The American Newsroom: A Social History, 1920 to 1960

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Abstract

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One of the most important centering places in American journalism remains the newsroom, the heart of the occupation's vocational community since the middle of the nineteenth century. It is where journalists have engaged with their work practices, been changed by them, and helped to shape them. This dissertation is a thematic *social history* of the American newsroom. Using memoirs, trade journals, textbooks and archival material, it explores how newsrooms in the United States evolved during a formative moment for American journalism and its workers, from the conclusion of the First World War through the 1950s, the Cold War, and the ascendancy of broadcast journalism, but prior to the computerization of the newsroom. It examines the interior work culture of news workers "within" their newsroom space at large, metropolitan daily newspapers. It investigates how space and ideas of labor transformed the ideology of the newsroom. It argues that news workers were neither passive nor predestinated in how they formed their workplace. Finally, it also examines how technology and unionization affected the newsroom and news workers, and thus charts the evolution of the newsroom in the early-to-middle decades of the twentieth century. In so doing, it fills an important gap in the journalism-studies literature prior to the newsroom ethnographies of the 1970s and 1980s.

Additional committee members

David Domke
Richard Johnson

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The American Newsroom: A Social History, 1920 to 1960

"More drivel has poured from typewriters regarding the life and times of newspaper editorial employees than of workers for any other commercial organization. . . . Writers—newspapermen as well as others—melodramatize reporters as romantic sleuths, drunken cynics, dapper youths who marry debutantes, hardened allies of gangsters, destroyers of wicked politicians, happy men-about-town, courageous prodders behind the walls of social sham, etc."

– Alfred McClung Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America* (1927)[1]

The most important centering place in American journalism remains the "newsroom,"[2] the heart of the vocational community that has grown up in and around the occupation since the middle of the nineteenth century. This storied gathering spot for news workers[3] endures as "a symbolic space of human labor that both challenges and reinforces preconceived notions regarding newswork."[4] It is a space journalists have engaged with, been changed by, and, in

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[1] Alfred McClung Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America; The Evolution of a Social Instrument* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1937), 603.

[2] The Oxford English Dictionary defines a "newsroom" as "an office in a newspaper or a broadcasting station where news is processed," and cites as one of the first known written references a Sept. 18, 1862 article in *The New York Times*: "The usual daily season of War rumors sent in to the Street . . . unsupported by any reliable information to the Press or the news rooms."

[3] The term "news worker" covers reporters, editors, and other newsroom personnel, including "rewrite men," involved in the editorial side of a newspaper, as opposed to the more mechanical or typographical workers. Typically, unless specified, I will use the term to describe reporters and other non-management journalists tasked with the gathering and writing of the news. I am mindful of the fact that it is not necessarily a term they would have used for themselves (preferring "newspaperman" or just "reporter" over "news worker" and "journalist").

[4] Hanno Hardt, and Bonnie Brennen, "Newswork, history, and photographic evidence: a visual analysis of a 1930s newsroom," 11-35, in Bonnie Brennen, and Hanno Hardt, eds., *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

their turn, shaped. This dissertation is a thematic *social history* of the American newsroom for the period lasting from the First World War through the 1960s and journalism's "high modernism" period.[5] Most histories of newsrooms have previously focused on either individual news organizations, most notably New York City-based daily newspapers, or specific groups of news workers (such as the political press corps, profiled in classic studies like Leo Rosten's *Washington Correspondents* and William Rivers' *The Opinion Makers*).[6] But a longitudinal study of the "newsroom" as part of American journalistic culture in the first half of the twentieth century, and that work space's effect on journalistic values and professional identities, has not yet been undertaken in a systematic fashion that incorporates memoirs, trade journals, textbooks and archival material.[7]

The newsroom has been where journalists gathered together, fostering a *newsroom culture*.[8] This developing culture in the early part of the twentieth century is worth a thick historical description, as inspired by Robert Darnton.[9] The newsroom for American news

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[5] By "social history," I mean a history focused on workplaces and workers, not on the "great men" (or women) of history, and more concerned with the typical reporter. This period was described by Daniel Hallin as being a kind of occupational apogee of American journalism in the twentieth century. Daniel C. Hallin, "Commercialism and professionalism in the American news media," 242-260, in *Mass Media and Society*, James Curran, and Michael Gurevitch, eds. (London: Arnold, 2000).
[6] Leo Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937). These reporters, as the title implies, functioned outside of and away from their "home" newsrooms, in some cases. See also William L. Rivers, *The Opinion Makers*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).
[7] Dissertations that explore the histories of individual news organizations, or work practices at these organizations, are, however, more plentiful, and serve as an excellent additional source of information for my study.
[8] The use of "journalistic culture" or "newsroom culture," in my case, is potentially problematic. One helpful definition is found in Thomas Hanitzsch,"Deconstructing journalism culture: toward a universal theory," *Communication Theory* 17, no. 4 (2007): 367-385: "One can generally speak of culture as a set of ideas (values, attitudes, and beliefs), practices (of cultural production), and artifacts (cultural products, texts). Journalism culture becomes manifest in the way journalists think and act; it can be defined as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously and unconsciously, legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful for themselves and others." This applies to newsrooms, as they are a center of journalistic culture.
[9] Robert Darnton, "Workers revolt: the great cat massacre of the Rue Saint-Séverin," 75-104, in Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009); thick description in historical writing involves an attempt to engage with several sources simultaneously, while using all five senses to recreate not only the bare facts of history, but also a sense of the ethos or attitude of the actors within it. There are, of course, limitations to this kind of history, namely how much time it can take to recreate the past. For a wonderful essay on the topic of time and history, see Frank Luther Mott, *Time Enough; Essays in Autobiography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972).

workers was and is a sacred space, where values and routines have been learned from peers and the terms of work have been negotiated with superiors. There, workers faced publishers and bosses, and formed impressions of their audiences through conversations with peers and rivals. In the process they developed an ecosystem of relationships with their colleagues, managers and sources, as well as the public, which has imaginatively placed journalists in newsroom spaces through portrayals on stage, in radio and television productions, and in novels. As an occupational phenomenon, the "newsroom" is also a boundary space, a designated place for the social organization of information collection, processing and dissemination. Its physical layout has defined occupational turf within news organizations. Where a news worker labored within these spaces has mattered. Editors at larger daily newspapers, for example, tended to have more office space set aside from the main newsroom floor. These private places had often been earned only after years of service as rank-and-file reporters. Ultimately, however, all the parts and members of a newsroom formed and form a "work zone," an arena for negotiated professional autonomy. This autonomy was and is complemented and confirmed (and sometimes contested) through the active self-policing and reinforcement of values in the newsroom. Through acts of internal surveillance, workplace culture helps to construct an occupation's self of sense and what it considers important for its membership. How workers behave outside of it also indicates the far-reaching influence of the newsroom.

Toward a social history of the American newsroom

Newsroom work culture has led to its structuring as a center of "news manufacture" for journalism in the United States.[10] Akin to the laboratory, the factory, or the office, newsrooms and their work cultures are identified with the act of doing journalistic work, and the human interactions necessary to accomplish discrete media work tasks—they are centers of work *coordination*. Examining the relationships formed and forged in newsrooms, how ideas of "professional" behavior worked themselves out in conflicts with business and management personnel, and how hierarchies developed between different kinds of news workers, will be explored in this study. Newsrooms are thus centers of *control* over work.

Two brief definitions are necessary here: following Richard Edwards, within a "system of control" such as that found in commercial organizations, "coordination" involves the cooperative production of goods (in this case, news content) by individual workers, as achieved by tradition or the mutually beneficial distribution of power among workers along a production process. Within capitalism, the horizontal distribution of power becomes more vertical, according to Edwards, as capitalists (in this case, owners) gain control of workers. But "as long as the managerial staff . . . remains accountable to the producers themselves," a production process continues as the locus of coordinated, self-directed work. In contrast, "control" is the "the ability of capitalists and/or managers to obtain desired work behavior from workers," along a continuum of power, with less (or little to no) input from workers, who may not have any control over their work, or may only have control within certain spheres.[11] This dissertation

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[10] John Nerone and Kevin G. Barnhurst, "U.S. newspaper types, the newsroom, and the division of labor, 1750-2000," *Journalism Studies* 4, no. 4(2003): 435-449.

[11] Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1979). 17-18. See also James R. Beniger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1986); Daniel A Wren, *The History of Management Thought* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2005), and JoAnne Yates, *Control Through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

reconstructs how coordination and control have played out in the newsroom through its workplace culture. Coordination and control, as well as unionization and technology adoption, were at work in early twentieth-century newsrooms. These newsrooms emerged during an era characterized by the rise of a manufacturing economy in the United States, fueled by ideas of Taylorism and "efficiency" at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.[12] They were organized to reflect certain values from society, but formed their own, inner occupational societies, and their own way of controlling journalistic work (or modulating the control of that work) from within. The "more systematic management" of newspapers in the early twentieth century impressed observers such as Alfred M. Lee. Lee, an early media sociologist, believed that the growth of specialized positions like rewrite staff and copy editors within newsrooms reflected how they were becoming more and more like "an automobile manufacturer's assembly line." Newsrooms had changed from highly personal offices run by charismatic editors and a cadre of printers to nerve-centers for news-producing factories. In this way, "news-handling" was more complex than ever by the time Lee completed his exhaustive survey of the newspaper industry in 1937.[13] Staff organization had been undergoing differentiation for a generation, since at least the 1880s and the introduction of telegraphy, typewriters and telephones. This led to the decline of "rugged individualism" and the growth of a more "impersonal," team-produced journalism.[14] Large newspaper newsrooms (defined in this dissertation as operating in cities with a circulation of 100,000 or more) also appeared with the explosive growth of American cities, sharing "a common set of values—industrial

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[12] Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1977) for a discussion of Taylorism, see p. 275 in Chandler.
[13] Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America*, 642, 643, 645.
[14] Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America*, 628-31.

capitalism, specialization of labor, geographic concentration, and an intricate and specialized economic structure" with their surrounding urban environments.[15]

This study will explore how the newsroom evolved during a formative moment for American journalism and its workers, from the 1920s through the 1960s and the ascendancy of broadcast journalism. It will examine the effect of that evolution on news workers and their work *in* the newsroom space, and evoke what it meant to work together. This includes the sights and smells and sounds of a busy, bustling work place. It was a place designed to produce a daily product, but also leave room for creativity and autonomy. The messy process for how that worked out, and what effect it had on news workers, is one of the themes of this study. The individual, routine-level and organizational forces at work in the production of news, conveyed in the newsroom, offer rich research terrain, and the sources that discuss them a rich set of data, for any exploration of the push-pull pressures that fuel change over time.[16] This project is interested in how reporters formed a unique *newsroom culture* while interacting with one another and with other people outside of their occupational community. By working together, in a collaborative fashion that also left room for de facto autonomy, the newsroom was a principal site for the socialization processes that created and continued a shared occupational community. To tease out this presumption, this study will focus on the daily, experiential nature of journalistic work. The ideas behind it have been inspired by the studies in Hanno Hardt and Bonnie Brennen's *Newsworkers*, by Warren Breed's analysis of newsroom culture and its unspoken norms, and by Randal Beam's application of the power-relations

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[15] Aurora Wallace, *Media Capital: Architecture and Communications in New York City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 10

[16] Pamela J. Shoemaker, and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology* Perspective, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2014).

approach to the study of the professions.[17] This project will be centered on the lived experiences of reporters and editors, and how they sought to construct their agency and autonomy from within their journalistic systems (with their cultural quirks, economic constraints and technological innovations).[18] Another inspiration for this project is Ted Smythe's classic research into the working lives of reporters.[19] Examining the last third of the nineteenth century, Smythe outlined the trials and travails of regular reporters facing totalitarian bosses and equipped with few resources. It is, however, in need of an extension that takes its ground-level, social history of news workers past the first decade of the twentieth century. Smythe's work previews the seminal scholarship of Herbert J. Gans, Gaye Tuchman and other newsroom ethnographers of the 1970s and 1980s. Understanding the newsrooms of the era between Smythe's studies and those of the ethnographers is another purpose of this dissertation.

Two notes on the bounds of the study: looking primarily at the end of the 1910s through the late 1960s focuses my study on an era when news workers were gaining both cultural prominence and professional agency. While scholars such as Smythe, Marianne Salcetti and William Solomon think that reporters' autonomy[20] suffered under their generally poor work

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[17] Hanno Hardt, and Bonnie Brennen, *Newsworkers: Toward a History of the Rank and File* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Warren Breed, "Social control in the newsroom: A functional analysis," *Social Forces* 33, no. 4 (1955): 326-335; see also his longer, earlier study: Warren Breed, Ph.D. dissertation, *The Newspaperman, News and Society* (New York: Columbia University, 1952); Randal A. Beam, *Journalism Professionalism as an Organizational-level Concept* (Columbia, SC: Journalism & Mass Communication Monographs. Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1990).

[18] See below for brief definitions of "autonomy" versus "agency."

[19] Ted Curtis Smythe, "The reporter, 1880-1900: working conditions and their influence on the news," *Journalism History* 7 no. 1 (1980): 1-10; and Ted Curtis Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press, 1865-1900* (Westport, Conn: Praege, 2003).

[20] This is not a precise definition, but, briefly, "autonomy" in the literature on the sociology of work grows more out of ideas of professionalism and control over work, while "agency," at least as I will treat it (and as contrasted to how it is used in critical-cultural studies), in history research, includes the more encompassing notion (aspirational or ideal) of control over life and vocational paths. Questions of power and who wields it, what it looks like and how it is shared underlay my use of these terms. Smythe writes conscientiously of these issues, which is why his work is a good model for this study.

conditions during these decades, Daniel Hallin, Michael Schudson and Christopher Wilson believe that news workers created a more sophisticated and defined, if still fluid, professional sense of themselves vis-à-vis management, their sources and their reading publics.[21] More pragmatically, as a dissertation project, this narrower band of time allowed for a deeper exploration of the social organization of the American newsroom.

Focusing on the experiences of news workers at larger, daily metropolitan newspaper newsrooms of a certain size, distributed by region (across the West Coast, Midwest, South, and East Coast) and seeking a set of "representative" newspapers bound the study more effectively than an exhaustive study of all newspapers, including weekly newspapers, magazines and early radio and TV stations. And a study that emphasizes non-New York newsrooms avoids a bias toward New York-based news organizations.[22] Journalism-studies scholars such as Karin Wahl-Jorgensen have warned against relying exclusively on studies of the latter organizations, as they were created under unique conditions and have special privileges (access to capital, culture, workforce, etc.) that many more typical newsrooms and news workers did not possess.[23] It should also be emphasized at the outset that this is a study of the *American* newsroom experience. A comparative study of newsrooms in Europe (particularly in the United Kingdom)

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[21] Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press*, 166; Marianne Salcetti, "The emergence of the reporter: mechanization and the devaluation of editorial workers," 48-74, in Hardt and Brennen, *Newsworkers*; William S. Solomon, "Newsroom managers and workers: the specialization of editing work," *American Journalism* 10, no. 1 (1993): pp. 24-37; Hallin, "Commercialism and professionalism in the American news media;" Michael Schudson, and Chris Anderson, "Objectivity, professionalism, and truth-seeking in journalism," 88-101, in Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin, and Thomas Hanitzsch, eds.,*The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (NY: Routledge, 2009); Michael Schudson, "The sociology of news production revisited (again)," 242-260, in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, eds., *Mass Media and Society*; and Christopher P. Wilson, *The Labor of Words: Literary Professionalism in the Progressive Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 38-9.

[22] Though in practice this dissertation still makes ample use of New York-based sources, where possible it sought out those from other parts of the country and privileged them where appropriate. New York City's outsize impact on newsroom history, while a reality for media historians, can still be placed in context.

[23] Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, "News production, ethnography, and power: on the challenges of cewsroom-centricity," 21-34, in Susan Bird, ed., *The Anthropology of News and Journalism: Global Perspectives*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

during the same era would make an ideal companion or follow-up study.[24] Following Hallin and Mancini, distinct, historically situated journalistic and newsroom cultures arise in different contexts.[25] It is unwise to generalize beyond a region or country's case (and only then with serious caveats). But the United States taken as a whole, due to its formative role in global journalistic traditions, its number and location of newsrooms, its number of news workers, and its pioneering role in technology development and adoption is an ideal case study. Regarding the organizational-level analysis of this study, more complex newspaper newsrooms during the era from 1920 to 1960 had enough differentiation among staff to illustrate larger trends in American journalism (the growth of middle management, unionization, use of telephones and cars, etc.). Leaving aside smaller or weekly newspapers, as well as broadcast newsrooms, for a parallel or sequel study is necessary, since in the former cases, reporters sometimes served as editors, and vice versa, and there were other, technical aspects to the journalistic work done at broadcast stations which are beyond the scope of this project.

Situating past and current studies of newsrooms

Media historians (along with historians in general) have long grappled with the proper role of theory. Media or journalism history in particular has struggled with how best to incorporate interpretative concepts, including elements of the arguably ongoing "cultural turn" in the humanities and social sciences. The field has tended to suffer from a sort of myopic, or overly Whiggish, tendency, in which "great men" and institutions have received more than their

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[24] There has been good research on other, though still mostly western, countries and their newsroom cultures. See Jose J. Sańchez-Aranda, and Carlos Barrera, "The birth of modern newsrooms in the Spanish press," *Journalism Studies* 4, no. 4 (2003): 489-500; Jürgen Wilke, "The history and culture of the newsroom in Germany," *Journalism Studies* 4, no. 4 (2003); 465-77.
[25] Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

fair share of attention. Indeed, while this faded by the 1970s, media historians have been accused of being out of step with larger trends in historical scholarship. As highlighted by scholars such as James Carey, the continual challenge for our field has been how to do more than make a long nod toward systematic analysis (or fall into that worrisome trap of finding history to fit a grand meta-narrative). Recent work reflecting on the state of media history and on future directions for the field has brought media historians to a healthier place, however. They are now and will continue to creatively apply theories of social construction, temporality, power, culture and textual criticism (indeed, expanding the idea of a "text" as other allied fields have done) to their subjects.[26] This makes for a richer and more relevant conversation with other scholars, including other historians. In addition, the "cultural" and now the "material" turns can be said to be at work in media history thanks to a closer alliance of media history and journalism studies.[27] Media historians (who often see their work as moving beyond exclusively "journalism" history, through this remains a heavy focus) see the value of actively engaging with journalism studies writ large, including some of the field's best scholars.[28] A particularly

[26] The topic of media history and theory is worthy of sustained discussion that goes beyond the scope of this introduction and its brief mention here, but the author must thank colleagues at the American Journalism Historians Association, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's History Division and the Joint Journalism and Communication History Conference. For excellent examples of some of the conversations media historians are having about this issue, see Amber Roessner, Rick Popp, Brian Creech & Fred Blevens, " 'A measure of theory?:' considering the role of theory in media history," *American Journalism* 30, no. 2 (2013): 260-78; John Nerone, "Does journalism history matter?," *American Journalism* 28, no. 4 (2011): 7–27 and John Nerone, "Why journalism history matters to journalism studies," *American Journalism* 30, no. 1 (2013); 15-28. Several of the seminal works in the field include James W. Carey, "The Problem of Journalism History," *Journalism History* 1, no. 1 (1973): 1-7; John D. Stevens and Hazel Dicken-Garcia, *Communication History* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980); and Joseph McKerns, "The limits of progressive journalism history," *Journalism History* 4 (1977): 88-92. Some perspective on Carey's influence can be found in David Paul Nord, "James Carey and journalism history, a remembrance," *Journalism History* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 122–126, and on the state of the field, Kevin G. Barnhurst and John Nerone, "Journalism History," 17-28, in Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, eds., *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*.
[27] See, for example, Pablo Boczkowski, "The material turn in the study of journalism: Some hopeful and cautionary remarks from an early explorer," *Journalism* 16, no. 1 (2015): 65-68; Michael Schudson, "What sorts of things are thingy? And what sorts of thinginess are there? Notes on stuff and social construction," *Journalism* 16, no. 1 (2015): 61-64.
[28] Kathy Roberts Forde, "Communication and the civil sphere: discovering civil society in journalism studies," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 39, no. 2 (2015): 113-24; Barbara Friedman, "Editor's note: is that a thing? The twitching document and the talking object," *American Journalism* 31, no. 3 (2014): 307-311.

promising trend involves journalism-studies researchers, for their part, recognizing the value of media history. This means bringing, for example, longitudinal perspective on past path-dependencies (or paths that-could-have-been) to bear to journalism studies, especially in regards to technology development and adoption.[29] To that end, this project uses iterative primary-source research, including memoirs, trade journals, textbooks and archival material. Details on these sources and the methodology used to explicate them can be found in the essay that introduces the study's bibliography, as well as in the notes in each chapter. This social history of the American newsroom is rooted in a review of relevant sociology-of-work and sociology-of-organizations, media-history and journalism-studies literature. These will be supplemented by an understanding of spatial theory as applied to newsroom spaces, as well as a consideration of newsroom ethnographies.

The sociology of the professions and the newsroom

The ideology of "professionalism" is integral to any study of American newsroom culture, as journalism and news workers have intermittently driven toward a professional status since the end of the nineteenth century. This professional project was especially pronounced by the 1920s, in response to criticism of press coverage of the First World War and the efforts of muckrakers in exposing the abuses of industrialized society.[30] It would be helpful to briefly review some of the theoretical constructs used by sociologists who study the

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[29] Benjamin Peters, "And lead us not into thinking the new is new: a bibliographic case for new," in *New Media & Societ*y 11, no. 13 (2009): 13-30; see also, Michael Goddard, "Opening up the black boxes: media archeology, anarchaeology and media materiality," *New Media & Society* 17, no. 11 (2015): 1761-1776. The work of Lisa Gitelman also bridges media history and STS; see, for example, her *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014).
[30] Walter Lippmann, *Liberty and the News* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1920, 2010); Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: from Bryan to F.D.R* (New York: Knopf, 1955); Marion Marzolf, *Civilizing Voices: American Press Criticism, 1880-1950* (London: Longman Group, 1991).

occupations, as well as conceptions of work in an industrializing economy more broadly. Within sociology, there has been a long-running debate about the nature of a “profession” versus other occupational groups, with scholarly camps advocating functional-structural, “power” and post-power, or jurisdictional, models.

The first focused on “traits,” or attributes, supposedly shared by all professions. Only by acquiring enough of these traits, as well as the legal monopoly over their use, which involved limiting entry into their exclusive occupational group, could an occupation obtain professional status. Such traits varied, but usually included some kind of esoteric knowledge possessed only by members of the profession, the moral and legal authority to do their work, and lengthy training. Doctors, lawyers and the clergy were seen as the first among equals, with engineers, scientists, and other contested groups, such as social workers, following in their footsteps. These “trait” theorists saw the professions as falling along a continuum of respectability, whereby the “well-recognized and undisputed professions” (like doctors) lay at one end, the “least skilled and least attractive occupations (including such blue-collar workers as truck drivers and security workers) at the other, and most occupations landing somewhere between these two poles.[31]

The trait model was influential through the 1960s, with an assumed and ongoing (though vague) “professionalization” process affecting all occupations. “Structuralist” writers such as Harold Wilensky took the ideas of the trait theorists and focused on barriers to this assumed professionalization, which included the establishment of codes of ethics, training

[31] Ernest Greenwood, (reprint of original 1957 article in *Social Work*) "Attributes of a Profession,” 302-318, in N. Gilbert and H. Specht, eds., *Emergence of Social Welfare and Social Work* (Itasca, Ill.: Peacock Publishers, 1976).

schools and national associations—all seen as natural steps in the evolutionary process of professionalization.[32] Wilensky and his peers were interested in theorizing why some occupations were successful in this process, and others were not. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, a new generation of sociologists rejected the trait approach embedded in the functional-structuralist models. Julius Roth, for example, noted severe deficiencies with models of "professional traits" and trait formation, criticizing them as arbitrary and hazy, and urged a historical perspective as a solution to what he called the "attribute rut."[33] Burton Bledstein traced the origin of a "culture" of professionalism in the nineteenth century as a way of rationalizing authority and organizing "careers" funding "lifestyles" (then a new idea, based on mass consumption) for middle-class Americans.[34] Bledstein also avoided formal trait or structural approaches, and looked at how pursuing a profession, often through a university education (especially as American universities reformed and expanded at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century on the German model). The ramifications of this increased emphasis on college education would, in time, affect American journalism through the expansion of programs for the training of reporters in colleges and universities.[35]

Dissatisfied with the prevailing approaches in the field, Terence Johnson, Magali Larson and Eliot Freidson formed a "power" or "monopolist" school beginning in the late 1960s focused on issues of political exclusion and control.[36] Their ideas found their way into Andrew

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[32] Harold L. Wilensky, "The professionalization of everyone?" *American Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 2 (1964): 137-158.
[33] Julius A. Roth, "Professionalism: the sociologist's decoy," *Work and Occupations* 1, no. 1 (1974): 6-23.
[34] Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: the Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: Norton, 1976), 90-2. This "cultural" approach can be subsumed in case studies of individual professions.
[35] Albert Alton Sutton, *Education for Journalism in the United States from its Beginning to 1940* (New York, AMS Press, 1968), 1968.
[36] Terence Johnson, *Professions and Power* (Houndmills, Basingstroke, Hampshire, United Kingdom: British Sociological Association and Macmillan Education LTD, 1972). Magali Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: a Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1977); Eliot Freidson, *Professionalism Reborn: Theory, Prophecy, and Policy* (Chicago:

Abbott's "jurisdictional" schema by the end of the 1980s.[37] Beginning with Johnson, who rejected ahistorical trait perspectives, there was an increasing concern over the "power of specific groups to control occupational activities."[38] According to Johnson and Larson, to focus uncritically on an assumed, and abstracted, series of steps toward institutional control was to follow too closely the professions' own beliefs about the importance of their work. Since the occupations and their work vary within an occupation, and within the wider cultural and temporal contexts in which that occupation exists, "professionalism" exists as a "peculiar type of occupational control rather than an expression of the inherent nature of particular occupations," and it is not an inevitable result of "their essential qualities."[39] Professionalism operates within an occupation as a rationalized form of control, not as an ideal. Larson followed Johnson with her investigation of the power relationships underlying the "professional project" that came out of the Industrial Revolution. According to Larson, the market for professional producers remain bounded by larger social structures, including class structures, state policies and cultural traditions.[40] Workers within a profession's "collective mobility project" rely upon the creation and maintenance of enclosed occupational communities that are a fusion of anti-market and market-reliant, elite and democratizing forces.[41]

Freidson, like Johnson and Larson, was intrigued by questions of control and power in relation to the state and market. Unlike these first two, however, Freidson was more concerned

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University of Chicago Press, 1994). Silvio Waisbord's *Reinventing Professionalism: Journalism and News in Global Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013) contains an excellent summary of these developments within sociology as they apply to journalism studies and media history. He describes "professionalism" as an aspirational ideal with real, if unrealized, consequences for journalism and its practitioners.

[37] Andrew, Abbott, *The System of Professions: an Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988).

[38] Johnson, *Professions and Power*, 37-8.

[39] Johnson, *Professions and Power*, 45.

[40] Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism*, 6, 50.

[41] Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism*, 55, 63, 67-79.

about how definitions of a "profession" (and a more comprehensive theory of professions) affected ideas of work, and was less worried about how they might be an oppression function of class. He called for comparative studies rooted in concrete historical examples and emphasized the interplay of the state and capital, with the "actual professional labor-process" as their foci, instead of the "formal administrative procedures said to control it." Freidson was in favor of a phenomenological approach to the professions, including their social construction. In his perspective, they were and are "changing historic concept[s]," rooted in "Anglo-American institutions."[42]

Building on these approaches, Abbott examined professions as "exclusive occupational groups" that apply "somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases." Abbott was chiefly concerned with "the actual work that is done and the expertise used to do it:" professional structures and cultures are built out of abstracted work practices.[43] Abbott focused on contested jurisdictional claims in an intricate ecosystem of occupations. The "essential cultural logic" of these claims revolves around the levels of abstraction found in the related processes of diagnosis, inference and treatment. *Diagnosis*, which could be made routine and carried out by subordinate occupations, involves the collection of information from a client. *Treatment* is the response to a found problem; the more specialized the treatment, the more closely controlled it is by a profession. *Inference* is the theory that connects diagnosis to treatment.[44] Different occupations contend for the authority to exercise the right of inference, or control, over the most "professional" part of a work process, i.e. the most inferential. Occupations making

[42] Freidson, *The Rise of Professionalism*, 7-9, 16, 45.
[43] Abbott, *The System of Professions*, 7-9, 18.
[44] Abbott, *The System of Professions*, 34, 40-4, 48-52.

professional claims (and counter claims) over these processes possess a complex and dynamic topology of tasks. Abbott emphasizes the role of history in understanding the rise and fall (and rise again) of individual occupations as they successfully, or unsuccessfully, make these claims. Until the twentieth century, for example, surgeons were considered less skilled than university-educated doctors, but now they are arguably some of the most highly regarded practitioners within their occupation. Abbott borrows from Johnson, who identifies the "historically specific" nature of the professionalization process.[45] In a critical move for journalism-studies and media-history scholars, Patricia Dooley takes Abbott's professional-work stages and applies them to journalistic work, equating diagnosis, inference and treatment to reporting, evaluation of news/sources, and the presentation or content of that news, respectively (with the first two happening concurrently). Journalistic identity markers, including editorial independence, helped to preserve news workers' occupational space and their political role in U.S. society.[46]

Abbott is not very interested in journalism's "inability to monopolize" its work routines (and whether or not that precludes it from being a profession) during the era in question. I share his interest in how inter- and intra- professional competition has shaped journalism, especially how ideas of professionalism were formed by its practitioners in newsrooms.[47] Specifically, I am thus curious as to the "where" and "when" of this process, with the newsroom as a site of its development. If instead one were to focus unduly on a supposedly failed "professionalization" process, journalists would be a rather dull group—what matters more is

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[45] Beam, J*ournalism Professionalism as an Organizational-level Concept*, 5.
[46] Patricia L. Dooley, *Taking Their Political Place: Journalists and the Making of an Occupation* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1997), 25-6, 126; Dooley is a student of Hazel Dicken-Garcia, whose *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-century America*. Madison, Wisc: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989) remains a critical text in American media history, and incorporates Dicken-Garcia's ideas of changing journalistic norms.
[47] Abbott, *The System of Professions*, p. 225

how their contested societal roles drove ideas of professionalism from both within and without journalism, and within and without newsrooms.

Following the power theorists, and Abbott, it is critical, therefore, to situate the study of the newsroom in contextualized places and times, in this case, newspaper offices. Also sometimes called "city rooms" or news "bureaus," newsrooms in the decades since the end of the nineteenth century had gone from being "cyclonic attics with desks gerrymandered into disorderly clusters by sulphurous (sic) editors" to "modern . . . as regimented as a real estate office."[48] Agency was negotiated, and contested, in the working world of the newsroom.[49] John Nerone and Kevin Barnhurst, in their high-level review of newspaper types, and the American newsroom as a center of journalistic work in the twentieth century, call the "resulting professional newspaper" of the 1920s through the 1950s "a reporter's newspaper."[50] They note several key developments in the formation of the twentieth-century version of the newsroom. The first was the division of mechanical from editorial labor. As mechanical workers unionized, there was a distinct break between typesetters and other production workers and reporters: the latter were no longer trained first as the former. The second way the newsroom formed as its own space was through the separation of advertising and news. This development was heightened by the growth of a distinct group of more independent, better-equipped and better organized reporters.[51] This "wall" of separation of the business from news operations of

[48] Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America*, 642, quoting from a memoir by a G. Britt, *Forty Years—Forty Millions*, 25.
[49] Lee's study synthesized a variety of primary sources, some of which are not easily accessible today.
[50] Nerone and Barnhurst, "U.S. newspaper types, the newsroom, and the division of labor, 1750-2000," 438.
[51] Nerone and Barnhurst, "U.S. newspaper types, the newsroom, and the division of labor, 1750-2000," 440-441.

newspapers also served as a useful metaphor for newspaper publishers keen on showcasing their product: the content produced by their editorial staffs.[52]

To examine these developments more deeply, we need a social history of the American newsroom conducted on the *meso-level*, one that looks at mediating processes, for change over time, while also examining the amount and kind of agency, or individual-level influence, news workers possessed and shared with one another. This meso-level history thus focuses on the constituent parts of an institution, not its leadership or simply its legacy writ large across society. By "mediating processes," I mean the creation of work-negotiating routines. A meso-level historical analysis looks for changes *within* institutions, and the newsroom, if it is anything, is an institution built from a set of interacting systems (the beat system, the pooled-work system, the copy desk, the interactions of editorial leadership, and so on).[53] By examining individual behaviors and the routines that infuse news institutions with mission and purpose, a social history of the newsroom tells us much about how journalism in the United States developed its unique work culture and identity, and its professional project in the two decades immediately prior to, and after, the Second World War.[54]

Spatial theorists and the newsroom

Whereas sociologists who study work and labor can offer important insights into how *news work* is unique, and how journalism had pursued its professional project in the newsroom,

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[52] Will Mari, "'Bright and inviolate:' editorial–business divides in early twentieth-century journalism textbooks," *American Journalism* 31, no. 3 (2014): 378-99.
[53] For this idea I rely on Timothy Cook, *Governing with the News: The News Media as a Political Institution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[54] Rodney Benson, "News media as a 'journalistic field:' what Bourdieu adds to new institutionalism, and vice versa," *Political Communication* 23, no. 2 (2006): 187-202.

