

Historiography

in Mass Communication



Volume 7 (2021). Number 3

Historiography in Mass Communication

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Essays

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

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

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

We place importance on the credentials of authors and normally expect an author to have published at least one history book. As you consider submitting an essay, please note that *Historiography* does not go through multiple “revise-and-resubmit” stages. In essence, we expect authors to have an expertise and to “get it right” from the beginning.

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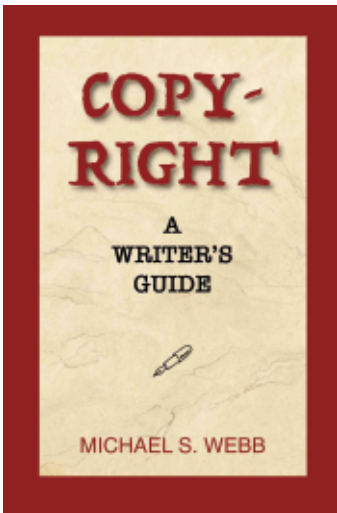
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The Author: Michael S. Webb is a practicing lawyer who has taught media law at both Georgia State University and Clark University in Atlanta.

The Tyranny of Our Time

By Wm. David Sloan ©



Sloan

Every generation projects its own ideas onto the past.

Take the case of 19th-century historians and their ideas about Katharina Luther. They thought the role of a woman was simply to prepare three meals a day and clean house for her husband and family. So in their histories of the Protestant Reformation, Katharina got little attention. She was a featureless background figure in the story of her

famous husband.

Yet Katharina was a strong woman and a smart family business manager. Martin Luther showed little interest or aptitude for the necessities of daily routine, and it was Katharina who ran the house, with its many events and even more visitors, started and operated the Luther brewery business, and managed the family's finances. Who knows if Luther would have come to be one of the most important people of the last thousand years if Katharina had not been his wife.

Surely, today's historians are more enlightened than those of the

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

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19th century. They see Katharina von Bora for what she truly was, one of the most important figures in the Reformation. She helped to determine the nature of marriages by clergy and to define Protestant family life. In other words, she was remarkable.

Or take the case of the changing nature of historians' treatment of women in mass communication. A few historians of the 19th century found remarkable the achievements of a handful of women, but most either ignored them or treated them as simply helpers to their husbands.

In our own time, that view has been turned upside down. Several years ago in the book *Perspectives on Mass Communication History*, Julie Hedgepeth Williams wrote that today's historians admire "how various women managed to overcome the discrimination in their path toward becoming accepted, valued members of the media. Other historians [are] more hard-hitting; they [criticize] society for overlooking media women and the media for overlooking women's issues.... Whereas other historians had looked with awe at the fact that women had made gains in a profession historically dominated by men, [today's historians focus] more on the existence of discrimination against women. The natural abilities of women had either conspiratorially or ignorantly been hidden from view."

Looking back at historians of the 19th century, we stand amazed at how they let the views of their time create such a strong bias against women. How could they have been so short-sighted.

But, as much as we hate to admit it, we are just as myopic. Historians of today are also subject to the tyranny of the views of today. It is human nature for each generation, ours not excluded, to think it is smarter and more enlightened than the generation that preceded it. But we are as influenced by the biases of our own time as were 19th-century historians by theirs.

The Tyranny of Our Time

In fact, unless historians stay alert to the ever-present danger of present-mindedness, their accounts reveal as much about themselves and the biases of today as about history.

The impact of present-mindedness can be found throughout JMC historiography.

The Romantic historians of the 19th century, for example, believed history to be the story of the unfolding advance of human liberty. Under the influence of the Romantic movement, they focused on the importance of the individual and told journalism history with an emphasis on the role of great men. After journalism began to professionalize in the late 1800s, Developmental historians came to think that proper journalism was that type associated with popular newspapers such as the *New York Sun* and Pulitzer's *World*. They then reasoned that history was essentially the story of how journalism had progressed to reach the point of development embodied in the popular press. They explained history by its contributions to the professional standards of their own time. Progressive historians, in contrast, in the 20th century emphasized ideological conflict. Influenced by the Progressive reform movement, they viewed the past as a struggle in which the liberal press was pitted on the side of freedom, liberty, democracy, and equality against the powerful forces of wealth and class.

The influence of contemporaneous times on historians' views can be seen in most other generations as well, from the Nationalist historians of the 1800s to Consensus historians in the late 1900s up to historians of our own time.

But present-mindedness is not restricted to what we identify as the classic schools of JMC historiography. It can also reflect historians' views on such diverse matters as ideology, philosophy, morals, and even theory — actually, anything of the present that a historian assumes

(usually without reflection) was true in the past, or should have been true.

Take the case of freedom of expression. Most JMC historians have been libertarian and have looked favorably on broad freedom of the press, but their reasoning has varied. Nationalist historians of the 19th century wrote of freedom of the press in terms of the fulfillment of the individual, incorporating the Enlightenment concept of natural rights into the romantic ideal of the perfection of humankind. Working within a framework of the unfolding advance of civilization, they explained the progress of freedom of the press within an overall story of the developing liberty of humankind and, in particular, of the American people. Progressive historians placed the story within the struggle of the masses of common people to liberate themselves from the suppressive domination by an entrenched, conservative minority. For Developmental historians, freedom of the press was part of the longer story of the evolution of the press from outside influence and regulation. Historians in all three schools favored libertarianism.

Today we may be seeing a shift away from that view. The reasons are varied, but we can discern the change in such trends as declining trust in the news media, vituperation on social media, partisanship in American society and among journalists, the willingness of some legislators to suppress opposing voices, attacks on journalists by members of the public, efforts even by activist professors to justify intimidation of journalists, and the commitment of a growing number of JMC historians to ideologies.

Perhaps these trends will not become strong influences in society or in mass communication. But if they do, we should not be surprised if historians reflect them and begin to alter the libertarian interpretation.

Present-mindedness is so pervasive that historians must be particu-

larly alert to it in anything that they write. Even on views that seem naturally proper, the danger exists. Or we might say that especially on views that seem proper, as if no opposing view could ever be considered correct, historians need to be on guard against present-mindedness.

One might think, for example, that theory is safe from the danger. But all theories are not equal, and some are more prone than others to reflect a contemporary mindset. We might think that theories involving matters of science are mostly immune to present-mindedness. Gravity works today the same way it did 200 years ago. Yet even theories about how gravity works have reflected contemporaneous mindsets.

Most theories that JMC historians use aren't about physical science. In fact, they are closer to assumptions than to theory proper. Some are little more than speculative guesses. A theory in the classic sense is developed based upon the results and evidence obtained through repeated observations. "Theory" in the sense that most JMC historians use the word is more a perspective than an explanation that has been supported through tests of a hypothesis. For the JMC historian, it resembles a viewpoint rather than a real theory. It is just as susceptible to present-mindedness as is any other idea.

Morals can create another slippery slope. The danger lies in the fact that nearly all of us believe we are morally right. We think, without reflection, that we can judge past actions based on our own personal morals. So it is natural for historians to appraise the past by standards that they consider to be good.

But historians must be cautious about applying judgments unless the moral principles are timeless. Historians do an injustice to particular times and people in history if they judge them by standards that developed only afterwards. By what standard do we ourselves want to be measured by future historians? Do we want to be condemned for not

holding the views that historians will have 100 years from now?

In Western civilization, many values that we hold today are not timeless. They can deal with such matters as censorship, privacy, capital punishment — indeed, with many issues that have become concerns of our society only in recent times.

The values that are timeless include such principles as that one shouldn't murder (taken from the book of Exodus in the *Tanakh*, the Old Testament) and that we are to treat others as we want to be treated ourselves (taken from the book of Leviticus and reiterated in Jesus' teaching in the Gospel of Matthew).

A number of moral standards can be derived from those two. Thus, for example, slavery would be wrong no matter the age. Its prohibition derives from the principle implied in Jesus' "golden rule."

However, even when considering timeless values, historians should be cautious in applying them. We must remember that people in the past were influenced by the values and practices of their own time. We should chastise them — even on such important humane issues as slavery — only if we can divorce ourselves from the values and practices of our own time.

There is little to be gained in the study of history if all the historian does is condemn people who didn't hold proper views.

Prof. Debra van Tuyl has said that present-mindedness "is one of the great scourges of our time." She is one of our field's outstanding historians. Along with writing numerous books, she is the recipient of the Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement given by the American Journalism Historians Association, as well as the Donald Shaw Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Symposium on the 19th Century Press. When she says anything about present-mindedness, or history generally, we should take her seriously.

The Tyranny of Our Time

In the first article in this issue of *Historiography*, she provides an insightful discussion of historians' treatment of journalists and slavery in the Antebellum South. Her essay helps us to understand the dangers of present-mindedness.

Unfortunately, in JMC historiography we too often see a glibness in treatment of people of the past who held different views than we do. Probably most readers of this essay have been in conference research sessions when speakers and audience members alike tittered at quotations from "quaint" people of the past.

Gigglers aside, present-mindedness is a betrayal of history. It fosters accounts of the past that are untrue.

History, as we all know, is of immense value in helping us to understand not only the past, but ourselves as well. It is of value, though, only if we understand the past as it truly was. But to understand it, we can't examine it through lenses clouded by the present. We must not project our own ideas onto it but must grasp it on its own terms.

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Theory in History and Contemplating . . . Navels?

By Debra Reddin van Tuyll ©



van Tuyll

Three years ago, historians Ethan Kleinberg of Wesleyan University, Joan Wallach Scott of the Institute for Advanced Studies, and anthropologist Gary Wilder of CUNY issued a manifesto on the role of theory in history. They declared, “Actual existing academic history promotes a disciplinary essentialism founded upon a methodological fetishism.”

The nature of that “fetish”?

“Treating reified appearances (i.e., immediately observable, preferably archival evidence) as embodying the real and containing the truth of social relations....” They accuse history of being a field that produces “scholars rather than thinkers” because historians pay “special attention to the disciplinary norms and gatekeepers upon which career advancement depends.” History, they argue, has “an unquestioned allegiance to

Debra Reddin van Tuyll, a professor at Augusta University, is the author or editor of five books. Her most recent is The Confederate Press in the Crucible of the American Civil War. She has received the Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement from the American Journalism Historians Association and the Donald Shaw Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Symposium on the 19th Century Press.

