

Historiography

in Mass Communication



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Historiography in Mass Communication

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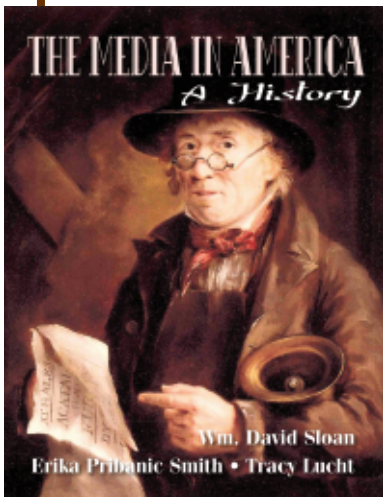
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The Enthrallment of Theory

By Wm. David Sloan ©



Sloan

A few years ago, our *Historiography* journal was putting together a panel to discuss the use of theory. We asked Don Shaw to serve, and he agreed. He was the co-creator of the agenda-setting theory. It's one of the best known theories in the entire field of mass communication. We then called for volunteers, and four professors signed up.

After we got answers to the first three questions, Don withdrew. He conceived of theory as a systematic approach one finds in social and behavioral science. The other four panelists all thought of theory within the context of Cultural Studies. There, “theory” is an overarching idea, often with an ideological turn. Their answers seemed to have no connection to Don’s.

As that episode helps to demonstrate, mass comm historians define “theory” in different ways.

Many historians find theory appealing. That’s true not only of mass comm historians but of historians in most other fields as well. Clearly, mass comm historians aren’t alone in their enthrallment with theory.

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Yet many of them are more seduced than historians generally are. Why does theory attract us?

Part of the answer is simple. It lives in the makeup of human nature. We see the world around us, with all its complexities, and we want to make sense of it, to simplify it so that we can understand it. We want an explanation that reduces its complexity.

The purpose of theory is to do just that. It aims to help humans comprehend a complex world, or relationships, or causes and effects, or even situations in the past.

Offering to explain how things work in a way we can understand, theory thus captivates us.

In truth, the fact that theory fascinates some historians fascinates me.

Like many historians in our field, I've tried to stay away from theory in my own historical writing. But I know that ideas that help me make sense of the past influence my approach. I also know that many of our colleagues find theory appealing. So what follows is an attempt to make sense of the use of theory in mass comm history.

Yet it's difficult to write a cohesive account of the subject. That's simply because — as the panel with (or without) Don Shaw illustrates — historians have vastly different conceptions of what theory is.

THE MANY VARIETIES OF THEORY

Even the definition of theory, which seems as if it should be simple, is complex.

What is theory? It's more correct to ask, What are theories? That's because we — and by “we” I mean people generally and mass comm historians particularly — use the word “theory” in several ways.

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One way to think of theory is to begin with scientific ones. I started to say that the “simplest” way to understand theory is with scientific ones. They can seem concrete and straightforward. But even in science the concept of theory isn’t simple.

Theories in history work differently than theories in science. Nevertheless, it’s useful for the historian to understand the concept of theory in the sciences.

A scientific theory is a systematic explanatory scheme derived from a number of physical laws. Laws are recognized from empirical observations (such as experiments). They describe relationships between objects or events. They are, one might say, direct statements of fact. A theory is an explanatory structure that these laws suggest. It aims to explain “how” or “why.”

One can see the difference by considering gravity. The *law* of gravity is that an attractive force exists between two objects. *Theories* of gravity attempt to explain how or why objects attract one another. If you step off a roof, you’ll hit the ground. That’s the law. The attempted explanation of why you’ll hit the ground is the theory.

In history, facts are analogous to laws in science. We know that individuals started newspapers in the 1700s. That’s a fact. An explanation of why is a theory.

Generally, but not always, theories are testable. Sometimes they’re inferred from observations. An example is the “big bang” theory about the origin of the universe. The observation is that matter in the universe, such as galaxies, is moving away in all directions from a central point. That evidence suggests that at one time everything was centralized in the same location, probably so densely compressed that it would fit in a thimble, or perhaps that there was nothing at all. Then suddenly, in an instant, it separated in a great explosion, the “big bang,” and brought

the universe into existence.

Most fields have their own theories, and they range from concrete ones supported by a history of evidence to shadowy ones springing only from the imagination and corresponding little to any definite reality. On the continuum from concrete to creamy, historical theory resides somewhere near the middle.

Walking along the continuum from science to history and beyond, we first meet with theories in such areas as economics and geography. Each has a variety of theories. Some are supported soundly with evidence. In economics, as an example, the theory of supply-and-demand to explain prices has such a long history and such strong supporting experience that it has become established law. (Please note for clarity that the concept of law in economic theory is not the same as physical law in science.) In simplified terms, it says prices are relative to supply and demand. As prices rise, supplies increase but demand decreases. Then, as demand declines, prices fall, and supplies also decline, resulting in increased demand for the existing supplies, resulting in higher prices.

On the other hand, supply-side economics is only a theory not firmly established as law. It argues that as the supply of goods increases, the result is economic growth. The opposing contested theory is demand-side economics, which argues that it is the demand for services and goods that drives economic growth.

Continuing on our walk, one of the areas of theory we next find is political science. It has had and continues to have many theories. One is Pluralism. It says that decision-making is mostly the purview of government but that many non-government entities, such as special-interest groups, also influence it. Elite theory is another, opposing theory. It argues that small but powerful minorities, such as those who wield economic power, make the decisions.

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Similar to theories in mass comm history, most theories in political science are short-lived and seldom outlast a few generations.

Finally, down the continuum even farther from science theory are ideological and philosophical theories (dealing with such matters as metaphysics, existence, morals, meaning, truth, knowledge, purpose, etc., such as Greek stoicism and Nietzsche's nihilism). In mass comm history today, they usually deal with social structure and power (such as one finds in critical theory). Such theories are the least "scientific" in the sense that they tend to rely not on evidence but are intuitive and, rather than empirical, are rational.

Had we paused in our trip along the continuum, somewhere around political science we would have encountered history.

Like theory in other subject areas, theory in history isn't simple.

GRAND THEORY

Historians make a distinction between two kinds of theory: small and grand.

Small theory applies to specific problems.

Grand theory is more general. It attempts to explain all of history (or at least a very large part of it) by a universal truth. It might be part of a historian's assumptions before he or she begins a particular inquiry.

Grand theories have attracted many historians. Since ancient times, numerous scholars have been fascinated by the idea that there's a force that determines history and establishes a pattern for human events. Because they ponder the question of ultimate historical reality, they might be called philosophers of history rather than historians. They're the grand systematizers of history, detecting regularities and correlations in human actions.

Some of their big patterns are cyclical in nature, others linear, and some merely ideological, but, since they impose an ordered meaning on history and explain that meaning by a pattern they believe all history follows, their conceptualization of history is deterministic. They're interested in discovering the laws behind history. On a less ambitious scale, some attempt to provide a theoretical framework for explaining history at only any one place or time.

Karl Marx, Oswald Spengler, and Arnold Toynbee are among the better known philosophers of history. Spengler and Toynbee both dealt with the reasons for the rise and fall of civilizations. Marx was more ideological. In the vein of Spengler and Toynbee, he attempted to explain the rise and fall of societies, but he attributed the cycle to historical materialism, in effect, how a society contributes to or fetters people's capacity to produce. His theory is ideological in the sense that it favors socialism over capitalism. Jared Diamond is today's popular equivalent to the grand theorists. In his book *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, he argues that Eurasians were able to conquer other civilizations not because they were intellectually or morally superior, but because of geography, technology, and immunology.

A more common type of determinism is that associated with the word *progress*. The Whig interpretation of history, which has had numerous proponents in the English-speaking world, is a classic example of using the idea of democratic progress to interpret history. Historians who accept this interpretation view human events as a record of upward progress, and their ideas have influenced a great deal of historical perception.

In American history, we also find grand theories, although not on such a broad scale as the rise and decline of whole civilizations.

One of the best-known is Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier the-

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sis. In 1893 Turner presented his essay “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” to the young American Historical Association. He noted that the U.S. Census of 1890 stated that the United States no longer had a frontier. He took the occasion to argue that “Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development....” It was the presence of a frontier that accounted for the “peculiarity of American institutions ... [which] have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people.”

Throughout the writing of American history we find a number of other such large interpretations. They range from the Nationalist of the 19th century to the Progressive and Consensus of the 20th to Nicole Hannah-Jones’ slavery thesis in her “1619 Project” of our own time.

Even as grand theories can be fascinating, the majority of historians remain unconvinced by deterministic explanations. As Jim Startt and I have written (*Historical Methods in Mass Communication*), most historians are dubious about the existence of single causes and laws of history. Determinism is a form of reductionism that forces historians to be too selective, even manipulative, in choosing evidence and leads them to organize that evidence in a manner that fails to correspond to the great diversity of human reality. “[H]istorical facts are unique in character, space, and time,” Carl Bridenbaugh cautioned, and historians refrain “from trying to fit them into a rigid theory or fixed pattern.” (*American Historical Review*, 1963). Most historians believe that a bullish use of theory does a disservice by trying to force the complex nature of the past into an explanation that simplifies to the point of distorting it.

In general, historians have serious doubts about the idea that the

key to humankind's experience lies in a mechanistic force that's beyond its control. By making any causal factor such a force, determinists impose an inevitability on history that's not there.

Furthermore, once one attempts to apply a grand theory to a specific situation, more often than not it falls apart.

Nevertheless, most historians find deterministic conceptualizations of history and the grand causes suggested by a Toynbee or a Hannah-Jones to have some appeal. Theories can stimulate thought about history and suggest possible explanations for particular chapters of history. One doesn't have to be a Marxist, for instance, to recognize that his philosophy can help one to understand the nature of capitalism in history. Or, to carry the example of capitalism a bit further, mass comm historians might well find Marx's ideas of substantial assistance if they wish to inquire into the relationship between business and the press.

THEORY'S APPEAL TO MASS COMM HISTORIANS

While general historians find grand theories, and even small ones, dubious, many mass comm historians find them appealing. That leads one to ask why. In answer, three main reasons can be suggested.

First, many of our historians did their doctoral study in mass comm programs that emphasized social and behavioral science. Those programs give pre-eminence to theory. So graduates, even those who go into the study of history, are impressed with the need to have theory as an explanatory framework.

Second, even those not trained in scientific or social/behavioral science still want a way to organize the complexity of the past. So they look for explanations through "theories" from such approaches as the social sciences and cultural studies.

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The third reason is that many mass comm graduates have little training in history. They didn't receive solid grounding in either history or historical methods, and so they're either less dedicated to the principles of historical study or more susceptible to the Siren call to impose on history ahistorical thinking such as theory and philosophy.

In fact, those untrained in history are usually the ones calling most loudly for theory. Most seem more interested in ideology or politics or some other current issue than they are in history. They don't respect history as history. They don't revere it for itself. They find it interesting because they think they can use it to buttress their own beliefs about contemporary matters.

When calling for use of theory or for "new theories," they usually don't mean a systematic "scientific" theory but rather an idea or an interpretation. So, though not intending to do so, they reveal one certain fact about the use of theory. It's this:

The idea of "theory" in mass comm history is more indefinite than it is in the sciences and the social sciences.

MASS COMM HISTORIOGRAPHIC THEORIES

Despite the fact that most good historians shy away from trying to apply theory, they do use it. But they don't employ a systematic or rigid approach.

In fact, historians throughout history have employed "theory." Each generation was influenced by the times in which it lived, and the overarching ideas during the period shaped historians' views. In most instances, they didn't grasp that fact, and so they looked at the past through the lens of those ideas and assumed that what they saw was reality, the truth undimmed. If we think of "theory" as such a pervasive

system of ideas and ideals, then we can say that all historians employ it or at least are influenced by it.

One can see such perspectives at work throughout the writing of American history — whether the historiography is Puritan, Nationalist, Romantic, Progressive, Consensus, Neo-Progressive, or any other approach that has dominated an age.

Until the 20th century, most historians didn't, in my opinion, intentionally apply a system of interpretation to their writing. They just assumed that the way they explained the past was the natural way it happened. It wasn't until the Progressive approach appeared on the scene in the early 20th century that historians deliberately attempted to use an interpretation to achieve their own purposes. That has been the case with many historians since, whether they're from a Consensus, Neo-Progressive, or any other school.

Just as in the writing of history in general, in mass comm historiography, grand perspectives have been present from the beginning. They continue up to the present. The various interpretations that historians have used are based on underlying assumptions about the fundamental causes behind history.

Mass comm historians have tended to fall into groups whose members share similar views. The several schools of American mass comm historians have been written about elsewhere. So here I'll do no more than briefly summarize them.

Nationalist

Historians of the early 19th century, writing during an era in which pride in American achievements was popular, explained newspapers and journalists as influential patriotic organizations and figures who contributed to the progress of the nation and its institutions. These Nation-

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alist historians looked on the history of America as the advancing revelation of the nation's leadership role in the world's improvement. To them, America was the nation chosen to lead in the fulfillment of humankind's destiny: greater and greater freedom and liberty.

Influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on natural rights and progress and the people's role in determining their government, these historians placed the press within an overall story of the developing liberty of Western civilization and of the American people in particular. Most wrote about the press in terms of the political splits of early America, between colonists and British authorities and between Patriots and Tories. They pictured the sides in the conflict as those who advocated the natural rights of liberty and those who supported authoritarian government.

Romantic

Even as the Nationalist interpretation continued strong throughout the 19th century, in the 1830s the influence of Romanticism began to alter it. Romantic historians shared their predecessors' belief in the progress of humankind, in liberty as the ultimate goal of history, and in America's special role in leading the world to that goal. The press, they believed, was one of the institutions of primary importance, and they considered the United States as the high point in its development.

But they added a new flavor to the story. The Romantic movement in the arts — with its emphasis on vivid pictorial descriptions and narrative, its fascination with the past, and its accentuation of the role of great men in history — strongly influenced these historians. They thought of history as one of the literary arts, and they mainly wrote narrative biographies in an imaginative style designed to appeal to large audiences.

Romantic historians described printers and editors as men larger than life who imprinted their newspapers with their own character. Since historians typically were gentlemen from socially and politically elite families in the Northeast, they especially favored printers and editors who respected established values and traditions.

Developmental

In 1833 Benjamin Day founded the *New York Sun*, America's first successful general-interest penny newspaper. It created a revolution in journalism, in attitudes about what the nature of newspapers should be, and in historians' views. From this changed perspective emerged what came to be the predominant, most pervasive, and longest-lived approach to mass comm history, the Developmental interpretation. While other interpretations have been strong at various times, the concept of the developmental progress of the media has been persistent since the last decades of the 19th century.

Beginning with the publication in 1873 of Frederic Hudson's *Journalism in the United States, from 1690 to 1872*, the Developmental interpretation has provided the underlying assumptions of a majority of histories of American mass media and continues today to resonate with some historians. (Readers familiar with Jim Carey's reference to "Whig" history in the 1970s can find some similarity between it and Developmental history, but the Developmental interpretation has both broad and specific features that Carey didn't recognize.)

It's based on the concept of the professional progress of the news media and related professions. It views mass comm history as the continuing improvement of practices and standards. How the press, for example, became a proper journalistic instrument was the primary concern of Developmental historians. Like many other historians, they

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tended to view the past in terms of the present, but they attempted to explain and evaluate history by its contributions to present standards.

Progressive

Contrasting with the Developmental interpretation, a fourth school — that of Progressive history — emerged around 1910. In place of the Developmental school's professional progress explanation, Progressive historians substituted a concept of ideological conflict.

The Progressive school grew, in part, out of a change that had taken place in the study of American history in the late 1800s. Professional historians began to replace the gentlemen historians and amateurs. While professional journalists continued to write historical works, many historians in the early 1900s were educators from the emerging departments of journalism at various universities. Thereafter, professors wrote more and more of the works on mass comm history.

Because American universities opened their doors to everyone, the new academic historians came from various levels of society, and they reflected the views of their social class rather than elite society in the Northeast. Representing their own geographic regions, they began to shift some of the emphasis away from the media in New York and New England to those in other sections of the country.

Influenced by the ideas of such Progressive American historians as Turner and Beard, reform-oriented mass comm historians viewed the past as a struggle in which most editors, publishers, and reporters fought on the side of freedom, liberty, civil reform, democracy, and equality against the powerful forces of wealth and class. Theirs was a black-and-white, conservative-vs.-liberal, bad-guy/good-guy dichotomy.

They believed the primary purposes of the media were to crusade for liberal social and economic causes and to battle on the side of the

masses of the common, working people against the entrenched interests in American business and government. They often placed the conflict in economic terms, with the wealthy class attempting to control the media for its own use. Sympathetic with the goals of the Progressive reformers of the early 20th century, they portrayed the media as tools for social change, progress, and democracy.

Eventually, the Progressive interpretation of American history as a conflict between liberalism and conservatism fell out of favor. However, it re-emerged in the 1960s as a Neo-Progressive interpretation. This mindset remains popular with a considerable number of today's mass comm historians.

Consensus

While the Progressive interpretation dominated the study of history in the first half of the 20th century, the fact that America faced major crises during that same period encouraged a diametrically opposing interpretation. With the nation confronting external threats from world war and domestic problems caused by the Great Depression, a number of mass comm historians presented a picture of America and its mass media that was characterized by basic agreement on fundamental principles.

These Consensus historians reasoned that America's past was marked more by general accord than by conflict and that Americans, rather than sundered by class differences, tended to be more united than divided. While Americans from time to time might disagree on certain issues, their disagreements took place within a larger framework of agreement on underlying principles — such as a belief in democracy, human freedom, and constitutional government — that overshadowed their differences. Consensus historians molded the Progressives' villains

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such as industrialists and media owners into important people who made constructive contributions to America, while they painted Progressives' heroes such as reformers and the labor press as less idealistic.

The Consensus outlook had a major impact on the interpretation of numerous aspects of mass comm history. It explained the American Revolution and the press' role in it, for example, as democratic rather than economic or social, as Progressive historians had argued. It viewed the media's role in America's entry into World Wars I and II in terms of the general agreement among Americans that involvement was necessary. Consensus historians viewed the media's performance during the wars positively, crediting the media and government for providing adequate information in a way that helped make possible the defeat of democracy's enemies.

Cultural

The next major school of interpretation — Cultural history — shows no favorites in ideology. Its fundamental premise is that the media operated in a close interrelationship with their environment.

To avoid confusion, I should point out that the Cultural interpretation sometimes is termed “Sociological” and isn't the approach that Jim Carey proposed under the term “Cultural.”

The impetus for the Cultural interpretation may be traced to a work on urban sociology by Robert Park, one of the members of the prestigious Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago. In “The Natural History of the Newspaper,” published in 1923, he argued that the evolution of American journalism resulted from its interaction with the surrounding culture. The primary factors in determining the nature of the newspaper were the conditions of the society and the system in which the press operated.

While some historians in other schools had attempted to explain the media as institutions somewhat separate from society, Cultural historians — such as Sidney Kobre, the most prolific of them — considered the media as a part of society and therefore influenced by various factors outside the media themselves. Thus, these historians addressed such issues as the factors that accounted for the founding of radio stations and the financial conditions under which the media operated.

Whereas most historians had assumed the media had a major influence on society, Cultural historians were interested in the reverse effect: the impact of society on the media. This perspective accounted for a major change in historical outlook. Until the 1950s, media influence was so widely accepted that historians often based their studies on the concept. Cultural historians largely downplayed media influence on society and substituted for it the concept that the media themselves were a product of social influences.

The Cultural perspective had other effects. One was the virtual disappearance of the “great man” explanation of communication history. Rarely did Cultural historians frame their studies around the role that an individual had played in shaping the media.

Cultural Studies

A notable impetus in encouraging studies from a new perspective came with Jim Carey’s 1974 article “The Problem of Journalism History.” It appeared in the inaugural issue of the journal *Journalism History*. In calling for a “cultural history of journalism,” Carey argued that historians should focus on a “ritual” view of communication, on the relationship of mass communication to human “consciousness,” and on journalism’s “symbolic meaning.”

Journalism historians, Carey said, should be concerned principally

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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 ... to recover ... 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.... Cultural history is, in this sense, the study of consciousness in the past.”

Carey wasn't a trained historian but instead worked in the realm of philosophy. He drew his ideas from a wide range of philosophical areas, the main one of which was cultural studies. Scholars who have drawn on his ideas usually have added their own, and thus the Cultural Studies school incorporates a variety of approaches. In general, however, the historians believe mass communication plays a significant role in determining the ideas of the culture in which it operates.

Most mass comm historians today who emphasize theory are from the Cultural Studies school. Their research tends to focus on the content of mass communication, with the researchers then drawing conclusions about what the content meant to the audience or about the social values that the content presented. They have produced studies dealing with such matters 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.

Some historians in the school are overtly ideological. Their approaches draw less from Carey and more from such perspectives as critical theory, postmodernism, feminist theory, ethnic studies, Marxism,

liberation theory, and a host of others.

Gender and Minority

Since the 1970s, approximately one-fifth of all history research articles appearing in journals in communication have focused on women and minorities. In the last several years, they've shown up with increased frequency. Of course, both topics have a long historiography, but recent scholarship emphasizes women's and minorities' struggles against discrimination.

The distinctive approaches of recent years have exhibited what have been designated "Feminist" and "Militant" perspectives. For extensive discussions of both approaches, see Julie Williams, "Women in Media, 1700-Present: Victims or Equals?" and Bernell Tripp, "The Black Media, 1865-Present: Liberal Crusaders or Defenders of Tradition?" chapters 7 and 12 in my edited book *Perspectives on Mass Communication History*.

A variety of reasons provided the impetus for those approaches. Among them, one can point to such factors as the civil rights movement and the protests against the Vietnam war of the 1960s (a time when many later mass comm historians were students on college campuses), the women's and feminist movements, instances of mistreatment of minorities (such as the Los Angeles police beating of Rodney King in 1991), a growing emphasis in academia on ideology, and an increasing number of women and minorities who worked as college professors, many of whom specialized in mass comm history.

The Feminist school focused on the discrimination women faced and overcame and on the feminist media in general. Some Feminist historians adopted some of the Developmental perspective as they explored feminist issues as factors in the professional development of

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women in the media. Some dealt admirably with women who overcame discrimination to become notable media professionals. Others took a more critical approach and condemned the male-dominated media for their mistreatment of women.

Similar to Feminist historians, a number of historians writing about minority groups and the media argued that the story was essentially one of discrimination and attempts to overcome it. That view was particularly evident in histories of Native Americans and African Americans.

Historians dealing with Native Americans focused mainly on the frontier press. They claimed that white editors' belief in racial superiority toward and hatred of Indians encouraged violence against them.

Similarly, historians of African Americans and the media presented a critical picture of white control and discrimination. They considered the Black media as part of the "Black revolution," as instruments of political protest and societal reform. Battle lines were clearly drawn — on the one side, white politicians, editors, and businessmen who conspired to withhold from African Americans the rights and advantages that white Americans enjoyed; and on the other side, crusading Black publishers and journalists dedicated to promoting political, as well as economic and cultural, equality.

On a scale not so grand as these interpretive schools, historians sometimes apply theories from the social and behavioral sciences approaches to mass communication. Or at least they may have the theories in the back of their mind as they study history. Media-effects theories — including persuasiveness theories such as primacy/recency — seem to be the most popular. Because it's so well established in current thinking, agenda setting probably receives the most attention from mass comm historians. It doesn't hurt that one of the two originators of the

theory, Don Shaw, became a respected and beloved historian.

THE ROLE OF EVIDENCE

Finally, the use of theory must confront the issue of confirmation. That is, how can we conclude that a theory actually works in history? Is it valid?

Here, the main question is that of evidence.

Simply stated, the answer is that evidence, the preponderance of the evidence, is mandatory. It must be clear and convincing. “Theories can be tested,” Brooks Adams wrote in *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, “only by applying them to facts.” That was more than a century ago, and since then the role of evidence in the study of history has only been elevated.

Evidence is the foundation of history. When historians speak of producing a well-researched study, they mean one that rests upon evidence from primary sources. They employ secondary sources — such as comments by theorists and others who agree with a historian’s view — only with discretion as the narration merits. Sound history stands upon sound research.

Three basic activities are involved in historical research: (1) compiling a complete body of sources, (2) evaluating those sources by understanding their explicit and implicit meaning, and (3) explaining the relevance of those sources to the account one produces. Historians must master all three of these activities for their work to achieve credibility.

Although it’s not required that historians be scientific researchers if they plan to use theory, it’s helpful that they understand some of the principles of scientific research relating to theories. Of course, scientists and historians don’t operate in the same manner. Nevertheless, histori-

The Enthrallment of Theory

ans, like scientists, must be able to state their theories in a concrete and specific way, they mustn't set out to prove a theory (but rather to attempt to determine if a theory's correct), they must gather an adequate body of evidence, and they must consider contrary evidence.

A particular danger that historians, like scientists, must avoid is that of confirmation bias. That's the error of interpreting evidence as it confirms one's beliefs and theories. One suspects that the issue has been and remains a common problem with historians.

Many historians, we can conclude, use theory in some way. But for the most part, they use it differently than do scientists and even social scientists, who shape their studies according to a strict theoretical framework. Historians use theories in an elastic manner.

Simply stated, theory doesn't play the role in historical inquiry that it does in the physical and social sciences.

Yet, theories can be helpful. In most cases, good historians employ them as they would use any idea — as an explanation to be rejected, adapted, or developed.

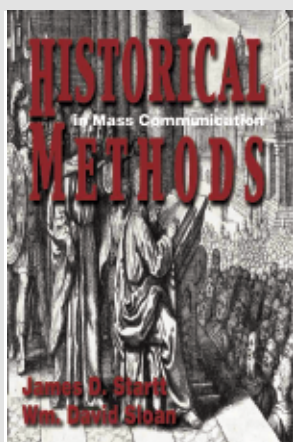
All historians have ideas that guide their thinking, but the good ones don't use theories to shape their accounts. They are aware of the ones that influence their outlooks — and they keep them in check.

