Historiography

in Mass Communication

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Historiography in Mass Communication

Editorial Purpose

This journal publishes essays dealing with the study of mass communication history and of history in general. (It does *not* publish articles about historical events, episodes, people, etc., as one finds in, for example, historical research papers.)

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Essays

This journal invites historians to submit essays. They may be original ones written specifically for this journal, or they may be from material that the authors already have (such as classroom lectures, AJHA presidential addresses, etc.).

Essay length may vary from 500 to 5,000 words.

To submit an essay for consideration, email a Word file to the editor at wmdsloan@gmail.com

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The Historical Search for Significance

By Wm. David Sloan ©

Sloan

We're pleased to point out that *Historiography of Mass Communication*, with this issue, is beginning its fifth year of publication. When a group of historians initially discussed the project during the 2015 national conference of the American Journalism Historians Association, we believed that the study of mass communication history had advanced to the point that it deserves and needs serious attention devoted to historiography. As our opening essay noted in the journal's first issue, the field has many historians "who think deeply about what we do." We have now published more than twenty-five issues, and we hope that each one has contained material of actual importance. Our goal for 2019 is to continue to offer essays and interviews that are worth the time you spend reading them. We know you have other things you can do with the limited number of waking hours you have in a day, and we don't want to waste them.

Our opening thoughts in this issue consider the struggle that media historians have had over the question of why the media have been important in American history. Bruce Evensen then takes us into a

David Sloan, a professor emeritus from the University of Alabama, is the author/editor of more than forty books and is a recipient of the American Journalism Historians Association's Kobre Award for lifetime achievement and of a variety of other awards.

thoughtful inquiry about what historians should do when the theory with which they begin a study comes into conflict with the evidence. Erika Pribanic-Smith follows with a roundtable on the equally important issue of how historians approach the First Amendment, a topic of heightened concern as traditional ideas about freedom of expression confront the challenges of 2019, the 100th anniversary of the Supreme Court's important opinions in the cases of *Schenck* and *Abrams*. For our interview with a historian, John Coward, a leading authority on Native Americans and the press, graciously consented to do a Q&A. Finally, Steve Casey agreed to submit to a Q&A about his book *The War Beat, Europe: The American Media at War Against Nazi Germany*, the winner of the AJHA's award for the best book published in 2017.

For several decades, media historians have wrestled with the question of why the media have been important in American history.

In part, their discomfort arose from their belief, probably correct, that historians in other fields seemed to pay too little attention to media historians or to the role that the media played in the nation's past. When general American historians dealt with episodes in which the media had, according to media historians, been integrally involved, American historians barely noted their presence. They found the media useful mainly for the material they contained that could be used in examining other subjects. Those outside historians seemed to ignore, for example, the role that the press played in helping to bring about the American Revolution, yet they would peruse the contents of the newspapers to help explain the ideas behind the growing revolutionary sentiment.

A 1992 study involving the treatment of the media in U.S. history college textbooks confirmed the suspicion. It found the textbooks paid strikingly little attention to the media as a force in American society. The study also discovered that few media scholars are discussed or

even included in the bibliographies of those books.

Such omission is a serious matter, for the media have been bound together with the evolution of democracy and material development through much of the nation's existence.

The nonchalant attitude of non-media historians can be explained easily enough as part of their understanding of the news media as merely chroniclers of life rather than as key players in it.

Thus the media, beyond their value as repositories for research information, were left on the fringes of American history. And with them were left media historians. It is not surprising that they felt that others viewed their work as of little consequence.

It was easy enough for them to blame the historical disregard of the media on other historians' superficial understanding of the mass media, but part of the explanation lies in how the media have been treated by historians who did recognize their significance.

Explaining, however, the obvious — that the media have been important — in a convincing way has not been easy. Yet there are numerous reasons that demonstrate that the media have been of vital importance to major aspects of American history. In fact, the first historians of the American media did not even struggle with the question of why they were significant. They simply *assumed* without a second thought that the media played a central and critical role in the nation's public affairs. The conscious historiographical search for significance emerged only recently.

In attempting to espouse the point that the media have been significant in the history of America, one is not hard pressed to find arguments. On the contrary, the number of demonstrations that one can present seem almost limitless. Few other factors — including such popular ones as the frontier, immigration, and urbanization — can be shown to have been as ubiquitous in the nation's past as the mass media have been.

The role of the media seems to have been pervasive almost from the beginning of the settlement of the American colonies, and today it is a topic of even more interest. The earliest colonists considered the printing press instrumental in the discussion of religious and political ideas. Today Americans consider the media, and especially television and the Internet, an integral player in a variety of issues of great moment. It is rare that one finds a major episode in American history that the media were not an important ingredient.

Most historians of the nineteenth century (Nationalists and Romantics) believed that America was the lead character in the centuries-long drama of humankind's progress toward liberty. For them, the press was one of the key instruments. They believed that the essential story of the history of printing was the progress of freedom within an overall story of the developing liberty of humankind and, in particular, of the American people. In that story, America was the nation chosen to lead to the eventual liberty of all of humankind, and the press played a main role. The works of both Nationalist and Romantic historians were predominantly political in tone, with most attention devoted to the press against a panorama of national politics. The historians themselves were strongly nationalistic and considered the history of America as the advancing revelation of the nation's leadership in humankind's improvement. They viewed the press as highly influential and as one of the primary factors in the advance.

These historians of the nineteenth century believed the press was significant for one elementary reason: It exercised influence. The nineteenth-century perspective was epitomized in the works of S. G. W. Benjamin. He observed in one of his narratives (tellingly titled "Notable Editors between 1776 and 1800. Influence of the Early American Press,") that there is "strong evidence of the power of the press." Editors were influential in the "fight for liberty" that was the reason for the American Revolution and were critically important to the debate

over the nation's political structure that followed. With that influence, the press of the Federalist-Republican era contributed to the progress of the nation's political system. It "influenced the destinies of the republic," Benjamin wrote.

Similarly, the Progressive historians of the early twentieth century emphasized the ideological role of the media. In contrast to nineteenth-century historians, though, they argued that the history of America did not consist in equality of liberty but could be found in the conflict between the rich and the poor, the aristocratic and the democratic. The media, sometimes manipulated by America's powerful self-interested conservative forces, were a key instrument in their ability to maintain control. Likewise, Progressive historians claimed, the media had been central to the successful efforts of liberals to bring about reform and progress.

Influenced by the ideas of such Progressive American historians as Charles Beard and Vernon Parrington, reform-oriented media historians began to view the past in terms of conflict between social classes. Their interpretation may be summarized this way: The story of the media past is that of a struggle in which editors, reporters, and some publishers were pitted on the side of freedom, liberty, civil reform, democracy, and equality against the powerful forces of wealth, class, and conservatism. The primary purpose of the media should have been to crusade for liberal social and economic causes, to fight on the side of the masses of common, working people against the entrenched interests in American business and government. The fulfillment of the American ideal required a fight against those individuals and groups that had blocked the achievement of a fully democratic system. Progressive historians often placed the conflict in economic terms, with the wealthy class attempting to control the media for their own advantage.

Considering history to be an evolutionary progression to better conditions, Progressive historians thought of the media as an influen-

tial force in helping assure a better future. They wrote in such a way as to show the media as tools for social change, progress, and democracy. Explaining the past in cycles of democratic and journalistic advance, they argued that the latter occurred when the media improved in serving the masses in America. They praised journalists and episodes that had contributed to greater democracy, and they criticized those favoring an elitist society and political system. Their ultimate intent was to use history in a way to influence conditions of their own time and eventually to bring about changes from the conservative status quo.

Typifying the Progressive explanation of the constructive role that reform media could play was Louis Filler's *The Muckrakers: Crusaders for American Liberalism* (1939). Offering a liberal, anti-big businessinterpretation, Filler argued in the preface to the 1976 edition that the muckrakers provided Americans "with knowledge and understanding." They were tough-minded investigators who "wrote because there was a demand for their work, and because they wanted more reform and more democracy." After reaching its zenith in 1906, Filler wrote, muckraking's emphasis shifted from "exposure to reform — and the reforms aimed at were so broad, so interrelated, that they predicted a full change in American life and thought." The outcome of the Progressive movement was that "these crusaders did not transform the nation; they modernized it. No other band of social workers in any country or time ever accomplished more."

The emphasis on the media's significance as a reform agent can be seen in a number of other works from the Progressive school. In *Newspaper Crusaders: a Neglected Story* (1939), Silas Bent focused on the practice of crusading to bring about change, an "immensely important function of the daily press." Historically, the press, he wrote, has been "our most powerful single agency of information, opinion, and reform." It has served "as a medium of political ideas ... since its beginning in this country.... [A]t times its work in this area has assumed the aspect of a

crusade." Because of the "important" influence that newspapers wielded, they have served as "champions of reforms, [and] as defenders of individuals."

The Progressive approach was strongest before World War II, but it continues to influence writing today, although its targets for attack have broadened. Progressive historians in the 1920s and 1930s focused their harshest criticism at the conservative media. After World War II, they changed their main target from newspaper owners to conservative forces in general. The greatest threat to the media and to society, they argued, came from what they considered to be reactionary government leaders and other members of the "establishment." The main objective of the media, they believed, had to be opposition to those forces.

Starting in the late 1930s, Consensus historians challenged the Progressives' emphasis on class and social differences and on economic motivations, but they, like the Progressives, also believed the historical significance of the media arose from the power to influence ideas and public affairs. Reacting against the explanation that the essence of American history was conflict between groups over social and economic structures, Consensus historians argued that even though Americans in the past may have disagreed on isolated issues, their differences took place within a broader realm of agreement on underlying principles.

The Consensus interpretation emerged as the United States faced the international threats of World War II. In the face of the threats, historians reasoned that America's past was marked more by general agreement than by conflict and that Americans, rather than being sundered by class differences, tended to be more united than divided. While Americans from time to time might disagree on particulars, their differences existed within a larger framework — such as a belief in democracy, human freedom, constitutional government, and the national welfare — that overshadowed their differences. The significance of the

media, historians believed, lay in their capacity to help America achieve its common values.

The foremost advocate of this interpretation was Bernard Bailyn. In fact, it did not take full form until he expounded the argument in his 1965 work *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1776* and then elaborated it in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. The second book won in 1967 both the Pulitzer Prize and the Bancroft Prize for history. Pamphlets, according to Bailyn, were the most important forum for the expression of opinion during the Revolutionary period. American leaders feared that a sinister conspiracy had developed in England to deprive citizens of the British empire of their long-established liberties. It was this fear that lay at the heart of the views expressed in the pamphlets. The ideas in the pamphlets then became the determinants in the history of the period by leading colonists to change their beliefs and attitudes. These ideas challenged traditional authority and argued that "a better world than had ever been known could be built where authority was distrusted and held in constant scrutiny; where the status of men flowed from their achievements and from their personal qualities, not from distinctions ascribed to them at birth; and where the use of power over the lives of men was jealously guarded and severely restricted."

