Historiography

in Mass Communication

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Historiography in Mass Communication

Editorial Purpose

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

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Essays

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

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The Personal Element

By Wm. David Sloan and James D. Startt ©

Sloan

Startt

What role should the values of the individual historian play in the study of history?

Put another way, the question is this: Can there be truth in history — and how do personal values influence the search for it?

The same questions can be asked of journalism. In its case, there is always a wide array of factors to consider — such as the nature of news, the demands of the audience, the imperfect quality of sources, the pressure to make journalism interesting as well as profitable, and the disposition of the journalist.

Is the product propaganda, or is it truth? If it's somewhere between the two, is it presented as such?

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James D. Startt, senior research professor in history at Valparaiso University, has written extensively on Woodrow Wilson and the press and has served as editor of a number of other books. He received the Kobre Award for lifetime achievement in 2000.

Limitations impose themselves on journalists just as they do on historians. Even in the case of investigative reporting, there are boundaries that hedge the time, expense, and effort that can be spent in researching a story. Journalistic writing, by its very nature, can reproduce the full reality of a current episode only imperfectly.

Suppose the journalist had the time of the historian to research and publish. The accuracy of the investigation might, indeed, be improved by a more extensive use of sources and perhaps the benefits of detachment.

But sources are never perfect, and the limitations to any investigation — as well as the journalist's values — influence the final product.

So surely, if journalists find truth elusive in their explanation of all but the most obvious data, historians confront difficulties also.

The problem revolves around a double axis. In part it relates to evidence and in part to the investigator.

Historians, like journalists, often despair at the limits of evidence. They frequently need more evidence, or more explicit evidence, to resolve a particular problem in understanding their subject. Even in this day of the growth of archives and the Internet and the abundant accumulation of printed and other evidence, one must wonder if the historian is forever at the mercy of the evidence that happens to survive.

Today more documents are being produced than in previous times. Computers, Internet sites, recording devices, and photocopying machines and scanners have provided a mass of records.

Have they increased the accuracy of sources or the fullness of the body of evidence? The same revolution that gave us speed of communication also increased privacy concerns and potential secrecy. The same technological culture that increased the number of bits of communication also produced greater means for people to communicate without

making their communication a matter of record.

Much like journalists confronted with contemporary circumstances, historians have to deal with evidence that is far from satisfactory. What gaps, they wonder, are in the record? Can substantive contradictions found in it be reconciled? And, even if the record is complete, is it a biased — and, thus, flawed — account? How many individual experiences, when recollected, become embellished with dramatic flourishes?

If historians have witnessed a remarkable broadening of the definition of historical sources, which they have, they also have failed to find a solution to the inherent problems of sources.

The rules of evidence can help one to handle such problems in a fair way. But they can't guarantee that the outcome will be consonant with truth. Nor can they assure that people from all perspectives and in all generations will understand the evidence in the same way. Consequently, the fact of partiality of the record permeates the study of history.

Based on this imperfect record, the historian proceeds to advance explanations. By necessity, what part of them is founded on incomplete evidence? How much is hypothetical? What part is artistry or, in extreme cases, even artifice?

Complete truth can be known about hardly anything other than the merest superficial elements associated with past episodes. Good historians are modest about both their knowledge and their limitations. When they discuss facts (as opposed to data) and ideas of times gone, and when they pursue the "how" and "why" of the past, they have to acknowledge an appropriate sense of restraint regarding conclusions. It is a principle that becomes a part of historians' professional judgment and of the tone of their narratives.

It would be arrogant for them to claim they have discovered the full

truth about a segment of the past.

What can be expected is that they be truthful to the greatest extent possible, that they work to understand the past on its own terms, and that they exercise judgment that is honest, perceptive, and balanced.

There is, then, a definite personal element related to the historian's navigation between past and present and to his or her limited knowledge of both spheres.

This personal element deserves attention for a number of reasons.

Like journalists, historians are products of their own social and personal environments. They can never completely escape their own values or the conditions that shaped and continue to shape them.

They all have emotions, persuasions, and ethical standards, some of which are shared in part with others of similar background and some of which are uniquely their own. Gender, race, ideology, religion, nationality, geography, class awareness, occupation, knowledge, education, and experience help define human perceptions.

Not to be overlooked is historians' attachment to the perspective of the mass communication professions of their own time. It raises the old danger of present-mindedness. That mindset has distorted much historical writing. JMC historians since the late 1800s have almost always judged the past by the professional standards and ideology of their own generation rather than from the view of detached observers. Many historians of mass communication continue to do so today.

To what extent do these perceptions become habits of thought, perhaps even biases, either recognized or not, that enter into the writing of history, thus imperiling the reconstruction of the true past? One cannot easily forget the comment of the elder British statesman A. J. Balfour about Churchill's multi-volume account of the First World War: "Winston has written an enormous book about himself and called it *The*

World Crisis." (Quoted in Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History*, 1970. Churchill himself had said, perhaps tongue in check, "History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it.")

History is, after all, a reconstruction by *individuals* of things past. How much of themselves should they put into it?

Modern historians, particularly those cast in the Rankean mold of evidence-based history, may have extolled the goals of impartiality and objectivity for the study of history, but others have pondered either the possibility or plausibility of such well-intended aims. In more recent years New Left and radical historians, like those journalists and professors who prefer advocacy to objectivity, have rejected such neutrality in favor of an activist search for and development of history as a tool to employ in solving present problems and changing society. In the process, if they are able to reconstruct an accurate version of the past, they have enhanced history. If not, as David Hackett Fischer observed, they have cast themselves into nothing more than "methodological reactionaries." (*Historians' Fallacies*, 1970)

In fairness, it must be admitted that radical historians don't hide their opinions. Among historians of the mainstream, that hasn't always been true. Some writers in previous generations produced histories based on their conviction that they were on the side of truth — while maintaining that they were merely presenting an impartial account — and thus subordinated history to cause. Today's scholars writing from ideological perspectives such as Cultural and Critical Studies often do the same thing.

So historians are confronted with this fundamental question: What part of themselves should they put into their history?

The personal factor manifests itself in all of history from its inception to the final act of composition. It is, in fact, one of the strongest

links between history and journalism. The well-known foreign correspondent Herbert Matthews once explained: "That a journalist has, at all times, his bias and sympathies is certain, since he is only a human being. That those feelings color his choice and presentation of news, without his being conscious of it, is also obvious…. It all boils down to the impossibility of achieving perfection or complete precision, and we journalists could write as many books on that subject as the philosophers have written." (*The Education of a Correspondent*, 1946)

Much the same comment could be made of historians. They reveal their preferences in their choice of topic, in their selection of evidence, in the words they choose to describe and explain their subject, and in the conclusions they offer. They interpret past figures and events for the present, and in doing that they not only evaluate sources but also exercise judgment. The demands of narrative and explanation force them to become a part of their scholarship.

At some points in their reconstruction of the past their judgments may be value judgments.

It is only fair to ask, whose values? Who was right in the partisan press wars of the early 1800s or in the ideological conflicts of the muckraking era? At anytime, the good life for one group in society may have been exploitation or oppression for another group. What served the purposes of the news media may have hindered the conduct of government or harmed the best interests of the public.

In the epic of civilization's past experiences, one can find many contradictory, even irreconcilable, convictions, honestly held in their day. They may have appeared as manifestations of national, racial, gender, ideological, political, religious, class, economic, professional, environmental, or generational preferences. Who doubts that they show up today in both society and historical writing?

Even within the course of one generation, we can see that culture evolves, opinions shift, standards change, tenets rise and wane, and customs come and go.

Historians live with such changing values in their own time, and they also must deal with them in studying the past. Uncertainty and opposing values are parts of the complexity of the past, and historians must explain such things. They are expected to reflect upon the past, to put the best of their thought into it.

Should that reflection involve them in intentional value judgments? What about moral judgments?

At this point historiographers' views diverge.

One group points out that historians, like all writers who describe the human experience, make moral judgments all the time even in such basic matters as their use of language. One person's "order" is another's "oppression."

Rather than seek for complete balance, would it not be better to recognize that values intrude on the telling of history and then discipline oneself to handle the dilemma with discernment and precision?

No one expects historiography to be a moral narrative, but one might expect it to reflect judgment that goes beyond explanation as such. There are, indeed, ethical and moral dimensions of past human behavior. Every age has its obscene, criminal, and evil elements. There was an Adolf Hitler, and genocide did occur, as have many other heinous acts in history. Should historians avoid comment on such things?

Simply explaining dramatic failings in human conduct fails to say whether it was right or wrong. As C. V. Wedgwood, who probed this matter with restraint matched by wisdom, observed: "… from explaining an action we move insensibly towards justifying it, and from thence

towards a general blurring of moral issues and a comfortable belief that circumstances are always to blame, and men and women are not…. This outlook steadily and stealthily fosters the conviction that nothing is good or bad in itself but only in relation to its surroundings." (*The Sense of the Past: Thirteen Studies in the Theory and Practice of History*, 1967)

That observation, the first group of historians says, touches the nerve of the issue.

Moreover, when it comes to unethical acts in the past of a dramatic sort (as contrasted with mere differences of opinion over such matters as, for example, politics), the historian's audience expects reflection about such matters. Historians have a responsibility to provide that, not to overdo it, but to do it with a broadness and a sense of honesty that will enhance meaning about significant questions while remaining ever mindful of their commitment to the search for truth.

Finally, this first group of historians argues, remember that history can be a source of inspiration to some people. Thus, the historian's responsibility includes being ethically responsible. There is a great deal of common sense in Barbara Tuchman's statement that "to take no sides in history would be as false as to take no sides in life." ("The Historian's Opportunity," *Saturday Review*, 1967)

Without the historian acting as a responsible interpreter of past happenings, it would be difficult to have a deep awareness of self, to be intellectually honest, and to recognize that there is a time and place for ethical judgment.

The other group of historiographers acknowledges that the first group makes a strong case.

But all episodes in the past, this group points out, aren't as simple as Hitler and Nazi genocide. Most don't present clear differences of good vs. evil. They usually are complex situations with good arguments

on both — and, often, all — sides.

Furthermore, handling value judgments well requires a great deal of maturity and wisdom. Young or untutored scholars often are the most eager to offer judgments. Yet they are usually the ones who haven't had the life or intellectual experiences to provide the broad perspectives needed to handle judgments well. Others who write about history, particularly some in mass communication and other professional fields, may not have had the training or acquired the capacity to subjugate their own opinions to the standards of historiography. Once historians give in to the notion that it is acceptable for their accounts to include value judgments, it becomes easy for them to start enlisting on one or the other side.

Historians must assure that their moral judgments don't descend into mere moralizing or argument.

Thus, the historian needs to be alert that one's judgment about values is not merely personal bias. All historians could justify their biases by simply thinking of them on a loftier plane as defensible value judgments. With that approach, all biases would be acceptable because they would be equal, simply matters of personal preference.

Value judgments in most instances verge on invoking present-mindedness. By their very nature, they involve values of the historian's own generation. Thus, they present the very real danger of judging the past by current standards. Once present-mindedness enters the picture, it distorts the past, and a true understanding becomes almost impossible.

The primary purpose of historical writing, the second group of historiographers continues, is not to make judgments but to provide an account. Good history seeks understanding of the past on its own grounds. If it doesn't do that, then it is little better than fiction and loses

its value. If one wishes to make personal judgments an important component of writing, then one should write essays or letters to the editor, not history.

Finally, the purpose of historical study is not to take sides.

That's true even with issues on which a historian has strong feelings. Some issues can set emotions afire. Whether the issue deals with politics, gender, race, or a variety of other topics, biases can quickly rise to the top. And we must confess that such biases influence many historians, including some who study mass communication.

True fairness may not be fully attainable, but historians should at least make the attempt. Whenever a historian begins with the notion that personal values should influence an account, then it is unlikely he or she will achieve fairness or render an account seen clear and unmarred.

Despite their differences on the role of value judgments, both groups of historians offer points deserving of study and worth pondering on a very complex issue.

And both recognize that, of necessity, a strong personal element infuses historical study — that historians stand between past and present and must engage both with imagination, integrity, and a sense of responsibility.

The creation of that delicate balance represents one of the greatest challenges in historical scholarship. As Carl Gustavson, an authority on the relevance of history to the present, writes: "A mastery of the techniques of scholarship does not necessarily … guarantee good history, which is also the matter of the human equation, the sum total of the man or woman using the techniques." (*The Mansion of History*, 1976)

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Weaving a Broader Tapestry

By Erin K. Coyle ©

Coyle

One line of my historical research explores how journalists have covered the investigation and adjudication of crime and how journalists and courts have identified press rights to cover such sensitive content. Journalism leaders have recognized that these types of cases involve fundamental constitutional rights, including freedom of the press and rights for criminal defendants to receive fair trials.[1] Exploring important social implications from news coverage and journalistic conduct, this research has required exploring legal records as well as journalism records. This research also has inspired questions about how to deepen my understanding of journalism history by analyzing diverse categories of historical sources and topics, analyzing historical non-journalistic records, and asking questions about what different categories of historical records reflect about journalism, culture, and society.

In 1974, two leading scholars called for us to broaden our field and to incorporate fresh perspectives. In the first issue of *Journalism History*,

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James Carey famously referred to the study of journalism history as "somewhat of an embarrassment," explaining that historians had "defined our craft both too narrowly and too modestly." He called upon historians to "ventilate" the field, seek "fresh interpretations," and broaden our craft to incorporate cultural and intellectual history to attempt to understand the consciousness of journalism.[2] In the same issue, Cathy Covert wrote that journalism historians often are former journalists who cover history as they covered news. With such an outlook, they could "most comfortably" focus "on story, personality or institution." Writing conceptual history or addressing abstract concepts could be especially challenging. "Few of us pose interpretive or speculative questions of significance," Covert stated, although she acknowledged that we are "particularly qualified" to bring new perspectives to journalism history.[3]

Marion Marzolf operationalized Carey's cultural approach to conceiving the "historical consciousness of journalism." One way to study ideas, values, and shared beliefs of the profession of journalism is to perform content analysis of newspapers. Marzolf also encouraged historians to look beyond these obvious sources, to "examine the cultural context of the society that produced the journalist and the journalism to examine these interrelationships." For example, Marzolf identified fiction, poetry, art, and music as additional sources of "cultural values and attitudes." She also noted the importance of studying the crucial voices of women and minorities, perspectives of travelers from abroad, and perceptions from the public.[4]

Hazel Garcia summarized calls for ways to broaden our craft from journalism history to communication history, "attend more to theory development," research more diverse sources, and apply more rigor. Historians called for the discipline to be reimagined as communication

history that expands the field beyond its strong tradition of providing biographies of newspaper personalities, general narratives, and case studies. Scholars also called for "a research perspective which relates communication data to their social settings."[5] David Nord countered with assertions that we ought to shift our focus from journalism history to communication history to information history. He recognized value in broadening traditional approaches but stated that we need "new and more critical evaluation and interpretation" of the powerful persons and institutions at the core of traditional journalism history.[6] Nord also called upon mass communication historians to be more critical in their selection and interpretation of sources.[7]

Covert identified a significant intellectual weakness in traditional journalism history. "A great deal of what is experienced by both men and women in journalism has not been recorded by historians or has been recorded in ways compatible with thought patterns and values characteristic of white American males," Covert wrote. She called for an intellectual breakthrough for journalism historians to consider and address what is missing from our scholarship. To do so, Covert outlined three guiding values assumptions associated with thought patterns and values characteristics that shape thoughts and behavior. Traditional journalism history is about 1. winning, 2. autonomy, and 3. change. To broaden journalism history to reflect more diverse thought patterns and value characteristics, Covert proposed applying different assumptions, seeking insights from diverse fields, applying more diverse perspectives, and recognizing "a greater variety of experience as appropriate material." Doing so would record more perspectives of women and minorities.[8]

In 1987, Donald Shaw and Sylvia L. Zack provided a more optimistic perspective on how scholars were rethinking journalism history.