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‘ontological realism.’” It is a field committed to empiricism when instead, they insist, historians should be committed to critical theory. Magnanimously, they add that it doesn’t matter which branch of critical theory a historian labors within. It could be Marxist, hermeneutic, poststructuralist, queer, semiotic ... the list goes on. Historians just need to plow theoretical fields rather than empirical fields.

The three conclude that historians do their best work when they contemplate navels. Yes, they did say that — though not in so many words. The concluding paragraph of the manifesto is headlined, “Coda: The Navel of the Dream.” This final paragraph argues that if historians are considered interpreters of dreams rather than analysts of facts, those who make sense of the dreams are the ones who are rewarded while “those whose inquiries lead to the obscure navel of the dream, the place where narratives and interpretation stop making conventional sense, are ignored or dismissed.” The manifesto concludes, “The historian equipped with a background in theory is attuned to the navel of the dream, to the places where history does and does not ‘make sense,’ and this is the opening to interpretative and political innovation.”

If anyone would like to read the complete manifesto, it can be found here: <http://theoryrevolt.com/>.

Augie Grant, a professor at the University of South Carolina journalism school, taught students in his Ph.D.-level theory and research methods classes that there is nothing so practical as a good theory. And he’s right. Theories help scholars — and thinkers — understand more about how journalism works, how journalism serves its societal roles, how journalism affects audiences. Those are also the topics journalism historians study — only in a historical context. They look not at how journalism works but at how it worked.

Theory can often help craft an explanation of why. To take an

example from my own area of interest: Why weren't mid-19th century southern journalists critical of slavery? Historians have theorized that journalists were cowed, silenced, by the "planter elite" — that is, they *theorize* planter hegemony was the outcome of a power disparity between the rich and the not-so-rich. Well, maybe. That's a good theory. But is it accurate? And how do you test the theory if not by seeing how well it explains a fact set?

The question of why southern editors were largely silent is what spurred me to create a database of demographic information about every southern editor and publisher I could find in a host of other genealogical sources. I *theorized* that if I gathered enough *facts* about working journalists on the cusp of the Civil War, I might gain some insight into whether they were the kind of men to bow to power plays by wealthy elites.

I will admit that another motivator was impatience with historians who seemed to be working from a present-minded perspective — making judgements about historical journalists based on the traits of contemporary journalists. Some seemed to assume that because most contemporary journalists are liberal and would speak out on the evils of slavery, historical journalists must be the same.

No, no, no. Historical journalists share a profession with contemporary journalists — but those in the 19th century south labored in a very different profession with very different norms and practices — and they lived in an exceedingly different society. Understanding how those norms, practices, and values intersected is the only real way to glean any sort of understanding of historical realities. I didn't know exactly how living in a slave society might influence a journalist's thinking, but as I gathered my data and I saw that the vast majority of southern journalists were from the South, I started forming a theory.

I never took more than first-year sociology, but I remembered that children who are socialized to the norms of a particular society typically accept those norms as, well, normal. If someone grew up in a society where slavery was embraced — a society where people were taught from earliest childhood that the welfare of the enslaved was assured through the institution of slavery, a society where most white people aspired to slave ownership — that person, along with his family and friends, might be inclined to believe that slavery was a social good. That hypothesis certainly seemed to accord with basic sociological theory.

I could have taken a different approach. I could have read what malcontent Hinton Helper said about southern journalism in his 1859 tome *The Impending Crisis*. I could have read Frederic Hudson's critique of the southern press in his history of American journalism. I could have studied the South's abolitionist newspapers — except that there weren't any by 1860, which is when my project began.

Actually, I did read those works as well as the southern abolitionist newspapers from earlier in the 19th century. I also read what southern journalists were writing about as the Civil War approached. They didn't sound like cowed men to me. They were issuing marching orders to political elites as often as not. One antebellum North Carolina editor was able to keep his party from having a gubernatorial nominee just by refusing to publish a notification of a state party convention. Other southern journalists were kingmakers in their states. So, the actual *facts* weren't adding up to the same conclusions my colleagues in critical history were reaching.

And that's why *facts* were where I went to find a more satisfying answer about why southern editors didn't criticize slavery before the Civil War. When interpretations fail, all that's left is facts.

Even so, theory was important to my work. I used gatekeeping the-

Theory in History and Contemplating ... Navels?

ory in my work about southern editors and why they wrote what they wrote. In other research, I've used framing, agenda setting (carefully, because the media landscape in the 19th century was quite different from the 20th and 21st centuries), and dependency theory in trying to understand 19th century audiences and their reading habits.

My issue with the critical theory methodologies suggested in the manifesto is its seeming rejection of facts in favor of interpretation. In addition to Augie Grant's instruction on the practicality of theory, he also taught that the best way to get answers to research question is triangulation. A bit of this method, a bit of that ... some theory here and maybe another one there. That's how you do research that produces significant results.

So, while I don't reject the utility of theory in history, I do believe the cautious approach is best. Intentionality should direct a scholar's — or a thinker's — use of theory. Knowing as you begin a research project what questions you want to answer and, as you sort through source material, knowing which answers are plausible and which aren't — those are the keys to proper use of theory in journalism history research.

My approach has always been to use theory when it's useful to interpret results but not to let it direct my work. Theory is a tool to aid in building historical interpretations. Interpretations, really, are kinds of theories. But to embrace a totally theoretical approach to doing history — to value “the navel of the dream” over all else — is to forsake one's role as a historian, as a scholar, and as a thinker.

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The Professional



If you want your students to excel at writing *and publishing* feature articles, *Writing for Magazines* will be your perfect textbook.

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A Conversation with the Editors:

Pam Parry, *Journalism History*

Pamela E. Walck, *American Journalism*



Parry



Walck

The field of JMC history is fortunate to have several journals. Along with our own *Historiography*, it is served by a variety of publications. Two of the most prominent and long-lived are *Journalism History* (founded in 1974) and *American Journalism* (founded ten years later). Tom Reilly, a professor at California State University-Northridge, was the founder of *Journalism History*. He served as its editor until 1985. Gary Whitby, a professor at the University of Central Arkansas, started *American Journalism* as part of the founding of the American Journalism Historians Association. Both journals have recently come under the supervision of new editors. Pam Parry of Southeast Missouri State University is working with *Journalism History* and will become its editor this fall. Pamela Walck of Duquesne University is in her first year as editor of *American Journalism*. Here at *Historiography* we've

been interested in knowing their plans, as well as something more about the operations of the two journals. Dr. Parry and Dr. Walck graciously agreed to answer our questions on a variety of matters. We want to

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express our appreciation to both of them for their time and candidness. We hope the interview will answer some of the questions you also may have.

Historiography: *Each of you has recently taken on the duties as editor of your journal. Why were you interested in becoming the editor?*



Walck: Honestly, academic editing was something I thought I would get involved with at some point down the road. I really didn't expect it to happen quite as quickly as it did. I had been an editor in my newsroom in Savannah, Georgia, prior to grad school. It was something that I really enjoyed a lot.

Then, back in August 2019, my mentor and good friend, Dr. Mike Sweeney at Ohio University, emailed me out of the blue asking if I might be interested in applying for the *American Journalism* editorship. The sponsoring body, AJHA, was looking for an editor because Dr. Ford Risley was stepping down at the end of 2020. Mike said you're qualified, you should think about it. At the time my response was "Oh, I thought I was too early for this." I learned a long time ago that when Mike suggests something, you should listen. So, after talking to him and a few colleagues, I decided to just go for it.

As a newly tenured faculty member, I understand how critical publications are in the tenure process and being able to help scholars — regardless of their career stages — find a bigger audience for their scholarship appealed to me.

Parry: Prior to entering higher education, I edited various publications,



and I missed producing them. Additionally, I love media history and contributing to the historiography of our field. So, editing *Journalism History* gave me the opportunity to wed both interests — producing publications and working in scholarship. Or put another way, it represented the best of the practical and theoretical sides of my experiences and interests.

Historiography: *Tell us about the process for selecting your journal's editor. How did you come to be editor?*

Parry: I applied and interviewed for the job. I believe the Publications Committee of the History Division of AEJMC made the decision, and I am happy they selected me.

Walck: I submitted an application and letters of recommendation and then waited. I learned that I had been selected just prior to AJHA's annual October conference.

Historiography: *What is involved in the transition from one editor to the next?*

Walck: In terms of transition, Ford was fantastic. He walked me through the editing process, the demands of the job, the deadlines, all those good things. Then during fall 2020, I began assigning reviewers, sending out correspondences, etc. My term technically began in January 2021, but I was involved in proofing some of Ford's last issue and then in charge of Vol. 38, Issue 1 in December.

Parry: I currently am editor-elect of the publication, and I will assume the role of editor in July 2021, succeeding Dr. Gregory Borchard. The transition is about a year, with the editor-elect working with the editor to learn the Editorial Manager system of Taylor & Francis. It is the system that enables the editor to manage double-blind reviews of manuscripts, and it is quite complicated. So, the editor works with the incoming editor to learn the ropes, and Greg has been very generous in helping with the transition. Additionally, a new editor traditionally puts a new staff together, and we have Drs. Kim Mangun and Dianne Bragg as the new associate editors and Dr. Sonya DiPalma as the new book review editor. I am very excited about the new team, and we are ready to go. Our first publication will be the fall 2021 issue, which is already underway.

Historiography: *Along with yourself, what other people are involved in producing your journal? What do they do?*

Parry: In addition to myself, more than 80 people help produce the journal. We have two associate editors, one book review editor, and 78 reviewers who provide double-blind peer reviews helping to select the manuscripts that we publish. I am so proud to be part of a team with such talent and commitment, and I am thankful for Kim, Dianne, and Sonya. Additionally, Dr. Teri Finneman often piggybacks articles appearing in the journal on the *Journalism History* podcast, and Dr. Erika Pribanic-Smith provides an online presence of complementary material. So, the journal today is a printed publication, with both an online and podcast presence. I cannot begin to thank the editors and reviewers for making my job easier. Additionally, Taylor & Francis does the layout and design, including production for us, and we work with wonderful

representatives from that publisher. So, in a way, it takes a village to publish this quarterly journal.

Walck: Aside from the talented scholars who submit articles, our dozens of blind review volunteers, and the Taylor & Francis team I work with on the production side, I have a fantastic team of editors who assist in each quarterly issue.