A change, however, had taken place in journalism long before the Progressive and Consensus schools appeared, and it was eventually to alter the study of its history as well — and to bash the idea of media influence. In 1833 Benjamin Day had begun publication of the *New York Sun*, the first successful "penny" newspaper. It was oriented not toward politics but toward entertaining and informing the general public. By the end of the Civil War, with the stunning success of such papers as the *Sun*, Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*, James Gordon Bennett's *New York Herald*, and Henry Raymond's *New York Times*, many people had come to think of such newspapers in the northeastern metropolises as

the proper sort of journalism and of the old party newspapers as aberrations.

As the press in the mid-1800s began moving away from its early ideological character and began to emphasize news and to appeal to the mass audience, there grew up a body of "journalists" who, when later writing histories of journalism, were primarily interested in the progress of journalistic principles and practices and of the institution of the newspaper rather than in its participation in the broader public affairs of the nation, as the Nationalist and Romantic historians had been.

The media's history seemed to them to be the story of how journalism had originated and how it had progressed to reach the successful, proper stage that the penny press had ushered in. These "Developmental" historians thus turned inward. They discarded the earlier historical concept of the interaction between the media and the nation's affairs and replaced it with a narrower view of the operation of the media. In the process they began to annihilate the earlier assumption of the natural importance of the media. The Developmental explanation eventually became the dominant explanation of media history, and the traditional acceptance of the media's broad national significance disappeared.

The first and, in many ways, most important of these Developmental historians was Frederic Hudson. Not only was he the managing editor of the *New York Herald*, the *news* paper *par excellence*, but he also was the author of the first book since the appearance of the penny press to survey the overall history of American journalism, *Journalism in the United States, from 1690 to 1872* (published in 1873). Many journalism historians since Hudson have drawn on his interpretation and his information. With his news-oriented background, he viewed the history of journalism not as the story of the press' impact on the world but as the origin and continuing evolution of journalistic techniques. His approach emphasized biographical profiles of leading journalists and nar-

ratives of various episodes that had contributed to journalism's progress. He explained the colonial period in terms of the beginnings of newspaper practices and the first attempts to gain freedom of the press. The revolutionary period was important not only for the colonies' fight for independence but for the press freedom it brought. The party press was injurious to journalistic progress, for politicians controlled the press and therefore prevented it from developing professional standards. True journalism, Hudson concluded, emerged only with the appearance of the penny press.

As the field of journalism expanded in the late 1800s, interest in the history of the profession began to grow. As a result, historical studies of the media increased in number. Although differing on a few particulars, they largely echoed Hudson's themes. As journalism in the twentieth century became more and more sophisticated as a profession, it developed more standards considered appropriate and proper for the media. Historians, most of whom had a background in the profession, began to apply the concept of professional development ever more widely, so that the Developmental interpretation pervaded most historical studies in the first half of the twentieth century. Many works were devoted solely to chronicling the development of particular aspects of journalism such as the editorial function and news gathering, and others provided biographies of the individuals who had contributed to the advance of journalism.

In the early 1900s, there occurred a major development that led not only to greater reliance on the Developmental interpretation, but that resulted in a surge in writing on journalism history. That was the appearance of journalism education at the college level. Following the lead of such early programs as those at Columbia University and the universities of Illinois, Wisconsin, and Missouri, colleges around the nation began to add journalism to their curricula. By 1920, there were 131 universities offering instruction in journalism. History was one of

the earliest scholarly research concerns of professors at those schools. Trained in the occupation of journalism, most professors who wrote about history approached it with the perspective of professional journalism.

The Developmental interpretation then had a pervasive impact on historical assumptions because most textbooks for college courses in journalism history were cast in terms of the professional framework. With early textbooks such as James Melvin Lee's *History of American Journalism*, published in 1917, and Willard Bleyer's *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism*, published just ten years later, the Developmental interpretation became entrenched in historical thinking. Bleyer's, which was both Developmental and mildly Progressive, was the most widely used of the early textbooks, and its successor in the 1940s, Frank Luther Mott's *American Journalism*, continued the Developmental influence on thinking. Used as a textbook for more than thirty years, Mott's work provided the apex of the Developmental interpretation, and historians for many years worked in his shadow. Studied by generations of students and future journalism historians, the textbooks tended to reinforce the explanation that the history of journalism was the story of how the press evolved in its professional characteristics. That approach had the effect of diminishing the role the media played in the larger arenas of American life.

By the mid-1920s a group of Cultural (or Sociological) historians had begun to react to the narrow Developmental perspective. Although they did not fully comprehend the tenets of that perspective, they did recognize that Developmental historians placed considerable emphasis on the role of "great men" in the development of the media. Cultural historians argued instead that the media had to be viewed more broadly in terms of their interaction with the surrounding social, economic, and political environment.

The impetus for the Cultural interpretation may be traced to a

1925 work on urban sociology by Robert Park, one of the members of the prestigious school of sociology at the University of Chicago. In "The Natural History of the Newspaper" he argued that the evolution of American journalism was a result of its interaction with its environment. The primary factors in determining the nature of the newspaper, he said, were not great individual journalists but the conditions of the society and the system in which the press operated. He explained the party press of the early 1800s, for example, as a natural development from journalism's earlier involvement with the political system. In a partisan environment, newspapers became journals of opinion whose role was to be party mouthpieces.

In the wake of Park's essay, Cultural historians began to give more consideration to factors outside journalism itself that affected the media. Their works normally dealt with the nature and cultural role of the media, and they believed that the media usually were a mirror of society and that social, political, cultural, and economic factors greatly influenced their character.

The most prolific writer in the Cultural school was Sidney Kobre. In a number of works he attempted to explain journalism as "a product of environment." His ideas typify those of the Cultural school. The nature of the media at any time in history, he believed, could be explained in large measure by the sociological influences acting on them. In *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper* (1944), for example, he attempted to show how "the changing character of the American people and their dynamic social situation produced and conditioned the colonial newspaper." The first American newspapers were products of various influences, including city growth, the public's desire for political and commercial news, and the need of business for an advertising medium. The public's and printers' ideas about political self-determination, a new American philosophy taking shape during the colonial period, greatly affected the character of the newspaper.

Cultural historians considered the media a part of society, rather than a separate institution, as Developmental historians had thought of it. The media therefore were influenced by various features of their surroundings. Cultural historians were concerned primarily with how such forces as economics, politics, technology, and culture acted on and affected the media. Thus, such questions as what factors were responsible for the founding of newspapers and under what financial conditions radio operated began to interest them.

Since most early Cultural historians concentrated on the effect of the society on the media, rather than vice versa, they did little to address the question of the media's significance. They painted a historical situation in which the media were simply buffeted and shaped by outside forces.

Although the Cultural approach, then, was not, at heart, an attempt to explain the significance of the media, it did help to broaden the perspective from which historians would look at the media. Soon a variety of works began appearing that attempted to explain the importance of the social role that the media played. One of the most important attempts to address media significance directly — Allan Nevins' "American Journalism and its Historical Treatment" (1959) — fit the media within their cultural and political context. Nevins argued that newspapers had to be considered not simply in terms of their journalistic performance and progress but more broadly in terms of their role in a democratic society.

Nevins' idea — the political importance of the media in a democratic system — has served as the basis for a number of works dealing with the historical importance of the news media. In *The Power of the Press: The Birth of American Political Reporting* (1986), for example, Thomas Leonard concentrated on seven episodes from the Boston inoculation controversy in the 1720s to muckraking in the early 1900s. He concluded that the news media have served as a common means for Americans

to participate in the political system.

Cultural historians provided a number of other explanations of mass communication's significance. One of the most influential has been David Potter. His *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (1954) explained the distinctive feature of the modern American as materialistic. A key instrument in the growth of that characteristic historically had been advertising. As the means of production of goods had improved to the point that the system could provide more items than consumers thought they needed, producers had to find a way to persuade them to buy more. The technique they turned to was advertising. It succeeded in achieving the producers' goals and was instrumental in turning America into a society of massive consumers.

The media, according to Cultural historians, exercised an influence in a variety of spheres of life. Reynold Wik, for example, described radio's effect on farmers and other rural residents. Soon after radio stations appeared in the early decades of the twentieth century, they began broadcasting weather reports and commodity market reports and running advertising useful to farm families. In "The Radio in Rural America during the 1920s" (1981), Wik wrote that "[t]he radio was of profound importance for the American people because it opened their ears to the sounds of the world and provided a medium which became an instrument for social change.... Rural Americans may have benefited the most from radio because they were the most isolated and had the most to gain from an improved communication system."

Despite such efforts as those of the Cultural historians to re-interpret media history, the Developmental explanation maintained its tenacious hold on historical explanation. Its power was illustrated most evidently by the domination of the textbook market by Mott's *American Journalism*, the quintessential Developmental statement.

Vague dissatisfaction with the Developmental perspective re-

mained present, however, among a minority of historians. It sprang from such sources as ideological mistrust of the media and theoretical misgivings about the assumed strength of media effects. But these historians had difficulty in formulating a counter-explanation. With the exception of Jim Carey's advocacy of a "communication as ritual" interpretation, few explanations have gained more than a small number of adherents. Carey's 1974 essay "The Problem of Journalism History," has, in fact, been the most talked about proposal of the last several decades. For readers who are familiar with the term "Whig" history, it should be mentioned that Carey used it to describe critically and in broad outline a view similar to the Developmental interpretation.

In "The Problem of Journalism History," Carey proposed that journalism history be approached from a "cultural" perspective, and since then a number of writers have attempted to apply the concept. Carey's proposal should not be confused, however, with what Cultural history generally has been understood to be. His ideas came from diverse sources, but most of them fit a Cultural Studies perspective. Scholars who have drawn on his ideas usually have added their own, and thus the Cultural Studies interpretation incorporates a variety of approaches. In general, however, historians in the school believe that mass communication plays a significant role in determining the ideas of the culture in which it operates.

Carey said that historians studying journalism should be concerned principally with the "way in which men in the past have grasped reality." The role the press played in that process of grasping reality, he argued, is the key to journalism history. "The task of cultural history is the recovery of past forms of imagination, of historical consciousness. The objective is not merely to recover articulate ideas or what psychologists nowadays call cognitions but rather the entire 'structure of feeling'.... By culture," he explained, "I ... mean the organization of social experience in the consciousness of men manifested in symbolic action.

