UCare signs on as first major sponsor of MinnPost
- IRS approves 501(c)(3) status
- 700 donors by the end of the year

2008

- John Camp and Eric Bowen file stories and video from Iraq
- Ron Way and Mark Neuzil's ethanol series wins second prize for online journalism nationally from the Society of Environmental Journalists

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HOME REGION WORLDNATION POLITICS HEALTH/SCIENCE BUSINESS ARTS POSTS SPORTS MULTIMEDIA COMMUNITY VOICES

Thursday, November 8, 2007

Right now, the D in DFL stands for debt
By Doug Grow
Thursday, Nov. 8, 2007

The party needs a \$5,000 contribution just to meet this week's payroll. Competition among political campaigns, internal party disillusionment and extra staffing are complicating budgeting. DFL Chairman Brian Melendrez is trying to calm concerns, but says he's heard rumors that some party activists believe he should step down. State Republicans, meanwhile, have off-year fundraising troubles, too.

Grave by grave, group restores Minnesotans' forgotten lives
Decorated graves in the cemetery at the old Hastings state hospital.
Photo by Steve Dale
By Cynthia Boyd
Monday, Nov. 5, 2007

For 13 years, with little fanfare, a coalition of advocacy groups has been working to bring dignity to the lives and deaths of the anonymous former residents of Minnesota's state hospitals and institutions. At cemeteries from Hastings to Wilmar, the group has replaced 4,000 unmarked graves with personalized stones noting their names, births and death dates.

EDITOR'S PICK: MINNESOTA
The Minnesota Daily's Danielle Nordine writes about a professor studying mind control, and the thinking cap he has developed. Want to recommend a Minnesota story published in the last 24 hours? Please send the link before 12:00 a.m. to info[at]minnpost[dot]com.

MINNPOST.WORLD
Who lost Pakistan? Maybe the West
By Susan Albright
Thursday, Nov. 8, 2007
The White House is pressuring

SEARCH GO

CURRENT POSTS

- Jay Weiner Stadium commission spins Vikings plan around the state
POLITICS | 11/8/07 11:04 AM
- Joe Kimball St. Paul's lone survivor: Republican Tom Conlon
POLITICS | 11/8/07 10:51 AM
- Steve Berg Some transportation advice -- from Utah?
BUSINESS | 11/8/07 9:15 AM
- Kay Harvey If only Jane Austen had a singles column.
ARTS | 11/8/07 9:14 AM
- Sharon Schmickle The sky's the limit for Planetarium -- but its future is up in the air
SCIENCE | 11/8/07 9:13 AM
- Amy Goetzman Librarians pinpoint bandit in mystery of missing patterns
ARTS | 11/8/07 9:12 AM
- Don Lee Time for fine-tuning? Programmers worry about future of classical music radio
ARTS | 11/8/07 9:11 AM

COMMUNITY VOICES

- Myles Spicer: A message to Sen. Amy Klobuchar from a disabled Democrat
- Best of the Blogs: Kevin Drum, who blogs at Washington Monthly, announces the winner of their first annual reader contest to name the nuttiest right-wing blogger in the nation. The winner of the Golden Wingnut, with more than twice the votes of his nearest competitor, is Minneapolis attorney John Hinderaker of Powerline.

From a screen shot of MinnPost's first home page layout. Look at those teasers!

A SPECIAL REPORT



REUTERS/Leffler Pitaraki
A familiar scene of U.S. helicopters and soldiers at Baghdad International Airport, known in military lingo as BIAP (pronounced buy-op).

After dust storms, bureaucratic waiting and 'riding the Rhino,' Camp and Bowen finally reach Baghdad

By John Camp | Thursday, Jan. 10, 2008

BAGHDAD, IRAQ — What's it like to get into Baghdad? Fight sand storms into Kuwait, put up with some bureaucratic waiting, hop on a military C-130 to Baghdad International Airport, ride the Rhino into the International Zone, and you're in a place filled with speed bumps and blast walls.



Related: [In search of journalists on the front lines.](#) by Eric Bowen

From a screen shot of MinnPost's home page featuring a post by John Camp and Eric Bowen.