Historians do well to keep in mind the advice that Sherlock Holmes gave Dr. Watson: "I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts."

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THE STANDARD — NEW, 4TH EDITION

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Propaganda and Military-Press Records as Sources for Journalism History

By Elisabeth Fondren ©



Fondren

“Take the big topic and you won’t be wasting your time,” David Sloan charged in his recent editorial essay. He encouraged his readers to tackle *big* topics in JMC history without assuming that everything on a *big* issue or period has already been done. Journalism history topics, Sloan argued further, should always pass the “Is this a historically important subject?” check. (“Go Big!” *Historiography in Mass Communication*, 9:3 [2023])

That advice resonated with me. In particular because the subfield of propaganda-press history is inevitably tied to both big *and* historically significant topics, but the process of *doing* that history can seem intimidating, or let’s say complicated, since disguise is part of propagandists’ legacy. Or is it, really? Upon a closer look, the process of detangling two seemingly separate histories (hint: they are not) begins with the realiza-

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tion that there is much meta-discourse between propagandists and journalists, especially as both sides emphasize the “truth-value” of their messages. The concept of propaganda becomes less illusive and more tangible as soon as one starts to select, analyze, and interpret primary sources to make specific arguments about the cases, institutions, techniques, or individuals involved in creating and disseminating messages during a specific time. Another perk is the wealth of surviving historical documents: maps, organizational charts, news reports, shipping labels, telegrams, censored news, and, yes, also propaganda materials like posters, speeches, staged photographs, flyers, films, and newspapers, among others.

Political, cultural, intellectual, and journalism historians have argued that times of war or democratic crises warrant scrutiny and often a re-examination of the historical record. “It is public opinion and propaganda in war-time, which calls forth the most strenuous exertions,” wrote Harold D. Lasswell in his classic history (1927) on propaganda technique during World War I (1914-1918).¹ Almost 100 years later, historians continue to unearth and interpret new archival evidence that adds to the large historiography on propaganda and journalism, arguably one of those *big* topics Sloan referenced in his essay. Specifically, journalism historians have used military and propaganda-press records as sources to discuss new evidence concerning the roots of systematic propaganda and governments’ strategies to control the press in the period before World War II.

Since Lasswell’s pioneering work, the study of international governments’ censorship measures and official propaganda, including the military’s role, have become firm parts of our discipline. Propaganda and censorship during war impact *how much* and *what* news journalists can report, and which pictures the public is allowed to see. But that is only

one part of the story, as propaganda societies, even in authoritarian regimes, are rarely entirely closed-off. As the history of journalism at war shows, reporters continue to find ways to source and access news to write stories, including those that detail governments' obsession to manipulate images, narratives, and restrict press freedom. Propaganda messages and news about war also cross borders, often intentionally, other times secretly. Audiences, as historians have shown, turn to journalism to learn "real" news about conflicts and those involved in home- and war fronts, especially as propaganda can create an information vacuum. Journalists have paid a high price for criticizing state or military officials: on top of emotional, physical, and psychological costs, they have lost their accreditation, faced imprisonment, or even death.²

Military and government records can provide important information about propaganda and journalism cultures, messages, institutions, censorship practices, and discourse around news at a certain time and place.³ Examining military accounts about war reporters, for instance, can yield a more complete understanding about the role and pressures of journalists during conflicts, as Kevin Williams discussed in his methodological essay (2012) "War Correspondents as Sources for History."⁴ Military historian Alexander G. Lovelace has suggested a new direction in conceptualizing military-press networks. His scholarship argues that battlefield news and reporters' discussions about the "strategy of truth" became part of the U.S. military's strategic decision-making in World War II.⁵

Traditionally, media historians have used journalists' published writings, their correspondence with editors or professional organizations, and their private records to learn about the extent of government mass manipulation, facts about censorship measures, and news routines and practices during wartime.⁶ These sources, of course, have their lim-

itations, and historians need to treat them with skepticism. Since so much history about war correspondents has focused on elite journalists working for large media outlets, newspapers, or broadcasters, and less on freelance, marginalized, women, and working-class reporters, there still is ample opportunity to expand our understanding of the concept of “who” a war correspondent is; how do eyewitness accounts differ; what is the role of photojournalism; and how do government propagandists and military engage with non-elite reporters? Journalism historian Carolyn Edy, furthermore, reminds us to be transparent and clear when questions about historical figures or primary sources arise. In her 2019 *American Journalism* essay on myths and misinformation perpetuated in the historiography of women war correspondents, Edy writes, “We need to make it clearer to readers what we cannot be certain about. We should not be afraid to be tentative and should, instead, raise questions for readers wherever we find them, pointing out possibly problematic sources as future research opportunities. Most importantly, however, and maybe most exciting, is the idea that no story has been fully told, and every story stands to benefit from yet another look.”⁷

In recent years, the historiography of the rise of pervasive government information and propaganda during the early twentieth century has been greatly expanded. Michael S. Sweeney and Natascha Toft Roelsgaard show in their 2019 book *Journalism and the Russo-Japanese War: The End of the Golden Age of Combat Correspondence* how the censorship practices and Japan’s treatment of western correspondents during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) became the template for how World War I was reported.⁸ Eberhard Demm’s 2019 comparative history details how extensive censorship and propaganda operations were part of all belligerents’ information strategies during 1914-1918.⁹ John Maxwell Hamilton reveals in his 2020 book *Manipulating the Masses*

the origins of American propaganda and information control, which were born out of the experiences of the Great War.¹⁰ Meghan Menard McCune's doctoral dissertation, "At the Service of the Government: American Journalists in the Great War and the Agent Model of Government-Press Relations" (which won the 2022 AJHA Margaret Blanchard Prize), discusses the complicated history of journalists who worked as cooperative agents and informants for the U.S. government during World War I.¹¹ Her study details and contextualizes the origins of the American press' extensive cooperation with government officials in matters of foreign affairs. McCune also developed a new descriptive model, the *Agent Model*, that journalism scholars can use as an interpretive tool to explain past — and present government-press interactions. Chris Dubbs and Carolyn Edy chronicle in their 2023 book *The Weekly War* how the influential middle-class paper *The Saturday Evening Post* reported World War I (the book is centered around the accounts of *Post* war journalists) and how reporters' news-gathering strategies and censors' news-controlling practices carried over and were largely duplicated in subsequent wars.¹²

In my own research, which examines international propaganda and journalism history in the early twentieth century, I found that primary sources located in foreign and U.S. military and political archives can provide rich perspectives on press activity despite censorship, reporters' resourcefulness and resilience, and audience cynicism towards official news. In addition to examining state records (government, military, and diplomatic), I found that personal or professional records of World War I propagandists and foreign correspondents, editors, photojournalism, and published news stories were particularly insightful. Below, I discuss four of my projects on propaganda-press history, how I worked with sources, and offer suggestions for the "mechanics" for writing and inter-

preting that history.

1. Triangulating international military-press sources with news

Some archival materials, especially those held in German archives, have thus far been underutilized in the scholarship on war correspondents during the early twentieth century. The German foreign office records at the *Auswärtiges Amt — Politisches Archiv* in Berlin, for instance, contain valuable information about Berlin censors' efforts to influence neutral U.S. correspondents (before the U.S. entered the war in spring 1917), including female correspondents.¹³

Interestingly, after reviewing one of these correspondents' published stories (located as digitized volumes at the U.S. Library of Congress) and her personal scrapbook (accessed via interlibrary loan) about her time in Germany, I learned about how she adapted her news reporting strategies while still participating in the official tours and programs hosted by the German military. She and other journalists bypassed strict censorship by waiting several weeks to file their stories until they had left Germany and were back in England or France. Their news and features included sobering interviews with demoralized German soldiers and factual accounts about the worsening food shortage across the Reich; material that Prussian censors would have never allowed to get out. Foreign and U.S. papers presented these accounts as "eyewitness" and "real" facts to news-hungry audiences.

2. Studying propagandists' notions about journalism and public opinion

What military propagandists working in semi-authoritarian, bureaucratic and hierarchical information cultures write about journalism

may seem so clearly opposed to our modern ideas about press freedom and the need for transparent information during crises. “The daily press,” charged a top propagandist at Berlin’s War Press Office in a guide for journalists, in 1917, “is to be instructed to repeat the individual points over and over again to hammer them into the consciousness of public opinion.”¹⁴ From a historical perspective, this is a useful quote to understand how some early German propagandists considered the press as a tool, and audiences as malleable and passive. From a storytelling perspective, it is a great line to use in organizing or highlighting smaller details and policy discussions into a bigger plot.¹⁵

In reviewing World War I military records at the German Military Archive in Freiburg, I also found records indicating that German propagandists and diplomats were surveilling enemy propaganda methods and secretly analyzing foreign press systems and practices. Before and during the war, they gathered intelligence to improve their own operations and control of war news, increasingly through visual propaganda and film. Propagandist and historian Walter von Hofmann, for instance, started to monitor and compare the German and foreign press as early as September 1909. His diary entries from 1913 up to 1919 suggest that he was a vivid observer of German and foreign public opinion, constantly noting down thoughtful observations but also suggestions for improvement or innovation. This means that German propagandists were trying to use force to “hammer in” their policy via news, as described above, but they were also trying to become more sophisticated and modernize their old-fashioned and print-based information apparatus.

3. Examining resourcefulness and resilience of working-class war reporters

Historians have focused increasingly on questions of identity, place and space at the center of discussions about journalism practice and reporters' understanding of their roles.¹⁶ In a recent research article on the British freelance photographer and WWI war correspondent Percy Brown, I explored early forms of eyewitnessing during war from the vantage point of lesser-known correspondents.¹⁷ "I was one of the lucky ones," wrote Percy Brown in December 1918, after returning to his mother's farm in rural western England. Since 1914, Brown had reported the Great War for the London *Graphic* illustrated magazine. In fall of 1915, he was jailed by German military police and spent three years at the infamous Ruhleben prison camp. He was allowed to keep his camera, and his pictures were printed in the British press. War-luck, as Brown described it, had helped him survive. After the war, he became a successful writer, editor, and businessman.

While historians might say his anecdote about "war luck" fits neatly within the narrative of heroism that war correspondents may use in their autobiographies post-conflict, the more time I spent researching Brown's experiences, reading his notes, news and interviews with officials, the more historical layers I found. I kept thinking about how I might use and organize these primary sources into a cogent story, but also how Brown's story adds nuance to the historiography on early forms of war reporting and non-traditional reporters. I used the qualitative methods of historical and discursive content analysis to interpret materials to analyze Brown's personal records, his pictures, and autobiographic writings at Stanford University's Hoover Institution Library and Archives, his *The Graphic* news stories through digitized copies, German military propagandists' writings (Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg; AA — Politisches Archiv, Berlin) on censorship, and British government records on Brown from the National Archives (Kew, Lon-

don).

Earlier scholarship on World War I military-press relations and war reporting has often treated censorship as un-pierceable.¹⁸ Brown's experiences and his photography, however, provide original insights into the debates concerning the role of working-class war reporters and military-press relations. His reflections reveal his unique standpoint as an "outsider within" the profession, as he often commented on the role of elitism in war news, government censorship, war intelligence policies, and the aggression of police units as factors impacting war reporters' access and their interpretations of events. The fact that he not only wrote about his interactions with military and propaganda, but that his original photographs *show* his experiences during war, including his prison time, helps readers understand the complexity of pressures on correspondents.

4. The goals and materiality of propaganda distributed as "truth"

As mentioned above, another method to study the collective ideas, professional roles, and the institutional and individual mandate to engage in either propaganda or journalism during war is to focus on analyzing records and writings through the prism of "truth" in war news. During World War II, propagandists in the United States developed a unique "ethos" in their "Strategy of Truth" and tried to apply standards of factuality and authenticity to the information they printed in war newspapers and airborne leaflets supplied to German home fronts and soldiers.

When I was reviewing military and political records of the Office of War Information (OWI) and the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) at the New York Public Library and the Hoover Institution Library and Archives, and digitized materials at the U.S. Library of Congress, the

sheer volume of Allied propaganda posters, flyers, and newspapers was impressive.¹⁹ It was also sobering to see the creativity, intellectual backbone, and zeal with which those materials were produced in the early and mid 1940s to counter fascist propaganda in Europe. Top U.S. propagandists discussed the policies of psychological warfare, specifically targeting the German home front and combatant soldiers on the front. One strategy these government publicists used was to design pro-Allied aerial leaflets and pamphlets as newspapers, with headlines, pictures, and colorful banners.

Moreover, the materials dropped from the sky — thereby bypassing Nazi censorship — provided facts, photography, war news, official views by British and U.S. statesmen, and practical advice to millions of civilians, women, workers, and refugees as whole cities were flattened or burnt down. One powerful memory from last summer's historical research at the Hoover Institution and Archives, where I was reviewing war propaganda materials, has stuck with me. While going through the papers of Daniel Lerner (1917-1980) — author and professor of sociology, who worked as Chief Editor of the Psychological Warfare Division, SHAEF (1944-1945) and as Chief of Intelligence of the Information Control Division, OMGUS (1945-1946) during World War II — I suddenly saw familiar names appear between the pages of his reports. I flipped through the pages (back-forth-back again). These were countless names of small German towns and villages not far from where I grew up. Lerner's team was designing leaflets and distributing propaganda questionnaires in June 1945 to see if German civilians believed Allied propaganda materials had been "accurate" and "truthful" enough. Seeing the propaganda materials, the post-war questionnaires, people's answers, and the U.S. army's public opinion reports, and all in one day, felt very humbling. (Thanks to the AJHA for supporting that

research trip with a McKerns Grant.)

Historians of propaganda-press relations have detailed the military's cult of secrecy (to protect strategic information), the expansion of government publicity, and journalists' struggle and resourcefulness to keep the public and distant audiences informed. In addition to studying war correspondents' records, their published stories, memoirs, photography and other visual media, propagandists' files and military documents can help us gain a better understanding of the political, social, and cultural contexts surrounding the "what" and "how" and "why" dimensions of evolving government-press tensions in the early twentieth century.

NOTES

¹ Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1927), 8.

² See: Michael S. Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Carolyn M. Edy, *The Woman War Correspondent, the US Military, and the Press: 1846–1947* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); Steven Casey, *The War Beat, Europe: The American Media at War Against Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Steven Casey, *The War Beat, Pacific: The American Media at War Against Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

³ Michael S. Sweeney, "An American, a Japanese, and a German Walk Into a Bar: "National Culture" and the Joke on Germany in World War I," *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 23:4 (2021): 318-322.

⁴ Kevin Williams, "War Correspondents as Sources for History: Problems and Possibilities in Journalism Historiography," *Media History* 18:3-4 (2012): 341-360.

⁵ Alexander G. Lovelace, "The New History of War Reporting: A Historiographical Perspective on the Role of the Media and War," *American Journalism* 40:1 (2023): 95-106. Also see: Alexander G. Lovelace, *The Media Offensive: How the Press and Public Opinion Shaped Allied Strategy During World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2022).

⁶ Elisabeth Fondren, "The Global Panoply of Propaganda-Press Cultures: Expanding International Journalism History," *American Journalism* (2023): 1-12.

⁷ Carolyn Edy, “Trust but Verify: Myths and Misinformation in the History of Women War Correspondents,” *American Journalism* 36:2 (2019): 251.

⁸ Michael S. Sweeney and Natascha Toft Roelsgaard, *Journalism and the Russo-Japanese War: The End of the Golden Age of Combat Correspondence* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019).

⁹ Eberhard Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I: A Comprehensive History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

¹⁰ John Maxwell Hamilton, *Manipulating the Masses: Woodrow Wilson and the Birth of American Propaganda* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2020).

¹¹ Meghan Menard McCune, “‘At the Service of the Government’: American Journalists in the Great War and the Agent Model of Government-Press Relations” (Doctoral Dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2021).

¹² Chris Dubbs and Carolyn Edy, *The Weekly War: How the Saturday Evening Post Reported World War I* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2023).

¹³ Report, *Die fremden Berichterstatter, Amerikanische Korrespondenten*. (1915) R121616 German Foreign Office records at the Auswartiges Amt – Politisches Archiv, Berlin.

¹⁴ Walter von Hofmann, Memorandum, *Vorschläge für eine systematische Organisation der publizistischen Verteidigung unserer Politik*, (1917–1918a). (BArch-MA, MSG2-15137). German Military Archive, Freiburg.

¹⁵ Michael S. Sweeney, “If you Can Write, Write,” *Historiography in Mass Communication* 3:3 (2017): 1-5.

¹⁶ Michael S. Sweeney, “Reporters and ‘Willing Propagandists’: AEF Correspondents Define Their Roles,” *American Journalism* 29:1 (2012): 7-31. Also see Debra Reddin van Tuyll, “John Mitchel,” in *Politics, Culture, and the Irish American Press: 1784–1963*, ed. Debra Reddin van Tuyll, Mark O’Brien, and Marcel Broersma (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2021), 117.

¹⁷ Elisabeth Fondren, “‘The Mirror with a Memory’: The Great War through the Lens of Percy Brown, British Correspondent and Photojournalist (1914-1920),” *Journalism History* 47:1 (2021): 1-26.

¹⁸ Philip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 16.

¹⁹ See the overview for the Psychological Warfare collections at the Hoover Institution and Libraries.

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Historical Roundtable: American Women in Journalism

By Mark Bernhardt, Kathleen Cairns,
Carolyn Kitch, and Julie Williams ©



Bernhardt

From the colonial era, American women have been practitioners of journalism. Yet historians long overlooked women's contributions to American journalism. The growing attention to women's history in general that came out of the 1960s began rectifying this neglect. Women rarely received full credit for their contributions and faced restrictions on their roles within the profession. However, the ongoing scholarship has greatly expanded our knowledge of who these women were, what they did, the obstacles they faced, and how they worked to overcome them. This roundtable discusses some of the developments that have taken place in the scholarship about women in American journalism.

Bernhardt: *What drew you to this field and inspired you to focus on your*

Mark Bernhardt is a professor at Jackson State University. He has published several articles on gender issues within journalism, including "Lizzie Borden took an Axe: Contrasting Views in the New York Press Coverage of the Borden Murders," "Boys are Running off to the Wars by Scores: Promoting Masculinity and Conquest in the Coverage of the Mexican-American War," and "What Kind of Parents are You? The Discussion of Expectations for Parents in the Press Coverage of the Lindbergh Kidnapping."

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specific area of women in journalism?

Kitch: In every degree I pursued, my “secondary” area was women’s studies, and gender is a theme in most of my work. I spent eleven years working in New York as an editor for *McCall’s* and *Good Housekeeping*, where I learned about the history of women’s magazines, the women editors who built long careers at such places, and the remarkably loyal audiences they served. At the time, such periodicals were one of the few arenas of journalism where most of the staff were women, and I remain grateful to those mentors. My commitment to women’s studies developed not despite my background at women’s magazines, but because of it.



Cairns

Kathleen Cairns is a third-generation Californian. She grew up in the San Gabriel Valley east of L.A. and earned a bachelor’s degree from California State University Long Beach, with a dual major in history and journalism. She spent a dozen years working as a reporter in Southern California before moving to UC Davis, where she earned a Ph.D. in history. She spent twenty-five years teaching at CSU Sacramento and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo before retiring in 2016. She is the author of six books, all focused on women in California history.



Kitch

Carolyn Kitch is the Laura H. Carnell Professor of Journalism at Temple University. She has authored or edited five books, the first of which, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, established her lasting interest in media history, social memory, gender, and magazines.



Williams

Julie Hedgepeth Williams is a media historian, author, speaker, and professor. She spent the 1980s as a press woman herself on a small-town newspaper. In 2021 she received the Sidney Kobre Award for lifetime achievement from the American Journalism Historians Association.

Roundtable: American Women in Journalism

Cairns: Before entering academia, I spent a dozen years as a reporter in Long Beach, Calif. When I started in 1977 women still largely were relegated to Life/Style sections. It took me two years to move into the newsroom, and even longer to get good assignments. When I applied to graduate schools in 1989, I knew I wanted to focus on journalism history. My major professor at UC Davis was one of the premier media historians in the country, and a second professor had long wanted someone to focus on women of color. Three notable journalists from California — Ruth Finney of Sacramento, Charlotta Bass, and Agness Underwood, both from L.A. — had papers I could easily access. My dissertation, which tracked the progress of women in the profession, became my first book: *Front Page Women, 1920-1950*.

Williams: I was drawn to the study of women in journalism when I found out — was FLOORED to find out — that the first woman editor in the (future) United States began editing her newspaper, *The South Carolina Gazette*, in 1739. The editor was Elizabeth Timothy, and she took over the newspaper after its editor, her husband, died in an “unhappy accident” the last week of 1738. Elizabeth had six young children to support and was pregnant besides, and she pleaded with her subscribers to be kind to her as “his poor afflicted Widow with six small Children and another hourly expected.” The baby arrived some six weeks later, and as far as I can tell, she didn’t miss an issue. She had seven small children to feed and a business to run, after all. Then I discovered other women journalists in the colonial era. What a blast! And what an eye-opener!

Bernhardt: *Which authors do you see as having laid the groundwork in the study of women in journalism?*

Williams: A really early scholar was Jessie E. Ringwalt, who wrote in 1872 of early women printers in America. If Ringwalt is any indication, women's concerns haven't changed much. Ringwalt lauded one early woman printer as handling her job and her role as a mother with dexterity. Ishbel Ross is often quoted as an early historian of women in the press, writing in 1936. She felt that early female journalists had succeeded when they were told they wrote like their male counterparts. Sidney Kobre also did much work on early press women. In one 1937 article, he faulted the press on its flippant, almost silly coverage of a "girl bandit" who was actually a feared serial robber. Those writers all happened before the feminist movement that heavily influenced scholarship of the 1960s and especially the 1970s, but those early scholars laid a groundwork for feminist scholars to discover women's contributions to the early press.

Kitch: While earlier accounts of journalism history included women who fit into the field's interest in great journalists at great institutions, a more expansive approach began in the 1970s, inspired by that era's feminist activism, the rising numbers of women pursuing journalism careers, and an increase in women on journalism faculties. Two foundational books appeared in 1977: Marion Marzolf's *Up from the Footnote: A History of Women Journalists*, and Maurine Beasley and Sheila Gibbons's *Women in Media: A Documentary Source Book*, first published by Donna Allen's Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press and later expanded as *Taking their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism*. Over the following decade, this documentary work grew with books by Jean Collins, Madelon Golden Schilpp and Sharon Murphy, Barbara Belford, Kay Mills, and Marlene Sanders and Marcia Rock.

Perhaps because they were launched in the same era, the two main journals in our field attended to gender even in their early years. In *Journalism History*, calls for “conceptual change” came from Susan Henry in 1979 and Catherine Covert in 1981, both of whom argued that a fuller understanding of women’s experiences could enable us to create more inclusive methods and to reconsider how we periodize time. In 1983, the very first issue of *American Journalism* opened with Linda Steiner’s study of women’s suffrage periodicals, in which she argued that readers found a sense of shared political identity despite geographical separation. So in our field there were early models for theoretical engagement with women’s history.

Cairns: Journalism differs from other fields of study because the subjects are writers themselves. Thus, the actual journalists laid the groundwork for studies of women in the field. They wrote stories, penned autobiographies, and were subjects of biographies. From the beginning, they recognized that members of the public saw them as curiosities, crossing into male territory by working outside the home. It didn’t matter that they worked on “women’s pages,” they had careers! Editors and publishers didn’t realize they were helping to shift boundaries, but the women themselves realized it — at least most did, even though they kept quiet. By the 1930s, a few women had moved into newsrooms, writing “hard news” — politics, crime, editorial columns, alongside male colleagues. This made them even more noteworthy, to scholars, among others. For example, in the 1930s Iona Logie, a female doctoral student (unusual in itself) demonstrated their growing influence by interviewing dozens of female journalists for her dissertation, “Careers for Women in Journalism.” And First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt promoted their work by barring male reporters from her weekly press conferences. As a result,

more newspapers and magazines hired them in order to gain access to the Roosevelts. Their growing prominence also can be seen in 1930s and 1940s films such as *His Girl Friday*, and *Woman of the Year* which featured female reporters in the title roles. Films such as these reflected the higher profiles of real journalists, and they reflect the tug of war between gender expectations, and the ways career women navigated and exploited them. The lead characters often extolled domesticity, but audiences could see that it paled beside the exciting world of journalism. Of course, male bosses and partners in these films largely seemed to have control, but the female characters usually prevailed in the end — they were too valuable to lose! Biographers and scholars wrote about real women journalists, but the lives of reporters themselves shaped the stories.

Bernhardt: *Discuss how the field has evolved to include different approaches for analyzing women's contributions to journalism.*

Williams: Above I mentioned Jessie Ringwalt, Ishbel Ross, and Sidney Kobre as early scholars. Ringwalt is considered a historian of the Romantic school, which examined the “great women” of the press to discern what made them great/how they were great. Ross and Kobre fall into the Developmental School of historians, where women’s writings were compared to the practice of good journalism (in the scholars’ day, anyway). Two other schools became popular in the 1970s — the Cultural School and the Feminist School. One Cultural historian, Barbara Belford, deliberately eschewed comparing women’s press writing to men’s. Instead, she was interested in what made women become journalists in the first place and how their writing was shaped by economic factors, among others. Not surprisingly, the BIG change in scholarship

that bloomed with the women's movement was the Feminist School. That school tended to examine women in press history as discriminated against or oppressed by men. Susan Henry and Marion Marzolf, for instance, each complained that historians often wrote of colonial woman printers as of little interest. As Henry said, these women couldn't vote, so for years male historians considered them pointless to address. As Henry and other feminists pointed out, these early women in the press were actually fascinating... and important.