They found that over a decade, articles published in *Journalism History* and *Journalism Quarterly* indicated "the historical literature of our field" was deepening. Much of the scholarship could be categorized according to its focus on printers, editors, reporters, publishers, or corporate journalism. The final category encompassed print and broadcast media, reflecting a broadening of the field. They concluded the field was no longer an embarrassment, and the field was addressing more topics.[9]

Nonetheless, more recent scholarship shows there is room to continue broadening journalism history. In 1999, Margaret Blanchard found the label of journalism history to be overly restrictive, with journalism historians finding "comfort in the old way of doing research and interpreting boundaries in our field." She described the excitement of a new generation of journalism historians to take new research approaches, encompass theory, and study a wider variety of topics. Still, she had three significant concerns: First, questions remained about what journalism history means, and that term has been narrowly conceptualized in relation to the production and producers of news. Second, she stated that we need to be less restrictive about what methodological approaches we consider appropriate. Third, we need more intellectually expansive and challenging ways to categorize journalism history and describe our field. She concluded that journalism scholars should discuss how the field ought to develop and whether we ought to more creatively categorize our work.[10]

Two years later, Barbara Cloud wrote that journalism historians "have become more creative in their approaches to researching their topics," with some authors being more imaginative with their selections of source material. She studied the variety of scholarship *Journalism History* had published over twenty-six years, comparing publications in the journal's first sixteen years with publications in the journal's most

recent decade. Over time, the journal published fewer articles on advertising, biography, historiography, law, journalism practice, and politics. The number of articles published about media and minorities did not change during the early and later years of the journal, accounting for approximately 10 percent of the articles published over twenty-six years. Yet, significantly, all articles about Hispanic media were published in the first sixteen years. The number of articles about women increased from 13 percent to 16 percent over time, but still only accounted for 14 percent of the articles published over twenty-six years. The number of articles about broadcast also increased from 5 percent to 8 percent over time, but only accounted for 6 percent of the total articles published.[11]

In the summer 2023 issue of *Historiography in Mass Communication*, David Sloan wrote that historiography has improved since 1974, when Carey and Covert wrote about the state of journalism history. Since that time, *American Journalism* and *Historiography in Mass Communication* have been launched to address journalism history, and both have focused on improving the field. Sloan recognized "widespread sophistication" in the field of journalism history today, but he warned there are some flaws in accounts being labeled journalism history. Notably, some "aren't grounded in historical sources," and some don't address significant topics.[12]

As the fiftieth anniversary of *Journalism History* approached, an audit of research articles published in the journal examined what significant topics have or have not been addressed between 1974 and 2021. The researchers — Gerry Lanosga, Alexia Little, Lillie Fears, and Candi Carter Olson — considered whether significant gaps exist in topics and time periods covered to identify opportunities for future scholarship.[13] Responding to that research, *Journalism History* and *American Journalism* took a significant step to encourage research on diverse topics. The

journals offered microgrant funding to encourage research on media history and race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, class, religion, disability, mental health, and/or rural populations. In 2023, six researchers received grants to complete research on diverse topics that employed diverse methodologies.[14] This collaborative effort relates to Covert and Marzolf's calls for journalism historians to recognize what perspectives are missing from our field.

The recently published *The Routledge Companion to American Journalism History* shows how journalism historians "are reimagining journalism history, its omissions and commissions, and its theories and methods," The book demonstrates that scholars have broadened our field beyond the tales of powerful newspaper personalities and major metropolitan newspapers to address broader topics, incorporate a wider swath of theories, and apply diverse methods.[15] Carolyn Kitch wrote, in a chapter on "Remaking Journalism History," that journalism historians have attempted to operationalize Carey's challenge for journalism historians to broaden our craft to incorporate cultural and intellectual histories. Yet, Kitch asked why journalism historians have not operationalized Covert's call for journalism historians to provide more imaginative and more inclusive histories. Kitch proposed that journalism historians ought to reposition journalism in relation to society, which means moving beyond the traditional focus on exceptional individuals, events, and times. She concluded, "The future of our discipline lies in our capacity to tell more inclusive, complex, and continuous stories, ones that embrace conceptual change and expand the kinds of knowledge we contribute."[16]

In the past five decades, journalism historians have taken some significant steps to strengthen our field by applying more diverse methodological and theoretical lenses and exploring a wider variety of historical

materials, even when addressing questions that focus on the newspaper industry or newspaper coverage. For example, in *Bad News Travels Fast: The Telegraph, Libel, and Press Freedom in the Progressive Era*, Patrick File applied Carey's conception of "the idea of a report" that "render[s] reality." File also applied legal historian Robert W. Gordon's conception of law as "socially contingent."[17] File used Gordon's law-box model to analyze discourse about retraction statutes, which are important to journalism institutions that wish to reduce the amount of damages they may have to pay for publishing libelous content. File demonstrates that journalism historians may shed meaningful light on journalism history by applying research methods from other fields of history.[18]

The conceptual foundation of Gordon's law-box model may be extended to study journalism as a socially contingent field that produces products with important social implications. Gordon's law-box model posits that historians may study legal history by researching factors that may influence legal rules and legal proceedings. One category of factors, those internal to legal history, focus on what historians observe within the legal system, its rules, and its records. The other category includes factors external to legal history. Legal historians analyze materials from both categories and focus on "the interaction between the boxful of legal things and the wider society of which they are a part, in particular to explore the social context of law and its social effects." File analyzed debates about creating retraction statutes reflected in court opinions, "sources of legal discourse," and journalism and legal professional organizations' institutional records. He demonstrated the law-box model was an effective lens to apply to research social factors in relation to institutional history and legal history relevant to journalism.[19]

Other journalism historians recently have researched historical sources within a singular category — such as a distinct type of newspa-

per — in comparison to historical sources within another category — that may include newspapers with different business models or audiences — to shed light on journalism history and its social context. For example, Melita M. Garza examined how editorial pages in newspapers with three different ownership models — a Hearst newspaper, an independent and locally owned newspaper, and a Spanish-language daily — framed Mexican immigration during the Great Depression. Evaluating editorial coverage across different categories of newspapers, Garza found that editorial frames in the three categories of papers shared one commonality in their coverage of immigrants. Yet, the papers primarily reflected "distinct constructions of social reality" that shaped mythology about immigrants.[20]

Journalism and Jim Crow: *White Supremacy and the Black Struggle for a New America*, edited by Kathy Roberts Forde and Sid Bedingfield, also analyzes an impressive selection of historical sources to cast significant light on how Black and white journalists in the South perceived and portrayed social orders and political economies differently in the 19th and 20th centuries. This award-winning book demonstrates two different models of journalism existed after Reconstruction in the South in the United States, and these different models shaped different conceptions of society. One model, led by white publishers and editors, strove to "protect white supremacist political economies and social orders." The other model, Black journalism, focused on "building a multiracial, fully democratic 'New America.'" Comparing and contrasting communications from people and publications that fit within each journalism model revealed significant insights about journalism practice and its social implications, particularly when comparison of different categories of sources revealed gaps or omissions.[21]

Journalism historians also could look to historian Michel-Rolph

Trouillot's work when applying a critical lens to evaluate historical records. Trouillot wrote in *Silencing The Past: Power and The Production of History* that history is filled with examples of material missing from historical records. Discrepancies in or omissions from records can reflect power imbalances and deeply held beliefs about social realities.[22] When comparing and contrasting communications across different categories of news or other types of records, searching for silences, gaps, or omissions may reflect significant insights about journalism, history, culture, and society.

Over the past five decades, journalism historians have reflected upon the need to discuss and debate what may be considered strong scholarship in our field. Scholars have expanded our field, weaving a broader tapestry that incorporates a wider array of historical records, theoretical foundations, methodological approaches, historical topics, and undergirding values assumptions. Scholars have disagreed as to whether we ought to refer to our field as journalism history, communication history, information history, or something else. Scholars also have proposed different notions as to whether more imaginative approaches ought to focus on cultural, intellectual, or social history, and there are ample opportunities to operationalize journalism history in relation to each of these approaches in addition to other approaches. Continuing this dialogue is critical to encourage new generations of journalism historians to seek to continue exploring the scope of our field.

There is tremendous value in clarifying our historiography. As we attempt to broaden journalism history, we must continue to carefully seek and rigorously analyze historical records and significant topics. As long as we stay true to these foundational requirements, we may broaden and deepen our field by applying interdisciplinary approaches, seeking a broader range of sources and topics, asking more imaginative

questions to conceptualize journalism history, and looking beyond single categories of sources or history to discover intellectual, cultural, and social reflections, realities, and implications.

NOTES

[1] For example, see Erin K. Coyle, "Turning Point: Balancing Free Press and Fair Trial Rights after *Sheppard v. Maxwell*," *Journalism History* 44:3 (2018): 150-61; Erin K. Coyle, "Press Freedom and Citizens' Right to Know in the 1960s," *Journalism History* 43:1 (2017): 44-5.

[2] James Carey, "The Problem of Journalism History," *Journalism History* 1:1 (1974): 3-5.

[3] Cathy Covert, "Some Thoughts on Research," *Journalism History* 1:1 (1974): 32-33.

[4] Marion Marzolf, "Operationalizing Carey — An Approach to the Cultural History of Journalism," *Journalism History* 2:2 (1975): 42-43.

[5] Hazel Garcia, "'What a Buzzel Is This ... About Kentuck?' New Approaches and an Application," *Journalism History* 3:1 (1976): 11-15.

[6] David Paul Nord, "A Plea for Journalism History," *Journalism History* 15:1 (1988): 8-15.

[7] David Paul Nord, "What We Can Do for Them: Journalism History and the History Profession," *Journalism History* 9:2 (1982): 56-60.

[8] Catherine L. Covert, "Journalism History and Women's Experience: A Problem in Conceptual Change," *Journalism History* 8:1 (1981): 2-6.

[9] Donald L. Shaw and Sylvia L. Zack, "Rethinking Journalism History: How Some Recent Studies Support One Approach," *Journalism History* 14:4 (1987): 112-17.

[10] Margaret Blanchard, "The Ossification of Journalism History: A Challenge for the Twenty-First Century," *Journalism History* 25:3 (1999): 107-12.

[11] Barbara Cloud, "The Variety of Journalism History: 26 Years of Scholarship," *Journalism History* 26:4 (2000): 141-46.

[12] Wm. David Sloan, "Forty Years Improving the Field," *Historiography in Mass Communication* 9:2 (2023): 1-12.

[13] Gerry Lanosga, Alexia Little, Lillie Fears, and Candi Carter Olson, "Identifying Research Gaps and Opportunities as Journal's Fiftieth Anniversary Nears," *Journalism History* 48:3 (2022): 181-83.

[14] Dana Dabek, "Microgrant Winners Selected for American Journalism/Journalism History Initiative," Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Com-

munication History Division (March 2, 2023), https://mediahistorydivision.com/microgrant-winners-selected-for-american-journalism-journalism-history-initiative/.

15 Melita M. Garza, Michael Fuhlhage, and Tracy Lucht, "Introduction," in Garza, Fuhlhage, and Lucht, eds., *The Routledge Companion to American Journalism History* (New York: Routledge, 2024), 1-14..

16 Carolyn Kitch, "Remaking Journalism History: Issues of Progress, Presence, and Position," in Melita M. Garza, Michael Fuhlhage, and Tracy Lucht, eds., *The Routledge Companion to American Journalism History* (New York: Routledge, 2024), 441-49.

17 Patrick C. File, *Bad News Travels Fast: The Telegraph, Libel, and Press Freedom in the Progressive Era* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2019), 4.

18 Patrick C. File, "Retract, Expand: Libel Law, the Professionalization of Journalism, and the Limits of Press Freedom at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Communication Law and Policy* 22:3 (2017): 275-308.

19 Robert W. Gordon, "Introduction: J. Willard Hurst and the Common Law Tradition in American Legal Historiography," *Law and Society* 10:1 (1975): 9-55.

20 Melita M. Garza, "Framing Mexicans in Great Depression Editorials: Alien Riff-Raff to Heroes," *American Journalism* 34:1 (2017): 26-48.

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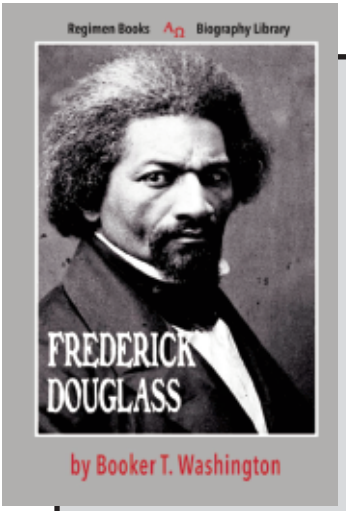

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

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Roundtable: How Faith Informs the Work of a JMC Historian

By Bruce Evensen, John Ferré, Christina Littlefield, and Julie Hedgepeth Williams ©

Evensen

How does religious faith — or the lack of religious faith — affect a historian's approach?

When historians examine the circumstances that led to the early morning attack by Hamas fighters, who surged across the Gaza border into Southern Israeli villages and kibbutzim on the morning of October 7, 2023, and the killings that followed, they will record that it occurred on the fiftieth anniversary of the Yom Kippur War. The words "Yom Kippur" literally mean "the Day of Atonement," and they signify a time of communal and self-reflection on the holiest day in Judaism. Egyptian and Syrian forces had made war on Israel on October 6, 1973 — the tenth day of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan — in an effort to recover the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights that were lost to Israel in 1967. Jordan had joined the struggle, hoping to secure the territory on the West Bank of the Jordan River that it had lost in 1967 as well. The result of the nineteen-day conflict was essentially a stalemate.

Bruce Evensen was a broadcast journalist in Washington, D. C., and Jerusalem before getting his Ph.D. in journalism and mass communication from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1989. He directed the Journalism Program at DePaul University and is now Emeritus Professor of Journalism there.

I arrived as a reporter in the Middle East shortly after the October 23, 1983, truck bombings in Beirut, Lebanon, that killed 307, including 241 American and 58 French soldiers, who led a multi-national peacekeeping force that the United Nations sent to the region. A group calling itself Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the killings. The attacks led to the withdrawal of multi-national forces in February 1984.

President Ronald Reagan then announced in March 1984 that — because of overwhelming Arab opposition — he would not relocate the U. S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. When I asked Jerusalem's 73-year-old, Mayor Teddy Kollek, his reaction to Reagan's decision, he asked

Ferré

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Littlefield

Christina Littlefield is an associate professor in journalism and religion at Pepperdine University. She received her Ph.D. in Divinity at the University of Cambridge. Her first book, *Chosen Nations,* investigated civil religion in the late 19th century's social gospel as practiced in Great Britain and the United States. She has also done extensive research into the muckraking efforts of British and American social gospel leaders.

Williams

Julie Hedgepeth Williams is a media historian, author, speaker, and professor in Birmingham, Alabama. She has served as president of the American Journalism Historians Association and in 2021 received its Sidney Kobre Award for lifetime achievement. She teaches at Samford University, which has a Christian ethos.

me a question.

"Young man," he asked, "where do you come from?"

"The United States," I said, somewhat surprised.

"Does your country have a capital?" he wanted to know.

"Washington," I answered. "Our capital is Washington, D. C."

"How long has Washington been your capital?"

"Uh, about 200 years," I finally answered after some uncertainty.

"Well," the old man told me, "when Washington became your capital, Jerusalem had already been our capital for nearly 3,000 years. So what does it matter what your president says?"

Kollek was pointing out what would become clear to me during my two years of reporting in the Middle East: There is an intimate connection between faith and the region's history. If a reporter didn't know one, he or she couldn't understand the other.

In the fall of 1987, when I began thinking about a dissertation project while at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I found a quote from Chaim Weitzmann, Israel's first president. He observed that those who quickly passed through Palestine often left it more ignorant than when they had arrived. They became more stubborn, he noted, thinking they knew something, which blinded them to how little they actually knew.

Weitzmann's warning about the complex connection between faith and history appears on page four of my first book, *Truman, Palestine and the Press: Shaping Conventional Wisdom at the Beginning of the Cold War*, which Greenwood published in 1992. In the years since, I've remained deeply interested in the connections between faith and history. *God's Man for the Gilded Age: D. L. Moody and the Rise of Modern Mass Evangelism*, published by Oxford in 2003, and my current research for *Journalism and the Meaning of America* examine the intersection of religious history and mass media history.

Whether a historian recognizes it or not, whether one has religious faith or has no faith at all influences the way he or she understands and explains history. The following roundtable of three prominent mass communication historians explores the connection between faith and historiography.

***Evensen**: How has your faith informed your work as a journalism and mass communication historian?*

Littlefield: I grew up culturally Christian at best, with a dad who was anti-organized religion, and came to embrace the Christian faith as a first-year undergraduate at Pepperdine University. I had been attracted to the campus because of the journalism program, but as I met Christians who seemed to live their faith and who welcomed my questions, I became intrigued. The Church of Christ tradition, as manifested at Pepperdine, takes the Bible very seriously but also affirms the value of the life of the mind. As part of its official affirmation statement, Pepperdine confirmed "that Truth, having nothing to fear from investigation, should be pursued relentlessly in all disciplines." Thus, from the very beginning, my faith encouraged me to pursue truth wherever it led me. I pursued truth as an investigative reporter. I pursue truth as a scholar in religion. And I pursue truth — as best as it can be ascertained — in researching religious and journalism history.