Journalism is then a particular symbolic form."

Individuals working from the Cultural Studies perspective have produced studies dealing with a variety of matters. Book-length accounts have treated such topics as how "new media affected traditional notions of space and time," professionalism and ethical standards in society, violence as a cultural norm, media coverage of murder and its relationship to such questions as where one fits into a changing community, American culture's preoccupation with success and anxieties over it, and news as an expression of knowledge and what is knowable. The research tends to focus on media content, with the researchers then drawing conclusions about what the content meant to the audience or about the social values that the content presented.

Carey's is an important idea. Since it has received so much approbation, it deserves scrutiny. The first thing to be noted is that, unfortunately, there is little way to document it. Thus, it is not at all certain that the conclusions that members of the Cultural Studies school have produced are an accurate explanation of the past. In fact, Carey himself, even though he was a communication philosopher and not a historian, recognized the enormity of the problem of documenting his ideas. In his 1974 article he wrote that it is extremely difficult to "get hold of" the "felt sense" of the past. For the most part, those trying to apply Carey's or other Cultural Studies ideas in the study of history, particularly those making the boldest claims, have not been trained as historians but have backgrounds in such areas as cultural and critical studies or philosophy as taught in schools of communication. As a result, they tend not to employ the methods of history rigorously — such as basing their work predominantly on primary sources — or to exercise the historian's normal caution about drawing connections. A few have done well-researched studies of events in the past but then have drawn their main inferences, connecting the media to the audience's concept of reality, without providing the documentation necessary to support them. Most

writers in the field are inclined, not confined by evidence, to jump to big conclusions.

Thus, Cultural Studies' value as an explanation of the past has been limited. The primary reason is that there is a paucity of factual evidence to support it. If the evidence were there, the explanation probably would be one of the most important contributions in media historiography. Unfortunatley, in their reliance on secondary sources — items, for example, such as sociological essays by other advocates of the interpretation — most researchers who have used Carey's ideas in writing about history have failed to present documentation. And, as good historians know, being able to document an argument with evidence is crucial.

Despite the weaknesses of the work of such writers, however, it can be said that Carey's concepts have been of immense value in media historiography. They have encouraged historians to consider the media past from a different perspective, and that is a process that should be ongoing.

It may be that anytime a historian sets out to explain the significance of any single factor in the past, he or she runs the danger of becoming blinded by narrow perspective and, then, merely didactic. That is as true in studying the role that the media have played as it is in the study of the role of ideology, the frontier, immigration, urbanization, and any other factor.

In the study of media history, however, there is a pressing need for the role of the media to be addressed — and the time is ripe. Today, the public and professional recognition of the importance of the mass media in American society is greater than at any other time in our history. Scholars and policy makers outside the field of mass communication find it a paramount concern. During the last few decades, the study of media history has progressed at a faster rate than has the study of any other area in the field of mass communication.

As a group, however, non-media historians have yet to grasp the full significance of the media as a force in society. They have, however, enlarged the intellectual boundaries of their scholarship, both by inquiring into new fields and by studying traditional ones in new ways.

Accordingly, the way appears open for a greater integration of the role of the media into general history, if the significance of their presence in history can be demonstrated. There clearly exists a need, as most of us have not seen in our lifetimes, for works to explain the historical significance of the media. An obvious idea that offers itself is that of the Cultural Studies school. A historian writing from that perspective could make a great contribution if he or she could produce an account relying on primary sources (not simply the historian's imagination) to demonstrate the connection between ideas that appeared in the media and ideas that individuals held.

Because of improvements in the methodological skills of media historians that have occurred recently, the next few years of study of media history hold the possibilities for some of the most important work ever to come out of the field.

How historians will take advantage of the opportunities depends to a large extent on their vision about the role of the media in American history. About twenty-five years ago, a number of our field's best historians joined me and Jim Startt in writing a book titled *The Significance of the Media in American History*. I wrote about public opinion. The other historians provided accounts of the media's contributions in such important areas as popular sovereignty, political values, political culture, foreign policy, wartime morale, the American character, the economy, race relations, community cohesiveness, and local community development.

We thought we did a good job. But despite our efforts, there is much to be done by today's historians. That means you.

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Theory and Evidence: The Story of Richard Frethorne

By Bruce J. Evensen ©

Evensen

In September 2017, *Historiography of Mass Communication* published a study I was working on that linked the role of journalists to "American Exceptionalism." The idea is not that Americans are exceptional but that America is based on an exceptional idea of individual liberty and the development of a public interest rooted in the creation and maintenance of a civil society. In my recent book *Journalism and the American Experience* I try to trace American journalism's significant role in creating a more civil society by serving citizens with news worth knowing.

This past summer I began another book-length manuscript, *Journalism and the Meaning of America* as a follow up to *Journalism and the American Experience*. In the colonial period I've used as a framing device the words of John Winthrop, the Puritan Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who supposedly said on the mid-Atlantic crossing in 1630 that Puritan activity in North America would be like "a shining city on a hill." Presidents as recently as Ronald Reagan have spoken of America as a "shining city" in celebrating the nation's quintessential

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story. "I've spoken of the shining city all my political life," the "Great Communicator" told a television audience in his farewell address to the nation. "It was a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than any oceans, windswept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity. And if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get there. That's how I saw it, and see it still."

This hopeful theory seemed to fit just fine in one of the major meanings of America as told through its press. All was well until I found evidence that didn't quite fit the pretty picture. Winthrop's journals are some of the earliest examples we have of reporting in America. However, Richard Dunn, an emeritus professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania and founder of the Philadelphia Center for Early American Studies, observes that only two of Winthrop's three volumes survived a fire in 1825. Those volumes are "notoriously hard to read. The ink is faded. The paper is often stained, worn, or torn. The text is studded with marginalia, insertions, cancellations, and underscorings." What's worse, those two volumes and the lost journal for which notes are available, show no record of Winthrop ever writing or delivering the supposed sermon. Dunn has suggested this as a cautionary tale in developing what he calls "micro-history" as "a healthy antidote to top-down history." He describes it as a process of historical editing requiring "very close observation and questioning of documents," leading to an outcome where the historian "avoids dictating to the reader."[1] Framework and context should be offered by the historian, in his view, only as supported by evidence.

Using this approach, we may ask: How did Winthrop's name become attached to the shining city sermon? No published version of the sermon appears to have existed for 208 years. The manuscript was first found in the New York Historical Society and was not in Winthrop's

handwriting. The sermon's publication in 1838 was seized upon by territorial expansionists affiliated with the Democratic Party, whose goal was to decapitate the northern half of Mexico in an effort to extend slavery into what would eventually become the American Southwest. John O'Sullivan's *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, launched the year before to promote Jacksonian Democracy's enthusiasm for western expansion, famously saw it as America's "manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions," producing "a nation of progress, of individual freedom, of individual enfranchisement." Ignoring his sanctioning of a slave economy, O'Sullivan saw "a boundless future of American greatness" in which "hundreds of happy millions," would be "governed by God's natural and moral law of equality, the law of brotherhood, of peace and goodwill amongst men." In the years that followed, America's mission in the world has often been framed as extending this opportunity to others.

For the historian, evidence, it seems, is almost never as neat as the theory it purports to affirm. And the mere matter of who really wrote Winthrop's supposed sermon was only the beginning of my trouble. I've started *Journalism and the Meaning of America* by telling the story of how my mother's parents fled Czarist Russia and how my dad's people hocked their farm after a bank bust in Norway to escape to the United States. By then, America as a place for second chances had become American gospel. As Franklin Roosevelt prettily put it on the fiftieth anniversary of the Statue of Liberty, "here, liberty of conscience, liberty of speech, liberty of the person, and liberty of economic opportunity" fed "the dream of a better life." The President assured his radio listeners in the midst of the Depression and on the eve of war, there was no doubt that "providence did prepare this American continent to be a place of the second chance." Seventy-nine years later, President Barack Obama appropriated the same language as Roosevelt in commuting the

sentences of 46 non-violent drug offenders. "I believe that at its heart, America is a nation of second chances," the President asserted in a video on his Facebook page, "and I believe these people deserve their second chance." The men, largely drawn from minority communities, "have demonstrated the potential to turn your lives around," Obama insisted, and America was precisely the place to do it.

The more I read, however, the more my grandparents flight from Europe and the later language of American presidents, did not seem to fit the evidence of how and why many of the earliest Europeans made the trans-Atlantic crossing. In searching through a handful of firsthand accounts available from the Jamestown settlement I was particularly struck by a letter the Virginia Company did not discard. It came from Richard Frethorne, the child of an indigent English family, who implored his parents from Jamestown on March 20, 1623, "Do not forget me. Have mercy and pity my miserable case."[2]

Richard was likely twelve when he arrived in Virginia around Christmas in 1622 after six years as a parish poor child. He now faced twelve years as an indentured servant. "For God's sake," he begged in desperation, someone had to be found "to redeeme me" before he perished from "want of meat and want of cloathes." Richard wrote that his sole cloak had been stolen by another child, who exchanged it for a bit of butter and beef. Frethorne's desperation was not unique. Fifty thousand of the 75,000 settlers sent by the Virginia Company to the Chesapeake Bay colonies before 1680 came as indentured servants. By 1700 the total had swelled to 132,000 indentured servants, slaves and felons of the 198,000 who'd made the crossing. Most worked for a minimum of four to seven years for masters who paid their way over. Many never lived to see the end of the contract.[3]

The headright system, begun by the Virginia Company in November 1618 to induce settlement, recreated England's large land holdings that kept many in poverty. Anyone who came to Virginia or paid the

transportation costs of someone else settling in Virginia was entitled to fifty acres for every immigrant. Merchants, shippers and land speculators got in on the inequity and soon enjoyed substantial estates, extended further when white settlers were replaced by black slaves. Their indentured servants signed a pledge to work the tobacco fields and attend to their master's wishes in exchange for passage and some food and shelter when they arrived.

Richard tried surviving on peas and water gruel. Around him, scurvy and the bloody flux claimed victims daily. And the Native Americans, whom Jamestown settlers had succeeded in immediately antagonizing, caused Richard to live "in fear of the enemy every hour. We lie even in their teeth." Since limbless people in England were not required to work and were free from indenture, Frethorne wrote of his fantasy to be "without lymbes" so that he could "bee in England againe." Richard knew "the answer to this letter will be life or death to me" and made arrangements with Goodman Jackson, a Jamestown gunsmith, "to send you the worth of it, if I die before it come." History does not record whether aid came, but records of the Virginia Company do show Richard died sometime before February 24, 1624.