Kitch: The analytical trends that have shaped the broader field of communication also have shaped journalism history research. Our work has included documentary profiles, textual analyses of women journalists' rhetorical strategies, and ideological and structural analyses of media messages about women. I would add that we should be interested not only in what women have contributed to journalism but also how journalism has treated, represented, and addressed women. One promising recent development is that researchers now are interviewing women journalists to learn about their work experiences and about how they cover issues of importance to women audiences. This is research about the present, not the past, but it is creating a respectful and informative record that should be useful for future journalism historians.

Cairns: In the 1970s, women journalists had just begun to advocate for "equality." They sued the *New York Times* over pay, and demanded access to speakers at the Washington Press Club, where they had long been relegated to the balcony. By the 1990s and early 2000s, however, white women had achieved relative parity; they were war correspondents and TV anchors. At this same time, a few women of color began to breach longstanding barriers in media: Oprah Winfrey, for example,

and Connie Chung. Meanwhile, women of color began attending graduate schools in larger numbers. When it came to dissertation topics, they too focused on journalism, but cast their nets wider. More than one focused on Ida B. Wells-Barnett. The cultural implications were impossible to ignore. Black-owned newspapers, and publications focused on other underrepresented groups, were inherently political, because they worked within an environment that had long ignored, dismissed, or attacked their issues and concerns. Thus began a rethinking of the role of journalism in fueling political change. Was it a panacea; of course not, but it was a start.

***Bernhardt:** How has the focus of the field changed as journalism has expanded into a greater variety of media forums?*

Cairns: The major questions/issues confronting scholars today would be: What is journalism, and what constitutes “media”? Before the last two decades or so, the answer might have seemed straightforward: newspapers, magazines, non-fiction books about political, cultural developments, and significant people, and a few other sources. The products of these outlets were generally vetted by “experts” on the topics at hand. To publish a book, for example, authors had to garner critical reviews from other writers in the field. Media venues came under the “Fairness Doctrine,” created in 1949, and essentially abandoned by 2000. Now, anyone who wants to tell a story or garner attention can create a newsletter, a personal blog, or a podcast. S/he can be an “influencer” or self-publish a book, no credentials or media background needed.

Of course libel laws still apply, at least to some extent. Television is a bit different because it takes vast amounts of money to broadcast pro-

grams. Billionaire owners can hire whomever they want and present the “news” with whatever slant they prefer. As we’ve seen recently, there are some limits due to lawsuits, but it’s a moving target. However, respect for traditional journalism still can be seen in mainstream films. The 1970s saw *All the President’s Men*. More recent films have included *Spotlight*, about the *Boston Globe*’s Pulitzer-winning investigation into pedophile priests; *The Post*, focusing on court battles over publishing the Pentagon Papers; and *She Said*, about the *New York Times* reporters who helped to fuel the “Me Too” movement. We seem to be in a transitional period, where at some point new “rules” will have to be written.

Kitch: Our research has expanded thematically and methodologically, and it has grown to include the study of broadcast news and strategic communication. Yet the field is still dominated by newspaper history, due to both tradition and availability, given that newspapers are better archived and more digitally accessible than other kinds of media. That continuing focus has worked against the diversification of what we consider to be legitimate topics of study, especially with regard to gender, since less-studied industries such as magazines and public relations have had more women workers. Moreover, there is little dialogue between journalism history and the rapidly growing scholarship on journalism studies. Becoming part of that broader conversation would help us to situate our work theoretically and internationally.

Williams: Hah! I’m so rooted in newspaper history that I have little perspective on more modern media. However, I have learned from scholars who have looked into women in broadcasting — something I need to know more about! I remember a fascinating study about how women were treated as they picketed television stations for more appro-

prate children's programming. These were ordinary mothers with kids in tow, and the executives treated them with disdain. No, your kid can't use our bathroom — that sort of thing. The execs treated them as, well, silly girls who were just flies to be shooed away. That intersection between audience and people in charge was a good area for study, very refreshing.

***Bernhardt:** What are some of the challenges faced by scholars working in the field?*

Kitch: In their own time, women creators and audiences of media, including journalism, often were seen as peripheral to those enterprises, and so they were not documented in any systematic way. Academic libraries have tended not to archive popular periodicals — women's magazines are a main example — or to do so haphazardly. In earlier eras, women journalists were often isolated professionally and personally in ways that made it less likely that their papers would be saved by others. It is difficult to study women as audiences, for the same reason that women's social history is hard to recover: record-keeping and statistical data have tended to be organized around the structures of men's lives. Finally, scholars doing this kind of research are routinely asked if it is really needed. That happened at the "groundwork" stage of the field in the 1970s; it happened to me at a conference last month.

Williams: It seems scholars have long been amazed that press women of the past did "a man's job." Women have been much ballyhooed for making a breakthrough or taking charge. And yet, I get the feeling that women who took over newspapers or started them in the colonial or party eras weren't exactly thinking of themselves as breaking through,

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but rather as just doing a job. I think that might be the biggest challenge for scholars — to get past the “gasp” factor of historic women in the media. I hope that makes sense. I wish historic women of the press could be judged for their accomplishments (or misdeeds) from other angles besides “breakthrough” or “oppression.” And of course, I’ll be the first to admit that the “gasp” factor was what got me interested in earliest colonial women journalists. I wouldn’t be following my own suggestion there. But it could be enlightening for scholars to consider themes beyond breakthrough/oppression.

Bernhardt: *What are some of the important works that specifically examine diversity in the field?*

Cairns: Growing diversity in media has been one of the most positive developments over the past few decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, journalists of color working on newspapers, magazines, or on television were largely “tokens.” Their “outsider” status was reinforced by the fact that often they became the subjects of stories about minorities in media — virtue signaling, “look how diverse we are!” And they always got the stories about “minorities” doing anything interesting, or important. When I left newspapering in 1990, my newsroom had two Black journalists, and three Latinos/as out of dozens of reporters. And no editors. As more minority journalists joined news staffs, they are no longer tokens; thus stories about them have fallen by the wayside. Sadly, so have many of the nation’s newsrooms, where there are fewer reporters/editors altogether.

Kitch: With regard to the intersectional experiences of women working in the Black press, influential works include Jane Rhodes’s *Mary Ann*

Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century (1998) and Jinx Broussard's *Giving a Voice to the Voiceless: Four Pioneering Black Women Journalists* (2004). There is a need for more research on the social and labor history of minority journalists as groups, and on factors of ethnicity, religion, class, and gender identity in news practice and coverage. Models for such work include Frankie Hutton and Barbara Straus Reed's *Outsiders in Nineteenth Century Press History: Multicultural Perspectives* (1995), Rodger Streitmatter's *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (1995), Jan Whitt's *Women in American Journalism: A New History* (2008), and Linda Lumsden's *Social Justice Journalism: A Cultural History of Social Movement Media from Abolition to #womensmarch* (2019).

Bernhardt: *In what ways do you see the study of women in journalism having been influenced by more general trends in the study of women's history?*

Kitch: Our field has followed trends in women's and gender studies more broadly. Scholarship began by "recovering" and inserting women into existing historical narratives but soon shifted to considering what different kinds of stories we could tell by acknowledging gender as "a useful category of historical analysis," as historian Joan Wallach Scott famously put it in 1986. More recently there has been increased attention to intersectionality, alternative journalism, and social justice, along with a commitment to diversifying not only the scholarship but also the scholars. This last development has occurred across disciplines but promises to broaden what kinds of questions are asked — and what kinds of evidence are considered valid — in journalism history research as well.

Cairns: Studies of women in journalism have largely reflected trends, rather than fueling them. Journalism programs in colleges, for example, grew in stature and among young people as the result of Vietnam, protests, and the Watergate break-in. The focus on women in journalism emerged in the 1970s with Second Wave Feminism, which questioned women's second-class status in virtually every endeavor. Among those leading the way were journalists, including Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem. Both used journalism as a platform, Friedan with magazine columns, and Steinem with *Ms. Magazine*. The few women reporters at major publications including the *New York Times* challenged inequalities in pay and hiring via lawsuits and sit-ins. Reflecting the growing interest in and debate, many colleges inaugurated Women's History and Women's Studies programs in the 1970s. This endeavor coincided with rising numbers of women working in journalism. Still scholars had to work hard to piece together historical narratives of women's lives and experiences. It took years for these disciplines to be taken seriously by the academy.

Williams: I'm going to twist the question a little, with apologies. I'm not in the women's history field and so shouldn't attempt to speak about it, but as a consumer of media, I notice that women are often addressed in the news as either a victim of men or equal to men. Just today I heard an article on NPR about how few works by women artists hang in major galleries, because most curators over the centuries have been male. The article certainly brought a need to light, and it shows a favorite media theme of women being judged and discussed as to whether they're victims of or equal to men. I have certainly heard that theme in many interesting papers about women journalists in history. Popular themes in the depiction of women in the press are certainly

reflected in many studies of women journalists.

Bernhardt: *What are some significant questions in the field that you feel need to be addressed?*

Williams: I'd like to see more on the ordinary woman in the press when no one thought it was odd for women to be in the press. For example, I don't get the idea that people in general thought it was odd that frontier women worked at and ran newspapers, partly because women were so valued on the prairie — there were too few women to go around, and men were tied up busting the sod. Therefore, women were often hired at newspapers, even sought out for that job. It was one of the career fields open to women at the time. One of the women of the press whom I've studied is Carrie Ingalls, Laura Ingalls Wilder's younger sister. Carrie did every job at small (even tiny) newspapers all over South Dakota, moving from town to town in the classic pattern of the frontier press. It didn't seem to be an oddity to her boss or her advertisers or her subscribers that she set type, ran the print shop, started papers, closed papers, edited papers, ran the business side of papers. I think it's fascinating that the job was just a matter of course to her and to her readers. Since Carrie wasn't considered odd in her job, I was able to analyze Carrie as a textbook frontier press worker and community builder rather than as, say, a breaker of the glass ceiling or a woman stomped by a male boss. I'd like to see more studies of press women who weren't considered an oddity, and given that, what themes describe their work?

Kitch: We now know much more about women journalists who had major careers in journalism despite considerable odds against them. That work remains important and is ongoing; one recent and very com-

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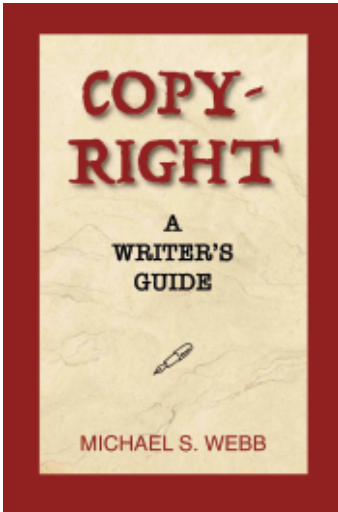
prehensive such contribution is Brooke Kroeger's *Undaunted: How Women Changed American Journalism*. Yet there is a more ordinary and continuous story of women's journalism history that remains largely untold. That includes the history of women who worked at small news institutions across the country, covering the events of everyday life; the parts of the field in which women's employment was the norm, such as newspaper women's pages and women's magazines; and the many women who worked for elite institutions as uncredited editorial "researchers" or in other support roles. That untold story also includes women audiences. Such work has begun with recent books by Kimberly Wilmot Voss and Dustin Harp about the history of newspaper women's page editors and their readers. We still need more social and labor history focused on women's workplace experiences over time.

Cairns: The primary question today relates to whether journalism as it has long been practiced can survive in a society where too many people do not read more than a few paragraphs or listen to more than 30-second soundbites. This makes it impossible to grapple with complex issues and/or ideas. Newspapers once taught immigrants to speak English, and how to be "American." Black-owned papers shaped a sense of community in a world of oppression. At times of great crisis, news outlets fostered a sense of national identity. Now, it seems, we are too angry, apathetic, and antagonistic, to trust any news source with which we don't agree. This does not bode well for our survival as a nation.

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The Author: Michael S. Webb is a practicing lawyer who has taught media law at both Georgia State University and Clark University in Atlanta.

Historian Interview

Pamela Walck ©



Walck

Dr. Pamela E. Walck of Duquesne University is in her final year as editor of the journal *American Journalism*. Before going into teaching, she worked in newspaper reporting and editing and in 2010 won first place from the Georgia Associated Press Association for Non-Deadline Reporting. Her three-part series on soldiers who had suffered traumatic brain injury helped launch a U.S. Congressional investigation. She has won awards from the American Journalism Historians Association for research papers dealing with the media and war and with women's history. She received her Ph.D. in journalism at Ohio University.

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

Walck: I was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, the oldest of three children and the only girl. My youngest brother was 11 years younger than me, my middle brother was three years my junior, and because we all enjoyed history, I would often drag both of them on road trips to historical places. A personal favorite was the time we went to Antietam, Maryland, for a reenactment of the Civil War battle fought there. Years later, my brothers and I worked on family genealogy and learned that

our great, great grandfather Charles Ahner had been injured during the second battle of Antietam while fighting for the Union Army. It was a humbling thing to remember the reenactment and know how many men did not survive that battle.

My father was a pastor in the Evangelical Congregational Church, and so we moved around a bit when I was growing up. He accepted his first church appointment when I was eight years old, and we moved to East Greenville, a suburb of Philadelphia, where we stayed until after my sophomore year of high school. At that point we moved to Central Florida, and I went from attending a private Christian school with a graduating class of 18 to a large public school with the graduating class of 800+ students. It was a bit of a culture shock, and I couldn't wait to get out of Florida. But being a pastor's kid who tended to follow the rules, I "rebelled" by leaving Central Florida for Central Virginia and an undergraduate degree in journalism at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Despite not being Southern Baptist, I went to a Southern Baptist school and quickly learned that, while I generally followed the rules at home, I wanted to question everything I was learning in college. (I barely passed a theology class after a professor told us to learn and know this as the truth; challenge nothing. This made the burgeoning reporter in me bristle, and I had a lot of explaining to do at the end of that term.)

While at Liberty I also learned valuable lessons about prior restraint as a member of the campus newspaper at a private university. Each week we had to get our paper approved by the late Rev. Jerry Falwell. (As editor-in-chief my senior year, I was on a first-name basis with Jerry. It was wild because he was not at all like the man many perceive from the *Old Time Gospel Hour*.) It was an interesting experience, especially when Jerry was out of town and his subordinates would second guess what he

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would and would not want in the paper. I learned that while there's a lot of critical things you can say about Jerry Falwell Sr. and his influence on the political right, he was always very supportive of the newspaper staff, and reveled in the ways that we would creatively scoop the local newspaper on big stories happening on our campus.

From my undergrad, I went straight into journalism. I started out at a weekly in Kutztown, Pa.; went on to a daily newspaper in Pottsville (better known for Yuengling beer); and eventually landed in Savannah, Georgia, where I spent twelve years as a reporter and editor at the *Savannah Morning News*. It was in Savannah where I started working as an adjunct at Savannah State University, which is a HBCU. It was there that I realized some of the things that frustrated me the most about being in the newsroom, such as wanting to talk about story development, interviewing approaches, writing styles, writing approaches — all were really difficult to do in the daily grind of a newsroom but were appropriate in a classroom setting. So that's where the seed of leaving the newsroom and going back to school began.

I left Savannah in 2010 and went to Point Park University in Pittsburgh for my master's degree and applied to the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University, where I was accepted for fall of 2012. I completed my Ph.D. in summer 2015.

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

Walck: I was a political reporter/military reporter before I got into teaching. But I was *that* reporter in the newsroom who was always talking to colleagues about how they conducted interviews, how they took notes, how they approached their writing, etc. I just really wanted to

better understand how I could be a better communicator through the written word.

I started out as a general assignment reporter at a small weekly (in Kutztown, Pa.), and eventually became a government beat reporter covering county government in Pottsville and Savannah. As a reporter, the Pulitzer Prize was always an underlying goal: I wanted to write stories that were meaningful and changed opinions and lives. I never won a Pulitzer, but in 2010 as a military reporter for the *Savannah Morning News*, I did receive the 2010 Georgia Associated Press Association's 1st place award for Non-Deadline Reporting for a three-part series, "Warriors in Transition: A Wounded System." It focused on a soldier in a Warrior Transition Unit at Fort Stewart, Ga., who was struggling mightily to come to terms with major changes in his life following a traumatic brain injury and a subsequent brain tumor that permanently changed his personality. Daily life was difficult for this man, and his commanders in the WTU were very unsympathetic. My reporting launched a Congressional investigation into why it was taking so long for the Army's human resources center in Missouri to release men and women wounded in battle and unable to finish their service terms. The soldier, John Jones, continued to be in my thoughts as I left the newsroom and went to grad school for my master's and then Ph.D. I was in my second year of teaching at Duquesne when I learned John took his own life, around the time I was finishing my master's program. It was a gutting moment that I shared with my journalism students because some stories stick with you and haunt you. And John's story was one of those stories. I wanted my students to know that it was OK to care. Caring is a strength in the newsroom, contrary to popular belief.

Around the time that most of my friends were leaving Savannah to go onto greener pastures and bigger newsroom, I stayed behind and got

into middle-management as an assistant editor on the features desk, and then was promoted to editor of the business and government desk for the *Savannah Morning News*. At the time I was the youngest team leader in the newsroom (I was in my early 30s) and running the biggest newsroom team with nine reporters, two editorial assistants, two staff photographers, and an assistant editor. (We had a team-based newsroom. So the copy-editing/management position was flat structurally speaking).

It was probably one of the most exciting and challenging times in my career as a journalist. The planning meetings were nonstop and became frustrating to me, but the ability to work with reporters and help them and their stories shine through for a reading audience was incredibly rewarding work. It is probably why I enjoy editing *American Journalism* so much now. In some ways it reminds me of my newsroom days, just with double-blind peer reviews.

Over time, I have also come to realize that I was reporting during the very end of a golden era in American journalism, before Web 2.0, social media, real-time tracking of what audiences are reading, and all the trappings that come with it. It was also during a time when my newspaper was adamant about community journalism and reporting on what was happening not just with the talking heads and officialdom, but also with the average person on the street. Because of this approach, and despite having a staff that was a fraction of that at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Morning News* was repeatedly beating papers much larger than us in statewide press awards. It was a really exciting time, and it was a lot of fun. And in hindsight, it helped inform how I approach teaching journalism now.

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

Walck: I started out as an adjunct at Savannah State University, where I taught Newsroom 1 and Feature Writing for a couple of semesters. Then, while a doctoral student at Ohio University, I picked up News-writing I and Multiplatform Editing.

When I took my first — and so far, only — academic job (at Duquesne University), I came in with the specific task of establishing a strong foundation for our multi-platform journalism program. So, I overhauled the Newsroom 1 classes and was the anchor instructor for those courses during my first five years at Duquesne.

More recently, I have begun teaching a Media Ethics course each semester. About a year ago, I was named a faculty fellow for the Institute for Ethics and Integrity in Journalism & Media. It was an organization created by an alumna from the University who was worried about the lack of public trust in the press. This summer, I was named director of the Institute and am currently working with colleagues to infuse more discussions about ethics in every day classes, in addition to the required media ethics courses that we teach. I also teach Multi-platform Editing, Newsroom II, a special topics course in Community Journalism, and a course in Military & Veterans Reporting as well as a Magazine Writing.

Historiography: *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? etc.*

Walck: I have always loved history. It was one of my favorite topics in school, and certainly historic novels were a regular part of my reading lists during my formative years. As a reporter in Savannah, I covered Chatham County's acquisition of a piece of land where the Revolu-

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tionary War era Siege of Savannah had taken place. And even though at the time I was not trained in the ways of historiography, I realize now that I was essentially using some of the same techniques in terms of looking through historical archives, maps, and public records to tell the story of what happened on that space, and why it was so important to preserve in a historic city such a Savannah.

Additionally, as a documentarian of government in three different cities along the East Coast, I often felt that my journalistic work was truly a first draft of history. Some of the highlights of my reporting years included the crash of TWA Flight 200 to Paris, Y2K, the 2000 Presidential Election, September 11th, the Afghanistan War, the Second Iraq War, two U.S. Census reports, and the Columbia Space Shuttle crash, just to name a few. So, yes, I've always been drawn to historic subjects and topics.

Then, in my doctoral studies I had the great fortune of attending Ohio University, where the History Department offers a certificate through its Contemporary History Institute. And it was really there where I learned a lot more about how historians approach historiography, and saw the difference from the investigative reporting in the journalism background that I came from.

I also had Journalism Historiography with the late, great Mike Sweeney, who had based the course off of Patrick Washburn's class that he had taken as a grad student at OU. So, there's this long pedigree of journalism history there that was really reinforced and influenced by some noteworthy educators and scholars. I still count myself fortunate to have been a doctoral student submerged in that environment where I could learn about techniques and how to tell good stories from a scholarly perspective.

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

Walck: I think I have always had a sense of history in my life. I still remember how I felt when I learned that I shared a birthday with former President Richard Nixon. From even an early age, I knew there was shame attached to that name, even if I was too young to understand why he had left office and why what he had done was shameful.

But honestly, it was my time with the Contemporary History Institute that had a big impact on how I look at history and my work. One of the first of fifteen (!!) books we read that first semester was John Lewis Gaddis's *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*. Aside from learning that the history grad students did not read every word (!?!) that these authors assigned to us wrote — that is a fact that still hurts my writer's heart — what I remember about Gaddis's book was how he urged historians to consider history akin to scanning the horizon, and understanding the role that time and space play in our understanding of the significance of events. Our proximity to the event skews our view.

For some reason, those words just really resonated with me — probably because as a reporter for sixteen years I felt like I *was* writing that first draft of history and I took my job in that role very, very seriously. Also, many of the stories, particularly surrounding local politics, seemed like such *big* moments at the time, but now, two decades later, those headlines hardly seem like a blip on the local horizon. So, for me, Gaddis's words just clicked and made so much sense. And I like that he begs the question, What will that moment look like from the distance of another 30 years? In 100 years? As a reporter, in the moment, it seemed like these were *massive* hilltop events, but I know that with time,

context, and space, many of those big stories have already become smaller in the larger scheme of things. To read Gaddis's book and sit around a table and hash out what his thoughts meant for three hours every Monday night with other grad students was just a gift.

Today, Gaddis's essay on the landscape of history still resonates with me in terms of trying to understand the context of the time in which events are happening on any given project. I think in today's politically charged environment there's so much presentism that's happening and a lot of what we know about history today is really influenced by pop culture. But here's the thing: Pop culture is there to entertain. It's not necessarily there to tell you the truth or to inform you. So, for me, this idea of looking at that landscape from the long view and mapping the past is something that remains important to me.

And, yes, I love a good historical drama just like a lot of other people I know. But, at the same time, I often find myself fact-checking things to see if they really happened. Did an event really happen? What's been written about it? What has been entered into the historical record? For example, in light of the 50th anniversary of Watergate, Amazon Prime's *Gaslit* with Julia Roberts explores the life of Martha Mitchell. It was a really fantastic period piece, and a story angle that I did not know much about prior to the series coming out. Another example from the Nixon era is the HBO series the *White House Plumbers*, which ran earlier this summer. It was really fun watching these programs and seeing some of the antics and things that happened with Hunt and Liddy and the other men who broke into the Watergate. The HBO series in particular does a great job of showing how these men's infatuation with covert ops and their unwavering fandom of the office of the President of the United States blinded them to take many morally questionable and ethically unsound actions. And, in some ways, it

perhaps helps explain the cult of personality that surrounds current events and popular opinions. At the same time, these series take great liberties about what actually happened, and so as a historian I find that to be problematic, because, in the eyes of the general public, the performance of Woody Harrelson as Howard Hunt or the performance of Sean Penn as John Mitchell outstrips the truth. And for the unsuspecting public, *that* is the narrative that becomes “history.”

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

Walck: My main areas of concentration for historical research are largely grounded in the Black press. It started out with me examining race and race relations as part of my dissertation, which introduced me to the Black press and the role that the Black press played in the 20th century in terms of telling the story of “other.” Again, I think that, as a reporter, I was always drawn to the stories of marginalized people, and so it probably is not too terribly surprising that that also resonates with me now as a scholar.

For the last couple of years, I’ve been working on a manuscript that examines the work of Jessie Vann, who was the wife of Robert L. Vann, the man who basically pushed the *Pittsburgh Courier* into the national spotlight and laid the foundation to make it the largest Black newspaper in the country. But while Robert gets all the credit for driving the circulation over 2 million during World War II, the reality is he died before America even joined the war effort. It was Jessie, along with Robert’s closest journalism friends, who drove that circulation beyond competitors like the *Chicago Defender* or Baltimore’s *Afro-American*. But when Jessie died in 1967, she directed her attorney to destroy her and

her husband's papers. So, the historical record surrounding her newspaper work went to the grave with her. It is a tragedy that she did this, because it has essentially meant she was erased from the history books. What I am trying to do is establish her rightful place in the history of the *Courier* and the Black press, along with a handful of other women who worked for the Pittsburgh paper during the early 20th to mid-20th century.

Each woman, in a different way, had a major impact on the paper and the types of information and stories it was telling. And I think that, as a woman in the newsroom who often felt like I flew under the radar in terms of the work I did, it's kind of exciting to identify these women and share their stories in a larger way and, hopefully, to give them the recognition they deserve for their contributions to both the Black press and journalism history as a whole.

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

Walck: In addition to the book that I'm working on right now, I've basically taken my dissertation and broken it into various papers and book chapters. Probably the one that I am most proud of is one of the first chapters that I wrote during my dissertation days. It examines a race riot that occurred between white and Black U.S. troops in Northern Ireland early in WWII. As I was digging around and researching, one of the things that I realized was that, much like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, our military (like any invading army) has a long history of influencing the cultures that it enters when deployed for war. U.S. troops did the same thing during World War II. All those racial tensions that existed in the United States, pretty much from our country's

beginnings, were brought to the places we deployed to in the name of saving democracy across Europe. And with those challenges came unrest. I was fortunate that that chapter was accepted for a transnational conference that was held in Dublin a couple years ago. From that conference, it was selected to be part of a collection of book chapters on transnational journalism that was edited by Debbie van Tuyl and her Irish colleagues. The book, *Politics, Culture, and the Irish American Press*, was a finalist for the Tankard Award last year, and it was truly amazing to be part of a group of international scholars who wrote about the inter-connectivity of media and how nations influence each other in many different ways.

I have also published an article that examined a bit of racial unrest that occurred in a little village, called Bamber Bridge, during the latter part of WWII. It was a little town where not a whole lot happened, and there was a support unit of the 8th Infantry Division in town. It was an all-Black unit that ran supplies to and from the nearby ports to the troops in the fight. But, in this town, a disagreement at a pub between Black troops and white MPs turned into a massive racial incident involving a shootout in town, akin to something at the OK Corral in the American Wild West. What was interesting to me when I visited Bamber Bridge were the locals who still talk about the incident as if it happened yesterday, and so that kind of had me really intrigued about the collective memory and how the telling and retelling of that Battle for Bamber Bridge (as it became known) really was infused in the psyche of the people who live there. Even today if you go up to children who live in Bamber Bridge they know about it; they know about the fight at the pub because the pub is still standing. (It's been standing there for, you know, 400 or 500 years and is pretty much unchanged. It still has a thatch roof. Still serves up pints.) The bullet holes are still there in the

front of the stone houses that were struck by the Yanks' gunfire. And the collective memory is so strong. The townspeople stood up for the Black soldiers and defended them, and I think they took a lot of pride in that because it was a small town, and they probably could've easily taken on more biased opinions about people of color, but they did not. They stood on the side of right. And so I think there's a lot of different reasons why that particular piece of research still stands out, but it was a lot of fun to report, and to visit, and to write about. I was proud to get that published in *American Journalism* just before taking on the editorship of the journal.

Since then, a lot of the research that I've been doing is looking at the role of women in the press. I talked a little bit about an award I received with my co-author, Ashley Walter, who was a grad student at the time (she earned her Ph.D. from Penn State and is a rising star in our discipline), that looked at *Flyin' Jenny* and the role this popular comic strip played in setting an agenda toward accepting nontraditional roles for women during World War II through the comic pages. I found the comic strip during my dissertation and thought, "Hmm, this is something different." And it was. Ashley and I found that the story lines in this comic really reflected the experiences of women during that time and worked to help normalize women outside of the domestic sphere.

Additionally, I've published a piece in *Journalism History* on Evelyn Cunningham, who was a columnist for the *Pittsburgh Courier*. This was a project I did with another graduate student named Emily Fitzgerald, and together we realized that Miss Evelyn was essentially the African-American Carrie Bradshaw (fictional character in *Sex in the City*) long before Carrie Bradshaw was even an idea of fiction. Miss Evelyn was writing about lingerie and how fur coats can be better than men and the lies of the American dream and what it's like to be a working woman in

the mid-20th century. She was writing about all these things in such a frank way at a time when women weren't writing about those things or talking so honestly about them in such a public fashion. And she was doing this in a minority press years before the Four F's even appeared on the pages in the *New York Times*, which were so landmark and legendary in and of themselves. So, it was fun to really dig into her archive and her writings and see how she struggled to embrace feminism in large part, because of her feelings at the time that there wasn't a place at the table for her as a Black woman. Another element of her story — her coverage of civil rights cases in the American South — will be included in my forthcoming manuscript.

***Historiography:** Of the books and articles you have written, from which ones did you get the most satisfaction?*

Walck: Probably the two most satisfying articles that I've published so far were on the story of Bamber Bridge and what happened there. While the contemporary press had written about it a little bit, it was a story that was *not* told at the time because of wartime censorship. The local newspaper in town was not allowed to write about Bamber Bridge until the 1950s as part of a series of events that had happened in the area but were self-censored by the British press in the name of fighting against propaganda. This project sticks out in my mind, too, because I walked the streets and had a pint in the pub. I spoke with people who were children at the time and remembered the adults, whispering in hushed voices about the battle that took place in their village.

Two awards I won that mean a lot to me were for papers I wrote with graduate students here at Duquesne. We don't have a doctoral program. So when I find a grad assistant who is eager to learn, it is a joy

Historian Interview

to bring them into my research. The first award I received was for a paper I co-wrote with Ashley Walter. We were named Honorable Mention winners in October 2017 for the Wally Eberhard Award for the Outstanding Paper on Media and War, at the AJHA conference that year. We lost to Dr. Patrick Washburn and Dr. Mike Sweeney — two mentors, scholars, and friends to whom I will always be pleased to lose out on top honors. I owe so much of what I do now to the influence of both Patrick and Mike. And I will forever be grateful.

The second award that sticks out in my mind was First Place for the Maurine Beasley Award For the Outstanding Paper on a Women's History in October 2019. This was for the paper I co-authored with Emily and focused on Evelyn Cunningham. It was a pleasure sharing both journeys with students because doing so always forces me to look at historical research with fresh eyes.

And while I'm not done with my book on Jessie Vann and the women of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, I am just really excited to tell the stories of these remarkable women who wrote for this newspaper that offered them a place at the table during a time when women were not generally getting front page stories or covering news stories of significance. I think that these women are just incredible and fierce and determined. They knew they were part of something special and they were proud of that. Some of them were getting involved with the paper and embracing the ideals of feminism at a time when women were just getting the right to vote in some instances. So it's been exciting to unearth their stories, and I look forward to sharing them with a much wider audience in the very near future.

Historiography: *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 (journalism/mass communication) history, what would they be?

Walck: Gaddis would probably say I am much too close to my own “horizon” to know what will be considered significant. That said, I hope that when it is all said and done, two things stand as part of my legacy:

First, that I brought graduate students into my research and introduced them to the world of journalism and mass communication history. Some of them, like Ashley, caught the bug and developed their own crazy dreams about doctoral programs and went on to significant work of their own. Others, like Emily, just loved the learning process but decided to go into the practicum side of their degrees and pursue meaningful work that way. Either way, it is incredibly rewarding to work with them. They bring ideas and perspectives and energy that I learn from. And honestly, it is my small way of honoring the scholars who assisted me along the way. Many of the approaches I take with my grad students are things I learned from Mike, who did the same with me. His generosity of spirit and time and knowledge were all freely given, and I try to do the same as a way of continuing to say “thank you” to a great mentor, scholar, and friend whom I and many others still miss every day.

I guess the second significant contribution that I hope to have made is helping to shed light on men and women whose stories remain untold. It’s difficult to document some of them because they destroyed their personal papers. Documents don’t exist and therefore they are missing from the historical narrative. But just because they did not see the significance of what they were doing does not mean that they — and their work — was insignificant. Quite the contrary. Luckily, I love the hunt. As a reporter, I loved chasing down facts, interviewing

sources, gathering information. And as a historian, it still rings true. Spending a week in an archive chasing down scraps of paper that prove that someone did such and such or that there's greater significance to somebody's life is such a thrill. It's a challenge but it's an effort that is worthwhile. I'm just happy to play a small, small part of that important work of shedding light on these individuals. And now, as editor of a major journal in the field, I see other colleagues and scholars out there who are doing similar things — telling untold stories and tackling old stories from new perspectives — and it's just humbling to be part of that group of scholars.

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

Walck: Honestly, I don't know that I would change anything. OK, maybe I would change my writing process to be a little less scatter-brained, but aside from that I don't think I would change anything. I tell my students all the time that my life experiences as a reporter — including the failures that I've experienced — are all part of what makes me who and what I am. So, while some of those failures were painful and frustrating at the same time, I learned a lot about myself through them and I wouldn't take that learning experience back for one moment. Failures are a natural part of life. And I think it is important to share some of those failures with students, so they understand that it is OK to fail. There is no shame there. In truth, failure is a natural part of life and it's in those painful moments that we grow and learn the most. And that process of learning does not stop when the degree is in hand. As long as you are on this side of Heaven, you should be learning and growing. Failures — both personal and professional — are part of that

process of being human. We need to normalize that more.

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

Walck: My philosophy of history is that it is OK to have hypotheses as to what might have happened in a particular situation, but that the modern lens that I bring needs to be put to the side and I need to investigate and extrapolate as much as I can from a particular moment in time to better understand it. I think that it is too easy to look at the past through the lens of our modern world or life experiences. But in doing so, sometimes we infuse misunderstandings even over simplify things like words and popular lexicon because of the modern lens we see our world through.

It is OK to be offended by the things that we read or discover from the past. There are things in the history of humanity that *should* offend us. At the same time, part of our obligation as media historians, is very similar to my obligation as a reporter, which was to present the facts as I best understand them and present that information to readers in a way that allows them to make better decisions about how they feel about a particular moment in time.

It is important work. And I do believe that we can better understand the present by understanding the past. Failure to remember the past sets us up to repeat the mistakes others before us made.

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

Walck: There is so much more access to information than ever before. To me, that is an incredible strength. After the global pandemic shut down archives, we learned that there are a growing number of online resources filled with primary information. I think that is a good thing. And there are scholars finding their way to that information. I applaud these scholars looking for “outside-the-box” avenues for continuing their research.

There are also many new perspectives examining history and I believe there’s great strength in this. I love that more women are doing historical journalism research, that more people of color and from different socioeconomic backgrounds are turning to the historical record to share untold stories with wider audiences. I think that a greater diversity of researchers brings to light new ideas and approaches, and I love that there is a wide range in subject matter that appears in our journals today compared to just a decade or more ago. We have an incredibly talented number of scholars who are coming up in the ranks, and it’s exciting to see the things that excite them and drive them in their research. So, I have a lot of hope for the future.

By the same token, I think that being grounded in the classics, being grounded in the fundamentals of historiography are more important than ever. We live in a polemic time, where politics have infused so many facets of everyday life. And sometimes, research topics can seem taboo just based on a particular political angle, but I think as scholars, we need to lean into those more uncomfortable areas of history to examine them and shed light on events, movements, and moments in time. Just because something isn’t popular doesn’t mean it isn’t worthy of study.

Historiography: *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?

Walck: I think that we need to be vocal about the value journalism history — and history in general — brings to the wider academic arena of liberal arts. In the last few years, it seems as if there is an assault happening against liberal arts programs — and mass communication and journalism history fall into this space. Universities still have an obligation to educate students in a way that makes them well-rounded individuals in our society, whether it's at the undergrad or graduate level. And history plays a significant role in that education. (This is where modernity, polemic politics, and presentism can cause serious problems. For example, recent news stories about curricula in a Southern state attempting to teach public school students that enslaving people was a good thing because it taught the enslaved transferable job skills is not only ethically bankrupt, but it's morally deplorable to propagate such a narrative—*because* it is counter to what the historical record has demonstrated for centuries.)

So, how do we counter this misinformation? Maybe it takes the shape of infusing some of the *Journalism History* Podcast into our classwork or getting students to engage in historic topics through the creation of podcasts of their own or incorporating readings from colleagues who have published on media history topics. I see these as small steps we can each take to spread the word about the value of history and media history.

Also, I think that one of the things we need to think about more is interdisciplinary efforts. Just earlier this year as part of *American Journalism's* 40th anniversary we ran an essay that was written by two scholars out of Northeastern University. One is a journalism professor who

does historical research; the other, a professor who works in computer science. Together they wrote about how the university was gifted a digitized copy of the photo archive from the *Boston Globe*, and together they wrote code for AI to help explore that archive. What we can learn from the photos that did run and even more interesting, the images that *did not* run in the paper, is more than just a philosophical debate. It is practicum thanks to technology. I found it really fascinating how they used AI to essentially not just examine the story of desegregation in Boston through images, but also through the images that never ran in the newspaper.

I think historians are sometimes reticent to embrace technology and new approaches to research because we just don't understand it. And I get it. Technology intimidates me, too. But I think that those of us who are willing to embrace more interdisciplinary efforts and reach out to colleagues from other disciplines and bring them into our research could find ourselves in a much more dynamic and exciting place.

Historiography: *What challenges do you think JMC history faces in the future?*

Walck: I think one of the biggest challenges that journalism history faces in the future is really just connecting the “dots” so people understand the significance of what we do. I think that having academic journals that are well-ranked among other social sciences that can translate what we do into the types of numbers that colleagues in other disciplines can understand, is helpful, especially in terms of gaining tenure or full professorships. But also, in terms of helping the hard sciences better understand the significance of what we do. I must believe there is room in the academy for all of us.

As a reporter, I always understood that there are individuals in the newsroom who have different strengths and different weaknesses, and when we all work together and implement our strengths to the fullest degree, it becomes meaningful work and it helps people understand the importance of what it is that we do. So, in terms of challenges for the future, I think that in an era where we have declining students, and challenges to the liberal arts that question the validity or importance of what we do, it is even more critical than ever to really spread the news and share the value that we bring to the academy.

I think that sometimes we would rather be in a dusty archive somewhere, rather than explaining to people why what we do is important. And while I have no pretensions of thinking that I'm curing cancer with my research topics, at the same time, I think that misunderstanding, ignorance, self-imposed anti-intellectualism... those are very different sorts of cancers trying mighty hard to thrive in our society. So, the things that we can do to help people better understand the world that they live and operate in is important and valuable work. And we need to vocalize the value of what we bring.

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Book Award Interview

Matthew Ehrlich ©



Ehrlich

Matthew Ehrlich won the AEJMC's Tankard Book Award in 2012 for *Radio Utopia: Postwar Audio Documentary in the Public Interest*. He is a professor emeritus of the College of Media at the University of Illinois. Along with *Radio Utopia*, he has written four other books. One of them, *Journalism in the Movies*, was named an Outstanding Title by the Association of American University Presses. Before going into teaching, he worked as a radio reporter, producer, editor, and anchor. Before joining the University of Illinois faculty, he taught at the University of Oklahoma. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois.

Historiography: Give us a brief summary of your book.

Ehrlich: The book examines a brief flowering of radio documentary on the American broadcasting networks between 1945 and 1951. The documentaries were grounded in the belief that radio could and should help remake the country for the better. Journalists and dramatists joined forces in producing programs that advocated action on juvenile delinquency, slums, race relations, venereal disease, atomic energy, and arms control. For a time, their efforts were enabled by the commercial broadcasting industry, which was under pressure from the Federal

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Communications Commission to demonstrate that it was serving the public interest. By 1951, however, radio had been supplanted by television, the “good war” against fascism had given way to the Cold War against communism, and many of radio’s top documentarians had landed on the blacklist.

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

Ehrlich: I had been researching a new wave of audio documentary that emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s, and I had published a scholarly article about the influential programs *Ghetto Life 101* and *Remorse: The 14 Stories of Eric Morse*. That experience got me interested in the historical roots of audio documentary. I wrote first about Norman Corwin’s 1947 radio series *One World Flight*, in which Corwin told of his round-the-world trip assessing the prospects for postwar peace. Then I turned to other radio programs of the era: *The Eagle’s Brood*, which looked at juvenile delinquency and was produced by the CBS Documentary Unit; *The Quick and the Dead*, which examined atomic energy and was written and produced by Fred Friendly for NBC; and *Hear It Now*, which was produced by Friendly and Edward R. Murrow as a sort of trial run for what would become their famous TV series *See It Now*. Those separate research studies eventually came together in my book.

Historiography: *What was the state of the historical literature about the topic at the time you began work on your book?*

Ehrlich: There were bits and pieces about the topic scattered across several different studies. For example, the broadcasting blacklist had received significant attention, and of course quite a bit had already been

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written about Murrow and his collaborations with Friendly. But no in-depth work focused specifically on that age of radio documentary. There seemed to be a void in the literature that I tried to help fill.

Historiography: *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?*

Ehrlich: The research was quite fun in that it drew on archives in several cool places. At Columbia University in New York City, I looked at the papers of Friendly and of Erik Barnouw, who had been a radio writer before he became a historian. New York University held the records of the redbaiting publication *Counterattack*. I also visited the Library of American Broadcasting and the Library of Congress in the Washington, DC, area; Boston University, which held the papers of Robert Lewis Shayon, one of the chief producers of the CBS Documentary Unit; the NBC archives at the Wisconsin State Historical Society in Madison; the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas in Austin; Wesleyan University in Connecticut, which held papers relating to ABC's documentaries; the Paley Center for Media in both New York and Beverly Hills; and the Thousand Oaks Library in California, which held Norman Corwin's papers. In addition, I interviewed Corwin — who was then in his mid-nineties and as sharp as ever — plus Ruth Ashton Taylor, who had been an original member of the CBS Documentary Unit under Murrow. The whole process from the start of research to publication of the book took about five years.

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

Ehrlich: I would have liked to have heard actual recordings of more of the programs that I wrote about as opposed to relying in some cases on just scripts. I located a number of recordings through so-called “old time radio” websites in addition to the archives that I just mentioned, but other things were either lost or else not easily unearthed (though I did find transcription discs of both *Hear It Now* and *The Quick and the Dead* in my own university library in Urbana, Illinois). In the years since I wrote the book, a national Radio Preservation Task Force has brought together a network of historians and preservationists. I wish that organization had existed fifteen years ago for advice on where to find things!

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

Ehrlich: This may sound commonsensical, but I suggest maintaining both a micro perspective and a macro perspective. From a micro perspective, simply try to uncover as many primary sources as possible, both to “zoom in” toward the truth of what happened and also to find specific historical details to enliven the writing. In-person archival research can be time-consuming, and it isn’t necessarily cheap, especially in cool-but-pricey places. But there’s no good substitute for it.

From a macro perspective, “zoom out” by drawing on a broad range of secondary sources. With my book, I looked at not only studies of postwar broadcasting, but also at histories of the Cold War era generally as well as studies of changing forms of news and documentary in print, photography, and film. In the years right after the war, there was a marked shift from dramatized radio documentaries that employed actors and music to actuality-based radio documentaries that employed

new portable recording technology. I argued in the book that this change paralleled a shift in postwar liberalism from an optimistic, pacifist, “One World” philosophy to a more pessimistic, hard-nosed philosophy rooted in anticommunism. The focus changed from the way the world ought to be to the way the world actually was, more intractable than perfectible. The secondary literature that I had been reading helped inform my analysis of the documentaries themselves and the details of their creation that I had found through primary sources in the archives.

Before leaving this question, one last piece of advice: Remember to double-check every reference and every quotation before publication. It’s a tedious process, especially for a book-length manuscript, but it’s necessary.

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

Ehrlich: Again, it was occasionally difficult to find actual recordings of the documentaries. So much radio of the era had vanished into the ether, owing in part to the longstanding recording bans imposed by CBS and NBC. Still, I was still able to locate recordings of several key documentaries as well as scripts of many other programs.

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

Ehrlich: I think that getting too close is a problem if you distort the truth — if, say, you omit pertinent-but-inconvenient details that don’t fit your preconceived narrative. But I don’t think that adopting a clear

viewpoint is always a bad thing in historical research. For example, there have been many fine studies of historically overlooked or marginalized subjects in which the authors have been transparent about their loyalties without sacrificing scholarly rigor. And a self-proclaimed neutral viewpoint doesn't by itself guarantee freedom from bias or distortion.

I recently wrote in my book *Dangerous Ideas on Campus* about Revido Oliver, a classics professor who was also a notorious white supremacist, anti-Semite, and Holocaust denier. I didn't pretend to be neutral toward him; I wrote that I found his views and his denial of documented historical fact to be abhorrent. But I still argued that an incendiary article that he had written (claiming that the recently assassinated John F. Kennedy had been a communist) fell under the protection afforded Oliver by academic freedom. With *Radio Utopia*, by way of contrast, I found the documentary producers' fervent belief in social betterment touching and even uplifting. Historical research requires a lot of time studying and thinking about your subjects, and I found the likes of Norman Corwin to be far more congenial company than Revido Oliver. (I very much enjoyed interviewing Corwin, whereas I'm not sure that I could have stomached interviewing Oliver had he still been living.) I ended up using a quote from Corwin — "To despair of the world is to resign from it" — as an epigraph for *Radio Utopia*. At the same time, I pointed out what I saw as the political, journalistic, and artistic limitations of the documentaries that Corwin and his peers had produced. I tried to maintain a clear-eyed perspective regardless of my sympathy toward the subjects I was writing about.

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

Ehrlich: I hope that the book has called attention to a fertile and pre-

viously overlooked era of audio documentary, and I also hope that it has demonstrated how the documentaries related to the profound changes and tensions of the immediate postwar years. Finally, I hope that the book has shown how audio documentary is just as worthy of serious study as documentary film and documentary photography are.

***Historiography:** What findings most surprised you?*

Ehrlich: The sheer volume and variety of the radio documentaries produced in this very short time frame surprised me. I was especially struck by a 1947 ABC documentary called *1960?? Jiminy Cricket!* that used Disney characters and songs to relate the findings of an 800-page report on America's future needs and resources. It was a prime example of the ways in which documentarians were employing all sorts of devices to address weighty subjects in creative ways, even without the use of field recordings.

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

Ehrlich: I've given most of this advice elsewhere, and with the caveat that I was originally educated as a journalist rather than a historian: Try to tell a good story with compelling characters. Avoid present-mindedness, but remember that history always speaks to the present. You have to address the "who cares?" question — why should we care about this particular subject in this particular moment that we're living in right now? Why and how does the topic matter to more than just a small subset of mass communication historians?

I also find it helpful to remember that history offers useful perspec-

Erlich

tive. It reminds us that we don't live in uniquely awful times and that nostalgia for an allegedly lost golden age never gets us very far. And it also reminds us that although notions of continual human progress are suspect, at certain moments in the past, we have demonstrated the capacity for working toward just ends and improving our common lot.

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The Media and Political Culture

By James D. Startt ©



Startt

NOTE: This is the sixth article in our series “How Media History Matters,” dealing with the significance that the mass media have had in American history. We think the series will appeal especially to historians who believe historical claims need evidence to support them. It’s easy, someone has said, to suggest explanations if one doesn’t have to worry about facts.

It will become clear as we publish more essays that many ways exist to justify JMC’s historical importance. One monolithic explanation won’t work. Jim Startt’s essay focuses on the media’s role in the political education of the public.

The media held an unprecedented position in American life as the twentieth century opened. Their capacity to reach the growing heterogeneous mass audience had never been greater. Since the 1880s a new popular journalism had developed, and in the early years of the new century, newspapers of this genre, as well as new popular maga-

*James D. Startt, senior research professor in history at Valparaiso University, has written extensively on Woodrow Wilson and the press and has served as editor of a number of other books. He received the Kobre Award for lifetime achievement from the American Journalism Historians Association in 2000. This article first appeared in the book *The Significance of the Media in American History*, James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, editors.*

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Startt

zines, helped the media to engage increasing millions of people. Muckraking journalists, who then gained prominence, placed the media in the forefront of the national reform movement that was spreading across the nation during these Progressive era years. Moreover, the flurry of the numerous turn-of-the-century wars and international incidents, as well as the imperial expansion of American national interests into Latin America and the Pacific areas, led to an extension of public interest in world affairs reflected in the growth of newspaper foreign services.¹ Advances in science and technology relating to communications gave the media the ability to cover national and international events with an efficiency and scope previously unknown.

In fact, the media were expanding in entirely new ways, for motion pictures had begun to assume their place in American culture. Film journalism could now be added to the traditional forms of the printed media. The first newsreels appeared in 1911 to take their place alongside the news films that had preceded them. By 1914 even some fictional films became attuned to political messages. So in this Progressive era when both the government and the governed considered public opinion a matter of crucial importance, the media expanded their capacity to penetrate the national political culture.

There were doubts about how this diverse and expanding media served the people. Media critics, both within and without journalism, expressed concern about yellow journalism and about the shrill and careless journalism associated with some of the muckrakers. Actually a number of things disturbed these critics about the media's performance. They charged that the popular media distorted, trivialized, and even fabricated news. The growing emotional appeal of the media and their commercialization disturbed them most of all. The collective term for all of these concerns was "sensationalism," and critics claimed that it de-

graded public taste and standards, encouraged hate and prejudice, and excited an emotional, alarmist public response to serious problems of state. Some critics even charged that sensationalism “debauched” the public’s judgment and appealed to the lowest instincts of society.² Interestingly, newsfilms escaped such criticism at this time. The popular press and films, of course, were not the entirety of media. There were many quality newspapers and excellent public affairs journals circulating, and they were growing in reputation.

All considered, the consensus among journalists that the media were expanding in influence can be understood, for it was an institution without rival in the political education of the public. “By 1900,” Robert Desmond observed, the media “had become so greatly effective as to represent a logical point at which it is proper to sum up the account of man’s search for and need for information about his environment and his world.”³ The manner in which the American media interacted with the nation’s political culture at the start of the twentieth century supports his claim. In fact, since the 1870s the effects of the media on nationalism and on American political culture in particular had been conspicuous, and their ability to penetrate and spread national culture farther and deeper was equally conspicuous as the new century opened.

The media, indeed, were central to the national political culture. They were the chief disseminators of the information, opinion, and persuasion that shaped the political culture of the time regarding matters both national and international. The term political culture refers to much more than politics narrowly defined. It involves the broad political environment that encompasses both the government and the governed at a particular time, and it addresses the predominant political consciousness of a time. Political culture involves a powerful ideological element — what Beatrice Webb once called the “Time-Spirit” that

gives an age its distinctive character. The media's role in shaping the political culture, particularly in the twentieth century, cannot be underestimated, for as the renowned historian Carl Becker explained some years ago, "whether arguments command assent or not depends less upon the logic that conveys them than upon the climate of opinion in which they are conveyed."⁴

Naturally many things, some traditional and some circumstantial, determine the "climate of opinion" of a given time. But, more than any other institution, the modern media interact with that climate of opinion, and in the process of interaction help to define it. No other institution has such a potential to engage political leadership; none other can match their role in shaping the content, tone, and force of public thought and political action. None other so consistently works to shape the prevailing public ideas and emotions that compose the political culture of a time. It is for this reason that the media possess a great responsibility for the consequences, either constructive or destructive, occasioned by the political culture they help to create. The manner in which the media related to a great modern historical event can be used to demonstrate their involvement in the nation's political culture. The event to be examined will be the First World War, but it should be understood that this event occurred at the end of a political generation, that which spanned the years from the end of the Spanish American War in 1898 to the Armistice ending the World War in 1918.⁵

THE MEDIA AND WORLD WAR I

There are two significant cultural elements in this political generation that need to be mentioned before proceeding with the subject of this essay. The first relates to the prevailing national sentiment. In the main,

the predominant qualities of prewar American society were progressive. It was an exuberant society. American nationalism appeared set on a promising path of harmonious unity and nondiscrimination against ethnic minorities. Democratic reformers sought to make the country more efficient and just, and a strong progressive spirit bolstered their efforts. Cynicism was in the minority. The majority of Americans were prosperous and growing in prosperity, and the nation appeared to have outgrown its isolationism and to be assuming a place among the world powers. There were, of course, exceptions to the tide of this movement. Tenement life in New York's East Side and the inequities forced upon Southern Black Americans proved that the national ideal was flawed in its implementation. In retrospect, it is even possible to detect a certain provincialism and an illusory quality in the American ideal that had such appeal in the popular vision of the nation throughout these years. Yet the reforming, progressive impulse was central to the prewar nation. The national character appeared to be growing in maturity and in self-confidence, and the media had been instrumental as a shaper and mover of that spirit.

The second thing to bear in mind about this generation was its perspective on international affairs. It was a generation that departed from a previous isolationist tradition in international affairs and accepted the idea that the United States would play a more active role as a great power. Accordingly, the nation was perceived either as a player in the imperial politics among the world powers or as an agent for liberal internationalism. The two perceptions were not mutually exclusive, but the latter one is of interest to our subject. Among other things, it helped to draw us closer to the British. More will be said about this later, but it should be mentioned here that this generation witnessed a fundamental rapprochement between Britain and the United States. Although some

friction remained between these two nations during the prewar years, a number were resolved as the United States and Britain grew closer together. There were many reasons for this new relationship, not the least of which was the fact that the British cultivated it. American perceptions of race, culture, political traditions, and democratic ideology also encouraged the new Anglo-American harmony. "The one indispensable feature of our foreign policy," declared John Hay, who served as American secretary of state from 1898 to 1905, "should be a friendly understanding with England."⁶

That was an idea endorsed by most members of the nation's cultural and political elite. It also found support in the media. During the prewar years, the media commented far more extensively on Britain, mostly in a friendly manner, than on any other European country. In 1912 a number of articles appeared in the press about the hundred years of unbroken peace between Britain and the United States as "an international event of immense significance."⁷ Enthusiasts of the rapprochement like August Schvan in the *North American Review* spoke of the "Anglo-Saxon peoples" standing together for the cause of international peace.⁸ Nothing like this sentiment, either in scope or depth, existed for any other European country in the American mind. This fact should be remembered as American media images of Britain and Germany are probed in this inquiry. Indeed, as the war opened in Europe, the British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, was able to report that his friend Theodore Roosevelt expressed the predominant American sentiment in his belief that "England's consistent friendliness toward us for decades past and Germany's attitude during the Spanish War and in South Africa, have combined to produce a friendliness in the U. S. for England as against Germany and a general apprehension of German designs."⁹

The Media and Political Culture

Such were the prevailing sentiments in the political culture of pre-war America that bear a special relevance to how that culture evolved during the war. More than being the central event of the generation in which it occurred, the World War that began in 1914 was an event of truly epic proportion. It deeply involved all of modern society and culture. More than any previous war it engaged mass communication. It tested the political media in many ways, for the trauma of total war would excite the political passions, persuasions, and prejudices alive in the political culture of the belligerent and neutral nations. How did the media engage the fact of war and, in time, this nation's participation in it? As mass communicators of news and opinion and as shapers of the political culture of the nation, did they perform responsibly? Answers to these questions provide insight into how the media operated in early twentieth-century American political culture, for the "Great War" was the defining episode for the political generation in which it occurred. It was, moreover, the event of that generation that most tested the media's commitment to the canons of journalism against the pull of war-produced emotions and popular sentiments.

Years of American Neutrality: 1914-1917

The war that began in Europe in the summer of 1914 challenged the mass media in unprecedented ways. Huge armies suffered gigantic losses and settled down to a war of attrition on the western front. Those on the eastern front endured sweeping movement full of promise for German victory and foreboding disaster for Russia. The media faced the task of reporting one of the greatest events of modern times. The war, moreover, burst upon the world as a conflict of tremendous fury and magnitude. Within days it became not only a world war but also a total

war in which public opinion would be mobilized by both sides and used as a weapon.

The challenge for the news media of the world's most important neutral nation was more formidable than anyone could have anticipated. Could they overcome obstacles of distance, scope, and censorship to report this sprawling and emotionally charged conflict? Could they be fair in their treatment of adversaries? Could they deliver an accurate portrayal of the war with all of its ramifications for the American public? And, once the United States entered the war, could the news media perform in a manner that would help preserve American democratic ideals?

From the beginning of the war, the American news media's record was a mixture of responsible and irresponsible journalism. Given the nature of the institution, perhaps it could not have been otherwise. Surely this was the case during the years of American neutrality. At first American correspondents distinguished themselves in reaching and reporting the war, so far as it was possible to do so. But civil and military censors soon gained control of publicity and the correspondents tended to become, as Frederick Palmer observed, "sort of glorified disseminator[s] of official military propaganda.... The critical correspondent was outflanked, decimated, routed."¹⁰ Military authorities took them on tours of the front while civil authorities gave them the news the government wished them to have. The American press did make a determined effort to inform the American public about the war and the best foreign correspondents tried to provide reliable news.¹¹ And, much to their credit, American correspondents took the lead in exposing the atrocity propaganda that flourished following the outbreak of hostilities.¹²

Atrocity stories appeared in the press of all belligerent countries at

the opening of war. Alleged German atrocities, however, caught the special attention of the American media, and they were of two types. The first dealt with supposed barbarous actions of German soldiers against individuals and groups of people. German troops in Belgium and Northern France were accused of raping and murdering women and children and of behaving in other brutal and indecent ways toward civilian populations caught in the forward move of their army. The second type of atrocity dealt with the reported German use of unanchored automatic contact-mines and explosive bullets (Dum-Dums), and their wanton destruction by means of aerial bombs and burning in their attack of places, especially of Louvain. Some American editors remained skeptical about these stories, but many others displayed little discretion in using them. The German action at Louvain, for instance, the *New York Tribune* called “a fit of brutal and tyrannous passion” as it accused Germany of “rebrutalizing war and multiplying its horrors.” The German bombardment of Antwerp impressed many papers including the *Springfield Republican*, the *Philadelphia Record*, and the *Washington Star* as a “crime against humanity.” *The Literary Digest* called the alleged barbarous atrocities “The Darkest Side of the Great War.”¹³ Harry Hansen, Irwin Cobb, John T. McCutcheon and other American correspondents abroad declared that the atrocity stories were “groundless,” but their protest mattered little.¹⁴ By early 1915 serious questioning of these stories appeared in print, and the *Review of Reviews* announced: “One of the lessons taught by the war is the general unreliability of newspaper accounts of atrocities committed by soldiers. As a rule they have been proven to be purely imaginative creations....”¹⁵ It was a belated realization, for the damage to public opinion had already occurred.

Why did these stories find their way into print so often? Perhaps

they were simply examples of sensational journalism at its worst. There might be some truth in that explanation for the link between a sensation-giving media and a sensation-craving public had already been established, but it stretches the imagination to suppose that most editors would go that far for the sake of sales. Walter Millis's claim that the "atrocious story filled the void" created when "correspondents were naturally debarred from reporting what was really going on" could be part of the answer, but it is not convincing.¹⁶ During the first year of the war when the atrocity stories were at their peak, there were abundant other aspects of the war to report. Since it came as a surprise to most people, there was much to be explained. The use of atrocity stories can be best explained by the fact that they appeared to come from reliable sources, not only from eye witnessed accounts but even from the Belgian and British governments.¹⁷ What is especially disturbing about these stories in retrospect, and more so because they appeared at a time when so much was made over objectivity in news gathering and reporting, was the disregard for the rules of evidence apparent in printing them. Correspondents and editors should have known more than they did about the history of modern war.

There was nothing new about these stories. Reports of similar, even identical, atrocious acts appeared in most modern wars. The Carnegie Commission investigating the Balkan wars that immediately preceded World War I discovered many cases of fabricated atrocities. In his excellent account of atrocity propaganda, H. C. Peterson demonstrated that many of these invented stories were "standard wartime" propaganda.¹⁸ This was even true of the most shocking of all the stories — those describing the sexual violation and mutilation of women and children. Many were common barracks-room fabrications. Others reported actual happenings but without proper exploration of motivation. The report

of the destruction at Louvain is a case in point. The German action there, as Peterson explained, was transformed “into an atrocity story by omitting discussion of the acts of Belgian civilians, by exaggerating the destruction carried out, and by throwing in an occasional fictitious human interest story....”¹⁹ In this case, or others in which civilians fired upon German troops, those troops had legitimate grounds for reprisal. Too frequently in printed accounts of German atrocities no distinction was made between observed and second- or third-hand evidence, and too little analysis was made of the evidence available. American journalists, moreover, used London newspapers and the news releases of Allied governments as important sources for these and other articles on the war. They should have scrutinized news from those sources more than they did. Allowing for the fact that there were some brutalities committed by the German forces in Belgium and France (that could be expected since they were the occupying army), for the confusion that prevailed for correspondents at the start of the war and the controls imposed upon them, and for the general impression created by the German invasion of Belgium, the atrocity stories represent exaggerated journalism that disregarded the principles of inquiry needed to understand such material. Unfortunately, they were received as fact by many Americans who tended to accept news favorable to the Allies from the start.

The pro-Allied inclination of American opinion is a fact of major significance. How can it be explained? It is too simple to say it was the result of British propaganda, although that was a factor. The British employed the most subtle propaganda of any country in the war. Its influence reached far into American political culture and utilized the American media in the process. The weekly *American Press Resumé* that the British propaganda ministry issued for the cabinet leaves no doubt of the success British propaganda had in creating a favorable reception for

the Allied cause in the American press.²⁰ From the start of the war, the British also controlled the sources of news in England as well as the transatlantic cables. Obviously those controls facilitated the effectiveness of their propaganda. By contrast, German propaganda in the United States was clumsy and ineffective and made more so by the activities of German agents engaged in sabotaging shipments of munitions to the Allies. At the end of the first year of the war, Sir Gilbert Parker, the head of British propaganda in the United States, could observe that “if things go a little further, German intrigues may become the center of a very vigorous sweep of public indignation.”²¹ That “sweep” occurred as the result of the German employment of submarine warfare, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and the exposure of German intrigues in this country. They appeared to confirm most American’s antagonism to the German government that can be traced back to prewar years. Americans and their news media, in fact, accepted the version of the war they wished to believe.

Sentiment was with the Allies, and it manifested a strong proclivity toward the British. Since so much of American heritage is English in origin, this persuasion seems natural enough. Cultural and political traditions created a strong affinity between the two nations. Heritage, however, explains only part of the reason for such preference. It fails to consider the strong transatlantic reality of recent years. As noted before, an Anglo-American rapprochement was growing by the turn of the century, and it was particularly in evidence during the Progressive era. The tendency of most American historians to assume that Progressivism was an American phenomenon has distorted the significance of this transatlantic factor. If British journalists and political reformers made American progressivism at least an indirect force in British politics during the era, the influence of British reform thought on American progressivism

was, as Kenneth O. Morgan explains, “coherent and direct.”²² British liberal reform inspired Americans. Settlement houses in Britain, especially London’s Toynbee Hall, had a dramatic impact on American reformers, and Eastern Progressive journals such as the *Outlook*, the *Forum*, and the *World’s Work* closely followed and reported reform experiments in England. British reform-minded journalists and public figures were widely read in the United States. Social reform in other countries was also observed, but the most Americans seeking social justice preferred the product of British liberalism. There were, to be sure, critics of British reform and English culture among American Progressives, and Anglophobia had not disappeared in the Midwest nor among Americans of German or Irish descent — no more than doubts, even anxieties, about American culture had vanished from the British mind.

Comparison, however, exemplifies the degree to which Americans were protagonists of the Allied cause. During the years of American neutrality no German statesman attracted and inspired confidence in the American mind comparable to that of the British foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey or Britain’s recent ambassador in Washington James Bryce. No German journalist was as known to American readers as the often cited Robert Donald of the *London Daily Chronicle* or H. W. Massingham of the *London Nation*. No German newspaper had a reputation in this country to match that of *The Times* of London. German propaganda depicting German *kultur* could never match the pulling power of British idealism among Americans.

The fact of the American pro-Allied sentiment became a topic that a number of publicists attempted to interpret. Several interesting themes appear in their discussion of the subject. They spoke, for instance, of “the spontaneous enthusiasm” for the British and of how the British and their Allies were “fighting on behalf of the civilized world to

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destroy a false and brutal idea.”²³ The reference to “spontaneous enthusiasm” is interesting, for, as the *Nation* pointed out, it predated any talk of atrocities and could even be detected at the end of July, several days before the British cut the German cables.²⁴ Two themes especially stand out in this discussion. The first is that the war “was made in Germany” and was the result of Germany’s use of the “mailed fist.” Accordingly, German policy since the days of Bismarck was portrayed as a continuation of “blood and iron” solutions to international problems in which Germany had an interest.²⁵ The German Emperor William II became the chief culprit in this interpretation. As Bernadotte Schmitt, who would become one of the foremost historians of the war’s origins, reasoned, American opinion, while respectful of the German people, was “decidedly against Germany” because “as a nation we do protest against the doctrine of militarism as preached and practiced by his Majesty William II.”²⁶ The size and speedy mobilization of the German army, its violation of Belgian neutrality, its swift attack, as well as Germany’s support of the Austro-Hungarian “undeviating insistence” for her “pound of flesh” from Serbia, all appeared as arguments to support this interpretation.²⁷

The second major theme in this discussion was an idealistic one. It was claimed that the American people viewed the German government as an obstacle to the “march of democracy.” Responsibility for the war was placed upon “monarchical cliques, absolutists, and those in Germany in particular,” said the *San Francisco Chronicle*. “Eastern Europe of kings will be remade,” announced the *Chicago Tribune*. “It is the twilight of kings. The republic [i.e., democracy] marches east in Europe.”²⁸ After studying newspapers, discussion in the clubs, and street-corner and subway talk, Arthur Bullard, one of the best political journalists of the war era, concluded that the American people were against Germany

because they did “not want to see the world Germanized.” He went so far as to add, “The governmental forms, the political life, of Germany are so opposed to what we are used to and to better things we dream of that we find it hard to understand how Germans can be ‘loyal.’”²⁹ All of these publicists believed that the media as a whole were in step with these predominant sentiments, and some conducted informal surveys to prove it. When the *Literary Digest* made a formal survey of American editors on the question, 367 replied. Of those, 105 said they favored the Allies, while only 20 favored the Germans. Those favoring a neutral position numbered 242, but aside from areas containing large German populations, the editors reporting the neutral position of their papers frequently admitted an inclination toward the Allies.³⁰

The strength of the pro-Allied sentiment was obvious to Sir Gilbert Parker who conducted regular surveys of the American press. Aside from the Midwest, he found the media were “decidedly” pro-Ally, and in the weekly reports that he made to the British cabinet he expressed his satisfaction with the treatment that the Allied cause was receiving in the pages of American newspapers, pamphlets, and magazines.³¹ German propagandists tried in vain to stem the pro-Allied tide of American popular and press opinion, but they never received favorable reception in the media comparable to that of their British counterparts. Most of the papers favorable to them were German-American or Irish-American ones that did not penetrate the dominant political culture. Of the major American newspapers only the *Milwaukee Sentinel* and *Washington Post* could be considered consistently pro-German. Although the Hearst press and the *Chicago Tribune*, which Allied enthusiasts labeled “pro-German,” could be anti-British and would print German dispatches, they also printed abundant pro-Allied news. Hearst went so far as to purchase the news services from London’s *Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, and

News as well as to use propaganda from many British writers (while noting that it was only part of the truth).³² Regardless, most American newspapers filled their news columns with pro-Allied reports. The German Information Bureau, the propaganda organization under the direction of Dr. Bernard Dernburg in the United States, never succeeded in the effort to influence the American press, and after trying to defend the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915, its work was discontinued.

The pro-Allied sentiment was evident from the opening of the war, though the majority of newspaper editors professed neutrality about the struggle. Just a few weeks after the war began, President Wilson, troubled by the “inflamed state of public opinion in the country over the European conflict” and by “utterances by the American people and press” took the advice of State Department Counselor Robert Lansing and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan and issued an appeal to the American people to remain impartial in thought and action.³³ Wilson’s appeal failed to check the general tide of opinion regarding the belligerents. As German propaganda in the United States stalled while that of the British succeeded beyond expectation and as the German actions in the war (i.e., the invasion of Belgium, the employment of submarine warfare, and resort to sabotage activities in this country) reinforced American suspicions of German intentions, the news media followed the current in American opinion. Increasingly newspapers and magazines allowed the public to regard the war as a simple struggle between good and evil with little doubt about which combatant was good and which one was evil. This dichotomy dominated the interpretation of the war that Americans read as it did that which they viewed in motion pictures.

The film media took considerable license in portraying the war as they aroused emotions about the struggle. It was impossible for news-

reel cameramen to report the combat at the front. Military restrictions kept them from using their equipment near the battle lines in most cases, and the belligerent countries forbade the filming of many subjects deemed vital to the war effort. But this did not stop the newsreel producers. They quickly outdistanced their prewar achievements in faking news. Old newsreels were searched for anything that could pass for pictures of war, and in a sometimes shameless manner producers presented the war in terms of a rousing excitement. “War! War! War! Ramo Films, Inc., Announce the War of Wars or the Franco-German Invasion of 1914,” ran one newsreel advertisement as if it were introducing a pulp novel. The notice continued like a barker at a circus performance: “Four hundred stupendous scenes taken on the actual battlefields of France will be released within a week. The first authentic events of the reigning SENSATION OF THE WORLD.”³⁴ This announcement appeared in *Motion Picture News* less than two weeks after hostilities began at a time when there was no evidence that a single frame had been taken outside of the United States. War was entertainment and entertainment sold. Therefore, the American public would be treated to the thrill of battle.

During the second year of the war German and French authorities began to allow a few cameramen near the front lines. By that time, however, the public’s interest in war pictures had started to wane. War as stalemate was losing its novelty. By that time too the *Literary Digest* and a few other journals began to publicize the fact that newsreels were often invented fakes.³⁵ It remains a puzzle, however, why so little criticism of this medium appeared. The public tended to believe the validity of newsreel reports. Pictures did not lie. Exploitation of this perception reached absurd proportions in 1914 when one writer in *Moving Picture World* commented: “The only real and incorruptible neutral in this war is not the type but the film. It is utterly without bias and records and

reports but does not color or distort.”³⁶

The film news media soon found other ways to promote interests in war. Late in 1914 preparedness agitation dedicated to making the United States ready for possible war with Germany emerged across the nation. Film documentaries such as *Uncle Sam Awake, America Preparing*, and *Making a U. S. Soldier* soon appeared along with a number of newsreels and film cartoons to heighten war consciousness.³⁷ Fictional films with pseudo-journalistic content also appeared. Some like J. Stuart Blackton’s *The Battle Cry For Peace* portraying a fictional invasion of the United States actually urged the entry of the country into war on the side of the Allies.³⁸ On the other hand, Thomas Ince’s classic anti-war production, *Civilization*, claimed its intent was to show the savagery and futility of war. Nevertheless, it gave a graphic description of war and the inhumanity of war, albeit with the figure of Christ observing the carnage. The film reveled in portraying the combat of war, and it left no doubt about who was to blame for the bloodletting. At one point in it, Christ appeared accompanying the Kaiser across battlefields showing him the tragedy he had caused.³⁹

D. W. Griffith’s masterpiece *Intolerance* was a pacifist film — one of the great film achievements of the era. Tracing intolerance throughout history, it showed how it led to war and devastation. It appeared in 1916 and may have helped to build public support for the re-election of President Wilson. *Intolerance* failed, however, to achieve the popular acclaim Griffith hoped it would. Terry Ramsaye, in his classic study of the early American film, called it a “magnificent failure.”⁴⁰ The public understood little of its abstract theme and was, at any rate, tiring of pacifist films.

Most fictional films depicting war at this time aimed to satisfy the public’s curiosity about war and about fighting Germans. They offered

stereotyped pictures of Germans and of submarine warfare. Their mock battles excited audiences and their numerous stories of German espionage in 1915 aroused fears of German spies infiltrating the country. For the most part, it can be concluded that journalistic and pseudo-journalistic films gave the public what it wanted during the period of American neutrality. In doing so they were conspicuous failures both as vehicles for international understanding and as restraints for the public's emotional response to the war in Europe.

America in War: 1917-1918

When the United States entered the war in April 1917, the media faced two great challenges. The first was informational. The demand for news was great, and the media deserves a great deal of credit for the sheer bulk of news and background material they provided about the nation at war and about the war in the world. It is impossible to read the newspapers and journals of the war years without being impressed by the range of coverage that filled the printed page. In this respect, the media broadened the vision of Americans of the nation and the world.

Newspapers and news services spared no costs in reporting the war. That was a difficult undertaking considering the distance, complexity, and obstacles to movement and publication it involved. Volunteer censorship at home and military and civilian censorship abroad impaired full and free coverage. But modern war without censorship is unthinkable, for to inform the public is to inform the enemy. The correspondents and editors worked within those circumstances, with some understandable irritation and anger. War correspondents, as the records of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) show, tried to see as much behind the lines and on the lines as authorities would permit, and they

pushed the authorities to permit more.⁴¹ To cover the war as thoroughly as possible large newspapers and news services increased the number of correspondents serving abroad. In France, the AEF established one press headquarters at Neuchateau, about thirty miles from General Pershing's own headquarters at Chaumont, and a second one in Paris. About fifty correspondents were accredited to the AEF at a given time, but there were over 500 American correspondents in Europe at large during the war. Through their efforts the American public learned all the news that was reportable plus, because of the many background articles that appeared, it can be added that they also had a greater chance than ever before to understand Europe. They read, however, little news or commentary that was critical either of military operations abroad or of the government's actions at home. Meanwhile, in the United States journalistic activity in Washington increased as that city became one of the world's great news centers. Beyond all this effort lies the fact that during the war the government left neither the American people nor the press to their own resources.

Just one week after America entered the war, President Wilson created the government's Committee on Public Information (CPI). Given his progressive faith in public opinion and the fact that the other warring powers had organizations for censorship and publicity long in place, Wilson had no alternative. Total war required total mobilization. To head the CPI, he turned to the former muckraker George Creel, and hundreds of other journalists soon flocked to serve the organization. The CPI instituted a system of voluntary censorship and also took many steps to provide news. It distributed an *Official Bulletin*, a daily record of the proceedings of all the government's departments and agencies that was a precursor to the *Federal Register* that dates from the 1930s. Claiming its purpose was "to inform the public on the progress of the

war and of official acts incidental to its prosecution,"⁴² it was distributed free of cost to all the country's newspapers. The *Official Bulletin* was only the edge of the government's endeavor to publicize its war effort. It also published the *War News Digest* for country editors, and about 12,000 editors requested it. A Division of Syndicated Features provided material that reached an estimated twelve million people per week. Posters, photographs and cartoons were widely distributed by other CPI divisions, and rousing patriotic notices produced by the organizations appeared regularly in newspapers and magazines as well as in numerous trade and specialized publications. The organization's activities were gigantic in scope. It utilized the film media as well as the printed, and in time even produced documentary films of its own.⁴³ Moreover, its efforts not only saturated the nation's political culture but also extended across the globe as they championed the American cause throughout Eurasia and southward into Latin America.

The CPI was a major source of news during the war, and the government imposed its version of the war on the nation either by means of censorship or publicity. The day of the news release had arrived. The public would have news of the war and of the country at war, and that which came from the CPI was largely accurate and widely used.⁴⁴ It was, of course, selective. The CPI was also a source of propaganda for its function was to mobilize the nation for involvement in total war. Journalists within and without the organization engaged in that mobilization.

This brings us to the second great challenge the media faced in the war, that of interpreting the struggle. Nothing better illustrates the media's role in the era's political culture than the way in which previous stereotypes and national mythology now came to characterize in print the nation at war.

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From the moment of America's entrance into the struggle, the media portrayed it as a "war for democracy." The *Kansas City Star* caught the essential spirit of the moment when it proclaimed: "Blockades and trade routes may be the occasion for the war. But it will not be a war in defense of trade. It will be a war in defense of liberty and democracy against the military autocracy of the Hohenzollerns."⁴⁵ It was a war for "Freedom and Democracy," wrote George Harvey in his *North American Review*; and a month later when extolling "The Call to Arms," he echoed Milton's: "Methinks I see in mind a noble ... nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep and shaking her invincible locks; methinks I see her as an eagle ... kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam."⁴⁶ The idealization of America's participation in the war was a theme that also appealed to the more muscular patriot publicists such as George Stanley. After calling down the wrath of the nation on those he labeled "Pacifreaks," he applauded the emergence of a "new America," grown beyond its "provincialism" and ready to accept "responsibilities." At the core of the country's new spirit, he claimed, was the realization that

Germany is an outlaw.... An enemy to all mankind, that would impose its might and its despotism upon the world, and plots and intrigues the destruction of the nations that refuse to submit supinely to its will. Germany is the antithesis of Democracy.... Prussian power has no place in the society of nations, it has no place in modern civilization, it is a pariah by its own deeds; and the responsibility is ours, not one degree less than it is that of the Allies, to put down the common enemy. True Democracy is ... a vital force with a world outlook. America has redeemed herself.⁴⁷

The nation, as Harvey contended, was “rousing,” and the media were quick to portray the awakening as a manifestation of the democratic ideal in which the virtue of the republic is fulfilled by an American-led crusade for freedom and democracy across the world. Obvious though the oversimplification and self-deception may be in such a portrayal of national policy and purpose, it is one that can be seen as a culmination of American acceptance of Allied idealism during the period of neutrality.

Just as the nation’s cause in modern war is idealized, so its enemy must be brutalized by language of unmistakable definition. So argued Harold D. Lasswell in his classic study of World War I propaganda. “There must be no ambiguity,” he said, “about whom the public is to hate.”⁴⁸ It must be spelled out in emotive, even satanic, terms. The images projected in the media must be carefully built and designed to persuade the public. As journalists and propagandists addressed that task, the line separating them blurred. The matter of the idealization of our participation in the war underscores the point, but it is demonstrated even more by the image that the media attached to Germany’s leaders.

Although many journalists displayed restraint, virulent rhetoric became commonplace in numerous printed references to the enemy (mainly Germany) and its leaders. Germans became “the Huns.”⁴⁹ It was a puzzling reference since Americans from President Wilson down were fond of saying that we had no desire to punish the German people who had been duped by their military masters. Yet the term “Hun” conveyed specific images of how an army operated in the field of battle, and the German armies were surely well peopled. Regardless, this type of sensational rhetoric was widespread. “The Hun is at the gate; the Republic is in peril; freedom is at stake; civilization and humanity tremble in the balance; America must save the cause,” proclaimed the *North*

American Review's War Weekly.⁵⁰ A writer in the *Forum* discovered that “compared with the modern Hun the ancient Goth and Vandal were bungling altruists.”⁵¹ It is interesting to note in this connection that another surge of atrocity stories ran through the media upon America's entrance into the war. Many appeared before most American troops could have been involved in battle. Once again they conveyed an unmistakable message about the nature of the enemy the Allies were now engaging.⁵²

The Kaiser, of course, became the personification of villainy in this rhetoric. He was blamed for all the war's evil, from slaughter on the battlefield to “the Zeppelin raids in London and the murder of innocent civilians, school children at play, the aged and infirmed in hospitals or wounded in care of the Red Cross....”⁵³

It was essential that national solidarity be promoted for the war effort to proceed, and the media excelled in their effectiveness in that promotion. Countless editorials, news items, and feature stories explained how Americans should serve the national cause. They explored all conceivable dimensions of how civilians were supporting the war effort by their work, spirit and financial contributions, and they described all the activities of the armed forces, from their training stations in this country to the battlegrounds of Europe, which could be covered without compromising national security and military performance. Photojournalists amplified the printed matter of the media by countless pictures taken at home and abroad. In this manner, the nation's newspapers and periodicals performed a vital role in creating national solidarity. By and large, however, they neglected their role as critic. They said little, for instance, about the sometimes violent harassment of the German-American community and its press. Solidarity led to a spirit of intolerance by 1918, and hundreds of newspapers plus mainstream magazines such as *Every-*

body's Magazine, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Life*, *World's Work*, and even the *New Republic* championed Americanization of the nation by denouncing German-Americans.⁵⁴ Explaining the war by simplistic reduction of issues to a basic “good vs. evil” framework had its domestic casualties.

Political cartoonists also operated within this framework. They could and did find humor in civilian and military wartime life, but most political cartoons were ideological rather than truly humorous. Created in the support-your-country and hate-the-Hun-and-blame-the-Kaiser environment that they helped to enflame, they were partly inspired by the government. To direct the cartoonists' war effort, the government established the Bureau of Cartoons in December 1917 and turned it over to the CPI in May 1918. The object of the bureau was not only to produce cartoons of its own but also to coordinate and concentrate the work of the nation's cartoonists, and in that manner to sharpen the “timeliness and unity of cartoon power.” Gradually cartoons would become “a great united constructive force for shaping public opinion and winning the war.”⁵⁵ The bureau opened relations with thirty-one departments of the government to create a source for ideas to be publicized and distributed them in a weekly *Bulletin for Cartoonists* to about 750 cartoonists across the country. Far from resisting this direction, cartoonists welcomed it, as the government welcomed their cooperation.

George Creel was quick to recognize their contribution. “The world is much too busy to stop and listen to the orator, or even to read all the stories that crowd every printed page, but the cartoonists never lack for an audience,” he wrote in commendation of their war effort. “Their appeal is irresistible. Their work in this war has been invaluable. They have exposed wrong and injustice.... They have told the story of why the United States went into the war so vividly that the patriotism of the whole country has been aroused and marshaled.”⁵⁶ Many of the bu-

reau's suggestions were essential to the mobilization of the nation such as urging economizing of food and fuel, supporting the Red Cross, and strengthening ties with the Allies. The nation's cartoons reflected them. But with rare exception, they were regimented along lines that pleased the government and can be characterized as "witty propaganda." It is difficult to quarrel with Stephen Becker's judgment that the "majority of American cartoonists believed what the government preferred to believe: that this was a righteous war to end all wars, that the world was being made safe for democracy."⁵⁷

In the main, wartime political cartoons were designed to create domestic unity and support for the war effort, to glorify the armed services, to brutalize Germany's war aims, and to associate the Kaiser with criminality.⁵⁸ They all, of course, were intended to inform and reinforce public attitudes, but some were especially indiscreet. For instance, a CPI's cartoon for the third liberty loan drive, titled "HALT the HUN!" pictured an ugly soldier who rapes women and bayonets children being restrained by a virtuous American soldier. The spy hysteria that the media helped to create during the war produced a number of unfair cartoons. One in *Life* titled "MY COUNTRY, 'TIS OF THEE (*German-American Version*)" portrayed a German-American (fat and mustached) with plans of forts peeking out of his pocket, holding a bomb behind him. Below was this verse:

My country over sea,
Deutschland, is sweet to me;
To thee I cling,
For thee my honor dies,
For thee I spied and lied,
So that from every side

Kultur might ring.⁵⁹

Other media artists lent their talents to similar vulgar oversimplifications, and they perpetuated stereotypes — sometimes using incredible license. Surely *Leslie's Weekly* abandoned restraint and appealed to public passion when it spread a skull and crossbones symbol bordered in black across its cover and captioned it “The Germany Service Flag” or when it placed a brutish, criminal-like picture of the Kaiser on its cover and captioned it “THE HIM OF HATE.”⁶⁰ It would seem that Joseph Pennell’s famous poster of New York in flames, destroyed by an air attack delivered by planes now departing against the backdrop of the burning city exceeded all sensibility. Such a bombing attack at that time was impossible, yet 500,000 copies of this poster were distributed for the Fourth Liberty Loan of 1918.⁶¹ On the other hand, the war artists portrayed the American cause as moral and patriotic. They utilized images of beautiful women (Damsel Democracy!) draped in the American flag or some semblance of it and countless depictions of sturdy, virtuous, and courageous young men serving the good cause to achieve this purpose. James Montgomery Flagg’s poster, the best-known American one of the war, showing a stern Uncle Sam pointing a finger at the viewer over the words “I WANT YOU FOR U.S. ARMY” was a masterful effort designed to reach the conscience of the nation’s available manpower.⁶² The visual definition media artists provided for the war effort was matched by that of film producers.

The commercial films shown during the war contained a dangerous exaggeration of reality. The crudity and hatefulness contained in many fictional films could only stimulate the worst emotions of viewing audiences. At the very time President Wilson was proclaiming that we were warring against the German government, not the German people, these

films portrayed Germans as a ruthless, even barbaric, people. Grim images of sinking ships, victims of German submarine attacks, became fixtures in these films. They left little to the imagination. For instance, having shed his pacifist convictions, D. W. Griffith produced *Hearts of the World* in 1917, a film that depicted German soldiers as villainous brutes. It rekindled images of the supposed German atrocities of the early years of the war. At the end of Winsor McCay's animated film, *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, this caption flashed across the screen:

The man who fired this shot was decorated by the Kaiser —
AND YET THEY TELL US NOT TO HATE THE HUN.⁶³

Hating “the Hun,” in fact, became a genre of World War I films. *The Kaiser, the Beast of Berlin* and *To Hell with the Kaiser*, as well as other popular films of this variety portrayed William II as “the evil archenemy of mankind and the mad dog of Europe.” In the first of these films the unscrupulous Kaiser was shown telling an officer he might be expected to kill his own mother, sister, or sweetheart at any moment. Similarly his armies were described as “Hordes of baby killers.”⁶⁴

Such commercial films were big box office successes, but they were not the only ones that sensationalized the war. Many others exploited the spy hysteria. Film makers also excited public emotions by parading endless fictionalized German atrocities across the screen. Images of lustful Germans committing savage acts became commonplace. German officers attempting to violate innocent women became a favorite theme, as sex was added to increase the sensational appeal of these films. Regardless, President Wilson recognized the value of the film media in the war effort and sought the cooperation of the producers. So did other government administrators like Franklin K. Lane, the Secretary of the

Interior, and Herbert Hoover, then head of the U. S. Food Administration. But the atrocity films offended Wilson and at the end of the war he instructed the CPI to try to curtail them.⁶⁵

Film documentaries and newsreels had a more respectable war record than the fictional film. Their performance, of course, was a patriotic effort in support of the nation at war. In large part, they aimed to stimulate recruitment, to build confidence in the nation's fighting forces, to demonstrate that the country's military and civilian authorities were capable of managing the war effort, and to advertise the various war bond drives. The war, however, continued to curtail the activities of cameramen abroad. As the United States Signal Corps took over filming coverage of the war in Europe, civilian film journalists abroad faded into insignificance. The government would not grant them the same privileges as newspaper and magazine correspondents. Consequently, many film journalists, more than 600, joined the armed forces and ended up contributing to the Signal Corps' effort to cover the war. Naturally, the authorities controlled the product of that coverage.⁶⁶ It should be recognized, however, that given the necessities of democracy at war, the documentary and newsreel media made a noteworthy contribution, in many respects, without offending good taste. But the caption writers for these media failed to resist using simplistic stereotyping and Hunish rhetoric.

Consideration of the film media underscores the unparalleled involvement of the media in the political culture of the nation at war. The media were, indeed, in a state of intense interaction with the public, and some journalists were uneasy about the nature of that interaction and its possible consequences. The Washington correspondent of the *New York Evening Post*, David Lawrence, who would become one of the most renowned journalists in the decades ahead, was among them.

Lawrence, whose cordial relationship with President Wilson dated from his undergraduate days at Princeton University while Wilson served as the university's president, undertook to alert the president about the media's effect on public opinion toward the end of the war. "Fortunately or unfortunately," he warned, "America has been fed war-hate or rather hatred of the Kaiser and the Hohenzollerns by Liberty Loan posters, unchecked newspaper propaganda, and speeches galore.... Mr. President, rightly or wrongly, our people have been fed intolerance and personalities for eighteen months." Lawrence was concerned about the irrational "to-hell-with-the-Kaiser" attitude and the feeling that "Germany hasn't been licked enough" that was being spread by "so many newspapers." He feared it rendered the public incapable of analyzing conditions in Germany and appreciating the need for a "healing" peace.⁶⁷ In expressing this apprehension, he was in fact underscoring two aspects of the new journalism that reached dangerous proportions during the war — the personalizing of issues and the reduction of issues to overdrawn stereotypes. Both impaired the national imagination in this instance and suggest that many newspapers (and films too) were going beyond the forms of new journalism and were resorting to the "yellow" journalism practiced by the "Czars of Sensation" during the Spanish-American War.

Perhaps the excessive stereotyping apparent in the media during the war resulted from a careless implementation of prewar journalistic practices. Perhaps it was an overzealous response to the challenge the fact of war forced America to face. Perhaps it was stimulated by the news released by the belligerent governments, or possibly by the actions of the Central Powers, Germany in particular. Germany's power seemed awesome after it crushed Russia, forcing the new Soviet government to sign the harsh Brest-Litovsk treaty, which confirmed the opin-

ion of many Western writers that the German government was under the influence of the *lebensraum* philosophy expounded by numerous German political philosophers before the war.

Regardless, it is fair to question if there were harmful consequences of the media's performance during the war, for any historical action may be judged in part by its consequences. This proposition forces consideration of several subsequent developments. Before the war the ideal of American nationalism, despite its imperfect implementation, had been grounded in democratic idealism. But the year following the war was a dark one for the democratic idealism. It was a year of turbulent labor unrest, racial friction, and of the country's first Red Scare, which reflected a sometimes violent public alarm that the media encouraged. At least they did embarrassingly little to restrain it. The public mood contained, in part, a transference of war hysteria to hysteria directed against the nation's alleged domestic enemies. The postwar national mood, in fact, reflected the narrowing of many Western nationalisms after the war. In the process, the patriotism and Americanism the media preached during the war now was carried to an extreme by a revived nativism directed against Black Americans, Catholics, Jews, and immigrants. The media's quest for national unity in the war, and their hounding of German-Americans helped to set in motion a current of political culture that produced a postwar demand for "real patriotism" and "pure Americanism."⁶⁸ Accordingly the super patriotism the media flamed during the war came to imperil a basic tenet of American liberal nationalism — the belief in the melting pot. Although straight lines can seldom be drawn in history, there appear to be a number of connecting links in this case.

There were other harmful results of the media's exaggerated treatment of war news and issues that reflected on the quality of its perform-

ance. First, consider the idea that “over-idealization and over-moralization of the reasons for which the United States had entered the war had roused an expectation that a new and better world would emerge from the war such as no peace treaty could ever have satisfied.”⁶⁹ The media surely contributed to that over-idealization and accordingly encouraged postwar frustrations with peacemaking, the American rejection of the League of Nations, and the retreat into isolationism. In much the same manner, the failure of idealized claims articulated by the media during the war to take root afterwards encouraged a widespread loss of confidence in the idea of progress that had shaped much of prewar American thought. “Progress, right after the war seemed to be ... shattered, and various types of reaction, long present beneath the surface, thrust militantly into the open,” Henry F. May once wrote. “Racial violence reached an all-time high; the Fundamentalists made their most extreme and pathetic efforts to crush the liberalism which had seemed to them oppressive. A little later, in the mid-twenties, something else which had been latent before the war reached a position of great power: the ultra-practical, anti-intellectual, pseudo-idealistic gospel of Prosperity First.”⁷⁰ The same failure of ideals to shape new social, political, and cultural realities after the war became a dynamic in producing the postwar liberal disillusionment. As Stuart I. Rochester observes, “If it [the war] did not hatch the disillusionment, it nourished and diffused it.” Thus the liberal “expatriations, the conversions to cynicism or communism, the withdrawals into private life or the business culture” may have begun before the war, but the war and peace settlement “launched them for good.”⁷¹ Since the media were the main diffuser of the meaning of the war in the political culture of the nation, this disillusionment can be traced to their performance as well as to the experience of the war itself.

CONCLUSION

The test of World War I illustrates the depth of the media's involvement in political culture. Fought with words and pictures as well as with weapons, the war intensified that involvement, for a sturdy, mobilized, and well-disciplined political culture is a necessity of nations caught in the awesome peril of modern total war.

The war had to be popularized in the American mind. Given the late entrance of the United States in the conflict in 1917, the loss of Russia to Bolshevism in that same year, and the precarious balance of battle on the Western front throughout most of 1918, the American commitment to war had to be molded quickly and kept firm. The media in all the major belligerent countries had been mobilized for war long before the United States entered the struggle. They all had vigorous and vast propaganda machines at work. Without employing all the means of political communication, the United States could not hope to compete effectively in the war. Clearly American life had to be nationalized to a hitherto unparalleled degree, and for that to happen the media had to mobilize their resources in a like manner. The public needed to know about the far-flung dimensions of the conflict. Successful participation in the war necessitated social and industrial discipline and commitment to the cause in terms of money, work, purpose, and life. Allies had to be persuaded about their ability to participate, and the enemy had to be frustrated in attempts to prove otherwise. The entire national political culture had to be geared toward winning this total war, and that was impossible without the media's support.

To say that the media excelled in providing that support would be an understatement. Their contribution to the cause was truly impressive, for without their support the shaping and keeping the firm resolve

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of the nation at war would have been far different. All of the available instruments of mass communication were employed. Never before had the mass media been so much a part of the social and political infrastructure of the nation. Their impact on the country's political culture reached unparalleled proportions. Their contribution to mobilizing the national spirit for war was vital. Thousands of correspondents and cameramen working, sometimes in perilous conditions, across Eurasia vivified the war for Americans at home and sharpened their vision of dimly perceived areas of the world, even places like Siberia. Notwithstanding the fact that they saw the war and world that censorship permitted, they saw a great deal. It is no exaggeration to say that the mass media were instrumental in making the war, the nation's first great crusade, a profound experience for Americans both at the time and in years to come.

In achieving this success, the media utilized the technical and substantive innovations developed before the war. Nowhere can the continuity linking media performance before and during the war be better illustrated than by the example of how the new popular journalism that had grown in the country since the 1880s permeated political journalism during the war. The sensationalism of its style and content, its fondness for caricatures of immigrant components of the nation (recall the media's stereotyping of Irish-Americans since the mid-nineteenth century), and the prominence it gave to crime were all obvious features in the media's coverage of the war. How often during the war did the media remind the public of the savage "Hun's" criminality? The organs of the new journalism liked to think of themselves as people's champions, and during the war the print media still claimed to be acting in that capacity.

Indeed, the reform imagination of the Progressive era captured by muckrakers and other reform journalists, ran through the media's por-

trayal of the nation in the war. They still pictured Americans fighting for the good cause and abounding in their faith in democracy and progress. Moreover, the crusading impulse of Progressive era journalism now was extended in the media's effort to convince Americans that they were participating in the war, in Armageddon, as part of a great crusade to purify and save civilization. The emphasis that government and the governed placed on public opinion during the Progressive prewar years became an urgent prerequisite for fighting a war involving the total nation. During the war journalists heralded the importance of public opinion and sought to influence it with all the persuasion at their command. In this manner, with all of the urgency occasioned by the nearness of war and then by participation in a total war of unprecedented sweep, the media penetrated and interacted with the political culture of the era.

Yet, the disturbing aspects of the media in war cannot be dismissed. Was not the over-idealized and super-patriotism that flourished in the media during the war simply propaganda, a type of political warfare necessary in modern total wars? Did not the journalists who flooded to work for the CPI and many of those who served the private media abandon all professional ethics and join the government's endeavor to manipulate the public? There is some truth in an affirmative answer to these questions, but it overlooks important considerations. All political journalism that seeks to persuade can, in some respect, be called propaganda. The media, moreover, had a long history of supporting what they perceived to be civic and national interests, and this included their involvement as propagandizers of government policy. There was nothing new about the media using the government as a news source nor in attempting to create a national consensus for legitimate goals. The popular connotation of propaganda as a sinister, devious, and anti-democ-

atic effort to manipulate the public only dates from the time of World War I. As far as can be discerned, most of the political journalists of the war thought their work served the public good at the time and were, after all, affected by the very political environment that they sought to influence. This was surely true for those in the CPI. Afterwards some came to regret their wartime propaganda activities, as postwar revelations about wartime propaganda shocked the public and helped to encourage the pacifist and isolationist tendencies of the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, the attack on wartime propaganda as “a subtle and insidious reptile” indifferent to truth and harmful to democracy became a significant topic in the media during the 1920s.⁷² But perceptions of it were quite different during the war when the great need was to mobilize and unify a mass society and to demoralize the enemy and frustrate its own propaganda efforts.

The fault, and it was a serious one, was the extent to which some journalists carried their efforts to achieve these ends. This can be seen in their Hunist and violent war rhetoric, in their overreaction to the spy menace, in their too frequent crude stereotyping of enemy culture and personalities, in their failure to criticize excessive intolerance at home, and in their at times brutal employment of super patriotism. The most disturbing example of this type of hate propaganda was the dissemination of the atrocity stories. As a genre of propaganda, they had a terrible delayed reaction for the Western world. Years later the memory of this propaganda made it difficult for the world to accept news of the real Nazi atrocities of the Second World War. The country and the world would have been better served during the First World War by a more restrained, more discerning national propaganda.⁷³

The media, of course, did not alone publicize and propagandize the war. Actors and actresses, university professors, public figures, and

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many others joined in the enterprise, and it was one for which the government organized itself in an unprecedented way. But the media's particular skills for reaching the public gave their war efforts a special significance. Surely it is possible to wish that more attention had been paid to prewar media criticism and to the canons of political journalism once the war began. Yet, whether the success or shortcomings of the media in the war are stressed, the extension of their penetration of the nation's political culture remains one of the many-sided facts of the war. The fury, magnitude, and totality of the war as well as the sense of national urgency it conveyed combined to extend the media's involvement with the nation. Their influence cannot be overestimated neither in any consideration of the country at war nor in any appraisal of how that conflict and the political culture associated with it had serious repercussions for the next political generation.

NOTES

¹ Aside from the Spanish-American War, the turn of the century conflicts included the Sino-Japanese (1894-95), the Greco-Turkish War (1897), the British South African War (1895-1902), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), and a number of smaller engagements.

² For examples of the criticism of yellow journalism see "A Danger to American Democracy," *Century Magazine* 72 (June 1906): 317-18, "Distorting the Nation's Conscience," *The World To-Day* 17 (December 1909): 1227-28, and "The Moral Menace of Yellow Journalism," *Current Literature* 44 (April 1908): 414-15. For examples of the criticism of muckraking see Ellery Sedgwick, "The Man with the Muck Rake," *American Illustrated Magazine* 42 (May 1906): 111-12; "After Exposure What?" *The Nation*, 22 March 1906, 234; and "President Roosevelt on Muck-rakers," *Harper's Weekly*, 28 April 1906, 580. For the general body of criticism, see "International Hatred and the Press," *Nation*, 26 March 1908, 276; "The Newspaper's Contempt for the Public," *The World To-day* 12 (March 1907): 262; "Offenses Against Good Journalism," *Outlook*, 29 February 1908, 479; "Sensational Foreign News," *Nation*, 22 December 1904, 494-95. Will Irwin's series of articles in *Colliers* became the best-known example of this genre of criticism. See in particular his "Power of the Press," *Colliers*, 21 January 1911, 15; "The Advertising Influence," *ibid.*, 27 May 1911, 15-16 and 23-25; and "The Unhealthy

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Alliance," *ibid.*, 3 June 1911, 17.

³ Robert Desmond, *The Information Process: World News Reporting to the Twentieth Century* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1978), 438.

⁴ Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (1932; reprint ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 5.

⁵ Political generations differ from biological generations. In the words of D. C. Watt they are not "marked by dates of birth of its members but by the dates at which they can be said to demonstrate political awareness by serious identifiable actions which embody a common element." D. C. Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 14-15.

⁶ Quoted in David Dimberly and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1988; Vintage Books, 1989), 48.

⁷ *Outlook*, 28 December 1912, 867.

⁸ August Schvan, "Anglo-Saxon Co-operation and Peace," *North American Review* 198 (December 1913): 812.

⁹ Quoted in Christopher Hitchens, *Blood, Class and Nostalgia* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990), 177.

¹⁰ Quoted in John Hohenberg, *Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times* (1964, reprint ed., New York: Columbia University Press, Columbia Paperback ed., 1967), 216. See also, Frederick Palmer, *With My Own Eyes: A Personal Story of Battle Years* (London: Jarrold's Publishers, 1934), chap. 18.

¹¹ Robert Desmond, *Windows on the World: The Information Process in a Changing Society, 1900-1920* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1980), 274-78 and 304-26.

¹² "Discrediting the Stories of German Atrocities," *Current Opinion* 57 (November 1914): 302, and Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty, From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 120.

¹³ "Darkest Side of the Great War," *Literary Digest*, 12 September 1914, 441-43.

¹⁴ Walter Millis, *Road to War: America 1914-1917* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), 68.

¹⁵ "How Stories of Atrocities Are Invented," *American Review of Reviews* (February 1915): 220-21.

¹⁶ Millis, *Road to War*, 68.

¹⁷ The Belgian government presented its report to the press on 16 September 1914, and the British released the famous Bryce Report somewhat later in 1915. H. C. Peterson, *Propaganda for War: The Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-1917* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), 53.

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¹⁸ Ibid., 51-63.

¹⁹ Ibid., 60.

²⁰ Ibid., 23, 232, and 239.

²¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 157.

²² Kenneth O. Morgan, "The Future At Work: Anglo-American Progressivism 1890-1917," in *Contrast and Connection: Bicentennial Essays in Anglo-American History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 251.

²³ "The American Attitude," *Living Age*, 3 October 1914, 52-54.

²⁴ "'British Lies' and American Sentiment," *Nation*, 26 November 1914, 621-22.

²⁵ "The Kaiser and the 'Mailed Fist,'" *World's Work* 28 (September 1914): 68-71.

²⁶ Bernadotte E. Schmitt, "Made in Germany," *Nation*, 27 August 1914, 251.

²⁷ "'British Lies' and American Sentiment," 621.

²⁸ "American Opinion on the War," *Outlook*, 15 August 1914, 907-08.

²⁹ Arthur Bullard, "The Story of the War," *ibid.*, 7 October 1914, 287-89.

³⁰ "American Sympathies in the War," *Literary Digest*, 14 November 1914, 939-41 and 974-78.

³¹ Peterson, *Propaganda for War*, 233-35.

³² *Ibid.*, 165.

³³ Quoted in Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality 1914-1915* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 65.

³⁴ *Moving Picture World*, 15 August 1914, 916-17, and also quoted in David H. Mould and Charles M. Berg, "Screening the First World War," p. 3, paper presented to the Conference of the University Film Association, 14 August 1979, in folder, "World War I," Subject Files, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress.

³⁵ "Fake War-Movies," *Literary Digest*, 13 November 1915, 1079.

³⁶ Quoted in Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 146.

³⁷ Craig W. Campbell, *Reel America and World War I: A Comprehensive Filmography and History of Motion Pictures in the United States* (Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland & Company, 1985), 42.

³⁸ Mould and Berg, "Screening the First World War," 7.

³⁹ Lowell Thomas, narrator, *The Moving Picture Boys in the Great War*, produced by David Shepard, The American Documents Series, Post-Newsweek Production, 1986.

⁴⁰ Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights* (1926, reprint ed., New York: Simon & Schuster, Touchstone Paperback, 1986), 759.

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⁴¹ Records of the American Expeditionary Forces (World War I), 1917-23, Record Group 120, Press Section, Personnel File, boxes 6181-6185, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁴² *Official Bulletin*, 10 May 1917, 1, Records of the Committee on Public Information, Record Group 63/CPI, 5-A1, box 95, National Archives, Washington, D. C. Hereafter cited as RG63/CPI.

⁴³ James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information, 1917-1919* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1939), chaps. 4 and 6.

⁴⁴ Walter E. Bean, "The Accuracy of Creel Committee News, 1917-1919: An Examination of Cases," *Journalism Quarterly* 18 (1941): 263-72.

⁴⁵ "War for Democracy," *Literary Digest*, 14 April 1917, 1043-47.

⁴⁶ George Harvey, "For Freedom and Democracy," *North American Review* 205 (April 1917): 31, and "The Call to Arms," *ibid.* (May 1917): 644-45.

⁴⁷ George Stanley, "America's Attitude," *The Forum* 57 (May 1917): 538.

⁴⁸ Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I* (1927; reprint, Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1971), 47.

⁴⁹ The term "Huns" seems rather strange since the Huns were a Central Asian, not a Germanic people. The Hun invasion of Europe by Attila, however, lived in European history as a symbol of brutality. Ironically the linkage of the label to Germans can be traced to Kaiser William II, who in 1899 urged the German contingent departing to intervene in China's Boxer Rebellion to "behave like Huns."

⁵⁰ Reprinted from the *North American Review's War Weekly* in "A Call to Patriots," *North American Review* 207 (May 1918): 649.

⁵¹ Frederic Courtland Penfield, "Our Answer to the Hun," *Forum* 59 (March 1918): 428.

⁵² These atrocity stories appeared in a number of publications including the *Atlantic*, *Bellman*, *Current Opinion*, *Delineator*, *Forum*, *Living Age*, and *Outlook*. The most persistent journal featuring them was the *New York Times's Current History*.

⁵³ "Accursed," *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper*, 8 December 1917, 782.

⁵⁴ Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 250, 267-68, and 284.

⁵⁵ "Report of the Bureau of Cartoons," 9 September 1918, 1, RG63/CPI, 17-A1, folder 42.

⁵⁶ George Creel to American Cartoonists, in *The Bureau of Cartoons Bulletin*, no. 9, 3 August 1918, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Stephen Becker, *Comic Art in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 310. *The Masses* was an exception to this generalization. It published brilliant cartoons

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of a critical nature until it was banned in August 1917, in part for antiwar cartoons.

⁵⁸ This statement is based on a survey of cartoons appearing in the *Literary Digest* in 1918.

⁵⁹ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 272 and 276.

⁶⁰ *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper*, 19 October 1918 and 27 October 1917, cover pictures.

⁶¹ Joseph Darracott and Belinda Loftus, *First World War Posters* (London: Curwen Press, 1972), 9 and 47.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶³ Thomas, *Moving Picture Boys*.

⁶⁴ Campbell, *Reel America*, 99.

⁶⁵ Kevin Brownlow, *The War, the West and the Wilderness* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 158.

⁶⁶ Fielding, *The American Newsreel*, 122-25.

⁶⁷ David Lawrence to President Wilson, 13 October 1918, David Lawrence Papers, box 136, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.

⁶⁸ Hans Kohn, *American Nationalism: An Interpretative Essay* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 166. See also, Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 140, 145-46, and 267-69.

⁶⁹ Kohn, *American Nationalism*, 204.

⁷⁰ Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917* (1959, paperback ed., Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1964), 394.

⁷¹ Stuart I. Rochester, *American Liberal Disillusionment in the Wake of World War I* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 103.

Erika G. King, "Exposing the 'Age of lies': The Propaganda Menace as Portrayed in American Magazines in the Aftermath of World War I," *Journal of Popular Culture* 12 (Spring 1989): 38.

Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1986), 129.

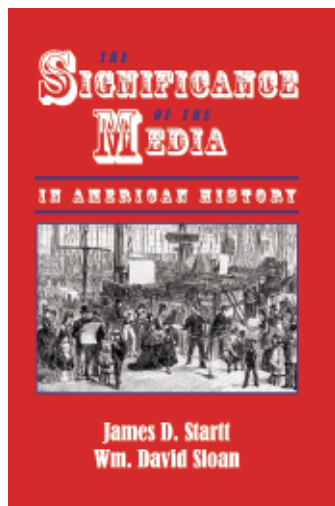
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News & Notes

(Please note: Announcements are from the organizers of the activities.)

2023 Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression

November 2-4, 2023 • Augusta University, Augusta, Georgia

The Society of Nineteenth Century Historians, in partnership with the Pamplin College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at Augusta University, presents the 31st annual Symposium on the Nineteenth Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression.

For more information, please contact
19thCenturyHistorians@gmail.com

The 31st annual conference is returning to an in-person format with exciting opportunities for graduate students and young scholars to gain valuable experience and feedback, not to mention networking and camaraderie, with in-person attendance. A zoom option is available upon request.

Since 2000, the Symposium, formerly hosted at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga by the West Chair of Excellence in Communications and Public Affairs, the late Dr. David Sachsman, has produced nine different books of readings covering a broad range of subjects. They include *The Civil War and the Press* (2000); *Memory and Myth: The Civil War in Fiction and Film from Uncle Tom's Cabin to Cold Mountain* (2007); *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism* (2008); *Seeking a Voice: Images of Race and Gender in the 19th Century Press*

(2009); *Sensationalism: Murder, Mayhem, Mudslinging, Scandals, and Disasters in 19th-Century Reporting* (2013); *A Press Divided: Newspaper Coverage of the Civil War* (2014); *After the War: The Press in a Changing America, 1865-1900* (2017); *The Antebellum Press: Setting the Stage for Civil War* (2019), and *The Civil War Soldier and the Press* (due for publication in 2023). Panel presentations from the 2020 Symposium were recorded and aired on C-SPAN.

Registration for the 2023 American Journalism Historians Association Conference

Registration is open for this year's national AJHA conference.

You can register by [visiting the conference site](#) and clicking “registration.”

When registering, please keep a few things in mind:

Early bird registration ends Sept. 7. So complete your registration today.

An all-inclusive package registration option is once again available. Selecting the “member convention package registration” option will give you access to *all* events at the convention, including the historic tour, gala dinner, and Donna Allen luncheon. Early bird registrants can get the package for \$420 by registering before Sept. 7, when rates will go up.

Those wishing to forgo an event or two can still do so by selecting the “member convention registration” option. Those going this route will still get plenty for their dollar, including access to all paper and panel sessions as well as the Thursday awards lunch, evening reception, and coffee breaks. You can also individually add tickets to the historic tour, gala dinner, and Donna Allen lunch at checkout. Early birds can sign up for \$289 by registering before Sept 7, when rates will go up.

Online registration ends Monday, Sept. 18. If you forget to register by the deadline, you will be able to do so upon arrival in Columbus. However, tickets to events like the Donna Allen luncheon, historic tour, and gala dinner may not be available on-site. If you would like to attend any of these events, complete the online registration form before the Sept. 21 deadline.

If you have any questions or problems before, during, or after registration, please contact Patti Piburn at ppiburn@calpoly.edu. This includes if you would like to make changes to your registration after completing the online form.

History Division Mentorship Program Call for Participants

The AEJMC History Division is seeking participants for this year's mentorship program. Prior mentors and mentees have found the program highly beneficial, with many choosing to continue their relationships informally after their year has ended.

If you're looking for help with your career, research, or teaching, sign up as a *mentee*. Whether you're a grad student, assistant professor, associate professor, or other, our division's mentorship program is open to you.

The program also needs willing *mentors* at all levels to provide guidance and support to the mentees.

To participate, you must be a current member of the History Division or be willing to join the division when you renew your AEJMC membership.

To apply, please email your CV to program coordinator Lisa Burns at Lisa.Burns@quinnipiac.edu and complete this brief application by **Friday, September 22 at 11:59 pm PT**:

<https://forms.gle/4sXvFdqEyXHs5P4f9>

Pairings will be notified via email by early October. The partnerships officially last through August 2024. If you have any questions, email Lisa.Burns@quinnipiac.edu.

John Maxwell Hamilton Selected for Kobre Award

The American Journalism Historians Association has selected John Maxwell Hamilton of Louisiana State University as the 2023 recipient of the Sidney Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement, AJHA's highest honor.

Hamilton is the Hopkins P. Breazeale Professor of Journalism at the LSU Manship School of Mass Communication and a global scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.

“Dr. Hamilton has provided a wealth of invaluable contributions to our field over his many decades as an academic,” said Willie Tubbs, chair of the selection committee. “The Service Awards Committee was thoroughly impressed with Dr. Hamilton’s nomination packet and were delighted to celebrate his career. In short, John Maxwell Hamilton is the type of scholar who AJHA leadership had in mind many years ago when the Kobre Award was established. His research is incisive, robust and significant, and the scope of his efforts place him in the company of the most accomplished names in our field.”

First awarded in 1986, the Kobre Award recognizes individuals with an exemplary record of sustained achievement in journalism history through teaching, research, professional activities, or other contributions to the field of journalism history. Hamilton will receive the award at the 2023 annual AJHA national convention in Columbus, Ohio, scheduled for Sept. 28-30.

Letters of support for Hamilton’s nomination spoke to the lasting

impacts his research and his support of fellow scholars have had.

Josh Grimm of LSU noted the significance of an LSU Press book series, “From Our Own Correspondent,” edited by Hamilton. The series “resurrects lost, unpublished books by and about foreign correspondents,” said Grimm. “Significant histories would be lost in archives if not for Dr. Hamilton’s book series.”

“Dr. Hamilton cemented his reputation with the highly acclaimed *Journalism’s Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting*,” said Grimm. “It is the only book to look at the comprehensive, sweeping history of foreign news in America starting in colonial times up through the modern era.”

Regina Lawrence of the University of Oregon said, “Jack’s record shows him to be an accomplished scholar and a sought-after expert who brings a deeply grounded perspective to questions of enduring importance. He is, in fact, this country’s foremost authority on the history of American foreign correspondence. His work is both richly detailed and eminently practical, aimed at understanding the past and informing the future of American journalism and our public information environment.

“Not only has his research been innovative, impressive and widely recognized, but he built much of this research record while serving as the founding dean of the Manship School for over 15 years,” said Lawrence.

Heidi Tworek of the University of British Columbia said, “I cannot think of a more deserving scholar, colleague and mentor. Hamilton has a storied career in history, journalism and public policy. He has also stood out for fostering dialogue between academia, journalism and government.”

Tworek also noted the quality of Hamilton’s mentorship. “With

good humor and grace, he teaches scholars how to be ambitious in their research agenda, analyze sources with rigor, and navigate the publication process,” she said. “This generosity is core to Jack’s scholarship and something that makes him a truly outstanding professor who seeks to foster the next generation of researchers.”

Hamilton was the founding dean of the Manship School, a position he held for eighteen years. Under his leadership, the school created a doctoral degree focused on media and public affairs, the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, and a public opinion research facility, and took on oversight of a variety of student media. He also served as executive vice-chancellor and provost at LSU.

He has authored or co-authored eight books and edited many more, in addition to publishing numerous articles. He was awarded the Goldsmith Prize from the Shorenstein Center on Press, Politics and Public Policy and the AJHA Book of the Year Award for each of his two most recent books, *Manipulating the Masses: Woodrow Wilson and the Birth of American Propaganda* and *Journalism’s Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting*.

Gerry Lanosga Wins 2023 American Journalism Best Article Award

The American Journalism Historians Association awarded Dr. Gerry Lanosga, an associate professor and director of journalism at the Indiana University (Bloomington) Media School, the 2023 *American Journalism* best article award.

The 2023 award honors the best scholarship published in *American Journalism*, the peer-reviewed journal of AJHA, between Summer 2022 and Spring 2023. Lanosga’s article, “Behold the Wicked Abominations That They Do’: The Nineteenth-Century Roots of the Evidentiary Approach in American Investigative Journalism,” was published in the fall

2022 issue of *American Journalism*.

The judges commented that the article achieved “a fine job of exploring and describing, with primary sources, the roots of investigative journalism as moral suasion before muckraking. It is both a thoughtful and thought-provoking article; by extending the historical context of investigative journalism back to the abolitionist movement, the article asks the reader to consider the nexus of emotional appeal/propaganda, investigative journalism, and political advocacy. In this sense, it raises important (almost foundational) issues about the purpose of journalism that echo across time to present debates.”

Lanosga responded, “I’m really thrilled to win this award, especially since there were — as always — so many great works of scholarship published in *American Journalism* in the last year. I’ve been thinking about abolitionist exposés since I was in grad school, so I was happy just to get this piece accepted. The award is icing on the cake, and I am truly thankful to the editors for this recognition.”

Pamela E. Walck, editor of *American Journalism*, acknowledged the challenge of selecting a winner. “Every year, it is difficult to select which scholars to nominate for the Best Article Award that *American Journalism* awards. This speaks volumes about the quality of the research submitted by the scholars in our field.” She also noted it demonstrates the significance of the research AJHA scholars explore and publish each year.

Lanosga will receive his award during the 2023 AJHA Convention scheduled for Sept. 28-30 in Columbus, Ohio.

Michael Stamm and Gerry Lanosga Win 2023 Covert Award

The History Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) congratulates Dr. Michael

Stamm, professor in the Department of History at Michigan State University (MSU), and Dr. Gerry Lanosga, associate professor in The Media School at Indiana University Bloomington (IU), as co-winners of the annual Covert Award for best mass communication history article, essay, or book chapter published in the previous year.

The award memorializes Dr. Catherine L. Covert, professor of journalism at Syracuse University, the first woman professor in Syracuse's Newhouse School of Journalism and the first woman to head the AEJMC History Division, in 1975. Dr. Covert died in 1983.

Dr. Tom Mascaro, Covert Award Committee chair, commented, "This year's submissions covered a wide range of journalism history topics, including Civil War memories, coverage of Black health, several analyses about women in journalism, early interactive web design, press coverage of scandals, as well as international histories." He noted that co-winners were selected in 2005 and 2006

Stamm's winning entry is "The International Materiality of Domestic Information: The Geopolitics of Newsprint During World War II and the Cold War," published in *The International History Review*. It recounts how Canada and the United States partnered to distribute newsprint to "friendly" papers around the world during the war and to strategically disburse newsprint to promote democratization during the early Cold War.

"I am honored and grateful to be receiving this award," said Stamm. "AEJMC is one of the premier organizations devoted to the study of mass communications, and the scholarship produced by this community has been deeply important for me and shaped my work and thinking about journalism history. This award is even more humbling and gratifying because of its connection to Catherine Covert, whose essay "We May Hear Too Much," in her *Mass Media Between the Wars*

edited collection, was very important and influential for me some years ago when I was starting what became my dissertation.”

Lanosga won for his piece in *American Journalism*, “Behold the Wicked Abominations That They Do’: The Nineteenth-Century Roots of the Evidentiary Approach in American Investigative Journalism.” Lanosga’s history places the idea of investigative reporting, so commonly associated with coverage of the Watergate scandal, to abolitionists in the 1800s. Their writings provided documentary evidence of the abuses of slavery.

“This is a surprise and a real thrill,” said Lanosga. “I’m grateful to the History Division judges for this honor and humbled to receive an award that has such an amazing history — named for an inspiring scholar in our field and given to so many wonderful historians over the years, including my mentor David Paul Nord, who introduced me to Theodore Weld’s *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*. That was what first set my mind to percolating on abolition journalism as a form of proto-investigative reporting. And I must thank Dave also for interrupting his retirement last year to read and comment on a draft of this article.”

AJHA Announces Top Papers For 2023 National Convention

The American Journalism Historians Association will honor scholars representing eight universities for research papers they will present during the 2023 Annual AJHA Convention in Columbus, Ohio, Sept. 28-30.

W. Joseph Campbell of American University won the Wm. David Sloan Award for Outstanding Faculty Paper for “Interrogating a ‘Conspiracy’: About That Civil War Press ‘Boycott’ of General Meade.” Campbell also received the Wally Eberhard Award for Outstanding Pa-

per on Media and War.

Yvonne Cantrell-Bickley of the University of Georgia won the Robert Lance Memorial Award for Outstanding Student Paper for “In Labor? Come Back on Wednesday: News Coverage of the Integration of Atlanta’s Public Hospital.”

The Maurine Beasley Award for Outstanding Paper on Women’s History went to Lisa Parcell and Paul Myers of Wichita State University for “Coming in the Back Door: Women’s Entry into Advertising Through the Brand Test Kitchen.”

Brian Carroll of Berry College received the J. William Snorgrass Award for Outstanding Paper on Minority Journalism History for “Transgressions: An Editor’s Crusade to Thwart America’s First Black Shakespearean Acting Company.”

The Jean Palmegiano Award for Outstanding International/Transnational Journalism Research went to Erin Coyle of Temple University, Elisabeth Fondren of St. John’s University, and Annette Masterson of Temple University for “‘The Throttling of the Free Press in Cuba’: Exploring Transnational Journalism and Sigma Delta Chi’s Advocacy for Press Freedom in Cuba (1956-1962).”

Scholars receiving honorable mentions were:

Sloan Award: Lisa Parcell and Paul Myers (Wichita State) and Brian Carroll (Berry)

Lance Award: Karlin Andersen Tuttle (Penn State University)

Beasley Award: Bailey Dick (Bowling Green State University)

Snorgrass Award: Yvonne Cantrell-Bickley (Georgia)

Palmegiano Award: Thomas Mascaro (Bowling Green, retired)

AJHA Selects Erin Coyle for National Award for Excellence in Teaching

Dr. Erin Coyle, an associate professor of journalism in the Klein Col-

lege of Media and Communication at Temple University, was selected to receive the 2023 AJHA National Award for Excellence in Teaching.

The award honors a college or university professor who excels at teaching in the areas of journalism and mass communication history, makes a positive impact on student learning, and offers an outstanding example for other educators. Coyle will receive the award at the 2023 AJHA national convention in Columbus, Ohio, scheduled for Sept. 28-30.

“I’m thankful my colleagues, mentors, teachers and students have provided me with many examples of how to connect with students and share our passions for journalism and history,” said Coyle, who serves as director of undergraduate studies in the journalism program at Temple.

The selection committee was impressed with the various ways Coyle incorporates history and study of primary sources into her courses, where she “focused on helping students acquire skills in analyzing primary sources, communicating their findings, and reflecting on the significance of their findings.” The committee especially pointed to the media law and ethics courses, in which students engaged in such activities as reviews of 1954 editorials and articles cited by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1966 case *Sheppard v. Maxwell*, in which Sam Sheppard was wrongfully convicted of killing his wife.

Committee members also praised Coyle’s innovative teaching during the pandemic and her commitment to connecting students with needed resources.

In her application materials, Coyle wrote, “I have treasured opportunities to teach journalism history courses.”

As well, she noted in her application that she “created opportunities to teach journalism history in courses that do not have journalism his-

tory in their titles” and linked the study of history to educating future journalists.

“Historians must actively attempt to prevent personal prejudices, personal assumptions, and presentism from skewing how they analyze or present results just as journalists actively try to prevent their personal biases and assumptions from skewing how they seek, analyze, or present information,” Coyle wrote.

In a letter of recommendation supporting her selection, David Mindich, Journalism Department chair at Temple, called Coyle “brilliant, generous, effective and inspiring.” He noted that she is an outstanding scholar with a growing national reputation, as well as “thorough, effective and engaging” in her teaching.

Several students Coyle mentored have presented research at national conferences and submitted work for publication, with one student’s work published in *First Amendment Studies*. Additional collaborations with students have resulted in articles published in *American Journalism* and *Communication Law and Policy*.

Guthrie Wins 2023 Rising Scholar Award

Dr. Jason Lee Guthrie of Clayton State University was named the 2023 Rising Scholar Award winner by the editors of *American Journalism*, the peer-reviewed quarterly journal of the American Journalism Historians Association.

The annual award is given annually to a scholar who shows promise in extending their research agenda. Guthrie’s research involves examining the newspaper columns and editorial cartoons of the folksinger Woody Guthrie.

“I was surprised and honored to receive the Rising Scholar award this year. AJHA has been an incredible support to me in my young ca-

reer. I am very thankful to be recognized by an organization that represents the best of academia not only in their scholarship but also in their collegiality and camaraderie,” Guthrie said.

“Despite our name, *American Journalism* does not support research on journalism alone,” said Nicholas Hirshon, associate editor of *American Journalism*. “Dr. Guthrie’s important work on the newspaper columns and editorial cartoons of the quintessential American folksinger holds significance for the histories of both journalism and music. *American Journalism* does not restrict its focus to one type of media, and neither did Woody Guthrie consider himself only a musician. I’m thrilled that we can stand by Dr. Guthrie as he embarks on work that will help us better understand a seminal media figure.”

Internet Histories Available Online

Internet Histories, Volume 7, Issue 2 (2023) is available online.

One article (“When Wikipedia met Tor”) is open access.

The full issue may be accessed at this URL:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rint20/7/2>

In this issue:

Articles

“When Wikipedia met Tor: trials of legitimacy at a key moment in internet history,” by Sebastiaan Gorissen and Robert W. Gehl

“Let’s play something awful: a historical analysis of 14 years of threads,”

Brian McKittrick, Martin Gibbs, Melissa J. Rogerson, Bjørn Nansen and Charlotte Pierce

“Emigration to the internet: ‘Samizdat’ and the genesis of contemporary Russian nationalism,” Dmitry Mikhailov, Nikolay Ternov and

Ivan Bobrov

“Situating the Internet as infrastructure: the case of post-socialist Lith-

uania,” Migle Bareikyte

“The first propaganda war through computer networks: STEM academia and the breakup of Yugoslavia,” Mato Brautovic

Book Review

Resistance to the current: the dialectics of hacking, Michael Kurzmeier

A House For The Struggle Wins AJHA's 2023 Book Award

The American Journalism Historians Association has selected *A House for the Struggle: The Black Press and the Built Environment in Chicago* by James West as the 2023 Book of the Year winner.

The three unranked runners-up are: *New Deal Radio: The Educational Radio Project*, by David Goodman and Joy Elizabeth Hayes; *Clash: Presidents and the Press in Times of Crisis*, by Jon Marshall; and *City of Newsmen: Public Lies and Professional Secrets in Cold War Washington*, by Kathryn J. McGarr.

“*A House for the Struggle* is a building history of Chicago’s Black press,” West said. “It’s a history of the buildings constructed, occupied, and utilized by Black journalists and periodicals, and why these buildings matter. It’s about how the actions of individual Black publishers and journalists, as well as the collective ambitions, influence, and orientation of Black periodicals such as *Ebony*, the *Defender*, and *Muhammad Speaks*, were shaped by and helped to shape the world around them. And it’s about how these contested spaces — from backstreet storefronts to custom-built corporate edifices - helped to both consolidate and complicate the role of such publications as a ‘voice for the race’.”

This book “breaks new ground by telling the history of the Black press in Chicago through its geography and architecture. In highly segregated Chicago — a city known for its architectural might and height — the structural presence of Black newspapers tells a significant story

about the Black press generally,” said one of the judges.

The judges recognized Goodman and Hayes’ *New Deal Radio* for its contribution to an understudied area of journalism history. The book is “a highly readable book that fills an important gap in radio history and an important gap in our understanding of the role of radio in promoting democracy,” said one committee member.

Marshall’s *Clash* earned praise for “its use of primary and secondary sources to develop key arguments, such as the longstanding efforts of presidents, from Adams to Trump, ‘to attack, restrict, manipulate, and demonize the press in order to strengthen their own power.’”

The judges commended McGarr’s *City of Newsmen* for the insights it provides into the work of Washington journalists. As one wrote, the book “takes readers into the intimate white male-dominated salons of mid-century Washington political reportage to reveal what these journalists really knew, even if it wasn’t always apparent in their reporting.”

West is a lecturer in Arts and Sciences at University College London and co-director of the Black Press Research Collective at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of three books, most recently *Our Kind of Historian: The Work and Activism of Lerone Bennett Jr.*

Goodman is a professor of history at the University of Melbourne in Australia. He is the author of two previous books, including *Radio’s Civic Ambition: American Broadcasting and Democracy in the 1930s*. Hayes, associate professor of communication studies at the University of Iowa, is the author of two other books. Previously she co-authored and edited *War of the Worlds to Social Media: Mediated Communication in Times of Crisis*.

Marshall is an associate professor in the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. His first book was *Watergate’s Legacy and the Press: The Investigative Impulse*.

McGarr is an assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She previously wrote *The Whole Damn Deal: Robert Strauss and the Art of Politics*.

History of Media Studies: Call for Submissions

History of Media Studies is a peer-reviewed, scholar-run, diamond OA journal dedicated to scholarship on the history of research, education, and reflective knowledge about media and communication — as expressed through academic institutions; through commercial, governmental, and non-governmental organizations; and through “alter-traditions” of thought and practice often excluded from the academic mainstream. The journal publishes high-quality, original articles, reviews, and commentary on the history of this inter- and extra-disciplinary area as it has intersected with other fields in the social sciences and humanities — and with social practices beyond the academy.

We encourage [submissions](#) in any one of our [formats](#), in either Spanish or English: <https://hms.mediastudies.press/author-guidelines>

We are committed to a humane, care-based, and developmental review process, with the goal to improve manuscripts through collegial exchange.

The journal is published by [mediastudies.press](#), a scholar-led, no-fee nonprofit publisher established in 2019. The journal is edited by three established scholars in the history of media and communication studies field: David W. Park, Peter Simonson, and Jefferson Pooley. See our [launch editorial](#) (*versión en español*).

The journal’s [Editorial Board](#) includes scholars from nearly all continents and regions, with the aim to broaden the field’s traditional scope.

The journal is affiliated with the Working Group on the History of Media Studies and the History of Media Studies Newsletter.

Lorimer Linford Wins Inaugural Hazel Dicken-Garcia Research Grant

The American Journalism Historians Association has awarded the 2023 Hazel Dicken-Garcia Research Grant to Autumn Lorimer Linford.

The Dicken-Garcia Grant honors the late Hazel Dicken-Garcia, who mentored numerous M.A. and Ph.D. students during her 30-year career in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Minnesota. Established in 2023, the annual grant provides financial assistance to graduate students or junior faculty whose work embodies the scholarly interests of Dicken-Garcia. Preference is given to research in the following areas: 19th- and 20th-century journalism standards; equity issues and the media; gender, identity, and the media; media and journalism ethics; international communication; Civil War journalism; and free expression/First Amendment.

“I am grateful for the example of Hazel Dicken-Garcia’s memory and her generosity, as well as the generosity of the entire AJHA community. The people of AJHA have always made me feel welcome, encouraged, and supported,” said Lorimer Linford, an assistant professor in the School of Communication & Journalism at Auburn University.

The grant will support Lorimer Linford’s travel to New York City to conduct research at the New York Public Library and the New York Historical Society for her upcoming book, *Extra! A History of America’s Girl Newsies*. Her research will focus on the efforts of publishers to lobby Congress to exclude boy newspaper carriers — but not girls — from the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. Her work “challenges the existing notions of newsie labor and adds to our growing understanding of the contributions of women and girls in journalism history,” she said

in her application.

Thacker Wins 2023 Blanchard Dissertation

The American Journalism Historians Association has announced Molly Thacker as the winner of the 2023 Margaret A. Blanchard Dissertation Prize.

The Blanchard Prize, which was given for the first time in 1997, is awarded annually for the best doctoral dissertation dealing with mass communication history. All four scholars will present their research at the Blanchard Dissertation Award Panel at the AJHA Conference in Columbus, Ohio, in September.

Thacker, who completed her dissertation at Georgetown University under the direction of Katherine Benton-Cohen, was recognized for “‘Are We Not Children, Too?’: Race, Media, and the Formative History of Unaccompanied Immigrant Children in the United States.”

“I am thrilled to receive the 2023 Blanchard Prize. It is an honor to have my scholarship recognized by such an esteemed organization as the AJHA,” Thacker said. “Modern media stories of unaccompanied immigrant children can generate outpourings of empathy or hysteria, a dynamic similarly chronicled in my research with historical newspaper coverage of these young migrants. My dissertation illustrates that this weighty connection between immigrants and journalism has a long and storied past — a multifaceted history that demands further investigation.”

Three other scholars received an honorable mention from the Blanchard Dissertation Prize Committee.

Autumn Lorimer Linford was recognized for her dissertation, “Extra! The History of America’s Girl Newsies,” completed under the direction of Barbara Friedman at the University of North Carolina,

Chapel Hill.

Natascha Toft Roelsgaard earned her recognition for “‘The Offense of Blackness’: Race Women’s Counter Storytelling and Exposé of the Southern Convict Leasing Regime.” Roelsgaard completed her dissertation at Ohio University under the direction of Aimee Edmondson.

Ashley Walter, who completed her dissertation at Pennsylvania State University under the direction of Ford Risley, was recognized for “‘We Didn’t Do It, and We Won’t Do It Again’: Class-Action Sex Discrimination Lawsuits at News Organizations in the 1970s.”

Internet Histories Early Career Researcher Award 2024: Call for Entries

Are you an early career researcher whose research focuses on the history of the Internet and/or the Web, and histories of digital cultures?

The journal *Internet Histories* invites early career researchers (masters students, doctoral students, and post-doctoral researchers) to submit an original article, between 6,000 and 8,000 words, by 1 November 2023. If the scholar has a Ph.D. degree, it must not have been awarded more than three years prior to the time of submission, exclusive of any leaves (parental, medical, etc.). Co-authored submissions will be accepted if all authors are early career researchers. In this case, the award will be evenly split between all authors.

Read more on previous awards at

<https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rint20/collections/best-paper-prize-early-career-internet-histories>

The jury of the Award is composed of the following members of the international Editorial Board of *Internet Histories*:

- Janet Abbate, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA

News & Notes

- Kevin Driscoll, University of Virginia, USA
- Greg Elmer, Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada
- Benjamin Thierry, Paris-Sorbonne University, France

You can find the full CFP [here](#).

H-Net Has New Commons

By Christine Pepper

Welcome to the new H-Net Commons! As you begin to explore the site, here are several Help Desk resources and notes that you may find useful in getting started:

Posting Announcements

NOTE: On the old site, the Discussion function was used to create posts that would more fittingly be described as Announcements, such as CFPs, TOCs, etc. On the new site, we have created a specific Announcements function that should be selected when sharing announcement-type material to H-Announce and/or specific networks. Because this is a new function, you will notice that the “Announcement” tabs on your networks will appear empty. These tabs will quickly become populated in the coming days and weeks as new Announcements get posted and correctly categorized. Discussions still exist on the new site, but the Discussion function should now be used exclusively for posts that invite conversation and discourse among H-Net users.

Managing Your Notifications

Managing Your Subscriptions and Memberships

NOTE: On the old Commons site, users subscribed to networks for two reasons: 1) to receive email notifications, and/or 2) to submit posts to that network. Since subscribers had the ability to submit posts, subscription requests were required to go through moderation, which could sometimes delay their request unnecessarily.

In order to streamline this process for both users and network edi-

tors, we have created a second user role on the Commons. An H-Net user can now become a subscriber OR a member of a network:

1. Subscriber now refers to an H-Net user who only wants to receive updates from a network in the form of email or onsite notifications. Subscribers cannot post their own content to a network, so their subscriptions do not go through moderation—they go into effect immediately.

2. Member now refers to an H-Net user who plans to contribute to a network by sharing announcements and participating in discussions. Since members will be able to post content to the network, their requests will go through moderation. Posts submitted by network members will still be moderated by network editors.

Users who were subscribed to one or more networks on the old H-Net Commons website as of July 4, 2023, have been automatically added as members of those networks on the current site, since their subscription requests have already gone through moderation. This means that you will be able to share content to a network on the new site if you had that capability on the old site.

More Questions?

Our Help Desk is live and ready to assist you with any questions you may have about how to use the new site. Browse our FAQs or reach out to us at help@mail.h-net.org if you cannot find the answer you need. If you need immediate assistance during the hours of 9 a.m.-5 p.m. U.S. Eastern time, call our home office at 517-432-5134 or message us on [LiveChat](#).

We look forward to assisting you!

Sincerely,

Christine Peffer, H-Net Associate Director of Networks

Contact Information

Christine Peffer, H-Net Associate Director of Networks

Contact Email: christine@mail.h-net.org

URL: <https://networks.h-net.org>

AHA's Guidelines for Broadening the Definition of Historical Scholarship

Approved by the American Historical Association Council on January 5, 2023

Historical scholarship is a documented and disciplined conversation about matters of enduring consequence. Taking a cue from the sciences, history as a discipline has traditionally valued the creation of “new knowledge” as the primary (if not singular) aspect of that conversation worthy of consideration in personnel decisions. The American Historical Association (AHA) has concluded that it is time we also look to the Smithsonian Institution’s mission, articulated in 1846, which advances a broader aim: “the increase and diffusion of knowledge.”

Background And Charge

In January 2022, the AHA Council authorized the Ad-Hoc Committee on Broadening the Definition of Scholarship to

- acknowledge both long-standing and increasingly diverse genres of historical scholarship that go beyond traditionally valued models of single-authored and peer reviewed books, journal articles, and other essays; and
- create guidelines for evaluating this work in tenure and promotion cases, as well as any other professional settings in which historians work and where historical scholarship is produced.

These guidelines lay the foundation for a broad expansion of what constitutes historical scholarship. It is by no means limited to the exam-

ples it invokes, or to academia and its standard professional ladders. These guidelines can be adapted to any institution in which historians work and where historical scholarship is an expected aspect of that work.

The first decades of the 21st century have witnessed a broadening of the ways historical knowledge is advanced, applied, accessed, integrated, diffused, and taught. Despite this multiplicity of scholarly forms, most history departments remain wedded to narrow conventions defining how historical scholarship is packaged and circulated, as well as what “counts” toward elevations to tenure and full professor and in decisions about fellowships, awards, hiring, and other venues of evaluation. At the same time, essential forms of scholarship — from textbooks and reference works to documentary and journal editing, op-eds, expert witness testimony, and more — have traditionally been relegated to the category of “service” within the triad of research, teaching, and service on which academic promotion rests. The disconnect between the wide variety of valuable work being done by historians and the much narrower boundaries of scholarship considered for professional evaluation limits historians’ public influence while perpetuating inequities harmful to individuals and to the discipline as a whole.

Previous Steps

In recent years, the AHA and other professional organizations have taken significant steps to identify and value the variety of work that historians do. The Ad-Hoc Committee has drawn on and reaffirms statements previously issued by the Association. In 2010 (revised 2017), the AHA issued a [joint statement](#) with the Organization of American Historians and the National Council on Public History that recommended full academic recognition of “publicly engaged and collaborative scholarship.” The *Guidelines for the Professional Evaluation of Digital*

Scholarship in History (2015) asserts that “digital history in various forms often represents a commitment to expanding what history is, and can do, as a field, as well as the audiences that it addresses.... Work done by historians using digital methodologies or media for research, pedagogy, or communication should be evaluated for hiring, promotion, and tenure on its scholarly merit and the contribution that work makes to the discipline through research, teaching, or service.” Similarly, in 2019 the AHA Council approved the *Guidelines for the Incorporation of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the Work of the History Profession*, affirming its legitimacy and significance as historical scholarship. While these guidelines have aided both candidates and departments in personnel evaluations, the recommendations have been unevenly adopted across the discipline.

Though the AHA’s journal, the *American Historical Review*, includes reviews of digital scholarship alongside book reviews, it has only recently begun including scholarship on teaching and learning, exhibitions, podcasts, and historical work in other formats. It is less clear whether history departments, in their promotion protocols and decision-making processes, have begun to value scholarship on teaching and learning, and historical scholarship published in a variety of formats.

Challenges

The stability and effectiveness of using the conventions and traditions of academic historians to define historical scholarship constitutes a major hurdle in the pathway to change. Removing that hurdle requires expanding the scope of how we define both *genre* and *format*.

A second set of challenges derives from our methods of evaluation. History departments have well-established criteria for assessing the originality and significance of books and articles that appear in competitive peer-reviewed journals. Many alternative forms of scholarship do not

yet have an established infrastructure of evaluation. For traditional modes of publication, the content of standard peer review, the prestige of a press or journal, and the stature of a peer reviewer can readily serve to validate quality. Other genres require venturing beyond these protocols to make the case on intellectual merits alone. In addition, some modes of explaining and disseminating historical understanding are collaborative efforts that will require learning how to discern the nature of individual contributions.

Imperatives and Opportunities

In the face of these challenges, we understand why some departments remain wedded to conventional boundaries of scholarship and methods of evaluation. But standing pat risks losing ground as a discipline in an environment with so many venues for intellectual and civic contribution. It also risks undervaluing important work being done *within* our discipline. Historians depend on public support — whether as employees of public institutions, recipients of federal research funds, or faculty at universities and colleges that allocate resources according to enrollments. If legislatures, public officials, governing boards, and students don't learn from us why history and historical thinking are essential elements of education and public culture, those resources will be allocated elsewhere.

We should remain mindful of the many other arenas of potential influence. If we believe that historical thinking and knowledge should inform public policy, then we need to make our work accessible to policymakers and influencers. This will be accomplished not by increasing their access to scholarly journals, but by applying and explaining our research to those who operate beyond our established sphere of influence, in policy and other decision-making environments.

This recommendation and the guidelines that follow rest on four pillars:

- A wide range of scholarly historical work can be undertaken in ways consistent with our disciplinary standards and values, from writing briefing papers and op-eds, to testifying in legislatures and courts, participating in the work of regulatory agencies, publishing textbooks and reference books, expanding our media presence across a wide range of platforms, and more.
- To support such publicly engaged and/or policy-oriented work, history departments should give it appropriate scholarly credit in personnel decisions. Not doing so diminishes the public impact of historians and cedes to others — observers less steeped in our discipline-specific methods, epistemologies, and standards — the podium from which to shape the historical framing of vital public conversations.
- Historians cannot expect decision-makers or other potential audiences to appreciate the value of our work if we don't affirm its value ourselves.
- All historical work can be peer reviewed, whether before or after publication.

In accentuating opportunities presented by publicly engaged and policy-oriented work, the AHA does not intend to diminish the value of traditional forms of scholarship and traditional standards of evaluation; we are not inverting old hierarchies in which monographs reigned in favor of a new order in which public history or other scholarly forms have primacy. Nor are we recommending creating a universe of *additional* expectations or requirements. Institutions will continue to determine criteria for the quantity and quality of scholarly deliverables in the evaluation of candidates for promotion. Many historians will continue

to focus on researching and writing traditional peer-reviewed books and articles. This includes works of synthesis that speak to some combination of fellow scholars, students, or public audiences. Synthesis is intellectual work that increases the value of narrower scholarship as well as the discipline itself. Consider also, at the other end of the process, where historians collect, categorize, and describe primary materials. Such work is scholarly activity in much the same way as the selection and ordering of facts in the creation of a historical narrative. There are many ways to be a historian.

Instead, these guidelines argue that history departments benefit from bigger tents in which many different forms of scholarship coexist and are mutually invigorating. Diversity strengthens our discipline; a department that includes historians working in a variety of modes and genres (as with methods and subfields) enhances the quality of collegiality, teaching, and research.

Nor does the shift imply an abandonment or even relaxation of standards. The challenge is to apply and adapt existing methods and theories of evaluation to a wider range of formats. Candidates can be required to write short memos putting such work into historiographical context as part of their portfolio, adapting customary expectations of clarity, originality, and significance to the relevant genre. A case must be made, at least during a period of transition to these broader definitions, that a particular publication or other product is appropriate to communicate the knowledge and precepts of a professional historian, as articulated in the AHA's *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* (for example, not all op-eds are works of scholarship).

The evaluation of a historian's adherence to these standards has traditionally relied on peer review as a requisite to publication. There is no reason, however, why peer review and other conventional paths of eval-

uation prior to publication cannot take place *after* work is produced and circulated.

The AHA recognizes the logistical challenges posed by post-hoc peer review. The calendar for peer review is already complicated by factors that depend on an institution's particular criteria. Institutions that consider scholarly "impact" often depend on *predictions* of influence, or they must wait until that influence can be assessed (if only through measures of visibility that can even include word of mouth). With some exceptions and the occasional time lag, the impact of work directed toward scholarly audiences usually aligns with quality. This is not necessarily true for publicly engaged scholarship, whose influence sometimes derives more from marketing, sensational modes of presentation, catering to prejudices, financial resources, and other factors unrelated to quality. Evaluation that considers public impact should, in all cases, include scrutiny of how such impact was attained, and maintain the standards of scholarship equal to those expected of other eligible formats.

Once we have liberated notions of what constitutes legitimate scholarship from the constraints of traditional calendars and modes of peer review and accepted the principle that all historical scholarship can be subject to comparable evaluative criteria, the obstacles to broadening genre and format fall away. This broader landscape of historical scholarship might now include (but is not limited to) textbooks, official histories, reference books, op-eds, blog posts, magazine articles, museum exhibitions, public lectures, congressional testimony, oral history projects, expert witness testimony, media appearances, podcasts, and historical gaming. Rather than attempt a comprehensive list of genres, the guidelines proposed here are intended to be expansive and flexible enough to accommodate forms we have yet to anticipate. What the

forms thus far envisioned have in common is that they can be peer reviewed after the work has been disseminated. What remains is the second challenge: how to carry out that evaluation.

Recommendations

Existing standards can be adapted to this broadened notion of scholarly contribution. Procedures, however, will need to change. The AHA proposes an evaluation process in which the candidate and the evaluators engage in a conversation around a series of questions about the work under review. We start from the assumption that there is general agreement within the discipline that appropriate and transparent metrics are essential to evaluating the originality, quality, and significance of historical scholarship, regardless of the form or format it takes. That said, the process of valuing different genres of scholarship offers new challenges as well as opportunities.

Post-Hoc Review Process

All scholarship should be subject to careful professional review, regardless of which stage in the creative process the evaluation takes place. There is no reason such work cannot be peer reviewed after publication as part of a promotion process. This principle would extend to any format that creates a product, whether written or preserved in other media. A history department can adapt its standards of quality and quantity to any mode of diffusing knowledge, just as we have different criteria for evaluating books, articles, and digital scholarship.

Departments and candidates should acknowledge and account for the different timelines that might be required for post-hoc review. Departments should offer guidance and appropriate mentorship to candidates to help them prepare and arrange for post-hoc review of work, in-

cluding iterative or staggered assessment.

Criteria

Guidelines or criteria for the evaluation of nontraditional scholarly deliverables will serve not only as a tool for tenure committees; they will also allow candidates planning their portfolios to gather the necessary documentation to support their promotion. Scholarly projects intended for public audiences — exhibitions and public history ventures, digital projects, collecting initiatives, op-eds, reference works, historical gaming, etc. — do not always include citations in their final product. Guidelines for demonstrating the research and historical thinking that went into creating these kinds of scholarship will allow historians to prepare for post-hoc peer review or personnel evaluation while the work is underway.

As a wider variety of modes and formats of diffusion gain acceptance as scholarly work, some of the challenges with assessing them will diminish. Until then, there are interpretive questions that the candidate can help to answer — articulating, for instance, why a particular medium is appropriate, or even better suited, to a particular historical pursuit. Some genres of scholarship involve collaboration with other scholars and work with communities, academic and otherwise. In this context, it might be helpful for a candidate to describe the structure and extent of their collaboration, along with a description of their own specific role(s).

Allowing that these reviews should involve both candidate and assessors, the AHA proposes the following categories of evaluation, to be used in various combinations and with varying emphases, depending on the form of scholarship under consideration:

1. Genre and Dissemination: The candidate should articulate what

form the project takes and how it is being circulated, as well as explaining *why* this genre and mode of presentation are optimal for this project (a practice that follows the recommendation made in the *AHA Guidelines on the Professional Evaluation of Digital Scholarship by Historians*). Some genres involve continuous revision and therefore projects might be iterative, rather than terminal, in form. In such cases, the peer review might involve a different process — and the reviewer might require expertise different — from what might ordinarily be required for with an article or book.

2. **Argument and Documentation:** Regardless of genre, the *AHA Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* (updated 2019) should guide candidates and evaluators. As that document states, “Professional integrity in the practice of history requires awareness of one’s own biases and a readiness to follow sound method and analysis wherever they may lead.” Historians should not misrepresent their sources or omit evidence that runs counter to their interpretations. The *Standards of Professional Conduct* also emphasize the importance of historians documenting the primary and secondary sources on which a work depends. As much as possible, with allowances for genre, candidates should cite or make transparent the sources of their scholarly output. If the genre does not readily accommodate citation, the candidate must be willing to share their sources with evaluators.

3. **Impact and Influence:** Typically, scholarly impact in history is measured by the quality of reviews and the quantity of scholarly citations — the latter a metric that might sometimes be misleading. In addition to these traditional measures, the impact of scholarship might be weighed on other scales. For example, scholarship that is transmitted digitally might have a quantitative metric for impact based on the number of clicks, site users, or amount of site traffic. Candidates should

make clear to evaluators the bases of their claims for impact or influence and explain how and why those metrics reflect scholarly influence.

4. Current and Future Trajectory of the Project: Some projects represent ongoing scholarly research. These might include new editions of textbooks, website design and curation, construction of scholarly databases, etc. Because these projects frequently have no finite deadline, candidates must be able to articulate the state of a project at the start — and the end — of an evaluation period, accounting for all new work conducted in between. Some institutions emphasize the quality and originality of the new work introduced during the period under evaluation; others will focus on the product itself.

5. Collaboration: Some genres of scholarship involve collaboration with other scholars and work with larger communities. When appropriate, the candidate should describe the structure and extent of the collaboration, along with a description of the candidate's specific role(s) in producing the work under review.

For all these criteria, the AHA will host conversations — at its annual meeting and through online programming — that we hope will generate continuing evolution of standards and procedures.

CONCLUSION

As the AHA declared in the *Guidelines for the Professional Evaluation of Digital Scholarship in History*, “At its heart, scholarship is a documented and disciplined conversation about matters of enduring consequence.” This conversation, and hence the work of the discipline, is enriched and enhanced by the inclusion of diverse forms of scholarship. The AHA has a responsibility to play a leadership role in broadening the landscape and influence of historical scholarship.

Rethinking Broadcast Archives: Dig, Deconstruct, Display: Call for Papers

Event: FIAT/IFTA Media Studies International Seminar

Date: 8 December 2023

Venue: BFI Southbank, London

The Media Studies Commission of the International Federation of Television Archives FIAT/IFTA is organising a one-day international seminar at the British Film Institute in London on 8 December 2023. Please join us in a dialogue about broadcast archives, present-day archival transformations and how these inform new understandings of the archive and new ways of engaging with the past.

Contributions that work with a variety of methods and theories that build upon the study of broadcast archives are welcome. Feminist, decolonial, post-colonial as well as environmentalist approaches to broadcast archives are especially encouraged. We also encourage contributions that focus on discussing research access to broadcast archives in different countries. Contributions can be in the form of paper presentations, workshops, round tables, research-based audiovisual screenings or multi-media projects.

The topics below can serve as points of departure for submissions; however, prospective participants shouldn't feel limited by these:

- critiques of the historical, social and political conditions that produce archival sources and how these inform and help us revisit narratives of the past;
- archives and processes of remembering;
- silences and power structures within the (digital) archives;
- polyvocality in broadcast archives;
- (digital) archives and social inequalities;
- broadcast archives as repositories of thoughts and feelings;

- broadcast archives and climate justice;
- politics of archival access;
- collaborative practices and alternative forms of knowledge in media historiography;

broadcast archives as living laboratories of data;

archive-based media research as a lived, embodied experience.

Proposals can be submitted by 1 September 2023 to: fiat.ifta.msc@gmail.com. They should include a title, an abstract of 200-300 words and a short biography of the presenter(s). The seminar will take place on location. Limited options for presenting online may be available. If you want to make use of that option, please specify that in your proposal.

Attendance of the seminar is free of charge, but prior registration is required.

Read more about the call for papers at: <https://fiatifta.org/media-studies-seminar-2023-call-for-papers/>

8th Global Reggae Conference: "A Century of Sound: Technology, Culture and Performance"

The 8th Global Reggae Conference will be staged at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus on February 14-17, 2024. Please see the call for paper, film and other proposals below.

From the 1940s to present day, sound systems have rocked the world with word, sound and power. From Kingston's streets to the world's biggest festival stages, the Jamaican-born institution of the sound system has deeply influenced the way music is produced, performed, remixed and enjoyed all over the world. The 2024 edition of the Global Reggae Conference celebrates and investigates the culture and technology of Jamaica's most famous musical instrument.

The triennial Global Reggae Conference extends its reach to engage academics within a wide field of scholastic orientations and practices for its 8th staging. In celebration of the cultural, technological and productive space created by the sound system, both locally and globally, the conference aims to bring together students, scholars, filmmakers, sound producers, researchers, writers, critics, music aficionados, and artists to share research findings, ideas and perspectives.

The conference comes as part of a larger project on music, popular culture and Reggae Studies from the Institute of Caribbean Studies and the Reggae Studies Unit. Over the last decade this has advanced the study of reggae and Jamaican popular culture and contributed to expanding scholarship and outreach through creative production, community engagement, research, experimentation, archive building, exhibitions and events. In the spirit of collaboration seen in previous conferences, the 2024 conference is being hosted in association with the European Research Council (ERC)-funded research project, Sonic Street Technologies (SST), and the research group Sound System Outernational, both based at Goldsmiths, University of London.

We welcome proposals for academic papers; innovative presentations and displays made through uses of media, music and technology; sound system films and videos for screening as part of the Sound System Outernational #10 film programme; and presentations/interventions from musicians, artists and students in the following areas: Culture, Global Reach, Technology, Performance, Politics, and Legacies and Futures.

Proposals for presentations should include an abstract and the following information: name of author/authors; email address/es; name of associated institution; and keywords of presentation. For panel proposals, please include one abstract for each presenter and a pan-

el abstract.

Abstracts for individual or panel presentations of no more than 250 words supported by a short biography no longer than 150 words, should be submitted to the conference organizers for international peer review.

Proposals for film screenings including a synopsis and video link must be emailed tosoundsystemouternational@gmail.com with subject ‘GRC2024’

Email presentation proposals to toreggae.studies@uwimona.edu.jm with the subject heading “A Century of Sound.”

Email screening proposals to tosoundsystemouternational@gmail.com with a subject heading “SSO#10 Screening Programme.”

Deadline for Submission of Abstracts and Film Synopses Is October 30, 2023

Deadline for Submission of Conference Papers And Films Is December 1, 2023

Selected papers will be peer-reviewed and published in themed volume. All paper submissions must conform to the UWI press style available here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NW6ashBtzIRYSp7FmV4ANwEspG_tGTyW8jabe_5QnbQ/edit

Contact the Global Reggae Conference 2024 Secretariat with queries at:

Institute of Caribbean Studies & Reggae Studies Unit

University of the West Indies, Mona Campus

Kingston 7, Jamaica

Email: reggae.studies@uwimona.edu.jm

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