Because I came to experience personal faith and formed a religious worldview as a young adult, this helped me to see, perhaps more clearly than those who grew up in a religious tradition, how one's religious belief or worldview intersected with and shaped one's actions. I became particularly fascinated with the ways people mixed secular and sacred ideas. Religious belief or world views inform all aspects of culture, in-

cluding media and politics, and I believe better understanding the how of that helps us understand so much else in our world today. I also think we cannot fully tell the stories of our communities, in the past or present, if we do not consider how their worldview, be that religious or secular, frames their lives. My work focuses on these intersections between religious faith, identity, politics, and journalism.

Williams: I've studied commentary by American colonists about how they used the press, and I discovered that one of their favorite uses was to spread and serve religion. I've studied how the Puritans' faith led to our concept of media impartiality, and I quote scholars on Puritans' religious concepts that led to our definition of what the press should actually contain. For those of you under the popular, misplaced opinion of the Puritans, you need to know that they believed (surprise!) that if you didn't hear all parties speaking on a matter of controversy, then you couldn't judge it correctly. They felt that all sides had to be published so that you wouldn't accidentally overlook what God was trying to tell you — and they practiced that, even to the point of the official church press printing the opinion of those opposing official church doctrine. Other scholars have said that Puritans studied "occurrences" (news events) to try to interpret what God was telling them about how they were living. I point out to my students that early newspapers didn't follow a specific format; some were about occurrences, but some were about education (reprinting the entire encyclopedia, for instance) and some were reader-driven (people wrote in questions, kind of like Dear Abby). Newspapers decided collectively over time to follow the Puritan model of "occurrences" as newspaper content.

Ferré: The obvious way that my faith has affected my teaching and

research is in what I study. As a person raised in the Southern Baptist Convention, married in the Episcopal Church, and settled in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I am fascinated by why people believe what they believe. American religious media became the subject of two scholarly books: *A Social Gospel for Millions: The Religious Bestsellers of Charles Sheldon, Charles Gordon, and Harold Bell Wright* and *Channels of Belief: Religion and American Commercial Television*. And for much of my career, I've been able to explore religious belief and expression in the college classroom in courses such as Religion and Media, Mass Media and Death, and Faith and Film.

In the spirit of the writer of the New Testament book of *James* who said, "I will show you my faith by my works," I am equally fascinated in moral reasoning about communication behavior. Media ethics has been the subject of my last four books, all co-authored or co-edited: *Public Relations & Ethics: A Bibliography*; *Good News: Social Ethics and the Press*; *Ethics for Public Communication: Defining Moments in Media History*; and *Journalism's Ethical Progression: A Twentieth-Century Journey*. Most of my work in media ethics has been historical and descriptive, although I joined Clifford Christians and Mark Fackler in championing communitarianism, which we consider an antidote to the excesses of individualism. In biblical terms, I am more of a chronicler than an evangelist, although I acknowledge that one does bleed into the other.

***Evensen**: How would you say your religious faith affects your view of history?*

Williams: In my very first class of my very first day as an undergrad at a church-related college, my professor wrote on the board for a history

class, "That which hath been is now; that which is to be hath already been, and God requireth that which is past." It's from *Ecclesiastes*. I love the idea of history being required. I don't mean required in college (although it should be!), but rather cosmically required of us in the great scheme of the world. I connect that with my own belief that everyone loves history; they just may not have found what type of history they love yet. It seems deeply part of us as humans to want to understand history. On a practical level, we can see the need all the time to learn from history — but I think it's part of our very nature to try to understand history. It's how we were created, if you will.

Littlefield: I would say my theological worldview makes me resistant to Whig interpretations of history, that things are inevitably progressing, or that we as humans can usher in the millennium or golden age; and resistant to a more negative, premillennial view that things are spiraling downward and the end times are upon us. Many theologians — dating back to the famous debates between Augustine and Pelagius — have grappled with the question of whether humans are basically rubbish or basically good. My reading aligns with Martin Luther's, that we are simultaneously sinners and saints. Christians must hold in dialectical tension the truth that God created all of humanity in his own image, i.e. we are basically good, with the truth that we are sinners. Recognizing that tension helps me take every figure in history whom I research on their own terms, in the context of their time, and seek to understand the complexities and nuances of their thought and action. In short, I would say my theological beliefs about human beings actually make me a better historian.

Ferré: I pay special attention to religious dimensions of media history.

Radio in the 1920s, for instance, was a medium of great social, economic, and political importance — but radio was also a fundamentalist-modernist battlefield, with evangelists such as Paul Rader, pastor of the Chicago Gospel Tabernacle, preaching biblical literalism and Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of the inter-denominational Riverside Church in New York, preaching progressive revelation. Religious movements have always been socially influential, so I believe it is vital to understand their involvement in media.

***Evensen**: In* Christ and the Life of the Mind*, Mark Noll describes faith as a key to understanding history. He notes that every major theme of Christianity asks, "how the present relates to the past." Noll cites the writing of the Apostle Paul in the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, where Paul observes, "everything that was written in the past was written to teach us." How does your own research in journalism and mass communication relate to Noll's point?*

Ferré: A number of years ago I wrote a chapter about the first 35 years of religious advertisements and public service announcements on broadcast television. It was a cautionary tale that concluded that religious television spots sometimes assisted fundraising and internal public relations but had little effect on church growth or education. A year or so after this chapter appeared in print, a representative from a mainline Protestant denomination called to ask whether my research supported this denomination's plans to spend a million dollars on a national television campaign to shore up its diminishing membership. I explained my study and concluded, "Your money would be better spent feeding the hungry." The call ended shortly thereafter. The denomination conducted its television campaign, and membership continued to decline.

So yes, media history has lessons to offer the present. But discerning how the past speaks to the present is often difficult — not to mention the will to learn the lessons that media history has to offer.

Littlefield: Are you allowed to be a historian if you don't think the past has important lessons for the present? I am drawn here to *Ecclesiastes*, that there is nothing new under the sun, it has all been done before. And thus, understanding how human beings navigated tensions in the past can help us learn from their mistakes and better deal with the present. My current work is focused on the history of Christian nationalism in the United States, as I am updating a book with Richard Hughes called *Christian America and the Kingdom of God*. The updated edition includes both religious and journalism history, specifically tracing how conservative media have embraced and promoted Christian nationalism today. That's fairly recent history that can help people navigate the now.

It's the new chapter I wrote on the social gospel period that I think is most helpful for understanding our current moment. These progressive Protestants were working for social reforms in the Gilded Age, and many started their own periodicals both in advance of and alongside the more secular muckrakers, who of course shared much of the social gospels' religious rhetoric. I argue that these leaders did significant good, particularly in improving living conditions and helping to advance labor rights. However, I also show how they were Christian nationalists, and how belief in their own Anglo Protestant superiority caused them to overlook or actively harm those who didn't fit their tribe.

In *Taking America Back for God*, Samuel Perry and Andrew Whitehead's sociological data show that nearly a third of Americans accommodate Christian nationalism because they want to see Christian values shape public policy. They, in turn, give cover to the 20% who are more

aggressive ambassadors for Christian nationalism and want to see Christianity dominate the nation. I believe studying how Christian nationalism corrupted the social gospel vision for installing God's kingdom can help the accommodators to better understand the dangers of this ideology.

Evensen: *Are the rules of evidence any different for research informed by faith and research presumably informed by "rationality" and "reason" and "scientific objectivity"?*

Williams: I think they are. I admit I'm irked when my students cite a "scholarly" source where the argument is based entirely on faith. It seems incomplete. However, I believe that the scientific method is merely one way to understand the universe. It isn't the only way. The following example relates. So hang with me. In the TV show *Young Sheldon*, Sheldon is a child genius laser-focused on science. His twin sister, Missy, is not nearly as smart. In one episode, the twins were being studied by scientists, apparently to determine why Sheldon was a genius and Missy was not. Sheldon easily passed the mathematical/scientific problems. Missy struggled with them. Then Sheldon was shown a picture of monkeys sitting on a living room couch, talking. He was asked to describe what was going on. Sheldon brushed it off as impossible, as real monkeys don't sit on living room couches and talk. Missy, however, saw social relationships in vivid detail. She noted that the picture on the wall of an old, wrinkled monkey was probably the grandmother monkey, who was probably dead. A grown-up monkey was shooing a child monkey out of the room, while other grown-up monkeys laughed, probably because, as Missy guessed, a dirty joke was being told. She went on pulling together all the social interactions into a bigger mean-

ing. It really brought into focus that society values Sheldon's scientific genius while ignoring Missy's social genius. To me it showed that sometimes reasoning scorned by the scientific method exhibits just as much genius, but in another direction. It may seem to scientists that historians are making leaps of faith when we interpret meaning, when actually historians are working from historical evidence and using (shall I say) God-given reasoning to figure out the greater meaning.

Littlefield: In one sense, no: Both should pursue truth where it leads and follow the weight of evidence. However, not everything humans do or experience is rational, objective, or scientifically measurable. I think people of faith who leave room for mystery, including the possibility of the supernatural, can actually better capture the nuance and complexity of what a historical figure was thinking or doing. It's critical, of course, to take them in their own words and in their proper context. That is, if a historical figure claims to have had a supernatural vision or performed a miracle, we should not discount the possibility that he or she is telling the truth. We would quote the primary source for the claim and present all available evidence for and against, i.e. trust, but verify. I have read reigious historians who deny the possibility of the supernatural, and their own doubt comes across in their work. Here, an insistence on reason alone might actually obscure the pursuit of truth.

Ferré: As a scholar whose patron saint is Doubting Thomas, I believe that the rules of qualitative and quantitative evidence are the same for all researchers, whatever their religious faith. Anything else is propaganda.

***Evensen**: How do those of us who have a faith that informs our research of*

the past escape the criticism that what we are really doing is "religious apologetics" with a "faith-based understanding" that only poses as historical research?

Ferré: All scholars, whether they are religious or not, are subject to the academic standards of their field of research. Submitting one's work to peer-reviewed conferences and journals — the traditional method of certifying one's work within a diverse community of scholars — should screen out unsupported presuppositions and claims. The work of a media historian who presents research at AEJMC and AJHA and publishes in *American Journalism* and *Journalism History* will easily fend off charges of writing religious apologetics.

That is not to say that historical research isn't interpretive. All social research is. But research that passes muster in our system of peer review is hardly rationalization. Peer-reviewed scholarship is subject to further scrutiny and criticism, of course, but it deserves consideration. Its value depends upon the quality of its evidence and reasoning, not on the religiosity of its author.

Williams: Even though I've studied, lectured on, and written about religious topics in media history, no one has ever called me a religious apologist, either in secular or religious universities. Maybe if you are careful to use and cite actual historical evidence, you escape such criticism.

Littlefield: Sadly, there are pseudo historians out there who are doing "religious apologetics." Moreover, they are cherry picking historical narratives to fit their preconceived notions of the past and that best suit the ideological commitments they are promoting. I think we respond best

here by doing good, nuanced work that tells the complete story — the good, bad, and ugly — of where the evidence leads us.

***Evensen**: Hesiod's* Theogony*, written 700 years before the Common Era, attempted to synthesize the study of Greek myths and gods. Isn't the role of religious faith in understanding history really a very old tradition that has long helped us better understand that history?*

Littlefield: As religious faith has always been an aspect of the human condition, at least since recorded history began, it has always been a crucial part of telling the story of humanity.

Williams: Someone once challenged me as an undergrad that some interpretations of history were "emotional." I said, "Emotions are a part of history!" And that's so. Much of what humankind has done has been based on emotions. The same is true for religion and faith. Much of what humankind has done over the course of time has been based on religion and faith. They're part of history! It is certainly possible for someone who isn't religious to study the religious basis of actions in the past. However, a good historian needs to avoid reducing religious people in history to stereotypes or suppressing them under modern stances. For example, early pamphlets told Europeans of the many Native Americans who had been converted to Christianity. Those pamphlets caused a great deal of interest in European settlement of the New World. Some today want to complain that the intent to convert natives showed insensitivity and even cruelty, but people who came over as missionaries to the Indians sincerely believed that they were saving a race hitherto damned because they didn't know Christ. I don't believe Native Americans were ever damned for that reason, but that was a sin-

cere belief among Christians of the day, and we need to see their motives as sincere, even though flawed.

***Evensen**: As a journalism and mass communication historian how have you operationalized Augustine's assertion that "I believe so that I may better understand" that was reinforced by Anselms's 11th-century definition of research as "a faith seeking understanding."*

Williams: Historical research always involves faith of some sort (religious or secular) that we can find truth. After all, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (says *Hebrews*).

Littlefield: My faith tradition affirms that God is big enough for our questions, even if the answer, on this side of the veil at least, is he is God, and we are not. As a historian specializing in journalism and religion, my aim is to seek to understand the fullness of the human condition, including all that motivates human beings in their thoughts and actions. For many of us in this roundtable, we have researched people who sincerely believed God was directing them in service to his people and for his kingdom, and we have studied how they used forms of media to spread their message. We have noted where they succeeded, and where they failed. We have sought to understand them fully, on their own terms, even as we could never objectively say whether God was involved at all. This to me is a form of faith seeking understanding.

Ferré: I haven't thought of my scholarship in terms of "faith seeking understanding" before, but I suppose that Anselm of Canterbury's definition of theology does have parallels to my own historical project. Insofar as I believe that the media are central to religious life, my studies

could be considered ways of discovering different dimensions of their historical significance.

***Evensen**: The University of British Columbia has created a central database of religion in history that has grown to more than 1,000 published articles written by more than 500 scholars. Does this suggest there is a growing understanding in the academy of the importance of religious faith as an element in better understanding the past?*

Ferré: The study of religious history has a long and storied tradition, but the study of religion and media is much more recent. But your point is applicable even to this newer focus. For example, Peter Horsfield's sweeping history of Christianity and media, From *Jesus to the Internet* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), was reviewed in disparate scholarly publications including *Communication Research Trends*, *Communication, Politics & Culture*, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television*, *Journal of Communication & Religion*, and *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.

Littlefield: I would actually argue that any perception that religious faith didn't matter much to understanding the past was a brief blip in the long historical record. As your question about *Theogony* illustrates, as long as there has been a historical record, historians have attempted to document the religious beliefs of humankind. As societies grappled with Modernization and the role religious faith would continue to play in the contemporary world, sociologists of religion, and thus also historians, may have leaned too hard into secularization theories that we were on an inevitable path toward privatizing all faith and moving toward purely secular societies. When this theory was in vogue, particu-

larly in the 1970s and 1980s, historians maybe paid less attention to the faith motivations of their subjects. But this left scholars blind to the ways religious belief was persisting, and sometimes radicalizing in dangerous ways. Peter Berger, who once trumpeted this secularization thesis, shifted in the last years of his scholarship toward promoting religious pluralism as the real key to understanding contemporary society. The very persistence of religion, and its ongoing role for better and for worse in global affairs, demonstrates the need to understand its historical development.

Williams: It's inspirational that the list has grown. Maybe now, when more people are questioning religion, scholars are also seeing the need to ask questions about religion, and that is another avenue of understanding.

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Historian Interview

Brooke Kroeger ©

Kroeger

Brooke Kroeger, a professor emerita at New York University, is the author of a number of books that have received national recognition. NPR in 1994 named her *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist* a Best Book of the Year. She has published five other books, including *Fannie: The Talent for Success of Writer Fannie Hurst* (1998, a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* Best Books of the Year); *Passing: When People Can't Be Who They Are* (2003, a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* Best Books of the Year); *Undercover Reporting: The Truth About Deception* (2012, a finalist for the Frank Luther Mott Research Award from Kappa Tau Alpha); and *The Suffragents: How Women Used Men to Get the Vote* (Gold Medal in U.S. History in the 2018 Independent Publisher Book Awards and a finalist for the 2018 Sally and Morris Lasky Prize of the Center for Political History). Her latest book is *Undaunted: How Women Changed American Journalism*.

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

Kroeger: I grew up in Kansas City with a large, close extended family. I have two younger brothers, no longer young but both accomplished. The older of the two is an educator and ordained rabbi; the younger, a

software designer and musician who is well-known in the rarefied community of jazz and blues harmonicists. My indefatigable father, who wrote unpublished pot-boilers, ran a number of small retail businesses without success. My mother became a real estate agent after she turned 50 and loved her work.

I chose Boston University for college because, in 1967, it was far from home and one of two known places in the Northeast corridor to study journalism. I minored in political science. On graduation in 1971, I went directly to Columbia to the graduate journalism school, which then still carried Joseph Pulitzer's name. I was in the class of 1971-72.

I've been married twice, divorced once, and widowed in 2021. I claim three children, the youngest of whom I bore, and seven grandchildren ages 12 to 24.