Richard Frethorne was a victim of English poor laws, which were responsible for thrusting thousands of indigent individuals upon the American continent much against their will. London's population had soared from 50,000 to 200,000 in the century preceding passage of the English Poor Laws in 1601. It forced parishes to decide what to do with the poor. A quarter of municipal costs went to the aid and feeding of the widowed, the aged, the infirm and the orphaned, but also soldiers and sailors maimed in war or shipwreck. More generous parishes became unwanted magnets to vagrants and abandoned women, some of them pregnant, who would soon make not one but two claims on the limited public purse.[4]

Overcrowding and an absence of sanitation made London a death-

trap and accelerated the urgency of resettling the poor. Pools of internal bleeding appeared as black spots and boils in victims who suffered a gangrenous finish to a weeklong fever and fury called the Black Death. The scourge was spread by rat fleas and killed 30,000 in 1603, 35,000 in 1625, and more than 100,000 in the Great Plague of 1665-1666 in a city whose population still surged to half a million by 1700. Rakers could hardly keep up with human and animal waste that collected oppressively beside garrets along London's winding lanes. The vulnerable had little more than herbal plasters and a little bloodletting to protect themselves from the plague. Astrologers assured others laying buttered bread across a sore might do the trick. The death rates from poor wards in the north and east of the city and the slanting shanties outside its walls accelerated plans to alleviate overcrowding by disposing of the poor and the vagrant who were seen as sources and carriers of the contagion.[5]

The therapeutic effect of cleansing London by exporting the poor to America is expressed by Sir Walter Cope, writing in March 1606 three years after personally welcoming King James to England. Cope commended a resettlement system that "provides a place where idle vagrants may be sent." John Donne concurred. In a sermon to the Virginia Company, the dean of St. Paul's supported sending indentured servants to Virginia, ridding England of "idle persons and the children of idle persons" who wisely would be forced to work.

Richard Hakluyt, an early and eager promoter of the New World and a charter member of the Virginia Company, insisted American settlement would rid England of the "multitudes of loyterers and idle vagabondes," who had been a burden to Britain's "decayed trades."He urged King James to send Britain's disposable population to America. "The time approacheth and nowe is that we of England," Hakluyt wrote, should possess "the temperate places in America" before they were taken by Catholic countries. A mere "sixe weekes sayling" made Amer-

ica nearer England "than to any other part of Europe," Hakluyt argued, making America England's natural inheritance. It was good reason to empty "al our Prisons which are pestered and filled with able men to serue their Countrie, which for small robberies are daily hanged vp in great numbers, euen twenty at a clappe." What was better than such a patriotic purpose for "such superfluous people"?

On November 24, 1606 King James complied, granting Hakluyt and the Reverend Robert Hunt, a vicar in the Church of England, a five year charter to take possession of the territory. The king would also authorize convicts be shipped to the colonies "to yield a profitable service to the Common wealth in parts abroade where it shall be found fit to imploie them." Fifty four thousand five hundred were shipped before colonial ports refused to receive any more.

The Records of the Virginia Company, which oversaw early American settlement at Jamestown and companion communities, tells the bleak story of many souls, otherwise anonymous to history, who were forced to migrate to the colonies and badly abused after arriving there. Jane Dickenson accompanied her husband Ralph to Virginia in 1620 with a seven-year indenture to Nicholas Hide. Hide died, and Dickenson later told the colony's General Court that her husband was "slaine in the bloudy Masacre" of the Pamunkey Indians that killed 347 settlers, one third of the colony. Dickenson testified she was "Caried away with the Cruell salvages." She then "Endured much midery for teen monthes." It was then that John Potts, a physician at the Jamestown settlement, and the colony's future governor, ransomed Dickenson and other hostages for two pounds of beads. Potts now insisted Dickenson satisfy a double indenture — one for her late husband and the other for the ransom he'd paid. Potts argued Dickenson's ten-month service was not enough and threatened that she would serve him "to the uttermost day, unless shee procure him 150 waight of Tobacco." Dickenson charged in court there was not much difference in serving a cruel master "from her slavery

with the Indians." The court later ruled that Dickenson's ten-month service was penance enough for Potts's payment and she was released.[6]

At least Dickenson lived to tell her story. Many of the early settlers, forced to cross the Atlantic, were not as fortunate. By 1625, only 1,095 men, women and children remained alive of the 7,549 settlers sent to Virginia in the 18 years after Jamestown's establishment. Scurvy, smallpox, malaria, measles, yellow fever and influenza were the main killers. Care involved bleeding, vomiting and sweating, succeeding in making miserable patients worse.

This reality bore little relation to what was written by Hakluyt and future governor John Smith to stimulate settlement in English America. The Virginia Company was starting to make some money on Virginia's cash crop — tobacco — so it sunk more ships and settlers into Jamestown, promising lots of land to those eager to seize an opportunity. It relied on the twin towers of coercion and the power of positive publicity in pushing its plan to bring England's supposed civilizing influence to the other side of the world.

Hakluyt saw "a greate necessitie" in getting to this second Eden before Catholic Spain closed the door. Spain, he charged, should not be allowed to seize America, a "countrie which is the fairest, frutefullest, and pleasauntest of all the worlde." Although he'd never been there, Hakluyt assured investors that America abounded "in honye, waxe, venison, wilde fowle, fforrestes, woods of all sortes, palme trees, cypresses, cedars, bayes, the highest and greatest, with also the fairest vines in all the worlde, with grapes that will growe to toppes of oakes and other trees that be of wonderfull greatness and heighte. The sight of fair meadows is a pleasure not able to be expressed with tongue."

Smith, who'd crossed the Atlantic and knew better, assured readers America was a spot where "Heaven and earth never agreed better to frame a place for man's habitation." He insisted it was a paradise where a man might "take with hooke or line what he will." And for the depend-

ent idle who burdened English society with their poverty and uselessness a trip across the sea, Smith suggested, would have an impact "Religion, Charity, and the Common good cannot." Parliament was happy to take him up on his offer, since many of its members were also investors in the Virginia Company.[7]

When I lived in Tidewater Virginia in the late 1970s I often went to Jamestown and attempted to imagine what life there might have been like. I remember much was made of the Reverend Robert Hunt's role as chaplain to Jamestown's first settlers. The Anglican cleric planted a cross at first landing on April 29, 1607 in a spit of sand called Cape Henry, named for the Prince of Wales. Looking up to heaven Hunt thanked God for the safe passage of the voyage and dedicated the work and destiny of the colony to God's good service. When a relief ship arrived on January 2, 1608, however, only 38 of Jamestown's first 105 settlers remained alive. Hunt appears not to have been one of them. It was well known that starvation, scurvy, smallpox and Indian attacks decimated those first European settlers. What was revealed only much later is that the settlers couldn't have come at a worst time. Cypress tree rings in Tidewater show a record drought, the region's worst in 770 years, arose before English ships made landfall.[8] It meant food was in short supply. Salt content in foul-smelling tidal water soon rose to poisonous levels. When Indians refused to exchange their remaining corn for trinkets, settlers stole their canoes or shot their muskets in the air to clear communities and raid their granaries. Within weeks, local game was gone and settlers became prisoners of their own fort.

Only sixty settlers survived Jamestown's winter of 1609-1610 out of a population of five hundred. Much of their story seemed lost under rising sea levels that were thought to have covered Europe's first permanent settlement in the New World. In 1996, however, the original Jamestown was rediscovered.[9] The evidence revealed a level of suffering never before imagined. The horror had been hinted at when a jour-

nal, written by the colony's governor, George Percy, recalled that "Notheinge was Spared to maynteyne Lyfe." After the carcasses of cats and dogs and rats ran out, survivors were forced "to doe those things which seame incredible, as to digge upp deade corpses out of graves and to eate them. And some have Licked upp the Bloode which hathe fallen from their weake fellowes." In 2012, archeologists dug down two and a half feet into a basement trash heap at Jamestown and found the butchered skull and shinbone of what they reckoned was a 14-year-old English girl, likely one of the many indentured servants, who had perished during the colony's "Starving Time." The brain, throat, tongue and face had all been taken. Even the cleaver that did the carving was found.[10]

Excavations at the Jamestown site also revealed Hunt's final resting place in the chancel of the first church built at Jamestown. The grave's position lies below where the Anglican cleric would have preached to his congregation. Hunt was wrapped in a simple shroud for burial in keeping with the custom of the time. He was positioned with his head to the east to face his congregation. Several of the faithful are buried next to him, their faces turned to the west awaiting the resurrection.

When I started my simple story of America as a place for second chances as told through the prism of its press, my eyes were also fixed to the west. I knew some of the stories of my family and other families who had come rushing over. And I knew something of the framing devices politicians and the media have long used in situating America as a "shining city" whose foundational faith is in the inalienable rights of every person. When, however, one digs a little below the surface the real Jamestown came into view for archaeologists, and when one digs a little deeper as a researcher one uncovers an early Anglo-American world profoundly different and more complicated than any simple narrative we might construct.

Evidence complicates story-telling. And the singular scene of men

and women sailing to America for a better life now includes the disquieting sense of those forced to cross the Atlantic and soon swallowed up in the misery that awaited them. Those who were doing quite well could afford to stay behind and write pretty passages. The desperate who made the journey had little choice in the matter. The stories that emerged about the meaning of America as seen through its press are the stories written by those who survived to write it, and not those who lived and died anonymously to history, disappearing with hardly a trace.

All this has left *Journalism and the Meaning of America* a more complicated story than I started to write. Evidence afflicts my former narrative and forces me to see something else. The view from a detached distance is quite different than the scene that Richard Frethorne experienced firsthand. Like Chris and Annie and Ida and Abe who could not have known what they would experience on the other side of the Atlantic, I begin *Journalism and the Meaning of America* uncertain where the evidence will lead, but eager to understand how the lives they lived and the stories they read contributed to the making and meaning of America.

NOTES

[1]Dunn makes the assertion in an interview he did with Sara Georgini for "The Junto," a group blog on Early American History posted at https://earlyamericanists.com/2015/01/30/retelling-a-tale-an-interview-with-richard-s-dunn."

[2]Richard Frethorne's predicament is well told by Sandra L. Dahlberg in "'Doe Not Forget Me': Richard Frethorne, Indentured Servitude, and the English Poor Law of 1601," *Early American Literature* 47 (Spring 2012), pp. 1-30. Frethorne's letters are drawn from vol. 4 of *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, ed. by Susan M. Kingsbury, and published in Washington by the Government Printing Office in 1935.

[3]An analysis of children and indentured servants in colonial Virginia appears in R. C. Johnson, "The Transportation of Vagrant Children from London to Virginia, 1618-1622," in Howard S, Reinmuth, Jr., *Early Stuart Studies: Essays in Honor of David Harris Willson* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1970).