Dr. Nick Hirshon, at William Paterson University, recently moved from being the journal's first Digital Media Review Editor to Associate Editor of *American Journalism*. So, what that means is that when I have questions about editorial decisions or just need a sounding board, Nick is the one who gets those phone calls. He also helps with last-minute editing tasks and heads up the Rising Scholar Award presented each year at AJHA.

New to the *AJ* editorial board is Dr. Matthew Pressman, from Seton Hall University, who has graciously agreed to become our new Book Review Editor, and Dr. Carrie Teresa, from Niagara University, who is the new Digital Media Review Editor. And last, but not least, is Ollie Gratzinger, a first-year MFA student at Duquesne University, who is my graduate assistant and has been working with the website and quarterly Q & As with our authors.

I'm really honored to be working with such a great team and am excited about some of the things we have planned going into the next few years.

Historiography: *Both of your journals aim at a particular niche (mass communication history, a field in the study of history that is relatively small). What is the value, if any, of having both journals (not to mention other journals such as Victorian Periodicals Review, Film His-*

tory, and Media History Monographs)?

Walck: I believe there is great value in having multiple publication options for mass communication historians. I say that because while we are a relatively small community of scholars, we are also a very robust group that produces a lot of fascinating and important historic scholarship. I am constantly amazed at the breadth and depth of the research that comes out of both the History Division with AEJMC and AJHA. And because of that, I feel like the more options that scholars have in terms of submitting to journals, the wider their audience becomes.

Parry: More is not always better, but it is in this case. Having multiple journals advance the historiography of mass media adds great value to our field.

Historiography: *How is your own journal different from the other(s)?*

Walck: In terms of *American Journalism*, I believe that it's nearly 40-year history of publication is notable. Especially in this era of open-source and pay-to-publish scholarship. Additionally, we have had giants in the industry who have edited this journal, contributed their scholarship, and served as reviewers. I stand on those shoulders today, and understand the rich legacy I am contributing toward.

One of the things that my editorial board and I are striving toward is widening the breadth of our reach — both in terms of audience and submitting authors. Yes, the journal has “American” in the title, and I think a lot of international scholars think that this is not a place for their scholarship because they study media in Denmark or India. But that could not be further from the truth. *American Journalism* is dedicated

to the history of mass communication, regardless of the hemisphere in which the media are located.

Parry: I think the two journals have much in common; we share a common interest, readership, and value in historical research. *Journalism History* has been published since 1974 and is looking forward to celebrating its 50th anniversary in three years. We are trying to broaden our international reach as a publication and to highlight diversity in our coverage and our participation in the production of the journal.

Historiography: *Does having two journals for the field present any disadvantages or problems?*

Walck: I personally do not see having any disadvantages with two premier U.S. academic journals for mass communication historians. Having just recently — and successfully — gone through the tenure process, I understand all too well that P & T committees are looking at *where* you're publishing, not just how much. If you're publishing only in one journal, they're going to start scratching their heads and wondering why you aren't venturing out beyond that publication. Also, in this era of metrics and H-rankings in the humanities, I believe that having publication options across a range of journals strengthens your tenure case. And, frankly, that is critical for our junior scholars on the tenure track.

Parry: This presents no problem at all. In fact, just the opposite. The two publications complement and contribute without competition.

Historiography: *You both are in the first year of editing your journal.*

What are your goals for the journal? What changes, if any, will you be making?

Parry: I have five goals for *Journalism History* — the first of which is do no harm. I am proud to be following in the footsteps of wonderful scholars who have edited this journal, and I hope to continue the publication's rich history and traditions. My second goal is to expand the publication's international reach — a goal shared by Dr. Will Mari, who is our division president. To that end, I have joined the International Communication Association in hopes of networking to attract international scholars to contribute to our journal as well as broaden more international topics. My third goal is related to the second: I want to increase diversity in the publication, so that we are covering topics of diversity and we are involving diverse contributors. To that end, we are in the process of studying the history of diversity coverage in our publication. Fourth, I hope to continue to improve the journal, so that scholars are clamoring to submit their manuscripts, putting us in a position of publishing only the very best scholarship.

In terms of changes, we have already made one significant change — after consulting the members of the History Division in a business meeting in August 2020. Because of the productivity of our members, we found that book reviews were getting backlogged in the quarterly publication of the journal. We were simply producing book reviews that were being delayed and scholars needed their works to be reviewed in a timelier manner. So, we have begun publishing book reviews online monthly. This provides timelier reviews and frees up more space in the journal for more articles.

My last goal is to have fun in the performance of my responsibilities. It is an absolute privilege to have this job, but I always want to keep

in mind how much fun it is to immerse oneself in journalism history — even when the responsibility and work are ever-present. If the task is a joy, I think somehow that attitude will impact and improve the quality of the journal.

Walck: I have a couple goals for *American Journalism*. My first and foremost is looking for ways to expand our international reach. As I said earlier, there is this sense that because “American” is in the title, that it has to be American-based mass communication history research. And this really isn’t the case. The editorial board and I would like to expand into Europe and beyond — both in terms of attracting a wider audience and in terms of the types of scholarship we publish.

Working toward this effort, Dr. Nick Hirshon and I are working with a student-led PR campaigns team to develop ideas and suggestions for expanding our reach. Additionally, I have personally reached out to contacts that I have in the academy overseas, in an effort to identify individuals who might be interested in assisting with our blind review process, and promoting submissions to *AJ* as well.

Additionally, the board hopes to update our journal website in the coming year. With a new journal cover and logo, now seems like the perfect time to rework the website in an effort to reflect some of these changes led by my predecessor, Dr. Ford Risley.

Also, as we look toward our 40th anniversary of publication in 2023, the editorial board is looking at ways in which to really celebrate the history, scholarship and scholars who have contributed to this publication over the last four decades. We have a year of special issues planned, including guest editorials and essays. So, stay tuned!

And finally, the board has a goal of expanding our social media presence. We know that we cannot duplicate what *Journalism History*

does, nor would we want to, but we are playing around with some ideas. So, stay tuned!

Historiography: *Tell us briefly about the mechanics of getting an issue of your journal published, from accepting submissions to seeing the issue in print.*

Walck: *American Journalism* generally works about four issues out from the current production cycle. So, what that means is the majority of manuscripts I am working on now were processed and accepted by my predecessor last year.

I started actively working on Volume 38, Issue 2 about two months ago. It usually starts with me proofing each of the final manuscript drafts submitted by the authors (following the blind review process, which I will explain in more detail later). After reviewing them, I will send the edited articles back to the authors for one last edit. At this point, I generally inform the authors that after this round of edits, the only chance to catch errors is in the final page proofs. And really, at the proof stage, the changes — if any — should be minor at best.

Additionally, I'm working with the book review editor to give edits over each of the book reviews that are submitted. We generally try to publish between seven and nine book reviews each issue, which is a lot of legwork on the book review editor's part, in terms of making sure that books get out to reviewers. This has been a bit of a challenge with the mail system being a little bit slower during COVID. I also work with the digital media review editor to do edits on the digital media reviews that are submitted by volunteer writers as well.

Once all the copy has been sent off to the writers, and returned approved, then the manuscripts are uploaded into Taylor & Francis and

sent on to the production team. It is there that copy is laid out on pages and page proofs are created. As we move closer to production, authors have about 48 hours to approve those final pages and get them back to the publisher.

Once Taylor & Francis has finished its work on the preproduction side, I will get links to the online digital copies of all the articles about the same time the journal goes to press. These digital copies are then posted on the *AJ* website. And somewhere in the middle of all this, I have discussions with my graduate assistant about which authors we might want to conduct a Q & A with and who might be interested in writing a “Teaching the Journal” essay.

It’s a flurry of activities at the very beginning of the issue and then a bit of a lull, followed by a flurry of activities once we get closer to production.

Parry: Once articles are reviewed and accepted, we submit them for editorial review by the associate editors and myself, ensuring they are ready for production. I transmit the revised manuscripts to Taylor & Francis for layout, design, and production. Once the page layouts are ready, we will proofread and submit the issue for print. Although that sounds brief, we actively engage in editing that is an intense process.

Historiography: *Take us through the process of how an article gets accepted for your journal. How does someone submit a manuscript? What happens to the manuscript once it is submitted? Etc.*

Walck: The process for submitting articles to the journal is pretty simple. Authors need to create an account with ScholarOne, where it will walk them through uploading their completed original manuscript,

blind manuscript, and abstract.

From there, as editor, I identify between two or three blind reviewers who have an expertise in that particular area and ask them to serve. Once they accept, they have roughly 45 days to give the unknown author their feedback. They can decide on: Accept, minor revision, major revision, or reject.

Once the decisions have been rendered, I will send out emails to the author(s) letting them know what the reviewers decided and provide them with blind reviewer comments.

At that point, the author has a decision to either proceed with publication, make the revisions and send the manuscript back for another review, or look to another journal. It really is their right to decide.

Along the way, I notify the author of the decision, and — if accepted — the manuscript goes into the queue for future publication.

Parry: A scholar uploads two versions of a manuscript into Editorial Manager — the editing system of Taylor & Francis, which is available at this <https://journalism-history.org/about/submissions/>. We need two versions because one identifies the author and the second does not identify the author, so we can send the manuscript for double-blind peer review. The first thing I do is to run a technical check to make sure the manuscript being sent out for review is truly anonymous.

Historiography: *Many authors would like to know more about how manuscripts are evaluated and how decisions to reject or accept them are made. Tell us about your journal's procedure for reviewing manuscripts and for making editorial decisions.*

Walck: The double blind review process is really critical for manuscripts

and how they are evaluated. We ask our reviewers — who are all volunteers — to evaluate the submissions based on the following:

The article's argument or theme, the importance of the scholarship to the larger field of mass communication history, the use of literature, the evidence/interpretation of their findings, and the quality of writing.

Now obviously there are challenges to this because where one reviewer might think the manuscript has a well-argued theme, another may say no — in which case, a third blind reviewer is asked to assess the work and help clarify the decision. Sometimes, reviewers agree wholeheartedly. Other times it's a mixed bag. It is always easier for me when they agree.

And in the end, as editor, I do rely on the expertise of our blind reviewers because they are the ones who are experts in those particular areas of research, and I value what they bring to the table. That is why I asked them in the first place.

And while I know that everyone believes that Review No. 2 is “out to get them,” I would say that since I've been editing and assigning manuscripts to reviewers, the vast majority of the reviews that we have generated really come from a genuine place in terms of the reviewers. They want what I want: A rigorously vetted piece of scholarship that pushes our knowledge forward.