American, French and British spatial theorists have much to say about the *relational* nature of the newsroom. Henri Lefebvre's *Production of Space*, along with David Harvey's *Spaces of Global Capitalism* and the work of John Urray and others, are among the important spatial theorists whose ideas have been applied to newsrooms in studies by Nikki Usher, Akhteruz Zaman and Aurora Wallace.[55] Usher examined *The New York Times* and *The Miami Herald* and both newsrooms' transitions to digital news production, Zaman's study looked at how news workers at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Sydney newsroom adjusted to changing work processes, and Wallace examined the exterior of New York City newspaper buildings for their statements about news values. All three scholars have been influenced by the material turn in journalism studies, as well as an increasing awareness of space as an analytical concept. Spatial theory helps media historians understand how organizational-level influences are manifested on (and by) news workers in newsrooms. Granted, the role of newsrooms is fluctuating. Scholars such as Pablo J. Boczkowski, C.W. Anderson, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and David Ryfe have called for examinations of news ecosystems and journalism-production beyond newsrooms.[56] Newsrooms are not, of course, the only place news gets produced, and it is important to study the post-industrial newsroom as it becomes a collection of distributed

[55] Henri Lefebvre, *Production of Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991), John Urray, "The sociology of space and place," 3-15, in Judith R Blau, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2004); David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (London; New York, NY: Verso, 2006); see also Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005). Examples of journalism-studies scholars influenced by, and utilizing, spatial theory, include Nikki Usher, "Newsroom moves and the newspaper crisis evaluated: space, place, and cultural meaning," *Media, Culture & Society* 37, no. 7 (2015), 1005-1021; see also her *Making News at The New York Times* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2014); Akhteruz Zaman, "Newsroom as battleground: journalists' description of their workspaces," *Journalism Studies* 15, no. 6 (2013), 819-834; Aurora Wallace, *Media Capital Architecture and Communications in New York City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012).
[56] Pablo J. Boczkowski, *News at Work Imitation in an Age of Information Abundance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); C.W. Anderson, *Rebuilding the News: Metropolitan Journalism in the Digital Age* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press, 2013); David Ryfe, *Can Journalism Survive? An Inside Look at American Newsrooms* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012); Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, "News Production, Ethnography, and Power: On the Challenges of Newsroom-Centricity," 21-34, in Susan Bird, ed., *The Anthropology of News and Journalism: Global Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

workplaces and spaces.[57] But understanding the function of these individual organizations is still critical to understanding journalism and journalistic culture, and perhaps more important than ever as news organizations continue attempts to innovate and survive.[58]

The legacy of the influential newsroom ethnographies of the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, including those by Gans, Tuchman and Fishman, reverberates today in the work of scholars such as Usher, Peter Gade, Susan Keith and others.[59] The older newsroom ethnographers were themselves heavily influenced by the theory of the social construction of reality, organizational theory and contemporary critiques of the ideology of professionalism.[60] In this regard, their thinking was especially affected by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *Social Construction of Reality* and Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.[61] These scholars helped newsroom ethnographers conceive of newsroom spaces as constructed of self-governing norms and priorities, much like Warren Breed found a generation before.[62]

A more explicit application of spatial theory is evident today in the journalism-studies literature on newsrooms. As the influential French spatial theorist Lefebvre describes them, newsrooms are thus conceived (produced), perceived (imagined) and lived (manifested)

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[57] Chris Anderson, Emily Bell and Clay Shirky, "Post industrial journalism: adapting to the present" (Tow Center for Digital Journalism, 2012); towcenter.org (http://towcenter.org/research/post-industrial-journalism-adapting-to-the-present-2/).
[58] Pamela J. Shoemaker, and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective* (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2014).
[59] Nikki Usher, "Newsroom moves and the newspaper crisis evaluated;" Peter Gade, "Newspapers and organizational development: management and journalist perceptions of newsroom cultural change," in *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 6, no. 1 (2004): 3-55.Susan Keith, "Horseshoes, stylebooks, wheels, poles, and dummies: objects of editing power in 20th-century newsrooms," *Journalism* 16, 1 (2015): 44-60.
[60] Sarah Stonbely, "The social and intellectual contexts of the U.S. 'Newsroom studies,' and the media sociology of today," *Journalism Studies*, 16, 2 (2015). Sociology has long had a healthy reinvigorating impact on journalism studies; see, for example, Roger Dickinson, "Accomplishing journalism: towards a revived sociology of a media occupation," *Cultural Sociology* 1, no. 2 (2007), pp. 189-208.
[61] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York, Doubleday: Anchor Books, 1966, 1989); Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962, 1996).
[62] Breed, "Social control in the newsroom."

places.[63] Researchers such as Usher and Zaman use his conceptualizations for their work. Usher, for example, while also summarizing Harvey, further identifies newsroom spaces as absolute, relative and relational (fixed, temporally bounded and then influenced and constructed by people, respectively). Since newsrooms are spaces built for and by news workers, it is particularly important to think of them as relative and relational. As Usher describes it, "relative space is a way to discuss how people relate to the objects, the social relationships formed, and the cultural meaning extracted" there. Relational space is people-defined and perceived, and both conceptions, along with ideas of absolute space, are at work in parallel ways.[64] Zaman uses the work of Doreen Massey, another important spatial theorist, to help explain the idea of relational space. It is the product of interactions and part of an ongoing production that is never quite finished.[65] In Zaman's words, "News is produced through practices, multiple realities and trajectories of news . . . [;] the space engendered in news work is always in the making and eternally unfinished."[66] News workers have existed in a continual state of change, at the occupational level, but also at the organizational level, throughout their history. A social history of the newsroom promises to enrich any application of spatial theory to journalism studies by showing the legacy of the newsroom as a relational space.

This study thus conceives of the newsroom as more than the sum of its physical parts, and as an active place of construction of roles, norms and practices. News workers sometimes proactively built this space, aware of what they were doing. In other cases news workers

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[63] Here I should thank Mark Noonan, a professor at the New York City College of Technology, and a co-organizer of the Joint Journalism and Communication History Conference, for this helpful summary of Lefebvre, from a private conversation with the author at the March 2015 conference of the JJCHC. While Lefebvre does not specifically mention newsrooms, his approach be applied to better understanding the newsroom.
[64] Usher, "Newsroom moves and the newspaper crisis evaluated," 4.
[65] Zaman, "Newsroom as Battleground," 823-4, and Massey, *For Space*, 9, 89-90.
[66] Zaman, "Newsroom as Battleground," 824.

adopted older practices and retooled them more or less unconsciously to their present needs. But at no time was the newsroom a static site, or just a place of work. Newsrooms embodied the aspirations of generations of workers and helped to shape an occupation. While other office spaces, or components of office spaces, such as the cubicle, have reflected larger trends in American firms, newsrooms were and are special.[67] Newsrooms were crucial formational spaces for new news workers. They provided opportunities for advancement for veteran news workers. Their arrangement empowered publishers and owners and occasionally disempowered more rank-and-file news workers. But these same structures allowed workers to push back and carve some autonomy of their own. The newsroom inspired what is arguably the first group of middle-class, creative white-collar workers to successfully unionize.[68] It stirred and stirs such nostalgia that journalism as practiced during the twentieth in the United States is, indeed, synonymous with the newsroom. This study examines the newsroom through the lived experiences of its workers, while incorporating a strong sense of space.

Brief overview of chapters

Following this introduction, the first two chapters examine the “near-peers” of the reporter, which include copy boys and girls, photographers, rewrite staff and copy editors. Whereas copy boys and girls and photographers were considered to have less power and autonomy in the newsroom than reporters, they were important recruits and companions.

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[67] Nikil Saval, *Cubed: A Secret History of the Workplace* (New York: Doubleday, 2014); more on the position of newsrooms as workplaces vis-à-vis other American places of work and business can be found in the chapter on unionization and quality-of-life in the newsroom. Beyond the scope of this work, Chandler’s *The Visible Hand* provides rich context, and Harry Braverman’s *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974) provides a further, and vital, critique.

[68] Reporters, editors and various newsroom support personnel could also, arguably, be classified as early members of an information economy.

Their interactions with each other, their bosses and reporters reflect larger intra-newsroom tensions. In contrast, rewrite staff and copy editors were nominally more powerful than reporters. Both groups controlled important parts of the *news-production process* in the newsroom. Reporters often aspired to the rewrite desk, or spent time on it in the latter part of their careers. They also routinely opposed copy editors' decisions. The parallel work worlds of these groups in the newsroom show how newsroom personnel were well aware of the various sub-cultures within their workspace, and how they learned to navigate these cultures over time as the newsroom transitioned to a more white-collar institution.

The next two chapters look at the role of the reporter in the newsroom. Beginning with the cub, "leg man" and general-assignment (GA) reporters, their internal stratification revealed a "junior" and "senior" status that was reflected in both pay and power. Senior reporters, which included veteran beat reporters and columnists, had more autonomy and were at the top of the newspaper's hierarchy in the *news-gathering process*. Newsroom norms both reflected and were changed by these "peer-to-peer" interactions. Unionization, technology adoption and the wider social forces affecting the American workplace also influenced newsrooms, and both junior and senior reporters considered themselves increasingly white collar and professionalized by mid-century.

The middle chapter focuses on the power of newsroom bosses over both the news-production and news-gathering processes. The interactions of managing, city and other mid-level editors in the newsroom saw this power decrease over time as reporters unionized and as newsrooms developed human-resource departments. Editors-in-chief also shared power with a growing group of middle managers (who acted more like junior section editors). As they

became less autocratic, their power over reporters and newsroom support personnel became shared and more corporately controlled from above.

Two chapters look at the role of technology adoption and unionization in the disruption of newsroom culture and work routines. The telephone and car created whole new groups of workers in the newsroom, notably rewrite and leg men, and helped print newsrooms compete with new journalistic forms (radio and TV). Newsrooms reoriented their news-gathering and news-production processes around mobile reporting technology. News workers reskilled or multi-skilled, learning how to best incorporate practices such as phoning in stories, updating editions throughout the day and reporting stories as they happened, pioneering techniques later adopted by radio and TV newsrooms workers. In parallel, unionization shifted power away from editors and owners and back toward workers, pushing the professional project of these workers in unexpected directions. While the unionization of the American newsroom was neither as total nor as radical as some in the industrial-union movement hoped, post-war prosperity allowed a détente between owners, editors and their workers. The newsrooms encountered by Gans, Tuchman, Fishman and others were spaces that had been shaped by these twin forces of technology adoption and unionization.

The conclusion summarizes these trends and reflects on the relational nature of the newsroom space, as well as its continuing importance to American journalism. It points toward future research possibilities, including work that could examine the computerization of the newsroom prior to the advent of the internet (the period from the early 1960s, where this study finishes, and the early 1990s). Two appendixes follow, the first including a table describing salary trends from about 1920 through 1960, and the second containing a collection

of occupational humor (especially on-the-job poetry). Finally, a note on primary sources describes some of the challenges of working with the large collections of professional-trade literature, memoir material, textbooks, government documents and archival material used in this dissertation.

Chapter 2

Reporters and their near-peers: copy boys and photographers

Perhaps, too, you will understand something of the thrill and excitement that every newspaperman feels about his job. For no matter what that job may be, he knows that it is part of the swift daily drama that takes place in the few breath-taking hours between the time news happens *and the time you read about it. Whether he is an editor, reporter . . . cameraman, [or] copy boy . . . he is proud to be able to say, "I work on a newspaper!"*[1]

– Henry B. Lent, *"I Work for a Newspaper"* (1948)

Newsrooms are and were complex communities of news workers collaborating and competing to produce the news. [2] From the 1920s through the 1950s and beyond, these workers grouped themselves into specific categories, and formed "near-peers" to the centering figure of the reporter, supporting and supervising the latter. This dynamic occupational ecosystem of editorial workers was composed of many varieties of writers and editors. While reporters will be the subject of their own chapters focused on "peer-to-peer" interactions among that critical group, the next two chapters focus on four representative kinds of newsroom inhabitants. Beginning with those who had less power in and out of the newsroom over the news-gathering process (vis-à-vis reporters), this chapter examines copy boys and girls

[1] Henry B. Lent, *"I Work on a Newspaper"* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), 6. Emphasis in original.
[2] Michael Schudson in his *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (Basic Books, 1978) discusses some of these issues, and this project is partially inspired by his work. Schudson's focus was on the broader formation of an American journalistic culture, and about how news workers fit into it. Advancing from that, my work is about how these workers operated more specifically within newsrooms.

and photographers. Rewrite staff and copy editors, who usually held more power over the news-production process (also vis-à-vis reporters, but also usually over others except senior editors), will be the subject of the next chapter.

Near peers: copy boys and girls

Copy boys, sometimes called "office boys," or "clerks," intuited newsroom culture from their position as entry-level news workers. To be a copy boy was to be an aspiring reporter, and so in the hierarchy of the newsroom they represented one of the few groups that looked up to, and not down or across to, reporters. In newsroom culture, only librarians could be considered less influential.[3] Pay, job security and future prospects were all rated according to what copy boys might get if they made the coveted jump to "cub" reporter. Copy boys physically conveyed "'copy through the stages of editing and did other routine office work such as distributing proofs, getting clips from the reference library and bringing in food for reporters and editors who are too busy to take time out to eat,'" observed a contemporary.[4] In this latter duty, as the newsroom's "traditional food bearer," they fetched sandwiches and coffee for reporters when the latter were stuck at their desks near deadlines.[5] Drawn by the "glamour attached to newspaper work," these mostly high-school graduates "considered themselves fortunate to have gained entrance to a newspaper office in any capacity," noted another observer.[6]

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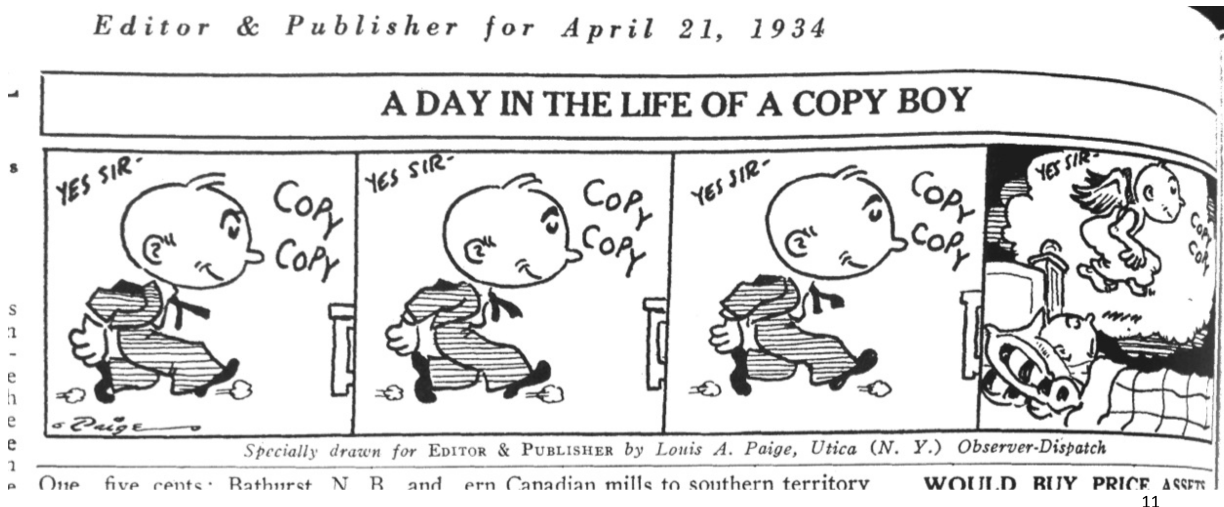
[3] Harry Pence, "The 'morgue man' and his job," *The Quill*, April 1919, 1-2; the author describes the early name for a newspaper librarian, the "morgue man," as being unnecessarily on the bottom of the food chain in a newsroom, subject to the whims of the "lordly reporters," the scoffing of the copy boys, and the object of editors' fury.
[4] Thomas E. Jefferson, "Copy boy," *Guild Reporter*, April 1934, 5.
[5] Elias E. Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism* (New York: Vocational Guidance Manuals, Grosset & Dunlap, 1951), 38.
[6] Jefferson, "Copy boy," *Guild Reporter*, April 1934, 5.

Becoming accustomed to the work could be a challenge, and it took time for a newly hired copy boy to get acclimated, but more often than not, most did so quickly, pulled inexorably into the newsroom's routines. After an initial period of bewilderment, overwhelmed "by the rush of the place, by the calls of 'Boy!' emanating from distant corners of the city room, a new copy boy gradually becomes oriented, [and] learns the routine of the job." Moving among the various departments of the paper, beyond the newsroom itself, and encountering all kinds of staff members, from cub reporters not much further along than themselves, to the managing editor and the chief of the copy desk, copy boys were ideally positioned, in a pre-intern era, to soak up the many unstated norms of the newsroom. It may have taken up two years of everyday "heal and toe work," but a copy boy "far from becoming robotized and doing his work mechanically . . . begins to feel the news pulse of the paper. He anticipates the needs of editors by studying their personal habits. He doesn't have to be told what brand of cigarettes the assistant makeup editor smokes."[7]

Copy boys could be called upon to write to fill in holes on a news page or hunt down information for breaking news stories. "Senior boys," once they had proven their competence, could write short reports for less-pressing beats, such as church news, or tackle the occasional obituary.[8] These opportunities were relatively rare but accumulated over time. Most boys advanced based on a honed attention to detail, a good memory, and, of course, moving copy around the newsroom and through the newspaper "plant." Into the early 1950s, a copy boy had "a better opportunity than any nonwriting member of a newspaper staff to observe newspaper

[7] Jefferson, "Copy boy," *Guild Reporter*, April 1934, 5.
[8] Jefferson, "Copy boy," *Guild Reporter*, April 1934, 5.

functions, the foibles of writing men, and other things that will be of inestimable value as he progresses in the writing profession."[9] But even by the 1930s, self-educated copy boys were facing competition for entry-level reporter jobs from college graduates. It was still a steady springboard for many, however. A key quality-of-life difference existed between those who lived at home and worked at the paper part-time, and those who were away from home. Buying a suit could precipitate an economic crisis, and "cigarette and lunch money make dire incursions into his bankroll."[10] The occasional tip and even some light freelancing might help augment the low pay.



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Copy boys, reporters, and newsroom culture

By the 1920s, a job as a copy boy had become one of the most traditional pathways into the newsroom, and the most trusted source of new reporters. It was also universally regarded as a humble position, below that of the most ignored cub reporter.[12] In reality, cub reporters

[9] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 39.
[10] Jefferson, "Copy boy," *Guild Reporter*, April 1934, 5.
[11] "A day in the life of a copy boy," *Editor & Publisher*, April 21, 1934, 56; the copy boy was a frequent subject for cartoonists.
[12] Frederick B. Edwards, "The road that leads to New York," *The Quill*, Oct. 1925, 6-7.

and copy boys were only a few steps apart, in terms of their responsibilities and work tasks. When not running copy, copy boys could be given other minor tasks. They existed in a kind of in-between status, as they waited for openings in the cub-reporter positions above them.[13] Sometimes a copy boy would be given the chance to become a photographer if there no openings on the news side. This was regarded as less than ideal, as the status of photographers was improving only slowly in the newsroom.[14] But the reverse could also be true: copy boys could start out exclusively focused on assisting photographers. Sammy Schulman, a news photographer who later achieved fame covering the Second World War for a variety of U.S. newspapers, was hired as a copy boy at age 17, in 1920, for the *New York American*. Before long he applied and got a copy boy position with International News Photo, based in the same building as the *American*, at $9 a week.[15]

Perhaps one of the better-known former copy boys in American journalism, Arthur Gelb, who went onto become to become the managing editor of the *New York Times*, recounted some of the social divides keeping copy boys from fraternizing too closely with reporters and others. Gelb got his start at the *Times* as a night-shift copy boy in May 1944, while on a wartime hiatus from college.[16] Usually, he noted, outside the newsroom, “a wide gulf existed between reporters and copyboys,” with few exceptions.[17] Some of this could be explained by age; since reporters often socialized at bars, and most teenagers were not old enough to enter, that relationship could only begin after the copy boy had become a cub, if not later. Work as a copy

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[13] James H. Wright, “Cog vs. wheel: No, thanks—I’ll stay in small city,” *The Quill*, June 1949, 9-10.
[14] Charles C. Clayton, “Photo journalism,” *The Quill*, April 1960, 6.
[15] Sammy Schulman, edited by Bon Considine, *Where’s Sammy?* (New York: Random House, 1943), 4-5.
[16] Arthur Gelb, *City Room*, (New York: Putnam, 2003), 6-7
[17] Gelb, *City Room*, 2.

boy could lead to an intermediate position, such as a clerk, and thence to reporter. This aspiration motivated Gelb and his fellow copy boys, and, starting with the war, copy girls.[18] Until their promotions, however, copy boys would sometimes warm a wooden bench, waiting to be sent on errands in the newsroom. Gelb recounts how when Wilson L. Fairbanks, the *Times*' intimidating telegraph editor, shouted "copy!" the next boy would rise "like a private saluting a four-star general. Orders would be muttered, and if a mission was not completed with speed and exactitude, his accusing stare was enough to make a grown newspaperman tremble."[19] There was stratification even within this world. Gelb, for instance, found himself promoted to desk clerk for Fairbanks, which at the *Times* was a kind of stationary office boy.[20]

By the late 1930s many larger and some smaller newspapers began to organize what had long been an informal arrangement. The American Newspaper Guild's influence had trickled down to affect the status of newsboys, who were given standardized weekly wages like other news workers. As with all other members of the newsroom, however, the prolonged Depression threatened job security. One estimate claimed that as many as 10,000 copy boys and girls, as well as cub reporters, were waiting for promotion across the country in 1930.[21] More optimistically, the *New York Daily News* ran its copy boys through an in-house "school," starting in 1935. This produced some 124 graduates though 1941, 23 of whom were subsequently dismissed for various reasons. Copy boys would start at $21 a week and end as junior reporters at $25 to $55, with a top scale of $60 to $75 each week, based on experience, service and ability. For four days a week the program's members would learn by shadowing

[18] Gelb, *City Room*, 15.
[19] Gelb, *City Room*, 27-8.
[20] Gelb, *City Room*, 28.
[21] Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 13, 1930, 52.

reporters or photographers on the beat, running photographic plates back to the newsroom or writing short stories or parts of stories, before gradually being allowed to do more on their own.[22] At the smaller, Binghamton, New York, *Press*, in 1941, copy boys and girls attended a "two-year beginner's school to train workers in the editorial department." Focused on copy boys and girls under 23 who had finished high school, it did not take "married girls of any age, [or] persons obviously deficient in personality, appearance, poise and good manners." After passing a health inspection patterned after that given to aspiring Marines, then a series of written tests, a copy boy or girl in the program would make $12 a week to start and then $14 after six months, with raises thereafter up to $25. After arriving on the staff through all these hurdles, the new recruit would do everything from running copy, taking down phone numbers, retrieving lunches, running errands, sorting mail, typing, helping the reference library staff and even transmitting copy through the newsroom's pneumatic tube system.[23]

During the war, copy boys increasingly became copy girls, too, as young men of draft age became rare (especially as they were often the youngest staff members and thus most likely to be drafted). A national survey showed 49 unfilled positions on newspapers of more than 100,000 circulation across the country in 1943.[24] The *New York Daily News*, in addition to recruiting promising copy boys for its in-house training school designed to produce cub reporters, sought out girls due to wartime shortages. Bill Shand, the city editor, found that "copy girls can go through the same mill as copy boys and emerge as good newspaper men." Anne Grosvenor, who started as a copy girl making $16 a week, pioneered the process, covering

[22] Walter Schneider, "N.Y. News seeking jobs for reporters it trained," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 25, 1941, 34.
[23] "5 girls, 1 boy in *Binghampton Press* copy boy school," *Editor & Publisher*, June 7, 1941, 20.
[24] Kenneth E. Olson, "Survey of Daily Newspaper Personnel Shortages," *Journalism Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1943): 114-15

police headquarters as part of the initiation ritual of life as a cub before her promotion to reporter.[25] A successful Washington, D.C., correspondent for *Newsweek*, Ann Cottrell, began as a "try-out clip desk, copy girl" at $20 a week, and rose through the ranks at the Richmond *Times-Dispatch*.[26] The war brought other changes. Returning veterans, some of whom had left positions as copy boys, had matured and acquired new skills during their military service. Finding positions for them more suitable to their new status was a challenge, and filtered down to the ranks of copy boys and girls.[27] By 1948, the *Detroit Free Press* had developed a six-month internal training program, which included opportunities for copy boys to gradually make the transition to cub reporter, practicing rewriting using "intra-office phones," shadowing more experienced reporters on various beats, then focusing on work for the police beat, or being moved to the copy desk for up to three and a half years. This program was designed for copy boys whose Guild contract guaranteed them a trial period on the editorial desk.[28] Other papers sought to smooth the path to work as reporters.

Copy boys and girls, however lowly they were in the newsroom's hierarchy, could and did speak as a group. As early as 1921, copy boys complained that they were not being given enough mentorship by reporters and others.[29] A generation later, a cartoon from January 1949 shows a suit-clad copy boy standing with hand on hip, and other hand on a table, telling a reporter (or editor), "Don't yell 'Copy Boy' and then keep me waiting; we have a union, too!" While this image and others like it gently satirized the niche union groups in the newsroom, and

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[25] "Girls train on police beat for N.Y. News," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 5, 1944, 30.
[26] Helen M. Stratton, "Covers interests of women, also 'straight news,'" Jan. 6, 1945, 42.
[27] "Reconversion problems of the press," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 18-20, 1946, 109-11.
[28] "Detroit Free Press tests editorial apprentice plan," *Editor & Publisher*, March 20, 1948. The program was developed in-house by editors George W. Parker and Richard Paulson.
[29] "A fifth estate—the copy boys," *Editor & Publisher*, April 30, 1921, 42.

federal regulation of underage workers in the news industry, there was a serious point to it.[30] Workers had more rights than before. Other cartoons from the 1950s depict copy boys as still very much at the bottom of the newsroom's social stratum.

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At the *Los Angeles Examiner*, new copy boys were hazed. Ordered to "call the roll" in the newsroom by reporters or senior copy boys, staff members would shout out, "present," and keep the charade going in hopes that an editor or publisher would pass through. Eventually,

[30] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 15, 1949, 32.
[31] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 15, 1949, 32; this image played on the post-war assertiveness of the ANG.

this ritual backfired, when a senior editor did, in fact, show up and demanded an explanation for the shenanigans.[32]

There was already nostalgia for the copy boy by the end of the 1950s, as seen in the continued regard for his (and increasingly, post-war, her) plight, romanticized in retrospect.[33] This happened as college internships and campus papers began to supplement and then eventually largely replace the copy boy/girl route into the newsroom. The transition to a proto-internship model for copy boys and girls took place over a generation. Gannett was advertising such a program for some its New England-based members' newspapers, including the Hartford (Conn.) *Times*, the Albany *Knickerbocker News* and the *Niagara Falls Gazette*. A paid "training program," it invited journalism graduates to "learn about the opportunities in (1) the newsroom, (2) the circulation department, (3) the advertising department, or (4) the business office."[34] Donald Dow Webb, a staff member at the Akron, Ohio, *Beacon Journal*, suggested that copy boys be invited to more actively shadow the staff, including attending their weekly meetings, so "these young men are introduced to the actual policy-making forces operating today's metropolitan newspapers."[35] In the face of competition from other newsrooms, and other lines of related work, including public relations, treating copy boys and girls as a more integral part of the workforce helped retain them. Webb argued that "when copy boys are invited to sit in on the staff meetings, they see [that] today's newsman DOES have job satisfaction. This is because reporting DOES provide challenge, opportunity, creativity,

[32] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, July 24, 1937, 33.
[33] George Kennedy, "Copy readers are young and copy boys are older," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 20, 1960, 60-1.
[34] "Journalism School Graduates," *The American Editor*, New England Society of Newspaper Editors, April 1960, inside front cover (no page number).
[35] Donald Dow Webb, "Letters: in conference," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 5, 1959, 7.

recognition, respect—in fact, it is because reporting DOES provided almost everything wanted from a job."[36]

A changing newspaper work culture during the post-war period was also affecting the hiring process, and training expected, for copy boys and girls. Hiring young men and women as copy boys (still sometimes called "office boys" or "office girls") was considered by some managing editors as part of a holistic process of forming a staff. Norman Shaw, associate editor of the *Cleveland Press*, and a former managing editor for the same paper, described how his paper's staff of 14 office boys and girls (11 and 3, respectively), engaged in "chasing proofs, sorting copy, and menial jobs of that kind" for six to eight months. These had been hired "with the promise that, if they make good, they will get a reporting and writing job, or a job in whatever branch of the business they are interested in," after their trial period of between three months to a year was up. Rotated through the various editorial departments (everything from the police beat to the society or women's page), the library and the "finance department," the goal was to "find out from the heads of those departments how good these people are." This allowed the staff to judge who they felt was competent and who "we can weed out early."[37]

[36] Webb, *Editor & Publisher*, "Letters: in conference," 7. Capitalized words in the original.
[37] "Managing editors panel," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21-23, 1949, 53.

BOY!

"Finally got back with my coffee, eh? . . . Here's tomorrow's headline: Ace Copy Boy Believed Missing; Returns To Office, Finds Post Vacant."[38]

The Guild approved of this system, especially since these copy or office boys and girls were paid above the union's minimum. Starting pay for the copy girl and boy rank was $32 a week (the Guild's minimum in Cleveland at this time was $25-27; first-year reporters, by comparison, made a minimum of $40, and during their second year, $50). In addition to their other duties, they attended training classes on Wednesday afternoons, with guest speakers

[38] George Thune, "Boy!" *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 25, 1956, 66; Thune's more fearful depiction of the interaction between an editor and a copy boy was less common. More common were paternalistic or teasing observations.

from the editorial and mechanical sides of the paper; a Monday night class, for an hour and a half, was led by a "chief editorial writer," with ten in each class and six sessions before new students were admitted.[39] Shaw's staff hired an average of one copy boy or girl a month, with stiff competition for the open positions (he claimed there were up to 2,000 applicants a year). Six a year usually made it through the initial training period before being assigned to the police beat, with three surviving that latter process ("survive" being his word), so three needed to be placed each year. This matched their regular staff vacancies, since their editorial staff consisted of 165 people. Their process emphasized the hiring of idea-creating, alert, aggressive and critical people, who could transcend the routine.[40]

The debate at the end of the decade was, indeed, about whether copy boys and girls were still getting legitimate shots at becoming reporters. The system itself was open to criticism, with college as the increasingly preferred entry path into the newsroom. One copy boy, in a letter-to-the-editor, deplored his working conditions and noted that his and his peers' pay ranged from $35 to $47.50 in Ithaca, New York. With college degrees but unpromising job prospects, they were in "system" that was "basically a pathetic exploitation of ignorance."[41] Other letter writers called for better treatment of college-educated copy boys, while claiming that those "who had been educated in college were useless for a year because they don't know the routine . . . news sources" or have "news judgment."[42] But the position of copy boy was too entrenched in newsroom culture to really fade for another generation.

