A (Brief) History of American Journalism

October 13, 2017

J201
Introduction to Mass Communication – Prof. Hernando Rojas

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Eras in American Journalism

1. Religious and Colonial Press, 1630s-1760s
2. Party Press, 1760s-1860s
3. Commercial Press, 1830s-1900s*
   *Dominant by 1870s
4. Professionalized Media, 1900s-present
The Boston News-Letter:

- First successful American newspaper

- Founded by the Boston postmaster, John Campbell, in 1704

- Published with a license from the Crown
Characteristics of the Colonial Press, 1700s-1760s:

- Small (in number, content, and circulation)
- Apolitical
- Content aggregators
- A side business for publishers
Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790
Partisanship in the Early Republic
Growth of U.S. Newspapers, 1760-1800

- Total U.S. Weekly Newspapers
- Total U.S. Daily Newspapers
“Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”

– Thomas Jefferson, 1787
Four types of changes in American society enable rise of mass circulation, commercial press by the 1830s:

• Technological
• Cultural
• Social
• Political/Economic
The Sun

- Founded in New York City by Benjamin Day in 1833

“The object of this paper is to lay before the public, at a price within the means of every one, ALL THE NEWS OF THE DAY, and at the same time afford an advantageous medium for advertising.”
Growth of U.S. Newspapers, 1760-1840

- Total U.S. Weekly Newspapers
- Total U.S. Daily Newspapers
Two Models of Commercial News by the 1890s:

- News as Entertainment
  - Sensational stories, exemplified by the *New York World*

- News as Information
  - Straightforward information, exemplified by the *New York Times*
Adolph Ochs, 1858-1935
### Table 5.1

Circulation figures for major New York City daily newspapers, circa 1896

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAPER</th>
<th>COPIES SOLD PER DAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>World</em> (Pulitzer; a.m. and p.m.)</td>
<td>600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Journal</em> (Hearst)</td>
<td>430,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Herald</em></td>
<td>140,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sun</em></td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Evening Post</em></td>
<td>19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tribune</em></td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Times</em> (Ochs)</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,344,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table From Christopher B. Daly, *Covering America*, p. 141
20th and 21st Century Trends:

• Professionalization (1900s-present)
  • Advent of Journalism Schools
  • Ideal of objectivity
20th and 21st Century Trends:

- Professionalization (1900s-present)
  - Advent of Journalism Schools
  - Ideal of objectivity

- Expansion of National Media (1920s-present)
  - Magazines
  - Radio
  - Television
  - Internet
First issue of Time, March 3, 1923
President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1882-1945

Edward R. Murrow, 1908-1965
Clip from the Camel News Caravan on NBC News, September 19, 1952
% of American Homes with TVs

1950-1978

- 9 percent in 1950
- 90 percent in 1962
Top Two Television News Programs of the 1960s


NBC’s Huntley-Brinkley Report (1956-1970), with Chet Huntley and David Brinkley
Ted Turner, 1938-
Online News in the 1990s
Gap between television and online news consumption narrows from 2016

% of U.S. adults who often get news on each platform

- Television: 57% in 2016, 50% in 2017 (19-point gap)
- Online: 38% in 2016, 43% in 2017 (7-point gap)
- Radio: 15% in both 2016 and 2017
- Print Newspapers: 20% in 2016, 18% in 2017

Survey conducted Aug. 8-21, 2017.
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