Parry: Once reviewers make their recommendations, the editor examines the reviews and then communicates with the author. If an author is to resubmit, the person needs to do so within 45 days. The editor works to ensure that reviewers' questions are answered prior to the publication being finalized. So, there is some communication back and forth between the editor and author.

Once an article is accepted for publication, the editor and two asso-

ciate editors examine the piece. We share our edits with the authors, and then after each editor has seen it and the author has seen the edits, I examine it one more time. So, each piece is edited multiple times. The two associate editors — Drs. Dianne Bragg and Kim Mangun — are wonderful editors, and they work hard to ensure the best possible articles.

Historiography: *How do you choose reviewers for a manuscript?*

Walck: Like I said earlier, the reviewers are generally selected based on their expertise. And currently, *AJ* has about 80 scholars who assist us each year.

One of the things that *AJ* is in the process of working on right now is updating and expanding our reviewer list and each reviewers' area of expertise. There are scholars who have been reviewing for years and maybe their research has taken them down different paths than where they originally thought when they first started reviewing for *AJ*. In those cases, having a better understanding of what our reviewers are interested in is very helpful in terms of matching them with manuscripts.

Generally, I try very hard to make sure that the expertise of the reviewer is aligned with the subject matter of the manuscript. And I'm also really working hard to make sure that we are not going back to the well over and over again by using the same reviewers.

Which is another reason why expanding the reviewer pool is so important. So, if you know anyone who is interested in reviewing for *AJ* drop me an email (walckp@duq.edu) because we're always looking to add to our roles.

But ultimately what we're really looking for are scholars who are going to offer critical feedback that is aimed at improving the overall

scholarship of the journal.

Parry: Reviewers are selected from a database of 78 scholars based on expertise.

Historiography: *What do you expect of reviewers? For instance, do you expect them to provide substantive comments even when a manuscript needs major revision and is unlikely ever to be acceptable?*

Walck: I expect reviewers to be fair, honest, and critical when necessary, constructive. The ultimate goal is to make the scholarship better.

And so, in those instances, I feel like personal ego or the need for ego-stroking really should be set aside for the more altruistic good of the journal. The idea that we want this journal to be rigorous, well-respected and a place for scholars to come and bring their work, knowing it will appear in print better than when it was originally submitted.

I would say that overall, the scholars involved with *AJ* really do have this greater goal of creating a community where solid scholarship is honored. That said, it is frustrating, sometimes, when reviewers give very little feedback, either way. In those instances, I try to mentally flag them and maybe look for alternative reviewers for future manuscripts.

At the same time, I also know that COVID has put a lot of demands on all of our time; so I am trying not to ask too much or be too critical of some of the reviews that have come in — knowing that life stressors are real and can impact how one views a manuscript.

As for manuscripts that would appear to be beyond fixing, I would say that my ultimate goal is always to give the authors enough feedback that they can improve their scholarship — whether it is with *AJ* or sent to another publication.

Parry: Once two reviewers agree to review the manuscript, they are given 45 days to recommend whether to reject, revise and resubmit, or accept for publication.

Historiography: *From the article manuscripts you've received so far, what changes are you seeing in the subjects that historians are focusing on? How would you evaluate the quality of the manuscripts that are submitted to you?*

Parry: To be completely transparent, I am the Editor-Elect of the journal, and while I have been working with a few manuscripts and learning the Editorial Manager system, I do not have enough exposure to the manuscripts to answer this question — yet. *Journalism History* is trying to encourage more diversity of topics, including broadening our international publication, but I am not sure yet what changes have occurred as I am at the beginning of this journey. Ask me in three years, and I'm sure I would have a different answer.

The reviewers help me by evaluating the quality of manuscripts in terms of whether they are a fit for *Journalism History*, the secondary and primary sources utilized, the quality of the writing, the argument or thesis, and the contribution to media history. We have many wonderful scholars who evaluate and recommend, and then I decide based on those recommendations. We try to publish the best articles we believe our readers want to see.

Walck: So, I began reviewing manuscripts as editor-elect in October 2020 in a limited capacity and then full-time since January 2021. What I find interesting is that of the *AJ* manuscripts we have in various stages of review right now, several focus on women and people of color in media history, which kind of speaks to scholars looking more broadly at

increasingly more diverse subject matter, which I think is really fantastic. Additionally, these authors are in all stages of their careers; so it is great to see the influence of long-time contributors as well as up-and-coming scholars. It's a really fantastic mix.

Another trend I am noting is several manuscripts that look critically at media of the 1950s and 1960s — research that looks at presidential or political adoption of new technology as well as examining how editors and producers handled controversial politicians such as U.S. Sen. Joe McCarthy. I think it's really fascinating that we are coming out of four years of a controversial White House and in an era where technology is pushing the industry, and we are seeing scholarship that looks to another moment in time in hopes of gleaned answers from the past to hopefully lend greater perspective to current times.

In terms of the quality of the scholarship, I would say that aside from a few outliers there has been a strong emphasis on primary sources in the manuscripts we are receiving. I think that even though COVID shut down a lot of archives in 2020, it isn't stopping scholars from conducting solid research. What I do not know is whether these primary sources are from archival visits from years past, and maybe mothballed — although I do suspect that may be happening from time to time. (I know I have mothballed a project to a future date and hope to pick that thread up again someday soon.) And some of the scholarship I saw presented at AEJMC and AJHA's annual conferences in August and October, respectively. So, it's exciting to see these projects go from a conference presentation to a journal manuscript.

Historiography: *The field of mass communication has a strong emphasis on theory, and historians in the field, especially those who did their graduate studies in mass communication, sometimes seem to be influenced by theoret-*

ical considerations more than historians in traditional areas are. To what extent, if any, are publishing decisions for your journal influenced by a concern for theory?

Parry: Of course, we have a concern for theory, and we care about theory. But we are primarily looking for great manuscripts that utilize the best sources, exhibit exemplary writing, and make an original argument that advances the historiography of the field. Theory is a consideration when weighing those factors.

Walck: *AJ* is always looking for solid methodology, primary sources, and thorough investigation into subject matter. Yes, increasingly, we are seeing more emphasis on theory. And, frankly, I think that that is a good thing.

Even if it is buried in a footnote, it shows that the scholar is looking for ways to connect bigger thoughts in mass communication with trends they are examining from the past. And even if, say, agenda setting theory didn't formally exist in 1850, it doesn't mean that there isn't evidence that it existed in a newspaper at that time. I believe that scholars who can make those connections and include theory without it being over cumbersome find themselves well received by *AJ* reviewer's.

That's not to say that reviewers require theory or that a manuscript not grounded in theory cannot get published, that's not the case at all. But I do think that there is this trend in mass communication history to incorporate more theory into research and that is something that I think only strengthens the journal — and the collective scholarship — in the end.

Historiography: *What are the top two or three pieces of advice you would*

give to historians who want to publish in your journal?

Parry: We want to encourage historians to submit their manuscripts to *Journalism History*, as we promise to treat your scholarship with respect and fairness. One thing I would want them to know is that we are changing the style to the Chicago 17th edition from 2017, starting with the Fall 2021 issue. It has been Chicago 16; so this is a slight change, and we hope scholars will begin adhering to the newer edition of the stylebook. Closer attention to detail, including style, the more it helps a manuscript to work its way through the system. A second thing I would want them to know is that our publication extends to all media history — not just journalism history as the name might imply. We are looking for a diversity of media topics, and we are particularly looking to extend our reach globally.

Walck: From a purely research perspective, my first piece of advice would be to submit manuscripts that you're really excited about. I think that the more authors are engaged and excited about the information they are researching and learning and sharing, the more it comes through in the submissions. Yes, publications are important. Especially for anyone on the tenure track. But beyond that, over the last few months I have been in awe of some of those passion projects that have been submitted to *AJ*. They stand out and are a joy to send out to review. So, keep asking those compelling questions about the past.

Also, *AJ* is, at the end of the day, a journal of media history. So we are looking for historical research that runs the gamut from advertising or public relations to broadcast or print. If it involves media and happened in the past, we want to see it. And while “American” is in our title, submissions are never limited to just “American” media.

And finally, from a more practical perspective: similar to what Pam said, please make sure you're using Chicago Manual of Style's 17th edition for your submissions to *AJ*, including its recommendation of not initializing US and capitalizing Black, when referring to African Americans. These are minor changes, but part of an effort to keep the journal's style preferences current.

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Historical Roundtable: The Role of Journalism in Defining American Democracy

By Thérèse “Terry” Lueck, David Copeland,
Kathy Roberts Forde, and Melita M. Garza ©



Lueck

The function of the press to inform cultural debate is essential in a participatory democracy. Yet there have been times during crisis or controversy in U.S. history when the popular press has promulgated stances that have polarized public opinion. In the narrative gap created by a dueling partisan press, information has been lost and voices have been effectively silenced. In the cultural dialectic, it has not always been Truth, or even truth, that emerged but subterfuge manifest in the instruments of democracy — legislation, judicial decisions, or administrative restructuring that reinforced the interests of the powerful and set agendas shaped as much by what was left unstated as the journalistic discourse itself. This roundtable discusses how such episodes have shaped the nation’s history and boldly concludes by envisioning the role of journalism in the future of democracy.

Terry Lueck is a professor emerita of the University of Akron and a former president of the American Journalism Historians Association. She is co-editor of the two-volume Women’s Periodicals in the United States.

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Joining the roundtable in his final semester of teaching before he retires from what has been recognized as an illustrious career, David Copeland recounts the foundational role the emerging partisan press played in forging a distinctly American culture, and he brings his observations forward into the 21st century. “The active voice of citizen-journalists and trained journalists has revealed, shaped, and perhaps created the nation’s history,” Copeland noted in his 2010 volume *The Media’s Role in Defining the Nation: The Active Voice*. Acknowledging the formative power of news media, this roundtable examines the vested interests of the press in building American democracy.

Kathy Roberts Forde draws on her scholarship from the forthcoming *Journalism and Jim Crow: White Supremacy and the Black Struggle for a New America*, which she edited with Sid Bedingfield. She also brings her his-



Copeland

A former AJHA president and Kobre Award winner, David Copeland is the A.J. Fletcher Professor and a distinguished university professor at Elon University. Author of twelve books, he is also series editor for thirty-eight books on the media’s role and function in society.