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[39] "Managing editors panel," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21-23, 1949, 53, 57.
[40] "Managing editors panel," April 21-23, 1949, *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), 53.
[41] C. Michael Curtis, "Letters: The pathetic exploitation of copy-boys," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 6, 1958, 7.
[42] "Letters: copy boys' chains," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 27, 1958.

Near peers: photographers

As newspapers became more visually oriented early in the twentieth century, and photographs of prosaic news events more common (and more easily reproduced), there was an increasing demand for those with the skill and technology to take them. Photographers gradually became one of the truest near-peers of the reporter in the newsroom during this era. Though initially regarded as the less-sophisticated, image-hunting sidekick, photographers gradually came into their own in the newsroom's vocational community. Their transition mirrors broader changes in that community, as well as the increasing acceptance of newspaper photographers as news workers on par with print reporters. As new, rival newsrooms (especially those creating radio and then TV news broadcasts) emerged by the 1950s, the print newsroom embraced the skills and experiences of photographers, claiming them as their own.

Contemporary observers of newspaper photographers, sometimes colloquially referred to as "cameramen" or "lensmen," among other nicknames, pointed to their rough reputation. In fact, it had been "the custom of newspaper reporters to assume a superior attitude toward the photographer," noted Stanley Walker, a New York-based editor, in 1934. Photographers were regarded as "the liveliest and most patient of newspaper men."[43] They had to be, to endure the waiting associated with news coverage. With their own, more individualistic, even "wolfish," approach to journalism, photographers were "as jealous of each other as the competing ladies at a gladioli exhibit" and enjoyed comparing their work to one another. Tensions existed between reporters and photographers. Some went so far as to refrain from

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[43] Stanley Walker, *City Editor* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, Inc., 1934), 103.

calling them “newspaper men” and even eat with them. Though these more extreme practices were fading, Walker called for faster integration of the two groups.[44]

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Morton Sontheimer, reflecting on photographers as a group a few years later, described how “from the slovenly Sancho Panza riding his broken steed behind the splendorous Quixotes of the reportorial ranks, the photographer is fast acquiring polished armor and manners to make him a don in his own right.”[46] Before they had been the “squires of newspapers’ knights, the reporters.” Waiting outside while reporters did the interviewing, leaving before formal events began and generally thought of as “the rogues and boors of the business, uncouth, unkempt, and uncontrollable,” photographers were regarded as unintelligent and uneducated. This perception by other news workers tended to foster a gritty self-perception among

[44] Walker, *City Editor*, 103.
[45] Walker, *City Editor*, ii; photographers pose on the steps of a Long Island courthouse, c. 1934.
[46] Morton Sontheimer, *Newspaperman, A Book About the Business*, (New York: Whittlesey House, 1941), 231.

photographers, one characterized by a willingness to bend or make their own rules. Photographers, perhaps unfairly, were known for their bad manners, such as picking their teeth with a cocktail olive's toothpick, propping their feet up on desks and keeping their hats on unless they had to scratch their heads. Their reputations sometimes dissuaded the best and brightest from joining their ranks (and attracted eccentric personalities). But that changed by the 1920s with the wider use of photos beyond the tabloids, in "picture magazines" like *Life*, as well as the development of "the telephoned picture," i.e. the faxed "wirephoto," and improved lenses and flash systems.[47]

A journalistic culture of more impressionistic, story-driven photography also helped, with people being "portrayed as they actually looked." Photographers needed to cultivate a kind of pragmatic artistic sensibility and imagination.[48] But just as publishers could not classify reporters as "professional" due to the subordinate nature of their work, photographers' work was not generally considered "original and creative."[49] The federal 1943 *Manual of Newspaper Job Classifications* defined a "news photographer" and his or her role in the newsroom. The few thought of as "professional" by the standards of the day were found on the staffs of the largest circulation newspapers. This stature came from being "given large general assignments with great latitude as to the method and time of performing his work and . . . [the use] of his own independent discretion and judgment as to the choice of particular subjects." Otherwise, the

[47] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 231-2.
[48] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 233, 240.
[49] *Manual of Newspaper Job Classifications*, Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor Wage and House and Public Contracts Divisions, April 1943, 9.

"routine taking of pictures of news events or persons on a day-to-day assignment basis" classified them with working reporters.[50]

As with other newsroom groups, photographers had their own internal culture in the broader newsroom (and journalistic) culture as a whole. Even unskilled photographers, "not so good in catching a horse with four feet off the ground . . . will purr when complimented on a picture of the reposeful skyscrapers of lower Manhattan, and will sulk if told that someone else made a better picture." Because their work varied from being assigned to get a "pose" (staged) or a "shot" (a more spontaneous) image of a particular person or situation, the typical photographer during the interwar years knew he "must be aggressive, sometimes offensively so; he must know the power of cajolery, and the endless uses of tact." Drawn to action, photographers liked images that told their own stories, and innovative perspectives on news events. They had to engage and outsmart corporations that did not like bad publicity (railroad companies and airlines did not appreciate the publication of scenes of carnage, for obvious reasons) criminals, shy celebrities and closed-off spaces, such as courtrooms. Photographers competed with one another, resorting to ruses to get an edge on the competition. During the Democratic National Convention in 1932 in Chicago, an AP photographer hired an ambulance to transport an "injured person" out of a stadium (the person was in fact a stack of undeveloped photographic plates).[51]

But these boundary-pushing antics could dance with tastelessness. Photos of mob executions (as well as the state-sanctioned kind) showed readers the uglier side of both

[50] *Manual of Newspaper Job Classifications*, Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor Wage and House and Public Contracts Divisions, April 1943, 9.
[51] Walker, *City Editor*, 103, 104-5, 110-11.

underground society and official justice. Controversial photos—such as the infamous image of the 1928 execution of Ruth Snyder at Sing Sing Prison in New York State, covertly taken by Tom Howard, a freelancer working for the *New York Daily News*—could cost photographers goodwill with the authorities.[52] Bound by their flexible ethical code, "which forbids shyster practices, even among this group of hard-boiled buccaneers," photographers also fought for their independence, refusing bribes and destroying their own plates if they decided a picture was unnecessary or harmful.[53] "Snappers" who resorted to dirty tricks to get scoops or beats on their fellow photographers were occasionally looked down upon. Examples of dirtier tricks that might earn wayward photographers shaming by peers included posing as public officials, or, more elaborately, getting group shots of celebrities at their weddings and then claiming that there were no more photographers on the way (when, in fact, there were; this insured that the late-comers got a cold reception).[54]

Throughout the interwar period, experts thought photography was important for the future of print journalism, especially newspapers.[55] Photographers strained to keep up with technological developments. Familiarity was required with the chemical processes needed to develop film, as well as the ability to maintain a complex and sometimes unforgiving camera (complete with shutters, flash/floodlight bulbs, and "speed guns," which helped to synchronize flashes with the opening of the camera's shutter). More "miniature," or "candid," cameras made news photography better suited to a larger range of breaking-news stories. A

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[52] Walker, *City Editor*, 111-12; Erica Fahr Campbell, "The first photograph of an execution by electric chair," *Time*, April 10, 2014. Accessed May 24, 2015. http://time.com/3808808/first-photo-electric-chair-execution/
[53] Walker, *City Editor*, 112-13.
[54] "'Smart' newspaper work," *The Quill*, February, 1932, 10.
[55] Walker, *City Editor*, 114.

photographer could travel lighter, faster and with less fatigue to develop his or her film more quickly. By the 1940s, large boxes strapped to shoulders no longer announced the presence of a photographer. Smaller cameras meant that sources were more willing to let photographers get close or gain entrance to events, helping to boost the photographer's "social acceptability." Photographers' assignments were also sometimes considered more interesting than regular reporters' stories during this era. Often simply because there were fewer photographers, "their chances of being stuck in the office on darkroom work are not near so great as the reporters' [odds of] having to stay in on a lot of crumby rewrite jobs." While their work could be perilous, and involve climbing out on roofs or dodging fisticuffs in riots to get some "action art," the very danger made it more thrilling, attracting young men and women to photojournalism (even if that phrase was not yet in vogue).[56]

Despite this ability to draw recruits to their ranks, photographers into the 1940s and beyond continued to relish "their legendary status as the clowns of the business," celebrated for their brashness and storytelling acumen. Photographers complained that art, layout and photo editors tended to mishandle or badly position their photos on the printed page, paralleling the tensions reporters felt with copy editors, and to a lesser extent, rewrite staff. Photographers, for their part, suffered from their own fads, such as overly angled shots (that tended to produce nose portraits from below), stylized light effects (including one that utilized a flashbulb below a face; this made subjects appear villainous), semi-posed shots of people pointing and a tendency to look for oddly juxtaposed emotions.[57] Photographers sometimes

[56] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 234-5, 243.
[57] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 235-6, 239.

collaborated with politicians to show the latter in a positive light, too. This was the case with President Roosevelt standing up in his leg braces; the press corps agreed to follow a Secret Service directive to not show the president in ill health.[58]

Photographers, reporters, and newsroom culture

From the beginning of the twentieth century, photographers developed their own culture within and without newsrooms that paralleled and also shared that of reporters, perhaps their nearest peer. By the 1920s, this relationship was regarded as unique. In 1920, a University of Minnesota professor of journalism, Norman J. Radder, urged young reporters to treat a photographer with respect. "Don't treat him as if he were your employe in getting the picture. Of course he is in a way. But you will find that a little co-operation will get you much further."[59] This was not a relationship of true equals, but it was, at least, a recognition of the other's value as a fellow news worker. "Instead of telling him, 'get a picture of that,' you will get better results by enlisting his interest by asking him, 'do you think we can get a good picture from this angle?' or 'what do you think about getting a picture from here?'" Photographers often knew more about lighting and angles, but not necessarily about news values, Radder claimed. Ideally, though, they should know a little about each other's work. The reporter had "to see that every detail is included that bears any important relationship to the story. He, as well as the photographer, must see to it that the poses are natural." If a photographer had "good news sense" it helped the reporter get the story. He predicted that eventually more

[58] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 241-2.
[59] Norman J. Radder, "Getting the photograph," *The Quill*, April 1920, 7. Note that the older spelling of "employee" (with the one "e") is maintained throughout this study when used in quoted material. Unless otherwise noted, older spellings are also retained where possible.

papers would require their photographers to obtain experience working as reporters. If the latter could take good photos, then those reporters would “get the most salary,” too.[60]

Another journalism professor later in the decade noted that reporters and photographers shared the same kinds of stresses and dangers, often fostering mutual respect.[61] Both groups received about the same benefits. At the start of the Depression, the *Chicago Daily Illustrated News* organized five-day work weeks for reporters and photographers alike, in an attempt to avoid layoffs.[62] Like reporters, photographers tended to work together, hunting “in packs.”[63] But this could be a tenuous equality. Jack Price, a prolific columnist for *Editor & Publisher* and former “star” photographer for the *New York World*, observed that it was “within the memory of many photographers when a newspaper photographer was regarded as an inquisitive pest and as such was requested to withdraw. This attitude toward him has been dissipated, and in its place is an attitude of honest toleration.” James W. Barrett, former city editor of the *World* and then city editor of the *New York American*, reviewed Price’s 1932 textbook, noting that, like the aspiring reporter, “a young man seeking to become a good news photographer learns by hard knocks and severe brawlings-out from editors.”[64]

But there were definitely differences, too, between photographers and other news workers, ranging from their actual day-to-day work processes, their collective (if sometimes fluid) ethics, education and parallel but separate perceptions of the public about their respective roles in society. These differences highlighted and in some cases caused conflict.

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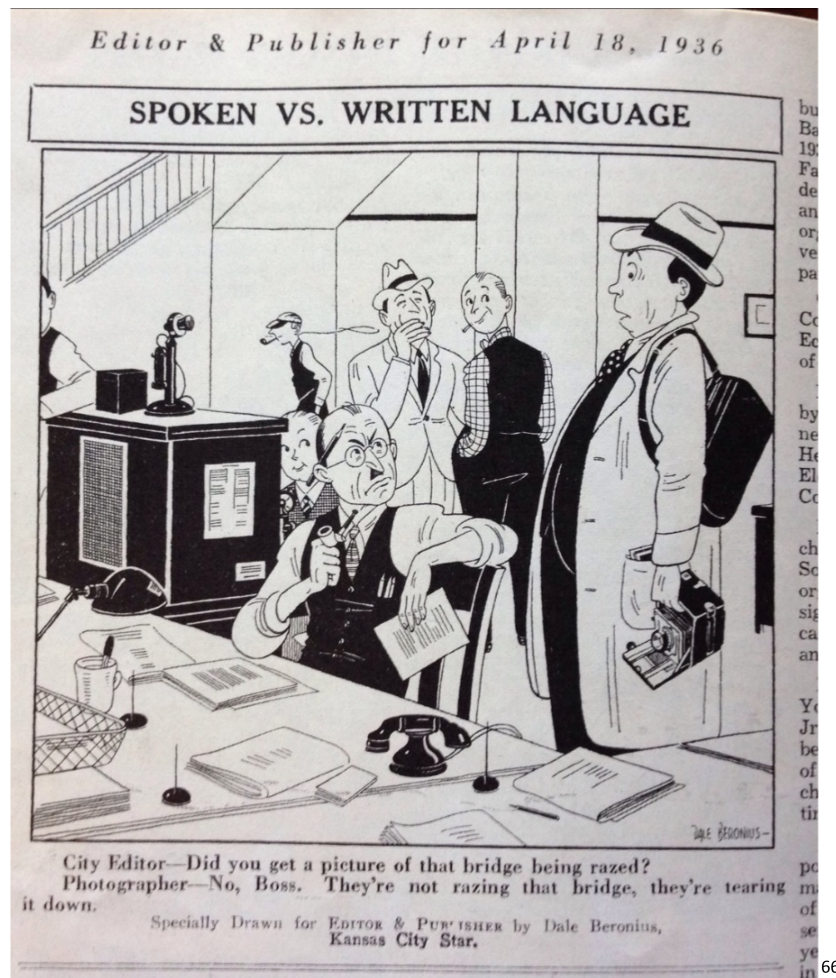
[60] Norman J. Radder, “Getting the photograph,” *The Quill*, April 1920, 7, 10.
[61] James Melvin Lee, “The newspaper as an economic product,” *Editor & Publisher*, May 15, 1926, 8; Lee, the director of NYU’s Department of Journalism, was talking specifically about how war correspondents and the photographers working with them faced the same dangers.
[62] “Adopts five-day week for editorial staff,” *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 8, 1930, 8.
[63] “Cameramen hunt in packs, nowadays,” *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 17, 1927, 52.
[64] “Our own world of letters,” *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 7, 1933, 25.

Generally, respect from outside the occupation for photographers lagged behind that of reporters. A cartoon from 1936 shows a misunderstanding between an editor and a photographer. Dale Beronius, a cartoonist at the *Kansas City Star*, showed a nonplussed editor interrogating a hapless cameraman, as colleagues look amusedly on:

> "City Editor – Did you get a picture of that bridge being razed?
> "Photographer – No, Boss. They're not razing that bridge, they're tearing it down."[65]



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[65] Dale Beronius, "Spoken vs. written language," *Editor & Publisher*, April 18, 1936, 86.
[66] Dale Beronius, "Spoken vs. written language," *Editor & Publisher*, April 18, 1936, 86. In this case, the photographer also represents other news workers of similarly minor influence in the newsroom—but the image of the photographer as a comic figure, sometimes clueless but allowed to swagger more than reporters, was enhanced in these kinds of depictions.

In addition to poetry and cartoons, photographers were often the subjects of newsroom lore. One example of such storytelling was related by Carroll Byrnes, a photographer on the Utica (N.Y.) *Observer-Dispatch*. Ordered to "make it snappy" and find something newsworthy to photograph, he happily (for him) happened on an accident right outside the newspaper building.[67] Photographers, according to another peer's account, were in need of "pre-natal care," and remained "undeveloped fetuses . . . [who] have obtained employment with the metropolitan press."[68] This teasing, some edgy but most good-natured, was endemic between photographers and reporters.

Controversial cross-training

During the 1930s, tensions between the two groups manifested in daily news-gathering routines. It also showed up in worries over how well reporters fared when they were tasked with taking their own photos. Many "experienced press photographers . . . resent the blundering and bullyragging which often covers incompetence, and some pictures that newspaper[s] have printed move old-time knights of the camera to bad words and tears."[69] As the use of smaller cameras became more prevalent, reporters, especially younger recruits, needed at least some basic training. As a result of budget-tightening during the Depression, more reporters were encouraged to carry their own cameras to take photos. Price, the news-photography columnist, was enthusiastic about this trend, predicting that soon "rank and file . . . newspaper reporters" would "also be their own cameramen." These hybrid "reporter-

[67] "Cameraman makes good on tough assignment," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 19, 1932, 38.
[68] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, March 2, 1940, 33.
[69] "Editorial: photos—or pictures," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 13, 1934, 24.

photographer[s]" were "the reporter[s] of the future."[70] Some editors, such as Stanley Walker, believed that the idea had some merit under special circumstances, and that some cross-training could succeed if a reporter already had an interest or training in photography.[71] Other newsrooms, such as at the *San Antonio Light*, provided small "Speed Graphic" cameras to their reporters so that they could supplement their news-photographer staff as "auxiliary camera-men-reporters."[72] In 1938, the *Birmingham News* equipped its reporters with the Kodak Duo 8, "with Kalert speed gun [shutter-flash device] attachments," in order to "supplement the work of the regular staff of photographers." The idea was to give reporters a chance to take photos of news as they came across it.[73] Without a "press machine [camera]," photographers coming across news could feel helpless—equipping and training reporters with smaller cameras was a trend that developed in response to the growing and accepted use of photography in daily print newspapers. This was especially true as radio made its first forays onto the news-reporting landscape before World War Two.[74]

And yet this cross-training idea was resisted by older reporters, or even by younger ones too busy tracking down leads and getting quotes to wrestle with the still-bulky (even if slightly smaller) cameras of the time. The Guild usually opposed the hiring of part-time photographers, and the use of such photographers for work that should, it felt, be done by a reporter.[75] Culturally, it was difficult to overcome the pervasive belief that the training and work of

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[70] "Reporters of future will carry cameras on assignments," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 5, 1932, 16.
[71] Walker, *City Editor*, 113-14.
[72] Jack Price, "West Virginia Daily buys candid cameras for local coverage," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 14, 1936, 38; Graflex was the manufacturer of the ubiquitous "Speed Graphic;" see "Pictures help make *Chicago Tribune* a great newspaper," *Editor & Publisher*, June 3, 1939, 21.
[73] "Daily buys cameras for all reporters," *Editor & Publisher*, March 19, 1938, 30.
[74] "Life's little tragedies," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 25, 1928, 12.
[75] "Guild opposing 'correspondent-photog' practice," *Editor & Publisher*, April 20, 1940, 62.

photographers and reporters was different. Some managers actively insisted that their reporters learn to use cameras, even as they acknowledged that reporters had trouble taking their own pictures. These same managers believed that reporters who could not take their own photos would one day "be as helpless as one who can't use a pencil."[76] L.R. Blanchard, an editor at the Rochester (N.Y.) *Democrat and Chronicle*, thought that reporters were not "interested . . . in the picture content of the paper." While some older reporters "felt repugnance at lugging a camera, tiny as the burden was," younger reporters, including women, on the staff seemed more open to it, he noted, with the latter proving "especially apt pupils." Even if some reporters could be persuaded, "the backbone of the newspaper's art" remained "the regular camera man with his machine which can be used day or night and under all conditions. The little camera can't replace the big one; it is a mere assistant."[77]

The larger trend during the immediate pre-war years was toward the pairing up of photographers with reporters, an older tradition made common by the use of the car. This would reach become more widespread after the war. In New York in the 1930s, police issued the same credentials to "real working reporters and photographers."[78] "Star reporters" would often get their own photographers for big, breaking stories. These "news crews" would travel together to scenes of unfolding disaster or drama, working as a team.[79] As Price relates, in the

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[76] "The news and pictures—cameras and reporters," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 18-20, 1935, 57; Blanchard was commenting on an informal Gannett Newspaper project to train reporters to use smaller, portable cameras.
[77] "The news and pictures—cameras and reporters," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 18-20, 1935, 58.
[78] "N.Y. police card lists cut, force ordered to respect credentials," *Editor & Publisher*, March 3, 1934, 53; Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia in 1934 attempted to clamp down on press credentials in order to make them "mean something." Some 2,041 cards were issued, 1,237 of them triangular green press cards allowing their bearers more or less as much access as they wanted, and 804 rectangular red identification press cards that were more restricted; newspaper editors worked with the mayor's office to voluntarily reduce the numbers of cards.
[79] "Flood in upper N.Y. taxes news crews," *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1935, 20.

late 1930s, in any “reporter-cameraman combination” the latter was “theoretically under the direction of the former.” Effectively, however, they were more like equals, since the disparity in power between the two had diminished. Photographers, like reporters, could be assigned to cover news on their own. While often given instructions by editors for particular news angles, “the cameras and techniques required for the job are details determined altogether by the photographer.”[80]

Early signs of a more equal status with reporters included legal efforts to protect photographers who had to get close to the news. In the midst of strife between business owners and striking workers, a 1934 New Jersey law made it a misdemeanor to interfere with news gathering (punishable with up to three years in jail and a $1,000 fine), specifically if one were to “strike, beat . . . or assault any news photographer or news reporter, while such news photographer or reporter is engaged in the pursuit of his or her occupation.”[81] Legal protection in this case was a validation of a closing divide between the two groups.

Technology and control over workspaces

Frank Hause, of the *New York Daily News*, reported at a 1935 convention of editors that his paper used about 2500 photos a month, 1500 of which were taken by 33 photographers and seven printers (apparently also trained as photographers). He added that generally photo departments were understaffed, with three to four photographers working in a studio and one photographer idle (but expected to be sent out for breaking news).[82] A typical mid-sized daily,

[80] Price, *News Pictures*, 15.
[81] “Buys new camera to escape penalty,” *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 10, 1934, 22.
[82] The news and pictures—cameras and reporters,” *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 18-20, 1935, 59-60.

such as the *Des Moines Register*, employed 11 photographers and two darkroom photographers. Many of the former also developed their own photos.[83]

Photographers in the mid-1930s benefited from improvements in transmission technology. Wirephoto, a proprietary facsimile system (and photo service) launched by the Associated Press between 1935 and 1936, meant that photos at ongoing events, such as baseball games, could be sent to newspapers for updated editions that hit the streets before they were over, or not long after. When the service was started, it took forty-five seconds to take a photo, two minutes to get it from the photographers' stand to a motorcycle messenger, seven minutes to the office and eleven minutes to be developed. A print was then made, dried, captioned and mounted for transmission. It took eight minutes to send, twenty-five minutes to develop and make a print on the other end, and finally thirty-five minutes to make an engraving and prepare it for printing. If accomplished without hiccups, this process could be completed and the paper out on the street by the end of a baseball game. The network handled at its inception about 40 "worthwhile news pictures a day" with up to about 12 transmitted regionally. This was a humble beginning, especially compared to the improvements that would come with wartime technological development, but impressive for its time.[84] Post-war experiments with reporting technology, as detailed later, relied on the close cooperation of photographers, especially with radio-phone equipped cars. In one typical example, a *Dallas Morning News* reporter borrowed access to a radio in a photographer's car.[85] Photographers and their vehicles would, as a rule, become more wired than their reporter brethren.

[83] Jack Price, "Trade literature aid cameramen," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 3, 1938, 39.
[84] Gideon Seymour, "Associated Press News Photo Service," *The Quill*, January 1936, 10-12.
[85] "The working press," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 23, 1947, 11.

Where they were in charge of their own departments, photo editors controlled their photographers' time (and locations).[86] The physical spaces photographers worked out of underwent some improvements during the 1930s. Newspapers built rooms for their photographers, sometimes designed by photographers themselves. At the *Los Angeles Times*' palatial $4 million new newspaper building completed in 1935, the third floor contained photographers' studios and darkrooms, as well as spaces dedicated to newspaper picture syndicates.[87]

Like other news workers during the Depression, and before the more widespread presence (and protection) of the Guild, photographers could suffer from sudden dismissal "for any reason beyond the whim of some duffer who doesn't like the cut of my jib or slashes the payroll by checking off every other name on the list."[88] In one particularly egregious case related to *Editor & Publisher*'s Marlen Pew, a desperate photographer in New York City was promised a job in the suburbs and then summarily fired after a few days. The photographer had wired ahead saying he wanted the job, phoning an editor to confirm that he was coming, but had been harangued. Presuming that the editor had just had a bad day, the photographer showed up and completed his assignment anyway, before being dismissed. Pew, for his part, retaliated on behalf of the photographer by refusing any more help-wanted ads from the newspaper in question.[89]

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[86] W.H. Hornby, "San Francisco News Pattern: Radio-phone links editor and reporter," *The Quill*, February 1947, 9.
[87] "*Los Angeles Times'* new $4,000,000 home combines beauty and efficiency: magnificent marble and limestone structure is air-conditioned throughout and protected against earthquake tremors," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 10, 1935, VI.
[88] Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 16, 1933, 48.
[89] Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 16, 1933, 48.

But over time, photographers were rewarded in their quest for greater newsroom respect. With the advent of photographic news-magazines, and their "new style of pictorial dramatization of the news," they were beginning to be perceived, at least, as a more important part of the editorial workforce.[90] Among these were *Life* magazine, which paid $5 for each photo accepted, a helpful supplement to a weekly salary that ranged from $35 to $60.[91] In addition to this continued trend toward more visual news coverage, there were other developments. As in-house training programs were established, photographers were invited to participate.[92] Other photographers sought improved access to sporting events.[93] Still others called for a separate professional organization just for photographers, at the national and local level, distinct from other news workers.[94] The necessity of photographers for news coverage, even in the midst of tough economic conditions, could be seen in their growing numbers, even on smaller newspapers, as noted in a June 1937 report by the Inland Daily Press Association.[95] These "camera knights" had earned their own column in *Editor & Publisher* by this point, written by the prolific Jack Price.[96] It highlighted the exploits of photographers in weekly profiles, and also included news about equipment and trends in the field.

Regional groups organizing photographers took the lead during this era to develop codes of conduct and ethics specific to photographers. One such code, drafted by the

[90] Jack Price, "New trend in pictures means more work for cameramen," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 12, 1936, 36.
[91] Jack Price, "New picture magazines extend field for news cameramen," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 28, 1936, 28.
[92] William Egan, "Akron staff attending 'school' conducted by city editor," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 26, 1936, XXXI.
[93] Jack Price, "Baker pledges his aid to move for photographer organization," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 10, 1936, 42.
[94] Jack Price, "New synchronizing machines saves money in photo department," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 26, 1936, 36; Jack Price, "Photog designs own developing tank," *Editor & Publisher*, May 20, 1939, 26; in the latter case, Price was documenting attempts by photographers in Los Angeles to start a national news photographers' network.
[95] "Trend to shorter hours shown in Inland survey of 82 papers," *Editor & Publisher*, June 12, 1937, 14. Managing editors were among the only other major newsroom group, besides proofreaders (a group not discussed at length because their work fell more on the mechanical side of the paper), to form substantial professional organizations during the period from 1920 to 1960.
[96] Jack Price, "Camera knights," *Editor & Publisher*, July 24, 1937, 30.

Southwestern Association of Pictorial Journalists, was adopted at the University of Oklahoma's "short course in news photography." It included such as admonitions as:

> Avoid gruesome photos, except where, in its own interest, the public should be informed with them. . . . Willingly play no favorites in securing pictures. . . . Study to keep up with the rapid advances of our profession. . . . Be worthy representatives, both in appearance and conduct, of the best in journalism.[97]

Photography was changing as the 1930s drew to a close. More photographers were coming from "schools of journalism" as fewer were elevated via on-the-job training from the ranks of "messenger boys or motorcycle dispatch riders." Improvements in technology meant that "in the near future newspaper photographers will be rated for their ability to analyze a news story in pictures along with their mastery of the technical problems required to produce the same results."[98] And in another key development, women started trickling into the field. More rarely, however, did they head photo departments or staffs. One exception was on the *Washington Times-Herald*, where Jackie Martin, the "only woman heading a photographic staff on a metropolitan newspaper," help to pioneer a leadership role for women.[99] Photographers continued to be the subject of in-house newsroom humor, with cartoons depicting them doing anything to get in position for a good picture, or lazily playing cards in a bar with reporter colleagues.[100] Another cartoon showed a bow-legged "ship photographer" taking a photo of a car crash, and instructing victims to pose.[101]

[97] "News commandments adopt ten 'self commandments,'" *Editor & Publisher*, April 16, 1938, 12.
[98] Jack Price, "Big city camera jobs are hard to get," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 17, 1938, 62.
[99] "Job is hard but fun, camera men agree," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 17, 1940, 28.
[100] Louis A. Paige, "Get that picture," *Editor & Publisher*, April 20, 1940; Paige's shows an enterprising photographer getting into position astride a bathtub (with someone in it), with the caption, " 'xcuse me ma'am—I can get a better view of the fire across the street from this window—"; Paige worked for the *Utica Observer-Dispatch* in New York; Walt Munson, "Now—you take in reel life," *Editor & Publisher*, April 20, 1940, 54.
[101] Johnny Anderson, "Now cross your legs," *Editor & Publisher*, April 27, 1940, 102.

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The 1940s and 1950s and the culture of news photographers

In the early 1940s, even as the United States geared up to enter World War Two, a typical large-circulation newspaper such as the *Dallas Morning News* would utilize five photographers and an editor to cover an average of about four assignments a day. Small to medium-sized dailies would employ up to three photographers (out of a staff of about 50).[103] On other papers, such as the Oklahoma *City Times* and the *Daily Oklahoman*, working as part of a larger staff, an individual photographer might cover up to six assignments a day.[104] In all these cases, photographers continued developing their own negatives when they could. Photo

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[102] Munson, "Now—you take in reel life," 54; detail from larger cartoon image; the trope of photographers and reporters spending time in seedy bars and hiding from the newsroom had a kernel of truth.
[103] "How editors deal with administrative problems,'" *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 19, 1940, 142.
[104] Jack Price, "Writer visit Dallas photo departments," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 22, 1941, 44; Jack Price, "Oklahoma dailies have modern equipment," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 8, 1941, 29.

departments could vary wildly as to organization, too. Some had their own dedicated "executive" in "complete charge of all picture coverage, directing photographic assignments, supervising artists and retouchers, superintending layouts, making subject selections, arranging picture pages and roto pages." This allowed for a filtering of photo assignments from editor to photographers, better management of limited staff resources, "more thorough scrutiny of ill-matured picture assignments suggested by editors; more critical examination of picture copy, [and] speedier remedy of defects in equipment and materials." Photographers generally appreciated being governed by their own. But not every paper had a photo editor, and many still relied on an ad-hoc management system whereby other editors would assign photographers to stories.[105]

As the war began, the demand for images increased. Photographers faced gas rations, along with reporters, though due to the nature of their work, some were allowed additional fuel.[106] As with other groups in the newsroom, photographers encountered workforce shortages, too. "Occupational deferment" was sometimes available for key staff, including photographers, but eligibility depended on a local draft board's decision, and as a result there was some confusion as to who it covered even as late as March 1943.[107] A survey by the National Council on Professional Education for Journalism, detailed the extent of staff shortages. Covering 45 states, and 14 percent of all English language dailies, it showed 2,197 vacancies, with an additional 4,169 expected in the six months starting in January 1943; 867 of

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[105] "How editors deal with administrative problems,'" *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 19, 1940, 146.