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

Kroeger: I married the first time, mid-year while at Columbia, at age 22. The spring of 1972 after Columbia graduation, knowing we would soon be moving, I took a job as the entire staff of a 24-page shopper called *Town & Village*, which covered Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village. Shortly after we arrived in Chicago in the early fall, the AP hired me on a three-month vacation relief arrangement. When that ended, the bureau chief kindly advocated for me for a full-time job at the city's UPI bureau, where I started in January 1973. I replaced the formidable Anne Keegan, whom the *Chicago Tribune* had just hired. I've often been asked if I felt like a pioneer in those days, but the answer is no. The Vietnam draft loomed for all eligible young men. So that and

the discrimination that legal actions against *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Life*, *Look*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, the *Detroit Free-Press*, *Readers Digest* and so on, meant opportunity for women had widened, much in the way it did during both world wars.

I loved working in Chicago. Beyond the usual reporting duties, I learned to write Big Ten roundups and short college game stories ("Brooke: You cannot *make* a rebound"), covered the gubernatorial campaign of 1976, and have a permanent reminder in stretch marks of the three painful hours I stood — eight months pregnant — for an address at the Medina Temple from presidential hopeful Jimmy Carter at 8:30 pm on September 9, 1976. After I filed, I yielded, and was granted desk duty for the remaining few weeks to term. I was on the election team — so heady — and felt sure I could make it to that first Tuesday in November, but Brett came on her due date of October 27, and the nurse called in to my bureau chief to say I would not be in because I was in labor. My husband had already left for his new assignment in Brussels, where I arrived three weeks later from Kansas City, where I had gone to stay with my parents three days after Brett's birth. As her passport declared, "Height: 1 foot, six inches." UPI promised me a job in Brussels as soon as I was ready to return. With accrued vacation, I cobbled together four months of maternity leave and started work in UPI's Brussels bureau and European headquarters in March 1977.

Brussels was dull, except for the Moluccan siege in Holland and the Shaba war in then Zaire, which we covered mostly by phone. For me, the quiet job was very helpful with a newborn and a husband always on the road. Chapeaus off to the Belgians for their social net; daycare was remarkable and utterly affordable, even on a UPI salary. None of my friends with babies back home could even imagine the luck I was having

in being able to manage work and an infant, nor were most ready to bear children. Over my eight years abroad, there were men with children with wives at home to care for them, plenty of single women, but I was the only woman working as a journalist among us who had a child.

Luckily, by December, UPI decided to move its Europe, Middle East, Africa Division headquarters from Brussels to London, where the news flow was constant. I reported and edited for the next two years during the administration of Margaret Thatcher. In August 1979, the company transferred me to Tel Aviv to prepare to become bureau chief as my predecessor left for Washington. My years in the Middle East, 1979-83, included the finalizing of the Camp David Accords, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, almost daily Palestinian uprisings, the aggressive establishing of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, the Sabra and Shatilla massacre and judicial reckoning, the assassination of Anwar Sadat, the death of Moshe Dayan, the blowing up by Israel of Iraq's nuclear reactor (We beat the competition by forty-five minutes on that story. It was a very proud day for the bureau), and the Israeli hand-back of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, not in that order. There were so many major stories and the almost unfathomable after Brussels and London: weather so perfect it never spoiled plans. No one even mentioned it.

In 1983, I was called back to London (as the company was falling apart, let's just acknowledge) to become division editor, responsible for the 100 correspondents and large UPI stringer network from London to Johannesburg to Moscow. A year later, in August 1984, as UPI went into more complete freefall, *Newsday* hired me. I was remarrying at the time, and we thought New York was not an option for us; so I turned down the offer of foreign editor. Then, when New York indeed began to make the most sense in the long run, we changed our minds and

Newsday now offered me the UN correspondent position, which I gladly accepted. After eight years abroad, foreign news was familiar turf but not New York City. It had been so long since I had been back home, I didn't even know what *The Gong Show* was. And I was glad we could settle in the city and not in the middle of Long Island.

At just about that time, after a year at the UN, *New York Newsday* was starting up and needed experienced women editors. I was called upon to become an editor at the "tabloid in a tutu" and was named one of two deputy metropolitan editors. *Newsday* was a great paper at the time and *New York Newsday* a grand experiment, but neither turned out to be the right fit for me after having run a third of the world for one glorious year. I resigned in December 1984 and freelanced for magazines for about three years before the idea for the *Nellie Bly* book emerged. That work took three years; *Fannie*, which followed immediately, took five. I completed the manuscript in 1998, just as the opportunity to become a visiting professor at NYU came up. I applied and was chosen, and then, two years later, applied for a tenure-track associate professor position on a three-year track, two years of which I had already fulfilled and thus went up for tenure the following year. *Fannie* was published in August 1999. So, although I had been working on the book for years before NYU was in my sights, its publication date meant it counted on the tenure clock. The attention *Nellie* had received earlier also worked in my favor. Plus, I took to teaching in a big way.

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

Kroeger: I have only taught at NYU. My years of service were twenty-two, from 1998 to 2020, with six (2005-2011) as department chair and founding director of the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute. My last

year on the active full-time faculty, 2020-21, was a sabbatical.

I love to teach skills. In the early years, I taught feature writing and the initial reporting class to graduate students in the Literary Reportage program and to those in Cultural Reporting and Criticism. I also taught a seminar in the literature of undercover reporting. For more than a decade, I guided the year-long senior Honors seminar for undergraduates, during which top students with the requisite GPA devote themselves to reporting and writing a senior thesis of up to 10,000 words in length.

I created GloJo, for Global and Joint Program Studies, the (still unique) global journalism program, which splits a two-year graduate studies MA between journalism and eight different academic area studies graduate programs plus international relations. For years I taught the thesis preparation course in the third of their four semesters as the GloJos completed their reporting. GloJo masters degree candidates spend the full two years in the program working on their thesis requirement; the undergraduate honors students, two semesters. But the GloJo efforts always involve a summer between years one and two for reporting from abroad. I advised as many as seven or eight of my students one-on-one for this requirement each year as well.

Where's the history, you might wonder? My courses generally required a major archival component. A favorite of mine was "A Lot about a Plot," which involved a semester's worth of reporting to produce a 3,000-word narrative based on primary sources. Students were required to track the history of a numbered plot of New York City land to before its first-built origins — "back to grassland," as we put it. As much as students balked at this assignment, and they often did, I am gratified by the number of thank-you notes received years after the fact when they were pleased to know how to mine off-line historical archives

and real estate records in their work as professionals.

Oh yes, and I once taught a course in Writing Lives. Enrollment was small; so we never offered it again, but it was potent. Several of the 50-page biographies produced in that class saw publication of one kind or another. The author Kate Bolick was in that class, writing about Neith Boyce; so was Carol Lee of NBC News, with a fine piece on Bella Abzug.

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.*

Kroeger: I blush to dare to think of myself as anything more than a reporter who loves the archives and likes to go deep and fresh. As an historian, if the term even applies, I'm self-taught. The impetus to do this kind of work emanated from the decision to write a biography of Nellie Bly, knowing from my initial survey of the resources known to be available that there seemed to be very little primary material. I took that as a challenge. Quickly, I learned I not only possessed *die Kraft zu sitzen* but relished the opportunity to engage in the hunt for what was thought to be unfindable. I described this in some detail in *Historiography*'s May 2023 issue. [Ed. note: That issue of *Historiography* is available on our journal's website at this address: http://history-jmc.com/2023_Issues_files/vol.%209%202%20Historiography2.pdf].

To me, engagement in the act of investigation and discovery is about as exciting and fulfilling as life gets. I credit my reporting years with however poorly or well I do this work. The immediacy of wire service work teaches one to be able to long for the opportunity to do what really needs to be done: taking perhaps another six months; perhaps

another six years. But this happens just as obligation and the assignment demand the harsh adjustment of that timeline to the six hours or sometimes six minutes to get the story out. It's surprisingly useful training for when the opportunity to go long and deep at last presents itself.

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

Kroeger: Robert Caro, Jill Lepore, Scott Berg's *Max Perkins*, just to name a few. I admire and have learned from many AJHA colleagues as well, including but by no means limited to those on whose work and/or guidance I have most directly relied: David Abrahamson, Jinx Broussard, Kathy Roberts Forde, Tracy Lucht, Carolyn Kitch, Linda Lumsden, Kim Mangum, Jane Marcellus, Jane Rhodes, Linda Steiner, and Kim Todd.

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

Kroeger: The evolution of women's place in history through the lens of their place in the culture as writers or journalists; the role of men in women's advancement; the examination of the discomfort that deception creates for what would or could be considered good and reasonable purpose.

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

Kroeger: All of it, really. *Nellie*, as described in the May 2023 issue of

this journal; *Fannie*, whose years (1885-1968) slightly overlap with Nellie's but extend to a high point in second-wave feminism (I've been interviewed about this for the fall-winter 2023 issue of *Le Temps des médias*); *Passing: When People Can't Be Who They Are* grew out of my work on Fannie Hurst's *Imitation of Life* and the real-time response to the book and films from scholars Black and white; *Undercover Reporting* takes this controversial field back to 1820 with its unearthing of major investigations long lost to history; *The Suffragents* excavated (not altogether popularly, but what I wrote was truth) the buried but critical role of men in the struggle of women to win the vote; and this past May, *Undaunted: How Women Changed American Journalism*, a representative history of women at the top of the profession — specifically those who served in what have long been considered the most coveted men's roles — from 1840 to the present.

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

Kroeger: *Nellie* because of the place in the work of others it has continued to hold over the past thirty years, and *Undaunted* because of the early response it has been receiving.

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

Kroeger: See just above, with the requisite embarrassment at even being so considered. *Undaunted* has for the first time for me a notable reliance

on the work of others. There are, however, several scoops, e.g., see Anne O'Hare McCormick's Pulitzer, the chapter on "Power Coupling," great heretofore unknown characters such as Edith Evans Asbury and Ann Stringer, and Jill Abramson's latter-day reflections on her dismissal. The use of the chronological continuum as the book's organizing structure also gives rise to new reflections, I think. At least it did for me.

My previous works all put a hard downbeat on the presentation of previously unexplored primary material with the attendant hope of introducing new knowledge and information and of generating new prisms through which to reach understandings.

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

Kroeger: That's easy: I wish I would have had the sense, even at 41, to apply to a Ph.D. program when I began to work on *Nellie*. My dissertation would have been well under way. Alas.

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.*

Kroeger: As I've said before to *Historiography*, leave no stone unturned; will success where it seems impossible; privilege primary over secondary sources; cast the widest possible net for new resources; conduct interviews as soon as feasible as life is fragile; honor chronology, which has so much to teach; then go follow the trail of amassed material everywhere it leads.

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?*

Kroeger: To "improve the status," in these crazy times, likely means finding ways to extend the visibility of the work in as many ways as possible. I note the success of the *Journalism History* podcast as a means of extending reach to targeted audiences and classrooms. Identifying and executing a few ideas such as that might be a great help. Is it available through all the academic and open databases? That would be a start if it's not already in place….

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Book Award Interview

Jon Marshall ©

Marshall

Jon Marshall was a runner-up for the American Journalism Historians Association's 2023 award for the best book of 2022 for his work *Clash: Presidents and the Press in Times of Crisis*. He's also the author of *Watergate's Legacy and the Press: The Investigative Impulse*. An associate professor of journalism at Northwestern University, he received his MSJ degree at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism.

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

Marshall: *Clash: Presidents and the Press in Times of Crisis* examines the history of the relationship between the news media and presidents from the founding of the United States to the start of Joe Biden's term. It seeks to answer two basic research questions: How did the nation reach its present tumultuous and often dysfunctional interactions between journalists and the White House, and what was truly unprecedented and what was precedented about Donald Trump's relationship with the press? It looks specifically at the administrations of ten

presidents: John Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Trump. I chose these ten because I think they tell us the most about how the dynamics between the White House and journalists have changed through the years.

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

Marshall: In one sense, I owe the idea for this book to my dad. When I was five years old, my family was spending a week in San Diego during the summer of 1968 when he learned that Republican presidential nominee Richard Nixon was in town. He thought it would be a good experience for my older brother and me to meet Nixon, so we walked to the hotel where he was staying and waited outside hoping that he would come out. Sure enough, a few minutes later the future president walked out the door, and my dad shouted, "Hello, Mr. Nixon, come meet my family." Nixon came over, shook our hands, and exchanged a few pleasantries. And so began my fascination with presidents, which only deepened a few years later when I watched the Senate Watergate hearings with my mom and saw how Nixon — who had seemed like such a nice person — was getting into big trouble. Largely because of these childhood experiences, once I became a journalism historian, I focused mostly on presidents and the news media, including my first book, *Watergate's Legacy and the Press: The Investigative Impulse*.

Then in early 2017 I watched as the newly elected Donald Trump continuously shocked people with how he handled the press — calling reporters "enemies of the American people" and "terrible people," circumventing the White House press corps by making major announcements via Twitter, blatantly lying about the size of his inauguration

crowd, and much more. I wanted to examine the historical forces that led us to this point and determine how much of Trump's relationship with the press was truly unprecedented and how much actually had precedent. And I wanted to do it in a way that was both scholarly rigorous and accessible to readers with a general interest in the media, history, and politics.

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

Marshall: Of course, a tremendous amount of historical research has been done on individual presidents. And there has been a lot of work on the history of political journalism in general such as Donald A. Ritchie's excellent *Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps*, published in 2005. Less historical literature existed from recent years on the nexus between presidents and the press. James E. Pollard's *The Presidents and the Press* was published in 1947, John William Tebbel and Sarah Miles Watts' *The Press and the Presidency: From George Washington to Ronald Reagan* came out in 1985, and Brigitte Lehens Nacos' *The Press, Presidents and Crises* was issued in 1990. I thought it would be useful to update this existing scholarship and try to connect the dots from the nation's founding to the present day. While I was working on *Clash*, Harold Holzer's *The Presidents vs. The Press* was published; it's a terrific book that has a less narrative approach than mine does.

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?*

Marshall: I started by studying the existing literature while I began to dig into different archives. I examined stories and other material from more than 90 different media outlets including newspapers, pamphlets magazines, TV broadcasts, radio shows, news websites and social media feeds. I also used the archives of the presidential libraries, the Library of Congress, C-SPAN, and the National Archives. It was also fun to read the memoirs and biographies of presidents, their aides, and journalists who covered them.

Overall, it took me four years to research and write *Clash* plus another 15 months to see it through the editing and publication process.

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

Marshall: Because of COVID, I was only able to visit one presidential archive — George W. Bush's in Dallas — in person. The other presidential archives have a wealth of material online, but I wish I could have physically spent time in them as well as those for some of the journalists.

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

Marshall: When researching history that involves presidents, I think it's especially important to keep in mind that our sources could be practicing political spin, whether it be in their letters, memos, speeches or any other written or oral material. Of course, we need to be wary of the potential that sources could be fudging the truth in any kind of history we do, but the likelihood is especially high with politics. This necessi-

tates trying to find multiple sources that will corroborate what happened.

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

Marshall: Probably my biggest challenge was deciding what not to include. I chose a topic that spanned more than two centuries, and there was a tremendous amount of material that could have fit within it. I chose to focus on the relationships of ten presidents with the press, but others — among them Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy — are certainly worthy of close examination. My publisher gave me a word limit, however, and even though I went a bit over it, I didn't want to go too far over. The initial drafts of each of my chapters were at least three times as long as the final versions because I had to, as the old saying goes, kill many of my darlings. And I'm glad that I was forced to make some tough choice because I think it made the book more readable in the end.

My other major challenge was to figure out when to finish my researching and writing. I originally intended to finish the project in November 2020, right after the presidential election ended. But as we all know, Trump continued to contest the election results, and I didn't think I could adequately complete the book until that was resolved, or at least until Biden was inaugurated. As a result, I missed my deadline by a couple of months.

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?*

Marshall: Yes, I think it's human nature for us to have emotions, whether positive or negative, conscious or unconscious, about the people and events we study. As I was researching and writing *Clash*, I felt like I was getting to know the different presidents as people and thought about which ones I'd most like to invite to a party (definitely Roosevelt for his cocktail-making ability, Lincoln and Reagan for their jokes, and perhaps even Nixon for his piano playing) and those with whom I would not want to spend time (Wilson was at the top of that list). I believe as historians we need to be honest with ourselves that we can have pre-conceived biases and still absolutely be committed toward following the evidence where it leads us and trying to keep an open mind when we interpret what we found. My perspective on several of the presidents certainly changed the more research I did. But I do think it's OK — and I realize this could be controversial — for historians to have viewpoints as long as we are staying true to the facts and are willing to change our interpretations as we encounter new evidence.

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

Marshall: *Clash* highlights how many of the presidents who have been most successful at getting their agendas into law — for example FDR with his New Deal legislation, Reagan with his tax cuts, Obama with the Affordable Care Act — effectively took advantage of the latest communications technology to bypass the gatekeepers of the White House press corps to take their messages directly to the public. The most successful presidents also tended to maintain cordial and respectful relationships with individual reporters.