Forde

Kathy Roberts Forde is an associate professor of journalism at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her book *Literary Journalism on Trial: Masson v. New Yorker and the First Amendment* won the Frank Luther Mott-KTA and the AEJMC History Division book awards.



Garza

Melita M. Garza is an associate professor at Texas Christian University. She is author of the book *They Came to Toil: Newspaper Representations of Mexicans and Immigrants in the Great Depression* and a founder of TCU’s Department of Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies.

torical contemplation to contemporary issues, as showcased in her online newsletter "Letter from a Region." Forde discusses how powerful white editors of the Southern press used their influence to counter the emancipation of, and rights granted to, African Americans in order to sustain the rule of white supremacy in the decades following the Civil War.

Melita Garza focuses on research from her award-winning book *They Came to Toil: Newspaper Representations of Mexicans and Immigrants in the Great Depression* as she discusses press depictions during the severest economic downturn of the Depression, a time that tellingly coincided with the peak of Mexican repatriation. She draws further on her ongoing research that assesses race relations beyond America's black-white binary, for example, press stereotyping of Mexicans when they have been constructed as threats to America's national security.

In an earlier volume of this journal (6:5), I recounted how a partisan press created a narrative gap during the final stages of woman suffrage that enabled the exclusion of women from the federal enactment of the very amendment that enfranchised them as citizens. The recognition that that 1920 press construction was not a historical anomaly led to this roundtable. Engaging with talented journalism historians is always inspiring, and this roundtable experience has invigorated my research process. Garza's scholarship highlighted the importance of material culture as evidence for scholarly articulation of the power wielded by symbolic interpretations. Forde's scholarship revealed how the white power structure was able to dictate the context for race relations during the woman suffrage campaign. Copeland demonstrated that patronage press coverage of women's enfranchisement was historically driven by concerns over whether "the woman vote" would be an asset or a liability to the party.

This roundtable examines journalism's role in constructing the American identity through a discussion of episodes in our history in which the actions of the press can be measured against the responsibility of its privileged position in our democracy. Garza reminds us that stereotypes and omissions construct a reality not only for the presumptive contemporaneous readership but also for the cultural memory. Forde reveals how white editors wielded political and economic power to influence public opinion and dictate the norms of social practice. Copeland starts our discussion with a consideration of the power of printers in the nation's early days.

Lueck: When you discovered that something was missing from the press narrative, what strategies or resources did you use to recover what was left out of the reportage?

Copeland: When looking at journalism's development in America, you see that when many printers started newspapers or when people introduced to public debate ideas that might be controversial, they referenced "Cato's Letter" of February 4, 1721. The quote: "Freedom of speech is the great bulwark of liberty; they prosper and die together: And it is the terror of traitors and oppressors, and a barrier against them." That quote was almost always abbreviated to the first clause to suit a writer's purposes.

When one turns to the primary sources of the mid-1770s through the Revolution, however, you discover that the remainder of the quote was used to justify suppression of speech. In the *New-York Journal* of January 5, 1775, Patriot John Holt said his paper was open "to the cause of truth and justice," but then concluded that what the Tories were saying was nothing more than "barefaced attempts to deceive." As

lies, he concluded, they should not be given a place in the papers. When James Rivington reported on Lexington and Concord in his newspaper on May 25, 1775, the front page contained four columns, two devoted to affidavits from Patriots at Lexington. The other two contained a speech by New Jersey governor William Franklin, which provided rationale on why the colonies should remain a part of Britain. The result: Rivington was arrested for traitorous speech, when in reality he had provided a balanced presentation of the issues in the spring of 1775.

When you look at the sources, you discover that “the great bulwark of liberty,” at least to the Patriots of the 1770s, justified silencing Tory opposition because doing so was essential to the cause of liberty. By 1780, an independent nation was ensured, and you begin to see a reopening to dissenting opinions.

Forde: In *Journalism and Jim Crow*, we start with the understanding that many of the most powerful white newspaper editors and publishers in the South for generations after the Civil War were straight-out political actors affiliated with the Democratic Party, which was then the party of white supremacy. So while we're deeply interested in press narratives and discourses that shaped white public understandings of “appropriate” social, political, and economic arrangements between white and Black Southerners, we're not *only* interested in the soft power of the press in public debate and opinion formation. We're especially interested in the hard power editors and publishers of influential urban white dailies exercised as leaders of a major institution (the press) working hand-in-glove with political and business institutions to build white supremacist political economies and social orders.

We discovered that understanding press leaders as political actors often directly involved in political activity has been a blind spot in his-

torical research, including journalism historiography.

But you've asked about the strategies we used to recover information left out of reportage. Let me share just one example. Standard Oil tycoon Henry Flagler built a tourist empire of railroads, resorts, steamships, and more in Florida from 1885-1910 using brutal and exploitative labor practices like convict leasing and debt peonage. He exercised incredible political and economic power in the state and, in fact, held controlling interests in many newspapers across Florida, including the most influential paper, the Jacksonville *Times-Union*. When the U.S. Justice Department launched an extensive investigation into Flagler's use of debt peonage to build his fabled Overseas Railroad from the tip of Florida across the Keys, most Florida newspapers published false information clearing Flagler's name and burnishing his reputation. But the truth can be found in the voluminous records of the Justice Department and in certain muckraking journals and labor newspapers in the North.

Garza: It starts with recognizing that there wasn't — and isn't — just one press narrative, especially in the print-centric past in which multiple city newspapers often proliferated. In the case of *They Came to Toil*, it meant examining years of Depression-era editions of San Antonio's three daily newspapers, the English-language *San Antonio Light* and *San Antonio Express*, and the Spanish-language *La Prensa*. It also meant excavating the history of these publications and the political forces that influenced their founders, editors, and investors. For these, I used oral histories and archives, primarily. Next, I read government records and documents, economists' reports, and non-journalism historical works to gain a broader understanding of the period.

Another thing that quickly became clear was the entire newspaper

from each day needed to be studied because some newspapers, particularly the Hearst-owned *Light* contained multiple narratives. Had I merely conducted a content analysis studying, for example, key words in headlines and/or front-page stories or editorials, I would have missed rich material, such as a debate between Anglo and Mexican American readers about the role of Mexicans, immigrants, and Spanish-language culture that was showcased in the paper's letters-to-the-editor. Just as important, I would have missed the flavor of the times and the sense of place and context in which the stories and issues I focused on were considered, debated, and in some cases, ignored. I even looked up weather reports for certain days to give me a better understanding of what it might have been like to witness certain events. I was very happy to finally fit the temperature into one of the book's vignettes.

Lueck: What balance of evidence and theory did you employ in (re)constructing the recovered content or the meaning of the absence in the press narrative?

Copeland: The late Margaret Blanchard always asked me the same question every time I hypothesized about something when I was her doctoral student. "What do the sources say?" She wanted me to look at the primary documents — the newspapers and the accompanying writings of those living at the time who were invested in my subject. To understand newspaper content or what was omitted, looking at private correspondence or other types of publications (like contemporary books or speeches) helped to explain and verify the press narrative while providing justification or refutation for any conclusions I might have drawn.

In addition, applying two of media's most powerful tools, agenda

setting and framing, reinforced and validated how the dominant message in the public prints came to be the ideological cornerstone of the people immersed in the issues of the time. Initially, in the 1760s, papers proposed ideas of separation from Britain offering pro and con views. Papers provided opposing content that people debated. As the colonies moved toward 1775 and the Tory voice was slowly extinguished from the public debate, people increasingly were exposed to commentary that allowed only one solution: independence from the Mother Country. This, I believe, is what the sources revealed. And, I think both of these methodologies — agenda setting and framing — can be applied to any timeframe and issue.

Forde: We didn't use theory explicitly. *Journalism and Jim Crow* is deeply empirical. We have voluminous evidence from extensive research across primary and archival sources. But public sphere theory (Jürgen Habermas and his many elaborators) and civil sphere theory (Jeffrey Alexander), both sociological theories of democracy, deeply informed my contributions to the book and its analytical framework.

Public sphere theory assumes that the independent press as institution holds a critical position in the public sphere, providing the public with the information and means to engage in rational, critical debate on matters of common interest. The resulting public opinion influences political decision-making and thus operates as a control on market and state power. Civil sphere theory assumes that the news media create “shared feelings and symbolic commitments” through the stories they tell and the language they use, and these public meanings can either serve the civil ends of social solidarity and justice or the anti-civil ends of social oppression and exclusion.

So public sphere theory helped me see that powerful white Demo-

cratic newspapers in the South were not independent and not much interested in furthering rational critical debate on matters of public interest. They were instruments of political parties and business interests and were used to disrupt bi-racial political coalitions and steal elections in violent Democratic Party campaigns; to build state-level convict leasing systems that stole the labor of Black men, women, and children for the profit and power of white industrialists; and to foment racial terror with lynching as a means of instituting and policing a strict racialized social order, among other things.

Civil sphere theory helped me see that the narratives in these white Democratic newspapers inflamed feelings of anti-Black animus and fear in the white South and shaped social commitments to white supremacy and the legitimacy of racial violence and disenfranchisement. These narratives were profoundly anti-civil and served profoundly anti-democratic ends.

These white Democratic newspapers were filled with lies about Black Southerners and opposition parties that included Black men. We found the truth in the Black press, the muckraking press, personal correspondence of key actors, legislative records, records of court cases, the records of investigative bodies, lynching records, state records of convict leasing, and political campaign handbooks.

Garza: This is a trick question, right? Evidence — solid, in-depth, and extensive — is a pre-requisite for the application of theory or its use as a theoretical lens. What good are binoculars if no vistas are before you? That said, theory effectively works as a paradigm, providing a parameter for what to study and a prescription for how to study it. Theory helps you evaluate your vista even as it sets boundaries for it. In *They Came to Toil*, I explain that in the course of expanding the nation's understand-

ing of civil rights, some paradigm-busting is required. A prime example is the Black-White race binary, which leaves Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and others outside of a racial discourse theorized as having only two constituent elements, Black and White.

A companion conceptualization defines the Civil Rights Movement as ranging from *Brown v. Board of Education* to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, while geographically centering it in the South. Historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, among others, has noted that this definition excludes civil rights efforts by Blacks in other time periods and geographies. At the same time scholars such as Mark Brilliant note that this definition also obscures the civil rights work of other groups, including multi-racial, multi-ethnic efforts. In my own research, I am expanding on pioneering African American publisher Robert C. Maynard's fault lines theory of journalism by applying it to an understanding of civil rights history that moves beyond the Black-White race binary.

