

Historical Outline of American Journalism

I. Colonial Newspapers

Colonial pre-newspaper communication

Word-of-mouth

Letters from England

Newspapers from England

Broadsides

First Colonial Newspaper

Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick

Published by Ben Harris on September 25, 1690

Lasted one issue because content disturbed Governor of Massachusetts

First Continuous Newspaper

Boston News-Letter

Published by John Campbell - first issue, April 24, 1704

Published by authority of the governor of the colony

John Peter Zenger

Published the New York Weekly Journal, starting in 1734

Charged with libel for printing news that disturbed the Governor of New York

Trial was held in 1735; defense was that Zenger printed the truth; Zenger was acquitted

Characteristics of Colonial Newspapers

Four pages, printed with worn type

Page size about half of modern newspapers

No headlines as we know them today (small type, usually all caps)

Usually no more than 200 copies printed an hour

Editorials and news mixed in same story

Advertising was small, comparable to today's classified section

Considered a luxury- only 5 percent of the families bought a newspaper in 1765

Sources of News

Mainly from Europe by ships which crossed the Atlantic in 4 to 8 weeks

News was published in America about two months after it was published in London

Some of the news came from captains of ships

Some news came from letters from England

Types of News

War and politics

Local and intercolonial news

Piracy, fires, counterfeiting, robberies, etc.

Maritime News

Weather, but no forecasts

Obituaries

Religion

Little or no sports

II. American Revolutionary War Newspapers

Stamp Act - 1765

Tax on all legal documents, official papers, books, and newspapers

Many newspapers published as handbills to evade the tax

Some newspapers suspended temporarily

Act repealed in 1766

Format

Larger pages

More illustrations

More columns

Coverage of War News

No reporters on the battlefields

Coverage through arrival of private letters

Stories from other newspapers

Nature of News

Struggle against taxes and duties

Revolutionary War (secondary news)

Accidents, fires, storms, epidemics, and crime<

Larger headlines

Editorials

Either in the lead or in paragraphs following a news story

Italicized in *New York Journal*

III. Party Press

First American newspapers

Pennsylvania Evening Post - Benjamin Towne, May 30, 1783

Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser - John Dunlap, September 21, 1785

New York Daily Advertiser - 1785

Reason for daily newspapers

to provide businessmen with up-to-the minute news of sailing vessels

to provide latest political news and thought

Gazette of the United States

Federalist newspaper first appearing on April 15, 1789

Published by John Fenno

Received written contributions from Alexander Hamilton and John Adams

Continued until 1818

National Gazette

Republican (Democrat) newspaper founded October 31, 1791

Published by Philip Freneau

Attacked Hamilton and Adams

Continued until 1793

Freedom of the Press

Nine of the 13 state constitutions guaranteed freedom of the press

Freedom guaranteed nationally through the First Amendment of U.S. Constitution

Editorials

First appeared in separate column in 1793 in the *American Minerva* published by Noah Webster

In 1800, the *Philadelphia Aurora* used its second page for editorials

Contents

European news (two months old)

News from other papers

News of George Washington's death

Washington died on Saturday night, December 14, 1799

First news appeared in the daily *Alexandria (Virginia) Times* the following Monday

News appeared in the weekly *Virginia Sentinel* on Wednesday

News appeared in the *Philadelphia Aurora* on Thursday

News reached New York newspapers exactly one week after his death

News reached Boston 11 days after his death

Subscription Rates

\$6 to \$10 a year for dailies

\$2 to \$3 a year for weeklies

Country papers traded for corn, wheat, linen, sugar, etc.

War of 1812 Coverage

Domestic news became more important than foreign news

News arrived by mail, through messages from officers to friends at home, by newspapers which received news first

James Bradford became first war correspondent by enlisting in Andrew Jackson's army in New Orleans

News of Jackson's victory in New Orleans reached New York a month after the event

Nature of Newspapers in the early 1800s

Four pages, but enlarged to 6 or 7 wide columns

Page 1 - three-fourths advertising; remainder, political essay

Page 2 - foreign and domestic news with letters to the editor

Page 3 - editorial column, local items, and advertising

Page 4 - advertising

Headlines more lively than in previous period

“ALMOST INCREDIBLE VICTORY!” - defeat of British in New Orleans

“GLORIOUS TRIUMPH” - Double column

The Star-Spangled Banner was first published in a Baltimore paper a few hours after Francis Scott Key wrote it

IV. Penny Press

Industrial Revolution

Mechanical advancements provided cheaper printing methods and larger quantity

Population growth caused increase in the number of newspapers

Three times as many newspapers in the United States in 1833 as in England or France (larger proportion by 1860)

First Penny Newspapers

New York *Morning Post* - January 1, 1833, Dr. H. D. Shepard

First appeared at 2 cents, then 1 cent

Lasted only two and one half weeks

New York *Sun* - September 3, 1833, Benjamin Day

Four pages, small, three wide columns

Emphasized local, human interest, and sensational events

Popular feature: police-court reports

In August, 1835, the *Sun* published the “moon hoax”

New York *Herald* - May 6, 1835, James Gordon Bennett

Contained financial news

Built up a murder trial to great interest

Started society columns

Established a European correspondent, set up a Washington bureau, placed his own correspondents in leading American cities, bought a small fleet of boats to meet ships before they entered New York harbors

Carried crime stories, scandals

Other Popular Newspapers

New York *Tribune* - April 10, 1841, Horace Greeley

Weekly Tribune, started by Greeley in 1841 and distributed throughout U.S., was more successful

Outstanding newspaper staff

Denounced publishing of police reports, advertisements, and news of the theater

Politics

Fought slavery

Wanted to improve conditions of the poor and unemployed

Attacked the slum conditions of New York

Opposed capital punishment

Favored prohibition of alcohol

Advocated westward expansion ("Go west, young man; go west!")