- Jay Weiner covers the 2008 Winter Olympics in Beijing for MinnPost
- Eric Black joins MinnPost, writing on politics and government in Eric Black Ink
- Corey Anderson wins a Regional Emmy for website design
- MinnPost wins two Page One awards
- 400 attend MinnRoast 2008 at Graves 601
- The Minneapolis Foundation and Greater Twin Cities United Way become major sponsors
- MinnPost hires its first Washington, D.C. correspondent
- MinnPost's Twitter account is launched
- 1,200 readers register as commenters
- More than 1,200 donors by the end of the year

2009

- Number of registered commenters grows to 4,800
- 600 attend MinnRoast 2009 at the Minneapolis Hilton
- Jay Weiner wins the Frank Premack Public Affairs Journalism Award for coverage of the Coleman-Franken recount contest
- MinnPost surpasses 5 million annual visits
- More than 1,500 donors by the end of the year
- Eric Black's story on the Seymour Hersh "executive assassination ring" claim goes viral
- MinnPost breaks the tragic tale about wrestling legend Verne Gagne

2010

- 700 attend MinnRoast 2010 at the Pantages Theatre
- Cityscape urban affairs blog launches with Steve Berg
- Community Sketchbook blog starts with Cynthia Boyd
- Daily Glean expands to twice a day with Brian Lambert
- Marks Group Wealth Management becomes a major sponsor
- David Carr profiles MinnPost in his New York Times media column
- 8,800 followers on Twitter
- More than 3,500 “like” MinnPost’s main Facebook page
- Fiscal year ends with \$17,594 surplus on revenues of \$1.261 million
- More than 2,300 donors by the end of the year

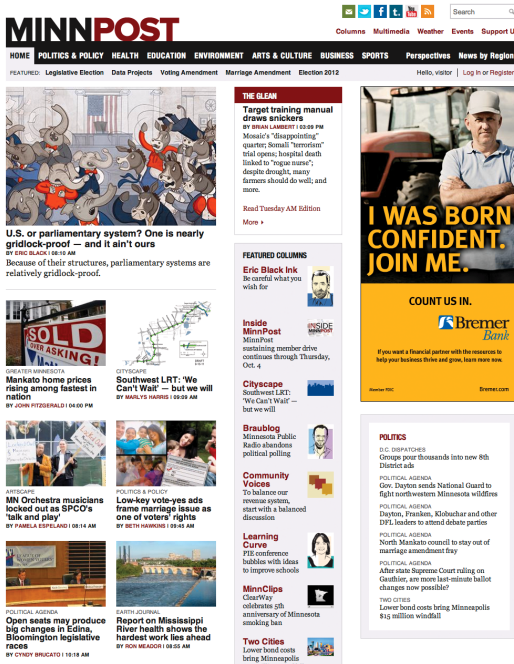
MINNPOST MILESTONES 2007-2012



WCCO-TV reporter Jason DeRusha and Michelle Hutchison in a skit from MinnRoast 2010 at the historic Pantages Theatre.

2011

- MinnPost Board approves \$1 million growth capital campaign to *Take MinnPost to the Next Level*
- Office space doubles at MinnPost World Headquarters
- 800 attend MinnRoast 2011 at the Pantages Theatre
- 40 newspapers sign up to republish MinnPost stories through the Minnesota Newspaper Association
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota becomes a major sponsor
- MinnPost scores high on ideological balance, transparency, and volume of original content in a Pew study of nonprofit digital news sites
- Don Shelby, Devin Henry, Steve Dornfeld, Louis Johnston, Liz Fedor and Ron Meador begin writing
- “You Fix the MN Deficit” interactive graphic draws 10,000 views
- Ordway Center for the Performing Arts becomes a major advertiser
- Ad revenues approach \$400,000 per year
- Sustaining membership program is introduced
- MinnPost surpasses six million annual visits
- Fiscal year ends with \$21,669 surplus on \$1.524 million in revenues
- More than 3,300 donors, including 651 sustaining members, by the end of the year



From a screen shot of MinnPost’s home page on Oct. 2, 2012.

2012

- Karen Boros and Joe Kimball launch Two Cities blog
- Site redesign launches on a Drupal platform
- MinnPost publishes Ojibwe translation of story on Bemidji adding Ojibwe to signs
- Almost 900 attend MinnRoast 2012 at the Pantages Theatre
- MinnPost and MN Historical Society start partnership on MNopedia and coverage of Minnesota history
- Marlys Harris takes over Cityscape blog
- Comcast becomes a major sponsor
- “Battle for Control of the MN Legislature” stories and interactive graphic published
- Doran Companies signs on as major advertiser
- Major series by Eric Black, “Imperfect Union: The Constitutional Roots of the Mess We’re In,” begins Oct. 1, is republished on Huffington Post
- Growth capital campaign passes \$630,000 in total pledges
- More than 18,100 followers on Twitter, 16,500 on Tumblr, and 6,600 “likers” on Facebook
- November 12 – our Fifth Anniversary Celebration
- Society of Professional Journalists’ Page One Awards for excellence in journalism go to Sharon Schmickle, Beth Hawkins, Ron Meador, Doug Grow, Cynthia Boyd & Jeff Severns Guntzel, with team award to Joel Kramer, Corey Anderson, Kaeti Hinck and the newsroom