Lueck: How did you determine the effect of mainstream partisan press discourse and its omissions on the institutional practices or shifting societal norms in the shaping of U.S. democracy?

Copeland: If you look at the 1770s or first quarter of the 19th century, you see the effect of partisan press discourse. In the mid-1770s, roughly one-third of Americans wanted to remain a part of Britain, another third wanted independence, and the other third was ambivalent. After Patriots controlled press outlets, independence overwhelmingly became the primary position of the people.

By the end of the 1700s and into the 1800s, you see the demise of the Federalists and rise of the Democratic-Republicans. Alexander Hamilton introduced press patronage as a means to bolster Federalist

positions shortly after George Washington became president, but the Republicans turned patronage into an art form. Thomas Jefferson wrote concerning the 1800 election, "The engine is the press." Philadelphia *Aurora* editor and Republican William Duane reflected in 1808, "My pen and my press are the only formidable weapons I have ever used." Duane's weapons were used by an ever-growing number of editors who favored a Republican form of government in part because they were receiving government payments to support the party. Jefferson, Duane, James Madison, and the dwindling Federalists knew that the party that controlled the press would be "irresistible," as Alexis de Tocqueville wrote. Republicans controlled national government almost completely following Jefferson's election, setting the agenda for the young republic with little to no opposition. Federalists were a thing of the past by 1820 when they did not even put forward a presidential candidate. Alexander Dallas, treasury secretary after the War of 1812, referred to the power of editors as "the tyranny of printers," meaning what Samuel Miller concluded in 1803, that newspapers "have become the vehicles of discussion, in which the principles of government, the interest of nations, the spirit and tendency of public measures ... are all arraigned, tried, and decided." The newspaper editor in the 19th century, according to Gerald Baldasty, therefore, increasingly became the person who directed political activities on all levels — national, state, and local. [Gerald J. Baldasty, "The Press and Politics in the Age of Jackson," *Journalism Monographs* 89 (1984): 7.]

Forde: In so many instances, white newspaper leaders used their papers as weapons in coordinated Democratic Party propaganda campaigns to defeat their opponents. These propaganda campaigns were often part of a larger campaign of electoral violence against Black Southerners. In

Mississippi in 1875, for example, Ethelbert Barksdale used the *Jackson Clarion* to help organize and prosecute a murderous Democratic Party campaign of violence to keep Black men in Mississippi from voting and to “redeem” the state from “Negro domination.” In North Carolina in 1898, Josephus Daniels used the *Raleigh News & Observer* as the leading propaganda organ for the Democratic Party for the same purposes in the state election — and in a violent overthrow of a duly elected biracial government in Wilmington, a coup d’état that decimated the thriving Black middle class in that city. In both of these significant historical events, the white press used its hard power to destroy democracy and help build white supremacist, one-party, totalitarian states. This is not the uplifting story we typically hear about the role of the press in U.S. democracy. But it’s a story that needs to be understood, especially in light of right-wing news media that are today working against democratic norms and goals.

Garza: *They Came to Toil* explores 1930s narratives about Mexicans and immigrants in light of how the powerful presses defined them in keeping with their own financial, political, and cultural interests. The book shows how these stories used news frames that supported agricultural, manufacturing, and railroad interests, as in the case of the *San Antonio Express*. It also shows how the press supported white nationalists who demonized the Mexican as a “mongrel” unfit for U.S. citizenship, which was the Hearst-owned *San Antonio Light* editorial perspective on most immigrants. In sum, the *Express* championed the presence of Mexicans for doing the work “whites wouldn’t do,” while the *Light* opined that people from South of the border need not apply to become part of this country. Meanwhile, *La Prensa* fought for and supported civil rights cases, including school desegregation cases involving Mex-

ican Americans in Texas, editorializing that Mexicans would always be a part of the United States. It is only through reading these stories in light of their ownership interests, histories, and missions that their rationale for who should and shouldn't be considered American becomes clear.

Lueck: Based on your historical scholarship, what role or roles do you envision for journalism in shaping, perhaps reimagining, the future of democracy?

Copeland: The “Journal of Occurrences” was a news package that described British atrocities committed during military occupation of Boston in 1768-1769. It was distributed throughout the colonies and widely read. Massachusetts governor Francis Bernard said of the Journal that “there could not have been got together a greater Collection of impudent virulent and seditious Lies, perversions of truth and misrepresentations.” The journal was propaganda, and it helped set in motion the changes that followed in America whether its contents were true or not.

We have been witness to the same type of news and commentary today via the digital realm. As in the 18th century, anyone has the potential to be a polemicist, can have a following, and be quoted extensively. Heather Cox Richardson is one example. Her “Letters from an American” is a historian’s interpretation of what’s happening in the United States. Hundreds of thousands receive her letter daily, according to a *New York Times* story on December 27. We know the digital world is providing a new public sphere for commentary, quite similar to the papers of the young United States.

What we saw in the 18th and 19th centuries with a powerful venue

for dialog continues. As Alexander Addison said in 1799, “Give to any set of men the command of the press, and you give them command of the country, for you give them the command of public opinion, which commands everything.” When millions hang on every word of a pundit, the potential to shape and reimage the future of democracy is real. Whether the results will be hailed or condemned will depend upon ideology. Unless something catastrophic happens, though, I don’t see Americans united in the ways they became in the 1770s and in the rise of Republicanism. Still, the potential for the “tyranny of printers” is real. The late Rush Limbaugh is proof.

Forde: I think we need to build a truly multiracial journalism — in content, leadership, and workforce — that reimagines what it means for news to serve the goals and purposes of multiracial democracy. We have some ideas about that in the epilogue of *Journalism and Jim Crow*.

Garza: The historical example of highly siloed media representing various perspectives on the political spectrum, at least in editorials, is mirrored in present day media. This is particularly true for national broadcast and digital media, as in for example, Fox, CNN, Univision, and Telemundo. Some things on the print side have obviously changed since the 1930s. Although bylines were rare during the Great Depression, it’s a safe bet that few members of underrepresented groups were employed at the San Antonio newspapers in my study, with the obvious exception of *La Prensa*. At the same time, today the mainstream media are still largely lacking reporters and editors from underrepresented groups. Nonetheless, there is growing recognition that journalists of color from all backgrounds, races, and ethnicities should be represented in the media, and not just to report on news that relates to

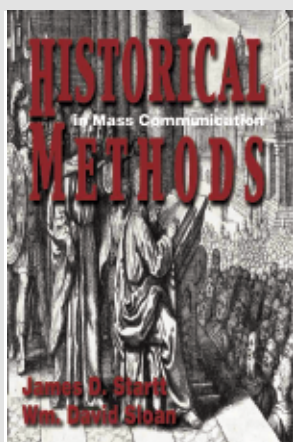
Roundtable: Journalism's Role in Defining Democracy

their own groups. We need the Weijia Jangs and the Jim Acostas as much as we need the Abby Phillips and the Yamiche Alcindors. To paraphrase Robert Maynard, this country cannot call itself a democracy if stories and histories are told through only one lens and one historical understanding of what it means to be an American.

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Historian Interview:

W. Joseph Campbell ©



Campbell

Joe Campbell, a professor at American University, is the author of seven books, including two editions of the media-mythbusting work *Getting It Wrong* (University of California Press, 2010, 2017). It won the Society of Professional Journalists' SDX national award for research about journalism. His most recent book, *Lost in a Gallup: Polling Failure in U.S. Presidential Elections* (University of California Press, 2020), emphasizes that polling failure is often journalistic failure. He also has written three books about late 19th century

American journalism, including *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies*; and *The Year That Defined American Journalism: 1897 and the Clash of Paradigms*. At American University, where he has taught since 1997, the student government selected him the "Faculty Member of Year" in 2006. He has received the Hazel Dicken Garcia Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Journalism History and has won research paper awards from the American Journalism Historians Association and from the History Division of the AEJMC. He received his Ph.D. in mass communication from the University of North Carolina.

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

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Campbell: My hometown is Newtown, Pa., in southeastern Pennsylvania, not far from where Washington crossed the Delaware River. Although reminders of the Revolutionary War period are abundant there, I became deeply interested in the Civil War during my childhood. I had cousins who lived near Gettysburg and visiting them usually meant a trip to the battlefield. I was 8 years old when my parents gave me *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War*, a handsome book that I still have in my home office.

We moved to Ohio when I was 13, and I went to a rural high school near Oberlin. I became senior class president and played on a basketball team that advanced to the Ohio high school regional finals before losing by one point in double overtime. It's a game that has stayed with me through the years.

I did my undergraduate work at Ohio Wesleyan University, where I found my way (though not by design) to the school's small but highly regarded journalism program. The program was directed by Verne Edwards, who became a terrific mentor. I was chosen the University's journalism graduate of the year in 1974.

Eight days after graduation, I joined the staff of the *Plain Dealer*, the morning newspaper in Cleveland, covering the police beat from 6 at night till 3 in the morning, and writing obituaries on Saturdays and Sundays. That's how rookie reporters were introduced to the newspaper business in those days.

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

Campbell: I was a professional journalist for some 20 years before entering the academy. Reporting assignments took me across North

America, to Europe, West Africa, and parts of Asia. I reported for the *Plain Dealer* and the *Hartford Courant* and overseas for the Associated Press.

I left the newsroom in 1995 to accept a Freedom Forum fellowship and begin accelerated studies at Chapel Hill and have never looked back.

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

Campbell: Since joining the faculty of American University's School of Communication, I've taught 19 different courses, ranging from "Advanced Reporting" and "Advanced Editing" to "Myth of the Media," "The American 1990s," and "Seminar in Doctoral Teaching and Research."

"Myths of the Media" and "The American 1990s" are seminar-style courses I designed; they're drawn from two of my books.

I no longer teach skills-based journalism courses, given that I left the newsroom a long time ago.

***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.*

Campbell: I majored in journalism and American history at Ohio Wesleyan and remember completing a far-too-long senior thesis about aspects of newspaper coverage of the Civil War. I don't recall it as a particularly memorable project. I do remember having to pay a considerable sum to a freelance typist to prepare the thesis according to exacting formatting requirements.

It was at Chapel Hill where my interests in media history began to emerge. My primary area of research interest during my PhD days was international communication. I wrote my dissertation about the emergent independent press in francophone West Africa, a part of the world from where I once reported for the Associated Press.