[106] "470 miles monthly set for reporters in gas rationing," *Editor & Publisher*, July 11, 1942; 470 miles was for their "occupational" driving each month, though it is unclear if this applied everywhere or if there were exceptions; Jack Price, "Some photogs eligible for 'C' gas cards," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 23, 1943, 6.

[107] "Selective Service further clarifies 3-B status," *Editor & Publisher*, March 27, 1943, 32.

the former were from the editorial side, and 604 were from the mechanical side. Of these, 38 photographers were needed on papers with 100,000 or more circulation (by way of comparison, 102 copy editors were needed).[108]

As a result, some editors reached out to college newspapers, recruiting young men not yet drafted or otherwise ineligible.[109] And while some photo editors were initially skeptical of hiring women to replace their thinning ranks, others were more open to the idea before necessity forced the issue.[110] By the fall of 1942, "women members of the news picture business" were not as rare as before. "Newspapers have been employing lens-gals for years," Jack Price noted, "but because of this emergency they will become more noticeable." He related how Frank Merta, of Acme News Photos, "asked if he was to place hand [lotion] on the list of supplies." A colleague "replied, 'give the girls anything they need but keep the cussin' to gentlemanly expressions.' 'Amen,' responded Merta." Other parts of the newsroom reacted with similar variations of amusement and, despite the war's workforce reality, resistance. Price himself expressed a changing point of view, believing that "the gals will dish it out also."[111] After the war, some, but not all, female photographers managed to hang on to their wartime appointments.[112] Other women on papers such as the *Los Angeles Daily News* faced an enduring sexism, as photographers continued to be perceived as hyper masculine because of the rough-and-tumble nature of their work.[113] Gender integration came slowly to photo staffs

[108] Kenneth E. Olson, "Survey of Daily Newspaper Personnel Shortages," *Journalism Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1943) 114-15
[109] Ross B. Lehman, *The Quill*, June 1942, 8-9; Lehman had been editor of the *Daily Collegian* at Pennsylvania State College.
[110] Jack Price, "No present need for training women photogs," *Editor & Publisher*, July 11, 1942, 16.
[111] Jack Price, "More women joining news picture service," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 12, 1942, 20.
[112] "From business office to darkroom," *Editor & Publisher*, March 16, 1946, 72; Two examples included Mildred Scruggs and Dorothy Huntsinger, who had been promoted during the war to their positions and having taught themselves, and who worked as photographers for the Spartanburg (S.C.) *Herald-Journal*.
[113] Tom Cameron, "Photography: red hair, perfect 36—camera gal, not model," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 3, 1949, 32.

in the post-war years. Sometimes smaller newspapers, such as the *Kansas City Kansan*, proved more welcoming to women.[114]

State photographer associations continued to function and even grow during the war years. In Boston, photographers were issued their own press badges, especially helpful when working after dark.[115] Thanks to the war, too, photographers were earning their own bylines (i.e. credit in captions). As Price explained, previously, an “unwritten” or “gentlemen’s agreement” had kept photographers anonymous. But with the conflict, and with tales of their exploits near battlefronts as riveting for audiences at home as the news stories and photos themselves, photographers were becoming better known to readers. As a result, “cameramen are entitled to the same amount of praise and glory that is given to writers. Surely, they face the same dangers and they often face greater hardships in order to get their pictures. A tardy reporter could easily get all his information from Public Relations Officers and at headquarters but pictures cannot be so obtained.”[116]

As the war drew to a close, photographers also began asserting themselves in the design of new spaces within renovated and new newsrooms, as well as with the scheduling of assignments. At the *Washington News*, Charles Stevenson, the city editor, was “very picture-minded” and believed in “giving the photographers plenty of latitude,” according to a contemporary profile by Price. Stevenson, perhaps a bit unusually, regularly consulted with his photographers. Despite his photo staff’s comparatively small size, they produced twice as much

[114] “Photography: Kansas staff is co-ed again—with a bachelor,” *Editor & Publisher*, July 12, 1952, 7, 69. The paper was itself an aberration with an all-women photo staff until the early 1950s.
[115] Jack Price, “N.Y. curbs evils of night club photogs,” *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 23, 1943, 18.
[116] Jack Price, “War front photogs now getting credit in bylines,” *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1943, 30.

coverage as they might have because of this "close cooperation between the desk and the cameramen."[117]

Like other groups in the newsroom, photographers in the post-war period faced challenges integrating. The hiring of minority news workers was especially difficult in photo departments. This was revealed in a July 1949 survey of 250 editors conducted by Lewis C. Jones, an African-American journalism student at Butler University. About half the survey respondents were white; while more were open to the idea of hiring black reporters, fewer were open to hiring black photographers.[118] Part of this could be explained by the dearth of recruits. While there were early attempts to hire black reporters during this era, such as Carl Rowan at the *Minneapolis Tribune*, a coordinated effort to diversify the newsroom would not take place for a generation, under the aegis of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE).[119] Another possible explanation revolved around the idea that sources and subjects would object to being interviewed or photographed by African-American staff members.[120]

(Nearly) a true peer of the reporter

By the late 1940s, photographers had been able to shed most of the remaining vestiges of their second-class status. "Photographers, who more and more work alongside reporters in obtaining the news, need be . . . one-quarter journalist and, in like proportions, artist,

[117] Jack Price, "Photo plants needs planning by photographer," *Editor & Publisher*, March 3, 1945; Jack Price, "Photography: city staff ideas worked out by cameramen," *Editor & Publisher*, July 21, 1945, 40.
[118] "J-education: jobs becoming more available for Negro grads," *Editor & Publisher*, July 2, 1949, 35. Jones' survey revealed that among the white editors, 35 percent said they would hire a black journalism school graduate, with 60 percent not answering, and five percent saying no; of the black editors, 72 percent said they would, 16 percent said they would prefer a black reporter but not necessarily a journalism graduate, "preferring instead men with experience," and 12 percent did not respond.
[119] Carl T. Rowan, *Breaking Barriers: A Memoir* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1991); Gwyneth Mellinger, *Chasing Newsroom Diversity: From Jim Crow to Affirmative Action* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2013).
[120] Prejudices ran deep and systematic, and newsrooms reflected this societal reality in their hiring practices.

technician and dynamo," wrote Howard L. Kany in 1947. Kany, the AP's Wirephoto editor, believed that "the cameraman should command a status equal to that of any reporter . . . in the matter of privileges and assistance in coverage of the news." Reflecting on his time attending a two-week long Columbia University School of Journalism seminar on news photography, with representatives from 27 newspapers, he believed that it was important to portray photographers in a positive light. He also thought that "occasional staff meetings on a high critical plane are constructive and lead to better pre-assignment cooperation between reporter and photographer."[121] The National Press Photographers Association was at that time seeking press credentials as expansive as those given to print reporters in court coverage. These, Kany argued, should be granted, and bylines given consistently in captions, in order to assist the work of "the genuine news photographer." The latter should be allowed the freedom to deviate from a news-gathering plan. While at the Columbia seminar, Kany observed how the other photo editors present believed that their work got the ax when it came down to a choice between photos and print.[122] Non-photo editors still had the final say.

The 1950s continued a focus on the value of cooperation between the "lensman and reporter" as radio and TV competed with daily newspapers for local news coverage.[123] Reporters for these new media had fewer barriers to collaboration with colleagues. Television in particular, with its emphasis on visuals, proved a keen rival for even the most image-friendly newspaper. In response, groups such as the ASNE made editor-photographer interactions the subject of study.[124] Photographers worked more for their own dedicated editors, and less

[121] Howard L. Kany and Robert H. Eastabrook, "Experts eye pictures, editorials," *The Quill*, April 1947, 8.
[122] Kany and Eastabrook, "Experts eye pictures, editorials," 8.
[123] James L. Collings, "Editor-photographer teamwork stressed," *Editor & Publisher*, March 26, 1949.
[124] James L. Collings, "Photography: editors tell how pic assignments are made," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 21, 1950, 39.

directly for managing or city editors. Joseph Costa, the chief photographer for the King Features Syndicate, noted that photographers' bylines were an increasingly common way "to help build the prestige of personnel," since they helped to give "a man a reputation for good work and it helps open doors to him." Reporters, for their part, should not refer to photographers with possessive pronouns (as in "my" photographer) and instead present a united front to readers.[125] John S. Radosta, the "picture editor" of the *New York Times*, echoed this perspective. "I think the young cameraman should come to the newspaper with the same background, education and preparation the reporter has. In every way he should be the equal of a reporter in these respects. Intellectually, they should be on a par."[126] While before photographers would often come to work on the staff "out of the darkroom," more and more they should come from other parts of the paper, Rodasta argued.

Assignments were sometimes given in advance at the largest newspapers (such as at the *Los Angeles Times*) in departments such as sports and society, but otherwise they still tended to be given on an informal, as-needed basis. Other newspapers, such as the *Des Moines Register & Tribune*, tried to formalize their assignment systems. George Yates, "photo chief" at the *Register & Tribune*, attempted to methodically pair up a "lensman" with a reporter.[127] Photographers continued to be more mobile than reporters, with many of the former having access to their own cars and with gas subsidized by the newspaper.[128] The "team" image of the reporter and photographer, however, remained ingrained in profiles of newsroom life.[129] Some

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[125] Ray Erwin, "Newspaper' color use studies at photo parley," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 26, 1953, 54.
[126] James L. Collings, "Photography: Fotog should match reporter: Radosta," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 18, 1954, 62.
[127] James L. Collings, "Photography: more regarding those picture assignments," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 28, 1950, 24.
[128] "Chi. Tribune has 36 cars linked to radio relay," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 10, 1953.
[129] "Along misery road," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 17, 1960, 12; in this story, for example, seemingly almost reflexively, *Miami Herald* photographer Dan McCoy and reporter Steven Trumbull are shown working together.

training programs for young reporters, including one at the *Denver Post*, purposely sought to expose them to experienced photographers.[130] Cub reporters, if they were fortunate, would find themselves paired up with a "veteran . . . who knows a reporter's job almost as well as his own."[131]

As will be explored in more detail later in this study, photographers used radio-equipped vehicles to compete with one another and with the emerging medium of TV.[132] The use of color also promised to make photography more competitive.[133] The acquisition of smaller cameras, a trend begun in the 1930s to capture more "candid" scenes, continued with improved technology in the 1950s.[134] Japanese-made cameras, noted for their quality and compactness, were also coming on the market.[135] Some photographers believed that these less conspicuous cameras got better pictures as "many people tend to associate the big camera with the more sensational newspapers of the past."[136] A more obtrusive camera "brands the operator as a 'news photographer,'" reported Don Ultang, assistant chief photographer at the *Des Moines Register & Tribune*. Ultang believed that in order to distinguish themselves from better-equipped amateurs, photographers needed to strive for a more artistic and narrative-focused "photo journalism" to complement routine news coverage.[137] Back in the newsroom, the photo desk underwent upgrades, such as the use of internal intercom systems and more integrated

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[130] Willarm C. Haselbush, "Many newspapers park their misfits with the night city editor. *The Denver Post* finds the . . . Nightside makes a fine school for reporters on an afternoon daily," *The Quill*, August 1953, 6-7.
[131] William Kostka Jr., "Big town opportunities for the cub," *The Quill*, March 1960, 17-18.
[132] James L. Collings, "Photography: editors tell advances made by their papers," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 20, 1954, 38.
[133] Ray Erwin, "Newspaper' color use studies at photo parley," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 26, 1953, 9.
[134] James L. Collings, "Photography: one man's adjustment to smaller cameras," *Editor & Publisher*, March 8, 1958, 50.
[135] "Technical progress," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Nov. 12-15, 1958, 40, 43.
[136] "What should a photographer do: take picture of tragic scene or flee from irate onlookers? Asks Arthur W. Geisleman Jr.," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 15, 1959, 13.
[137] Don Ultang, "News photography to photo journalism," *The Quill*, September 1954, 11.

mobile-communication technology.[138] There was a consistent emphasis on making it easier for the various departments in a newsroom to work together, instead of existing—as they once did—as separate fiefdoms.[139] "The press photographer of today stands ready to fulfill his role as a visual reporter and documentarian of the age," declared James Colvin, a former reporter and rewrite staff member for the *Chicago Daily News*, capturing the spirit of his peers.[140] In the face of competition from TV and radio, the "newsphotographer" had "become a reporter to back up the written or spoken word," and this necessitated the equipping of photographers' cars with radio connections to newsrooms.[141] This competition caused anxiety among some photographers, worried about the ability of newspapers to play technological catch-up.[142] Photo staff tended to be among the more hopeful and risk-taking when it came to applying technology to their work.

Despite these strides, there still existed real tensions between photographers and reporters, especially at press conferences. Walter T. Ridder, a Washington, D.C., correspondent for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *Dispatch*, complained that TV and radio reporters were the worst offenders at press conferences with "the mass of lines and wires needed for flashbulbs, klieg lights, tape recorders and live broadcasts, and the bawling of light engineers, cameramen, television production experts, and newsroom representatives." But photographers for

[138] "Everything's under control," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 6, 1960, 36.
[139] Eugene S. Pulliam, Jr., "Just seat 20 next to each other: how to streamline a big city newsroom," *The Quill*, February 1950, 8-10.
[140] James Colvin, "Photo-journalism is here to stay," *The Quill*, February 1952, 18. Colvin Colvin, a public relations director for the Encyclopedia Britannica, had worked as a writer and associate editor for *Popular Mechanics*, as well as a naval officer and historian for the U.S. Navy's Supply Corps.
[141] "Queens, cops, killers and tough competition beset Chicago photogs," *The Quill,* November 1955, 19. The Chicago Press Photographers Association at the time included "still men, television men, newsroom cameramen, editors, darkroom men and wirephoto technicians."
[142] "Newspaper photography," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 20, 1956, 165.

newspapers could also be a huge hindrance, he said. An interview subject would be "pushed and hauled and shoved by the photographers as he enters the room until whatever good humor he might have possessed evaporates in a violent eruption of strobolights, flash bulbs and photographers' instructions." Photographers would "yell at the interviewee, at the reporters, at themselves and at anyone else who may be handy, while they take for the fiftieth or sixtieth time 'just one more.' Having ceased at long last their basic task, they lurk on the sidelines, ready to swoop out at unexpected moments to get a candid shot of the interviewee." While he was less annoyed by what he described as "legitimate reporters" (by which he mostly meant fellow print reporters), he suggested a separate conference for radio reporters, photographers and TV cameramen.[143]

Perhaps reflecting the self-confidence and status of news photographers, for both men and women, the term "photojournalist" became more common in the industry by the end of the 1950s.[144] The National Press Photographers Association (NPPA), founded in 1946, which included some 1,800 "working news cameramen" in 1952, helped to popularize the interests of photographers, who had "a new awareness of their responsibilities in the public interest." They deserved better pay and training in storytelling, as both were "an investment in the future" of the field.[145] At the college level, there were similar calls for more photojournalism courses in journalism programs.[146] At larger newspapers like the *New York Times*, they participated in cash-prize contests for best stories and photos, with the names of winners posted to an office

[143] Walter T. Ridder, "The decline and fall of the press conference," *The Quill*, September 1952, 7; there is evidence that reporters for other new mediums, and the technology required for their coverage, sometimes impeded or at least caused similar tensions at high-profile events like press conferences, but also political conventions and like places where a media-diverse press corps gathered.
[144] Bob Warner, "Photography: a photojournalist is a photojournalist," *Editor & Publisher*, July 2, 1960
[145] George S. Bush, "The men behind cameras make picture journalism," *The Quill*, July 1957, 9-10.
[146] C. William Horrell, "Photojournalism training needs more emphasis," *The Quill*, December 1960, 17, 22.

bulletin board.[147] Calls for better pay and education, along with efforts to recognize their work internally, meant that photographers were no longer regarded as "the stepchildren of the news room." It was now taken for granted that they needed to be good reporters in their own right, and work for "well-qualified picture editors." While a "comparative newcomer," the "photo journalist" was "key man in modern news coverage," as one contemporary journalism author put it.[148] The next chapter examines two groups in the newsroom who acted as senior peers to the reporter, namely, the rewrite staff and copy editors.

[147] Donald Janson, "Everybody in the act: news awards for enterprise," *The Quill*, December 1959, 9-10, 18.
[148] Charles C. Clayton, "Photo journalism," *The Quill*, April 1960, 6. For more on this topic, see scholarship by Stanton Paddock, including "Developing news photography: the post-WWII rise of normative photojournalism instruction in liberal arts journalism education," presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual conference, St. Louis, Missouri, 2011.

Chapter 3

Reporters and their near-peers: rewrite staff and copy editors

Unlike copy boys and girls, or photographers, rewrite staff and copy editors from the 1920s onward had influence over, and sometimes also power over, the work of others in the newsroom. As "near-peers" of the reporter, they formed a quasi-supervisory group, less empowered than managing and other kinds of senior editors, but more in control of the news-production process than reporters. Their role in this process shows how the stratification of work tasks in the newsroom often determined who possessed power, and how that power shifted over time.

Rewrite staff

Perhaps the "nearest peer" of all to reporters were "rewrite men." But while photographers were close near-peers in a junior sense, rewrite men were close near-peers in a more senior sense. It should be noted that by the 1940s, women were also performing this role, and that the term was commonly used in newsrooms to describe a loose category of more newsroom-bound news workers. Rewrite staff in fact often *were* reporters.[1] But because of

[1] Or designated as reporters assigned for a time to a rewrite desk, but primarily still thought of as reporters; see "*N.Y. Sun* grants $100 minimum for reporters," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 8, 1947, 62. The post-Second-War newsroom was a bit of an aberration, because by this point newsrooms in larger cities were highly stratified, both from tradition and necessity. On other papers, general-assignment reporters doubled as rewrite men when needed. Those chosen to serve as back-up rewrite staffers were sometimes situated near the rewrite desk, just in case. See Eugene S. Pulliam, Jr., "Just seat 20 next to each other: how to streamline a big city newsroom," *The Quill*, February 1950, 8-10.

their technology-driven role in the news-production process, and their slightly higher status in terms of authority, hours and pay in the newsroom, they did comprise a distinct class of news worker. Warren Breed, for example, thought of them as a separate group from reporters, as well as members of the copy desk, in his accounts of newsroom life.[2]

The *Manual of Newspaper Job Classifications*, published by the U.S. Department of Labor, strove in April 1943 to define newsroom roles as part of the federal government's implementation of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The *Manual*'s authors cautioned that "considerable variation" could be found among newspapers and their staffs, and depending on the size of the paper in question, job titles did not always represent reality. Comparing titles from one newspaper to the next was just not possible. The *Manual* was designed to serve as a guide to categories of workers based on their job functions, "since in each instance news must be gathered, edited, printed and circulated."[3] Ultimately, the regional offices of the Wage and Hour Division would resolve differences of opinion between employers and the Guild (and other unions) as to who qualified for exempt "professional" status, according to the Act.[4] The *Manual* provided a kind of litmus test for what was considered creative versus routine, and the role of management versus subordinates. Part of the "trait theory" approach to defining professional identity during that period (and as postulated by sociologists of that era) depended

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[2] Warren Breed, "Newspaper 'opinion leaders' and processes of standardization," *Journalism Quarterly*, 1955, 278. Breed based this paper on his dissertation on the same topic, for which he worked with Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton at Columbia; Breed was, at the time of this article's publication, an assistant professor of sociology at Tulane. Breed's focus was on the subtle influences unstated "policies" had on news workers, as guided indirectly by publishers and senior management. But his work is also helpful for understanding some of the subtle ways news workers controlled or influenced each other and their work processes.

[3] *Manual of Newspaper Job Classifications*, Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor Wage and House and Public Contracts Divisions, April 1943, ii.

[4] *Manual of Newspaper Job Classifications*, April 1943, iii.

on these definitions of "professionalism."[5] A "professional" worker, defined by the federal government as someone who supervised others, could work more than the usually prescribed 40 hours a week, but was *not* eligible for overtime. The Guild often argued that its members were thus not "professional," in order to remain eligible for that overtime. Because the salary standard was relatively high (about $200 a month) many news workers could not be classified as such.

Rewrite men, according to the *Manual*, were defined as writers who wrote or rewrote news stories, "working from telephone information and notes prepared by reporters, or received from other sources, or data developed from the newspaper's reference materials."[6] The *Manual* continued, "The day-to-day work of the rewrite man, however, is generally not original and creative in character. . . . it appears that rewrite men almost invariably write or rewrite 'straight' news stories to an extent which would disqualify them from" professional status.[7] Descriptions of rewrite men and their role in the newsroom from the early 1950s emphasized how the job was normally given to older, experienced reporters who had spent several years "grinding out copy under all conditions" before assuming the "heavy burden and . . . exercise the skill required" of them.[8] As observed by the writers of the *Manual*, rewrite staff rewrote stories based on clippings from other papers. Rewriting was necessary to avoid directly copying other material (with the exception of quotes) and to cast the rewritten story in the paper's style and format. Often done at the start of a shift, from clippings gathered by an

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[5] See, for example, Talcott Parsons, "The Professions and Social Structure," *Social Forces* 17, 4 (1939): 457-467; and A. M. Carr-Saunders, and P. A. Wilson, *The Professions*. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1933). Only later, in the 1970s, did conceptions of the "professions" shift to power, economic status, education, control over work, and vocational culture.
[6] *Manual of Newspaper Job Classifications*, April 1943, 8.
[7] *Manual of Newspaper Job Classifications*, April 1943, iii, 8, 18-19.
[8] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 47.

overnight staff on an evening paper, or by the day shift on a morning paper (or by evening paper staff based on what was produced in the morning papers), rewriting in this vein summarized and shortened longer stories, often from wire accounts.[9]

But the primary duty of rewrite men was reshaping phoned-in material. Described as "one of the most important cogs in the news machine," an area known as the "battery" connected leg men to the city editor. A battery was commonly composed of several desks arranged side by side, sometimes, but not always, arranged near the copy desk in a central position. Rewrite staff knew how many column inches they had to work with, and took down a story seated at a desk, often wearing headphones instead of holding a phone receiver. This freed up their hands to take notes or use a typewriter. The typewriter was usually preferred, due to its speed under any kind of deadline (which was nearly all the time). The leg man talking to the rewrite desk would know to dictate his or her story in a rough narrative, to minimize rewriting. In the era long before word processors, this was critical. Sometimes, when time was less pressing, and a story could be reworked, a rewrite staff member would overhaul it more completely, but this was rare. "More often than not, the rewrite man is pressed so hard for his copy that sheet after sheet is literally pulled out of his typewriter as he continues his story," wrote one contemporary. Moved straight to the copy desk, and then to the composing room to be set in "takes," or short paragraphs of type, seconds mattered in an "unrelenting" job.[10] Rewrite staff existed, and indeed were created, in a newsroom climate of speed. This climate of

[9] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 47.
[10] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 47, 48.

speed was only reinforced in the 1930s and 1940s as radio emerged as a competitor to both morning and evening newspapers.

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According to Morton Sontheimer, who wrote a 1941 autobiographical guide to working in journalism, the job was considered "a step above that of reporter" and "coveted."[12] He

[11] Frank Jess, Marion Lebron and Rudolf Modley, and Alice V. Keliher, eds, *News Workers* (New York: Johnson Publishing Company, 1946), 9. This photo of a rewrite staff member in action is from the *New York Times*, c. 1939, from an illustrated vocational guide (part of a series of "Picture Fact Books") for students.
[12] Morton Sontheimer, *Newspaperman, A Book About the Business* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1941), 187, 188.

believed good rewrite men were rare. But beyond broad strokes, the categorization of who filled it was difficult. This was especially true before Guild contracts began standardizing the industry's salaries in the 1930s. The rewrite staff could be a fluid group, depending on the newspaper: especially on non-union newspapers, even by the Second World War, "rewrite" was sometimes still composed of reporters waiting for their next assignment.[13]

But in large newsrooms dominated by the ANG, and therefore prone to more precisely defined positions, rewrite staff focused exclusively on drafting phoned-in stories or recreating stories from clippings. In either event, a capable rewrite staffer could write up to about 800 to 1,000 words an hour (ready to be checked and set). With their own norms, including the belief that quotes were sacrosanct, and the need to check facts and the words of the reporter when in doubt, rewrite staff were able gauge the length of stories (how many typewritten words would fill a page or a column, usually about 1,000). A rewrite staff member would spend four to eight hours of his (or in rarer cases, her) time actually writing. Between what could be intense sessions, he or she could "relax, get into undignified positions, and read the funny papers."[14] Many rewrite staffers were occupied by card games, or, more seriously, side projects, ranging from writing feature articles for their or other papers, to books, though many of the latter remained unfinished.[15] Many reporters thought that too much time at a rewrite desk could turn one into a hack writer, but there was a parallel school of thought that admired the consistent "ingenuity, finesse and literary quality" of some rewriters. Rewrite men and women

[13] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 187.
[14] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 186-187.
[15] Arthur Gelb, *City Room*, (New York: Putnam, 2003) 215; 228; Gelb notes that a classic example of a book that was, in fact, finished, was Herbert Asbury's *Gangs of New York*, written while Asbury was on the rewrite desk of the *Herald Tribune*, based on clippings from the paper's morgue.

often took pride in their work. Outside the battery, amongst the newsroom staffers, rewrite men were known to possess varying levels of ability: "Although there is no placard on their desks to that effect, the best one is always known as 'first-string rewrite,' the next as 'second-string,' and so on." Those among the first-string crew were especially valued staff members.[16]

Rewrite men, reporters, and newsroom culture

Rewrite men first appeared shortly after telephones entered the newsroom, from about 1900 to 1920. Not until the 1920s, however, did they attain their newfound status. The rewrite staff in the newsroom did not have formal authority "over" their more mobile brethren, including reporters. But in their interactions with reporters, rewrite men did have disproportionate influence and a higher degree of agency in constructing the final news product. It paid to stay on their good side, as an unspoken rule. Because this rule presumed that rewrite men had power over the news-production process (even as reporters had power over the news-collection process), it could produce tension, especially if the reporter's work was seen as too heavily edited. But "the reporter-victim of a rewrite man's grudge can console himself with the realization that the rewrite man is cutting off his own nose" if the latter failed to work well with a reporter and turn in good copy.[17]

The rewrite staffer's work was really only as good as the reporter he or she worked with, ultimately, and vice versa. A reporter out in the field was supposed dig up facts and the rewrite staff had to assemble these facts into a coherent story. Differing beliefs about the

[20] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 186-8.
[17] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 189.

quality of one's work (or the importance of one newsroom norm over another) could lead to clashes:

> While the rewrite man theoretically has the power to order him [the reporter] back to get more, in practice he has no way of enforcing his orders except by tattling to the city editor. Even if the rewrite man isn't a squealer, the editor may complain about an inadequate story, and there is nothing for him [the rewrite man] to say but that he couldn't get the facts from the reporter. So it's a good idea to give the rewrite man all the information he wants . . .[18]

Sontheimer describes a delicate balance between very near peers. He is addressing younger reporters, but the basic principles also applied to the dynamic between older, more experienced reporters and rewrite men. Trust between the two groups was key. Only then could the "traditional enmity" between rewrite men and reporters (and copy editors) be resolved positively.[19]

Rewrite became a job classification just before the turn of the century, but the use of the telephone had increased its status in the newsroom. Irving Brant, editorial writer on the *St. Louis Star*, noted in 1920 that a rewrite man, "if he has sufficient prestige, raises a storm if his copy is interfered with."[20] High-salaried rewrite men did not want to take orders from lower-salaried copy editors. Others chafed under rules set from middle-management for ever-tighter copy.[21] Rewrite staff, like older reporters, could have their "stars" who had carved out more independence than others.[22] The appointment of rewrite staff was indeed ingrained in the

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[18] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 189.
[19] William D. Ogdon, "Now that I'm a copy 'butcher' myself—things appear a little different, says reporter who joined lords of the rim," *The Quill*, April 1936, 6.
[20] Irving Brant, "Where are the copy readers of tomorrow?" *Editor & Publisher*, June 19, 1920, 5.
[21] Carl Kesler, "Readability vs. writeability," *The Quill*, March 1950, 3; Kesler quipped that someday rewrite men might face a mechanical replacement: "the science which now threatens to hydrogen bomb us may come up first with an electronic rewriteman whose mechanical infallibility will need no editor." This gallows humor about being replaced by (analog) machines seems to have prevailed in every department of the newsroom, and, indeed, the whole newspaper (though less whimsically and more seriously on the mechanical side).
[22] Arthur Robb, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, July 1, 1939, 36.

larger American journalistic culture. Visitors from the United Kingdom as late as the 1950s were impressed by how much copy was phoned in to rewrite men, and how telephones came equipped with earphones.[23]

In the newsroom, especially in their interactions over the phone with younger reporters, rewrite men could assert their power. Interactions with a rewrite man for a young reporter could be challenging. "You'll be terror-stricken the first time you're called upon to do it," warned Sontheimer.[24] But short sentences, and pausing when one needed, were two helpful techniques. While a cub reporter was anxious about getting the details right, the often-older rewrite man just wanted the details to begin with: "crowded to the limit about 10 minutes before the edition goes over . . . he hasn't any time to play around. A cub calls up and bothers him with a lot of foolish detail when about 30 words would give the rewrite man time to write a stick or two," claimed an anonymous rewrite man in 1924.[25] Rewrite staff could become impatient and sarcastic with cubs who had trouble organizing their notes or thoughts.[26] There was a steep learning curve for talking to rewrite men throughout the interwar years. Many cubs could barely get their "panted words" over "one end of a telephone."[27] At least one reporter suggested that new reporters practice calling into the rewrite desk on less important stories. Calling into rewrite should also happen at college newspapers.[28] In these ways, new reporters could get used to telling stories to rewrite staff.

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[23] "Iced water, gum, cig. urns amaze British," *Editor & Publisher*, July 14, 1951, 20.
[24] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 190.
[25] "Rewrite man sorrows for sins of the cubs," *The Quill*, March 1924, 12.
[26] Charles M. Cowden, "Cub reporter's ordeal by wire comes the first time he faces 'phone and must dictate—or be damned!" *The Quill*, July 1941, 7.
[27] Erwin D. Canham, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, May 6, 1944, 68; Canham was managing editor of the *Christian Science Monitor*.
[28] Cowden, "Cub reporter's ordeal," 12.

In other parts of the country, the status of the rewrite staff was less assured. Eric Allen, the chair of the University of Oregon's journalism school, critiqued what he saw as an increasingly over-reliance on rewrite staff, particularly in New York City: "The cheap reporter, reinforced by a high-priced rewrite man and a skilled copy desk, is a bad combination so far as the possible improvement of American journalism is concerned."[29] Others believed an ideal newspaper would not have dedicated rewrite staff at all. Marlen Pew, editor of *Editor & Publisher*, believed a reporter should be able to "some rapid telephoning," but also be expected to return to the office to "write most of his stories."[30]

Though they considered themselves set apart, from the perspective of management, rewriters' status in the newsroom (just not their pay), was considered roughly, though erratically, on par with reporters. In the initial years of the Depression, the *Chicago Daily Illustrated News* moved to a five-day work week in an attempt to mitigate layoffs. Its management kept the rewrite staff on the same schedule as their reporters, since the two groups worked with one another closely. Along with reporters, many rewrite staff members had Saturdays off.[31] The American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA), for example, in their official response to labor policies set by the Roosevelt administration and as mandated by Congress in the National Industrial Recovery Act, classified rewrite men with reporters. This was part of the publishers' attempt to argue for their workers' collective "professional status." As noted elsewhere, the ANPA was trying to make the case that those making above a $35-a-week salary were "professionals" as defined by the norms of the time. This would have granted

[29] "Too much writing, no reporting, Allen finds in New York papers," *Editor & Publisher*, June 18, 1921, 13.
[30] Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1929, 70.
[31] "Adopts five-day week for editorial staff," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 8, 1930, 8.

publishers' immunity from having to conform to the federal government's 40-hour work week and salary schema.[32] An industry-sponsored survey from 1934 showed that rewrite workers were indeed classified as "desk and rewrite men."[33]

Over time, the rewrite person's role was supplemented by stenographers and dictationists, who "made inroads on the rewrite ranks" by the 1940s. These workers were more specialized in the task of information transfer. But there was sharp differences between reporters and rewrite staff and such auxiliary workers: "Some of the biggest newspapers still make their rewrite men take dictation, which is not only a degrading, resented task but an economic waste, when one considers the salary of a rewrite man and that of a stenographer."[34] Dictationists and stenographers had lower status and pay, but the work was an opportunity for more women to enter the newsroom, and, in some cases, make the jump "up" to copy editing or rewrite.