Greeley nominated Abraham Lincoln for the presidency in 1860

Greeley ran for the nomination of president in 1872, was humiliated, and died soon after

New York *Times* - September 18, 1851, Henry J. Raymond

Four pages, 6 wide columns, contained foreign and local news

Times always kept good manners

Wrote accounts of stories in full

Changes in News Concepts

Increase of local or hometown news

Great emphasis on sensational news

Faster Communication

Steamships

Railroads

Telegraph

Associated Press

Started in May, 1848

Six newspapers including the *Sun*, *Herald*, *Tribune*, then *Times*

V. Civil War Coverage

Thoroughly Covered by Eye-witness Correspondents

New York papers (*Times*, *Tribune*, *World*) gave a third of their columns to coverage of the war

Telegraph lines speeded the news from the correspondents to the newspapers

Much rumor in the news; headlines sometimes read:

IMPORTANT- IF TRUE

RUMORS AND SPECULATIONS

News Style

Stories printed in full without being summarized

Dispatches were likely to be printed chronologically, the oldest news at the head of the column

Following the story, list of soldiers killed, wounded, and missing, in small type

War maps were used

Eventually, the lead of the story contained most essential elements, with balance of story sent in inverted pyramid style, due to frequent cutting of telegraph cables

War Correspondents

Correspondents were known as “specials”

150 “specials” served northern papers (*Herald* used the most “specials”)

Censorship

No organized censorship of the news

Confederate generals constantly tried to get northern papers to obtain information

Newspapers regularly printed news of troop movements, war plans, etc.

VI. Yellow Journalism

Pre-Yellow Journalism Days

Sunday editions, in 1870s same as dailies

Joseph Pulitzer, upon coming to New York, made the *Sunday World* a 20-page paper

Attractive news stories (some sensationalism)

Stories easy to read and illustrated

As circulation rose, so did the number of pages (to 48)

Morrill Goddard, editor of the *Sunday World*, called the father of the American Sunday paper

Some items were comic drawings, popular songs, sports, society, news for children

Inventions and Technological Developments

Telephone – 1875

Typewriter – 1876

Typesetter (Linotype) – 1886

Engraving (half-tone) – 1894

Joseph Pulitzer

Reporter on *Westliche Post* in St. Louis

Entered politics and fought graft

Bought St. Louis *Dispatch* in 1878 at a sheriff's sale for \$2,500, and combined it with the *Post* three days later; the paper became famous as a leader in crusades

Cleaning and repairing streets

Fighting lotteries

Combatting gambling

Battling tax-dodgers

Pulitzer bought the *New York World* in 1882

News policy: colorful, unusual, significant (main), serious (excellent), sometimes sensational

Crusades and stunts: collection of a fund to build the Statue of Liberty pedestal. "Nellie Bly" (Elizabeth Cochran) went to an insane asylum (faking insanity), and wrote an exposé. She later went around the world in 72 days, 6 hours, 11 minutes, and 4 seconds (in contrast to Jules Verne's novel *Around the World in 80 Days*). Pulitzer crusaded against New York Central, Standard Oil Co., Bell Telephone Co. He also provided free ice and coal and staffed 35 doctors to furnish medical service to the needy

Editorial page: this was Pulitzer's favorite page; a spokesman for liberal ideas, he backed Cleveland in 1884

Size: started at 8 pages at 2 cents and grew to 16 pages in a few years

Illustrations: led all other papers, showed scenes of crimes (X marked the spot), many two-column drawings and photos, some larger; one-column photos rare

Promotion: coupons and voting contests

William Randolph Hearst

Put in charge of his father's (Senator George Hearst) newspaper, the *San Francisco Examiner*, in 1885, remaking it in the image of the *New York World*

Bought the *New York Journal* November 7, 1895 for \$180,000 cash; paper had once belonged to Albert Pulitzer, Joseph's brother

Hired best journalists at any cost

Used many illustrations, emphasized crime, disaster, scandal reporting

Pulitzer lowered price to 1 cent; Hearst followed

Public menace

World and *Journal* banned in many families; subscriptions cancelled

More sensational news appeared

In 1897, Hearst bought a New York paper to get the Associated Press franchise

News coverage

Dedication of Grant's Tomb (in color)