[4]The language of the 1601 Act for the Relief of the Poor is posted at www.

workhouses.org.uk/poorlaws/1601intro.shtml.

[5]The impact of the 1665-1666 plague is examined by Daniel Defoe in *History of the Plague in London* (New York: American Book Co., 1894, originally published in 1722) and Walter George Bell, *The Great Plague in London in 1665* (London: Folio Society, 2001, originally, 1924).

[6]Jane Dickenson's account appears on p. 473 of vol. 4 of Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1933).

[7]John Smith's reassurance Virginia was a heavenly place is found in the second volume of his 1624 publication, titled, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles, Together with the True Travels, Adventures and Observations* and on pp. 44-45 of its 1907 re-publication by James MacLehose in Glasgow.

[8]A study by David W. Stahle, Malcolm K. Cleaveland, Dennis B. Blanton, Matthew D. Therrell and David A. Gay, "The Lost Colony and Jamestown Droughts," *Science* 280 (Apr. 24, 1998), pp. 564-567 was among the first to indicate the severity of the deadly drought faced by Jamestown settlers.

[9]At www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Summer11/jamestown.cfm, a site hosted by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, William Kelso describes the re-discovery of the original Jamestown settlement. Nicholas Fandos summarizes Kelso's work in "Unearthing Jamestown's Leaders, and a Mystery, published in the *New York Times* on July 28, 2015.

[10]Scientific evidence of cannibalism is reported by Joseph Stromberg on Apr. 30, 2013 at https://www.smithsonianmag.com/historystarving-settlers-in-jamestown-colony-resorted-to-cannibalism-46000815/ .

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Historical Roundtable: Legal and Historical Understanding of the First Amendment

By Erika Pribanic-Smith, Erin Coyle, Jared Schroeder, and Ken Ward ©

Pribanic-Smith

First Amendment issues create an important intersection among legal and historical scholars and the modern communication environment. As 2018 drew to a close, the Supreme Court was considering whether to allow lawsuits claiming abuse of police power in retaliation for exercising free speech rights. A federal court recently ruled a 1985 immigration law unconstitutional for imposing criminal penalties on those encouraging or inducing someone to enter or remain in the U.S. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump faces legal action for allegedly infringing on the First Amendment rights of a CNN White House correspondent, and debate is swirling on the rights of Neo-Nazis to express hate speech.

As the courts and public grapple with current First Amendment issues, we are poised to celebrate the 100th anniversary of landmark cases that helped develop the nation's understanding of free expression. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes's March 1919 opinion for the Supreme Court in *Schenck v. United States* provided the clear and present danger test and the Court's first clear statement about the meaning of the First Amendment. That fall, Holmes's groundbreaking dissent in *Abrams v. United States* introduced the marketplace of ideas theory of the First Amendment, which remains the Court's dominant tool for commu-

nicating how it understands freedom of expression.

For this roundtable, three scholars who have explored historical First Amendment issues discuss how they have conducted their research as well as the value it provides for understanding free expression both in the past and in the present.

Pribanic-Smith: *What is your approach to researching First Amendment issues?*

Coyle

Coyle: My research explores how judges and journalists describe press freedom and speech freedom in relation to fundamental values identified by leading First Amendment theorists. I carefully analyze state and federal court opinions to assess how majority, concurring,

Schroeder

Ward

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Erin Coyle, an associate professor at the LSU Manship School of Mass Communication, is the author of *The Press and Rights to Privacy: First Amendment Freedoms Vs. Invasion of Privacy Claims*. She also has published journal articles that address First Amendment, privacy, and access issues.

Jared Schroeder, an assistant professor of journalism at Southern Methodist University, is the author of *The Press Clause and Digital Technology's Fourth Wave* and co-author of *Emma Goldman's No-Conscription League and the First Amendment*. He is teaching chair for the AEJMC Law & Policy Division.

Ken Ward, an assistant professor of communication and media at Lamar University, co-authored a *Journal of Media Law and Ethics* article on Jacob Frohwerk's landmark case. His research has also appeared in the *Journal of Media Ethics* and the *Journal of Magazine and New Media Research*.

and dissenting opinions address these freedoms. I also evaluate content in judges', attorneys', and journalists' articles, reports, speeches, and diary entries to explore how they describe press freedom or free speech for different audiences. In doing so, I explore how they conceptualize freedom of expression, what functions they indicate free expression serves in a democratic society, and whether they agree on what the First Amendment protects.

Courts have authority to interpret laws and to interpret constitutional rights in the United States. Over time, courts have explored what the First Amendment protects against specific government limitations. Some opinions include historical references to the U.S. founders' ideals for First Amendment freedom. For instance, in 1927, in a concurring opinion in *Whitney v. California*, Justice Louis D. Brandeis wrote that the people who fought for the nation's independence believed that freedom of thought and speech are "indispensable to the discovery and spread of political truth." Court opinions are primary sources for historians and legal scholars to review. Scholarship has analyzed court opinions to identify certain functions or values that justices or judges associate with freedom of speech or freedom of the press. That scholarship addresses First Amendment theory.

Schroeder: My work is very concerned with the future of discourse in a democratic society and how we understand the First Amendment in the twenty-first century. I approach most projects by asking what we know and what we don't about how technological changes in how we communicate will influence legal precedents regarding the flow of information. Artificial intelligence is a great example. The Supreme Court has never ruled on anything that relates to artificial intelligence, yet computer programs are playing larger and larger roles in the information people encounter.

When I identify a problem or question, in this or any area, I read

widely about the topic and then start to work on an outline. Next I try to write an introduction. The introduction can take a long time, because it's more than an introduction. It's me trying to figure out what exactly this paper is about. In the process of writing the introduction, I'm more concerned with focusing in on the question and how I'll go about exploring it than producing a polished introduction. That comes later. From there, I construct each section of the paper as if it is a miniature paper of its own. In each section I immerse myself in the related literature. I take extensive notes. I read and re-read cases and enter the passages I highlight and the notes I make into a Word document so I can have them all in one place and keyword search them later. I keep reading until my understanding goes beyond the surface of the texts. I read until themes start to emerge regarding how decisions were rationalized or ideas were communicated.

Above all of this, the key for me is to identify a good question — one that has not been clearly answered — and contribute to what we know about answering it within my paper.

Ward: I generally don't go out looking for the First Amendment; it finds me. For example, my dissertation charts the course of competition between two newspapers, the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News*, for more than a century. When you're looking at so broad a chunk of time, you're bound to run into lots of legal issues. It's then a matter of identifying those that bear on broader topics related to the interpretation and application of the First Amendment and trying to transform your local findings into something of relevance to a larger audience.

The glaring exception to this is a project Aimee Edmondson and I tackled exploring the prosecution of Jacob Frohwerk, a German-language newspaper editor convicted under the Espionage Act for writing editorials critical of U.S. involvement in World War I. The First Amendment was central to that work, as we were trying to figure out who this

guy — who had long been mentioned alongside pivotal figures like Schenck, Debs, and Abrams — actually was. But even in that case, my interest was primarily in who Frohwerk was and *when* he was, the man in the context of his time. As a result, my contributions to the project were focused on using vital records, newspaper coverage, court documents, and prison records to piece together a portrait of Frohwerk. We were then able to situate him and his actions within the framework of his trial and its historical impact on the implementation of the First Amendment.

Pribanic-Smith: *How does historical study inform modern legal, scholarly, and/or public discussions of First Amendment rights?*

Coyle: U.S. Supreme Court opinions sometimes refer to intentions framers of the Constitution held for freedom of expression, particularly when addressing freedom for political speech. Justice Anthony Kennedy's 2010 majority opinion in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Committee* references debates between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists that were published in newspapers. Kennedy's historical interpretation of the First Amendment indicates that framers of the Constitution perceived the First Amendment as a response to taxes imposed on the press and repression of speech. His opinion concludes that censoring corporations' political speech hampers the potential for speech to contribute to the marketplace of ideas.

Court opinions also refer to previous justices' historical interpretations. For instance, in 1964, in *New York Times v. Sullivan* — a landmark U.S. Supreme Court opinion that recognized constitutional protection against strict application of liability for libel law — the unanimous opinion quotes Justice Louis D. Brandeis's 1927 explanation of the founders' beliefs that participating in "public speech is a political duty." Courts and scholars sometimes cite Justice Brandeis's interpretation of

history when examining whether and how the First Amendment protects freedom of expression. Thus, historical and legal studies of the First Amendment influence how courts and scholars interpret what expression the First Amendment protects.

Reviewing how free expression rights have changed over time helps us explore how First Amendment rights might change in the future as well. For instance, John Frank Weaver, a Boston attorney, recently addressed whether A.I.-created content could be considered speech protected by the First Amendment. Weaver referenced *Federalist Papers No. 68* and *Debs v. United States*. Weaver quoted Alexander Hamilton's warning about the desire for "foreign powers to gain" improper influence in relation to Russian-created bots using Facebook and Twitter messages to influence American voters. He also acknowledged the potential for bot-generated messages to be considered weaponized content that could be similar to Eugene Debs's use of speech "to obstruct the draft." Exploring the past provides context for us to imagine how free expression rights might evolve. Thus, knowledge of First Amendment history is foundational for our understanding of First Amendment rights and privileges in the present and future.

Schroeder: Precedent is a crucial legal concept. Because the courts draw from previously decided cases when making contemporary decisions, historical study is almost inherently involved in what we do. We have to look back in order to look forward. A big part of almost any project is looking at past decisions regarding related issues. Those past decisions come with historical context. It matters when they were decided and what was going on at the time. Justices are influenced by external concerns. For these reasons, historical scholarship can contribute substantial insight, meaning, and depth to First Amendment research.

Ward: The Constitution and its amendments are applied to questions unimaginable when the Constitution and amendments were drafted. This provides historians an opportunity to contribute in ways only we can to discussions about what our rights are as well as how and whether those rights are respected. To draw on an example from my own research, how could the nation's founders have imagined something like the recent Cambridge Analytica incident, in which the data on our Facebook profiles were used to tailor highly personalized political messages targeting both ourselves and others in scarcely perceptible ways? They couldn't have. Instead, today's judges would lean on precedent, rather than the few words offered by the Bill of Rights, to assess the legal liabilities, if any, of Facebook and Cambridge Analytica. This reliance on precedent gives historians an outsized role in making sense of rights that are afforded by the Constitution. Our training equips us to identify issues in which First Amendment concerns are lurking, dig into the historical record to assess how related incidents were addressed in the past, consider those past episodes within their social contexts, and bridge those contexts with our own. In doing so, we can offer evidence-based suggestions not only about how to address modern problems but also how we got to where we are in the first place.