I was in West Africa in the early 1980s, and non-governmental news media were exceedingly rare. Within ten years, with the arrival of a wave of democratization across much of sub-Saharan Africa, independent news outlets began to flourish. The transition was fascinating — and its causes had been little-examined.

I don't remember who on the j-school faculty at Chapel Hill suggested this, but it was great advice. It was a boxing metaphor, applicable to new scholars, and went something like this: Develop a strong right lead in your research but also develop an effective left jab. In other words, develop a strong secondary area of research interest. That, for me, became media history.

I loved the graduate seminars in history that Peggy Blanchard and Don Shaw taught at Chapel Hill. Peggy taught a class in readings in media history, and I just devoured that course; it encouraged students to look behind completed works and to figure out how they were researched, sourced, and prepared.

I left Chapel Hill in 1997 with a lot of research momentum. I began a tenure-track position at American about a month after defending my dissertation. Almost immediately I began looking to turn the dissertation into a book, and I did. Praeger offered me a contract and brought it out in 1998 as *The Emergent Independent Press in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire: From Voice of State to Advocate of Democracy*. Praeger gave the book stratospheric pricing, but it received favorable reviews in journals such as *African Studies Review*.

Not long after that, I turned attention almost exclusively to my left job, to my secondary area of research interest — media history, specifically the yellow press period of the late 1890s.

A good deal of accepted wisdom about that period just didn't seem quite right to me: The yellow press fomented a war with Spain? William Randolph Hearst sent a telegram to a sketch artist vowing to “furnish the war”? Really?

Those narratives sounded fanciful to me, a former journalist, and the more I looked into them, the more dubious I found them to be. I also determined that almost no one had examined the evidence with a skeptical eye.

So the yellow press period was ripe for revisiting and reinterpretation. I wrote a conference paper about the ostensible Remington-Hearst telegram titled “Not likely sent” that won the AEJMC History Division's top paper award in 1999. The paper became a chapter in my book *Yellow Journalism*, which came out in 2001. And my secondary area of research had become my principal interest.

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

Campbell: I've mentioned Peggy Blanchard and Don Shaw at UNC. They were important figures in shaping my scholarly career. My PhD adviser was Bob Stevenson, and his guidance was invaluable. He helped immensely in my transition from journalist to scholar.

Bob was an advocate of the “so what?” question, meaning that scholarly research had to go beyond the descriptive and offer analysis and explain significance.

Bob liked to say that work that failed to address “so what?” invited

even more withering questions such as “who cares?” and “why bother?” Bob wasn’t mean about it. But his views were spot-on: “So what?” may be impertinent. But it is an essential question for scholars, including media historians.

Going beyond the descriptive to address “so what?” was an important lesson — and a way that Bob Stevenson, who died in 2006, had a lasting influence on my career.

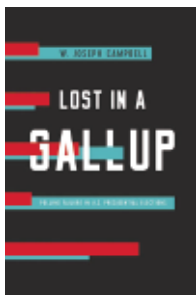
Historiography: *What are the main areas or ideas on which you concentrate your historical work?*

Campbell: I’ve been working in media history for more than 20 years, and I’ve always been intrigued by topics that could be treated or examined in new ways, or analyzed from fresh perspectives. I’ve also been interested in researching important topics that had been mostly ignored.

In 1999, for example, I wrote an article for *American Journalism* about the prominent yet little-examined role of Josephus Daniels, the editor and owner of the *Raleigh News & Observer*, in championing white supremacy campaigns in North Carolina in 1898 and 1900. I pointed out that Daniels’ “race-baiting rhetoric [had] scarcely been recognized by journalism historians or in works of American journalism history. Rather, Daniels’ reputation in journalism history is that of a *progressive* Southern reformer....” It was an overdue revisionist treatment.

My focus expanded beyond the 1890s to a broader interest in addressing and debunking media-driven myths, and then on to a variety of other research topics that became books. I published a book in 2015 about decisive developments of 1995, the year when the internet

entered mainstream consciousness. It was an “origin year” in other respects, too — in domestic terrorism, crime and justice, international diplomacy, and political scandal.



My latest book, *Lost in a Gallup*, came out in August 2020, and one reviewer called it a “bracing reality check.” It’s a study in political communication about polling failures in U.S. presidential elections — a first-of-its-kind treatment about polling flops, epic upsets, unforeseen landslides, and exit poll fiascoes in presidential elections since 1936. (That, by the way, was the year of the *Literary Digest* polling debacle; the *Digest*’s mail-in poll, which had never been wrong, predicted Alf Landon would unseat Franklin D. Roosevelt. Landon won just two states).

I researched and wrote *Lost in a Gallup* under a very tight timetable. I signed the contract with University of California Press in February 2018 and delivered final page-proof fixes in May 2020. It’s a meticulously documented book; the endnotes run to 82 single-spaced pages.

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

Campbell: That’s a challenging question — rather like asking who’s your favorite sibling. But I’ll go for it.

The media myths book — *Getting It Wrong* — has received the most sustained attention over the years, given that it identified and took on false, dubious, and improbable stories about news media exploits, exploits that masqueraded as factual.

The book specifically challenged well-known tales in American

journalism such as the notion that Woodward and Bernstein's reporting for the *Washington Post* brought down Nixon's corrupt presidency, and that Walter Cronkite swung American public opinion against the war in Vietnam on the strength of a single, on-air assessment in late February 1968.

These are among the cherished stories journalists tell about themselves and their profession, so identifying them as exaggerated or apocryphal was obviously provocative. Provocative because it challenged some long-held notions and beliefs about journalism's power and influence.

The first edition of *Getting It Wrong* came out in 2010 and won a research award from Sigma Delta Chi in 2011.

Getting It Wrong was the first book I worked on with University of California Press, which published an expanded second edition in 2017. The second edition had three new chapters, including a debunking of claims that the "Napalm Girl" photograph, taken in Vietnam in 1972, was so powerful that it hastened an end to the war.

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 history, what would they be?

Campbell: Presenting evidence-based challenges to conventional or accepted wisdom is, I'd say, an important contribution. So, too, is a demonstrated willingness to examine topics in media history that are neither obscure nor narrow: I think I've shown range in my work.

A willingness to experiment with methodological frames, such as the year study, has been a contribution, too. I've written single-year

studies about 1897 and 1995, both watershed times. And while I don't plan another such book, the year study has much to commend it. As I wrote in the 1897 book, the year study is "intriguingly flexible." And versatile.

Granted, the year-study is not an approach that's much caught on in media history, but it is an available methodological option.

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.

Campbell: It's important to be cautious about certainty. About being dogmatic. I made this point in a speech ten years ago at the Chattanooga Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression.

I said then that a lesson I'd taken from researching and debunking media myths is that history is neither static nor infallible, that prominent narratives about media performance and influence have been infused with exaggeration and error and, as such, plead for reinterpretation. There should be plenty of room for skepticism, plenty of room for testing assumptions — for applying logic and evidence to well-established narratives.

It's also important to find ways to share scholarly research, to make research more broadly accessible, in a public history sort of way. I launched blogs to support my books about media myths and about the year 1995. The blogs have been vehicles to reach popular audiences well beyond the academy.

I've written many op-eds over the years, for outlets such as the *Conversation*, *The Hill*, the *Baltimore Sun*, *Fortune* and the BBC. And

I've been on C-SPAN several times, including an appearance in 2010 on Brian Lamb's *Q-and-A* interview program.

Reaching beyond scholarly audiences has always been important to me. I almost never turn down interview requests from corporate news outlets, right or left, when they want to talk with me about topics in media history. The *New York Times* and Fox News, for example, both have interviewed me about the endlessly popular 1897 newspaper editorial "Is There A Santa Claus?" That's the one with the timeless passage, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus."

I discussed the back story to that editorial in my 2006 book, *The Year That Defined American Journalism: 1897 and the Clash of Paradigms*. But a blog post I wrote about "Yes, Virginia" has led to more media interview requests than the book has.

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

Campbell: The sense of renewal in the field is impressive. Media history continues to attract young scholars, bringing fresh insights which, in turn, offers a promise of sustained vigor.

The tradition of self-assessment and self-criticism is striking in media history, and that also signals a sense of vigor. The field surely has benefitted from critical assessment, from the critiques of James Carey, Joseph L. Morrison, and Michael Schudson. I've told fellow historians that this record of critique could be grist for a stunning conference panel someday. You could call the panel "critiquing the critiques," or something along those lines.

Weaknesses? Too often, research in media history seems small bore, nibbling at the margins rather than taking on ambitious topics. Re-

search doesn't seem to "go big" often enough.

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?*

Campbell: About a dozen years ago, the historian Gerard DeGroot wrote in a book review in the *Washington Post*: "We mine the past for myths to buttress our present." Then he added:

"Every historian is a mythbuster."

It's an aphorism that I've quoted from time to time over the years. While it's not entirely true in practice, it is a useful reminder.

There's an edginess that comes with mythbusting, which means that it can seem aggressive, at times. Guarding against such appearances is important. Sensitivity is important. But historian-as-mythbuster is a worthy pursuit. After all, exaggeration, distortion, and the telling of myths still garble the telling of history and media history.

DeGroot (whom I've never met) wrote on another occasion: "History is fascinating precisely because it concentrates on the extraordinary — weird events or larger than life individuals." Which also is sort of true. It's a comment that hints at an intrinsic exuberance to the field. The study of history need not be a slog, or be perceived as a slog. Media historians might do well to rediscover, or insist on, that sense of exuberance, and energy, inherent in the field.

In another way, though, the field may be *too* exuberant. A lot of prizes and awards in media history are given out every year by AJHA and the History Division of AEJMC. The recognition is nice; it's flattering to win. But there sure are a lot of awards.

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

Campbell: There's an obvious challenge in not being thought of as luxury to deans and provosts in a budget-restricted, post-COVID environment.

A deeper challenge, perhaps, lies in demonstrating the relevance of history amid a badly divided, even toxic media landscape. Old business models, and one-time norms of impartiality and even-handed treatment of the news, are eroding or are being swept away. Amid the turmoil in professional journalism, there's room for imaginative and creative media historians to clarify how American media have survived wrenching change in the past, how professional norms of impartiality are anomalous in the sweep of American journalism, and how partisanship over the decades has infused and defined news coverage more deeply than many people recognize. This is not to say we should necessarily take comfort in the partisan treatment of the news these days. But it is a way of placing the hand-wringing about contemporary journalism in useful perspective.