Some of my favorite insights were about moments that illustrated the ways different presidents related to the press. There was John Adams

joining a water brigade to put out a fire in the home of an editor who regularly pummeled him in print, Abe Lincoln allowing Frederick Douglass to cut to the front of the line of people wanting to meet with him, Franklin Roosevelt discussing strategy with Edward R. Murrow over beers late at night after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and George W. Bush serving chocolate birthday cake to Rush Limbaugh. I tried to include as many anecdotes such as these to show the kinds of relationships the presidents had with journalists.

Historiography: *What findings most surprised you?*

Marshall: I originally was not planning to write a chapter focusing on Bill Clinton, but the more research I did, the more I realized his time in the White House was a turning point in the relationship between presidents and the press. The World Wide Web came of age during his administration, while Fox and MSNBC joined CNN in providing 24-hour cable news. As a result, Clinton's White House had to be ready every second of every day to respond to something that might pop up in the news. We entered the age of instant personalized communication, allowing people to constantly have a choice of what content to consume, which changed everything. During Clinton's presidency, we also saw the growth of a coordinated opposition that used multiple media — television, talk radio, newspapers, magazines, and the web — to attack the president, which is a phenomenon that continues to intensify.

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

Marshall: If you are like me, you'll be thinking about your book constantly and working on it every spare hour; so it should be about a subject that you truly love. I also encourage writers to think about when in the day they work best and setting aside those hours for working on the book and nothing else. During my writing hours, I turned off my phone, didn't check my email, and told my family to only bother me if there was a fire.

Historiography: *Is there anything else that you would like to share?*

Marshall: I am truly grateful to the community of media historians, which has been a constant source of ideas, support, and encouragement. Most of what I know about media history comes from attending the sessions of the American Journalism Historians Association and the History Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, along with reading journals such *Historiography in Mass Communication*. I deeply appreciate the work you do and thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences with *Clash*.

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The Media and Public Opinion

By Wm. David Sloan ©

Sloan

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

It will become clear as we publish more essays that many ways exist to justify JMC's historical importance. One monolithic explanation won't work. David Sloan's essay focuses on the media's role in helping to form public opinion.

As the year 1798 came to an end, Federalist politicians looked to the new year with foreboding. Their party was locked in a battle with their Republican opponents that both sides believed would determine the nature of the new American nation. In the year just closing, the Federalists, in control of the national government, had succeeded in

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. He founded the AJHA. This article first appeared in the book The Significance of the Media in American History, James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, editors.

passing the oppressive Sedition Act. Perhaps it would work in silencing the opposition. Still, the Federalists feared for the future. The Republicans yet might find a way to spread their radical views through their newspapers to the general populace. "Give to any set of men the command of the press," Judge Alexander Addison wrote with worry on New Year's Day of 1799, "and you give them the command of the country, for you give them the command of public opinion, which commands everything."[1] Should Republicans succeed at corrupting public opinion, what could result but despotism? Federalists wondered. "Of such force is public opinion," Addison had written earlier during the furor over passage of the Sedition Act, "that, with it on its side, the worst government will support itself, and, against it, the best government will fall."[2]

Federalists by 1799 had come to realize a fact that had been at the essence of American public life almost since the first colonists had stepped ashore in the early 1600s. Public opinion — that is, in its simplest terms, the views and sentiments of the citizenry — was the basis for public policy, and the printing press was the means that provided a forum for that public opinion. Since then and throughout American history, many of our fundamental concepts about the mass media have arisen from a belief in the importance of public opinion. That belief served as the basis for thinking on the press in the colonial period, and it has continued as a key consideration up to the present.

One does not have to think on the topic for long before recognizing that a respect for public opinion is essential to American views about public affairs. The importance attached to public opinion historically grew out of a respect for the value of the individual. In the areas of life touching on public affairs, that respect grew from both religious and political roots.

Much of what came to be a distinctive American view about the role of the individual resulted from English Protestant thinking. Christians believed that God considered individuals important, so much so that He had allowed His own divine Son to die for them. Even though Catholics also held that dogma, with Protestants it gave rise to a belief not only in the spiritual worth of each individual but in his earthly importance also. In contrast to Catholics, Protestants also postulated that individual believers could communicate directly with God without going through a mediator. If God, Protestants argued, had placed such importance on individuals, must not human beings do the same? That belief resulted in a deep respect for the beliefs and opinions of individuals.

Furthermore, God had revealed Himself directly to the human race through the Holy Bible. That meant that people had an obligation to become literate so that they could read His word, and printing became important because it provided a means of making copies of the Scripture available to individuals. Such ideas affected human existence not only in religious matters but in secular ones also.

In political thinking, the ideas that grew out of the works of such men as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke[3] implicitly sprang from a belief in public opinion as the foundation of a proper governmental system. The importance attached to the role of public opinion rested ultimately on a respect for the worth of individual human beings. In the arena of public affairs, such thinking led unalterably to the conclusion that a political system must be based on public debate.

That conclusion led directly to the recognition that in a society in which affairs were to be debated there must be a means through which the debate could be carried on. In a society that was large or dispersed, it was physically impossible for issues to be contested face-to-face

among the debaters. A more accessible forum was needed, and that forum was provided by the printing press. In today's America, the forum is more likely to be television, but the principle remains the same.

Prior to the debate about the nature of the political system that took place after the adoption of the United States Constitution in 1788, the groundwork already had been laid for the eventual triumph of public opinion. America's earliest settlers began their communities with the assumption that public affairs had to be discussed publicly. That attitude, which the Puritans and other settlers brought with them from England, seems to have been a distinctive feature of English-speaking people. For public discussion, colonists turned to the printing press — through pamphlets, broadsides, and newspapers — as the best means of providing a forum.

Different groups among early Americans held differing degrees of respect for public discussion; but, whatever their differences, the social and political circumstances prevailing in the colonies ultimately made it impossible for any group to ignore public opinion. The Puritan settlers of Massachusetts, for instance, began their thinking with the assumption that everyone was of value in the eyes of God and that, therefore, all believers should have the right to express their opinion. Through a variety of circumstances they had been able to set up a commonwealth relatively absent of the influence of the British crown and Anglican authority, thus assuring a freer society than would have been possible otherwise.

When, however, royal control was asserted over their colony in the 1680s, the conflict created a situation in which both sides had to accept the presence of opposing opinion. The Puritans' tradition of freedom of expression and the political power that they had been able to gain in the absence of royal rule made it impossible for British authorities to silence

their views. On the other hand, the force of British authority provided a safe arena for the Puritans' opponents to express their views as well.

Situations similar to that in Massachusetts existed in various degrees throughout the colonies. The ultimate effect was that the clash of competing groups, in which neither group wielded total power, created conditions in which all groups had to accept the fact that their opponents' views could be expressed publicly. In some, if not most, instances that acceptance was made grudgingly. When it was possible to do so, some groups went so far as to suppress opposing views. That circumstance can be seen clearly during the intense period surrounding the American Revolution. Radical Patriots, by intimidation and appeal to public passion, were able to silence most Tory newspapers and speakers. Ideological passions also ran high during the early national years of the American republic. It was during that period, however — from the adoption of the Constitution through the first decade of the 19th century — that the assumption that ideological debates had to be fought out in the public forum gained firm acceptance.

The Press and Party Politics, 1789-1816

Because of the democratic nature of the American political system, early party leaders recognized the necessity of appealing to public opinion if their concepts were to be the ones to shape the nation's political ideals. The primary means that they turned to mold public opinion was the press. Because decisions crucial to the nature of the American political system were being made, editors thrust themselves into the middle of the public debate. Newspapers became political and ideological instruments, and a close working relationship between editors and politicians emerged. In the struggle over politics and public opinion, journalism's

role was central.

From the outset public opinion was formally incorporated by the United States Constitution as an integral, even the central, feature of American politics. The democratic nature of American government became visible immediately to the parties. That point was suggested by John Fenno's introductory statement in the first issue of the *Gazette of the United States* in 1789. Supported and subsidized by Alexander Hamilton and other leading Federalists, the *Gazette* was intended as the mouthpiece of the Federalists in the battle that was shaping up to determine the essential nature of the new American government. "To hold up the people's own government, in a favorable point of light," Fenno wrote, " — and to impress just ideas of its administration by exhibiting FACTS, comprise the outline of the plan of this paper."[4] Fenno's was not the first newspaper to practice partisan politics, but it was the first founded as an organ of one of the factions later to comprise the first American party system. It foreshadowed the political and journalistic battles that were to take place for the next quarter century.

Federalists Vs. Republicans: A Difference of Opinion

Just when political parties developed is not agreed on by historians, although most authorities place the origins in the 1790s. The timetable of party development emphasizes the importance political leaders attributed to the press. Hamilton encouraged the establishment of the *Gazette of the United States* almost a decade before the fight over the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798 cemented party structure and discipline. Thomas Jefferson in the meantime assisted in the founding of a national organ for the Republican cause, the *National Gazette*, in 1791, even before the Republican party had taken shape.

By the time the parties had begun to take on their form, public opinion had been accepted as an important, even indispensable part of American politics. Parties differed, however, in their attitudes toward it. Republicans appealed to public opinion because they saw it as a means of positively influencing the political system. Federalists played to it because it was an unfortunate political necessity. As a result of differences in their attitudes, the parties differed in their estimations of both who the people were whose opinions were important and what the goals should be in working with public opinion.

Republicans showed no reluctance in acknowledging the role of public opinion. Indeed, they saw it as one of their closest allies. Their attitude was stated succinctly by the editor Philip Freneau. "Public opinion," he wrote, "sets the bounds to every government, and is the real sovereign of every free one."[5] These were not just the rantings of a radical journalist. The acknowledged leader of the Republicans, Jefferson, advocated the same view.

His views on the role of public opinion in America's political system have been extensively detailed. Although the historian Leonard Levy has attempted to debunk the idea of Jefferson as a libertarian, the prevailing conclusion is that Jefferson considered public opinion the guide and director of government.[6] Journalism historians have especially favored this quotation from one of Jefferson's letters:

> The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.... I am convinced that those societies [such as American Indians] which live without government, enjoy

> in their general mass an infinitely greater degree of happiness than those who live under the European governments. Among the former, public opinion is in the place of law, and restrains morals as powerfully as laws ever did anywhere.[7]

In view of other less benign comments about the press Jefferson made at various times, this letter probably reflects an exaggerated attitude, as statements by the President were wont to do. It is not misleading, though, as to his general view. To be found in Jefferson's writings are frequent references to the importance of the opinions of the public.[8]

Lesser Republican luminaries shared Jefferson's view. For example, Frances Preston, a United States Congressman from Virginia, wrote his constituents, "I have always conceived it to be one among the most essential duties of the representative of a free people, to give them all the information in his power."[9] The rhetorical question "Is this a government of the people, or of its officials?" — stated in various but similar forms — was frequently asked by Republican newspaper writers. The Anti-Federalists, forerunners of the Republicans, also had believed that government should reflect the public will. On their attitude toward the role of the people's voice in the period of the Federation, the historian Jackson Turner Main concluded, "[T]o guard against the tyranny of power and preserve popular rule, the men entrusted with power had to be kept responsive to public opinion."[10]

Federalists, however, did not share such fealty to public opinion. Nonetheless, they recognized it — sometimes too late for their own political good — as a cornerstone in American politics. Many Federalists would have preferred to conduct the government without deference to majority opinion. Others recognized that no matter what Federalists might wish, public opinion had to be courted because it was inherent

in the political system.[11] Federalists paid the ultimate tribute to the importance of public opinion with passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798. With the Acts' intent of silencing opinion, critics asked, was not the Federalists' goal to bring about uniformity of public opinion?[12]

While Federalists and Republicans agreed that public opinion was necessary to consider because it was an ingredient in the political system, they did not see eye-to-eye on whose opinion should be counted. Federalists believed that decisions should be made by the "best" men of the nation, although they did not shrink from appealing to the general public when they knew the middling class was on their side. Republicans, exhibiting their differing attitude about political participation, when speaking of public opinion meant nothing other than the opinions of that very middling class.

Yet, neither party aimed its appeals at the "masses." Large numbers of citizens were excluded from political participation. Some states imposed property-holding qualifications and tax requirements for voting throughout the Republican-Federalist period. In New York in 1790, for example, only 28.9 per cent of the adult males could vote for senator and governor. Though the number of eligible voters had increased by 1795, the percentage of the total adult male population qualified to vote remained about the same. In national elections, direct participation was reduced in those states in which presidential electors were chosen by the legislatures rather than by general ballot. When these limitations are added to the fact that newspapers had small circulations and illiteracy was common, it is probably incorrect to assume, as Donald Stewart did in *The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period* (1969), that the purpose of the press was simply to transmit ideas from political leaders to the masses.[13] Both parties attempted to appeal to people other than the lower economic classes. Spending time or effort to reach these masses

who exercised no political power would have been unrealistic.

It was clear to Federalists whose opinions were important. They were the elite, the well-born, the rich, the gentlemen, the few. "[T]hey who own the country," John Jay explained, "are the most fit persons to participate in the government of it."[14] The "most fit" included the moneyed class, merchants, college professors, the clergy, and lawyers, among others. So elitist were the views of some of the most prominent of the Federalists that even Fisher Ames — one of the party's foremost advocates of working with public opinion — lamented that not a hundred people in his state of Massachusetts agreed fully with his political notions.[15]

Despite Federalist disdain for the less fit, practical politicians — men such as Hamilton and Ames — chided fellow party members for not courting the power of public opinion, and few Federalists refused to take their case to the public when they recognized the political advantage to be gained.[16] When others — Republicans and fellow Federalists — courted the public, however, some staunch Federalists showed their contempt. They criticized Chief Justice John Marshall, otherwise a good Federalist, for his tendency to "feel the public pulse" and to "express great respect for the sovereign people."[17] A Federalist complained to Oliver Wolcott, Hamilton's successor as Secretary of the Treasury, that "Democrats had spent all their time and talents ... endeavoring to persuade the ignorant part of the community."[18] Gouverneur Morris compared Republicans to Roman "demagogues, who, by flattery, gained the aid of the populace to establish despotism."[19]

Federalist criticism of the public-oriented Republicans was evoked not only by disdain of the public. Federalists feared the ultimate power of the people. Republicans recognized this power and attempted to cultivate it to their advantage. Rather than scorning the public, they be-

lieved that the political system ultimately should conform to the wishes of the people. Edward Livingston, a United States Representative from New York, concisely stated the Republican position: "Let the public judge."[20]

Who was this "public"? Republicans usually referred to it in such broad phrases as the "people" and the "citizens." Hugh Henry Brackenridge of Pennsylvania spoke of "the citizens at large"[21]; Albert Gallatin talked about "the people at large"[22]; John Taylor wrote of instructing "the people"[23]; a writer for the *Independent Chronicle* pointed to "the will of the people."[24] These spokesmen rarely were more explicit in defining their public, but it is clear that that group known by the Federalists as the "most fit" was not the primary part of it.[25] Republicans did not, however, restrict their appeals to people of insubstantial means. They recognized that certain groups of "influential" men needed to be approached, and frequently they hoped these men then would carry local opinion.[26]

In their approaches to public opinion, then, Republicans and Federalists exhibited a number of differences. Both recognized the ultimate power of public opinion; but Federalists, if they could have had their way, would have eliminated or at least greatly reduced public opinion's role. Republicans, sensing public agreement with their ideas, thought of public opinion as an ally.

The Question of "Democracy"

The parties' differing views on the merits of "democracy" accounted for most of these differences. Federalists shunned democracy as a sure way to national ruin; Republicans embraced it as the proper method of assuring liberty and individual rights. Madison expressed the Republican

view of the proper government-citizen relationship in 1794. "If we advert to the nature of Republican government," he said, "we shall find that the censorial power is in the people over the government, and not in the Government over the people."[27] Federalists agreed that the final nature of the political system rested in the vote of its citizens, but Republicans were more eager to recognize the immediate power of the people. Because Republicans believed their views were the ones that the public would favor in the long run, they welcomed public opinion and considered it the means by which their views would become the foundation of the nation's political structure.[28]

Federalists, on the other hand, generally had low regard for the people at large. That attitude resulted in little appreciation for public opinion during the party's early years.

