Monitor to End Its Daily Print Edition

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The Christian Science Monitor is about to pull the plug on its print edition, just as the venerable newspaper is about to turn 100.

The money-losing paper announced yesterday that it will stop publishing next April, except for a weekly edition, and shift its emphasis to the Internet.

"Everyone who grew up with print, and everyone who worked in print like me, you feel a little sad," editor John Yemma said in an interview. But he said the Church of Christ, Scientist, which has heavily subsidized the $26 million annual cost of running the Boston-based paper, wants to stem the flow of red ink.

The Monitor's circulation is just 52,000 -- down from 160,000 two decades ago -- and its early deadlines are crippling. Since most copies are sent to subscribers by snail mail, all copy must be turned in by noon for the next day's edition.

"The cost of producing it, printing it and distributing it is pretty high," Yemma said.

But the Monitor, which concentrates on analysis, has a strong news team: 95 editorial staffers; eight foreign bureaus in an age when mid-size papers are shuttering theirs; and eight domestic bureaus, including a nine-reporter Washington office.

The church has made a series of bad bets over the years, including pouring cash into a television station and a radio operation, both of which ultimately flopped. And Yemma said he will have to cut at least 10 percent of the staff when the print edition shuts down.

The Web site is drawing 1.5 million unique visitors a month, but Yemma said he must boost that if the brand is to survive. "There's no magic bullet," he said. "You just have to do high-quality journalism and post constantly."

Eventually, said Yemma, "every news organization will be looking at whether it's in print
or not. We just got there first.