The camaraderie on some rewrite desks could be quite pronounced, as Arthur Gelb related about his experience on the *New York Times* in the early 1950s. Gelb, who started out as a copy boy and moved up in his long career at the *Times* to managing editor, was in a good place to observe it. Having been more or less summarily transferred to the *Times*' rewrite battery at the insistence of a prickly editor, Gelb was not sure what he would face.[35]

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[32] John W. Perry, "Code for dailies filed at Washington; many publishers endorse regulations," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 12, 1933, 3, 12, 35.
[33] "A.N.P.A. survey shows editorial wages," *Editor & Publisher*, May 5, 1934, 10, 37.
[34] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 190.
[35] Gelb, *City Room*, 208. Gelb noted that at the time, being moved to the rewrite would normally be considered a reward, for reporters who had the "special ability to turn in smooth copy under deadline pressure." There was also another, less-good reason: reporters could be "assigned there to speed up or sharpen their own languid prose." In this case, he just was not sure, and the editor who reassigned him was mum on the topic. Years later, however, he found out that the city editor, Frank Adams, had been angry that Gelb had not reported to work when Gelb's wife was ill. Their relationship eventually improved, and the incident nearly forgotten.

Overwhelmed his first night, he was assisted by another rewrite staffer, Billie Barrett, who helped him organize piles of incoming wire-service updates on a winter storm afflicting New England, and who also helped him sort the many phone calls coming in from reporters across the region. As paragraphs of copy were ripped from his Underwood typewriter and taken directly to the city desk for editing, he beat his deadline with just seconds to spare.

"After all my misgivings, I began to feel invincible, euphoric; I was suddenly sure I could handle anything that rewrite required," Gelb recalled. When he thanked Barrett for her help, she replied, "Rewrite's like a commune . . . we all try to help each other, especially on the big stories." Barrett, who Gelb relates was the first rewrite woman on the *Times*, was sometimes mistaken for a telephone operator (a position actually held in high regard by reporters and editors alike), but took pride in earning the "the respect of all the rewrite men . . . [and was] accepted as one of them." The rewrite staff relied heavily on phone operators and the morgue—the *Times*' extensive reference library of news clippings—in their work. That work was indeed communal. Gelb remembered how "the entire battery teamed up to put a story together," particularly when it was a complex one and at risk of not meeting major deadlines, as when the rewrite desk helped to cover Joseph Stalin's fatal stroke on March 4, 1953. The "rewrite bank" had to work as a unit in order to collect enough information on Stalin's impending death, and its ramifications for the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. After formative experiences like these, the rewrite desk found it easy to bond as a group. Gelb's rewrite desk even when so far as to create an ersatz dinner group for the night staff, "The Night Rewrite Gourmet Society," which brought ethnic meals to share on Wednesday evenings in the newsroom. On other evenings, the staff would gather at nearby

late-night restaurants and bars, sometimes joined by the night copy editors. These were necessary to unwind after intense shifts, though in time Gelb himself reduced his late nights for the sake of his wife and young son. Gelb and his fellow rewrite men and women continued to pool their resources, occasionally helping one other to obtain "the rare rewriteman's byline—proof of the efficiency of our teamwork."[36]

The rewrite desk also built on its camaraderie outside of breaks for meals or card games. The staff spent time analyzing the early edition for stories worthy of praise or derided as mediocre. Collectively, they also resisted "periodic cost-saving measures," such as a decree to keep using their soft-lead Ebony pencils (used for taking notes) until they were worn down to a third of their original size. After a clerk locked all the spare pencils in his desk and left early, Gelb and his colleagues reacted against this regulation of an "essential tool of our trade." Grinding 19 pencils down to stubs, they put them in an envelope and addressed them to their city editor. The pencil edict, Gelb recalled, was rescinded. These acts of defiance helped to deepen the rewrite desk's sense of collective identity, and were similar to other news workers' resistance strategies. The actual space the battery occupied, in Gelb's case, helped to build this in-group identity. Other parts of the newspaper were less close. When Gelb went to work for the drama department, he moved into a small, glass-enclosed office away from the main newsroom. There, with six other staff members, "we felt like fish colliding in a bowl." This space helped produce a different attitude toward the work, and the "drama enclave functioned on an every-man-for-himself-principle."[37]

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[36] Gelb, *City Room*, 209, 210, 213-4, 217-8, 220, 226.
[37] Gelb, *City Room*, 228, 232, 240

The rewrite desk at midcentury

The Second World War changed the culture of newsrooms, and modified its more specialized internal fiefdoms like the rewrite desk. Newsrooms, previously a mostly male domain, began to hire women to fill openings on the desk. But some resisted. Fred M. McLennan, later editor of the *Buffalo Courier-Express*, decried what he saw as the uneven quality of women in newspaper jobs. [38] He complained that they tended to "lose their enthusiasm for the game rapidly. They marry, or drift away when they find that real work and not glamor permeate the atmosphere of the news room." Even as he urged editors to look to smaller newspapers for "good rewrite men," he did not encourage the hiring of women.[39] But as women began to fill the ranks of reporters, including at the elite wire services, the pool of candidates for the rewrite desk began to include them too, especially as the war continued.[40] One sign of this increasing pool can be found in the "Situations Wanted" ads in *Editor & Publisher* during the war. Among them were a self-described "able newspaper woman," another "aggressive young woman," and an "alert woman reporter," all looking for work, and sensing, perhaps, that their moment had arrived.[41] Women were an increasing sight in the reporter and rewrite ranks, at a ratio at more like one to five (women to men) by the mid-1950s.[42] But their presence, as elsewhere on many newspapers, was still controversial, especially among older male editors. Some were welcomed on the rewrite desk. Others were

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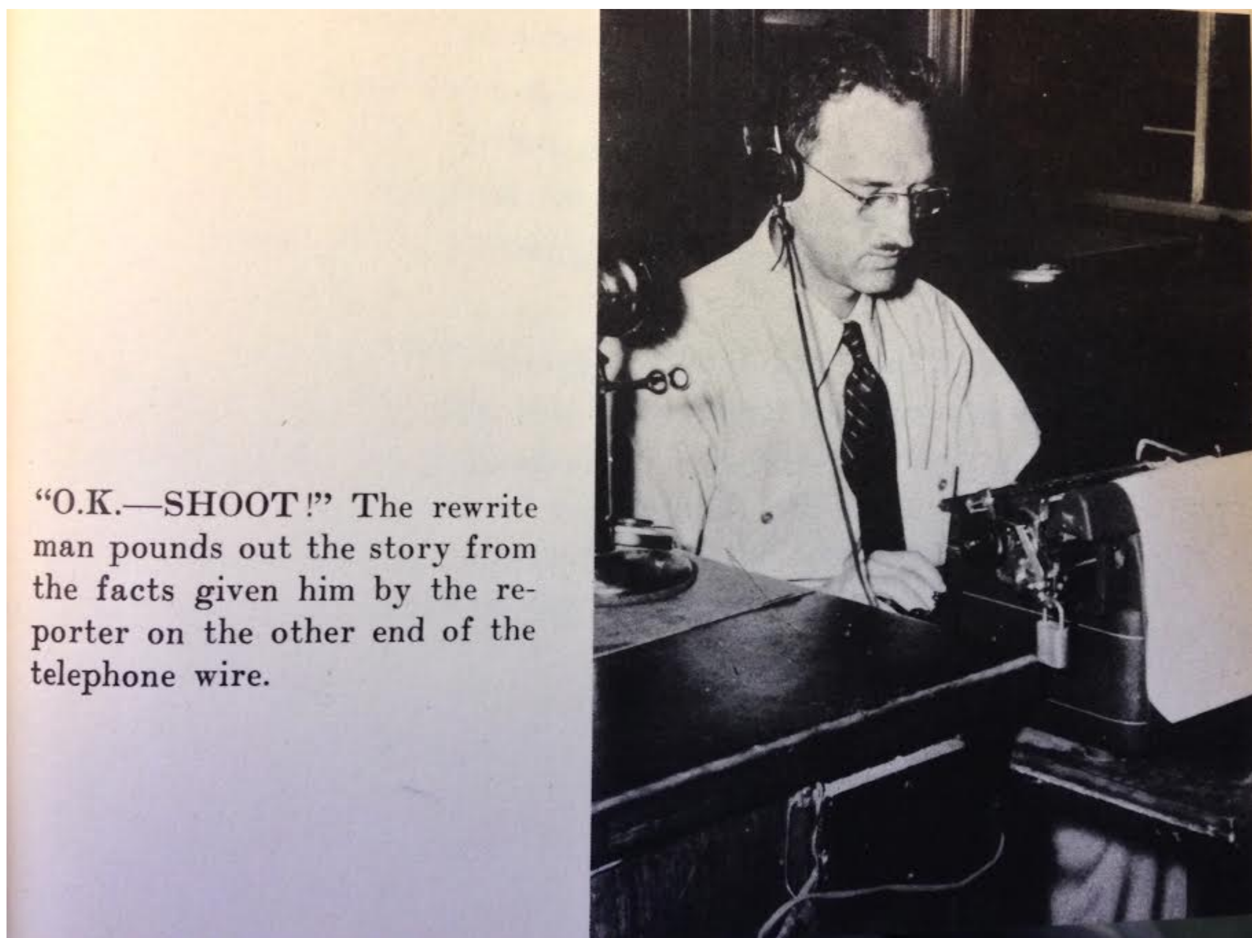
[38] Michael Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 59.
[39] "Sees small city newsmen coming into their own," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 8, 1942, 11.
[40] "15 women writers now with AP, long a male stronghold," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 12, 1942, 9.
[41] "Situations wanted: editorial," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 12, 1942, 48.
[42] George C. Biggers and Morton Sontheimer, "Should your child be a newspaperman?" *The Quill*, June 1954, 5.

derided as unintelligent or lazy, and assigned to dictation.[43] But by the end of the 1940s, women were not an aberration among rewrite "men." Reflecting this, there was a gradual emphasis on "battery," "staff" or "desk" as opposed to the male plural of "rewrite men," to describe the now more co-ed position. As with their first arrival on rewrite-desk staffs, the increasing presence of women depended on the slow introduction of women among senior reporters (because these same ranks provided rewrite staff to most newsrooms).



"O.K.—SHOOT!" The rewrite man pounds out the story from the facts given him by the reporter on the other end of the telephone wire.

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[43] Charles Henry Hamilton and J.Q. Mahaffey, "Women in the news room?" *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Nov. 16-19 , 1955, 209-212.

[44] Lent, *"I Work on a Newspaper*;" this anonymous photo is from a career guidebook, showing a typical rewrite staffer's workspace c. 1948; note the headphones.

After the war, mangers attempted to streamline rewrite desks and put them on par with improved copy desks. Spurred by the increasing capacity of radio and nascent TV news broadcasts to cover breaking news, these improvements were directed internally, and sporadically, by newspapers. At the *Detroit Free Press* in 1948, inspired by the "continuous production line made famous by auto makers in this Auto Capital," improved coordination was sought between the copy and rewrite desks. With "a specially designed five position Rewrite Desk and eight position Copy Desk, joined by a straight-line working table-desk which places the News Editor, City Editor and their assistants in a compact group in the center," the goal was to move copy more efficiently from rewrite to the city and then to the copy desk "in a fairly continuous process." The ability to hold phone calls from multiple lines was also part of this "modernization."[45] Four years later at the *Chicago Tribune*, "the entire news flow" was directed by a "center desk," with local, telegraph and cable desks each having its own team of "rewritemen to handle special stories."[46] Also in 1952, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* renovated its newsroom, providing "button-type mouthpieces, identical with those used by Bell Telephone operators, to its reporters and rewritemen.[47] In Los Angeles at the *Examiner*, a renovation of the "editorial department" placed Agness Underwood, its well-known city editor, along with the assistant city editor and news and photo editors, next to the "rewrite battery" and the copy desk. Proximity, even with internal upgrades to phone systems, was key.

By the 1950s, rewrite staff were increasingly recruited from college-trained journalists. Alongside this, there were attempts to more systematically prepare new rewrite staff for the

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[45] "New layout eases confabs, copy flow," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 28, 1948, 10.
[46] George Brandenburg, "At Chicago Tribune: news hole is filled by percentage system," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 26, 1952.
[47] "*Phila. Inquirer* news facilities on one floor," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 13, 1952, 13.

job. Even though many were already veteran reporters, as tradition and newsroom norms dictated, some newspapers attempted to craft a training pipeline just for them. The *Denver Post*, for example, used its evening edition to thoroughly train its more promising young reporters, who could step into more advanced beats, and also the rewrite desk on the day staff, as needed. Exposure to the existing night "rewrite-battery" also helped to serve as a kind of in-house classroom for young reporters, getting them used to the unique interactions necessary between reporters and rewrite.[48] Night reporters in training, for example, would spend a month on the dayside staff, starting at rewrite, graduating to general assignment and then more specialized beats, shadowed by a more experienced reporter. This was a step away from the usual use for night desks as a holding tank for beginners to get enough seasoning to cover day-time assignments or as a "burying place for journalistic misfits."[49] It reflected a more unionized, white-collar newsroom work force, one that could not waste personnel or time with haphazard training. Rewrite staff, as part of this work force, had solidified their positon as a superior near-peer to the reporter.

Copy editors

Copy editors, or "copy readers," held a substantial amount of power in the newsroom from the 1920s through the 1950s. More so than rewrite staff, they held near-ultimate authority over the news-production process (second only to senior editors), and were the most superior "near peer" to the reporter. Their ranks were populated by both former reporters and those who had entered the newsroom expressively to work for the copy desk, bypassing time

[48] Willarm C. Haselbush, "Many newspapers park their misfits with the night city editor. *The Denver Post* finds the . . . Nightside makes a fine school for reporters on an afternoon daily," *The Quill*, August 1953, 6-7.
[49] Haselbush, "Many newspapers park their misfits with the night city editor," 6.

on beats or on general assignment. As enforcers of print journalism's explicit rules, they also embodied an unspoken set of cultural norms, and existed as a world apart (or a world within worlds) inside many newsrooms. Their conflict with reporters (and occasionally other editors) was notorious, and both groups often thought ill of the other's work.

The tensions between the two groups could reach a distracting point, occasionally, as reporters complained that copy editors systematically eliminated their best material, and copy editors bemoaned maverick reporters for bending both stated and unstated journalistic standards. Working at the interface between the news-gathering and news-producing sides of a newspaper, such skirmishes were inevitable, and in some cases, healthy. But over time, the two kinds of news workers reached a working détente and learned to share power as reporters claimed a white-collar status and the authority and autonomy needed to control the news-gathering process. Copy editors, too, were also more systematically trained to cooperate, rather than oppose, their necessary collaborators, the reporters. Gradually, younger news workers saw the copy desk as a viable way to start a career.

It should be noted that throughout the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, copy editors were sometimes identified in textbooks, journalism trade publication and memoirs as "copy readers." Proofreaders, in contrast, were a different classification of news worker, focused more on the presentation side of the news-production process, examining typeset copy one last time before publication. "True" proofreaders were already fading as a sub-group within newsrooms by the 1930s and 1940s, and one that continued to fade with the advent of cold type and offset printing (with less need for hot-type-driven, final page proofs).[50]

[50] Roger Simpson; private conversation with author, Feb. 19, 2015.

Contemporaries noted the occasional confusion by outsiders, and observed that the job was much more mechanical than editorial. The work was considered essential but less creative than copy editing, and often involved two-person teams of "reader" and "holder" who read stories twice over for errors.[51] The idea of correcting "copy" verses working on "proofs" captures the distinction, which was clearer to the generation of news workers who operated without word processors. The latter technology essentially eliminated the last vestiges of the proofreading system by the 1970s and 1980s.[52]

According to a 1951 vocational guide to journalism for high-school and college students, larger newsrooms could not function without a well-staffed copy desk (sometimes just described as "the desk"). Often a horseshoe-shaped table, it was usually located centrally in the newsroom, with copy editors seated at the edge, or "rim," and a chief copy editor at its head, in the lead spot, or slot. A "slotman" was thus slang for the lead copy editor, and the "copydesk" short for the whole copy-desk staff.[53] A copy editor was considered an "advanced member of the city-room staff," and it was "not conceivable" for a junior reporter to fill a vacancy on a copy desk. Copy editors were among the more experienced people in the newsroom, expected to be, by newspaper culture and custom, "a veteran of mature judgement . . . and considerable knowledge."[54] Into the 1930s, "the old fellow, from two to five decades of experience back of him . . . is called upon to handle the important copy and to write the delicate headline which is

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[51] George C. Bastian, and Leland D. Case, *Editing the Day's News: An Introduction to Newspaper Copyreading, Headline Writing, Illustration, Makeup, and General Newspaper Methods* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932).
[52] The incorporation of pre-Internet technologies such as the word processor and microcomputer will be the subject of a study I would like to pursue, and that would build on the work of Anthony Smith. See his *Goodbye, Gutenberg: the Newspaper Revolution of the 1980s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).
[53] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 49.
[54] Sontheimer, Newspaperman, 191.

to be the paper's main show-window tomorrow morning."[55] A certain nostalgia for a supposedly more free-wheeling recent past, as with other groups in the newsroom, characterized perceptions of copy editors. Stanley Walker, the otherwise world-wise city editor of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, characterized them as "hoary and delightful fuddy-duddies . . . holdovers from the days when the copyreader roamed the country like the telegraph operator or the tramp printer." As long as they were not "too far gone in liquor and loss of memory," the "really competent old-time copyreaders" still had a number of job prospects even in the midst of the Depression.[56] That would change over time. Yet as late as the 1920s, before the more widespread acceptance of college and especially college journalism programs as a routine route into the newsroom, copy editors were regarded by their peers as both more educated, and more cynical, than their young reporter peers, and, most importantly, more secure in their positions.

Within their parallel but separate routines, copy editors could be directed by copy chiefs as to how long and how many columns wide a story should be, as well as how big to make a headline, and subheads, as needed. Though they usually worked as a team, editing copy written by beat and general-assignment reporters, as well as produced by writers working for other sections of the paper, they were under the direct authority of their chief. This chief was "the king of copy," with the "men around the rim . . . his courtiers." A chief was nearly equal in power to the city editor, according to one account. Copy chiefs' power radiated outward, toward their rim editors, almost literally in proportion to their physical distance. Copy, after

[55] Stanley Walker, *City Editor* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, Inc., 1934), 91-92.
[56] Walker, *City Editor*, 92.

having been edited by the rim editors, would be returned to the copy chief for a final check before being sent to composing for typesetting. The copy chief, or chiefs, would be recruited from the ranks of the rim editors. The former would be given authority to hire or fire their "rim men," and had "complete authority over the desk and its personnel.[57]

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In contrast to most reporters, copy editors were "the most sedentary member[s] of the city room," while also "the best informed."[59] Sontheimer believed that copy editors' duties

[57] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 49, 51, 52.
[58] Frank Jess, Marion Lebron and Rudolf Modley, and Alice V. Keliher, eds, *News Workers* (New York: Johnson Publishing Company, 1946), 11.
[59] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 50.

"approximate a bookkeeper's routine more than any other job on the staff. The grind is steadier, the tenor of the work, despite deadline peaks, more even, the hours more dependable (a copyreader seldom works overtime, sorry to disillusion you, Mrs. Copyreader) and the confinement greater." The actual job was only for "certain temperaments," but those who liked it could last whole careers enjoying the work.[60] A copy editor was the "unsung hero of the Fourth Estate." His work could be "monotonous . . . he sits on the rim . . . does his stint and then goes home."[61] A routine schedule might be part of a less-exciting newsroom role, and one associated with less-glamorous news-production work. But it also promised stability, and "fixed, regular hours," which meant that time off was one's own. The ability to sit down and then leave, with fairly set hours, was "sometimes a sweet boon." This was particularly true before World War Two, and the effect of the Guild was felt on standardizing the (more or less) forty-hour work week.[62]

Since copy editors remained inside the physical newsroom, these characteristics were not surprising. The copy editor was "responsible for the exact form in which a story appears on the printed page." Copy editors were constantly on the lookout for factual errors, libelous content, and errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, titles, streets, local institutions and so on. Less explicitly, he or she was expected to implement a newspaper's style, to fix or alter (or in many cases, simply remove) awkward phrasings (or as reporters alleged, anything too creative).[63] A copy editor "corrects and manicures" the work of others. The "elimination of verbosity," the primacy of space restrictions, the desire to reshape stories so that the most

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[60] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 192.
[61] Walker, *City Editor*, 88.
[62] Walker, *City Editor*, 93.
[63] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 50.

(idiosyncratically determined) vital elements came first—all these were guiding norms for copy editors throughout the interwar years and beyond.[64] This came with a fair amount of pressure. Breaking unwritten or written policy directives could lead to a copy editor's firing, and he could "well lose his job for ignorance or carelessness." Headline writing formed another important and less-heralded part of a copy editor's job. Challenging to write due to space limitations and rules governing style, headlines and their words had to be composed to order and on tight deadlines. Many of these pithy, active words entered popular culture.[65] This could produce some quirky habits: some editors liked working with pencils instead of typewriters as late as the early 1950s.[66] Others invented new, shortened words that could fit in tight spaces.[67] Among their peers, copy editors were measured by their accuracy, clarity, speed and ingenuity with headlines and ability to retain the gist of a story even when cutting details.[68] They should develop a "nice feeling for the right word, a sense of the clear and the straightforward, a sound knowledge of the people and materials which make news, a retentive memory, a close eye for what is libelous or dangerous, and an incorruptible mental honesty which makes it impossible for him to be unfair." Due to the large influx of copy—one estimate from the mid-1930s guessed that 40,000 words could pass through a copy desk on a nightly basis—individual copy editors were crucial to work flow for the entire newsroom. Curiously, not all copy editors were gifted spellers.[69] But with their separate "decisions"—i.e. their determinations of what had to be changed, or be removed, from a story—there was no appeal except to the copy chief on

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[64] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 192.
[65] These shortened words included "biz," for "business," for example.
[66] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 50.
[67] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 193; Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 50.
[68] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 194.
[69] Walker, *City Editor*, 94, 96.

duty. Reporters were typically not expected to have much, if any, say over their turned-in stories.[70]

Copy editors, reporters, and newsroom culture

Sympathetic observers of both copy editors and reporters noted the enduring tensions between the groups. Reporters and copy editors were particularly prone to conflict due to the somewhat contradictory natures of their work flows and processes. Reporters were expected to go out, gather news, come back, and create content, while copy editors remained behind, and even more than rewrite staff, saw to it that the same content was cut down to size and conformed to the newsroom's production norms. Unlike rewrite staff, though, copy editors had even less contact with the outside world. Reporters were given credit through bylines but copy editors remained anonymous. Copy editors worked as a team and reporters were encouraged to work solo. Unless a reporter previously worked on a copy desk, he or she had a hard time thinking of copy editors as "anything except officious dummies, with a gnawing inferiority complex, who delight in ruining the best work of a reporter by cutting out the frills." [71] Folktales of spiteful copy editors were favorites among reporters, such as this anecdote:

> There is the story of the bitter old copyreader who, reading the copy of a young and brilliant reporter, was unable to restrain his genuine amusement. 'Lord, this is funny. I'll fix it.' Wherewith his pencil would cut out the very phrases which had moved him to rare bellylaughs.[72]

For others in the newsroom, "The copyreader has traditionally been a worn-out rewrite man or reporter, cynical, skeptical, unappreciative, sour on the world and deriving his only pleasure

[70] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 51.
[71] Walker, *City Editor*, 93.
[72] Walker, *City Editor*, 93.

from murderously disemboweling and emasculating good stories." But that "traditional picture, never wholly correct as to the copyreader's qualities, was losing accuracy in regard to his origin."[73] Stanley Walker half-teasingly referring to the copy editor as the "man with the green eyeshade," and said that a copy editor's "deft touches with the pencil may raise a story out of the ordinary, but it's the handsome, much publicized reporter who gets the credit. Fancy reporters, particularly young ones who have been debauched by gazing too long at iridescent and poetic images, call him a butcher. Rarely do they thank him for improving their efforts."[74] A ditty from a generation before, by the journalist-poet Henry Edward Warner, emphasized the animosity some reporters felt for copy editors, despite this mutual need:

> Somewhere there must exist a hell
> For copy-readers who employ
> Their witless minds in killing joy
> And sounding young Ambition's knell![75]

Female reporters were thought to be particularly susceptible to the "the hacksaws of hurry-up copy desks," and not tough enough for a working environment that included cranky copy editors.[76] But female reporters disagreed. Mildred Philips, author of a unique, but short-lived, column in *Editor & Publisher* in the early 1920s, believed that women could be co-partners in "the land of copy-paper and cusses." Philips also demurred against the perception of some male editors that women would make better desk workers than "go out and go-getters."[77] While their presence would not become common until after World War Two, some enterprising

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[73] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 191.
[74] Walker, *City Editor*, 88.
[75] Henry Edward Warner, "Songs of the craft," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 15, 1925, 4.
[76] "Editorial: Do women belong?" *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 21, 1925, 22.
[77] Mildred Philips, "Forum of female fraternity of Fourth Estaters," *Editor & Publisher*, May 28, 1921, 301.

women reporters tried anyway. A "situations wanted" ad in a 1934 issue of *Editor & Publisher* was published by a female reporter who had "enough backbone to learn copy desk."[78]

The deep disconnect in mentality and mission between reporters and copy editors affected recruitment. "The copy desk, in spite of efforts of well-meaning journalistic uplifters to interest young and ambitious men in its undoubted charms, remains, in all truth, pretty much a refuge for ageing men who are no longer spry enough to get out and cover assignments," as Walker put it. This was not necessarily a bad thing, or always true. "If many old reporters, faced at last with the realization that they were unable to stand the rough and tumble life of collecting and writing news, had taken the time to learn the technique of reading copy, their old age would be much more secure. They could land on the copy desk, instead of whining that they had given the best years of their life to reporting and then had learned too late that there was nothing else they could do."[79] Better to be familiar with how the copy desk worked, because it would "improve your writing, and it may come in handy some day when you want to, or are forced to, become a copyreader."[80] Knowing how to listen to "wise old copyreaders" was a good idea, as "their skulls are full of the accumulated wisdom of decades." [81] Attempts to recruit younger copy editors in the early 1930s did meet with moderate success. [82]

But despite such admonitions, reporters were reluctant to make a switch—and it was a cultural and mental leap—to work for the copy desk. They would far more willingly make the shorter jump to the rewrite battery, or angle for a junior editor's position on the city desk. "Too

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[78] "Situations wanted," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 10, 1934, 35.
[79] Walker, *City Editor*, 89.
[80] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 194.
[81] Walker, *City Editor*, 93; also: "Hot-headed young word-painters have been known to fly off the handle when questioned by a copyreader on the facts of a story. This is a great mistake. If the copyreader can't understand it, how can the average reader?"
[82] Walker, *City Editor*, 93-4; "The results, while not always happy, have produced some exceptionally high-class handlers of copy. The business needs more of them."

many of the young men are impatient, and won't stand up under the drudgery. Why should they sit at a desk," Walker mused, "when other young men are writing stories that carry big by-lines, and others are getting around, painting the town red, growing up into special writers, dramatic critics, columnists or feature writers of distinction?" The copy desk had its own rewards, but they were not for everyone. As Walker described it, there were still "members of a strange cult, who suffer from an ailment known in the trade as the itching pencil—that is, they can't leave well enough alone. They think they have to change a few words, or a few sentences, on every page, either to prove that they are working or because of some obscure inner compulsion. Such men deserve all the calumny heaped upon them by heartbroken reporters."[83] In depictions of journalistic communities in popular culture, such as Silas Bent's *Buchanan of the Press*, reporters continued to disregard copy editors. The titular character in Bent's novel, for example, "slowly sinks from the glory of a star reporter to the depths of the copy desk."[84]

A later détente with reporters and others

Some believed that copy editors were grouchy because reporters had made them that way, partially by being worse spellers than copy editors. A spelling bee at the *Sacramento Bee* showed that most of its reporters spelled only 40 to 60 percent of 50 given words correctly. "If copy desk people are as villainous, as empty of humor, as reporters imagine they are, they have gotten that way because of this [tendency to misspell words]," one writer noted.[85] A measure of humor on both sides helped to cushion some of the more pointed feelings of dissatisfaction.

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[83] Walker, *City Editor*, 92-3, 95-6.
[84] "Our own world of letters," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 15, 1932
[85] "And that's how copy readers get that way!" *Editor & Publisher*, June 4, 1927, 12.

As a *Los Angeles Times* staff member put it, while copy readers who suffered from “rim-rot” should be euthanized with a “merciful death,” beat men could experience “calcification of the brain” and the “immobility of star crime reporters” was caused by “a paralysis due to industrophobia in its most extreme form.”[86] Another anecdote poked fun at both sides for their low view of the other: “A photographer guiding a guest through the plant of the *Detroit News* remarked as he explained the city room layout: ‘On this side are the reporters. They write, but can’t spell. On that side are the copyreaders. They spell, but can’t writ[e].’”[87] More seriously, senior reporters believed that cubs had a lot to learn from copy editors.[88] Other writers noted that reporters needed copy editors just as much as they needed their fellow reporters or rewrite men. “It is traditional that reporters must damn the copy desk for ‘butchering’ his masterpieces, but every newspaperman knows that a competent desk is the heart of a good newspaper. The men on a first class desk are not mechanics. They are professional, in the highest sense of the word [.] Their technical skill, essential as it is, is only a minor part of the equipment they must bring to their daily tasks.”[89]

There was a bigger cultural shift underway in the newsroom: reporters were becoming copy editors. More reporters were also going to, and finishing, college. This meant a bigger pool of candidates for the copy desk. And certain practices, like leaving contact information for sources on the top of copy, also helped to increase “inter-office cooperation.”[90] William Ogdon, who had made just such a transition, and who was a veteran of the *Toledo Times*, *St. Louis*

[86] “Short takes,” *Editor & Publisher*, March 2, 1940, 3.
[87] “Short takes,” *Editor & Publisher*, March 27, 1943, 18.
[88] “Ray Erwin’s Column: credit the copyreader,” *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 21, 1959, 4/
[89] Arthur Robb, “Shop talk at thirty,” *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 16, 1941, 36.
[90]Frank Landt Dennis, “City room ‘short course’ saves tempers and time,” *The Quill*, August 1942, 5.

Globe Democrat and *New York Times*, described the "traditional enmity" between reporters and rewrite men and copy-readers. He compared it to the disdain reporters had for the "'basement journalists' of the classified advertising and circulation departments who occasionally pass[ed] themselves off to the public as newspapermen."[91] The "logical schism" that divided the reporter from the copy desk could, however, be mitigated by better communication, a chance to review changes made to a reporter's copy by the copy desk before the story went to print and a general fostering of a "friendlier relationship" between the two groups, especially on bigger papers where reporters and copy editors did not know each well, if at all.[92] Without active efforts to bridge gaps reinforced by routine, the "pace, the constant vigilance over detail, the exhausting competition, and the strain of the ever-impending emergency are likely to make us inhumane toward one another," Ogdon noted. He had immense empathy for reporters, and how they felt about changes to their copy. [93] Other reporters made the move to the copy desk during this era, finding that the reputation of the desk as "a hoary circle of hunch-backed old editors who approached the grave consoling themselves with second-hand glimpses of life from beneath a green eyeshade" were not true.[94] Despite these efforts at reconciliation, there was a lingering fear of getting stuck at the rim, "advancing slowly if at all."[95]

[91] William D. Ogdon, "Now that I'm a copy 'butcher' myself—things appear a little different, says reporter who joined lords of the rim," *The Quill*, April 1936, 6.
[92] William D. Ogdon, "Now that I'm a copy 'butcher' myself—things appear a little different, says reporter who joined lords of the rim," *The Quill*, April 1936, 7.
[93] William D. Ogdon, "Now that I'm a copy 'butcher' myself—things appear a little different, says reporter who joined lords of the rim," *The Quill*, April 1936, 16.
[94] Richard Tucker, "Don't dodge the desk! That's where a young newspaperman can get real, all-around seasoning," *The Quill*, February 1940, 13, 19.
[95] James H. Wright, "Cog vs. wheel: No, thanks—I'll stay in small city," *The Quill*, June 1949, 9, 10.

Unlike rewrite men and women, whose newsroom role emerged in the first third of the twentieth century primarily out of technological necessity, copy editors held a firmly established position in the newsroom before the 1920s. But that does not mean that technology was not altering their work processes. Some copy editors initially resisted the introduction of typewriters because they were used to estimating the length of articles written in longhand, and they felt reporters "were getting too much 'space.'"[96] But the typewriter had largely replaced the "old-time stylus" and the practice of writing on loose slips of paper was fading throughout the newsroom by the 1920s. Copy editors were also facing the introduction of the "automatic telegraph printer" and an increasing amount and reliance on wire-service copy.[97] Often located centrally in the newsroom, the copy desk at larger newsrooms often received copy by pneumatic tubes. New buildings from the period emphasized "rapid manufacture." The basic idea, with the copy desk in mind, was to include "the latest devices to make the mechanical work faster and more efficient."[98]

At the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*'s new building, the copy desk was the center of news production. As "the heart of any news room," its "horse shoe desk" accommodated six copy editors, all working for the "'head' of the desk, who sits in the bend of the shoe." Built from mahogany, it was illuminated by a "trough lighting system, which throws 400 candle power of light direct on the copy but is softened by glazed glass." Copy was carried to the desk via

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[96] Hugh S. Balllie, "Headwork behind the headlines: initiative and enthusiasm help newsmen steer their course safely past perilous shoals of standardization," *The Quill*, February 1935, 10; Balllie was executive vice president of United Press. He began working in journalism in 1908 for the *Los Angeles Record*, joining the UP in 1915.

[97] Milton Garges, "A.P. news wires span 50,000 miles operation costs over $2,500,000," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 7, 1919, 17; Garges was "acting chief A.P. traffic department"

[98] F.C. Nelson, "Efficient factory hidden behind *Hartford Times*' Splendid Facade—production departments arranged that all work converges by shortest routes on press room and delivery of finished papers," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 18, 1920, 15.

"pneumatic air tubes."[99] And perhaps most importantly, while "formerly every editor and subeditor on newspapers were given separate offices . . . the *Star-Telegram* has found that desks . . . open with partitions eliminated afforded closer team work and co-operation." The open-floor plan encompassed the copy desk.[100] The *Washington Star*'s new newsroom space in 1922 included a horseshoe-shaped copy desk, of "art-metal design, green-enameled steel and brass trimmings, with facilities for handling local, and cable copy. Pneumatic tubes at the chief's elbow communicate with the composing room and other departments."[101] Other newspapers used gravity-based systems to move copy down floors from the copy desk to the composing room.[102]

The *New York World*, taking copy-desk reorganization one step further, adopted what was known as a "universal desk plan" in order to handle the increased flow of copy. Designed more like a large "H," the copy desk was located in the back of the newsroom, with Hugh Logan, its chief copy editor, sitting in the center. Working with "10 assistant copy editors, [and] a man from the old telegraph desk alternating with a man from the former city copy desk," the new system handled all copy, including material from the formerly separate copy desks devoted to telegraph and local news. With a work day beginning at 5:30 p.m., and with local news dealt with first before "the telegraph matter begins to flow in . . . slack and rush times" were reduced.[103]

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[99] "Finest newspaper plant in Southwest ready," *Editor & Publisher*, May 28, 1921, II; note: "This, with the automatic house telephone system, enables each department to get in touch with each other without a moment's delay. Both systems were installed at great expense."
[100] "Finest newspaper plant in Southwest ready," IV.
[101] "Human touch vitalizes efficiency in *Washington Star*'s Plant," *Editor & Publisher*, April 22, 1922, 18-9.
[102] "*Philadelphia Inquirer* in palatial home," *Editor & Publisher*, July 18 1925, 9.
[103] "N.Y. World adopts universal desk," *Editor & Publisher*, May 27, 1922, 36.

The copy desk in the 1920s was also a tempting target for efficiency experts, apostles of Fordism interested in making the newsroom more like a factory.[104] The copy desk's fixed, routinized work patterns naturally lent itself to attempts at making it more efficient. Osmore R. Smith, part of the *Milwaukee Journal*'s planning department, urged a more standardized system for ensuring a better flow of copy to and from the desk. That material "is as much a problem of manufacturing as is the making of an automobile or a pair of shoes," he claimed.[105] Smith, possibly an "efficiency expert" himself, also urged better cooperation with the mechanical side of the newspaper. "A traditionally minded editorial man may tell you that you cannot control news; that news doesn't 'break' to suit the convenience of linotype operators and must be handled as it comes." That point of view was incorrect, he said.[106]

The copy desk in the mid-1920s faced further calls for efficiency due to an ever-increasing influx of wire news. Some worried that copy editors would be physically and mentally overwhelmed by the vast amounts of prepared copy flowing into their desks. The constant work, or the "treadmill business of desk-plugging," could cause one to fall into a bad "copy-reader mind." This would then affect reporters. "A dull witted, mentally lazy copy-reader can stifle the spark of genius in a budding writer so effectively—by mere dunderhead squelching—that he will be years in regaining his lost enthusiasm even in the most altered environment," a contemporary observed.[107] Better pay and more regular hours could prevent

[104] Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).
[105] Osmore R. Smith, "Controlling copy flow is secret of economic production: *Milwaukee Journal*'s planning division created to eliminate costly edition time rush—search analysis revealed haphazard methods prevailing," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 17, 1923, 18.
[106] Osmore R. Smith, "Inability to control news copy flow largely a myth," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 1, 1923, 30.
[107] Alger Stephen Beane, "Syndicate copy, machine reporting, producing 'era of kiln dried news,'" *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 2, 1924, 10.

this, it was urged. Better internal communication, especially between emergent rewrite and the older copy desks, was also thought to be a solution. Keeping related staff members "within speaking distance of each other . . ." could help the copy desk when it got swamped, suggested a staff member at the *Kansas City Star*.[108]

This emphasis on speed meant that the late 1920s witnessed continued improvements to the technology of the news desk. Conveyer belts brought material from the newsroom, often through the copy desk, to the composing room. Soundproofing deadened the dull roar of telegraph keys and "printer machines."[109] Other newsrooms placed their copy desks strategically near centers of editorial power. The *Syracuse Herald* in 1928 positioned its copy desk and editors near the city editor and state editor, while dampening sound with absorptive ceiling tiles and an internal tube system for moving copy.[110] Similarly in 1928, the *Cincinnati Inquirer* used nine pneumatic tubes to connect the city editor to the copy desk.[111] Some newsrooms maintained spots on the copy desk for the managing editor and city editor (and his assistant) to sit and work. The desk also became a focus, with some made of steel and equipped with "typewriter compartments."[112] In images of newsrooms from this era, copy desks were a prominent part of the environment.[113] These were also sources of nostalgia. The scarred wooden copy desk could make a crude bed, one editor recalled, and "one could sleep on it if he stayed out too late to go home to a suburb and not late enough to start an early trick."[114]

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108 "Editors exchange experiences on news handling," *Editor & Publisher*, May 3, 1924, 14-5.
109 "*Houston Press* occupies $500,000 building," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 11, 1928, 9.
110 "*Syracuse Herald* in million-dollar plant," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 25, 1928, 7.
111 "*Cincinnati Inquirer* in $3,500,000 building," *Editor & Publisher*, April 14, 1928, 8-9.
112 "*Knoxville News-Sentinel* publishing from new modern building," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 10, 1928, 16.
113 "Modern appointments of newest metropolitan newspaper building," *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1929, 13.
114 "Our cover—and other city rooms," *The Quill*, January 1948, 2.

Remodels of existing newsrooms and new newsroom spaces continued earlier trends. There was a recurring interest, for example, in moving copy in straight lines across a newsroom, from reporters to department editors to the city editor and managing editor.[115] Copy desks were still being placed for optimum efficiency, sometimes directly above the composing room, as was the case with the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*.[116] Technical innovations were heralded in profiles of renovations and new construction in contemporary accounts, including the installation of a loud-speaker installed in the "editorial and composing rooms" of the New Orleans (La.) *Times-Picayune*. Located on the copy desk and the foreman's desk, with "an open connection during working hours:" in an emergency, "Hold Page One!" could be amplified loud enough to be heard by the entire composing room staff, "reaching the foreman wherever he is."[117] Another newsroom installed an "electronic copy control" device that lit up to indicate "deadline," "too much" or "low" to facilitate communication between the newsroom and the composing room.[118]

As newspapers increasingly focused on economic survival during the worsening Depression, the traditional mobility of copy editors faded. Before, wrote one anonymous copy editor, three years on a desk was considered enough to become a veteran. Now, he said, three years was enough to classify an editor as being among the "newest." No more did they come and go. "Economic uncertainty is an excellent cure for the itching foot of the newspaperman. Whether for good or ill I make no pretense of knowing," wrote one contemporary.[119] The

[115] "News room remodeled," *Editor & Publisher*, May 23, 1931, 16.
[116] "*Globe-Democrat* occupies new plant," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 7, 1931, 13.
[117] "Loud-speaker device installed by daily," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 7, 1931, 20.
[118] "Dailies control copy by electronic device," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 10, 1935, XXVII.
[119] "What our readers say: copy desk veterans," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 19, 1932, 35.

Depression had forced some newsroom staffers into “starvation pay . . . for as long as three years.”[120] With uncertainty so high, many stayed put rather than risk losing work. This trend, toward a less nomadic life for copy editors, had already started in the 1920s.[121]

Marlen Pew, in his “Shop talk at thirty” column in *Editor & Publisher*, complained how U.S. copy editors were mere “rim plugger[s]” and were not imaginative compared to their London counterparts.[122] And back home, they still suffered in comparisons to reporters. Among other press bromides was this jibe: “What happened on the copy desk? Must be in a trance, for they let . . . an authentic piece of human interest slip into the paper.”[123] That the “knights of the green eye-shade” were targets for even sympathetic watchers like Pew speaks to their continued position in the newsroom pecking order. Spoofing the tensions between reporters and copy editors, he wrote a short a fictional account of a copy editor losing his cool when a reporter misspelled his own name.[124]

The 1930s also witnessed some of the first systematic attempts to standardize the hitherto erratic training of copy editors. Though this would not be fully realized until after the Second World War, the *Akron Times-Press* was among the pioneers. As part of an in-house refresher program for news workers, Walter J. Coyle, the paper’s city editor, made sure to include members of the copy desk alongside photographers and reporters. Other papers tried to emphasize the responsibility of the copy editor. The *Toledo Blade*’s Raymond A. Werneke, a

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120 Marlen Pew, “Shop talk at thirty,” *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 5, 1933, 40.
121 Carl Kesler, “‘By guess’ not good enough,” *The Quill*, November 1947, 3.
122 Marlen Pew, “Shop talk at thirty,” *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 21, 1933, 32.
123 Marlen Pew, “Shop talk at thirty,” *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 5, 1933, 40.
124 Marlen Pew, “Shop talk at thirty,” Editor & Publisher, Oct. 27, 1934, 40.

former veteran rewrite man and copy editor, was designated a "super copyreader" and given the tasks of checking all proofs.[125]

Despite these early forays into better training and a few reflective efforts at refocusing on the importance of the copy desk under conditions of austerity, copy editors were not considered "professional" under federal labor regulations. Elmer E. Andrews, administrator of the Wage and Hour division of the Department of Labor, sought to clarify the issue in a speech at the sixth annual convention of the ANG in 1939. The fact that "the copyreader is under the constant supervision of the head of the desk, and the sports editor and other departmental heads generally are under the supervision of the managing editor," disqualifies them from any professional status under to the Wage and Hour law, he said. Copy editors, just as much as reporters, were caught up in the larger debate about who could be exempt from overtime pay. Andrews also highlighted the irregular education and training of "the ordinary newspaper worker." Based on then-current understanding of what constituted "professional" status, news workers lacked advanced education and regulated entry into the field, especially as compared to the practitioners of law or medicine.[126] In the newsroom hierarchy, copy editors outranked reporters, but in labor law—and in reality—they fell far below senior editors classified as "professionals" or executives.

The copy desk in the 1940s

The involvement of the United States in the global fight against the Axis affected newsrooms' relational equilibrium as staffs shrunk due to wartime mobilization, newsprint

[125] "Super-copyreader to check all proofs," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 5, 1938, 32.
[126] "Andrews speech cheers Guild in sixth annual convention," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 5, 1939, 9.

became scarce and both in-house unions and the ANG reached an unofficial understanding that strikes were on hold for the duration of the conflict. As the United States prepared for war, the effect on newsroom work culture was felt in relationships between experienced news workers, a group that often included copy editors and their management. While copy boys and girls, photographers and rewrite staff members were also affected, the culture of copy editors faced some unique challenges.

The draft of young men hit these editors like any other group in the newsroom, with a corresponding influx of women into positions previously not open to them. [127] Since copy editors were older on average, however, the draft did not, perhaps, reach as deeply into copy desks. But publications and news organizations that had traditionally served as the training ground for copy editors were hard-pressed to fill their ranks with qualified workers, and this, in turn, had ramifications up the recruiting ladder. Copy editors were already not plentiful (one study counted five out of about 80 editorial staff members working for the *Milwaukee Journal* in 1941; the *Journal* could be considered a typical large-city newsroom).[128] One survey by the National Council on Professional Education for Journalism found that on about 14 percent of all newspapers of 100,000 circulation or more, copy editors were in particularly short supply.[129] So while fewer may have been lost to wartime exigencies, their positions were harder to fill. Some

[127] "Sees small city newsmen coming into their own," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 8, 1942, 11.
[128] Francis V. Prugger, "Social composition and training of *Milwaukee Journal* news staff," *Journalism Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1941): 232; other estimates from this era guessed that at medium-sized daily papers in cities of 200,000-300,000, there might be 50 editorial members, of which 8 were copy editors; see "How editors deal with administrative problems,'" American Society of Newspaper Editors, *Problems of Journalism*, April 19, 1940, 142.
[129] Kenneth E. Olson, "Survey of daily newspaper personnel shortages," *Journalism Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1943): 114-15

papers turned to unusual sources, such as journalism faculty (normally hired in the summers between semesters) to meet their personnel needs.[130] This was considered a stopgap measure.

In Chicago, the City News Bureau was not able to help fill the staffing gaps on Chicago newspapers as easily, including the *Chicago Journal of Commerce*. As a result, during the war the *Journal* had an all-female copy desk.[131] Women were hired as copy editors at the *Portland Journal* and *New York Herald Tribune*.[132] The *Tribune* had not hired any since the First World War. In both cases, female copy editors were referred to as “copy gals” or “copy girls.”[133] Some women objected to being referred to in this way, and to the general tone of coverage of female news workers in trade publications. In a letter-to-the-editor to *Editor & Publisher*, Jessica Bird, a reporter and desk worker from the Riverside (Calif.) *Press and Enterprise*, complained that the prejudices women were facing in the newsroom were well-ingrained before the war.[134]

Unlike after the First World War, though, women remained in the newsroom after the Second as a more substantial presence. At the *New York Times*’ magazine, Virginia J. Fortiner remained at the copy desk.[135] Women also stayed at the copy desks of the *New York Post* and *Mirror*.[136] And while many veterans returned to their positions, there were definitely challenges in placing them in positions commensurate to their skills and experiences. This was especially the case in New York City, where the only positions open were entry level, such as for copy

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[130] “Bright ideas: professors on copydesk,” *Editor & Publisher*, May 20, 1944, 22. During peacetime, it was not uncommon for faculty to work over the summer. This tradition continues in a more limited way today, through research and newsroom fellowships.
[131] “Chicago *Journal of Commerce* has all-girl copy desk,” *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 12, 1942, 10.
[132] “Copy gals!” *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 9, 1943, 10.
[133] “Has two copy girls,” *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 23, 1943, 6.
[134] Jessica Bird, “What are readers say: cites ‘slap’ at women reporters,” *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 23, 1943, 49.
[135] “Woman wields blue pencil on *N.Y. Times* copy,” *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 5, 1946, 63.
[136] “E&P finds two other N.Y. girl copyreaders,” *Editor & Publisher*, March 16, 1946, 65; Barbara Yuncker at the *Post* and Betty Wood at the *Mirror*.

boys, according to a 1946 Guild survey of 10,000 news workers employed before the war. Of this number, only about 30 percent had returned to their former positions. And as for the 500 job applicants the Guild was working with, 90 percent were vets.[137] The copy desk was, however, seen as an ideal place to help retrain them, if positions could be secured.[138]

Despite the war and its aftermath, the basic set up of the newsroom changed only moderately in the 1940s. The Santa Fe *New Mexican*, for example, in its new 14,000 square-foot office, equipped its editorial staff members with a "clover leaf" desk with soundproofed slots for wire copy.[139] Other incremental innovations included circular copy desks, tried at the *Philadelphia Bulletin* as part of its push to include a more "personal element." Throughout the newsroom, the "flow of copy is expedited by a triangular arrangement with the slowest functions farthest from the copy desk."[140] After the war, other experiments in newsroom design toyed with simple changes to the shape of the desk, including a "modified V" instead of the more traditional "U" shape. The *Wall Street Journal* used this design for its "seven-plus-slotman" staff, in an attempt to provide more room to work. The desk was equipped with two telephones, and two to three typewriters, and had more room to spread out, with about 33 inches of clearance between editors; each editor had waste bins for paper and "ample leg room."[141]

At the *Detroit Free Press*, a "modernization" program "streamlined" the newsroom's layout in 1948.[142] The major change to the newsroom involved repositioning the rewrite and

[137] William Reed, "Huge re-employment effort cuts job openings in NYC," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 16, 1946, 7, 60.
[138] "Reconversion problems of the press," American Society of Newspaper Editors, *Problems of Journalism*, April 18-20, 1946, 109-11.
[139] "*Santa Fe New Mexica*n moves into new home," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 8, 1942, 28.
[140] "Tomorrow is today at the *Bulletin*," *Editor & Publisher*, May 20, 1944, 15; part of a wartime ad campaign.
[141] "*Wall St. Journal* copy desk ends elbow knocking," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 14, 1946, 52.
[142] "New layout eases confabs, copy flow," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 28, 1948, 10.

copy desks. Before, the copy desk had been across the room from the city desk, "necessitating a constant walking back and forth by news executives as they conferred about the numerous problems coming up for each edition. Now those editors sit side-by-side, or face-to-face, and such problems are settled as fast as they come up," detailed a profile of the revised space. This speeded up consultations over copy but also allowed it to move from rewrite to city desk and then to the copy desk with fewer hiccups. This "City Desk-Copy Desk combination" was hardly radical, but it was one example of a newsroom moving away from Depression-era retrenchment to one that took advantage of early post-war prosperity to retool the space.[143] Larger newsrooms, including at the *New York Times*, were also attempting to modernize and expand their work space after the war, focusing on modifications to the copy desk. The *Times*, with a "specially designed city desk," was hoping "to help speed the orderly flow of news copy."[144]

The copy desk in the 1950s and beyond

Efforts to streamline copy processing and publication continued into the early 1950s. At the *Sacramento Bee*, a partial renovation of the newsroom, originally built in 1922, involved the installation of a new, centrally-located (and octagonal in shape) "universal copy desk" to speed the "flow of copy."[145] The *Bee* later installed a "double-horseshoe" copy desk.[146] The Philadelphia *Inquirer* provided more spacious desk spaces (instead of the traditional wood, or

[143] "New layout eases confabs, copy flow," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 28, 1948, 10.
[144] "The *New York Times*: 'All the News That's Fit to Print,'" *Editor & Publisher*, March 20, 1948, 4; part of a series of ads the Times had taken out in the trade publication showcasing its physical space and work force, often one and the same. An ad from the Aug. 25, 1951 issue of *E&P*, "Why so many men just to edit copy?" also showed off the *Times*' commitment to accuracy.
[145] "Octagon-shape universal desk cuts congestion," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 21, 1950, 27.
[146] "Sacramento, Calif., *Bee* copy desk," *Editor & Publisher*, July 5, 1952.

metal, they were "hard-finished plastic in a shade of soft, gray green").[147] Centralizing efforts continued, moving copy desks closer and ever more in line with the city editor and rewrite battery, as was the case at the *Los Angeles Examiner*.[148] Similar efforts took place at the *Miami News* and the headquarters of Fort Wayne Newspapers, Inc.[149]

Moving beyond relocations of the desk, there were other attempts during this decade to rethink the role of the desk more holistically. The *Chicago Tribune* attempted to systematize its copy desk by encouraging better coordination with the local, telegraph and cable desks, assigning teams of rewrite and copy staff to each. "Slot men" for each team could decide more proactively how to fill the news hole.[150] The 1950s also brought a renewed focused on systematic training for copy editors. During the war, and the more frugal Depression years, training had largely occurred on the job. But the increasing numbers of college graduates with journalism training in the newsroom had begun to change how copy editors were trained. Internal training programs at newspapers flourished, especially for reporters and copy boys and girls. Accreditation efforts for college programs emphasized how the reporter and copy editor, in particular, were benefiting from a more standardized curriculum.[151]

The shift from self-taught and ad-hoc training to college and internships as the preferred routes into the newsroom meant that the traditional pathway for copy editors faced changes, too. One program at the *Detroit Free Press* involved up to three and a half years of training on the copy desk. While designed for copy boys, whose Guild contract guaranteed them a trial

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[147] "*Phila. Inquirer* news facilities on one floor," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 13, 1952, 13.
[148] "Ex-back shop now city room," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 22, 1956, 67.
[149] "Efficiency high in streamlined *Miami News* plant," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 9, 1958, 43-44; "Here are 'inside' stories . . . from new newspaper buildings," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 3, 1959, 14-15.
[150] George Brandenburg, "At *Chicago Tribune*: news hole is filled by percentage system," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 26, 1952.
[151] Carl Kesler, "Education for journalism," *The Quill,* May 1951, 3.

period on the editorial side of the paper, it was also intended to better integrate new hires into the newsroom workforce.[152] Journalism schools, in a parallel move, pushed more robust courses to prepare students for work on the copy desk.[153] Some editors were also interested in training reporters as back-up copy editors. There was some pushback from the Guild for this plan, because reclassification of reporters as copy editors reduced overtime pay.[154]

New technology, including improved teletypesetters, prompted further anxiety about the future of the copy desk. But another reaction was to encourage journalism students to pursue copy-editing skills to bolster a back-up career path.[155] Especially during the Depression, working on the copy desk had been considered more secure than reporting.[156] Now that reporters who had pursued just such a path were reaching the peak of their careers, their advice percolated down to new staff members.

In the meantime, the tensions "between slot and rim," observed G. Norman Collie, a "slotman" at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, could be mitigated. Slot men were picked for promotion because they had the copy-editing and headline-writing skills needed, as well as "the patience of a Cub Scout den mother, the sympathetic tin ear of a bartender, the flintiness of a drill instructor, the partiality of an octopus, and the jaundiced eye of a deserted wife." Training copy editors was akin to teaching skills in other occupations: "Like other trades—laying bricks, pulling

[152] "*Detroit Free Press* tests editorial apprentice plan," *Editor & Publisher*, March 20, 1948.
[153] Dwight Bentel, "Journalism education: ACEJ names four-man advisory committee," *Editor & Publisher*, March 22, 1952, 34.
[154] "Panel on news and editorial costs," American Society of Newspaper Editors, *Problems of Journalism*, April 18, 1953, 173; Edward T. Stone, an editor at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, elaborated: "This plan took a lot of doing because our news editor goes on the theory that the local and news desks are separate empires that should never communicate except under the most formal circumstances like exchanging ambassadors or something." The Guild local also did not like the plan and was preparing to oppose it during negotiations, because "any time you monkey with the opportunity for overtime gravy you're headed for trouble."
[155] Robert U. Brown, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 13, 1952, 80. Brown added: "We've already eliminated most of the time-honored workers in the newspaper vineyard, as related above. All we need are one or two more automatic devices."
[156] "What to do?" *The Quill*, October 1931, 10.

teeth, delivering babies—copy reading can be taught any reasonably literate man of average intelligence. (Women, for some reason I haven't discovered, rarely make the grade)."[157] The latter observation was not uncommon, as women still faced challenges getting hired and remaining on the copy desk.

The social and occupational standing of the copy editor had reached a new, more white-collar status in the newsroom. Carl Kesler, editor of Sigma Delta Chi's *Quill*, and a former copy editor himself, said that "nowadays he is listened to with respect even by city editors. He is invited to press parties along with reporters just like a regular newspaperman." Paid better, and sometimes the most powerful among their near peers and with their value now more publicly praised, copy readers remained a vital part of the newsroom's relational ecosystem.[158] Part of this status was signaled by a move to call "copyreaders" (an older term) "copy editors." And since "headlines never have bylines," one contemporary believed that these editors deserved to be "made to feel they are part of the team."[159]

Reflections on the culture of the copy desk

Some in the newsroom complained about the old, pervasive idea "that the copy desk is a place of apprentices and pensioners." The copy desk had grown up, and deserved respect, and had come from being a place "where non-committal heads were written and guide signs put on for the printer" to "the ultimate test of efficiency in handling of copy."[160] Over the

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[157] G. Norman Collie, "Letters: a slot man talks back," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 4, 1958, 7.
[158] Carl Kesler, "A copyreader is also an editor," *The Quill,* August 1950, 3.
[159] Merritt L. Johnson, "Memo to editors: A good copyreader is a bargain," *The Quill*, November 1952, 12; Johnson, a former copy editor for the Chicago *Daily News*, described the still- "ancient, beat-up, inefficient, cigarette burned copy desks, and all the old-fashioned, hard, uncomfortable, unadjustable chairs that copy editors are chained to all day," 24.
[160] Irving Brant, "Where are the copy readers of tomorrow?" *Editor & Publisher*, June 19, 1920, 5.

decades, copy editors were known for their mobility, or restlessness. An anonymous writer at "one of the largest copy desks in the country," commenting on the work culture of the copy desk in 1922, observed that the "genius copy-reader . . . is the original rolling stone, at least until it attains middle age and a thin mossiness or state of vegetation." The desire to travel, soak up "large smatterings of varied knowledge," combined with the pressure of the work and the tendency of copy editors to get overworked, helped to "enslave a young brain to his green eyeshade."[161] Being "nervous but mercurial" (both qualities, the writer assures us, of a good copy editor), a copy editor had to be managed carefully by a copy chief.

Between shifts, or during lulls during their shifts, copy editors socialized with one another, and tended to spend time with each other rather than other news-worker groups in the newsroom. Ritualized teasing seemed to be built into copy-desk culture, at least on some newspapers.[162] Complaining about reporters' copy was a more outward-focused activity.[163] In addition to reading the paper, writing books or working on articles for other parts of the paper during these breaks, copy editors would play games.[164] One such game was noted by Joe K. Schmidt, the state editor of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in 1931. It involved a headline-finishing, "ask-me-another" quiz that was popular on his paper's copy desk "during the long morning hours when they are not busy."[165] Others would play practical jokes. The summer weather inspired just such a prank in the newsroom of the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* on a hot July day in

[161] "Solving the problem of keeping the copy-desk in order," *Editor & Publisher*, April 29, 1922, 62.
[162] "Horace in the slot: ode to & for copy desks," *Editor & Publisher*, July 3, 1953, 4.
[163] Richard R. Ryan, "Disillusioned copy editor poses the question, 'why can't Johnny write?'" *The Quill*, July 1957, 15-6; Ryan was a veteran copy editor working for the Corpus Christi *Caller-Times*.
[164] Warren Breed, "Newspaper 'Opinion Leaders' and Processes of Standardization," 280-1; Breed noted the newspaper reading, speculating that it might "'look better' to be seen reading than to be merely sitting," and that reading "probably fills certain needs of relaxation and a sense of adequacy.
[165] "New copy desk game invented in Cleveland," *Editor & Publisher*, May 23, 1931, 47.

1946. Charles Wheeler, the paper's makeup editor, yelled from the composing room to 'Send up some shorts!' The "Slot Man," Clarence Grundish, "rummaged in a desk and came up triumphantly with a pair of men's shorts, which he stuffed into the copy tube," and launched it back to the startled Wheeler.[166] Chicago's extensive "'underground railway'" of the City Press' 15 miles of pneumatic tubes, linking the AP, *Chicago American*, *Chicago Daily News*, *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Chicago Tribune* carried up to 268,291 separate pieces of material each year, including pictures, news releases and other messages, often to copy desks. Among them, even into the 1950s, were mice, felt hats and billiard balls that arrived, along with less-humorous copy, with a whoosh and a bang.[167]

Even when they had been moved to other, sometimes equally well-regarded parts of the newsroom, some copy editors missed their work. A want ad in *Editor & Publisher* in September 1942 emphasized how a rewrite man, "homesick" for the copy desk, "yearns for a return to pencils, shears, paste pot, cuspidor."[168] Outsiders' perceptions of copy editors could be seen in a 1955 cartoon. A socialite, commenting on a copy desk's inhabitants, remarked that "Not one of these people is wearing a green eye-shade!"[169] Another cartoon showed how packed a copy desk could get.[170]

[166] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1946, 26.
[167] Eddie Kitch, "Chicago news has its own subway: Pneumatic tubes from newsroom to composing room are common. The City Press newspapers is unique," *The Quill*, January 1954.
[168] "Situations wanted: editorial," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 12, 1942, 48.
[169] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, March 19, 1955, 46.
[170] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 21, 1957, 124.

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Conclusion: a changing newsroom of near-peers

All mutual teasing aside, the copy desk had changed. Less wild and woolly, and separated from the rewrite and local desk, it was staffed by a different, more mellow and stable group of news workers.[172] Copy editing had become more attractive to reporters over time as a career option. As noted above, by the 1950s, copy editors were generally younger, trained specifically for the job, and drawn from the ranks of reporters. More openness characterized

[171] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 21, 1957, 124.

[172] George Kennedy, "Copy readers are young and copy boys are older," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 20, 1960, 60-1. Kennedy, a "columnist and writer of 'The Rambler' for the *Washington Star*, was thinking back to life in the newsroom c. the 1920s.

copy editors' perspective toward reporters' creative copy. In turn, copy editors felt more respect from reporters, at least on some newspapers. Differences in attitude and skillsets remained, however.[173]

In some cases, the copy desk was more open to women, and younger reporters, by the end of the decade. Advancement could come quicker, too.[174] Copy editors were encouraged to become experts in a field.[175] They were recognized for their newsroom achievements more often, and participated in in-house refresher training programs.[176] While still senior as a near-peer to the reporter, they were also more able to work together as part of a newsroom team. The period from 1920 to 1960 witnessed the rise of an ever-more industrialized newsroom, as reporting technology and unionization made the space (and the work tasks within and without) more stratified. Groups of news workers tended to work best within their unique work routines. The sum of these—the production of the daily editions at a newspaper—defined the American newsroom's occupational culture. But even as unionization in particular clarified work roles for news workers after the 1930s, there was an increasing emphasis on teamwork among "near peers." While still distinct, they thought of themselves as more on par with one another, especially as related to the centering figure of the reporter (and variations thereof). The ranks of rewrite staff and copy editors were increasingly drawn from frontline reporters, and vice-versa. Copy boys and girls increasingly went to college, were better trained and better paid, and

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[173] Charles C. Clayton, "The writer's best friend," *The Quill*, August 1957, 6; Clayton succeeded Carl Kesler as editor of *The Quill*.
[174] John Stevens, "J-grad discovers copy desk is not a dead end job," *The Quill*, February 1959, 15. Stevens was a reporter and former copy editor for the *Indianapolis Star*; He elaborates: "Sometimes the copy desk is viewed as a sort of limbo to which those who couldn't quite make the grade as top reporters are banished. This seldom is the case; most copy readers are there because that is where they prefer. The majority have been reporters, but they are on the copy desk of their own choosing."
[175] Charles C. Clayton, "Age of specialists," *The Quill*, September 1959, 7.
[176] Donald Janson, "Everybody in the act: news awards for enterprise," *The Quill*, December 1959, 9-10; George E. Simmons, "Serendipity of summer internships," *Journalism Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1956): pp. 517-20; "The super-copyreader becomes an editor with a title and managerial ability, but not necessarily a managing editor of a newspaper," 518.

given a more direct pipeline to the newsroom workforce. Photographers, once considered second-class newsroom citizens, became more important to news coverage as radio and TV emerged as real rivals for newspapers, and as their own ranks became better educated and cross-trained as reporters.

The American newsroom of the late 1950s was, if anything, as differentiated as it ever would be. But between the effects of the ANG on newsroom organization, college (and also journalism education within college) as a more common route to news work and a set of reporting technologies that linked news workers to one another, among the near-peers of the newsroom, there was a strong sense of solidarity and group identity that cut across differences in routines, tasks and objectives. News workers still had their cliques, of course, and as will be explored in the next chapter among reporters, these could strongly influence the course of one's career in the newsroom, as well as one's daily working life.

Chapter 4

Reporters and their junior peers: sharing routines, careers and status in the newsroom

Among the various groups in the newsroom workforce, the large pool of reporters was marked by an intense degree of stratification and diversity of both agency and ability. Ranging from the humble cub, only recently lifted out of the hopeful but even lowlier office-support role and routine of the copy boy or girl, to the exalted and powerful columnist (and his or her more faraway cousin, the correspondent), reporters were "peers" in that they all gathered or created content for the newspaper and found themselves enmeshed in a newsroom hierarchy over which they had minimal managerial control. How they cooperated and competed with one another, negotiated differences in age, gender, race, experience, education and political belief, and formed their own internal working routines and culture, will be the subject of the next two chapters. More junior reporters (cubs, leg men and general-assignment reporters) will be examined first. More senior reporters (beat reporters, specialists, columnists and editorial writers) will be surveyed separately.

Robert Darnton, the eminent historian of eighteenth-century France, reflected on his experiences at the *Newark Star Ledger* and the *New York Times* as a young reporter from 1959 to 1964.[1] He describes an intricate newsroom culture, especially at the latter. While no

[1] Robert Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," *Daedalus* 104, 2 (1975): 175-194; while he also discusses the relationships between editors and reporters at some length, his observations on that set of interactions will appear in the chapter on supervisors in the newsroom.

newsroom was (or is) exactly like another, his experiences in the newsroom of the *Times* are illustrative of how reporters created and sustained the newsroom as a space for both work and socialization. As Darnton recreates it, the newsroom had a distinct power structure. This was determined by spatial proximity to the managing and section editors:

> At the other end, row upon row of reporters' desks face the editors across the fence. They fall into four sections. First, a few rows of star reporters led by luminaries like Homer Bigart, Peter Kihss, and McCandlish Phillips. . . . Next, a spread of middle-aged veterans, men who made their names and can be trusted with any story. And finally, a herd of young men on the make in the back of the room, the youngest generally occupying the remotest positions.[2]

Function could determine where certain departments were located, such as sports, shipping news, “culture” and “society.” News routines and workflows determined where copy editors and rewrite staff were located in key clusters throughout the space. But how reporters were grouped together was another matter. To a newsroom newcomer, status stood “out as clearly as a banner headline.” Editors could classify and organize their reporters, but staffers were less clear about where they stood, exactly, in their editor’s estimation. There were hints, though. Performance on individual story assignments helped to determine how fast a reporter advanced. A reporter who did well could literally “move up to a desk nearer the editor’s end of the room, while a man who constantly bungles stories will stagnate in his present position or will be exiled” to coverage of the outer boroughs of the city. The placement and play of stories in the newspaper’s daily editions operated like a social “map, which reporters learn to read and to compare with their own mental map of the city room in an attempt to know where they stand and where they are headed.”[3]

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[2] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 176-77.
[3] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 177.

Since the *Times* gave out bylines fairly regularly by the early 1960s, reporters measured the movements of this status map through compliments from peers and editors. If they came from someone with "prestige," such as the hard-to-please night city editor, the aloof newsroom "star" reporters, or the "most talented reporters in one's territory," they carried extra weight. Supervisors could also mete out public praise, private notes, lunches, or even cash prizes (via the publisher). Internally, reporters, including those of the same nominal rank, formed their own social sub-groups, which helped to "mitigate competitiveness and insecurity." Organized around age, gender, experience and socioeconomic status, these groups would eat and drink together, befriend one another's families, and consult and aid one another on challenging stories. A reporter's colleague-friend circle was just another layer in a complicated social-work milieu.[4]

Darnton adds that "inter-paper peers"—colleagues from rival news services and newspapers—could be added to an outer ring of influences on a young reporter. The influence of these external peers—efforts to work with them, mimic their career moves, or switch to their publications—was strong. After having made "tenure," or having been "made staff," at a home paper, a reporter could move laterally across peer news organizations if he or she had gained enough status.[5] Moving up was harder, and involved a delicate balance of staying within one's peer group and eventually weighing if the leap to the management side was worth the sacrifices along the way.

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[4] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 177, 180.
[5] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 184-5.

For reporters, working closely with their peers provided the ultimate "occupational socialization." Even editors were constrained by it, as reporters learned the social mores of their newsrooms from each other. Beyond the practicalities of learning beats and boundaries, they gauged how to talk to each other, to sources, and to supervisors, largely from listening, starting as copy boys.[6] This process continued throughout a reporter's career. It did not end when a reporter's cub days were over. Reporters idealized those who had come before them long into their own careers, telling stories to each other of reportorial exploits and victories over deadlines, cranky editors or obstinate sources. From their first days in the newsroom:

> By listening to shop talk and observing behavior patterns, they assimilate an ethos: unflappability, accuracy, speed, shrewdness, toughness, earthiness, and hustle. Reporters seem somewhat cynical about themselves. They speak of the 'shoe-leather man' as if he were the only honest and intelligent person in a world of rogues and fools.[7]

This mythos of the "trench coat" reporter, standing with only a few friends against a crazy world, was powerful and motivating. Because they had "to win their status anew each day as they expose themselves before their peers in print," Darnton recalled, reporters defined their work and their success in relation to peers, in this space.[8] In the outside world, these appraisals carried less weight. But in the newsroom, they could make or break careers.

Cub reporters

Cub reporters were barely on the news-gathering continuum of influence and power. While they could sometimes do the work of a more seasoned reporter in an emergency, either

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[6] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 184-5. For example, "He acquires the tone of the newsroom by listening. Slowly he learns to sound like a New Yorker, to speak more loudly, to use reporter's slant, and to increase the proportion of swear words in his speech. These techniques ease communication with colleagues and with news sources. It is difficult, for example, to get much out of a telephone conversation with a police lieutenant unless you know how to place your mouth close to the receiver and shout obscenities.
[7] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 187.
[8] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 176.

by themselves or supervised, the cub was often given assignments that did not "require the exercise of advanced skill."[9] They instead did background reporting work for other reporters, including copying such prosaic material as marriage and death records, court dockets and police blotters. They wrote obituaries and ran errands. When they were trusted with more independent work, they were often assigned to a not-as-important police station, a lower court or other local institution of importance to a paper's news-gathering net but not critically so.[10] The role and identity of a cub reporter could vary greatly. At the largest daily newspapers, they would have a proportionally smaller degree of control over the kinds of reporting work they could do. They could be assigned as district reporters, with a certain geographic area of a city to cover in what was essentially the role of a junior "leg man," but with more contact with the newsroom. A cub's exposure to the city and its "cosmopolitan community" was considered a crucial part of his or her training. Alternatively, and ideally, a cub was paired with a more senior reporter, so the former could observe up close as the latter did their work.[11]

Career path: starting out—first newsroom experiences

Even if they were inexperienced, "the line of demarcation between the cub and the senior" was considered "very thin or even nonexistent," crossed silently and gradually over time. Reflecting on his experiences, a former Chicago cub reporter said that "an uncomfortable period of apprenticeship, of adjustment to the, at first, bewildering variety which confronts the newcomer," was just part of the process. Enduring "waiting idleness" that came from sitting in a "city room chair for the duration of my working shift," he was eventually caught "by the coat

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[9] Elias E. Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism* (New York: Vocational Guidance Manuals, Grosset & Dunlap, 1951), 40.
[10] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism,* 40.
[11] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 40.

sleeve" by older reporters on the way out the door. They proceeded "to whirl me to the scene of a news story and keep me there in feverish activity for 24 hours."[12] Only "day by day" in the midst of such experiences could a cub graduate from apprentice, meriting more meaningful, interesting or otherwise career-enhancing assignments.[13] Small pay increases and more trust in his or her ability to pursue leads and develop a story (or react quickly and thoroughly to breaking-news stories) meant that "one day he awaken[s] and find[s] out that he is no longer a cub." Especially before the Guild helped to standardize pay, that transition could be subtle and was not formalized. But even later, it would take the unspoken affirmation of being called by one's first name for the first time, or of being given a special task by "the boss," that would clearly signal the unofficial move up from cub-dom.[14]

Morton Sontheimer, a former copy boy and reporter on the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, noted in 1941 that new reporters could sometimes go for a full day without lunch when they first showed up for work.[15] Shunted from desk to desk until they found themselves at the edge of the newsroom, they longed for the purposeful gaze of the city editor, but were sometimes ignored for hours at a time.[16] This "blisters on the buttocks" period could last for a day or several days, depending on how large a staff was and how much potential a new reporter had for fitting into an editor's existing schema for classifying his or her reporters. Occasionally, a managing editor would dispatch cub reporters on trivial errands, just to get them out of the office, because they were in "eternal dread of the [senior] editor walking in, seeing men sitting

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[12] John Dreiske, "Now that I've lost my job—should I try to find work on another newspaper or chuck the business and enter another field?" *The Quill*, October 1932, 5, 9.
[13] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 41.
[14] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 41.
[15] He references working for this newspaper in his second chapter, see 30.
[16] Morton Sontheimer, *Newspaperman, A Book About the Business*, (New York: Whittlesey House, 1941), 4.

around doing nothing, and being struck with a notion to cut down the staff."[17] It was possible to put this "blister time" to good use, learning the city's geography, people and sources of news. Practicing conversations with strangers in unfamiliar parts of town was "as important to a newspaperman as training to a surgeon."[18]

The "easy informality of the office," which was "unlike any other business place," was full of coatless, smoking, gambling, and spitting men, "gabbing gadding and griping," some with feet on their desks. Cubs would benefit by embracing it, soaking up newsroom banter over the course of an afternoon.[19] The atmosphere had the effect of warming an "awestruck youngster's heart," even if there were odd little unwritten rules one should not trespass, like no whistling in the newsroom: "try it, and dirty looks will be the least of what's thrown at you."[20] Because these kinds of guidelines were not written down, newsrooms could confound their new inhabitants, but not for long.

Among a cub's first assignments would be overnight rewrite duty. The writing of shorts, "peewees," or briefs, as they were variously called, allowed a reporter to practice writing tightly and simply. Attempts at being clever or "fancy" would expose one as a "callow" cub. Instead, humbly accepting the fact that copy would be cut down and rewritten was important. Because they did not yet know newsroom norms, cubs' copy was particularly susceptible to the rewrite desk's honing pressure. Sontheimer counseled, however, that higher quality papers had

[17] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 5.
[18] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 8.
[19] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 9-10.
[20] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 10.

aggressive rewrite desks, and that a reporter who bragged about not having his or her material rewritten was either a "temperamental prima donna" or worked for a flawed paper.[21]

Cubs should ask the city editor what was wrong with their writing if, after several weeks, their material was being rewritten constantly. An experienced editor would try to help a cub improve, realizing that most needed some kind of training in writing. There were rewards in the midst of this indoctrination. The joy of seeing one's first story, no matter how much it was modified, was "one of the unparalleled sensations of the newspaper business. It lifts your feet right off the ground. It gives you an incomparable feeling of importance. It is a hypodermic shot in the ego."[22] A second thrill would come with getting a desk, complete with "spacious drawers in which you neatly place copy paper, carbons, pencils and a pipe and tobacco you brought down from home to help you fill up." After a few months, they would be "crammed with assorted notes, pictures, clippings and gadgets . . . great gobs of stuff will spring out like jack-in-a-boxes every time you open one quickly." But it was not all elation. Discouragement was part of the cub's lot during the "breaking-in period," and the temptation was strong to "lay down on the job" and not work hard. Lasting as little as a few months, or as long as a couple of years, a good "breaking-in" was considered essential.[23] Sontheimer advised against becoming consumed with office intrigue during this initial phase, and recommended instead working hard and eschewing as much office politics as possible.[24]

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[21] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 10-11.
[22] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 11.
[23] "What to do?" *The Quill*, October 1931, 10. Sometimes a cub was called an "apprentice," at least in older conceptions of the position; see "'St. Louis Plan' may be solution of writers' discontent," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 18, 1919, 74.
[24] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 12-13.

New cubs were closely watched by other, older reporters during their first few weeks. These "friendly, but clannish" reporters gradually opened up to and began to like the beginner usually after the latter had shown that he or she could handle the work and be trusted.[25] Socialization started earlier, from the moment a cub walked in the door. A "surly old receptionist" might give the cub a "ga, morning." Older reporters might pull the cub into a huddle where in hushed tones (or shouts) they shared their "ceaselessly variable likes and dislikes toward the deskmen, always in proportion to the yield of their assignments." The "tribal spirit" of reporters burned brightly throughout big newsrooms and little ones alike, or in newsroom outposts like a police precinct's press room.[26]

Taking each task seriously, moving quickly instead of ambling the way a "star reporter lopes out of the office on a big assignment," checking in explicitly with your first few details once on the scene (to lower editors' expectations), following the custom of the paper when it came to expense accounts (where to be frugal, or when to "pad") and voraciously consuming the news—these survival strategies could make life for the cub easier during his or her first few months.[27] A cub would also benefit from exploring the paper's various departments outside of the newsroom. In the composing room, among the engravers, riding along with a circulation manager or chatting with the advertising staff, a cub could ask questions more freely. The former groups would be just as ignorant of the cub's work as he or she would be of theirs, and

[25] Thomas P. O'Hara, "The Cub," in in Joseph G. Herzberg, *Late City Edition* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), 14-15, 20-21.
[26] Thomas P. O'Hara, "The Cub," in in Joseph G. Herzberg, *Late City Edition* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), 14-15, 20-21.
[27] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 14, 16, 17

most would be happy to show off their jobs.[28] But each newsroom's internal culture was different, with some more prone to office gossip and politics than others. "Therefore a young man may feel lost on one paper, and immediately find himself on another."[29]

More college graduates (and graduates of journalism programs) entering the field by the mid-1930s helped to change the nature of the cub experience. Stanley Walker, reflecting on the influence of higher education from his perspective as the former city editor of the *New York World*, believed that "the fledglings often flabbergast their elders with their erudition—a scholarly but lovely sense of words . . . such a man is likely to outstrip the reporter of the old school in a few years . . . if his legs are good, he can make the older man appear ridiculous." The average older reporter was an "outworn champion pugilist."[30]

The appreciative, inquisitive, absorbing cub would that "find, for all the occasional dreary interludes he has been plumped down in the midst of the liveliest and most amusing of worlds."[31] The newsroom was:

> like attending some fabulous university where the humanities are [studied] to the accompaniment of ribald laughter, the incessant splutter of an orchestra of typewriters, the occasional clinking of glasses and the gyrations of some of the strangest performers ever set loose by a capricious and allegedly all-wise Creator. The faculty at this fount of knowledge is so grotesque that the young man may be puzzled by the presence of mummified but helpful gnomes, slinking or boisterous yes-men, and thwarted desk-thumpers . . . he is being paid—not much, but something—for attending this place which his part seminary, part abattoir.[32]

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[28] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 20, 21. "You'll find the men in the other departments a lot of surprisingly good fellows, from the tough-looking mugs in the circulation department to the shyly pleasant ad solicitor, who always makes the sage observation to you, as he walks through the city room when all hell has broken loose, 'lots of excitement today, huh?"

[29] Stanley Walker, *City Editor* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, Inc., 1934), 218.

[30] Walker, *City Editor*, 40, 41. Other qualities valued by Walker: "a sound background in history and economics, the ability translate or even speak two or three foreign languages, a comprehensive knowledge of literature, and sometimes definite expertness in art and music."

[31] Walker, *City Editor*, 41.

[32] Walker, *City Editor*, 41.

Cubs endured drudgery. But it was for a reason, according to newsroom tradition. Through the "searching for details of the most picayune sort," hunting down names, attending mundane meetings in the hopes news was present, he had to learn to make mistakes ("at least ten . . . in a ten-line obituary"), in order to learn how to report news and work with sources. These "million boring things that go to make up professional technique" would come only with time.[33]

Career path: making it—bylines for the youngest reporters

Promising cubs could be rewarded with bylines. Internally, their use became more common between 1920 and 1960. For much of that era, bylines were still thought of as a rewards for good stories, or hard work, sometimes in lieu of monetary compensation. But some felt that the more common use of bylines, especially for cubs, by the 1950s had lessened their value, and not all reporters wanted them.[34] But they were still coveted by most. One reporter described the emotional rush of seeing his first byline. Reading the story over and over again, and rushing any corrections back to the desk, he "quickly glances around to see if anyone else has discovered it yet." But it is one's peers (and immediate boss) who help to solidify the experience:

> A while later, when the first-string rewrite man passes by and says, 'that's a good yarn you got in on the goatherd,' you can see him swell. He [the cub] replies with a quivering attempt at casualness, 'ah, it didn't turn out the way I wanted it to, but thanks Jim.' When the city editor passes a moment later and crackles, 'Nice story, McGurk,' he almost pops.[35]

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[33] Walker, *City Editor*, 43.
[34] Roy H. Copperud, *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 11, 1956, 2; discussions about the use of bylines as an indication of status, or the rewarding of bylines by editors as a demonstration of their power over reporters, are scattered throughout the trade journals of the time.
[35] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 172.

This process "will be repeated with each byline, until . . . they become so commonplace you're not even bothered by your name being misspelled." But the bylining experience could also be frustrating. Bylines could be awarded and then taken away, or hinted at but never given.[36]

Awarding bylines had an arbitrary and irregular quality to it throughout the period, even if other parts of a cub's work life improved.[37] The language describing them in memoirs and the trade literature is telling. Reporters generally felt they had to "earn" their bylines, and they were not commonly used until the late 1950s and after. They were also governed by norms that varied from paper to paper. Some general themes emerge, though. Sontheimer said that "all newspapermen belittle bylines, but they all like them." One should never ask for them, however, since it "cheapens you in the eyes of the city editor," and causes resentment for "putting him on the spot to do it." Writing first-person stories, a relatively rare form, was another way to *not* get a byline, unless specifically ordered by an editor. In order to get one, a reporter had to carefully "inject [his] own personality or opinions enough to make a byline almost necessary." But doing so "has to be very subtle and not too frequent, because the city desk [the general term for the copy desk in combination with senior editors] knows all about those tricks and has a special feeling for those who do it all the time."[38] Certain types of stories, including features, were more likely to be bylined.

Anxiety about their use revolved around the idea that too many bylines could dilute their value on readers, and with the newsroom staff, bylines were to be "considered a mark of

[36] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 173-4. Recalling his own first brush with a byline, as a young reporter at the *New York Telegram*, Sontheimer wrote a colorful obit and was begrudgingly given a byline for it by an editor, only to have it taken away when it was discovered the wrong body had been identified.
[37] This can be seen most visibly in the higher and more regularized salaries of the period, as Guild advocacy helped to make the working lives of many reporters better—even for those not in the Guild.
[38] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 174.

distinction on a story." They did not always reflect reality, especially for rewrite staffers, who often wrote under the names of the reporters who had initially phoned in stories. Editors also sometimes directed the use of a reporter's name on a story if he or she had become identified with it, even if they did not actually contribute to its latest version or update. This was done with wire-service copy on behalf of a star correspondent or reporter.[39]

Too many bylines by the same reporter could give a newspaper a "rube appearance by making it seem that it has such a limited staff the members have to do more work than they can adequately cover." Editors sometimes did not like giving out bylines in abundance because reporters could develop an independent identity and ask for more money if a rival paper wanted to draw them away. Reporters, however, continued to believe that bylines were a "reward for good work" and felt that they inspired better writing, signaling to readers that a story was authored by someone with authority (since they thought that "all byline writers [were] expensive"). This, many reporters thought, built "up good will for the paper, giving the reader a feeling of acquaintance with the staff." This latter benefit could be enhanced by giving the reporter the same kinds of assignments with a consistent byline, and describing him or her as a "staff writer, political editor or whatever title he [or she] may have."[40]

Work routines: newsroom humor and advanced indoctrination[41]

New as they were to an eccentric work space, where a creative product had to be produced according to a schedule-driven routine, cubs were known for their enthusiasm and willingness to learn. Humor helped make the steep learning curve less intimidating. While a

[39] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 175.
[40] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 176-7.
[41] For more on newsroom humor, see Appendix B.

newsroom needed to be "operated as efficiently as the peculiar nature of the materials will permit," it also needed, "if it has any life . . . [to be] at times a pasture where salty, jocose spirits lift their hooves and bray."[42] That room for humor often expressed itself at a cub's expense.

Hazing was a fact of life for cub reporters and other newsroom newbies. Unless a newsroom was understaffed and faced extraordinary pressure, gags were a part of the routine, especially after "a very slow day, when everyone's sitting around doing nothing, or at the end of a day of high tension and hard work, when everyone feels let down and a little bit hysterical." As "one of the foremost pastimes of the older members of the staff," teasing, ribbing and horseplay socialized a beginner. The newer you were, the more you would be exposed to it, and the more gullible one was, the longer it lasted.[43] But reporters felt that an element of surprise was crucial: "the best ribbing is spontaneous and not repetitious," one explained.

Taking advantage of a cub's rawness, an editor (or older reporter) would send a cub on a snipe hunt to find non-existent newsroom tools. In one such hazing ritual, a cub would be taken to a composing room, and told to examine the open space between the type in a page form for "type lice," before the type was shoved together and the water splayed the victim's face.[44] Other, more elaborate pranks included making a cub believe someone was a movie star when they were not, and going so far as to concoct fake stories that forced credulous cubs to hunt down leads and quotes from sources—with some of these actually in on the joke, and playing along.[45] These extended gags fostered newsroom comradery and a team ethos by involving everyone.

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[42] Walker, *City Editor*, 42.
[43] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 22, 25.
[44] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 23. This was acknowledged as a bit "crude."
[45] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 23-27.

For their part, senior editors often looked the other way or even approved of the hazing. There were limits, however, especially when newsroom targeted supervisors. Sontheimer relates one egregious newsroom April Fools' Day prank. A managing editor was led to believe that a newspaper had won a Pulitzer Prize. The editor-in-chief was told and a story ordered. By the time the hoax was revealed, it was decidedly not funny. The prank had been at the expense of those in power, in the newsroom hierarchy, and was thus less successful. Along these lines, reporters often enjoyed more cerebral jokes versus the practical kind, but there were exceptions. They tended to value spontaneity, and could be borderline cruel, though most were not meant to be so. Readers, especially those who called late at night to settle arguments, could also fall victim to jokes.[46] Mostly, though, in-house humor was just that—internal.

Cartoons drawn by sympathetic observers also used the gullibility of cubs as important plot elements.[47] One common trope was the cub's initial lack of knowledge about the wider world, and especially the newsroom's world.[48] Cubs could be "as ignorant of craft terminology as is a finishing school graduate of ancient Sanskrit slang." In one common tale, a cub would be sent out to gather facts for an obituary (writing them was a typical cub task) only to return to an impatient editor, explaining that there was no story because "there was a death in the family." A variation on this involved a cub being assigned to cover a wedding, only to return with the announcement that there was no news because the bride (or groom) had run away.[49] These showed how cubs had to learn news values.[50]

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[46] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 29, 30-31.
[47] C.W. Kahles, "Hairbreadth Harry, the Cub Reporter," *Editor & Publisher*, April 17, 1926, 4.
[48] "1935 World Almanac: Book of a million facts," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 12, 1935, 15.
[49] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 28, 1936, 16.
[50] "News values" is an important topic for journalism studies researchers; see, for example, Tony Harcup and Deirdre O'Neill, "What Is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited," *Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (2001): 261-80; or Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News : A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).

By the second and third decades of the twentieth century, the tradition of having reporters spend their first few months (or first few years) as "cubs" had been firmly established. Older news workers celebrated the "quenchless, unconquerable" zeal of a young reporter. The "days of his cubdom" would last until "he puts over a story, covered as news should be covered, written as news should be written," and proven himself.[51] A "good cub" was praised by older reporters if he or she endured many small, unimportant jobs, after which growth would come "if he is not fired too often and too seriously."[52] Some pioneers recognized relatively early on that young women, even in an intensely male-dominated field, should get the chance to work as cub reporters.[53] Ironically, and sadly, according to Carol Bird, a reporter and feature writer for the *Detroit Free Press*, the youngest male cub reporter would sometimes resent receiving assignments from a woman editor, necessitating "an amount of finesse in dealing with him that no man editor would need."[54] The same kinds of challenges that copy girls faced were faced by women cub reporters. Editors unwilling to take a chance on them, a lack of sustained recruitment of copy girls into cub-reporter positions and the slow cultural acceptance of women reporters slowed the integration of younger women. But the war altered the situation by weakening resistance to women in the newsroom.[55]

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[51] Steuart M. Emery, "The Cub Spirit," *Editor & Publisher*, March 25, 1922, 8.
[52] Steuart M. Emery, "The Cub Spirit," *Editor & Publisher*, March 25, 1922, 8.
[53] Mildred Philips, "Forum of female fraternity of Fourth Estaters," *Editor & Publisher*, May 28, 1921, 301.
[54] "Declares organization is needed among editorial workers," *Editor & Publisher*, June 5, 1919, 20, 37; Carol Bird, a "newswoman and feature writer" with the *Detroit Free Press*, gave a talk called, "What newspaper work is a woman best fitted for?" In it, she advocated for what she called "regulars," or "the girls who really are news-women," arguing that women could handle certain stories, especially those involving human interest (as well as the sometimes difficult act of getting photos), better than men, that they were observant, and that they could be charming, just like men, calling it unfair the fact that men could get away with being "magnetic" while women who were similarly engaging were said to use "sex lure[s]" to get material for their stories.
[55] Newsrooms echoed as much as they pushed societal norms.

As they advanced (however slowly) in status, cub reporters faced further hurdles. They could annoy rewrite staff if they were not careful. As explored in the chapter on reporting technology, interactions over the phone between the members of the rewrite battery and younger reporters could be fraught with misunderstanding. One rewrite man groused that "they [cubs] are under the impression that a college education is a short cut to a byline." These "embryo journalists" needed more practical seasoning before they could be let loose in the newsroom, and the larger "hard cruel world of newspaperdom," he insisted.[56] College journalism instructors countered that their programs prepared cubs to get right to work: "the real achievement of the school was that it saved him from pestering the city editor . . . by drilling him [the cub] in alertness, terminology and practices."[57]

Cubs, explaining their experiences to peers, described acculturation to newsroom life as a profoundly transformative experience. A young reporter in Chicago, Phillip D. Jordan, reflecting on his experiences as a cub in 1923, noted that he was spoken of as "'one of the old boys,'" though he had only been there three years. Painting a picture of his fellow cubs, he described how they would work late, through the noise from the newspaper presses ("the rattling linotypes, the swishing Ludlows, and the proof presses").[58] Busy with tending to the telephones, or retrieving tobacco for older peers, Jordan remembered how "the squatty little city ed, who beat newspapering into me . . . kept me on my feet long after deadline and long, long after I should have been in bed."[59] A cub in this environment would change "in that subtle

[56] "Rewrite man sorrows for sins of the cubs," *The Quill*, March 1924, 12.
[57] "Training reporters schools' big task," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 1, 1932, 33; this thought is from Kenneth Stewart, a journalism instructor in Stanford's "Division of Journalism" within its School of Social Sciences.
[58] Phillip D. Jordan, "News room philosophy," *The Quill*, March 1926, 22.
[59] Phillip D. Jordan, "News room philosophy," *The Quill*, March 1926, 23.

manner that all newspaper men do. Without his knowing it, the deadline horror has brought lines into his face and the constant fear of a scoop has eaten into the complacency of his peace. Our cub is tasting the bitter details of his 'cubship.'"[60]

The use (or misuse) of newsroom terminology during the acculturation process, including references to the "bulldog" (or first) edition of a paper, could trip a cub up.[61] To help temper this naiveté, mentorship was crucial throughout the newsroom, but especially for cub reporters, argued a contemporary.[62] It was important to forgive cubs' antics, particularly when a "junior leg man" made mistakes. Giving cubs grace for even egregious mistakes (such as sleeping in and missing a shift) was an unofficial tradition.[63] But cubs did not escape censure for their failures. Verbal correction, sometimes quite vehement—the "bawling out" of memoir accounts and recollections found in trade publications—became part of journalistic culture, and another method of indoctrinating young reporters.

Newsroom life for cubs during the Depression

The Depression reduced newsroom mobility within and between newspapers. This meant that cubs fought for positions more than ever: with job opportunities so scarce, work as a new reporter was hard to come by and sustain. The arrival of Guild contracts did bring some job security, as discussed in the chapter on unionization. The status of cub reporters under the federal government's newspaper industry codes—mandated during first part of the Roosevelt

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[60] Phillip D. Jordan, "News room philosophy," *The Quill*, March 1926, 22.
[61] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 5, 1938, 18. In another typical telling, a young woman cub reporter, described as "A sweet young thing, who knew none of the terms or practices of a city room," was confused by an order to write up an interview "for the bulldog."
[62] Philip Schuyler, "Romances of American journalism: stories of success won by leaders of the press," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 13, 1928, 10; part of recurring series of profiles of well-known/successful figures in the newspaper industry; this one features George B. Parker, editor-in-chief of Scripps-Howard Newspapers.
[63] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 28, 1937, 20.

New Deal reforms—was recognized as unique, even as the length of time a reporter would remain a beginner was debated. Elisha Hanson, attorney for the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA), and a counsel for the Daily Newspaper Code Authority, argued that a cub should be defined as a newsroom "learner" under the code. How long that status lasted, "was purely a matter of the man's own ability. If he was good, he shortly would be advanced, and if not, he had better seek employment elsewhere."[64] The Guild argued that starting salaries for cubs and other entry-level reporters were too low.