Pribanic-Smith: *How do you humanize First Amendment law for those who read your research?*

Coyle: Focusing on the stories of people who are directly affected by challenges to First Amendment rights humanizes First Amendment law. When courts address First Amendment issues, they often do so in the context of individuals' stories. Legal challenges arise because people seek changes. Thus, it is sometimes possible to write about First Amendment law from the perspective of those affected by complex situations. This can show why individuals care about freedom of speech

or freedom of the press. Sometimes this may be done through biographical work.

I used a biographical approach when writing about the free press advocacy of Samuel T. Ragan, former managing editor and executive editor of the Raleigh *News and Observer*. He crusaded for the press's rights to access criminal justice information and the press's responsibility to inform the public about the investigation and adjudication of crimes. Explaining why and how he informed others that press freedom mattered showed why he cared about challenges to First Amendment rights. While freedom of expression inherently relates to individuals' rights to share and receive information, providing personal stories may humanize First Amendment issues.

Schroeder: The cases do quite a bit of the work for us. The facts, historical contexts, and personalities involved in the major First Amendment rulings, as well as many of the less high-profile ones, often have tremendous stories. *New York Times v. Sullivan*, for example, was part of the Civil Rights Movement. The Court's decision includes concerns about and recognitions of the movement. The Court explained, for example, that the advertisement in the case "communicated information, expressed opinion, recited grievances, protested claimed abuses, and sought financial support on behalf of a movement whose existence and objectives are matters of the highest public interest and concern." *Sullivan* is not an outlier. *Hustler v. Falwell* pitted the publisher of *Hustler Magazine*, Larry Flynt, against televangelist and Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell in a battle over an advertisement parody that suggested Falwell had intercourse with his mother in an outhouse. *Morse v. Frederick*, a student rights case, is also known as the "Bong Hits 4 Jesus" case, and last spring an appeals court decided the "monkey selfie" case.

The people involved in the cases also have tremendous stories. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, beyond being one of the key architects

of how we understand the First Amendment, also was shot three different times during the Civil War. Those experiences shaped his judicial philosophy. After reading about his experiences in the Civil War, I started to notice references to battles and war in his opinions. Knowing his experiences in the war and how they changed him helped me to understand his opinions in a more meaningful way.

My project with Erika Pribanic-Smith, *Emma Goldman's No-Conscription League and the First Amendment*, started with the realization that Goldman was fighting for free expression rights in federal court and appealed to the Supreme Court a year before the famous World War I-era Espionage Act cases that were the first to define the meaning of the First Amendment. When we brought Goldman's story and timeline together with the First Amendment's timeline, we found a gold mine of rich, important information that was also deeply human. So, drawing in historical connections between people, events, and cases can help the research connect more meaningfully.

Ward: We humanize the law by telling stories about people that illuminate the forces that act on them, one of which is the First Amendment, and then turning around to show what effect those people had on how we understand and implement the law. Laws are instruments used by people to elicit some sort of action from others. Laws don't decide to apply themselves; someone sues or presses charges against someone else. Every person involved in the process — from litigants to lawyers to jurists to judges, as well as everyone watching a case from the outside, including reporters — is a fallible human subject to the social and legal context of their era. Every action taken and decision made is contingent on individuals acting within the bounds of their situation.

This makes it fruitful to shift the focus from the law to the people affected by it. Rather than investigating how the First Amendment applied to a certain historical episode or changed as the result of a case, I

prefer to emphasize how *individuals* chose to interpret and apply the First Amendment and then try to identify the contextual forces that led them to do so. It's an approach that highlights the influence of a culture's undercurrent while emphasizing the autonomy and impact of the people who lived and acted within that context. For example, the things Jacob Frohwerk printed in his newspaper seem tame by contemporary standards, and they were tolerated in the years prior to the entry of the U.S. into World War I. What changed in American society, then, that suddenly made Frohwerk's comments so threatening, and how did he react once under fire? The simplified answers, that the government was terrified of widespread resistance to the draft and that Frohwerk swung from being a critic of the war to a champion of U.S. war bonds (which, in the end, wasn't enough to sway the courts in his favor), say much about what it must have been like to find oneself orbiting beyond the limits of free speech, a boundary that suddenly shifted with America's entry into the war.

Pribanic-Smith: *What are the challenges specific to researching First Amendment issues?*

Coyle: Finding primary sources can require travel and be costly. Researching trial court orders and decisions that address First Amendment issues may necessitate finding and reviewing documents that are not easily accessible in electronic databases. Some of the documents also are not accessible in bound volumes stored in many law libraries. Researching these materials may require contacting clerks of courts, finding judicial archives, and searching for people who may be able to share oral histories or their own copies of documents. Sometimes, judges and lawyers have archived papers including copies of legal documents and correspondence that explain rationales for judicial orders. Supreme Court justices' papers also may include drafts of opinions as

well as memoranda addressing requests for changes to drafts. One may need to travel or pay for copies of specific files to be able to review these materials.

When writing about legal issues, one also has to be mindful that contemporary understandings of what freedom of speech and press protect may differ from past understandings of what the First Amendment protected. For instance, in 1890, when Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis proposed that judges create privacy law in the United States, they did not need to address the potential for state laws to conflict with the First Amendment. The U.S. Supreme Court clarified that the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment could extend First Amendment freedoms to protect against state laws in *Gitlow v. New York* in 1925.

Pribanic-Smith: *What advice do you have for researchers seeking to study First Amendment issues?*

Coyle: I once was challenged to explain how there was any room left to complete research in a field where so many people have already published scholarship on the First Amendment. That challenge inspired me to read previously published scholarship with questions about how different approaches could build upon a foundation created by excellent scholars. I learned there is a lot of room to continue addressing free expression issues and First Amendment issues may be studied with multiple methodological approaches. Some First Amendment issues have never been explored. Other First Amendment issues have yet to arise.

When researching these issues, context is critical to explain how First Amendment rights are conceptualized at specific points in history. I review primary sources and historical studies to broaden my understanding of factors that could influence how people perceived First Amendment issues. Currently, I am researching conflicts between free

press and fair trial rights in the twentieth century. For this line of scholarship, I also am exploring how members of the legal profession and journalists perceived First Amendment issues by reviewing material presented at professional conferences and published in professional organizations' periodicals. Reviewing these materials and letters exchanged between members of the bar and the press has revealed a level of institutional context.

Schroeder: Studying the First Amendment is rich and rewarding work. It has deep ties with history and, at the same time, has us looking forward in a constant, never-ending discussion about how we should understand freedom of expression as society and the technology we use to communicate continue to change.

I encourage people to read well-written legal research and to watch carefully how the authors structure their work, analyze cases, and cite sources. Robert Kerr, my dissertation chair, was a great example for me. His work is so thoughtful and well structured that it provided a great way for me to approach and structure my own work.

Finally, don't be afraid to try First Amendment-related research. The First Amendment is deeply embedded in history, so anyone who has done historical research should already be well on their way to developing some of the tools needed to succeed in this field. Try a project and submit it to the Southeast Colloquium or AEJMC. The Law Division is generally extremely supportive of people who are trying to learn how to research First Amendment issues.

Ward: Just keep an eye out for First Amendment issues as you go about researching other questions and, most importantly, be willing to engage them when you find them.

I am often intimidated when I first run into First Amendment issues in the course of research, and my instinct is to minimize them. I am

quick in such situations to remind myself that I am not a lawyer, and I worry that fact precludes me from qualifying as a credentialed researcher on such matters. I imagine similar thoughts scare off other historians from taking on First Amendment issues, especially less-experienced scholars like myself.

That kind of thinking is hogwash. We may not all be lawyers, but we are all historians and educators. I may not be of much use to my students if they're dragged into a courtroom, but that doesn't preclude me from helping them understand how the First Amendment affects them (and, I hope, helping them avoid the courtroom in the first place) through my media law course. Similarly, I couldn't argue a libel case between two newspapers in court, but I can certainly analyze the lasting impact of that case on the newspapers' willingness to criticize one another. Such issues aren't likely to be the object of a court's attention, despite their obvious importance. The legal system is busy adjudicating. It's up to us to consider the lasting impact of those adjudications on those they affect.

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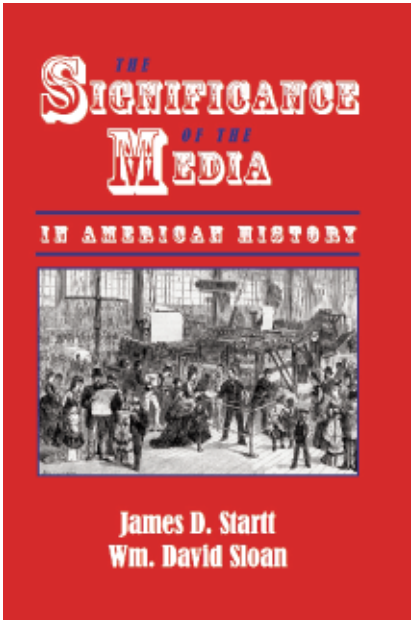

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Historian Interview: John Coward ©

Coward

John Coward, a professor of media studies at the University of Tulsa, is one of today's leading historians of the press and Native Americans. He has written two books on the subject: *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90* (published in 1999) and *Indians Illustrated: The Image of Native Americans in the Pictorial Press* (2016). *The Newspaper Indian* was a finalist for the Western Writers of America award for the year's best historical book. He also has written a number of research papers and journal articles. "Selling the Southwestern Indian: Ideology and Image in *Arizona Highways*, 1925-1940" (2013) was selected as the best article of the year published in the journal *American Journalism*. Prof. Coward received his Ph.D. in communication from the University of Texas.

***Q:** Tell us a little about your family background — where you were born and grew up, your education, and so forth.*

Coward: I was born in Chattanooga. Both my mother and father were raised in East Tennessee; so I have family roots in Southern Appalachia. My father was in the navy in World War II and came back to college at Carson-Newman in Jefferson City, Tennessee, where he met my mother. My father was a history major and a Civil War buff, which may explain my early interest in history. He worked for the Boy Scouts his entire career, and we lived around the South. After Chattanooga we moved to

Lake Charles, Louisiana, then to Tupelo, Mississippi, where I attended elementary school. My father later took a job in Johnson City, Tennessee, near his hometown, and I finished high school there and went to the local university, East Tennessee State. I became interested in journalism in high school because I was interested in the world beyond Johnson City, and the news brought the wider world to me. I was curious, I liked to read, and I thought of myself as a good writer; so I majored in journalism and English at ETSU. I was a student journalist there and ended up as editor of the campus weekly.

