

# Where news came from: the history of journalism

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# Some questions to consider

- Why is what we consider news news?
- What is the difference in other countries?
- Why is news distributed differently within the same state/ region/ county?
- How has news evolved being controlled by the government to being completely objective?

# Habermas Vs. Anderson

- Habermas, a German scholar, wrote in 1962 in his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, that the rise of the newspaper, once “the public sphere’s preeminent institution” allowing the public to have a free discourse on matters that pertained to them, was overtaken by the thrust of capitalism and its desire to turn a profit. Journalism became a money-making enterprise with private companies giving specific directives to writers to create news to consume.
- Anderson proposes the notion of nations and cities as “imagined communities” through the instrument of news. He discusses the “extraordinary mass ceremony” that takes place when we read a newspaper and know that others we consider a part of our community are doing the same.

# Colonial printing

- Colonial printers created the newspaper initially as an alternate revenue stream, selling what were essentially four-page advertisements peppered with local gossip and stories from London newspapers
- Wary of libel, colonial printers focused on foreign news
- When the situation with Britain became more impassioned, so did the presses: pamphlets became an outlet for political issues
- Newspapers began to print more political matters, Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists
- Sam Adams, once a proponent of free press, hoped to bar the public from access that may sway them from his ideals
- Eventually the First Amendment was upheld by doing away with the Sedition Act

# Partisan papers

- The new nation saw a party-specific system of journalism
- The Postal Acts helped to facilitate the newspaper business
- With the New York Sun in 1833, the rise of the penny paper changed the face of journalism from one of longer lengths between publication and subscriptions
- These papers were the product of enterprising individuals seeking to use new technology like steam presses to print a daily paper featuring more local news aggressively harvested from the courts, “society,” wherever they could, and seeking advertising.
- The penny papers were profit-minded, rather than driven by supporting a particular party or politician

# Changing tides

- Although the penny papers were an exciting new advent, most circulation still came from the countries weeklies or other nondailies with local circulations
- · These newspaper companies were boosters of economic development in their own towns and regions.
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- · The Civil War marked a move towards big-business newspapers
- · After the civil war, newspapers started to expand rapidly and became large industrialized business.
- · Again, their major funding was from advertising, such as local department store.

# Changing tides

- As the business became more lucrative, competition for audience and news became intense
  - How did Newspaper companies respond this?
  - Papers tried to appeal to women and new immigrants because there were about 40% of the New York City's population was foreign born.
    - Using simpler language and larger headlines
  - **Randolph Hearst** of the New York Journal decided to
    - Create sensationalism, such as pages of comics and sensational coverage.
    - Yellow journalism attempted to pull in readers with sensationalism
    - Although sensationalism did influence the objectivity of the newspapers, it also helped the news paper to move away from the political parties

# Politics and papers

- By the 1890s, in the North where the antiparty movement had taken hold, still only a quarter of papers claimed to be independent
- The break from affiliation with parties happened due to
  - Antiparty reforms
  - An independent newspaper culture
  - New practices like interviewing highlighting the distinctiveness of journalism
- Editors formed the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1922, adopting a code of ethics to remove bias or opinion in reports
- Objectivity became an occupational ideal; journalists sought to distinguish themselves from public relations parajournalists



# Journalism now

- American journalism placed an emphasis on providing objective, well-researched reports because of its history and relative newness in the field, while other European systems of journalism had more of an established bureaucratic system and were less inclined to keep politics out
- Vietnam and Watergate turned the American public from a reliance on government-issued reports
- “The genius of American journalism is that it operates out of commercial organizations built on the autonomy of news professionals.”