

TO UNPUBLISH OR NOT TO UNPUBLISH?

REMOVING CONTENT IS AKIN TO ERASING HISTORY, WRITES O'HARA



CATHERINE O'HARA
Column

It's about trust. Our relationship with our readers is built on transparency, honesty and integrity. As such, we have launched a trust initiative to tell you who we are and how and why we do what we do. This article is part of that project.

Our newsroom is guided by a set of standards that helps steer our editorial decisions.

These standards, which you can read in full on our website, were carefully crafted with trust and transparency in mind. They are in keeping with industry standards and are put into practice each and every day.

Despite their comprehensive nature, our code of journalistic principles and conducts don't cover all matters

affecting our newsgathering and publishing efforts.

A committee of local journalists also offers support to each of our newsrooms. The committee include reporters and photographers - our boots on the front lines - managing editors and editors in chief. In addition to maintaining a regular meeting schedule, they connect on an as-needed basis, namely when newsrooms are faced with more complex, ethical dilemmas.

The ethics committee, of which I am a member, is often asked to adjudicate requests to remove content from our websites or archives.

Except for in rare and often legal circumstances, we don't "unpublish" material from our sites. And we do so for good reason: it is part of the historical record of the community. Removing the content would be akin to erasing history.

Technology has made it

easier for the media to archive its published work. Access to these works is, for the most part, readily available at the click of a button.

Removing content from articles or unpublishing stories altogether may very well be made simpler in the digital space, but doing so would have serious implications, effectively undermining our credibility and integrity.

It's important to note that news stories were pursued for public consumption and written in the public interest. We are not in the business of rewriting history, nor do we make news disappear.

We have a responsibility to our readers and the communities we serve. We take this responsibility very seriously - as all trusted news organizations should.

Catherine O'Hara is the Regional Managing Editor of Metroland's Halton, Hamilton and Niagara divisions.

We welcome your questions and value your comments. Email our trust committee at trust@metro-land.com.

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