Sports events around the country

Sent Mark Twain to cover the Jubilee Celebration of Queen Victoria

Sent two expeditions to the Klondike, where gold had been discovered

Ran a special train from Washington, D.C., after McKinley's inauguration, with artists drawing while on the train, to beat the other papers with pictures; train broke a speed record

Detective business: a headless, armless, legless body, wrapped in oilcloth, had been found in the river; Hearst built a story each day by reporting the finding of each part of the body

Competition Between Hearst's *Journal* and Pulitzer's *World*

Heaviest competition through Sunday editions

Hearst hired entire staff of the *World*, then the best in the newspaper business; Pulitzer hired them back; Hearst raised his price, and in 24 hours, had rehired them

Sunday World published an 8-page comic section in color; Hearst began a similar section, advertised as "eight pages of iridescent polychromous effulgence that makes the rainbow look like lead pipe" which outdid the *Sunday World*

Richard F. Outcault's drawing, *Yellow Kid*

Outcault drew for the *Sunday World*, then for the *Journal*

George B. Luks took over the comic panel for the *World*, giving New Yorkers two *Yellow Kids*

Term "Yellow Journalism" stems from the yellow color printed on the kid's clothing

Characteristics of Yellow Journalism

Scare headlines: excessively large type, in red or black, screaming excitement

Lavish use of pictures - some without significance, some faked

Fraudulent stories - faked interviews and stories, misleading headlines, pseudo-science

Sunday supplement - color comics and sensational articles

Sympathy with the underdog - campaigns against abuses suffered by the common people

War with Spain

Spanish-American War is said to have come about because of the newspaper circulation war between Hearst and Pulitzer

Sensational descriptions sent by correspondents to papers in New York of Cubans in concentration camps

Lurid pictures of killings of mothers and babies, and imprisonment in filthy and fever-ridden stockades (many of the pictures drawn from rumors)

Cuban atrocity stories proved good for high circulation of the *World* and the *Journal*

Against Yellow Journalism

New York Times, Adolph S. Ochs, publisher, 1896–1935

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

"It Does Not Soil the Breakfast Cloth"

News service improved, Sunday supplement, Saturday book review section, Monday financial review

Christian Science Monitor, 1908, Mary Baker Eddy, publisher

Foreign news, art, music, literature

Stayed away from crime and disaster

Pulitzer Policy Change - 1901

Emphasized the *World's* responsibility to the public both as a crusader and an accurate reporter

Death in 1911

Established Pulitzer School of Journalism at Columbia University in New York

Established 8 annual Pulitzer Prizes for Journalism, beginning in 1917

VII. Newspaper Chains

Hearst: Albany *Times-Union*, Baltimore *News-Post*, Boston *Record-American*, Detroit *Times*, Los Angeles *Examiner*, Los Angeles *Herald-Express*, San Francisco *Examiner*, Milwaukee *Sentinel*, San Antonio *Light*, New York *Journal-American*, Pittsburgh *Sun-Telegraph*, New York *Mirror*, Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*

By the end of 1922, Hearst owned 20 dailies and 11 Sunday papers

Hearst also owned 6 magazines, Kings Features Syndicate, Hearst Metronome News, motion picture company

Scripps-Howard: Fort Worth *Press*, Evansville *Press*, Knoxville *News-Sentinel*, Pittsburgh *Press*, Columbus *Citizen*, El Paso *Herald-Post*, Washington *News*, New York *World-Telegram and Sun*, Albuquerque *Tribune*, Houston *Press*, San Francisco *News-Call-Bulletin*, Indianapolis *Times*, Memphis *Press-Scimitar*, Cincinnati *Post*, Birmingham *Post-Herald*

VIII. Newspaper Press Associations

Associated Press Reorganized in 1900

Newspapers are members and they share (cooperative)

Largest of the associations

United Press International

Combined in 1957 from United Press (Scripps-Howard) and International News Service (Hearst, 1909)

No member newspapers; news sold on contract basis

IX. Newspaper Consolidations

Advertisers found it cheaper to buy space in one paper than in two

Economy of combining a morning and an evening paper

High cost of publishing forced many newspapers out (often bought out by larger papers in same city)

Because of consolidations, fewer newspapers but higher overall readership (More than 2,200 dailies in 1900; just over 1,700 daily newspapers today); readership has increased because of education and growth in population

X. Television Journalism

Many people use television as their primary source of news

Faster means of conveying the news

Satellites bring news - picture and sound - into the homes from around the world

More graphics are used to convey meaning

Networks and local stations have increased news coverage

Cable News Network and others have 24-hour news available

Newspapers have become more graphic; more colorful, more complete in coverage in order to compete effectively

XI. Desktop Publishing

Development of Personal Computers put keyboard and monitor on every desktop

Reporters could enter type directly into a central storage unit

Designers could plan pages electronically

Rise of software, lower prices made stand-alone units attractive

Non-journalists were able to prepare newsletters, etc.

Professionals, students learned to assume a greater role in production

Development of laser printers improved quality of computer output

No need to accept dot-matrix reproduction

DPI increases from 300 to 600 to 1200 to 2400 eliminates need for professional output

Improvements in scanners, photocopiers

Increased use of modems, on-line resources

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