

Guardian launches online Australian edition

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA: Britain's Guardian newspaper yesterday launched a new online edition in Australia where print media is struggling, pledging an independent perspective and a multimedia approach.

The Guardian, the world's third most read newspaper website, unveiled the new site with an exclusive interview with Prime Minister Julia Gillard and a pledge it will operate without a paywall.

This is in contrast to Fairfax and News Limited which dominate the Australian media landscape and are increasingly asking readers to pay for digital content.

"Australians are looking for an alternative that is truly independent, both global and local, which offers serious reporting and lively commentary," said Australian editor-in-chief Katharine Viner.

"Starting today, we'll be reporting and blogging, providing commentary, debate and community interaction as well as using cutting edge data visualisation and interactive technology to engage readers in new ways".

Top journos recruited

The Guardian says 1.1 million Australians regularly view the newspaper's global website, making it the fourth biggest market of digital readers after Britain, the United States and Canada.

According to data service comScore, the Guardian is the world's third most viewed newspaper website with 38.9 million readers as of last December, behind the Daily Mail with 50.0 million and The New York Times at 48.6 million.

Viner, also the Guardian's deputy editor who has relocated to Sydney, has recruited a host of respected names in Australian journalism, primarily from News Limited and Fairfax which have been making staff redundant.

Last year Fairfax, which boasts esteemed mastheads The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age, announced the sacking of 1,900 staff in a radical cost-saving move as it adapts to the digital age. In common with media companies worldwide, both News and Fairfax are facing sliding print advertising and circulation revenues and a need to adapt their business models.

Guardian Australia is backed by Internet entrepreneur and philanthropist Graeme Wood, who launched the travel website wotif.com and is also the investor behind the not-for-profit Australian online news website The Global Mail.

The scale of his investment has not been revealed.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge