

Historiography

in Mass Communication



Volume 11 (2025). Number 1

Historiography in Mass Communication

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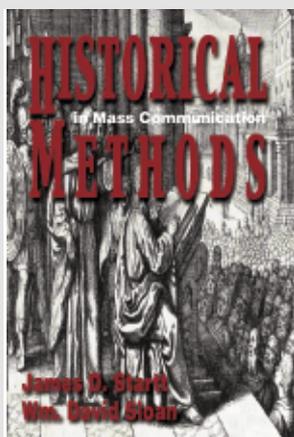
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Fishy History

By Wm. David Sloan ©



Sloan

The history of the media in America is a continuing story of conflict between liberal and conservative forces. We might describe them as the good guys and the bad guys.

We can see this story in the state of the mass media in the middle of the 20th century. By the 1960s the press had lost its honor. It had served well the information needs of the public during World War II. But then it helped lead the nation into a perilous political conservatism. It needed reforming.

The main cause of the danger was media owners' economic motivations. They had an insatiable thirst for money and power. They emphasized journalism primarily as a business. Chain ownership grew. Newspapers reduced their expenditures for news services. Editorial vitality declined. These problems created a number of failures, including ideological conservatism, reluctance to speak out on issues, threats to freedom of the press, and American informational imperialism.

In *The Press and the Cold War* (1970) James Aronson summarized

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

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the dangerous state of the news media. Growing military, private, and government bureaucracies, he pointed out, had inserted themselves into the information transmission process. The press supported or initiated government actions by either accepting them or promoting them without any serious questioning. It thus played a major role in a number of episodes — such as McCarthyism; U.S. imperialism; domestic attacks on socialists, liberals, and Marxists; the debacle at the Bay of Pigs; illegal activities of the Central Intelligence Agency; and America's immoral participation in the Vietnam War.

Does that explanation sound familiar? Does it ring true?

Or do we dare say that it sounds simplistic? Even arrogant?

In fact, it typifies the Progressive interpretation of media history. It's a superficial, black-and-white view of history. Progressive historians portray the entirety of American media history the same way. It's the heroes fighting the villains. If it were a movie, it would be Ellen Ripley vs. Hannibal Lecter. Since Progressive historians identify the good guys as the liberals and the bad guys as the conservatives, their explanations of people and episodes are easily predictable.

We find in Progressive historiography the danger that is common to all historical study when a historian is too attached to a particular mindset. That's true whether the subject is politics, race, gender, religion, or any number of other topics. Whenever a historian holds passionately to a singular view, that outlook threatens an open, honest approach.

Progressive historiography, however, deserves special attention because it has a long history and because it still exercises a strong influence in JMC history.

Progressive historiography emerged around 1900 and dominated the study of American history for the first half of the 20th century. It

declined starting in the 1940s, when a Consensus interpretation began to replace it. But it has never vanished from the field of JMC history. In fact, JMC history has been one of its pockets of activism.

The Progressive school grew, in part, out of a change that had taken place in the late 1800s in the study of American history. Professional historians began to replace the gentleman Nationalist and Romantic historians who wrote most histories in the 19th century.

A similar change took place in the writing of JMC history. While working journalists continued to write historical works, many JMC historians in the early 1900s were educators from the emerging departments of journalism at public universities, particularly in the Midwest. Because most of those universities opened their doors to everyone, the new professional historians came not from the comfortable social class in the Northeast but from various levels of society.

Influenced by the ideas of such Progressive historians as Frederick Jackson Turner, Charles Beard, Claude Bowers, and Vernon Parrington, reform-oriented JMC historians began to view the past as a struggle in which working journalists were pitted on the side of freedom, liberty, civil reform, democracy, and equality against the powerful forces of wealth, conservatism, and class.

For Progressive historians, ideological conflict provided the fundamental key to understanding history. In their mind, the past consisted of a black-and-white, conservative-vs.-liberal, bad-guy/good-guy dichotomy. On one side were the forces of equality and reform, and on the other were the wealthy and the politically influential. The fulfillment of the American ideal required a struggle against those individuals and groups that attempted to control the media for their own use.

Sympathetic with the goals of the Progressive reformers of the early 20th century, JMC historians pictured the media as tools for social

change, progress, and democracy and as an influential force in helping assure a better future. They believed the media should champion the common people and crusade for social and economic changes — should fight on the side of the working masses against the entrenched interests in American business and government. They saw the media as a means of exposing the vices of conservative forces, contributing to progressive political doctrines, and influencing the general public into accepting ideas for political and social reform. They praised journalists and episodes that had contributed to greater democracy, while criticizing those favoring an elitist society.

Do these views sound familiar today? Probably so — since it's likely you've heard them in conference research papers. And you likely have seen them in journal articles also. If you should think that the Progressives' black-and-white view of history has disappeared from JMC historiography, just scan the pages of journals in the field. There you'll find articles with such conclusions as these:

The efforts of conservatives to vilify the media aren't new but began decades ago.

Before Donald Trump, there were other “demagogues” who threatened the American Democracy.

Male journalists in the late 1800s stereotyped reporting jobs in order to pigeon-hole female journalists.

Newspapers described female journalists in traditional stereotypes in an effort to boost business.

The press in the early 1900s was nativist.

Standard journalistic practices were motivated by racial stereotypes.

The press tried to maintain segregation and the racial status quo.

Even so-called “liberal” media owners were reluctant to integrate their staffs.

The media “demonized” Black radicals.

From this list — which represents actual themes and not some I just made up for the purposes of this essay — it’s not difficult to see that the black-and-white interpretation of history persists. The traditional Progressive view is there, with its attention to politics and government. What has changed is an increased emphasis on gender and race. In fact, those two topics get more attention than traditional Progressive concerns such as economics, media ownership, press freedom, social reform, democracy, and government influence on the media. But the good guys vs. bad guys mold remains apparent.

This antinomic view, while seemingly superficial, is not just a shallow overlay on history. It’s a worldview that the authors hold deeply, a frame through which they explain history.

So history, in the Progressive view, can be seen properly in only one way. In that sense, Progressive historiography is deterministic. It presents a law behind history. Thus, we can’t help but find Progressive explanations predictable — and suspicious. Predictability makes history fishy. It takes complex past human behavior and renders it one-dimensional.

Outside JMC historiography, the majority of mainstream historians remain unconvinced by such deterministic explanations. They’re dubious about the existence of single causes and laws of history. Progressivism’s deterministic history is a form of reductionism that forces historians to be too selective, even manipulative, in choosing supporting evidence. Reductionism leads Progressive historians to organize their evidence in a manner that fails to correspond to the great diversity of human reality.

More extreme Progressive historians go even further. In fact, they can barely be called Progressives. They bolster support for their explana-

tions by appealing to ideological theory and employing ahistorical methodology. They're Critical Theorists. They claim that the past is a history of social problems caused by status quo ideology. That ideology, they say, was the main barrier to human liberation.

Critical Theorists who write about history dispense with, as you might imagine, traditional historical methods. They employ mainly textual analysis. When used rigorously with groups of readers, it can be helpful in describing contemporary texts. In studying history, though, Critical Theorists usually work alone. They don't employ detached readers. The result is that their conclusions are merely idiomatic. It's not unfair to say that Critical Theorists — in fact, anyone — can find in texts any ideas they want if they begin with a subjective mindset.

Exhilarating would it be to know that such black-and-white historiography will soon pass away. But we have no reason to be so hopeful. The Progressive interpretation has a long history, and it shows no signs of weakening in JMC historiography. In fact, Progressive historians in the field are more numerous than a generation ago. Joined by the new Critical Theorists, some are as well more vigorous in promoting their views. So it doesn't appear as if their ideological approach to history will disappear anytime soon.

And that presents a danger.

So, faced with the problem and concerned about the worth of history as well as threats to it, what should other historians do? First, those who are professors should explain to their students Progressive historiography and Critical Theory and alert them to the pitfalls.

The rest of us should be watchful to detect superficial black-and-white history. We need to remain vigilant to discourage fishy history.

Thoughts

When Others Think We're Not Real Historians

One of the finer historians in our field posted on Facebook the question “How do you respond to other people who don't think we're ‘real’ historians?”

A woman had introduced her as a historian and then corrected herself to say “or, well, a journalism historian.”

Our historian got several FB responses. They ranged widely. One “journalism” historian pointed out that he had a Ph.D. in history. Another said he had a history professor on his dissertation committee. Another said she had taken two courses from the history department as part of her doctoral program.

The JMC field has many excellent historians. They don't need to make excuses. They're not just JMC historians. They're historians.

Yet the field also has members masquerading as historians. They're not serious about history, some are little more than light-weight philosophers, and others are more interested in the present than the past — and they get upset because “real” historians don't take them seriously. It's little wonder they don't. As long as our field has so many pretenders, we should be ready for contumely from the outside.

If we want to be considered “real” historians, all we need to do is perform like real historians. We must take history seriously. We must determine to be the best at it that we can be. We must be historians.

The Forest for the Trees

JMC's historical importance may be much easier to explain than we think.

My son and two grandsons sat with my wife and me in our library on a morning in late December. The outside temperature had dropped overnight, and we found it easy to stay inside in front of the fireplace.

My grandsons are 25 and 24 years old. Matthew has a degree in business, and Garrett in biology and kinesiology. My son, Christopher, is an engineer, theologian, novelist, freelance writer, strength trainer, and student of Japanese history and philosophy, among other things. When Matthew and Garrett were in grade school, he already was teaching them classical philosophy and encouraging them to think analytically. Their conversations are sometimes hard to follow.

In December we were discussing analytical methods, Plato's and Socrates' disagreement over dialectic methods, and other such topics. Somehow I mentioned JMC historians' angst about convincing other historians that journalism was important in American history.

Matthew, not being immersed in all the theories and philosophies that we encounter daily in mass communication scholarship, immediately replied, "That's simple. It's easy to understand why journalism was important. It was the main way people learned about what was going on in the world outside of those things they knew about personally or from what other people told them."

That's a straightforward explanation of JMC's importance. It helps explain why people believed what they did about public events, life in other places, national and state politics, and a host of other subjects — and why journalism played a vital role. Yet we historians virtually overlook it. We want theories more exotic, more complicated, higher

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sounding, theories so arcane that we think they must be true.

But just because an explanation is parsimonious or readily evident doesn't mean we should ignore it. The best explanations may be right in front of us.

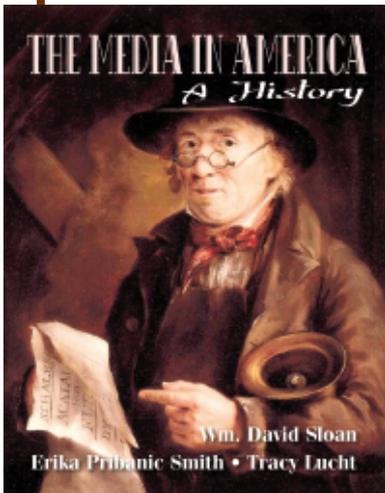
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A More Inclusive Approach

By Debra Reddin van Tuyll ©



van Tuyll

One of my first tasks as the 2024/2025 president of the American Journalism Historians Association is to appoint an ad hoc committee to help find resources for members who are targeted for their work in fields that address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This is a pressing issue for journalism and mass comm faculty, just as it is for those in more directly targeted disciplines. Upon graduation, our students have the responsibility of covering, representing, and communicating with those marginalized, overlooked, and out groups. Such communities also have a call on journalism historians to bring their media experiences (or lack thereof) to light. But I wonder if our current work and approaches to that work needs tweaking as we move forward.

I did a bit of informal research in preparation for this article, and I found the results truly concerning. Mine was not by any measure a systematic study with properly explicated categories and intercoder reliability tests. Nevertheless, I think it gives a good indication that we, as

Debra Reddin van Tuyll, professor emerita at Augusta University, is president of the American Journalism Historians Association. She's the author or editor of nine books. Her most recent is The Midwestern Press in the Crucible of the American Civil War (co-edited with Mary Cronin). She also has two forthcoming books dealing with the early Irish press and transnational journalism. She received the AJHA's 2019 Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement.

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well as our social sciences colleagues, have dropped multiple balls in our work to understand how the media and related industries have served and failed to serve minority communities.

For this research, I gathered the names of as many groups that fall under the DEI umbrella as I could find, and then I went to the EBSCOhost database Communication and Mass Communication Complete. There, I checked to see how many articles have been written about these groups since 2000. (See Table 1.) I then went to the tables of contents of *American Journalism* and *Journalism History* for the last twenty years to see what journalism history research regarding my iden-

Table 1
**Number of articles listed in Communication and Mass
 Communication Complete by DEI classification**

	Media coverage or media or press or journalism or news
Ethnicity or race or culture	30,372
Gender (collapsed from women and gender)	25,411
Women or female or woman or females	17,043
Gender	8,368
Disability or disabilities or disabled	6,957
Agism	5,435
Elderly, aged, older, elder, or geriatric	2,883
Agism, Ageism, age discrimination	2,552
Class	5,303
Class	4,560
Socioeconomic status	743
Religion, religious, religiousness, religions, religiosity, or spiritual or spirituality or faith	5,179
Veterans, military, soldiers or servicemen	4,244
Marital status, married, marriage, or single Age bias, or stereotype	3,986
Native Americans, indigenous, native tribes, native people	1,771
Cultural appropriation	57
Institutional racism	50

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Table 2
Number of articles on DEI topics published in
American Journalism and Journalism History, 2014 to 2024

	American Journalism	Journalism History
Women	31	29
Race	25	16
Men	35	31
Gender	1	1
Viewpoint	1	0
Systematic racism	1	0
Native Americans	2	0
DEI	1	1
Labor	0	1
Disability related	0	2

tified groups looked like. (See Table 2.)

What I found was that we scholars have privileged some groups more than others. For example, as of December 18, 2024, the EBSCO database showed 17,943 articles written about women and media. Many of the articles dealt with women in other countries, but given the global nature of scholarship today, I included them because a researcher studying women and media would likely at least look at those pieces and use the ones that are relevant to his or her work. The largest category of studies listed in the database was those that dealt with ethnicity or race — some 30,372 total.

I should add that the preponderance of these articles were not historical in nature, nor were they written by media historians. When I added the limiters “nineteenth century or 1800s” and “United States or America,” I found only forty-five articles that dealt with media coverage of women and eighty-two that dealt with race and the media. At best, these findings are anecdotal, but they still give an indication of which way the scholarly winds have blown in diversity-related research. Further, my informal findings are corroborated by Gerry Lanosga and Alexia Little’s work related to the fiftieth anniversary of *Journalism*

History.

Both sets of findings show that most communication scholars, including historians, have been mostly interested in questions of race and gender and have essentially ignored other marginalized groups and other voices. Scholars in the field of media history show the same prejudices.

Little and Lanosga found incredible diversity in terms of authorship, with 536 unique scholars penning 727 articles across the fifty years of *Journalism History*.¹ But the journal's commitment to diversity falls short in many other areas. For example, they found a pronounced preference for studies of print media to the exclusion of broadcasting, digital media, and advocacy media such as advertising and public relations. As the authors observed, "This particular problem stands as one perhaps willfully ignored after earlier calls," including the call from Paul David Nord in 1988 to move beyond the over-emphasis on the urban newspaper, a particular pet peeve of my own.

Further, despite a preponderance of scholarship that examines the contributions of men in pursuit of "a grand homogenous account of the pursuit of freedom of information," more attention has been given in the last quarter-century to women who have worked as journalists, according to the Little and Lanosga study. Just over a quarter of the articles published in *Journalism History* across the last twenty-five years have focused on gender. However, very few articles have dealt with gender "outside of its traditional binary definitions."² Less than 5 percent of articles published in the last fifty years have dealt with the press or its employees or audiences and the LGBTQ+ communities or those within the disabled community. Instead, studies of media that serve minority communities have predominantly featured the Black/African American. I found only two articles that consider the press and the LGBTQ+ com-

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munity and only four that deal with the history of the press and Native Americans.

I also found, just as Little and Lanosga did, a preponderance of attention given to the women's press and women in journalism — some sixty articles between the two journals. Articles about men, mostly male journalists or media owners, numbered sixty-six. So, articles that might fall within the “gender” category numbered 126, or just over a quarter of the journals' total published articles, which was 445. This does not count two articles that dealt specifically with gender as a concept or masculinity as a concept rather than as a binary system.

Our professional organizations like to tout their emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. Both the AEJMC History Division and the AJHA offer microgrants to support such research, yet most of what we are producing focuses primarily on two marginalized populations. We need to do better, and there are signs that we are trying.

In 2023, the AJHA and the History Division of the AEJMC, publishers of *American Journalism* and *Journalism History*, worked together to award for the first time six microgrants to researchers engaged with diversity research. The chair of the awards committee, Teri Finneman of the University of Kansas, said in a story for the History Division's newsletter *Clio* that the goal of the grants is “to provide direct support to increase diversity research in the journals.” Those 2023 grants are a step in the right direction, for they funded research on the Southern Queer press, the anti-Mormon religious press in the 19th century, advertising industry racial and ethnic minority professionals, a woman who worked in the Black press, and an oral history project that examines the newsroom roles of Hispanic journalists who serve the Latin community.

Even as several of these projects move us in the direction of greater

inclusion in our diversity research, we must remember that society changes, meaning that who is marginalized may change, too.

The results of the last presidential election have me pondering whether we need to open a new area of diversity research that looks at young (18-29) men of all races. This group has reported feeling left behind, even as their female counterparts have galvanized over issues such as abortion.³ Young men expressed their disaffection by voting for Donald Trump in far greater numbers than women in their cohort did. These men represent one of the constituencies that showed a huge shift in party preference in the election. They also are less likely to pursue higher education and more likely to have little hope for success and prosperity in the future. John Della Volpe, the polling director of the Harvard University Kennedy School Institute of Politics, wrote recently that his group had found “an increasing political rift between young men and women under 30” that had been developing since 2020. The number of young men registering as Democrats has dropped 7 percent in that period, and those identifying as Republicans had increased by the same amount.⁴

Della Volpe wrote that one focus group participant, a young man from Pittsburg, a college graduate working as a bartender, reported feeling hopeless and adrift. Inflation, compounded by “stagnant wages and lack of affordable housing,” led him to see no future for himself. Della Volpe’s take-away was that the young man’s “experience reflects a broader crisis of confidence and purpose, rooted in economic insecurity and social disconnection.” Nearly three-quarters of Gen Z men report feeling similarly hopeless and bleak.

Perhaps it’s too soon to start looking historically at the role media have played in constructing a world that is so alienating for young men, but it’s not too early to start thinking about whether scholarship, with

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its emphasis on women, might have contributed in some way. Women still face massive problems in American society, particularly with regard to control of their bodies. But if media portrayals of women have influenced their self-perception and their lives, might the same be true of other social groups?

Finally, a question I have been ruminating on for a while is this: If we study marginalized voices in isolation, can we truly understand them? This question is borne of my volunteer work as a church conflict manager. We're trained in family systems theory, which maintains that all members of a group must be functioning well for the group to function well. The key here is that, while those who make up the system may be diverse, the system itself is inclusive. Systems theory seems to offer a way forward in an environment that is likely to become even more fraught in the coming years. I wonder if our efforts to understand media and their relationships with marginalized communities could be enhanced by taking a systems approach. In other words, I suspect, and would like to open a conversation about, whether a shift from diversity research to research focused on inclusivity would enhance our understanding of the media's role in social, cultural, and economic systems.

A good example of the kind of study I'm thinking about is Kathy Roberts Forde and Sid Beddington's recent book, *Journalism and Jim Crow*, on media culpability in the creation, acceptance, and sustenance of Jim Crowism.⁵ By studying both White- and Black-owned newspapers, Forde, Beddington, and their chapter authors weave together a study that delves deeply into press complicity with White supremacy. Had they looked only at the White press, or only at the Black press, they would have told an incomplete story. Instead, their book definitively shows that those who set the parameters for the political, social, or economic environment are at least as important a component of the

story as those who suffer at their hands. Power relationships are the products of social tensions that exist between groups with diverse interests. The press plays a role in the creation of both the relationships and those tensions, and examining the entire system can reap far richer results.

The historiography of diversity research shows that communications scholars, including historians, need to move forward with a more inclusive agenda. Just as James Carey told us fifty years ago, we're defining our field too narrowly.⁶ Margaret Blanchard — after whom the AJHA names its annual award for outstanding doctoral dissertations — wondered in 1999 if, in the 21st century, journalism history might “ossify, and die.” As she pointed out in her *Journalism History* article, journalism historians “have achieved a professional comfort level” and tend to fall back on the comfort of old ways of doing things.⁷ It's time, finally, to broaden our view and move forward with research that is truly inclusive as well as diverse.

NOTES

¹ Alexia Little and Gerry Lanosga, “Addressing the Problem(s) of Journalism History,” *Journalism History* 50:1, 2024, 11-19.

² Little and Lanosga, 13.

³ Claire Cain Miller, “Many Gen Z Men Feel Left Behind. Some See Trump as an Answer,” *New York Times*, August 24, 2024 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/24/upshot/trump-polls-young-men.html>).

⁴ John Della Volpe, “Trump's Bro Whispering Could Cost Democrats Too Many Young Men,” *New York Times*, October 21, 2024 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/21/opinion/trump-gen-z-men-harris.html>).

⁵ The book's full title is *Journalism and Jim Crow: White Supremacy and the Black Struggle for a New America*.

⁶ James W. Carey, “The Problem of Journalism History,” *Journalism History* 1 (Spring 1974), 4.

⁷ Margaret Blanchard, “The Ossification of Journalism History: A Challenge for the Twenty-first Century,” *Journalism History*, 25:3 (Autumn 1999), 107, 110.

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Historian Interview

Amber Roessner ©

Lori Amber Roessner, a professor in the University of Tennessee's School of Journalism & Media, teaches and studies media history and its relationship to cultural phenomena and practices. She has written two books —



Roessner

Inventing Baseball Heroes: Ty Cobb, Christy Mathewson, and the Sporting Press in America and *Jimmy Carter and the Birth of the Marathon Media Campaign* — and co-edited *Political Pioneer of the Press: Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Her Transnational Crusade for Social Justice*. Her research articles have appeared in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journalism History*, and *American Journalism*, among others. In 2014 she received *American Journalism's* inaugural Rising Scholar award. Her 2020 article "The Voices of Public Opinion: Lingering Structures of Feeling about Women's Suffrage in 1917 U.S. Newspaper

Letters to the Editor" won the AEJMC History Division's Covert Award for the year's best mass communication history article. She also has received the American Journalism Historians Association's Award for Excellence in Teaching and the AEJMC History Division's Transformative Teaching of Media and Journalism History award.

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

Roessner: I was born in Athens, Ga., in May 1980 and grew up in the nearby area. I am an only child and spent a great deal of my early years with my grandparents and great grandparents, where I gained an appreciation for family history and media history, in particular early radio, television, and telecommunications history. I also was active in youth

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and prep sports, including baseball, softball, basketball, cross-country, and track & field. My parents had a deep appreciation of sports and sporting culture, and this was one source of pleasure for our family. Though I always have enjoyed storytelling, my first foray into journalism was not until my time as an undergraduate student at the University of Georgia in Athens. I wrote an opinion column about the untimely passing of John F. Kennedy, Jr., in 1999, and shortly thereafter, I began working in the sports department at the *Red & Black*.

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

Roessner: After graduating from the University of Georgia in 2003, I worked briefly as an intern at the American Junior Golf Association in Braselton, Ga., before landing my first gig in the industry as a sports reporter with the *Gainesville (Ga.) Times*. The hours of a sports reporter, however, did not lend themselves to the life of a newlywed, so I transitioned into a role as editor of *Gainesville Life* and associate editor of *Athens Magazine*. As the industry entered a moment of transformation circa 2005-08, I decided to pursue my graduate degree. I had an opportunity to take classes with historian Janice Hume and qualitative methods specialist Carolina Acosta-Alzuru as a master's student, and my experience in those courses and my emerging passion for historical and qualitative research prompted me to forgo a trip back into the industry for my Ph.D. Each step on this journey helped me to feel confident about the direction that my career was taking me — into the classrooms and archives of public universities.

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

Historian Interview

Roessner: Since 2010, I have taught a wide range of courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, including reporting, editing, sports journalism, literary journalism, media history, historical methods, and qualitative methods, among others. Within these courses, I have stressed experiential learning, encouraging students to report with radical context and to engage in historical initiatives, including the Medal of Honor Project, the Ida [Wells-Barnett] Initiative, and more recently Frederick Douglass Day and the Election Project.

***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.*

Roessner: I often say those afternoons spent looking through family photo albums with my great grandmother instilled my love of history, but my preparation did not truly begin until I entered the College of Journalism & Mass Communication's master's program at the University of Georgia. I had the opportunity to take a historical topics course, focused on cultural heroes, from Janice Hume, where I recognized my continued love of media history and the potential to focus a career in higher education around this passion. I took a broad range of courses in general and media history and historical methods thereafter to prepare me for my journey as a media historian.

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

Roessner: The works of Raymond Williams, James Carey, Stuart Hall,

and David Paul Nord had a major influence on my historical outlook and scholarship surrounding cultural history. I have long attempted “to operationalize” Carey since taking a class with Dean Krugman in graduate school. Peter Burke, Patricia Hill Collins, and Joan W. Scott have long shaped my thinking around the history of the construction of race, gender, and class and the role of intersectionality in history. Piera Nora and Carolyn Kitch, among others, have shaped my thinking on public memory. And, then there’s Janice Hume, who has shaped my thinking on almost everything related to history [thank you for that], but especially the concepts of hero-craft and public memory.

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

Roessner: I study media history and its relationship to cultural phenomena and practices, including the operation of politics, the negotiation of public images and collective memories, and the construction of race, gender, and class. I have concentrated my historical work in these areas on investigative, political, and sports reporting in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

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

Roessner: Well, most of my work focuses on the cultural construction and negotiation of image and collective memory that happens over time through personal relationships and industry practices in journalism, advertising, and public relations. For instance, you can see those linkages in my work on sports journalism and political reporting. I also focus on

Historian Interview

the cultural construction and negotiation of race, gender, and class, which you can see across my body of work, but especially in the volume that I had the opportunity to co-edit about Ida B. Wells-Barnett and a more recent piece about the woman's suffrage movement. I hope to continue down this path, heeding Carey's call in 1974 for journalism history that attempts "the recovery of past forms of imagination."

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

Roessner: Oddly, the ones that required the most work, but not necessarily just in terms of primary source research. Yes, I've found great satisfaction in the projects that found me elbow deep in archival boxes, but I've also found even greater satisfaction in the ones that required significant revision — that is, once I've managed to embrace the revision process. For instance, my second book project, *Jimmy Carter and the Birth of the Marathon Media Campaign*, required a complete rewrite to cut the manuscript in half, but that process made the book so much better. And "The Voices of Public Opinion," which eventually won a Covert Award, originated from a rejected manuscript proposal. "Embrace the revision process," I often remind myself and my students. Sometimes easier said than done.

I've also found great satisfaction in projects that require collaboration, particularly the volume that I co-edited on Ida B. Wells-Barnett and *American Journalism's* upcoming special issue on the 200th anniversary of the Black Press. I have found true joy in helping to lift up and amplify the voices in our community of scholars, which I see as a central focus of my role as editor of *American Journalism*.

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?*

Roessner: Well, that *is* a tough question. My most important contribution, thus far, is to consider the role of theory in history and to encourage a more diverse and nuanced media history. I believe that the journal and book manuscripts that I have written over the years have contributed to those overarching goals while also offering insight into the practices of imagecraft and journalism, particularly investigative, political, and sports reporting, in the late-19th and 20th centuries.

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

Roessner: I was young and in love [the best stories start this way, right?] and decided to constrain myself from a geographical standpoint when I was looking for my first job out of undergraduate. If I could do it over again, I would have found an internship in New York and likely remained in the sports journalism field for longer. I often share this story with my undergraduate students. Strong relationships can withstand separation by distance for a limited period, but if you're looking for the best-fit job, you really should be open to moving anywhere.

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.*

Roessner: Drawing from Carey, Williams, and Hall, I have long focused on the study of our past through the lens of cultural history. “Cultural history,” Williams wrote in *The Long Revolution*, “must be more than the sum of particular histories, for it is with the relations between them, the particular forms of the whole organization, that it is especially concerned.” With that in mind, as I once said on an AJHA panel in 2012 focused on the role of theory in history, “any hope of understanding the past requires a radical contextualization of historical figures, events, and institutions and a systematic interrogation of the existing documentary record generated by those figures and within particular institutions and formations. It is within the remaining documentary record that journalism [and media] historians can gain insight into the relationship among individual agents such as publishers, editors, reporters, broadcasters, media personalities, telegraph operators, industry supervisors, public relations managers, advertising executives, their sources, and their real and imagined audiences; media institutions such as transnational media conglomerates, local, regional, and national newspapers and magazines, book publishing houses, radio stations, television networks, public relations and advertising agencies, and film production companies; the practice of journalism [and media] — the production processes that helps give form to the profession[s]; and the greater national culture(s). ... The end goal, however, should not be to recover the past so much as to forge a living relation among the past, present circumstances, and future prospects, and in many cases to provide a ‘critical history of ideas and values.’”

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

Roessner: I am excited by efforts to encourage more diverse media history and to address major gaps in media history after the recent audit conducted by *Journalism History*. Additional funding for microgrants co-sponsored by *American Journalism* and *Journalism History*, in collaboration with the AJHA and AEJMC's History Division, will offer scholars more resources to research and develop manuscripts focused on how traditionally othered and marginalized groups have engaged with journalism and media.

Moreover, I would continue to encourage us to move past a brick-maker or bricklayer's approach designed to construct a grand edifice of journalism and media history and to instead embrace an interdisciplinary approach meant to offer new understandings about how the past has influenced this present moment.

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?*

Roessner: We should continue pre-pandemic efforts to encourage the adoption of media history in the curriculum, encouraging leaders of our accreditation bodies to reaffirm their commitment to curricular standards focused on history, law, and ethics and reminding administrators of journalism and mass communication programs that industry professionals incorporate historical perspective into their reporting and analyses on a day-to-day basis.

We should also continue to encourage our scholars to engage in conferences, special issues, and initiatives that speak to our broader field, including the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians, among others.

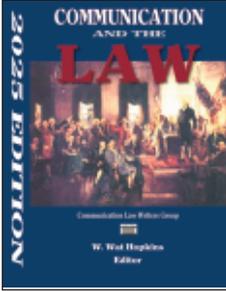
Historiography: *What challenges do you think JMC history faces in the future?*

Roessner: A report released by the AJHA in 2019 noted that of the approximately 200 journalism programs in the nation more than 25 percent fail to offer courses on journalism or mass communication history. Given this trend, the continuing focus of many journalism and communication programs on grant-funded social scientific scholarship, and sociocultural attacks to history, we may see fewer graduate students turning toward the study of media history at a point in time in which we are encountering what some people call the “graying of media history.” With this in mind, we should double down on our efforts to encourage the readoption of undergraduate and graduate media history courses that, as the AJHA report contended, can “sharpen students’ critical thinking, underscore the value of the press in public life, and provide comparisons to assess the present state of news media.” These courses will not only help future reporters understand how to report with radical context, but they will also inspire future generations of media historians. We should invite these scholars into our community through inclusive outreach.

Of course, we also face plenty of challenges now — and the greatest threats are attacks to history rooted in racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia amid our current sociopolitical landscape. As recent leaders in the AJHA, including 2024 AJHA President Tracy Lucht, have suggested, during this moment, we should get loud and collectively speak back by reminding those around us of our commitment to championing academic freedom and holistic histories.

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Book Award Interview

Andie Tucher ©

Andie Tucher won four awards for *Not Exactly Lying: Fake News and Fake Journalism in American History* (2022). The awards include the



Tucher



Best Journalism and Mass Communication History Book Award from the AEJMC History Division, the Frank Luther Mott-Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award, and the ICA Journalism Studies book award. Columbia University Press, the book's publisher, also gave it a Distinguished Book Award. Dr. Tucher is the author also of *Froth and Scum: Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and the Ax Murder in America's First Mass Medium*, which won the Society of American Historians' Allan Nevins Prize, and *Happily Sometimes After: Discovering Stories From Twelve Generations of an American Family*. She is the H. Gordon Garbedian Professor of Journalism at Columbia University. She received her Ph.D. in American Civilization from New York University.

Historiography: Give us a brief summary of your book.

Tucher: *Not Exactly Lying* takes a long view of the recently notorious phenomenon of “fake news,” exploring how the complex relationships among truth, journalism, newsmakers, and readers/audiences evolved over the centuries since 1690 when America's first known newspaper, *Publick Occurrences* of Boston, included in its inaugural (and only) issue

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a fake news item claiming that Louis XIV of France was sleeping with his daughter-in-law. (He didn't have a daughter-in-law at that point.)

I argue that for the first 200 years or so of American journalism, newspapers fulfilled a wide variety of roles, only some of which had anything to do with the creation of truthful accounts of what was going on in the world. Their columns were filled with timely, fact-based information about current events *and* with humbugs, fiction, jokes, and embellished content that came to be openly and cheerfully referred to as *faking*, and readers were apparently neither perturbed nor confused. Not until the late 19th century did conscientious truthfulness become a primary value in U.S. journalism, as some journalists and some citizens, convinced that newspapers were too sensational, too sloppy, too commercial, too inauthentic, too full of fake news, began the effort to reform and professionalize the craft by establishing standards and codes of ethics. Paradoxically, however, this effort to create and validate truthful journalism also inspired the opportunistic tactic I am calling “fake journalism” — the appropriation and exploitation by partisans or activists of the outward forms of authentic journalistic practice in order to lend credibility to advocacy, propaganda, and falsehood. That, I contend, poses the greatest danger to public life today.

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

Tucher: I feel as if I've *always* had the idea for this book. My dissertation, which became my first book, *Froth and Scum*, proposed the “humbug” as a defining feature of the Jacksonian-era mass press in the US. And almost everything I've written ever since, in genres ranging from historiography and photography to personal narrative and family lore, has also focused in some way on the intricate dance between news con-

sumers and truth that has always been part waltz, part tango, and part hoedown. But I've always been most interested in the evolution of truth-telling conventions in journalism: how people known as “journalists” persuaded other people they didn't know that what they said presented an acceptable picture of the world; what readers wanted from journalists and how that changed over time; why so many nineteenth-century news consumers apparently did not expect or even desire everything they read in the paper to be verifiably, factually true.

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

Tucher: I began this book shortly after the term “fake news” crashed into the public discourse, but while the phenomenon gave rise to a number of scholarly and popular works looking at various forms of disinformation and misinformation in public life, few if any works focused on what was both familiar and unique in its history and context or covered the full 330-plus-year span of U.S. journalism.

***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?*

Tucher: Although I started work on this book in 2017, I have, as I've said, been researching humbugs, errors, fakery, and fraud for years, and I've spent countless hours browsing through digital databases of historical newspapers (and, yes, scrolling through microfilm reels and even wrangling huge bound volumes of paper copies; I still have, and still use, the dog-eared sheaves of notes I typed on the tiny battery-operated

typewriter I carried everywhere during my pre-laptop years of dissertation research.) And I credit that deep immersion in the newspapers of the past for giving me a feeling for what they *meant* as well as what they *said*. So by the time I started the new book I had already pulled together a deep database of material that was either relevant or seemed as if it *might* be relevant someday — a process we called “collecting string” when I worked in documentary television. Of course I also drew on contemporary accounts, secondary works, archival material, and other standard sources to organize my strings in their social and cultural context. I turned in the manuscript in early 2021.

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

Tucher: As we all know, newspapers and broadcasts are ephemeral, and I can only sigh over the ones that got away — for instance the fake campaign tabloid *From the Record*, published in 1950 by Senator Joseph McCarthy’s allies, that included a doctored photograph showing one of the senator’s toughest critics apparently engaged in close conversation with a leader of the Communist Party USA. I’ve seen murky reproductions of the photo but never found a copy of the paper itself. (Anyone?) And so much of the glorious jumble of early radio and television was never captured in the first place; it’s always been much harder to do primary research into broadcast or cable news, not to mention fleeting digital or social-media sources.

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

Tucher: It seems obvious, but my sojourn among the humbugs and the fakes underscores the importance of approaching any item of historical journalistic work alert to the possibility that — to put it bluntly — it’s not true. Or less bluntly, that its readers were willing to see it as fulfilling other purposes than the conveyance of factual intelligence. Every journalism historian who’s ever written about *Publick Occurrences*, for instance, tells the story of how the heavy-handed local authorities shut the paper down and destroyed every copy they could find because the fearless editor had dared to report a couple of scandalous items, including the one about the king of France and his daughter-in-law. I’ve never come across anyone, however, who ever questioned the accuracy of those scandalous items or even checked to see if Louis XIV actually *had* a daughter-in-law at the time. Once you know he didn’t, the story becomes something else entirely — one that I believe might have had to do with the staunchly Protestant editor’s dismay over Louis’s recent crackdown on Protestants in France.

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

Tucher: Because the term “fake news” has become so closely associated with Donald Trump, I had to work hard to explain that my book was *not* all about him! But he did, of course, make it into the last chapters, which meant I had to grapple with the questions that face every historian whose work touches the present day: how do I write about happenings that are current events right now but will be history by the time the book appears?

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?

Tucher: Iron will!

Historiography: *Good answer! What new insights does your book provide?*

Tucher: My main contribution is to identify and explore what I call “fake journalism” and its consequences for public life. “Real” journalists essentially invented the *profession* of journalism around the beginning of the twentieth century by claiming the right to set standards of truth and accuracy and ethical reporting. Paradoxically, the birth of real journalism has also allowed for the growth and spread of fake journalism, as partisans, propagandists, activists, and fraudsters figured out they could dress themselves up in their counterparts’ conventions, pretend to embrace their standards, and by their very presence undermine the credibility of good-faith journalistic work.

Not only do the websites and public statements of hyper-partisan journalistic organizations like Breitbart, Daily Caller, Fox News, Sinclair Broadcasting, and the ranks of “pink slime” local newspapers use the language of real journalism, claiming that they are independent, objective, fair, and balanced. They also claim that it’s actually the mainstream organizations that are biased — that are slanting their reporting, pushing their agendas, and telling only their side of the story. At the same time, more and more mainstream media, some of them under pressure from their readers/viewers, are arguing that objectivity is inadequate to the complexity of the times. Many of them are saying it might be time to ditch the traditional ideal and be more open about their subjectivity, to go ahead and make value judgments, to acknowledge that

truths can be relative.

But for the mainstream media to give up on objectivity, I argue, would leave us with two main models for journalism. On the one side would be the empire of hyper-partisan fake journalism, which spreads its conspiracy theories, disinformation, malice, and mischief while insisting on its objectivity, unlike those other guys. And on the second side there are those other guys, the mainstream media, who are increasingly arguing that it's time to be transparent about their own subjectivity and to use words like "liar" and "deceit."

So I can see a media world where it's the fake journalists who are saying to the mainstream: you're just expressing your opinion, but *we* are reporting the unbiased objective facts. And at the same time, the mainstream journalists are essentially responding: it's our opinion that your facts are wrong. A world where the fake journalists are defining what real journalism is is not a healthy place to be.

Historiography: *What findings most surprised you?*

Tucher: That in the midst of all the (sometimes justifiable) criticism of objectivity I ended up making a case for renewing journalism by rebuilding genuine, Lippmann-style objectivity as a primary value. There's a lot to criticize about objectivity, of course, but it's also been widely (and sometimes willfully) mischaracterized. It does *not* require journalists to pretend they have no opinions, to find a "she said" for every "he said," to suspend their own judgment, or to defend the dominant (white, male) cultural norms as default neutral values. Properly practiced, what it *does* mandate is their obligation to fairly weigh and analyze a range of plausible viewpoints and to convey their commitment to fairness and accuracy in the modulation of their voice.

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

Tucher: It's very fashionable, among scholars and the general public alike, to be dismissive of journalism. People see it as something *anyone* can do, something that doesn't take much training, and its flaws and errors — and we all know there have been many — are both consequential for public life and glaringly visible in the public square. But there have also been times when journalism practitioners do stand up and say: Enough! We've got to do better; this is not working. And they figure out something that might. One of those times was the move toward objectivity in the early twentieth century, a genuine if flawed attempt to stamp out faking by codifying how to determine what's true. Another time might, we can hope, be starting now. We should not be shy about giving credit to journalism where credit is due.

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The Media and the National Economy

By Gerald J. Baldasty ©

NOTE: This is the twelfth article in our series “How Media History Matters,” dealing with the significance that the mass media have had in American his-



Baldasty

tory. 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.

Many ways exist to justify JMC's historical importance. JMC historians make a mistake if they focus on just one explanation, whether it be “cultural history,” materiality, Progressivism, or any other interpretation. They shouldn't put all their eggs in one basket. One monolithic explanation won't work.

In the following essay, Gerald Baldasty examines the media's role in contributing to the functioning of the U.S. economy.

Much of the common lore of the mass media (and newspapers in particular) stems from their role as a watchdog on government. Many — journalists as well as non-journalists — have tended to value and portray the press primarily in light of this service. Clifton Daniel noted, in 1960, that “The press in this country has been called ‘the

Gerald Baldasty is Professor Emeritus and Provost and Executive Vice President Emeritus at the University of Washington. He's the author of numerous articles and of three books in JMC history: Vigilante Newspapers: A Tale of Sex, Religion & Murder in the Northwest; E.W. Scripps and the Business of Newspapers; and The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century.

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fourth branch of government.’ Its importance to the structure of our democracy is certified in the Constitution. In fact, there would be no democracy without a free press.”¹ And Charles A. Dana, editor of the *New York Sun* in the 1880s and 1890s, expressed this same idea in a speech to Wisconsin journalists in 1888. What would protect liberty, he asked, in the face of a despot? “Where then is the safeguard of the public liberty against his ambition?” He answered: “It is in the press. It is in a free press. And when every other bulwark is gone, the free press will remain to preserve the liberties which we shall hand down to our children, and to maintain the republic in all its glory, let us hope, forever and forever.”²

This vision of the press — and this role of the press — is an important one. But the function of the press in American society has gone far beyond such a narrow role. The press has had many roles, and the purpose of this essay is to explore the economic role of the press. In particular, this essay attempts to detail the way in which the press has contributed to the functioning of the U.S. economy. In a broad sense, the press has helped sustain the equilibrium that characterizes a capitalist free enterprise economic system by filling a key role in the marketing of goods.³

Each society faces several fundamental economic tasks. First, it must organize a system of production (of goods and services); second, it must arrange for distribution of those goods and services — so that more production can take place.⁴ As the economist Richard Leftwich writes, “Every economic system must have some means of mobilizing productive effort in order to turn out in appropriate quantities the goods and services desired.”⁵

A variety of methods for accomplishing these tasks exists.⁶ In some societies, tradition guides production and distribution. Such tasks are

accomplished through heredity — fathers give their jobs to their sons, assuring that skills will be passed on and that jobs will be filled in each generation. In other societies, some central authority guides production and distribution — the orders of an economic commander-in-chief guides society.⁷ A third system is the market system. While it incorporates some elements of tradition and command, the market system is characterized primarily by a minimal reliance either on tradition or command.

In a market economy — also known as a free enterprise or capitalist system — no individual or organization is consciously concerned with the tasks of production and distribution. Although the United States has a “mixed economy” — in which both public and private institutions exercise economic control — its economic system is primarily a market economy rather than a traditional or authoritarian one. As Paul Samuelson writes, in the United States “hundreds of thousands of commodities are produced by millions of people more or less of their own volition and without central direction or master plan.”⁸

What guides such a system of free-wheeling production and distribution? What prevents complete chaos in such a system of thousands of commodities produced by millions of people without reference to tradition or centralized authority? In so-called capitalist, free-enterprise economies, production and distribution are determined by competition, demand, production costs, price, and a desire for profit. As Samuelson writes,

A competitive system is an elaborate mechanism for unconscious coordination through a system of prices and markets, a communication device for pooling the knowledge and actions of millions of diverse individuals.... In other words, we have a vast system of trial and

error, of successive approximation to an equilibrium system of prices and production.⁹

Communication is a key component to the equilibrium (however imperfect) in a capitalist free enterprise economic system. Through communication, producers discover the wants of consumers. Through communication, producers market their wares to consumers.

This communication process in free enterprise economic systems has been more or less focused in marketing activities. Marketing involves discovering consumer wants, planning or developing products or services to meet those needs and then determining the best way to price, promote, and distribute a product or service.¹⁰ Discovering consumer wants involves communication processes; promoting products and services requires communication as well.

In this last aspect of marketing — promotion — the mass media have emerged as key players. The American economic system relies extensively on the media as a means to reach consumers — to inform consumers about the supply of products or services and ideally (from the producers' point of view) not only to meet but also to create demand. This has been true throughout the three hundred years of the American press, but it has been particularly true in the last century or so. The press has become a vehicle for business promotion and marketing in the past century; business people have come to see the press as a key ingredient in their own commercial endeavors.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, 1880-1900

The centrality of the American press in the American economic system became increasingly evident in the era of industrialization. Before the

Civil War, the organization of economic life in the country had been fairly simple; business people operated within small and highly localized markets.¹¹ Early manufacturing plants were small in capitalization and output. Barriers to cheap transportation of goods served to reinforce the local nature of markets, and business people generally offered their wares to their neighborhood community (a community generally limited in radius to the distance a horse could travel in a day).¹² Such localism characterized American markets into the 1870s.¹³

By the 1880s or so, the main attributes of an industrialized economy were in place: large-scale factory production, a rationalized urban work force, strategic centers of investment capital and extensive marketing of standardized products.¹⁴

The new industrial age was characterized by *mass* production, with a high degree of mechanization, accurate machine tools, uniform quality of materials, and high capital investment.¹⁵ The capital investment in manufacturing rose from \$4.8 billion in 1879 to \$11.15 billion just ten years later, and to \$18.62 billion by 1899 — a 288 percent increase in just twenty years.¹⁶ Production increased 38 percent from 1870 to 1880, by 69 percent from 1880 to 1890 and by 40 percent from 1890 to 1899. Over-all, manufacturing production rose 284.6 percent from 1870 to 1899.¹⁷ Transportation systems aided in the dramatic rise of production. From the middle of the century onward, railroads were central to the new industrial order, for they made possible the tremendous exploitation of the rich natural resources of the nation (including coal, iron ore, petroleum, gold, silver, and copper). Moreover, the railroads provided the national transportation system so central to the *mass* distribution of goods made necessary by mass production. Railroad trackage increased from 53,000 miles in 1870 to 193,000 miles by 1900, thus providing the main arteries for a national distribution sys-

tem of manufactured goods.¹⁸ The adoption of a standard gauge (in the North by 1880 and in the South by 1886) provided for the uninterrupted transfer of goods throughout the nation. With standard gauge, products put in a boxcar in New England did not need to be unloaded and repacked because of differing track widths. Such a time-consuming process had been common before 1880 and naturally added considerably to transportation costs.¹⁹

The Need for Marketing

The tremendous increase in production, delivered via a far-flung distribution network, would have amounted to little if consumers had not been informed about the vast new supply of goods available. Indeed, the need for marketing was an imperative complement to *mass production* and *mass distribution*.

When production was small (in terms of output) and distribution limited to a fairly narrow region, marketing was naturally less a concern than it became later in the nineteenth century. Early in the century, a small advertisement in the local newspaper could alert most people in a county about goods made by a local cobbler, for instance. A sign outside the shop was considered by many to be adequate advertisement, and word of mouth usually could maintain a business in a local area.

By the latter decades of the century, however, such general inattention to marketing was no longer possible if a business person wished to prosper. With mass production, the financial stakes were much higher than before; the village cobbler in 1820 or 1830 had but eight to ten pairs of shoes to sell at any one time, but the shoe manufacturer in New England in 1895 easily could produce hundreds of pairs of shoes *each* day. Such stock represented a major investment in raw materials (not to

mention the capital investment in the machinery used in such mass production); the financial stakes were now so high that manufacturers and distributors were forced to exert themselves more than ever before to induce consumers to buy their goods.

National distribution of goods naturally precluded selling only to those who walked by a shop and saw its sign outside, or who knew a cobbler (or some other producer of goods) personally or by reputation. The New England shoe producer who sought to sell goods in Oregon could not rely on word of mouth — either with retailers or with consumers. National markets required national marketing.

By the late nineteenth century, American manufacturers had come to rely on many forms of marketing to reach the consumer: salesmen, billboards, free samples (Quaker Oats pursued this system, distributing tens of thousands of free samples around the country to familiarize the public with its product), calendars, blotters, and signs on barns. And many businesses relied on advertisements in the leading mass media of the day, newspapers and magazines. Most business people frequently relied on a variety of marketing techniques, although some clearly had preferences. Life insurance advertising generally appeared in magazines. Quaker Oats relied on calendars (with the friendly Quaker beaming at all), cookbooks (which not so surprisingly stressed the use of oats), and door-to-door giveaways of free samples of its product.²⁰

Marketing of goods became a major concern because, quite literally, hundreds of consumer goods were being marketed nationally by the 1880s: beer, home remedies and patent medicines, soaps, food products (baking powder, cocoa), pianos, seeds, typewriters, bicycles, and mail order dry goods. Other than patent medicines, most of these items had never had national distribution before the 1880s.²¹

Marketing in the Press

Many of these goods were advertised in American newspapers. In 1898, Milwaukee's *Evening Wisconsin* had national advertising contracts with eighty different companies, selling such diverse products as patent medicines, books, soaps, food, and food-related products.²² Pendleton's *East Oregonian* had accounts with five patent medicine companies in the 1880s.²³

Many manufacturers came to believe that advertising was fundamentally vital to success in business. At the very least, it served an economic function of linking producers and consumers. But some dared to believe that it was quite possible that advertising did far more than merely tell consumers about goods they already needed or wanted; rather, advertising might well just create demand. In either case, advertising was an essential part of the new economic order.²⁴

A leading New York City department store manager in the late 1890s said that advertising was "the fundamental thing — the cornerstone; therefore, it demands the attention of the head of the business."²⁵ The head of the Angier Chemical Co., a patent medicine firm in Boston, said that advertising was crucial to good business.²⁶ In 1915, R.J. Reynolds recalled that he spent \$4,000 for advertising in 1894 and saw his business increase dramatically. Encouraged, he spent \$20,000 on advertising in 1895 and his business doubled. He believed that advertising was a necessary part of doing business and he claimed he spent between 2 and 3 percent of annual sales in advertising.²⁷ And James B. Duke, the leading figure in the cigarette industry, built his firm's fortune in the 1880s and 1890s through business acumen and aggressive marketing; he spent \$800,000 on advertising in 1889 alone.²⁸

Advertising by manufacturers in the American press was not *new* in

the period after 1880; rather, it grew dramatically in scale and frequency. Patent medicine manufacturers, for instance, had been advertising on a broad basis since mid-century, but they increased advertising expenditures in the 1880s and 1890s (as both production increased and various elixirs seemed to proliferate). Patent medicines had a ready market; Americans had remarkably poor diets in the late nineteenth century which gave rise to a number of “complaints” that patent medicines promised to cure.²⁹ Indeed, that was the simple, tantalizing lure of patent medicines: those easy-to-take remedies promised to cure whatever ailed you.

But a ready market, based on both real and imaginary maladies, was not enough to assure commercial success. Patent medicine manufacturers advertised *constantly* because they believed that people only heeded their ads — and bought their remedies — when they were ill or in need of comfort.³⁰

Patent medicine manufacturers were not alone when they placed their faith in advertising. Dry goods merchants found advertising to be a lucrative investment. A.T. Stewart, an early department store magnate, said, “He who invests one dollar in business should invest one dollar in advertising that business.”³¹ And W.G. Thomas, manager of the O’Neill Dry Goods Co., in New York City, said that “every dollar” spent on advertising produced “two dollars in return” in sales.³²

Reliance on Newspaper Advertising

For many businesses, newspapers were the most effective vehicle for advertising. Newspaper circulation growth through the country provided advertisers with broad and relatively cheap access to most American consumers. It is important to note that businesses had advertised in the

press since colonial days, and advertising had grown throughout the following century, paralleling the emergence of new and wider markets. But in the late nineteenth century, as never before, a wide variety of businesses — carriage makers, bicycle manufacturers, railroad agents, hoteliers, department (dry goods) store owners, food processors, and others — turned to the American newspaper as the major vehicle for their marketing.

E.H. Morse, principal of a business college in Hartford, Connecticut, told his colleagues at a business college teachers convention in 1898 that newspaper advertising was the best forum for marketing:

Of all the methods of practical publicity that I have tried, and I have tried a good many, I find repeatedly that the newspaper is the foundation. It leads both in reaching the people and producing the results. People read the daily newspapers for the sake of getting the news. This means the news of business as well as the news of politics and war. An advertisement is business news....³³

Morse said that people saw “the daily paper as the up-to-date medium by which the newest knowledge is disseminated” and thus approached it with a good deal of trust.³⁴

Many business people testified that newspaper advertising had provided great sales for them. C.S. Bunnell of Bradley and Co., a Syracuse, N.Y., manufacturer of carriages and agricultural implements, noted that the firm’s “phenomenal” success in carriage sales was due to newspaper advertising. The firm advertised *only* in newspapers and had no other marketing schemes (such as circulars or traveling sales people) for its product. The manager of another Syracuse company heartily concurred, saying that his success in selling bicycles was due, at least in part, to

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newspaper advertisements. H.B. Harding, of Humphrey's Homeopathic Medicine Co., said his company relied primarily on newspapers for advertising and found large city dailies the best advertising medium. E.S. Burnham, founder and manager of a company specializing in food products and beverages, said he believed that advertising was absolutely essential to his business. He relied on newspapers and magazines for his marketing campaigns, but he said he found newspapers to be the cheapest and most effective means for reaching the public. Dr. R.V. Pierce, a patent medicine manufacturer, believed that newspapers were a leading advertising medium because they were relatively cheap (due to the introduction of wood pulp, the reduction in the cost of white paper and improved machinery for production) and because they circulated widely in the country.³⁵

Newspapers were widely valued by advertisers. Boston theaters relied almost exclusively on newspapers for advertising. The Park Theater, in Boston, had an annual advertising budget of about \$20,000 in the early 1890s; \$18,000 went to newspapers (\$8,000 to dailies; \$1,000 to small weeklies; and \$9,000 to Sunday newspapers).³⁶ George H. Daniels, general passenger agent of the New York Central Railroad, said that daily newspapers were the best medium for his company's advertising. "Their frequency of issue makes them very desirable mediums for our advertising, and their character makes our reading notices particularly appropriate for their columns."³⁷ And W. Wallace Waugh of Boston, head of the Hotel and Tourist Bureau and publisher of a hotel trade industry journal, said that newspapers were the best advertising medium.³⁸

Many kinds of businesses thus came to rely on the American newspaper as a vital link to the consumer. The economic necessity of such reliance is probably best illustrated by the example of the department

store, the great palace of consumption, that came to dominate much of the retail trade in the late nineteenth century.

The Department Store

The department store was a product of an industrialized, urban-based society. Urban growth — 22 percent of the population in 1880 lived in cities, rising to 33 percent in 1900 — created a sizable market for dry goods merchants.³⁹

The urban infrastructure (such as street improvements, street cars or railway systems, and delivery systems), in place by 1880 or so, expanded the market area beyond a shopper's immediate neighborhood and thus allowed for the concentration of a myriad of goods in one store relatively distant from the consumer's home.⁴⁰

Although urban Americans still purchased daily necessities, such as meat and other groceries in their local neighborhoods, they increasingly flocked to the central business districts to shop in department stores, so named because so many different departments existed all under one roof. Technical developments allowed the construction of tall, spacious buildings with many floors, equipped with mechanical elevators and central heating.

The trend toward department stores dated from mid-century, but large-scale retailing was not common until about 1880. Some of the best known stores (Macy's, Bloomingdale, Lord and Taylor, B. Altman) were in New York City. But department stores drew customers not just there but throughout the country — in Columbus (Lazarus), Cincinnati (Shillito), Chicago (Marshall Field, Carson-Pirie-Scott), Philadelphia (Wanamaker), Boston (Jordan Marsh, R.H. White), and San Francisco (Emporium). Gimbels began in Vincennes, Indiana, and ex-

panded to Milwaukee and Philadelphia by century's end.⁴¹

The lure of the department store has been noted by many. As Alan Trachtenberg writes:

Of all city spectacles, none surpassed the giant department store, the emporium of consumption born and nurtured in these years. Here the citizen met a new world of goods: not goods alone, but a world of goods, constructed and shaped by the store into objects of desire. Here the very word "consumption" came to life....

They specialized, that is, not only in selling multiple lines of consumer goods, but in the presentation, the advertisement, of such goods as desirable, as necessary. In department stores, buyers of goods learned new roles for themselves, apprehended themselves as *consumers*, something different from mere users of goods.⁴²

Department stores were particularly dependent upon newspaper advertising because of the economic structure of the retailing business. The primary test of a department store's performance was *stock-turn*, that is the number of times stock on hand was sold and replaced each year.⁴³

As Arthur Chandler Jr. notes, an increase in stock turn (with working force and equipment constant) lowered unit costs, raised output per worker and per store — all of which meant greater profit. Marshall Field in the last decades of the century recorded a fairly respectable average annual stock turn of five; Macy's in New York soared to twelve in 1887 and stayed at that level for the rest of the century.⁴⁴

This high volume allowed lower profit margins and lower prices relative to the smaller neighborhood stores. But this emphasis on volume sales necessitated a steady stream of customers. The emphasis on volume

also dictated price reductions on slow-moving lines of goods. And all of this — volume, steady clientele and sales — dictated *newspaper* advertising, and in most cases, *daily* advertising. Before radio and television, only newspapers could reach a sizable segment of the population on a daily basis.

Department store managers preferred newspapers over magazines. Given the desire for quick turnover of goods, magazines were simply too slow in reaching the public. Isidor Straus, one of the owners of Macy's Department Store in the 1890s, refused one magazine publisher's bid for advertising patronage, telling him that the "nature of our business is such that goods will in most instances be closed out before we are able to announce through you that we have them for sale."⁴⁵

Advertising was not a complete guarantee of financial success — a store still needed good merchandise and good sales people. But department store managers and the leading department store trade publications recognized that advertising provided the necessary linkage between consumer and supplier.⁴⁶ A writer in the trade journal *Dry Goods Economist* stressed the need for advertising: "Might as well try to successfully run a soda fountain under the Pyramids of Egypt as to try to run a modern dry goods store without a reasonable use of printer's ink, unless you want to run it into the ground."⁴⁷

Macy's, one of the largest and most successful department stores of the era, relied extensively on newspaper advertising. Between 1888 and 1902, Macy's spent an *average* of 1.58 percent of total net sales in advertising.⁴⁸ The percentage essentially doubled during that period, rising from 1.16 percent in 1888 to 2.11 percent in 1902. The figure becomes more impressive when one notes that net sales grew by nearly 400 percent during the same period. The advertising budget for 1888 was just under \$60,000; it rose to \$113,531 in 1896 and to \$227,142

by 1902. In the late 1890s, Macy's had a five- or six-column ad in Sunday newspapers and a single column weekdays. As Hower notes in his history of Macy's, "... despite the growing volume of retail advertising, the city's vast army of newspaper readers could hardly escape seeing a Macy announcement at least once a day."⁴⁹

By the 1890s, the leading newspaper advertisers in New York City and Boston were all department stores.⁵⁰ And one advertising trade journal writer estimated in the late 1890s that a single large New York City department store would spend at least \$100,000 a year on advertising.⁵¹

John Wanamaker, the Philadelphia department store magnate, believed newspapers were the best marketing device for his stores. "I owe my success to newspapers," he said.⁵² In the late 1890s, he described his marketing methods:

I never in my life used such a thing as a poster or dodger or handbill. My plan for twenty years has been to buy so much space in a newspaper and fill it up as I wanted. I would not give an advertisement in a newspaper of 500,000 circulation for 5,000 dodgers or posters.⁵³

One of Wanamaker's biographers writes that the department store magnate believed that he could not go a single day without newspaper advertising.⁵⁴ Wanamaker himself estimated that he spent as much as \$400,000 a year on advertising in Philadelphia in the late 1890s.⁵⁵

Other department store managers also testified to the value of newspaper advertising. James O. Flaherty, manager of a New York dry goods store, said:

After a careful analysis of the factors incidental to our success in the building up of a large and steadily growing trade from small beginnings, we find that, in addition to a carefully assorted, plentiful and well-bought stock, attracting public attention by newspaper advertising has been — if not the greatest — at least one of the principal causes of our success.⁵⁶

S.E. Olson, president and general manager of a New York dry goods store, called the daily newspaper “the best advertising medium in the world.... I reason that advertisements are only daily reminders of any business, and the more the public is reminded of a store the more people it will bring to that store and the more good it will do that store.”⁵⁷

Outside of the leading cities, the same attitude toward newspaper advertising prevailed. W.S. McCombs, a Rock Island, Illinois, dry goods merchant, attributed his success in business “in a large measure to the liberal but judicious use of printer’s ink.” His firm advertised in newspapers in Rock Island and in eight leading nearby towns.⁵⁸

Department store managers around the nation learned from their key industry trade journals that advertising was crucial, that newspaper advertising far outstripped other marketing schemes and that advertising should be conducted year round.

Both the *Dry Goods Economist* and the *Chicago Dry Goods Reporter* had regular columns and advice on advertising. One *Dry Goods Economist* writer argued that newspaper advertising, if done correctly, would bring tremendous results:

Tell a story every day; tell it enthusiastically, entertainingly, truthfully. Use as much space as you need to fully acquaint your readers with the conditions at your store, and you’ll wonder where all the

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people came from after they wake up to the fact that you are alive and really have something worthy of their investigation.⁵⁹

Another column noted: “It has been our experience that a liberal space in the newspapers, freshly equipped at short intervals with plain, straightforward facts connected with the business, gains public confidence and yields best results...”⁶⁰

The dry goods trade journals urged department store managers to advertise all of the time in order to draw “a high class clientele.” One writer in the *Chicago Dry Goods Reporter* noted:

It is not enough to make a few splurge ads and then quit.... If a man has a good thing, he should tell people about it, but it is not sufficient to tell them one or two times, he must keep telling them. He would make a mistake to keep repeating the same story in exactly the same manner, for people would finally become weary of hearing him, but if he will get up his story in a new garb every time, and still keep to the same facts, the people will finally be convinced that there is something in what he says.⁶¹

And a *Dry Goods Economist* writer noted that a decrease in advertising could be a signal to the public that the firm was having financial problems or lacked capable management.⁶²

CONCLUSION

The rise of a national capitalist free enterprise economic system in the United States, based on mass production, mass distribution, and mass marketing of goods, provided the basis for a new, highly significant role

for the press. Certainly the press had had an economic role in the nation's development throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and advertising had long been a part of virtually every newspaper. Yet the rise of a national free enterprise economic system, and the need for business to acquire a reliable link to the consumer, for the first time made the American newspaper an integral part of American business. Far more than ever before, the press had become absolutely essential to the American economy.

NOTES

¹ Clifton Daniel, "Responsibilities of the Reporter and Editor," 21 October 1960. Speech at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

² *St. Louis Republic*, 25 July 1888, 1.

³ This chapter does not address the inequities inherent in markets governed by supply and demand. The point here is not to idealize free market economies; rather the point is to look at how a free market economy operates and then to examine the role of the media within that system.

⁴ Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Economic Problem*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), 12.

⁵ Richard H. Leftwich, *An Introduction to Economic Thinking* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), 17.

⁶ The economists Leith and Lumpkin write, "The economic system adopted by a nation is the set of laws, government regulations, private institutions and customs" that guide the tasks of production and distribution. Harold R. Leith and R. Pierce Lumpkin, *Economics USA* (New York: Gregg Division, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968), 25.

⁷ Heilbroner, *The Economic Problem*, 16, 18.

⁸ Paul A. Samuelson, *Economics*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 41, 42.

⁹ Samuelson, *Economics*, 42, 44. No effort is made here to claim that such a system is perfect; the existence of monopoly in free enterprise systems should disabuse us of notions of perfection. Edward H. Chamberlin, *The Theory of Monopolistic Competition: A Re-orientation of the Theory of Value* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962). The point rather is to point out a general system of market operation that characterizes, for the most part, the issues of production and distribution in the United States.

¹⁰ William J. Stanton, *Fundamentals of Marketing*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1978), 5.

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¹¹ Robert Higgs, *The Transformation of the American Economy, 1865-1914* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1971), 39.

¹² Alex Groner and the editors of *American Heritage and Business Week, American Business and Industry* (New York: American Heritage Publishing, 1972), 235.

¹³ Alfred D. Chandler Jr., "The Beginnings of Big Business in American Industry," in *New Views on American Economic Development*, ed. Ralph Andreano (Cambridge: Schenckman Publishing, 1965), 279.

¹⁴ Robert H. Weibe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), 8; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Political and Social Growth of the American People, 1865-1940*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1941), passim.

¹⁵ Ross M. Roberson, *History of the American Economy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 340.

¹⁶ *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Series P, 123-76.

¹⁷ *Historical Statistics of the United States, Production Index Series*, P13-17; also see Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang), 53.

¹⁸ Sean D. Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 12-13, 126.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30. Also see Page Smith, *The Rise of Industrial America* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1984), 89-112; Alfred S. Chandler Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 81-189.

²⁰ Morton Keller, *The Life Insurance Enterprise, 1885-1910: A Study in the Limits of Corporate Power* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963); Alfred E. Marquette, *Brands, Trademarks and Good Will* (New York: 1967).

²¹ Thomas C. Cochran, *The Pabst Brewing Co.: The History of an American Business* (New York: New York University Press, 1948), 129-36; Marquette, *Brands, Trademarks and Good Will*; Frank S. Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran, 1929), 362-63; *Chicago Dry Goods Reporter*, 21 March 1896, 11-13.

²² *Advertising Experience*, June 1899, iv.

²³ East Oregonian Record Books, Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

²⁴ *New York Sun*, quoted in *The Newspaper Maker*, 23 May 1895, 4.

²⁵ *Profitable Advertiser*, April 1898, 423; also see *Dry Goods Economist*, 22 February 1896, 16.

²⁶ *Profitable Advertiser*, 15 October 1894, 215.

²⁷ Nannie M. Tilley, *The R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.* (Chapel Hill: University of North

Carolina Press, 1982), 71-2, 75.

²⁸ Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, 290-92.

²⁹ Robert C. Alberts, *The Good Provider: H.J. Heinz and His 57 Varieties* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 41-3.

³⁰ *Advertising* (Columbus, Ohio), July 1898, 76-7. Also see *Printer's Ink*, 1 January 1890, 215.

³¹ Henry R. Boss, *A Brief History of Advertising* (Chicago: Frederick Weston Publishing, 1886), 25.

³² *Printers Ink*, 26 February 1890, 408.

³³ *Advertising* (Cincinnati), December 1898, 125.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Printer's Ink*, 8 January 1890, 241; 2 December 1896, 4-5; 23 September 1896, 4; 21 October 1896, 3.

³⁶ *Profitable Advertiser*, 15 June 1893, 12,21; also see *Profitable Advertiser*, 15 December 1897, 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 15 June 1899, 27.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 33-4.

³⁹ Edward C. Kirkland, "Building American Cities," in *Views of American Economic Growth: The Industrial Era*, ed. Thomas C. Cochran and Thomas B. Brewer, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), 2:15-32.

⁴⁰ Ralph M. Hower, *A History of Macy's of New York, 1858-1915* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 146-47.

⁴¹ Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, 224, 225-26.

⁴² Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 130.

⁴³ Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, 223; also see John W. Ferry, *A History of the Department Store* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 16; *The Newspaper Maker*, 16 December 1897, 8; *The Manufacturer* (Philadelphia, Pa.), 13 August 1892, 5.

⁴⁴ Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, 229.

⁴⁵ Hower, *A History of Macy's*, 268.

⁴⁶ *Dry Goods Economist*, 11 April 1896, 73; and 17 October 1896, 81.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 May 1896, 65. Also see *Dry Goods Economist*, 12 December 1896, 15, and *Chicago Dry Goods Reporter*, 8 February 1896, 47.

⁴⁸ Hower, *A History of Macy's*, Table 20.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

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- 50 *Profitable Advertiser*, 15 October 1893, 142, quoting the *New York World*.
- 51 *Fame*, February 1897, 444. Also see *King's Jester*, April 1892, 42; Michael Schudson, *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 150-52.
- 52 *Advertising World* (Columbus, Ohio), 15 September 1897, 1.
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 Herbert A. Gibbons, *John Wanamaker*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926), 2:14-15. Also see Joseph H. Appel, *The Business Biography of John Wanamaker, Founder and Builder* (New York: Macmillan, 1930).
- 55 *Chicago Dry Goods Reporter*, 25 March 1899, 53.
- 56 *Dry Goods Economist*, 8 August 1896, 80.
- 57 *Printers Ink*, 12 August 1896, 48, quoting the *New York Journal*.
- 58 *Chicago Dry Goods Reporter*, 11 February 1899, 15.
- 59 *Dry Goods Economist*, 8 August 1896, 80.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 12 September 1896, 63.
- 61 *Chicago Dry Goods Reporter*, 7 October 1898, 71; also see *The Manufacturer*, 3 October 1891, 10; 24 October 1891, 10; 31 October 1891, 10; 4 November 1891, 10; 8 October 1892, 10.
- 62 *Dry Goods Economist*, 24 October 1896, 55. Also see *Dry Goods Economist*, 16 May 1896, 6; 27 June 1896, 57; 15 August 1896, 65.

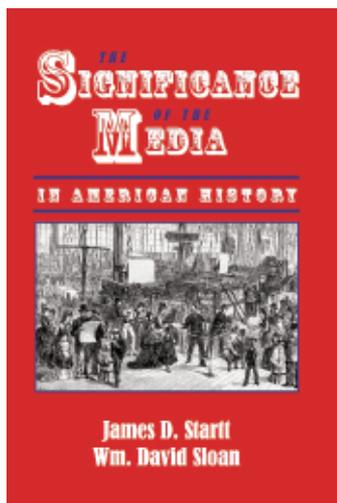
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News & Notes

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

Call for Proposals: 2025 The Joint Journalism and Communication History Conference

The Joint Journalism and Communication History Conference – co-sponsored by the American Journalism Historians Association and the History Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication — is accepting submissions for its 2025 conference, which will be held in person on March 28, 2025 in College Park, Md.

The deadline has been extended to 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2025.

The one-day, interdisciplinary conference welcomes faculty, graduate students, and independent scholars researching the history of journalism and mass communication, including advertising and public relations. Topics from all geographic areas and time periods are welcome, as are all methodologies. The joint conference offers a welcoming environment in which participants can explore new ideas, garner feedback on their work, and meet colleagues from around the world interested in mass communication history.

When: Friday, March 28, 2025, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern (U.S.)
Time

Where: Philip Merrill College of Journalism, Knight Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, Md. 20742

Registration fee: \$90, including boxed lunch. Free for graduate students, with optional boxed lunch at \$30.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Anya Schiffrin, [director of the Technology, Media, and Communications](#) specialization at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and a senior lecturer on global media, innovation and human rights.

Tour: Conference participants can join a tour of the National Archives in College Park.

Proposals for paper presentations, research-in-progress presentations, or panels are all welcome. Your proposal should detail your presentation topic and offer a compelling rationale for why the research would interest an interdisciplinary community of scholars.

Papers are completed research studies. The paper should be attached to the submission (as a PDF or Microsoft Word document), and include an abstract of up to 500 words.

Research-in-Progress (RIP) proposals are projects currently underway and that could benefit from collegial feedback. An RIP submission is an abstract of up to 500 words.

Panels are pre-constituted presentations from multiple scholars working on similar topics or using similar methodological approaches. Panels generally consist of three to four scholars. To submit a panel proposal, please include an overview of the panel along with abstracts for each of the individual projects/presentations. The overview and the individual abstracts may each be up to 500 words.

Submissions should be emailed to jjchc.submissions@gmail.com.

Please remove any identifying information from your paper or abstract, and attach it to your email as a PDF or Microsoft Word document. In the body of your email, please include your name, preferred email address, institutional affiliation, and title/rank (if applicable). If you are submitting a panel proposal, please include that information for all panel participants.

The submission **deadline** is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (U.S.) Wednesday, **Feb. 5, 2025**.

Authors will be notified about the status of their proposals by mid-February.