However, as Federalists found themselves losing ground to Republicans, they began to reassess their approaches to public opinion. They generally had little more than contempt for wide popular participation in politics, for "democracy," which for Federalists bore the connotation of mob rule. Fisher Ames, even though he became one of the Federalists' leading advocates of working with public opinion, stated a pervasive Federalist view toward democracy. He defined it as "a government by the passions of the multitude, or ... according to the vices and ambition of their leaders.... Men are often false to their country and their honor, false to duty and even to their interest, but multitudes of men are never long false or deaf to their passions." Democracy, he observed, was the "worst of all governments, or if there be a worse ... the forerunner of that.... Like death, it is only the dismal passport to a more dismal hereafter." Admitting the general public into political participation, he suggested, was to put government into the hands of "ordinary rogues."[29] Noah Webster, a Federalist editor, claimed that "a republi-

can government can be rendered durable in no other way than by excluding from elections men who have so little property, education, or principle, that they are liable to yield their own opinions to the guidance of unprincipled leaders." In 1801 he boasted that he had spent "the largest part of eighteen years in opposing Democracy."[30]

Federalists believed the average citizen had little ability to make decisions affecting government. The "choice sort of people" (which meant "Federalist leaders") were better qualified to know what was good for the nation. Because they knew more, they thought they should not be bound by public opinion. George Cabot, the "Sage of New England Federalism," set the tone of the Federalists' attitude toward the intelligence of the middling classes. "[C]onsidering the sort of stuff men are made of," he said, "I confess my apprehensions have been very great."[31] John Ward Fenno, son of the first editor of the *Gazette of the United States*, added that "the stupid populace" was "too abject in ignorance to think rightly, and too depraved to draw honest deductions."[32] Plainly, if members of the general public could not think, they certainly should not have stuck their noses into running the government. "They may know enough," the Rev. David Osgood said, "for the places and stations to which Providence has assigned them; may be good and worthy members of the community, provided they would be content to move in their own sphere and not meddle with things too high for them."[33] Hamilton confessed to Washington, "It is long since I have learned to hold popular opinion of no value."[34] Federalists felt that a nation guided by the opinions of the masses, dictated by their passions, would surely wind up wrecked. They had too much faith in their own judgment to stoop to hear the opinions of the people. They would rather have been right, they boasted, than popular.

Because Federalists knew, however, that public opinion ultimately

prevailed, they did not act completely in disregard of it. They acknowledged it but desired to limit its influence. They accommodated themselves to public opinion no more than they had to, attempting to direct public opinion rather than being directed by it. "Let the popular opinion be what it would," declared Congressman Zephaniah Swift, "too much has been said about it. We are not to be influenced by such considerations, but are only to regard the public welfare."[35] Government, wrote a newspaper contributor, should be "set totally above the influence of a surrounding populace."[36]

Federalists based their view of government autonomy from public opinion in part, oddly enough, on the fact that the government was a representative one. Citizens, they explained, gave their opinion in the votes they cast for representatives during the previous election. Their votes for offices were to be considered continuing votes of confidence. If citizens wished to voice disapproval of their representatives' acts, they must wait until the next election, when again they would have a chance to register their opinions. Criticism during the interim could be considered nothing less than an attempt to destroy a popularly constituted government and thereby overthrow the will of the electorate. It should be noted that Federalists promoted this particular point of view only so long as it was they who were the public officials. This attitude was at odds with the Republican view that public officials could fall out of public confidence and that the public could convey its opinions about representatives whenever it wished.

Wanting to remain independent of public opinion, Federalists — when they did relate to public opinion — tried primarily to manipulate it. "Instead of currying favor with the people," explained the historian John C. Miller, "the Federalists attempted to instruct them in 'salutary truths.'" They wished to tutor rather than listen to the public's views,

for they believed the people had nothing "to say worth listening to: the labor of imparting wisdom was, in their estimation, strictly a one-way process — from the top to the bottom." Federalists therefore directed most of their efforts "toward the 'rectification' of popular errors. Whenever they conceived public opinion to be wrong — and it was rare that they considered it to be otherwise — they undertook to set it right." They came to believe almost as an article of their faith "that anything popular was contrary to the best interests of the community."[37]

Federalists desired to appeal to public opinion only when they knew it would be on their side. Even then, they were not happy with what they had done. During Genet's visit to America, Federalists decided to take their case directly to the people. Although the appeal was effective, it was frowned on. Rufus King declared that such a technique was "altogether wrong." "It was never expected," he said, "... the government should be carried on by town meeting."[38]

Such an approach to public opinion seemed workable to Federalists as long as they were solidly in control of the government. As their fear of losing that control grew, they began to see that ignoring public opinion was inefficacious in their struggle to determine the nature of the political system. Republican cuts into Federalist power created a growing recognition that Federalists would have to mend their ways.[39]

As a result, the Federalists in 1798 imposed the Alien and Sedition Acts. A variety of circumstances motivated the laws. Supporters of the laws argued that they were necessary, during a period of heightened tension between the United States and France, to combat treachery that was aimed at inciting open rebellion against the government. Proponents considered them a means of restricting criticism of the Federalist policy of the Adams administration. Some of the most ardent Federalists wanted to prevent criticism from leading to public disapproval.

There is something of irony in the fact that the acts were aimed at influencing public opinion when Federalists frowned on it.

Full Federalist recognition of the power of public opinion and the need to court it came with John Adams' defeat in the presidential election of 1800. The victor, Jefferson, suggested that the election had been a "contest of opinion" and had been decided by "the voice of the people."[40] Seeing the error of Federalist ways, Hamilton concluded that members of his party "erred in relying so much on the rectitude and utility of their measures as to have neglected the cultivation of popular favor, by fair and justifiable expedients."[41]

With the ascension of the Republicans to the seats of power, many hard-line Federalists deserted politics. They considered appealing to the general public beneath their dignity. Those Federalists who continued the fight, however, began to woo the public more diligently[42]; but they may have seen the light too late. Looking back on the rise and decline of the Federalist party, Noah Webster in 1807 concluded, "They have attempted to resist the force of current opinion, instead of falling into the current with a view to direct it."[43]

The Media of Opinion

Throughout the 1789-1816 period, both parties used a number of media besides newspapers to appeal to public opinion, although none received the importance accorded the press. Printed and oral, these media had both mass and individual audiences. Among the unique types was the liberty pole. One raised at Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1798 had a placard attached declaring: "No stamp act, no sedition and alien acts, no land tax. Downfall to the tyrants of America: peace and retirement to the President [Adams]: long live the Vice President [Jeffer-

son] and the minority." Excited Federalists marched on the Republicans defending the pole and toppled it.[44] Of a similar nature was the practice of parading effigies of opponents. John Jay, after negotiating the treaty with England, found himself the model for a Boston mob's effigy crowned with a watermelon head. He was also the target of graffiti on the wall of a house proclaiming: "Damn John Jay! Damn every one who won't damn John Jay! Damn every one who won't put lights in his windows and sit up all night damning John Jay!"[45]

Poems and songs occasionally were composed for political purposes, John Hopkinson's "Hail Columbia!" being the outstanding example. Both parties encouraged public meetings, addresses, debates in meetings of political societies, and petitions. Correspondence committees were established to keep regional party groups informed of events; and party leaders corresponded frequently with other leaders and influential party members to propose ideas, share news, and plan strategy. A technique used frequently was the circular letter. Written usually by a representative in government, such letters kept constituents informed of the representative's activities and promoted his party's cause. Circular letters also were distributed by political candidates, local party committees, state organizations, and other political groups. These letters might announce campaign promises, party tickets, plans for electioneering festivals, instructions to local party committees, or other information aimed at the electorate or local leaders.

A number of forms of printed and reproduced material besides newspapers were popular. Handbills and broadsides, campaign leaflets, and pamphlets were published incessantly. Pamphlets were considered such an appropriate medium for political argument that many major political leaders took up the time-consuming job of writing them: Hamilton, George Logan, Tench Coxe, John Beckley, Daniel Webster,

James Monroe, Edmund Randolph, Albert Gallatin, Fisher Ames, and Charles Pinckney, to name but a few. These politicians were joined in what amounted at times to pamphlet warfare by a host of writers who occupy no great place in history. Of all this pamphleteering, one reader in 1800 complained to the editor of the *Charleston* (S. C.) *Gazette*:

> I have lived in this parish twenty three years, and we have never been so pestered with politics as we are at this day. For my part, I am for good government; but we are so beset with and run down by Federalists, Federal Republicans, and their pamphlets, that I begin to think, for the first time, there is something rotten in the system ... or why all this violence and electioneering? This printing of long, dull pamphlets? This forming into parties to pay the expense of the printing? And all this, to instruct us poor countrymen in the politics of the nation?[46]

The advantage printed materials had over such media as circular letters and effigies was their easy reproduction, enabling them to reach bigger audiences. A printing of 5,000 copies was not unusual for a well-executed piece.

The party emphasis on so many forms of appeal to public opinion has led some historians to conclude that such media as circular letters and pamphlets, rather than newspapers, were considered the most important and actually were the most effective. Noble Cunningham in his two major works on the Jeffersonian Republicans stressed the role of circular letters. Writing about the 1790s, he argued:

> Due to the inadequacy of the press in many sections of the country, voters looked to their representatives for information as to

> the proceedings of Congress. The newspapers of Philadelphia, New York, or Boston did not always find their way into the remote regions of an America that was still predominantly a rural country. The Virginia farmer was most likely to hear about the proceedings of Congress on county-court day from some influential neighbor to whom the representative of the district had written or from a circular letter which the congressman had prepared for his constituents; and so it was with the voter of Western Pennsylvania, or upstate New York, or Georgia, or wherever men lived beyond the radius of the city presses.[47]

Cunningham also pointed out the importance of private and circular letters *after* Jefferson became President.[48]

Writing also of the 1790s, Richard Buel concluded:

> In the end, the press and legislative declarations of right proved disappointing [to Republicans] as techniques for giving a focus to public opinion. The press remained predominantly Federalist.... If the opposition hoped to stir up public opinion against what they took to be threats to revolutionary achievements, they would have to find more effective ways than these.... [S]ome of the opposition did try another technique, that of corresponding societies dedicated to spreading political information.[49]

These arguments, however, are not persuasive. As Cunningham made clear, he believed circular letters were important primarily in rural areas outside the circulation of metropolitan newspapers. City papers, however, did circulate in urban areas that had a significant percentage of the nation's population and frequently had rural subscription lists

that were larger than their city lists. They were supplemented by smaller newspapers throughout the land. Buel seemed to contradict his own conclusions about the importance of newspapers when he wrote, "[T]here is no evidence that Madison and Jefferson, the recognized leaders of the opposition, sponsored them [corresponding societies] as they had sponsored Freneau's *National Gazette*."[50]

Cunningham and Buel drew their conclusions primarily for the 1790s. Close scrutiny of the views of political leaders and other writers makes it clear that they considered the newspaper the most efficacious medium for affecting public opinion in not only that decade but all of the Federalist-Republican period. The functions of informing, mobilizing, and persuading party adherents and other voters could have been performed — and to some extent were performed — by organizational efforts, mass meetings, and personal correspondence. The press, however, was able to perform these functions more efficiently and thus became an expeditor of party efforts.

Certainly, politicians — and even newspaper editors — did not rely solely on one medium to reach the public. A number of editors sometimes put their views into pamphlets rather than their own papers. The most notorious of the editor pamphleteers was James Thomson Callender of the *Richmond Examiner*. In 1796 he published a pamphlet titled "The History of the United States for 1796" containing documents revealing Hamilton's extra-marital affair with Mrs. James Reynolds. The woman's husband apparently had lured Hamilton into the affair in order to blackmail him. Callender also charged Hamilton with stealing from the United States Treasury. The pamphlet had such an impact that Hamilton thought it necessary to reply in a pamphlet in which he cleared himself of the financial charges but admitted his illicit relationship with Mrs. Reynolds. Callender made another splash in 1800 with

a pro-Jefferson election pamphlet titled "The Prospect Before Us." Written with Jefferson's approval, the pamphlet declared that President Adams was "not only a repulsive pedant, a gross hypocrite, and an unprincipled oppressor, but ... in private life, one of the most egregious fools upon the continent." For this, Callender was convicted of violating the Sedition Act. Rather than repenting, he took his imprisonment as leisure time to write "The Prospect Before Us, II."

Among other editors who devoted time to writing pamphlets was John Ward Fenno, whose "Desultory Reflections on the New Political Aspects of Public Affairs in the United States of America Since the Commencement of the Year 1799," an attack on both Jefferson and Adams, gained wide circulation and was considered one cause of a split within the Federalist party. James Cheetham of the *American Citizen* authored a number of popular anti-Burr pamphlets in New York. Benjamin Franklin Bache and William Duane, successive editors of the *Aurora* in Philadelphia, were assiduous pamphleteers, as was Noah Webster of New York's *American Minerva*. Some editors are better known for their pamphlets than their newspapers. William Dickson made his niche in history not for his editorship of the *Lancaster* (N. Y.) *Intelligencer* but for an 1806 campaign pamphlet titled "The Quid Mirror," a malicious combination of half-truths and innuendos attacking leaders of the Quid movement, an organized Republican effort to oppose the party's national leadership.

"The Engine is the Press"

Writers and political leaders put so much effort into pamphlets and newspapers because they were the only media for general public information. Pamphlets may have been the primary medium of political

argument during the Revolutionary era, but by the 1780s newspapers could provide faster and wider circulation than pamphlets could. When Washington, toward the end of his first term as President, was pondering how to announce his intentions about a second term, Madison advised him that no mode "better occurs than a simple publication in the newspapers."[51] Jefferson also recognized the superiority of the newspaper.

Pamphlet material frequently was reprinted in newspapers, but more often newspaper writings were compiled later into pamphlets. After Samuel Kerchevel had composed what Jefferson viewed as worthy arguments in pamphlet form but had copyrighted the pamphlet, Jefferson wrote Kerchevel that he regretted "that a copy-right of your pamphlet prevents their appearance in the newspapers, where alone they would be generally read, and produce general effect."[52] Newspapers became such an important medium by the end of the Federalist-Republican period that a Boston newspaper could boast, "Almost the total reading of at least half the people of this country, and a great part of the reading of the other half, is from the newspapers.... The insatiable appetite for *news* ... has given rise to a general form of salutation on the meeting of friends and strangers: *What's the news?*"[53]

The pamphlet was considered ideal for the lengthy political arguments favored during the early part of the period. It is easy to understand why some editors with newspaper columns at their disposal resorted on occasion to the pamphlet. As the period progressed, however, editors began to intersperse in their papers shorter, livelier comments with the longer essays the politicians still submitted. Eventually, believing the shorter editorials on immediate concerns better served their causes, editors devoted their attention to them. They began to make use of the newspaper's advantage of timeliness for comments on public

events. By the end of the period the pamphlet-style matter virtually had disappeared from newspapers.

Both the Federalists and the Republicans had their advocates of the importance of the press. While the beliefs these men had in the influence of the press may seem unsophisticated today, they were extremely significant for their impact on the politicians' attitudes about the necessity of using newspapers for political purposes. Jefferson recognized the significance of the newspaper's relationship to public opinion. Although perhaps he was overly sensitive to the workings of the press, he still was a practical politician who continually urged other Republicans to make use of the press. Historians have made much of Jefferson's bit of hyperbole about choosing "newspapers without a government" over a "government without newspapers."

