

Francis Times

# Murdoch says newspapers must embrace the internet

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By Aline van Duyn in New York

Rupert Murdoch, one of the world's biggest newspaper proprietors, yesterday told American editors that they had all been "remarkably complacent" about the effects of growing internet use on the newsprint industry.

"I didn't do as much as I should have after all the excitement of the late 1990s," Mr Murdoch admitted. "I suspect many

of you in this room did the same, quietly hoping that this thing called the digital revolution would just limp along.

"Well, it hasn't... it won't... and it's a fast-developing reality we should grasp."

Mr Murdoch is chairman of News Corporation, the global media company, and is mapping out an internet strategy for the group. His willingness to discuss ways for News Corp to embrace

the internet follows years of shunning the subject after News Corp lost considerable sums when the internet bubble burst.

However, the recent growth in advertising spending on the internet and declining newspaper circulation has pushed the issue to the forefront again.

"The threat of losing print advertising dollars to online media is very real," Mr Murdoch told the American Society of

Newspapers Editors in Washington. He said his newspapers, which include the New York Post in the US and The Times and The Sun in the UK, had to find a way of bringing news to young people, who access news in an entirely different way.

"They don't want to rely on a God-like figure from above to tell them what's important," Mr Murdoch said. Not making these changes would mean the newspa-

per industry would "be relegated to the status of also-rans".

He said that although most newspapers had websites, most of these were "a bland repurposing" of print content. Instead, they had to become destinations, much as internet portals and search groups, such as Yahoo and Google are today.

As well as finding ways to incorporate blogs into news coverage, Mr Murdoch said it was

important to link text with video.

"We've spent billions of dollars developing unique sports, news and general entertainment programming," Mr Murdoch said.

"Our job now is to bring this content profitably into the broadband world... and to garner our fair share - hopefully more than our fair share - of the advertising dollars that will come from successfully converging these media."