Q: *What did you do professionally before going into teaching?*

Coward: After ETSU, I was subject to the draft; so I applied for and was accepted to the naval officer candidate school in Newport, Rhode Island. I was commissioned as an ensign in the naval reserves in late 1972 and served three years on active duty, first on an aircraft carrier, the *USS Forrestal*, and later at a training command in Virginia Beach. I began my graduate studies at UT-Knoxville in 1975. I took a break from school and worked for three years as a newspaper reporter and editor for a small newspaper in Sevierville and Gatlinburg, Tennessee, in the late 1970s. As I was completing my master's, I heard about a teaching position at Emory & Henry College in Southwest Virginia, where I taught as a one-person journalism department from 1980-1984, when I left to pursue a Ph.D. in communication at the University of Texas-Austin.

Q: *Where, and what courses, have you taught?*

Coward: At Emory & Henry I taught a number of skills course — news-writing and editing — as well as media courses such as introduction to mass communication, media law, and principles of public relations.

After I completed my degree at Texas, I taught at Oklahoma, where I continued to teach skills courses, but also taught media history and a public opinion class. I moved to the University of Tulsa in 1990, where I've been a generalist, teaching skills courses as well as a variety of media courses including mass communication and society, history and philosophy of free expression, analysis of media, media history, senior seminar, and so on. For several years, I taught a first-year course at Tulsa called "From Fact to Fiction," which examined literary journalism and creative nonfiction. I also supervise our department's internship program and regularly teach a class on Native Americans and the media, which is my primary research area.

Q: *Tell us about your background in history — when did you first get interested in historical research? How did your education prepare you to be a historian?*

Coward: As I mentioned, my father was a Civil War history buff, and our family visited battlefields when I was a schoolboy. I have vivid memories of our Boy Scout trips to Shiloh in Tennessee, where we walked the grounds and learned about the battle. I suspect these experiences kindled my interest in history. As an undergraduate, I was more interested in media law — I loved the backstories that led to major Supreme Court decisions — but at Texas I turned toward history, which was more natural for me than legal research and writing. I took a media history seminar as part of my doctoral program, as well as seminars in U.S. intellectual and cultural history with William Goetzmann, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian in the American Studies department at Texas, but I never took a class in historical research methods. I picked up much of that on my own. So I'd say my training as a historian was somewhat haphazard, though my courses and training did give me the tools, ideas and wherewithal to teach myself how to do the kind of historical

research I wanted to do.

Q: *Who or what have been major influences on your historical outlook and work?*

Coward: I took an undergraduate journalism history class in 1970 or 1971, and the professor — a retired army colonel and Missouri Ph.D. named Max Marshall — used the old Ed Emery book, *The Press in America*; so my undergraduate understanding of media history was mostly from the "great man" school. I was pretty innocent of social and cultural history, which is why Michael Schudson's *Discovering the News* was such a revelation when I read it as a doctoral student at Texas. I was also jolted by the ideas of James Carey, especially the ritual view of communication, which he described as "the representation of shared beliefs." This idea — and others — helped me understand and interpret my research topic, Native American representations in the media. In addition, I was influenced by a number of historians who worked on the idea of the Indian in the Euro-American mind, such as Robert Berkhofer, whose book, *The White Man's Indian*, was an influence on my research.

Q: *What are the main areas or ideas on which you concentrate your historical work?*

Coward: I've spent many years researching and writing about the idea and image of American Indians in the U.S. media. I didn't intend to study this topic, but at Texas I became interested in all the organizational and technological developments in journalism in the nineteenth century — the invention of the telegraph, the beginning of photography, the rise of the illustrated press, the creation of the Associated Press, and so on. The nineteenth century was also a time of westward expansion, of

course, which is what prompted me to think about the ways that Native people were covered in the press during the era of Manifest Destiny and the Indian wars. Most of my research has focused on that topic — trying to describe, analyze and explain the ways American Indians were represented in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century press.

Q: *Summarize for us the body of work — books, journal articles, and so forth — that you have done related to history.*

Coward: My major historical works are my two books on Native Americans and the press, *The Newspaper Indian,* published in 1999, and *Indians Illustrated,* published in 2016. I published a handful of journal articles and book chapters too. I also compiled and introduced a collection of newspaper stories and editorials about the nineteenth-century Indian wars, which was published as volume four of *The Greenwood Library of American War Reporting,* published in 2005. I've also published a good number of book reviews on topics related to Native Americans and media, which has been my way of bringing more attention to scholarship in this area. More recently, I have been researching the Native American press, focusing mostly on the activist newspapers of the 1960s and 1970s, the "Red Power" newspapers. This has led to several conference papers and works in progress, but I haven't published much in this area yet.

Q: *Of the works you have written, from which ones did you get the most satisfaction?*

Coward: *The Newspaper Indian* was satisfying because it was my first book and it was seen as a significant piece of research at the time. I got a lot of positive reviews, and the book was nominated for an award from the Western Writers of America in 2000. I also got a positive re-

sponse from a number of graduate students, who emailed me about how much they liked the book and how it influenced their research. That was gratifying. That said, I'm a slow researcher, and I worked for many years on *Indians Illustrated*; so I was really happy to have that project completed and in print after all the time and effort I put into it. That book has been well received too; so I've been happy about that.

Q: *We realize that it is difficult to judge one's own work — and that the most accomplished people are often the most modest — but if you had to summarize your most important contributions to the field of JMC history, what would they be?*

Coward: I think my main contribution to the field has been my focus on Native Americans in the media, a topic that has not been studied extensively. When I began by dissertation research in the 1980s, I was surprised that the topic had been so neglected. There were a few dissertations and research articles on news coverage of the Indian wars and similar topics, as well as some essays and book chapters on Indian images, but the field was understudied then — and remains so today. I hope my research and writing have helped fill that gap and explained the nature and significance of Indian representations in the press, but there's still more work that needs to be done.

Q: *As you look back over your career, if you could do anything differently, what would it be?*

Coward: That's a tough question. I'm not sure. I don't think I would change my focus on Native Americans — I'm really glad I stayed with that topic — but I do wish that I had been a faster researcher. I have worked steadily over the years, but it took me a long time to sift through the evidence I found, develop my research questions and work

out an interpretative framework to understand and explain the kinds of ideas and images I found in the press. Along the way, I had to educate myself about the major events of Native American history and the history of the American West, topics I knew little about when I started my research. For *Indians Illustrated*, I had to learn about the illustration process, nineteenth-century American art history, the history of portrait photography and more. All of this took time. So I wish I could have worked faster, but in retrospect I think I needed that time to sort through the texts and images and explain them in ways that were true to the times and made sense historically.

Q: *Tell us about your "philosophy of history" (or historical study in general or of JMC history in particular) or what you think are the most important principles for studying history.*

Coward: I'm not sure I have a philosophy of history as such. That's probably a flaw in my career as a researcher. In any case, I've been influenced by a variety of social theories and historical philosophies, especially social and cultural history. For me, explaining Indian news stories has been largely about context — the kinds of social and cultural ideas that shaped the news. I don't know that I've always been successful, but I tried to approach my primary sources — newspaper articles, editorials and images — without preconceived ideas so that I could look beyond the more obvious explanations and remain open to unexpected themes and contradictions. I guess this was my version of grounded theory — making a close reading of the content itself before attempting to explain the larger ideas embedded in the news.

To put it another way, I tried to develop my interpretations and explanations of Indian representations in light of the larger issues surrounding the production of these stories. This includes the fraught history of Indian-white relations in America, but also political, economic,

religious and other forces that affected the ways Indians were imagined and constructed in the American mind. I think my interest in these larger explanations comes from my literary and humanities interests — I was an undergraduate double major in journalism and English — and I have long been suspicious of simple explanations because they tend to overlook or understate the complexity of human motives and social behaviors, including the ambiguities that shaped Indian news coverage.

Q: *You've been active for many years in both the AJHA (American Journalism Historians Association) and the History Division of AEJMC (Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication). How have those organizations influenced your research?*

Coward: I've learned a lot from my colleagues over the years. My first AEJMC conference was in 1982, and I made my first academic presentation at the AJHA conference in Las Vegas in 1985. So I've come to know and appreciate the work done by professors from across the country, even when their research topics are different from mine. Clearly, there's a scholarly cross-fertilization that occurs at these conferences, and that's been rewarding both personally and professionally. As a grad student and young scholar, I got a lot of encouragement from senior scholars and colleagues in the field — people like Barbara Cloud, Alf Pratte, David Sloan, Jean Palmegiano, David Copeland, Bill Huntzicker and many others. Their support helped me develop as a researcher and teacher, and I've always been grateful for that.

Q: *How would you evaluate the quality of work being done today in JMC history — its strengths and weaknesses?*

Coward: I have been impressed by a lot of the research I've seen in recent years, especially the work of younger scholars. As you might ex-

pect, many of them have brought new ideas and energy to the field. I have been impressed with the large number of women working in journalism history and the perspectives and topics they've introduced. That's helped keep the field relevant and certainly added to the body of knowledge about the role of journalism in society. I do wish, however, that there were more Native American graduate students and scholars writing about the history of the Native press and indigenous media, as well as issues of race and representation of Native Americans. Native scholars can bring indigenous perspectives to the field, raising questions that other scholars — people like me, for example — might never think to ask. I expect that will happen, but it may take time to build a community of Native scholars in this area.

Q: *What do you think we in JMC history need to be doing to improve the status of JMC history in (1) JMC education and (2) the wider field of history in general?*

Coward: These are good questions, but I'm not sure I have very good answers. I've been in a small communication department — now retooled as media studies — at a small university for almost thirty years, and we've been pretty far outside the kind of mainstream of journalism education you find at major universities. We do offer media history, but it's not a required course and it's not taught every year. In my time at Tulsa, most of our students have been interested in public relations and advertising work, which means they don't gravitate to media history. But I think it's an important course for our students, and we have discussed making media history a foundational course in our revised curriculum. One argument for that, of course, is the rapidly changing media landscape of the past twenty years or so. To understand those changes and how they affect individuals and the larger society, it is important to understand the history of communication, journalism, media technolo-

gy and so on. I think most journalism schools recognize this, but I know there's been a long-running battle to keep journalism history central to the curriculum, especially when resources are limited and there's a huge demand for skills and technology courses. Despite that, I continue to believe — naively, perhaps — that journalism history is a vital part of JMC education and that it contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of journalism in society.

As for the wider field of history, I'm not sure how to make our presence felt there in ways that could help JMC history. One idea is simply to keep doing what we're doing and wait for the broader field to come to us. I say that because it seems that the significance of journalism and media more generally is being recognized now by some traditional historians who didn't start out thinking much about journalism or the media. The rise of the Internet and digital media has prompted this reevaluation of journalism, bringing some historians closer to our field.