This statement is convenient for its simplicity, but it did not describe exactly the subtleties of Jefferson's view. It was accurate, though, to the extent that it demonstrated the Republican leader's recognition of the importance of the press. On numerous occasions he testified to his belief in newspapers' political value. At the height of the XYZ affair in 1798, for example, fearing that two Republican newspapers might cease publication, he wrote Madison that failure of the papers would be devastating for "Republicanism."[54]

Jefferson's attitude was based on the beliefs that an informed public would make right decisions and that the press could influence views on political issues. "Our citizens," he wrote in 1799, "may be deceived for awhile, and have been deceived; but as long as the presses can be protected, we may trust to them for light."[55] His correspondence was filled with references to his receiving newspapers himself to keep informed and his sending papers to political acquaintances to be assured they were aware of occurrences.[56] The press, Jefferson wrote shortly before

his death, was "the best instrument for enlightening the mind of man, and improving him as a rational, moral, and social being."[57]

Jefferson believed editors were influential, and he respected their power. He thus was more than a little sensitive to the material newspapers printed. It was this sensitivity that accounted for Jefferson's reluctance to have articles published under his signature[58] even at a time when it was normal for politicians to write for the press. He preferred that other members of his party do the writing. In the task of prodding others to write, he was not complacent; he assiduously encouraged fellow Republicans to compose articles.[59] As the 1800 election approached, he urged articles on an almost daily basis. He wrote Madison, "We are sensible that this summer is the season for systematic energies and sacrifices. *The engine is the press*."[60] Madison was Jefferson's favorite choice as a writer, and his frequent and urgent plea to Madison — "For God's sake, take up your pen ... and cut [Hamilton] to pieces in the face of the public"[61] — was a classic statement of his reliance on Madison and faith in his writing ability.[62] Besides encouraging newspaper articles in this circuitous fashion, Jefferson made a habit of sending information to editors through direct and indirect means and on occasion offered unsolicited suggestions.[63]

A number of other Republicans attributed to the press a major role in influencing public opinion and actively encouraged their party to make use of newspapers. Unlike Jefferson, though, other leaders wrote frequently for papers. Madison actually was an earlier exponent of the political utility of the press than Jefferson was, and he was probably the most effective publicist among Republican politicians. A sampling of opinion from party leaders may suffice to illustrate that belief in the political importance of the press was widespread. During debate on the Sedition Bill in 1798, Albert Gallatin, then a United States Congressman

from Pennsylvania, declared:

> If you put the press under any restraint in respect to the measures of Government; if you thus deprive the people of the means of obtaining information of their conduct, you in fact render their right of electing nugatory; and this bill must be considered only as a weapon used by a party now in power, in order to perpetuate their authority and preserve their present places.[64]

Alexander Wolcott, the Massachusetts Republican state manager, attempting to spread his party's ideas to the public, wrote county managers in 1805, "You will be supplied with newspapers.... A correct knowledge of our cause will go a great way towards removing the prejudices which the devices of our enemies have produced."[65] Gideon Granger, Postmaster General in Jefferson's administration, declared with some anxiety after returning to Washington from a trip in 1802, "I found on the road a very general circulation of federal papers.... This was not altogether pleasing to one who believes that public opinion will in a great measure be determined by that Vehicle of Intelligence."[66] Henry Dearborn, Secretary of War, described to a fellow Republican the methods of Federalists and confided his fear of their success:

> The leading characters among the federalists ... appear to rely principally on writing down (as they term it) the present administration through the channell of their newspapers. The industrious and unremitting application of the tallants they possess, may, in a country like this, where newspapers are so generally circulated, produce very important effects, unless equal industry is used on the opposite side.[67]

Even after Jefferson had been in the presidency for almost two full terms, Levi Lincoln still believed Republicans had a great need to strengthen their newspaper support. He wrote the President in 1808, "I need say nothing of the necessity or utility of supporting a republican paper, in [Massachusetts]."[68] Another Republican put the official view of press importance even more succinctly and explicitly. "If ink and black paint could overpower the enemy," he said, "we should give him an unmerciful beating."[69]

Federalists were no less certain of the importance of newspapers. Hamilton was convinced that newspapers had been successful at overthrowing governments and that they could have "very fatal consequences" in America.[70] He acted on the principle that the press was a crucial part of the political system and had to be used to achieve one's political goals. Throughout his career as Federalist leader, he wrote articles for the press, encouraged fellow Federalists to do the same, helped establish papers, and encouraged editors faithful to his party.

Even while Federalists were in control of the national government and courts, they recognized the potential power of the press to change the governmental structure. This power they usually feared because they considered it destructive and pernicious. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase believed that "a licentious press is the bane of freedom, and the peril of Society"[71] and that the press, if permitted free rein, could and probably would contaminate public opinion, corrupt the morals of the people, and bring down the government.[72] First Lady Abigail Adams in her outspoken way expressed the feelings of many Federalists toward the power of the press when she predicted in 1798 that if Republican newspapers were "not suppressed, we shall come to civil war."[73]

Many Federalists clearly were frightened by the impact they believed the press had on public opinion. They feared the newspaper and

believed the most efficacious method of dealing with the Republican press was to silence it. One result of their attitude was passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. On the other hand, some Federalists who feared the deleterious effects the opposition press might have also diligently pursued an activist policy of using the friendly press to influence public opinion.

A leading advocate of an aggressive approach was Fisher Ames. Rather than simply disdaining the press, Ames early in his political career attempted to make use of it. In his contests for a congressional seat in 1788, 1790, and 1792, he resorted to newspapers as one of his primary electioneering tools. By 1794, while believing that government should be entrusted to a small class of men, he was telling fellow Federalists that the only effective means of obtaining such a system was through "the real federalism of the body of the electors," which could be achieved only by the efforts of the party faithful and the medium of the press.[74]

As the presidential election of 1800 approached, Ames became even more certain of the necessity of using the press in an attempt to mold opinion. "The sword of public opinion," he wrote, could be invaluable to Adams' administration and should be wielded through the press.[75] Many Federalist leaders were not so willing to work with the opinion of the people, and Ames expressed the fear that even though Republicans "depend[ed] on lies," they spread their lies industriously and would capture political power.[76] It was not until Adams' defeat that some Federalists recognized the truth of Ames' observations. Many of these, upon seeing the truth, thought it better to get out of politics than bend their knees to the people. Ames expressed their feeling of inevitable defeat: "The newspapers are an overmatch for any government. They will first overawe and then usurp it. This has been done; and the Jacobins owe

their triumph to the unceasing use of this engine."[77]

Some Federalists, however, did not simply give up and disappear into seclusion safe from the knowledge that public opinion was a working force. They realized the practical necessity of increasing their efforts with the press. Hamilton during those bleak days after the ascension of Jefferson to the presidency helped establish a new national Federalist organ, the *New York Evening Post*. For his part, Ames redoubled his writing efforts, contributing numerous letters, articles, and essays to Boston newspapers. Along with other Federalists, he also supported and attempted to establish papers to promote their party.[78]

Throughout the Federalist-Republican period, political leaders who believed in the power of the press lent support and encouragement to journalists. They wrote articles for the press, announced their candidacies through the press, gave information to editors, helped finance newspapers, solicited subscriptions, distributed copies of papers, and by other means generally offered their aid. They granted journalists special favors, legislated special postal rates, exempted newspapers from taxation, meted out patronage to editors, awarded government work to them, and even went so far as to pay them as government employees.

All this homage was not lost on journalists. They, too, believed in their power and thought the press played an essential role in the nation's political system. This attitude was apparent during the entire period — editors asserted the claim of influence of the press even before organized parties existed — and among editors of both parties. The primary difference in the outlooks of Federalist and Republican editors was fear of the power of the press. Republicans tended to be optimistic about the positive influence of newspapers, while Federalists trembled at their potential destructive force — although Federalists were enthusiastic about the wholesome impact of their own papers.

Editors believed the press had two types of persuasive power. One was its ability to inform the public. The other was the outright influence of editors' and writers' opinions. William Duane "affect[ed] to consider his importance as an Editor of a Newspaper," Pennsylvania Governor Thomas McKean said, "to be superior to the Governor of a State, or even of the President of the United States."[79] James Callender believed that in 1802 the "people of America derive[d] their political information chiefly from newspapers." Duane and William Coleman of the *New York Evening Post*, he said, "dictate at this moment the sentiments of perhaps fifty thousand American citizens."[80] Abijah Adams and Ebenezer Rhoades, editors of the Republican *Independent Chronicle* (Boston), spoke of newspapers as "those powerful engines of state,"[81] while James Lyon boasted that his proposed *Friend of the People* could "rally, concentrate and nationalize" the efforts of Republicans all across the nation to bring about the election of Jefferson in 1800.[82]

Like Lyon, editors greeted new or proposed papers dedicated to their cause with enthusiastic prophecies. When the *Republican Ledger* was founded in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Charles Holt of the *New Haven* (Connecticut) *Bee* welcomed it as the "dawning in the east." Nothing but freedom of the press, he said, "can preserve the liberties of the people from the artifices of its pretended friends."[83] As the *Bee* itself faced dangers to its survival, Duane wrote in his *Aurora* that the *Bee* "rises under persecution, and the awakened people of Connecticut stretch forth their hands for the truths which it publishes, like travellers who had passed the sand parched deserts for the CUP."[84] When the *New York Evening Post* appeared, Federalists editors greeted it with anticipation. "Federalism has much to hope and expect from this paper," wrote the *Gazette of the United States*. "The talents and activity of WILLIAM COLEMAN, Esquire, the Editor, are such as entitle him to

the attention and liberal encouragement of all who realize the importance of well conducted papers."[85]

While Federalists expected Republican papers to wield influence equal to that of their own papers, they felt the consequence was much less to be desired. One "of the most efficacious modes of destroying governments which the jacobins have pursued," wrote "Burleigh" in the *Connecticut Courant* during the campaign of 1800, "... has been corrupting the channels of public information, and disseminating falsehood and slander."[86] The *Boston Palladium* reported that a Federalist senator was alarmed that "if the *Aurora* is not blown up, Jefferson will be elected in defiance of everything."[87] One of the reasons the Republican press had such injurious potential was its ability to mislead "the good yeomanry of our country." Opposition papers, complained the *New York Gazette*, were "read by a class of people who never do, or have not the time to investigate their contents." As a result, concluded the *Gazette*, innocent citizens had become "open enemies of our constitutional government."[88]

Republicans held to a view that directly confronted the Federalists'. Republicans argued that the capacity of the press to inform the citizenry was one of its primary strengths. A well-informed public was necessary in a democracy, they reasoned, and only newspapers could provide the information the public needed.[89] The discovery of printing and the newspapers it made possible, wrote James Cheetham, provided the death blow to despotism.[90] "It is from newspapers," wrote a confident contributor to Boston's *Independent Chronicle*, "that the mass of the people derive their knowledge." It was from newspapers, he said, that many people gained their political principles.[91]

Such respect for the power of the press in molding public opinion led editors "to devote a large portion" of their papers to politics.[92] It

determined political leaders to devote their resources, time, and energy to supporting friendly newspapers and to trying to silence the opposition press. In the battle for public opinion, they considered these actions nothing less than indispensable if they were to be victorious.

Conclusion

Although factional viewpoints had varied, by the early 1800s one could see the victory of the concept that the American political system was based on free public discourse. Even though the two parties disagreed violently on fundamental political views, they agreed on a more essential principle: that the American political system was a democratic one, that the nature of the government ultimately had to be decided by the majority public will. The early national period thus was critical in American history, for it firmly established the acceptance of public opinion as an integral part of public affairs.

The period also clearly established the fact that the media had to be a central feature in the American system of public opinion. The media provided the only means by which public opinion could become a working part of the American democracy. Without the presence of the media, it is difficult to imagine how such a system as the one that America uses in its public affairs could operate. For a demonstration of that fact, one can look at virtually every major episode in American history since the early 1800s — from the slavery debate in the antebellum period to political affairs in recent years — and find that the media have been an essential ingredient in the mix.

The triangular relationship among public affairs, public opinion, and the media that became clear during the period of America's first party system relied on the partisan nature of the nation's newspapers.

Journalism has changed since then, but the relationship remains in force. Throughout the 20th century, the news media have increasingly removed themselves from strict partisanship and ideology. Party loyalty has been replaced with professional detachment. Ideological bias in news coverage still exists, and transparent partisanship has been replaced by what sometimes shows itself as general media antipathy toward government. The media appeal to the public not as the voice of one party, but in the role of a broad conduit of information and views. With that change, however, the importance of the media to public opinion has not diminished. The information and the views that the media provide the public may not be as balanced and objective as media professionals claim, but the media nevertheless remain the most important forum for public debate. American public affairs continue to rest on public opinion, and the American system of public opinion continues to rely on the media.

NOTES

1 *Columbian Centinel*, 1 January 1799.

2 *Russell's Gazette*, 7 June 1798.

3 See Steven Knowlton's essay, "The Media and Popular Sovereignty," Chapter 2 of this book, for a more elaborate discussion of the works of Hobbes and Locke.

4 *Gazette of the United States*, 27 April 1791.

5 *National Gazette*, 19 December 1791.

6 See, for example, Frank Luther Mott, *Jefferson and the Press* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943); Jan C. Robbins, "Jefferson and the Press: The Resolution of an Antinomy," *Journalism Quarterly* 48 (1971): 421-30; and Leonard Levy, *Jefferson and Civil Liberties: The Darker Side* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963).

7 16 January 1787, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Andrew A. Lipscomb, editor-in-chief (Washington: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1904-1905), II: 418-19.

8 To George Washington, 9 September 1792, *Works of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Paul L. Ford (New York: Putnam, 1892-1899), 6: 109; and 4 November 1823, Lipscomb, *The*

Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 15: 491.

9 Circular letter, March 1794, quoted in Noble Cunningham, *The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), 73.

10 Jackson Turner Main, *The Anti-Federalists: Critics of the Constitution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 11.

11 See footnote 2 for a typical Federalist explanation of the consequence of public opinion.

12 *Albany Centinel*, 31 July 1799.

13 Donald Stewart, *The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1969), 13.

14 John Jay to William Wilberforce, 25 October 1810, *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay ... : 1794-1826*, ed. Henry P. Johnson (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1890-1893), IV: 336.

15 In John C. Miller, *The Federalist Era 1789-1801* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 118.

16 Hamilton to Rufus King, 13 August 1793, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Harold C. Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 15: 239-41; and *New York Evening Post*, 7 December 1804.

17 Theodore Sedgwick to Rufus King, 11 May 1800, *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*…, ed. Charles R. King (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), III: 237.

18 Timothy Phelps to Oliver Wolcott, 18 September 1800, *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams* … , ed. George Gibbs (New York: Printed for the Subscriber, 1846), II: 418-19.

19 Gouverneur Morris speech in the U.S. Senate, 8 January 1802, *Annals of the Congress of the United States, Seventh Congress; The Debates and Proceedings* … (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1851), 41. For Massachusetts Federalists' views on democracy, see James M. Banner Jr., *To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts 1789-1815* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 38, 42-43, 71-72, 130-32, and 150.

20 Quoted in James Morton Smith, *Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), 143.

21 *National Gazette*, 1 August 1792.

22 10 July 1798, quoted in Leonary Levy, *Freedom of the Press from Zenger to Jefferson: Early American Libertarian Theories* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 259.

23 John Taylor to Creed Taylor, 10 April 1799, Creed Taylor Papers, University of Virginia.

24 "Atticus," *Independent Gazetteer*, 24 August 1795.

[25] See *New York Herald*, 15 June 1796; and Timothy Phelps to John Adams, 18 September 1800, in Gibbs, *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams*, II: 418-19.

[26] Madison to A. Rose and others, 13 August 1790, *The Writings of James Madison*, ed. Gaillard Hunt (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1865), 6: 20; Madison to Jefferson, 27 August 1793, in Hunt, *The Writings of James Madison*, 6: 179; and Jefferson to Archibald Stuart, 13 February 1799, in Ford, *Works of Thomas Jefferson*, 7: 354.

[27] 27 November 1794, *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States, 1789-1825* (Washington, 1845-1873), 934. See also George Warner, 4 July 1797, quoted in Alfred M. Young, *The Democratic Republicans of New York: The Origins 1763-1797* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 580; *Vermont Journal*, 7 August 1792; and Jefferson to Roger C. Weightman, 24 June 1826, in Lipscomb, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 6: 182.

[28] See Richard Buel, *Securing the Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), Part III "Public Opinion," for the most detailed statement of the Republicans' views of public opinion. See also *Virginia Argus*, 21 January 1800; *Albany Register*, 22 and 25 April 1800; and Cong. Aaron Kitchell, 23 April 1800, quoted in Cunningham, *The Jeffersonian Republicans* (1957), 156.

[29] Fisher Ames, "An Oration on the Sublime Virtues of General George Washington," *The Columbian Phenix*, Vol. 1 (March 1800): 154; and *Works of Fisher Ames*, ed. Seth Ames (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1854), II: 80, 392, 394, 364, 324, 353, 364, and 395.

[30] These comments can be found in a small book composed of short essays that Webster wrote in answer to the arguments of Joseph Priestly. For the letter quoted here, Webster gave a date of January 30, 1800, *Ten Letters to Dr. Joseph Priestly …* (New Haven, Conn.: Read and Morse, 1800), 28; and Webster to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., 1 October 1801, Wolcott Papers, CHS. See also Miller, *The Federalist Era*, 111 and 121.

[31] George Cabot to Oliver Wolcott Jr., 3 April 1797, in Henry Cabot Lodge, *Life and Letters of George Cabot* (Boston: Brown, Little, & Co., 1878), 119.

[32] "Desultory Reflections on the New Political Aspect of Public Affairs" (pamphlet), quoted in Claude G. Bowers, *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Struggle for Democracy in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 467.

[33] Quoted in Anson Ely Morse, *The Federalist Party in Massachusetts to the Year 1800* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1909), 95.

[34] 11 November 1794, in Lodge, *Life and Letters of George Cabot*, 457.

[35] Quoted in Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 113.

[36] *Middlesex Gazette*, 6 December 1794.

[37] Miller, *The Federalist Era*, 122.

[38] King to Hamilton, 3 August 1793, *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, I

(1894): 492-93.

39 "Decius," *New York Daily Advertiser*, 14 April 1792; Fisher Ames to Timothy Dwight, 12 December 1794, S. Ames, *Works of Fisher Ames*, 1: 155-56; George Washington to John Marshall, 4 December 1797, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John Clement Fitzpatrick (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931), 36: 93.