Please direct questions to one of the conference co-chairs:

Elisabeth Fondren, St. John's University, fondrene@stjohns.edu

Rob Wells, University of Maryland, robwells@umd.edu

Nominations for AEJMC History Division's 2025

Donald L. Shaw Senior Scholar Award

Nominations are open for the AEJMC History Division's 2025 Donald L. Shaw Senior Scholar Award. This division honor will recognize an individual for excellence in research on the history of journalism and mass communication. Nominees must have a minimum 15-year academic career and a record of division membership. To submit a nomination, please compile a single PDF file with the following items:

- Cover letter that explains the nominee's research contributions
- Minimum of two letters of support
- Nominee's current C.V.

Self-nominations, with the accompanying supporting materials, are welcome. Nomination packets should be sent to committee chair Matthew Pressman at matthew.pressman@shu.edu. The **deadline** for submissions is **February 15, 2025**.

Margaret A. Blanchard Dissertation Prize

Submission Deadline: Feb. 15, 2025

The American Journalism Historians Association's Margaret A. Blanchard Doctoral Dissertation Prize, [given for the first time in 1997](#), is awarded annually for the best doctoral dissertation dealing with mass

communication history. An honorarium of \$500 accompanies the prize, and a \$200 honorarium is awarded to each honorable mention.

Eligible works shall include both quantitative and qualitative historical dissertations, written in English, which have been completed between January 1, 2024, and December 31, 2024. For the purposes of this award, a “completed” work is defined as one which has not only been submitted and defended but also revised and filed in final form at the applicable doctoral-degree-granting university by December 31, 2024.

To be considered, please submit the following materials *in a single e-mail* to the address below:

1. A cover letter from the applicant containing complete (home and work) contact information (postal addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses). The letter should express a willingness, should the dissertation be selected for a prize, both to attend the awarding ceremony and to deliver a public presentation based on the dissertation at the 2025 American Journalism Historians Association Annual Convention Sept. 25-27 in Long Beach, California.

2. A letter of nomination from the dissertation chair/director or the chair of the university department in which the dissertation was written.

3. A single PDF containing the following (with no identifying information):

- A 200-word abstract.
- The dissertation table of contents.
- A single chapter from the dissertation, preferably not exceeding 50 manuscript pages (not including notes, charts or photographs). The chapter should, if possible, highlight the work’s strengths as a piece of primary-sourced original research.

4. In a separate PDF but in the same e-mail, a blind copy of the complete dissertation.

To be considered, all identifying information — including author, school, and dissertation committee members' names — must be deleted from items 3 and 4 above.

Nominations, along with all the supporting materials, should be sent to AJHADissertationprize@gmail.com

Direct any questions to Blanchard Prize Chair Pete Smith at gsmith@comm.msstate.edu

Call for Papers: 33rd Annual Sachsman Symposium on the 19th Century Press

November 13-15, 2025 • 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 33rd Annual Sachsman Symposium on the 19th Century Press, formerly known as the Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression.

The Society invites panel and paper submissions dealing with any topic related to the media of the nineteenth century. Of particular interest this year are studies related to 19th century media law and ethics; international coverage of the American Civil War; and the 19th century minority and foreign language press. Other recent topics have included studies of political and sports reporting, reporting on slavery and abolition, the illustrated press, sensationalism, and reporting on the arts.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: August 25, 2025. Please send your paper or a panel proposal as a Word attachment to 19thCenturyHistorians@gmail.com. Students are encouraged to submit their research work. Please note:

News & Notes

- Papers should be at least 10 pages with a 200–300-word abstract.
- Pre-formed panel proposals should include a panel title and abstract, and the names, contact information, and presentation title for each presenter.
- Selected papers and panels must be presented during the conference, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, November 13-15, 2025.
- It is not necessary to be a member of the Society to submit a paper or panel for consideration.

LOCATION: The conference will take place at Augusta University. We strongly encourage on-site participation to take advantage of collegial, collaborative scholarship and discussion; public history experiences; and networking opportunities. A Zoom option is available upon request.

RECOGNITION: Top papers will be recognized. The top student paper will be honored with the Sachsman Family Award for outstanding student research. Financial assistance may be available for in-person presentations by undergraduate and graduate students thanks to the Schmitt Family Fund, which is dedicated to encouraging student research.

PUBLICATIONS: In addition to dozens of collaborative and independent publications by participating researchers, 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 books covering a broad range of subjects. These 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* (2023). Panel presentations from the 2020, 2023, and 2024 Symposiums were recorded and aired on C-SPAN and C-SPAN 2.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact 19thCenturyHistorians@gmail.com or visit 19thcentury-historians.org for the latest information on the Society, links to publications, upcoming book projects, and other news.

***Internet Histories*, Volume 8, Issue 4, Is Available Online**

Internet Histories, Volume 8, Issue 4, December 2024 is now available online. This is the third Early Career Researcher Award special issue. The full issue may be accessed at this URL:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rint20/8/4>

It contains the following articles:

Editorial:

“The third internet histories Early Career Researcher Award.” Niels Brügger, Anat Ben-David, Ian Milligan & Valérie Schafer

Articles:

“The flames are 50/50 right now’: content moderation practices at the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States (1982–1990).” Kat Brewster

“Fixing the earth: whole-systems thinking in Silicon Valley’s environmental ideology.” Rianne Riemens

“Methodological and epistemological challenges in meme research and meme studies.” Idil Galip

Book Reviews:

The Digital Revolution: A Short History of an Ideology. By Gabriele Balbi, Oxford University Press, 2024.

The Digital Departed: How We Face Death, Commemorate Life, and Chase Virtual Immortality. By Timothy Recuber, NYU Press, 2023.

WhatsApp: From a one-to-one Messaging App to a Global Communication Platform. By Amelia Johns, Ariadna Matamoros-Fernández, and Emma Baulch. Polity Press, 2024.

Asger Harlung

Editorial Assistant, *Internet Histories*

CFP Conference Planned for 22-23 May 2025, Madrid

CIMS is co-organizing an international conference on recent changes in European cinema, together with the Universidad Complutense Madrid. The conference will be held in Madrid on 22–23 May 2025.

The conference's title is "Frames of Change: Historicizing Recent European Cinema (1990–2025)."

The past three decades have seen European cinema undergo significant transformations, driven by a range of technological, economic, cultural, and political factors. From the proliferation of digital filmmaking and distribution to shifts in film programming, audience consumption patterns and evolving cultural policies, the landscape of European cinema has been dramatically reshaped. *Frames of Change: Historicizing Recent European Cinema (1990–2025)* seeks to explore these changes and reflect on their historical implications for the production, distribution, exhibition, and reception of European films, as well as for their modes of representation, aesthetics and ideology.

At the heart of this exploration is a broad rethinking of the very concept of *cinema* across Europe and its cultural, societal and industrial

value. Hasn't cinema just become a "niche, like opera", as Paul Schrader recently argued? What about cinema in Europe and its (still valid?) reputation linked to 'auteur cinema', art, critical prestige? How do different national and regional cinematic traditions conceptualize film and the *cinematic* in relation to global audiovisual media? These questions extend beyond traditional notions of national cinema to encompass how filmmakers, audiences, and institutions across Europe have shaped and been (re)shaped by the evolving media landscape.

This conference seeks to provide a platform for scholars to critically engage with these issues and contribute to the ongoing reimagining of European cinema in the 21st century.

Call for Papers: 13th ESPRit Conference: "Periodicals as Cultural Assemblages"

The European Society for Periodical Research (ESPRit) is pleased to announce its 13th annual Conference, to be held at the University of Málaga on 3-5 September 2025.

This conference aims to look at the different ways in which periodicals can be considered as cultural assemblages across different periods, languages, and contexts. It welcomes a wide variety of perspectives on and approaches to the term "assemblage" in relation to periodicals and periodical studies. In *Mille Plateaux* (1980), Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari adopted the term "assemblage" to move beyond traditional notions of structure and hierarchy, and draw attention to the myriad connections, relations, and flows that make up reality. We welcome papers that similarly explore periodicals as complex, interconnected entities that are ultimately constituted by the elements, both material and cultural, that compose them. At the same time, we encourage submissions that approach the idea of studying periodicals as cultural assem-

blages from a range of theoretical perspectives, methodological frameworks, or disciplinary angles. By opening the term “assemblage” to multiple interpretations, we hope to foster a wide-ranging conversation on how periodicals operate as cultural objects and dynamic, heterogeneous formations in and across different historical, linguistic, and geographical settings.

We invite theoretical reflections, case studies, comparative analyses, and other contributions that consider periodicals as cultural assemblages from a wide range of disciplines, including philology and literary studies, media history, history of publishing and printing, comparative literature, cultural studies, gender studies, reception studies, visual studies, postcolonial and decolonial studies.

Proposals may focus on, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- periodicals as assemblages of forms, formats, and genres;
- periodicals as material constellations, and their digital transformations;
- the webs of relations in and between periodicals (e.g. serialization; miscellanies; issues, runs, editions; supplements);
- periodicals as multimodal texts and the relations between their visual and verbal components;
- the different elements that make up the materiality of periodicals (e.g. typography, paper quality) and their impact on reading experience and the dissemination of ideas;
- reassembling processes such as reprinting, scissors-and-paste, and translation;
- the networks of actors involved in the production, distribution, and consumption of periodicals (e.g. authors, editors, printers, newsagents, readers);

- periodicals as complex knowledge systems or discursive networks (cultural, political, medical, etc.);
- the periodical format and how it enables forms of cultural dissidence (e.g. with regard to race, gender, sexuality);
- the use of historical periodicals in contemporary assemblages (e.g. modern collages).

We welcome proposals from researchers at all career stages. Please submit your proposal by **21 February 2025** to the organizing committee at esprit.assemblage@gmail.com.

Proposals may include 15-20 minute individual papers, panels of 3-4 speakers with a common (and named) theme, and roundtables consisting of 5-minute position statements from 4-6 speakers followed by discussion. Each proposal will include the title (also the overall title for a panel), an abstract of up to 300 words, including individual abstracts for each presentation within a panel, plus a short bio note. ESPRit aims for linguistic inclusiveness by welcoming multilingual presentations. The working languages of the conference are Spanish and English. All presentations should be accompanied by English slides of salient points (titles, quotes, main arguments).

Organising Committee: Sara Robles Ávila (University of Málaga), Rosario Arias (University of Málaga), María Magdalena Flores Quesada (University of Málaga), Manuel Hueso Vasallo (University of Málaga), Lola Artacho Martín (University of Málaga), Carmen González Román (University of Málaga), Alejandro Rojas Jiménez (University of Málaga), Antonio Calvo Maturana (University of Málaga).

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Contact Information

Rosario Arias, University of Málaga

Sara Robles Ávila, University of Málaga

Nora Ramtke, Ruhr University Bochum

Contact Email: nora.ramtke@rub.de

URL: <https://www.espr-it.eu/news/events>

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