Another way of expanding the reach of journalism history is simply to do good work, by which I mean to produce first-rate scholarship in our field that can inform the larger historical conversation. If we can publish articles and books that make the case for journalism and media history as crucial to a greater understanding of American and world history, then we won't be seen as a minor subfield of the discipline. That's easier said than done, of course, but I don't think it's impossible given the quality of the work of the best journalism historians.

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Book Award Interview: Steven Casey ©

Casey

Steve Casey received the 2018 American Journalism Historians Association award for the best book published in 2017 for *The War Beat, Europe: The American Media at War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford University Press). A specialist in American foreign policy, he teaches at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His other books are *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War against Nazi Germany, 1941-1945* (2001); *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion, 1950-1953* (2008), which won both the Truman Book Award and the Neustadt Prize for the best book on American politics; and *When Soldiers Fall: How Americans Have Debated Combat Casualties, from World War I to the War on Terror* (2014), which also won the Neustadt Prize. The following interview deals with *The War Beat, Europe.*

***Q:** Give us a brief summary of your book.*

Casey: Based on a wealth of previously untapped primary sources, *The War Beat, Europe* provides the first comprehensive account of what American war correspondents witnessed, what they were allowed to publish, and how their reports shaped the home front's perception of World War II, from America's first offensive in North Africa in 1942 to Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender in 1945.

***Q:** How did you get the idea for your book?*

Casey: One of the conundrums I faced when working on *Selling the Korean War* more than a decade ago, was why and how General Douglas MacArthur belatedly introduced censorship in December 1950. With many news organizations claiming that the Korean War rules were unprecedented in their severity, MacArthur responded that he had "lifted [them] almost bodily" from the World War II regulations. Not wanting to take anything that MacArthur said at face value, I began searching for books on the media-military relationship during World War II, only to draw a blank. At that time, historians had produced excellent work on propaganda and censorship inside the United States, including Allan Winkler's *Politics of Propaganda* and Michael Sweeney's *Secrets of Victory*, but there was very little on how war correspondents had operated in and around the distant battle zones. This was the gap I decided to fill.

Originally, I planned to cover Europe and the Pacific in one volume, but such a book would have been too long. A different cast of military characters also existed in the two theaters, with reporters facing Eisenhower and the air force in Europe and MacArthur and the navy in Asia. So *The War Beat, Europe* tells only half of the story. *The War Beat, Pacific* is scheduled for publication in 2020.

Q: *Tell us about the research you did for your book — What were your sources, how did you research your book, how long did you spend, and so forth?*

Casey: Researching how the military sought to control the media in and around the battlefield was relatively straightforward. The army kept copious records that now reside in the National Archives in College Park, Md., with most army documents relating to publicity and censorship to be found in the 000.7 Decimal File. Key officers also left letters and memoranda that can be consulted in a few major research centers:

the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kan., the Military History Institute in Carlisle, Pa., the VMI in Lexington, Va., and the Citadel in Charleston, S.C.

Trying to piece together how and why reporters produced the stories they did presented a greater challenge. I focused on the output first, using the excellent Proquest Historical Newspapers database, as well as the microfilm version of titles like the *Chicago Daily News* and *Washington Daily News* in the Library of Congress Newspaper Reading Room. The LC also contains a large archive of NBC radio broadcasts. Once I had the stories, I hunted down as many of the private papers as possible. I also found the records of a number of news organizations to be invaluable, especially the AP Archives in New York, the Sulzberger Papers at the New York Public Library, and the Chicago Tribune Company Records at Cantigny, Ill.

Armed with a digital camera, my technique in any archive is to photograph all the documents that might be relevant. I then spend weeks trawling through them, organizing and noting, when I return home.

Q: *Besides the sources you used, were there any others you wish you had been able to examine?*

Casey: The book's starting point is to document the activities of those correspondents who reached the biggest audience at the time. Only a few of them left any letters or diaries from the war, however. As a result, I yearned for more information about the private hopes and fears of men like Wes Gallagher of the Associated Press (AP), Bill Stoneman of the *Chicago Daily News*, Drew Middleton of the *New York Times*, Homer Bigart of the *New York Herald Tribune*, and John Thompson of the *Chicago Tribune*. Even those who did bequeath private collections to university libraries left much more material on their pre- and post-war careers.

Q: *Based on your research for the book, what would you advise other historians in our field about working with sources?*

Casey: Don't ignore the hierarchies within which the war correspondents operated. Too many historical works are organized as biographical studies of "exceptional individuals in exceptional circumstances," but reporters are never free agents. Situating them not only within the structure of their own news organizations, but also inside the military units they were accredited to, gives a greater depth to the analysis. Crucially, it also helps to uncover important sources that are absent in private collections. Letters from, say, Middleton or Gallagher to their editors and bureau chiefs are available in the Sulzberger Papers and AP Archives, and help to fill the gap highlighted above. Because the military acted as transmitter as well as censor, army and navy records sometimes contain a large number of service messages between the reporters and their bosses.

Q: *What were the challenges you faced in researching your book?*

Casey: The most obvious challenges were those that face any researcher: time and money. A university professor is often only a part-time researcher, who has to cram archival trips into those precious moments when teaching and administration can be put to one side. A university professor based in Britain also has the added costs of lengthy and expensive plane trips. Whereas someone working on, say, presidential history can apply for research grants from presidential libraries, there are fewer sources of funding for anyone looking to consult the media collections scattered across the country.

After collecting the material, I had to overcome the unevenness of not just what various individuals and organizations had left behind, but also the quality of prose in the surviving documents. Military memos

tended to be terse, dry, and fact-filled. Letters by a stylist as good as Ernie Pyle were filled with colorful insights. The first drafts of *The War Beat* reflected this disparity — the sections on the military being much duller than those based on the correspondents' communications. My earlier books had been straightforward academic monographs, with the methodological architecture to the fore. I wanted this book to be more readable, and it took a considerable amount of time and effort to ensure that the narrative on, for example, Eisenhower's planning for D-Day was of the same pace and quality as the experiences of Pyle, Robert Capa, and Ernest Hemingway in the days leading up to June 6, 1944.

Q: *Is it possible to get too close to a research subject? How do historians maintain their neutrality of viewpoint when conducting and interpreting research?*

Casey: It is certainly easy to admire and respect reporters like Bill Stoneman or Don Whitehead, to name just two, who landed on most of the invasion beaches in North Africa and Europe armed with just a typewriter. Unlike other books in this field, which concentrate on the bravery and exploits of war reporters, my goal was to take a step back and focus on how these experiences influenced the ultimate output, in order to understand how the American home front experienced this distant war.

Looking at the published story as much as the back story enabled me — hopefully — to avoid the obvious pitfalls associated with hero worship, but it also contained another danger. Views on war and the media remain heavily influenced by Vietnam, especially the claim that a group of inexperienced and biased reporters turned the public against the war during the 1960s and early 1970s. Seen against this backdrop, the media during World War II is often viewed as a tame partner in the war-winning team. As I sought to establish the main

themes of World War II reporting, I tried to place to one side what had happened in the subsequent decades, and treat these correspondents on the basis of the standards of their time.

Q: *What new insights does your book provide?*

Casey: Perhaps the most important insight is how the nature of the fighting in World War II exerted a profound influence over the correspondents' actions. Previous works have treated the war as either an ideological inspiration (reporters inevitably joining the military team because the Nazi enemy was so evil) or an arena for adventure (reporters naturally heading to the front because this was the only place where their heroics would lead to fame and fortune). In contrast, *The War Beat,* argues that the way in which this war was fought is crucial to understanding when and why correspondents felt compelled to forge a close partnership with the military.

This dynamic operated in a variety of ways. When the United States finally became a full belligerent in December 1941, a basic asymmetry existed between the military and the media. While the army was stocked full of war virgins, their counterparts in the media tended to be war veterans, who had covered the battles in Europe since 1939 and were not about to become submissive junior partners to a bunch of officers who only knew about war from training manuals — or these reporters' own dispatches.

As soon as the American fight-back began, however, extreme peril acted like a powerful adhesive, fastening the media and military together. Indeed, because conquering the Nazi empire required a combination of amphibious assaults and sustained bombing missions, war reporters had little choice but to cozy up to the military hierarchy: it was their only chance of getting a coveted spot on a landing craft or Flying Fortress. Since the upcoming mission was invariably so dangerous, the cho-

sen war correspondents rarely disputed the military's fierce determination to enforce total operational security. Faced with the prospect of landing on a hostile shore bristling with enemy guns, not even the bravest, most competitive, most reckless reporter wanted the enemy to be alerted ahead of time. The problems tended to come afterwards, when the acute danger receded and the rationale behind the restrictions no longer appeared so compelling. Then reporters would revert to type, heading off on their own, digging for stories that spelled trouble and challenging the censors for blocking dispatches that they thought were in the public interest.

Q: *What findings most surprised you?*

Casey: I was constantly surprised by the quality of the articles the war correspondents produced in such demanding conditions. Too much attention has been paid to the role of censorship in fostering an excessively antiseptic version of the war in media reports. For the correspondents who joined a bombing mission or boarded a landing craft, censorship was often the least of their worries. Take Don Whitehead on D-Day. After a number of nervous, sleepless nights, the AP reporter spent much of June 6 laying prostate in a hastily scrabbled trench, amid the carnage on Omaha beach. After finally hauling himself into a more secure foxhole, he felt he "was ready to drop with fatigue," but he still had to tap out his story, which he did "that afternoon under shellfire that made his typewriter jump on his shaking knees."

Whitehead's D-Day dispatch was not his most vivid piece of writing — it merely described American troops wading ashore to the "rattle of machine guns and the bursting of shells" — but, under the circumstances, it is amazing that he was able to produce anything coherent at all.

Q: *What advice would you give to people in our field who are considering doing a book in JMC history?*

Casey: There are so many great topics that remain unresearched, and, although you shouldn't have to, you need to make the case as aggressively as possible for writing about them from an historical perspective.

Political scientists too often ignore JMC history, viewing it as little more than an intervening variable between the state and society. Other historical sub-fields also disregard it, as they concentrate on social and cultural trends, or political and military leaders. Yet JMC history matters. Rather than a relatively irrelevant intervening variable, the media operates as the public's window on the world, and it is impossible to understand how and why the nation responds to issues like war and peace without a knowledge of the way these subjects were reported at the time. Moreover, cultural, political, and military leaders are invariably obsessed with how they are portrayed in the press, and they often say the most revealing things to reporters.

As an added inducement, book presses are extremely interested in publishing work on this subject, especially if they receive a proposal without too much jargon.

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