40 Jefferson, first inaugural address.

41 Hamilton to James A. Bayard, [16-21] April 1802, Founders Online. National Archives. See also *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. John C. Hamilton (New York: Charles S. Francis & Co., 1851-1856), 6: 540-543.

42 Sen. William Plumer, 1805, quoted in Jerry Knudson, "The Jefferson Years: Response by the Press, 1801-1809," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1962: 299.

43 Webster to Rufus King, 6 July 1807, King, *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, V (1898): 37-38.

44 This episode is recounted in John C. Miller, *Crisis in Freedom: The Alien and Sedition Acts* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1951), 114-15.

45 This episode is recounted in Bowers, *Jefferson and Hamilton*, 279.

46 *Charleston City Gazette*, 3 October 1800.

47 Cunningham, *The Jeffersonian Republicans* (1957), 72-73.

48 Cunningham, *The Jeffersonian Republicans in Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 100.

49 Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 96-97.

50 Ibid., 97.

51 Madison to George Washington, 21 June 1792, in Hunt, *The Writings of James Madison*, 1: 565.

52 12 July 1816, in Ford, *Works of Thomas Jefferson*, 10: 37-38.

53 *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 7 April 1814.

54 Jefferson to Madison, 26 April 1798, Ford, *Works of Thomas Jefferson*, 7: 245.

55 To Archibald Stuart, 14 May 1799, ibid., 378.

56 To James Monroe, 28 June 1793, ibid., 321-24; to Carrington, 16 January 1787, ibid., 4: 357-61.

57 To M. Coray, 4 November 1823, ibid., 15: 489.

58 To Randolph, 17 September 1792, ibid., 6: 111-12; to John Taylor, 1 June 1799, ibid., 10: 47; to Albert Gallatin, 25 July 1803, ibid., 10: 26.

59 To Pendleton, 22 April 1799, ibid., 7: 375-76; to William Wirt, 3 May 1811, ibid., 9: 319; and to Levi Lincoln, 4 March 1802, and Albert Gallatin, 1 May 1802, Gallatin Papers, New York Historical Society.

[60] 5 February 1799, in Ford, *Works of Thomas Jefferson*, 5: 344. Italics have been added for emphasis.

[61] 21 September 1795, ibid., 9: 311.

[62] See also Jefferson to Madison, 3 January 1798, ibid., 7: 10.

[63] To William Wirt, 3 May 1811, ibid., 9: 319; to Peter Freneau, 20 May 1803, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

[64] July 1798, Annals of Congress, House of Representatives, 5th Congress, 2nd Session, 2110.

[65] To Jefferson, 5 September 1802, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

[66] To James Bowdoin, 10 April 1802, in "Bowdoin and Temple Papers, Part II," *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, 7th Series, 6 (1907): 226.

[67] *Connecticut Courant*, 27 November 1805.

[68] To Jefferson, 1 April 1808, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

[69] Samuel Mitchell to Tench Coxe, 3 August 1813, quoted in Jacob Cooke, *Tench Coxe and the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 211. Other Republicans were equally convinced of the utility of the press. For the views of John Nicholas and of Edward Livingston, see Smith, *Freedom's Fetters*, 121-22 and 143; of George Logan, see Frederick Barnes Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 109; of Cornelius Schoonmaker, letter to Peter Van Gaasbeck, 14 January 1789, Van Gaasbeck Papers, F.D.R. Library; of William Munford, letter to Joseph Jones, 1 December 1799, Joseph Jones Letters and Papers, Duke University; of Barnabas Bidwell, letter to Aaron Burr, 6 July 1801, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[70] *Gazette and General Advertiser*, 8 November 1799.

[71] To James McHenry, 4 December 1796, in Bernard C. Steiner, ed., *The Life and Correspondence of James McHenry* (Cleveland, 1907), 203.

[72] Philadelphia *Aurora*, 13 June 1800; *Gazette of the United States*, 17 June 1800.

[73]To Mary Cranch, 10 May 1798, in Stewart Mitchell, *New Letters of Abigail Adams, 1788-1801* (Boston, 1947), 147.

[74] Ames to Christopher Gore, 17 December 1794, *Works of Fisher Ames*, ed. Seth Ames (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1854), 156.

[75] Fisher Ames, "Laocoon," 1799, in *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution*, ed. David Brion Davis (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971), 54. See also *The Works of Fisher Ames*, ibid., 2:212, 114-115.

[76] Quoted in Stewart, *The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 638.

[77] To Timothy Dwight, 19 March 1801, *Works of Fisher Ames*, 294.

[78] The *New England Palladium* and the Boston *Repertory* were two of these papers. See Winfred E. Bernhard, *Fisher Ames, Federalist and Statesman* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 245.

[79] To Jefferson, 18 February 1805, McKean Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[80] Quoted in Allan Nevins, *The Evening Post: A Century of Journalism* (New York: Boni and Liverwright, 1922), 24.

[81] To Joseph B. Varnum, 20 January 1801, quoted in Cunningham, *The Jeffersonian Republicans in Power*, 247.

[82] Richmond *Virginia Argus*, 21 January 1800.

[83] *New London* (Conn.) *Bee*, 18 September 1799.

[84] Philadelphia *Aurora*, 18 November 1801.

[85] 18 November 1801.

[86] *Connecticut Courant*, 21 July 1800.

[87] 10 April 1800.

[88] Quoted in *Vergennes* (Vt.) *Gazette*, 20 June 1799.

[89] *Newport* (R.I.) *Companion*, 2 May 1798; Peacham (Vt.) *Green Mountain Patriot*, 1 June 1798; Boston *Independent Chronicle*, 16 May 1799.

[90] New York *American Citizen*, 19 March 1800.

[91] 12 January 1801.

[92] *Portland* (Me.) *Gazette*, 16 April 1798. See also Wiscasset (Me.) *Eastern Repository*, 28 October 1806.

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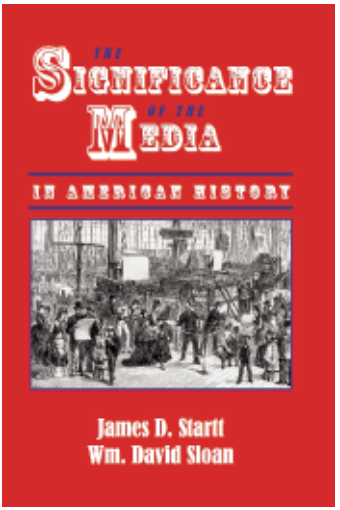

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News & Notes

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

Banning Wins Top Paper Award at 19th-Century Symposium

Stephen Banning won the award for best paper presented at the Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression. The Symposium, in its 31st year, was held Nov. 2-4 at Augusta University in Augusta, Ga.

Banning won for "Journalists Drink from Skulls Amid Ghoulish Relics in a Nineteenth Century Chicago House of Horrors." Judges said his paper was "a well-written and engaging study of the Bohemian Chicago Press Club."

Banning is a professor at Bradley University.

Thomas Terry of Utah State University took second place for his paper, "From the Egyptian Darkness of Bondage: A San Francisco Black Newspaper and Its Civil War Agenda in 1862-1863." Third place went to John Navin of Coastal Carolina University for "Premature Burials: Free Lovers, Feminists, Spiritualists, and the Antebellum Press."

Historians presented a total of forty-eight papers at the Symposium.

AJHA Elects Fuhlhage VP, Three Board Members

Michael Fuhlhage has been elected Second Vice-President of the American Journalism Historians Association. He will ascend to First Vice-President after the 2024 conference and then to President of the AJHA

in 2025.

Mark Bernhardt, Christina Littlefield, and Amber Roessner were elected to three years on the AJHA Board of Directors. They are replacing Julien Gorbach, Jennifer Moore, and Rich Shumate, who completed their terms.

Mike Conway has ended his term as President of the AJHA. First Vice-President Tracy Lucht has replaced him; Second Vice-President Debbie van Tuyll has become First Vice-President.

Wanted: New Moderator for JHistory

Dr. Christopher Shoop-Worrall, who has served as a moderator of JHistory for six years, is stepping down. Working with him has been inspiring — he's a first-rate scholar and thinker — and we should all be grateful for his service.

We are looking for a new moderator to serve with me, Elliot King, and Gerry Lanosga. The moderator's duties include managing the list three months a year — the four moderators take turns — and helping to plan JHistory First Friday Salon. It's not a lot of work.

JHistory is an international listserv for journalism historians and has hundreds of members from around the world. The list is part of the H-Net system and provides a space for announcements, book reviews, and discussion.

Are **YOU** interested in serving as moderator? If so, please contact me at **mindich@temple.edu**,

David T.Z. Mindich, Ph.D.

Professor of Journalism, Temple University

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Research Fellowships

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library has relaunched and expanded its fellowship program to facilitate research in Yale's special collections by the broadest possible group of researchers. We welcome applications from scholars and graduate students locally and globally who utilize traditional methods of archival and bibliographic research as well as from individuals who wish to pursue creative, interdisciplinary, and non-traditional approaches to conducting research in the collections.

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Fellowship application deadlines and requirements can be found on our website. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Research Fellowships are available at https://www.h-net.org/jobs/job_display.php?id=65834.

If you have any questions, please contact beinecke.fellowships@yale.edu.

New Resource: The Archival Internet Video Index

I've been working on a new resource that might be of interest to folks for research or teaching: The Archival Internet Video Index. While the name is a bit of a misnomer, the AIVI indexes archival footage of early digital communications and information services in use, ranging from videotex to the early years of the web. I've focused on video in particular because it allows folks, especially students, to see these technologies in use. It's also great for illustrating public understandings of technology at the time as well as contemporaneous corporate rhetoric (the CompuServe/Mickey Mouse Club theme mashup might be my favorite find so far).

Please feel free to email me at **avery.dame@gmail.com** if you have questions, suggestions, or any updated information for an entry — in almost all cases, I've based what I've indexed on what the poster shared; so some of the dates for when these videos were produced are very fuzzy.
Avery Dame-Griff
Lecturer, Women's and Gender Studies (Gonzaga University)

Feminist Media Histories Fall 2023 Issue Is Available

The *Feminist Media Histories* Fall 2023 issue is now live on our website: https://online.ucpress.edu/fmh/issue/9/4
Yumo Yan, Managing Editor of *Feminist Media Histories: An International Journal*

Feminist Media Histories – Special Issue on Gender, Media, and Developmentalism

Call for Papers
Date: September 21, 2023 - February 1, 2024 (deadline)
Guest Editors: Dalila Missero and Masha Salazkina

With this special issue of *Feminist Media Histories* we invite contributions that explore the historical role of gender within media production explicitly engaged in developmentalist projects. As an ideological and political framework, developmentalism became especially prominent between the 1950s and the 1990s to conceptualize, discuss, and tackle global inequality. Based on the certainty that economic growth inevitably leads to social progress and modernization, it has been a dominant paradigm driving state and inter-governmental support for various institutional media projects, especially in the context of Asia,

Africa, and Latin America on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In a more latent way, developmentalist discourses and representational regimes — as well as their critiques — have also been central to much film and media production in these regions, from radical, grassroots, or independent media collectives to commercial filmmaking. With the inauguration of the United Nations Decade of Women (1975-1985), the issue of gender inequality became increasingly central in developmentalist debates and policies, in tandem with and in response to the agenda of the international women's movement. Media representations and infrastructures have played a key role in shaping these intersecting processes in a way that remains to be fully explored in media history.

This special issue seeks to foster new knowledge and develop shared theoretical and methodological frameworks for exploring this topic. We welcome scholarship on different types of media (film, television, radio, digital media, etc.), situated within a wide historical period, and from a variety of geographic and geopolitical positions. Contributions may focus on specific case studies as well as on broader methodological and theoretical questions.

Interested contributors should contact guest editors Dalila Missero and Masha Salazkina directly, sending a 500-word proposal and a short bio no later than **February 1, 2024,** to d.missero@lancaster.ac.uk and salazkina.masha@gmail.com; contributors will be notified by **March 1, 2024**; article drafts will be due **by October 1, 2024,** and will then be sent out for peer review.

Contact Information

Yumo Yan, Managing Editor of *Feminist Media Histories: An International Journal*

Email: yy2887@uw.edu

Internet Histories December 2023 Issue Is Available Online

Some articles are open access.

Internet Histories, Volume 7, Issue 3, December 2023

https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rint20/7/3

Articles:

- Cryptoeconomics as governance: an intellectual history from "Crypto Anarchy" to "Cryptoeconomics," by Kelsie Nabben (Open Access)
- Genealogy of an archive. The birth, construction, and development of the World Wide Web collection at CERN, by Martin Fomasi, Deborah Barcella, Eleonora Benecchi and Gabriele Balbi (Open Access)
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- Internet freedom, free culture, and free information: Aaron Swartz and cyberlibertarianism's neoliberal turn, by Michael Buozis
- Shaping the digital world: views on the internet in India in Prime Ministerial speeches (1998–2019), by Lasya Tandon

Call for Papers: Special Issue of *Early Popular Visual Culture*: Early Cinema in the British Empire

Guest edited by James M. Burns and Mario Slugan

The dominant approach to early cinema (c.1893-1918) has been to treat it as an emblem of modernity ushering in the new age of urbanization and leisure on par with technological inventions such as the railroad. This is a direct consequence of a prevalent focus of early cinema historians on the North American and European context even when discussing cinema as a part of the colonial project. More recent work

has started to break away from this trend. Scholars have produced work on early cinema in Africa, Southeast Asia, Japan, Latin America, Brazil, China, and in German, Dutch, and British colonies. Similarly, historians with the knowledge of local languages have started to integrate colonial early cinema histories into histories of national cinemas, mostly Asian ones, with the most extensive contributions focusing on China, India, and the Philippines. Yet, a large-scale study of early cinema in the British colonies is still missing.

This absence is particularly striking because the period up to 1918 under investigation saw crucial developments in the history of the Empire and cinema alike. In the former case, the British Empire undertook some of the largest colonial expansion in its history, bridging Africa from Cairo to Cape, acquiring substantial territories in West Africa, and peaking in territory with the 1919 Versailles Treaty. In the latter, the period saw the worldwide institutionalisation of cinema as a set of material practices including production, promotion, distribution, exhibition, and reception which would by the end of World War I come to be dominated by Hollywood. Cinema, moreover, was widely available to the peoples in the Empire and, unlike newspapers, was not constrained by (any) language literacy. At the same time, this was also the period when cinema was radically different from the form that the present-day audiences are accustomed to.

We, therefore, invite papers that investigate early cinema in its various forms – production, distribution, exhibition, and reception – in the British colonies. We are interested in case studies (within specific colonies), comparatist approaches (across colonies), and more theoretical and methodological investigations alike. And we are especially interested in the local audiences and sources in local languages. Topics may include (any combination of) but are by no means limited to:

• where in the colonies could the films be seen? (Large urban centres, small towns, villages, labour centres, moving exhibition venues, permanent exhibition venues)
• what was the structure of cinema audiences in the colonies? (Race, ethnicity, language, class, occupation, gender, age, religion, etc.)
• what films were exhibited? (Titles, themes, genres, country of origin, film programmes shown, etc.)
• how were the films distributed? (Traveling showmen, film companies, industrious exhibitors, etc.)
• what was the role of local peoples in the film business? (Film pioneers, participation in cinema as a business from production and distribution to exhibition and reception, etc.)
• where and how in the colonies were the films produced? (Itinerant production, local production, early studios, etc.)
• what discourses surrounded cinema? (Promotion, advertising, reviews, discourses on colonialism, modernity, and nationalism, etc.)
• how was cinema dealt with by the colonial authorities? (Promotion, regulation, censorship, etc.)
• how did the local audiences engage films? (Reasons behind attending film screenings, the effects on the audiences, audiences' thoughts, etc.)
• (how) can we reconstruct local audience engagement given the patchy nature of the archive?
• what sources are available for the study of early cinema in the colonies in local languages?
• due to the itinerant nature of early cinema is it better to focus on routes between neighbouring Empires (in South and Southeast Asia, East Africa, etc.) as opposed to the British colonies alone?

• is early cinema, a concept developed within European and North American context, with its standard cutoff somewhere between 1914 and 1918, a useful category to study cinema in the colonies to begin with?

The Special Issue of *Early Popular Visual Culture* is scheduled for publication in late 2024 (Volume 22, Issue 4).

Please send abstracts of around 300 words, together with the title, up to 5 references, a short bio, contact details and institutional affiliation to the guest editors of the Special Issue of *Apparatus* at m.slugan@qmul.ac.uk for initial selection. Selected articles should typically be 6,000-10,000 words in length. They will undergo an editorial and double-blind peer reviewed process before final acceptance. (Please note that the selection of an abstract for development into a full article does not guarantee publication.)

Deadlines for abstracts: 22 December 2023

Notifications of acceptance: 8 January 2023

Deadlines for full articles: 29 April 2023

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