

Papers grapple with coverage

The Associated Press

Headlines such as "Sex and Lies" and "The XXX Files" screamed from newsstands Saturday, along with warnings to readers to expect more than their usual breakfast-table fare.

The graphic sexual accounts from Kenneth Starr's massive report on President Clinton were reprinted in newspapers nationwide, as concerns about offending readers were outweighed by the implications of accusations that Clinton committed impeachable offenses.

"We think this was an historic enough event in our country that people would want to have as many facts before them as possible to reach their own conclusions," said Raul Reyes, assistant managing editor at the San Antonio Express-News.

Papers big and small published special sections, added pages to their often thin Saturday editions and printed extra copies. Whether they published all or part of Starr's report, most papers included warnings about the details of Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky.

In St. Louis, where home-run king Mark McGwire dominated this past week's pages, readers will have to wait until Monday to get their full version of the report in print.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch published the Starr report and rebuttal on its Web site Saturday. But it had no room in the paper Saturday or Sunday, when it was running a special commemorative for McGwire.

“To X-rate the section is equivalent to saying ‘Juicy Bits Here’ and we thought that was a little condescending.”

JOSEPH LEYVELD
New York Times executive editor

"The Starr report just pales in comparison in terms of what is going on about Mark McGwire," said Dick Weil, managing editor.

The Washington Post printed the report in a 25-page special section with a three-paragraph, large-type advisory about the lurid contents atop the section's front page. The Arizona Republic also ran a special section with the complete report and a disclaimer.

The New York Times printed the entire report as a special section and devoted five of its six front-page stories to Clinton, but did not print a warning.

"We felt that it was almost impossible that an individual reader could pick up the report without knowing what was in it after everything that had been on television last night and everything they would read on our front page," said Joseph Lelyveld, executive editor.

"To X-rate the section is equivalent to saying 'Juicy Bits Here' and we thought that was a little condescending," Lelyveld said.

Clinton's hometown newspaper, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette in Little Rock, published the entire report in a 22-page special section and devoted three-quarters of its front page to the story under the banner headline: "Starr Report: Sex and Lies."

Tabloids, of course, got in their gibes. The New York Daily News headline called the report "THE XXX FILES," and the New York Post proclaimed it Clinton's "DAY OF SHAME." The Philadelphia Daily News screamed "YUCK!"

Ben Bagdikian, a former assistant managing editor and ombudsman for The Washington Post, said many readers, especially parents, would likely view reprinting the sexual accounts as overkill given the report's exposure on TV and the Internet.

Some readers will say, "We knew all of this all along; did they have to print all of these salacious details for my kids to see?" said Bagdikian, professor emeritus and former dean of the University of California-Berkeley graduate school of journalism.

No crimes committed, Clinton says

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misconduct short of an offense against the state, is not redressable by impeachment," they wrote.

Ultimately, that will be up to Congress to decide — a point that Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, made tartly. "David Kendall is not the one who will decide what is impeachable and what isn't," said the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"It's the House of Representatives."

Former independent counsel Michael Zeldin said the White House appears to be trying to set its own guidelines for the public to decide how serious Clinton's actions were.

"It sounds like the White House is saying, 'What are the rules?' If this is not a criminal lie, how is that a high crime and misdemeanor?" Zeldin said.

The more successful the White House is in making that argument, the harder it might be to gain the public support needed for impeachment, said Georgetown University law professor Paul Rothstein.

"If something is not a crime, I think there will be an initial reluctance to view it as very serious," he said.

Posting of Starr report slows Internet speeds

NEW YORK (AP) — For those seeking the Starr report on the Web, waiting was part of the search.

But even those trying to conduct their routine Internet activity found jam-ups and long delays.

As millions rushed Friday to download Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's report about President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, government computers and Web sites were swamped.

Some called it the Internet's busiest day ever.

"This is the first big test of the Internet to distribute a lot of data," said Mark Simmer, a vice president at Web directory Lycos. "It wasn't designed as a broadcast medium. It was designed as a communication medium. It's like everyone lifting up the same phone to talk to their mother on Mother's Day."

Possibly most telling in the Web's acceptance as a toddling mass medium was Congress' decision to use it to distribute the report.

Still, there were fumbles. An hour after the report was released, the White House, Senate and House Web sites were hopelessly snarled, as were the four other government sites offering it.

All across the Internet, the slowdown was felt. According to the Internet Traffic Report, a Web site that monitors and indexes the Net's speed, North America and Europe were most affected, especially the areas around New York and Washington. Even call-

ing unrelated Web sites was sometimes sluggish.

The slowdown shows the Web is still primitive, said Abdelsalam Hedayda, vice president of Infolibria, a maker of computers that help move data around the Net.

As the wired population grows, the news sites will have trouble keeping up with the crowds. But they are trying.

The news Web site <http://msnbc.com> reported 26 servers working at full capacity — and more were being installed to meet demand — but at times in the afternoon it was still inaccessible or slow to respond.

Once the report was posted, CNN's Web site was getting more than 400,000 hits a minute, spokesman Kerrin Roberts said.

That was higher than the record 320,000 a minute Aug. 31 when the Dow Jones industrial average plunged. To ease the crush, <http://cnn.com> stripped out most pictures and graphics to present a fast-loading version.

Traffic on The Associated Press' Web site peaked at about 20 times the normal load just prior to the release shortly before 2 p.m., said Ruth Gersh, editor of the AP's multimedia services.

Still, with the cyber-rush, frustration was inevitable. Even television anchors had problems getting the report quickly. "If somebody wants to step over to the fax machine and fax us, we'd appreciate it," CBS' Dan Rather said.

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