I'm rather pessimistic about the arc of American journalism. I'm not pessimistic about the future of media history.

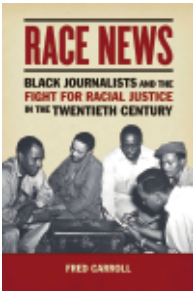
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Book Award Interview

By Fred Carroll ©



Carroll



Fred Carroll won the 2018 award from the AEJMC History Division for Best Journalism and Mass Communication History Book for his *Race News: Black Journalists and the Fight for Racial Justice in the Twentieth Century* (University of Illinois Press). He is a lecturer in the Department of History and Philosophy at Kennesaw State University. Before going into teaching, he worked nine years as a daily newspaper reporter. He received his Ph.D. from the College of William and Mary.

Historiography: Give us a brief summary of your book.

Carroll: *Race News* analyzes the political and professional evolution of Black journalism in the 20th century. It examines the commercial Black press' contentious working relationship with the alternative Black press and its thorny interactions with a repressive federal government and hostile white media. This study reveals how shifting toleration of progressive politics — anticapitalism, anticolonialism, and Black

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Nationalism — reconfigured how black journalists wrote and covered the news. The legacy of these conflicts endures today in the U.S. media's fairer but imperfect coverage of African Americans and other minorities.

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

Carroll: I had worked in daily newspapers for nine years before switching to academia. So I had a natural interest in journalism. While reporting in Gastonia, N.C., and Newport News, Va., I came to realize that race and racism continued to play a far more significant role in American society than I had previously understood. So I set out to study race and racism in modern American history.

These twin interests led me to study the Black press. The historiography of the Black Press is substantive and sophisticated. However, when I started to analyze it, I concluded that its monographs could generally be divided into four broad categories: works focused on individual publishers or journalists; works focused on individual newspapers; works focused on a particular time period, especially the world wars and modern Civil Rights Movement; and textbooks focused on the entirety of the Black press's history.

After reviewing these books, I wanted to better understand how these publishers and journalists and newspapers interacted with one another as an *industry* during the century of their greatest influence.

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?

Carroll: My conclusions reflect insights gained from accessing fourteen manuscript collections at nine different research centers, reviewing seven published manuscript collections, and reading extensive runs of national and regional black newspapers. I worked on the book, with varying degrees of intensity, over about eight years.

I could not have written a sweeping book like this without the digitalization of national Black newspapers like the *Baltimore Afro-American*, *Chicago Defender*, *New York Amsterdam News*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, and *Pittsburgh Courier*, as well as significant regional newspapers, such as the *Atlanta Daily World*, *Cleveland Call and Post*, and *Los Angeles Sentinel*. Keyword searches helped me identify significant trends in news coverage and industry practices.

However, I also spent a fair amount of time hunched over a microfilm reader. I lived near Hampton University and the librarians there, for example, graciously allowed me to view the papers of Claude Barnett, who founded the Associated Negro Press. It had been so long since anyone had asked to see those microfilm rolls that no one had a key to unlock the filing cabinet. They had to break the lock. I initially started working through that massive collection without a guide to tell me what was available on any given roll.

In the archives, I spent most of my time at Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, which has a large and diverse collection on the Black press, and Chicago Public Li-

brary's Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection, which most notably holds the papers of Robert Abbott and John Sengstacke, publishers of the *Defender*. At these two archives in particular, I read deeply, wrote extensive notes, and spent quite a bit on photocopies. Their collections were crucial to learning about changes in business and editorial practices over time.

I also received a grant that allowed me to travel to Duke University to view the Milo Guthrie Papers, which holds a large collection of alternative magazines and other progressive printed materials, including a comprehensive three-year run of the *Black Panther* from the late 1960s into the 1970s.

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

Carroll: Well, I asked to visit the *Afro-American* Newspapers Archives and Research Center in Baltimore, but my request was declined. I had expressed a desire to research possible communist influences at the newspaper, especially in the 1930s. I also never managed to match my travel schedule with operation hours at Fisk University's library, which holds a collection of J.A. Rogers' papers. Rogers was a longtime columnist for the *Courier* and a central figure in popularizing Pan-Africanist beliefs in the 20th century. I find him and his work fascinating.

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

Carroll: I don't have any profound insights, but here are some of

the lessons I learned working on this book:

Talk to the archivists often — all of them. Why? They genuinely want to help. They often have tremendous knowledge of their research center and can point you to documents or collections you might otherwise have overlooked. And every now and then, they might waive a technicality or restriction that's hindering you from making the most of your research visit just because you asked. Even when you run into someone who's a bit rude, you'll be amazed at how much they open up once they realize you've done your homework.

Sometimes open “secrets” are staring you in the face, urging you to make the most of them. For me, this was writing about John Pittman, a communist journalist who wrote a foreign affairs column for the *Chicago Defender* in the 1940s under the pen name John Robert Badger. None of the scholarship I had read had identified Pittman as Badger, even though the finding aid for his papers at New York University included this detail very matter-of-factly. It was so open that I felt like I was getting something wrong since I had not read about it elsewhere. Anyway, I believe what I wrote about Pittman/Badger provided a small but important insight into the history of the Black press.

And finally, while good journalism aspires to accuracy, the history of journalism teems with fraud. I say this as often as I can to as many scholars as I can: Don't cite the opinion polls published in *Negro Digest*. They seem so authoritative, and so often address the pressing issues we want to tackle in our research. They are, however, fabricated, even if they often seem to reflect what we suspect is true. As editor Ben Burns recounts in his autobiography, *Nitty Gritty: A White Editor in Black Journalism*, “My sample

polling to reflect national opinion was usually no more than a dozen acquaintances, but my margin of error was probably no greater than those of so-called scientific polls.”

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

Carroll: Personally, the biggest challenge was the worsening job crisis, which continues to undermine the study of history as a profession, and my inability to land a tenure-track position (occasionally because of a thoroughly botched interview but more often because of too much talent seeking too few positions). Working as an adjunct, one-year visiting professor, or at-will lecturer resulted in inconsistent or nonexistent funding, which limited research trips, conference presentations, and professional networking. Unfortunately, this increasingly appears to be the new norm.

In the archives, the most daunting challenge was tracing the elusive role of communist perspectives in news coverage at various newspapers in the 1930s and 1940s. To me, it seems obvious that many prominent publishers and journalists likely scrubbed their private papers of overt conversations of communism, leaving only fragments that hint at broader discussions. The best evidence of leftist perspectives in leading Black newspapers was often indirect — found in memos and letters where the authors first protected themselves from anticommunist persecution by reaffirming their own opposition to communism before then discussing (and usually criticizing) progressive influences in Black journalism.

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?

Carroll: Just as a reporter can get too close to a source, a historian can get too close to a historical figure, especially when that person is waging the good fight against racism. I strive to maintain a personal commitment to what I perceive to be morally honest, rigorously informed scholarship while also understanding that I must maintain an openness to differing perspectives as well as striving to perceive other ways of interpreting historical sources.

For example, I think I can fairly say that J.A. Rogers did a rather lousy job reporting for the *Courier* in the mid-1930s from Ethiopia as that nation battled Italy. But I can also say Rogers was one of his generation's most influential journalists due to his columns and long-running cartoon feature, "Your History." I tried to present Rogers's strengths and flaws in a fair and non-judgmental manner. I did not call him a bad reporter. Instead, I let his frustrated editor, Percival Prattis, do so.

Historiography: What new insights does your book provide?

Carroll: The most original insight, as identified by different reviewers, seems to be my study of the fraught relationship between commercial newspapers, such as the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier*, and alternative publications, including Marcus Garvey's *Negro World* and the Nation of Islam's *Muhammad Speaks*. Racism and segregation narrowed the opportunities available to all Black writers, whether reporters or authors or poets or playwrights. Such oppression encouraged Black writers to be less

concerned than white writers with gate-keeping the boundaries of journalism and literature and poetry and drama. This fluidity resulted in journalists moving rather freely between a more objective, profit-minded commercial press and a more activist, idiosyncratic alternative press.

As Black America's politics took a leftward turn in the 1930s, the influence of progressive politics — the lifeblood of an alternative press that advanced anticapitalist, anticolonialist, and Black Nationalist perspectives — seeped into the commercial press, swelling circulations and expanding the parameters of acceptable political discourse. By the 1940s, the alternative Black press had essentially folded into the commercial Black. After World War II, though, a surging anticommunist movement led commercial newspapers to purge themselves of progressive influences in the early 1950s, which ultimately spurred the emergence of a reinvented alternative press that would help define the Black Power Movement.

Historiography: What findings most surprised you?

Carroll: I wouldn't call it the most surprising finding, but the general narrative of the Black press after World War II focuses on decline — declining circulation, declining revenue, declining relevance. All of that is true, of course. However, if you distinguish the profitability of a specific platform (i.e., the commercial Black press) from the quality of available writing (i.e., news reporting and opinion writing by Black journalists), the race journalism of the late 1960s and early 1970s remained vibrant. Again, not surprising but a perspective easily overlooked if you concern yourself

too much with the business success of certain publications.

African American readers still read commercial Black newspapers because they still valued news about their local communities and editorials written from a Black perspective. However, readers now had other options available for various aspects of news coverage once provided almost exclusively by that commercial press. For pressing racial stories of national interest, Black readers could read and watch white-owned media. (Daily newspapers and television stations remained far less dependable when covering local racial news, and many white editors doubted Black journalists could objectively report racial news, resulting in uneven and ineffective efforts to integrate white newsrooms.) If readers wanted a militant Black perspective, they could read the alternative Black press. The most popular alternative papers, *Muhammad Speaks* and the Black Panther Party's *The Black Panther*, claimed circulations in the hundreds of thousands, but smaller, fleeting Black Power publications appeared in cities nationwide. And if readers wanted coverage of lifestyle and celebrities or sports and business, they could subscribe to *Ebony* or other magazines, including *Essence*, *Black Sports* and *Black Enterprise*.

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

Carroll: Take a walk. When the writing is hard, staring at the computer screen won't help. Take a walk, and empty your mind. Sometimes, walking won't help either. So just accept that you might be done writing for the day. Other times, though, you might barely be out the door when suddenly the words you need-

ed to move on will burst forth ... at least that's what I tell myself.

Another thing I try to do: Always stop writing when you know you could continue. By doing that, you'll increase the odds of a productive writing day the next time you sit down because you're likely to have a good start.

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