Even in the midst of the Depression, there were attempts to standardize not just the pay but also the training of cub reporters. The Guild helped lead the way with some of these efforts. The Toledo, Ohio, ANG local arranged a once-a-week workshop with lectures and mentoring for beginner reporters working for the *Blade*, *News-Bee*, and *Times*.[65] College education for cubs was gradually becoming more common. While still scorned by older editors, some were increasingly in favor of it. As one put it in 1930, "the journalistic school cub knows more about the game . . . than the old-time cub could learn in a year."[66] The process of becoming "broken in" was still a matter of osmosis during the 1930s, however. The first few years on the job were about knowing "your business before expecting remuneration," and remained a personalized path. If you found a good editor, one writer advised, it made sense to stick with him for "the first couple of years."[67]

Newsroom life for cubs during the war

[64] James J. Butler, "Guild walks out of wage hearing," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 8, 1934, 33.
[65] "Toledo Guild schools trains cub reporters, *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1935, 41.
[66] O.O. McIntyre, "As they view it: in the United States," *The Quill*, October 1930, 2.
[67] Walter J. Pfister, "This word-weary, long suffering city editor prints a catechism for cubs: essential 16 years advice to new staff members points out pitfalls," *The Quill*, November 1940,

The same forces that influenced copy boys (and the arrival of copy girls) also influenced the ranks of cub reporters during the war. Many reporters found themselves doing similar work in the military, though some of their civilian newsroom experiences were not applicable. Waiting for sources, for example, the "time-wasting custom only practiced by cubs," still happened in the military, even if these sources could be superior officers. But unlike the civilian world, deference toward people in power was expected for reporters in uniform.[68]

Life as a cub had lost some of its absurdity as the field mellowed in the face of covering a global war. Many "cub reporters are discriminating young fellows," not young hellions, wrote the managing editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, half-seriously.[69] Cubs tended to be younger, some still in college, and the draft dug deeply into the ranks of those eligible for the job. More women than ever before worked as cub reporters during the war. The City News Bureau in Chicago, itself a source of new reporting recruits, ran a training program for newer women reporters. It lasted six weeks and involved two days on the police beat followed by shadowing veteran reporters on the superior and district court beats, the local criminal court beat and city hall. While an "expensive training process for the bureau, as the girls are on the payroll all the time," it had immediate benefits. Namely, it helped the new reporters learn the internal and external routines they needed to know to function on their own, reported Isaac Gershman, City News' general manager.[70] The result proved that they were "neither sob sisters nor club-note

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[68] Joseph E. Ray, "Reporters have troubles as Army scribes," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 12, 1942, 14. The author was a U.S. Army private assigned to the "Public Relations Section, Quartermaster Replacement Training Center, F[or]t. F.E. Warren, Wyo."

[69] William A. Rutledge III, "The write of way," *The Quill*, February 1942, 13. Rutledge, in what appears to be a recurring column of miscellaneous news about Sigma Delta Chi members, quotes L.D. Hotchkiss, managing editor of the *Los Angeles Times*.

[70] John T. Buck, "Woman's place (so they say in these days of World War II) is in the home—edition! 'Ladies of the Press' take over," *The Quill*, December 1942, 10-11. The article's title was probably a play on the title of a popular (and pioneering) 1936 book about women in journalism, Ishbel Ross' *Ladies of the Press*. Ross herself had been a reporter at the *New York Herald Tribune*.

specialists, but good, straight news reporters."[71] Gershman, "a firm disbeliever in the 'cold plunge' method of allowing the 'cub' to flounder by himself," believed instead that his cubs, of both genders, did better work (and were less prone to charges of libel) when exposed to structured on-the-job training. About 12 of the 48 newsroom workers were women, and had, for the most part, been reporters, society editors or clerical staff at other, smaller news operations.[72] While the City News' newsroom and other newsrooms pragmatically accepted the presence of women reporters, and female cub reporters, as a wartime necessity, women had "to overcome the deep-seated prejudice against them in the hundreds of courtrooms and the 40 police stations in Chicago." It was "gruff policemen" who initially disliked "the presence of girls in the mens' club atmosphere of squad rooms and district stations." But over time, their colleagues and some of their male sources warmed to their presence (even if there was a definite gendered overtone to this acceptance): "the police desk sergeant, his ears ringing from taking complaints over the phone, enjoys pleasant relief when he lifts the receiver to hear a feminine voice say: 'Sarge . . anything doing?' . . . It's the City News reporter making her routine checks."[73]

Case study: Margaret Ellington

A female cub reporter's experiences during the war illustrate how staff shortages changed newsrooms. At the *Baltimore Evening Sun* in 1943, Margaret Ellington was the "first

[71] John T. Buck, "Woman's place (so they say in these days of World War II) is in the home—edition! 'Ladies of the Press' take over," *The Quill*, December 1942, 10.
[72] John T. Buck, "Woman's place (so they say in these days of World War II) is in the home—edition! 'Ladies of the Press' take over," *The Quill*, December 1942, 10.
[73] John T. Buck, "Woman's place (so they say in these days of World War II) is in the home—edition! 'Ladies of the Press' take over," *The Quill*, December 1942, 11.

girl reporter hired in many years."[74] When she first entered "the long room filled with assured men typing easily . . . my slight confidence oozed away to nothing," she recalled. As was customary, she sat and waited for hours, until "all at once, a man came over and handed me some sheets of paper. 'Dig some shorts out of these' he said, and walked away." Having majored in journalism at the University of Alabama, she recalled her training and got to work.

At first, she was "completely ignored" by everyone but the city editor. Later, upon reflection, she believed she was "being given a very thorough once-over." Among the "smoke spirals," she heard wafts of comment about "that blond menace." To her face she was called "Miss Ellington" and addressed formally. Over time, however, she found that she gained acceptance, and earned a nickname by an editor, "Duke" (in reference to the band leader who shared her last name). But her challenges continued:

> Being a rank amateur was low enough, but being a girl made the feminine-hating city desk expect much less of me than any male, good or bad. It was up to me to prove to them that being born a girl didn't exclude me entirely from a share of brains.[75]

She found that patience and fortitude paid off. She began by observing news routines and personalities. Ellington noted that the physical office environment was "calm, serene, not too noisy," a place where "everything runs along according to schedule," with exceptions "when the copy desk and the city editor are tearing their hair over a story that broke at just the wrong time." Knowing when to speak up and ask for help was vital. "The powers-that-be on a big city daily are too busy and are too concerned with other matters to stop and explain an assignment to a cub," she said. "If it's something that's terrifically important, glance around to find

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[74] Margaret Ellington, "Wherein a feminine scribe reports what happens when through whims of war: girl meets 'boys' of the city room!" *The Quill*, January 1943, 6.
[75] Margaret Ellington, "Wherein a feminine scribe reports what happens when through whims of war: girl meets 'boys' of the city room!" *The Quill*, January 1943, 6-7.

someone who isn't busy and broach the matter to him." The best method was "trial-and-error," honoring the curious cub mixture of self-reliance and helplessness. Regardless of gender, cubs were taught to rely on others and themselves. This was difficult to teach, so, like copy boys and girls, most cubs found their own way through occupational osmosis. It was important, Ellington wrote, to remember that a reporter would have to be "initiated by pulling some boners."[76]

Ellington gave other, more gendered and specific advice to women cubs. She advised that women "be friendly, but not cute or coy. Let them [male reporters and other editorial staff members] make the first gesture of fellowship and keep just a little behind in the matter of good-natured razzing." There would be "plenty of it," as many men, "from copy boy to editor," went out of their way to stop and talk to her. This would not happen without a chorus of "hoots coming from all corners of the room." In time, however, "they'll begin to accept you as just one of the boys." Dressing modestly was another survival tip, as "men don't like to be too forcibly reminded of your femininity." Ellington felt that it was her mission to help ensure that women stayed in the newsroom long-term, after the war: "we girls are not only going to show the men what we can do in an emergency; we're going to prove that women on the city desk are not an unnecessary evil but a necessary good."[77][78]

Newsroom life for cubs after the war

Depictions of cubs in post-war newsrooms continued to emphasize their bewildering and disorienting experiences. In one tale, Ralph L. Brooks, a veteran political reporter at the

[76] Margaret Ellington, "Wherein a feminine scribe reports what happens when through whims of war: girl meets 'boys' of the city room!" *The Quill*, January 1943, 7.
[77] Margaret Ellington, "Wherein a feminine scribe reports what happens when through whims of war: girl meets 'boys' of the city room!" *The Quill*, January 1943, 7.
[78] "Sees small city newsmen coming into their own," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 8, 1942, 11.

Indianapolis Star, welcomed a new reporter he had seen in the office, and explained that, "they don't bother to introduce people around here." In reply, the cub responded, "'I've noticed that. I'm new here too.'"[79] Another theme was the lack of control a cub had over his or her assignments. One cartoon spoofed this reality, portraying a cub as having the pick of the best beats, including, "sports, drama, politics, [and] finance."[80] Other cartoons played on the age of cubs, or their obvious presence in newsrooms, including one that depicted a literal cub.[81]

ing. He will serve a three-year term.

Dr. QUINTUS C. WILSON, chairman of the University of Utah Department of Journalism, has accepted an assignment to spend six months at the University of Tehran, Iran. Wilson was granted a leave of absence by the University Board of Regents at its June meeting to accept the assignment and help set up a College of Social Science at the Iranian University. He will be in Iran during the fall and winter quarters of the 1956-57 school year.

Germany (side-trip to Berlin); Paris, France; London, England (side-trips to Wales, Ireland and Scotland), before landing in New York on June 9.

How do you think the Guild will take it?

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[79] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 6, 1945, 24.
[80] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 28, 1948, 38.
[81] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 27, 1952, 36; see also "How do you think the Guild will take it?" *The Quill*, July 1956, 27.
[82] "How do you think the Guild will take it?" *The Quill*, July 1956, 27.

According to some commenters, opportunities for advancement during the post-war years could still be hard to come by at larger dailies. Extolling the virtues of starting at smaller papers, including more chances to write and work independently, one author said that cubs might get stuck for "months and months writing nothing but deaths."[83] As with copy boys and girls, positons at big papers could become dead ends if the cub was neglected. Even if he or she was not ignored, that entailed being "occasionally sent out to cover relatively unimportant events or to obtain minor interviews which will appear (if there's space) somewhere between the classified section and the comic page."[84] Others doubted that the newsroom was a good place for a young reporter to learn. Cubs were especially prone to getting lost in the crowd.[85] But this perspective was in the minority. While still uncertain to some degree, a position as a cub was thought to offer a strong point of entry into future newsroom work. In the meantime, many editors remained ambivalent about college preparation for cub reporting, according to a 1949 survey.[86]

But as more entered the newsroom via college, post-war attempts to improve training included cubs. At the *Denver Post*, the managing editor declared that "good reporters don't just happen. They are the result of proper, well-rounded training, support [and a] background of adequate education." That education involved a "school for cubs" that met every day at 4 p.m. at the rewrite desk, and was led by the night city editor, who insisted on "on literary perfection for each piece of copy produced. He stresses writing or reading 12 hours hence." This informal

[83] James H. Wright, "Cog vs. wheel: No, thanks—I'll stay in small city," *The Quill*, June 1949, 9.
[84] James H. Wright, "Cog vs. wheel: No, thanks—I'll stay in small city," *The Quill*, June 1949, 9.
[85] "Managing editors panel," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21, 1949, 56. This opinion was expressed by Russell Wiggins, managing editor of the *Washington Post*.
[86] James L. Julian, "Journalism education: how does the talent perform in the shop?" *Editor & Publisher*, July 16, 1949, 50.

training program helped the paper's management know who to retain, and who to release early. While initially opposed by the ANG local, enough members gradually became sympathetic to the paper's position, and backed the process.[87] The *Post* had been using its night-side editorial crew as a training ground since at least the early 1950s for copy editors, rewrite staff and even older, general-assignment reporters.[88] Training alternated between the day staff and intensive coaching at night by the night staff, when news-gathering routines were less busy barring emergencies and where there was more time for mentorship and feedback.[89]

Making time for mentoring cub reporters in the near-constant work of the newsroom remained a challenge. An editor at the *Washington Star* observed that "one of the commonest complaints of young reporters . . . [is] that nobody on the city desk has time to talk to them."[90] His paper ran a training program lasting three months, with each new reporter given their own desk and typewriter, and told to start with an autobiography of 2,000 words. The idea was to see "whether the man is the kind who punches out about ten words, lights a cigarette, stares out the window and goes on. If he is, the supervisor begins right then and there to try to force him to write his first draft, at least, fast . . . he starts inculcating in the man's mind the habit of turning out copy to be ready for deadlines." Another editor from the *San Diego Union* recommended assigning an experienced staff member to provide direct feedback to cubs, as well as rotating cubs to different beats, from obituary to police, to courts, to city council, shadowing and mentored by a more experienced reporter.[91] An example of a more formalized

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[87] Campbell Watson, "Editors list moves in building papers," *Editor & Publisher*, July 2, 1955, 50.
[88] Willarm C. Haselbush, "Many newspapers park their misfits with the night city editor. The Denver Post finds the: Nightside makes a fine school for reporters on an afternoon daily," *The Quill*, August 1953, 6-7.
[89] Willarm C. Haselbush, "Many newspapers park their misfits with the night city editor. The Denver Post finds the: Nightside makes a fine school for reporters on an afternoon daily," *The Quill*, August 1953, 7.
[90] "Personnel training and recruiting," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Nov. 14-17, 1956, 162.
[91] "Personnel training and recruiting," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Nov. 14-17, 1956, 160, 162, 163.

training system (an early form of the later twentieth-century "internship" model) could be found in Gannett's twenty-one-week long, in-house orientation program for new reporters, with three weeks working in the circulation department, two weeks in the mechanical department, and "twelve weeks in the department for which the trainee is being prepared." As with more informal programs, rotation and mentorship were a part of the process. The idea was ambitious; it was to be an "internship affording all the personal dignity to be found in the internships of older professions."[92] Variations were advertised in regional trade publications to garner a wider pool of recruits.[93]

Still, as with copy boys and girls, even as more training programs were implemented, cubs learned mostly on the job, or casually by shadowing older reporters. Only time and feedback from editors would help to properly mature a new reporter. The overarching goal remained teaching them to source truth claims in a story, so that "eventually . . . [the cub] grows into a gimlet-eyed, case-hardened reporter."[94] More women—though still relatively few—took on the role of mentoring younger reporters of both genders during the 1950s. One, Joan Metzger, a reporter for the *Illinois State Journal*, helped a cub learn the courts beat.[95]

Cubs remained low in the newspaper hierarchy of power, deferring to almost everyone else except for copy boys and girls, and perhaps the librarian and other support staff. They were under the authority of many, starting with the city, managing, copy and other senior editors.[96] Editors had immense influence over the future of cubs in their or other newspapers'

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[92] Joseph N. Freudenberger, "Gannett newspapers devise program for training beginning staffers," *The Quill*, May 1958, 21.
[93] "Journalism School Graduates …" *The American Editor*, New England Society of Newspaper Editors, April 1960, inside front cover (no page number). The NESNE was composed of some of the oldest weeklies and dailies in the country.
[94] "Ray Erwin's Clippings Column: attribution, according to an authority," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 17, 1955, 4.
[95] "The judge likes a good story: reporter tells a cub where news is hidden," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 8, 1956, 2.
[96] "Ray Erwin's Column: credit the copyreader," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 21, 1959, 4.

newsrooms.[97] The traditional power dynamics of these spaces were slow to change for workers with less agency, reinforced as they were by well-developed customs and culture. Even so, cubs remained a celebrated part of newsroom life.

Leg men and general-assignment reporters

After one had passed through the fires of the cub experience, the next step in the newsroom's hierarchy was work as a "leg man" and then general-assignment, or GA, reporter.[98] These positions were occupied by a majority of the newsroom's reporters, and some would spend an entire career in either of these roles. In the internal hierarchy of the newsroom, the "leg man," or field reporter, was regarded as an extension of the rewrite staff. As an "outgrowth of modern journalism . . . he did not exist in the days when there were no telephones and when competition and mechanical development did not necessitate publishing portions of a story that had not yet been fully developed."[99] The telegraph editor had been a precursor (since that position also juggled incoming long-distance news reports, but the telephone was a more disruptive technology, creating new linkages to and from the newsroom. Leg men had a unique relationship with rewrite staff. Inhabiting a niche position in the newsroom's reporting system, one contemporary noted that "leg men with only mediocre ability are frequently not at all unaccustomed to public speaking when it comes to beating a deadline with a twirl of a telephone dial and a few well-chosen words."[100] Of course, "public

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[97] Carl Kesler, "Journalists' choice," *The Quill*, July 1956, 4. As Kesler put it: "Nobody is quicker to discern a promising young newspaperman than the average managing editor, even when he is limited in rewarding such talent."
[98] It should be noted that during and after World War Two, more women filled that role, even as the nomenclature continued to reflect the position's male-dominated past.
[99] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 41.
[100] Charles M. Cowden, "Cub reporter's ordeal by wire comes the first time he faces 'phone and must dictate—or be damned!" *The Quill*, July 1941, 7; leg "men," of course, could be and increasingly were also women (especially during and after World War Two), though the latter could be rare in some cities, depending on the formal and informal hiring policies of the newspapers

speaking" in this context referred to skill using the phone. A leg man had to be good at more than dictation. He (or she) had to tell stories rapidly, often in fragments and through iffy connections. Despite these abilities, leg men complained that their contributions were not recognized. The unsung workhorse of news gathering, the leg man's "name is rarely seen on a by-line story since he seldom if ever does any [actual] writing" noted an observer sympathetic to newsroom unionization in 1935.[101]

Phoning in updates wherever he or she pursued a story, and checking in throughout the day, a "leg man" was named such because he or she was mobile, and not tied to a specific beat, though they could be assigned an area of the city and a broad beat, including crime. As a "master of the shortcut," leg men and women knew their sections of the city and the people therein "as well as it is possible for any newspaperman to know a beat."[102] While writing skill was not their strong suit, some leg men and women devoted part of their day to it, and could become adept at translating their newspaper's style into various news items. For example, a leg man assigned to cover courts would phone in stories for an evening paper in the morning, and then in the afternoon work on longer updates to be used the next day. Instead of returning to the newsroom to do so, though—and this is a crucial difference between these more mobile reporters and GA writers—he or she would often stay in designated press rooms out in the field. Expertise at news *gathering* was what they were known for, among other reporters and their editors. As such, too much time away from the newsroom as a leg man or women, as "fascinating and exciting" as it could be, and staying "out of personal touch with the newspaper

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there. As with other gendered newsrooms terms, I have tried to reflect the content of my primary sources while also honoring the agency and presence of women in the newsroom.

[101] "Newspaperdom's great unsung: the ultra-spry New York district men at work," *Guild Reporter*, Oct. 1, 1935, 7.

[102] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 44.

office" could lead to being forgotten by editors. Too much time away from the newsroom during the day could stall a career, contemporaries warned. It was felt that leg men or women should not spend more than five years at it if they wanted to advance to GA or beat reporting.[103]

Work routines and newsroom status

Not all police or crime reporters were leg men, nor were all leg men crime or police reporters, but because of the nature of the reporting involved—calling in updates on spot news across a city—leg men over time became associated with crime coverage. "Police reporters," as some leg men and women who focused on local crime beats were called, were "somewhat removed from the reporters of the city room," according to Arthur Gelb, reflecting on his experiences as a cub on the *New York Times* in the early 1950s.[104] There were class differences, too, between leg men and women and beat and general-assignment reporters. The latter two had better sources (including politicians or large business owners), tended to be better educated, and, at least in New York City (and in other large cities) came from more middle-income backgrounds. In this way they resembled their middle- or even upper-class sources. Leg men or women tended to be more working class and self-educated.

Gelb observed that his new companions in a Lower East Side police station's reporters' "shack" had been hired for "their street smarts and ability to ferret out facts swiftly." Many were the sons of Italian, Irish and Jewish immigrants, had not finished high school, and were, "'dese, dem, and dose kind of guys.'" They often shared the same backgrounds as the police

[103] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 45.
[104] Arthur Gelb, *City Room*, (New York: Putnam, 2003), 152.

and criminals they covered. Communicating with the newsroom could be challenging, as the some of the field reporters had thick accents. Once, a leg man's report that a woman had died at the hands of a "poisson" (person) or "poissons" unknown had translated into the headline, "Funeral Follows Inquest with Verdict of Death by Poison." Gelb, having gone to college, was initially regarded with suspicion in this environment.[105] He had to show that he could report despite his education. Work in the field hunting down facts for the crime beat was considered such a part of the job that "legging" became shorthand for this kind of reporting.[106]

Others distinguished leg men from "the routine men," "the specialists," "investigators" and "dynamiters"—while the latter group, especially, could "blast out the stories that are hard to get," members of the first group "do the running around" needed to find details about breaking-news stories. Despite the humble status of the leg man, he or she was expected to travel constantly from one news source to the next, "and is always expected to be miraculously on the scene of every newsworthy incident practically immediately on its happening." Sometimes also called a "district" or "beat" reporter (though not to be confused with an older and more educated beat reporter), he or she would occasionally work alongside a dedicated police-beat reporter. Familiarity with sources, including the constant making of rounds, was crucial foundational work for a good leg man. Knowing ordinary police officers, neighborhood-level politicians, local shop owners, and the various individuals who hung out at dubiously legal watering holes could lead to solid sourcing when the time came. Relying on carefully cultivated

[105] Gelb, *City Room*, 152.
[106] "Personnel committee," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Aug. 12-15, 1959, 142.

friendships with police officers, but also knowing when and how to bluster, bully or appeal to their bosses, fell under the general sphere of the leg man or woman.[107]

This could be a delicate balance. Too much cooperation with the police could result in missed stories or abusive departments. Too little and leg men and women would not have access to personalities that drove stories. Handling an editor back in the newsroom also presented challenges for a leg man or woman. Sometimes unaware of conditions out in the field, editors could issue unreasonable orders. Sontheimer advised junior reporters to, "use your own method," since getting "your assignment done . . . [is] all they care about." Doing everything one was told would "probably get you killed or go nuts, or even miss a lot of stories." At the same, it was important to not let the city editor know one had diverged from the latter's exact directions. In that vein, senior editors could be hard to pitch stories to, having heard many such pitches before, but a young police reporter should write extra features anyway, if only for the practice.[108]

The more junior a reporter was, in fact, the less leverage he or she had over sources if not backed up by the paper. This could be mitigated by being adopted by more experienced reporters, or sympathetic sources, or both.[109] Young "district" reporters also faced temptation in the form of bribes from people eager to have their names kept out of the paper, or from lawyers courting business, or from those hoping to see their names *in* the paper. Getting

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[107] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 58-9, 59, 61, 62, 66.
[108] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 62, 65.
[109] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 63-64. In Somtheimer's case, after he reported a case of police brutality—a suspect being beaten by a hose—and his editors were not interested, he "incurred the enmity of the police," and was only saved by "the kindheartedness of the indulgent old veteran who was working the district for an opposition paper." Adopted by this older reporter ("A big fellow, with dark, oily skin and loose jowls, he had been on this same district for years and never aspired to anything higher"), unflappable and chain-smoking, he taught Sontheimer how to survive. This practice—of mentoring hapless beginners, who were either in or just emerging from cub status—was not uncommon.

entangled with sources was unwise, in the midst of this pressure, since it might lead to lost independence. [110]

General-assignment reporters: their role in the newsroom

The line between experienced reporters and leg men could be indecipherable, but generally the former could be defined as those “not tied down to a district, a desk, a beat, or a specialized department.” Other key markers for a “senior” were the kinds of assignments given, skill and pay—sometimes experienced reporters preferred the independence and variety of stories pursued while on “general assignment.”[111] GA reporters also differed from leg men in that they did, in fact, return to the newsroom to finish their stories and interact with editors. This was a crucial difference. Working on everything from several assignments a day to one every few days, weeks or even months, “seniors” could also act as specialists or de facto correspondents. GA reporters would cover news within a city or its immediate environs. “A senior of the first rank” would have, by the early 1950s, been someone who had usually held a variety of newsroom positions including, occasionally, positions as copy editor or section editor. Returning to reporting work without a demotion in pay, a senior reporter often had at least five years’ worth of experience on the job.[112] Four to six years became the typical temporal yardstick against which Guild (and even non-Guild) contracts measured seniority.

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[110] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 65; as detailed in Fred Fedler’s excellent *Lessons from the Past: Journalists’ Lives and Work, 1850-1950* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2000), 163; Sontheimer narrowly escaped getting himself trapped in an ethically suspect relationship with a runner for a lawyer, in which Sontheimer would tip the runner on cases for $50 an accident; the runner did not keep his end of the bargain, and after six such cases, Sontheimer settled for $35 and the chance to be free of the arrangement.
[111] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 40, 41.
[112] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 42, 43.

Reporters could then advance from GA work into a number of other, more elite positions in the newsroom. [113]

GA reporters were often positioned as a kind of reserve force. This “ready availability” gave senior managers confidence that they could cover any kind of breaking-news story. It also ensured that editors could keep track of their best reporters when they were not out in the field.[114] At the *New York Times* in the late 1940s, city editor David Joseph liked to use his “star” GA reporters on the rewrite bank, where they would play cards or read the paper while taking turns handling calls from leg men and women.[115] As late as 1949, editors debated the merits of having their reporters remain generalists or “whether they be allowed to specialize.”[116] Into the 1950s, however, leading editors believed that a cub should be trained so that he or she could eventually become a well-rounded GA reporter.[117] As part of this GA ideal, the 1950s brought with it a new pride in the nomenclature reporters used to identify themselves. “Newspaperman” was still customarily reserved as a proud and lingering epithet that should be used exclusively by members “of the editorial department.” Other news workers claimed the title as part of “a continuous, though ineffectual, attempt to arrogate the proud word . . . Ever hear a newsman pass himself off as a circulator or adman?”[118] This tribal pride, this sense of belonging to a special group within the larger newspaper organization, resonated throughout the period from 1920 to 1960, and, if anything, grew in its special intensity. This happened both within and without print journalism in the United States, as newspaper memoirs attracted

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[113] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 42, 43.
[114] This theme will be revisited in the chapter on supervisors in the newsroom.
[115] Gelb, *City Editor*, 153; Gelb, looking back, criticized this policy, calling it a “pitiful waste of first-rate talent” that eventually faded.
[116] Managing editors panel,” *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21, 1949, 74-76.
[117] “Personnel training and recruiting,” *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Nov. 14-17, 1956, 163.
[118] “Editorial workshop: quirks and quibbles,” *Editor & Publisher*, July 16, 1955, 45.

general-interest readers, and popular culture's depictions of reporters in radio, films and television gradually became more positive.[119] It became important, too, as rival broadcast (TV and radio) newsrooms emerged to compete with print newsrooms.

Conclusion: work routines and newsroom status

Some veteran reporters, even those with varied experiences, confessed to enjoying GA work the most. As one former GA reporter put it: "It is the one spot on a newspaper where you come to work in the morning not knowing where you'll wind up or what you'll be doing at the end of the day, where you get the greatest diversity of assignments and experiences, where you're more likely to meet the unusual and have a greater opportunity to write about it."[120] The work and the prestige could vary widely depending on the paper and the individual reporter, from the most prosaic spot news coverage of fires, meetings and celebrity visits to the most important stories a paper published. The latter, often calling for multiple editions or saturation coverage, were the special charge of an elite group called "star reporters." While not always officially called such, these were GA reporters with enough skill and experience (and clout) that they could easily work complicated beats, but were instead used and trusted by editors for emergencies and one-off projects.[121] Other reporters at the paper knew and looked up to these reporters. Assigned with teams of photographers to report on disasters that affected whole regions, states or countries, star reporters could roam far afield of the newsroom.[122] They could be leaders of their peers, even outside the newsroom, as when

[119] Though this generalization is far too sweeping; for a more nuanced perspective, see Matthew C. Ehrlich and Joe Saltzman, *Heroes and Scoundrels: The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2015).
[120] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 185.
[121] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 185-6.
[122] "Flood in upper N.Y. taxes news crews," *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1935, 20.

Evelyn Shuler, a former "star reporter" for the *Philadelphia Ledger*, helped set up an "employment office" in her apartment for former fellow unemployed *Ledger* workers after that paper folded in 1942.[123] Star reporters were sometimes the first to try out new technologies or reporting strategies.[124] They could also become pioneering reporters in early newsroom-inclusion efforts, as with Carl Rowan at the *Minneapolis Tribune* in the early 1950s.[125] Their chief attribute was their aloof independence, and the measure of freedom they had earned from close oversight by editors.

Within a newsroom, star GA reporters could serve another purpose: inspiring cubs and other younger reporters. A.R. Holcombe, the managing editor of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, believed that having "a star reporter of as great versatility as possible, for the other men to shoot at" would help the cubs become "fired with an ambition to be as good a man as he is." Their example could help these younger reporters "dream at night . . . of being someday as able a reporter as the star."[126] As a rule, these reporters were a very small percentage of a newsroom, so there was plenty of room for inspiration.[127]

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[123] "Evelyn Shuler runs job office for Ledger staff," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 24, 1942, 24.
[124] Robert U. Brown, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 20, 1945.
[125] "What makes a newspaper great?" *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 20, 1955, 5; at this early stage of such efforts, however, it was still a relatively rare phenomenon for a woman or a minority reporter to achieve this kind of status; when it happened however, ads for their newspapers in trade publications often trumpeted it.
[126] "City staff luncheon," and "discussion," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 19, 1930, 246.
[127] "Copy desk luncheon," and "discussion," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 19, 1930, 263.

Chapter 5

Reporters and their senior peers: sharing routines, careers and status in the newsroom

The reporting staff of a typical newsroom from 1920 to 1960 contained two broad kinds of reporters. Those more junior, including cubs, leg men and general assignment (GA) reporters, and those more senior, such as specialists, feature writers, columnists and editorial writers. The degree of independence marked the dividing line between the two groups, though GA reporters straddled it (some becoming senior themselves, as noted in the previous chapter). For specialized senior reporters, this translated into more control over their work. They were more empowered, more "professionalized," and self-aware of this superior status both in and out of the newsroom. While both broad types of reporters were focused on news *gathering* (and were thus distinguished from those who helped to *produce* the news, including support staff such as copy editors, rewrite staff, and desk-bound senior editors), the power differential between junior and senior reporters justifies a separate, if related, examination.

The distance on the continuum of newsroom power and success between leg men or women, GA reporters and beat reporters could be, like all attempts at classification, short. But beat reporters, unlike the other types of reporters mentioned thus far, focused their routines exclusively on following, checking in on, and developing the same set of sources, traditionally including officials in educational institutions, hospitals, courts, local, state and federal

governments. Like leg men or women, they remained focused on a particular place or set of places and often left the newsroom in pursuit of stories. But unlike leg men, and more like GA reporters, they were expected to write their own stories, and not call them in. They were also expected to become experts on their beat. This practice could vary by newsroom, however. If a beat man stayed out of the office too long, like the leg man or women, he or she could be similarly overlooked.[1] But on the plus side, beat reporters earned a certain amount of autonomy from their editors. Keeping confidences (and knowing when to break them) became more important, as the nature of covering a "building"—spending time at city hall, city, state and federal courts, federal offices, or the state legislature (if a newspaper was in a capital)—meant spending time with more sophisticated, in-the-know sources.[2] Being close to sources with power reflected these reporters' own increased autonomy. At least one observer recognized that "many of the most important beats are those which have a topical rather than a geographical basis."[3]

Career path, combinations and group work

While other categories of reporters faced them, too, it was beat reporters who were most enmeshed in "combination" reporting.[4] Others referred to this practice as pool reporting, or "reporter's combines."[5] This collaborative approach to newsgathering involved reporters from competing papers pooling their resources. While prone to abuse, some observers

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[1] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 46.
[2] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 66-67.
[3] Frank S. Adams, "The job of the reporter," in *The Newspaper: Its Making and Its Meaning* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), 115.
[4] For an excellent description of this phenomenon, see Randal Sumpter, "'Practical reporting:' late nineteenth century journalistic standards and rule breaking," *American Journalism* 30, 1 (2013): 44-64.
[5] Peter Kihss, "General assignment," in Joseph G. Herzberg, *Late City Edition* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), 44.

defended it as a necessity. The informal system was especially common on the more routine beats, including police and local government. But it could also exist at the highest levels.

In the pre-World War Two Washington, D.C., political press corps, sociologist Leo Rosten found that correspondents would routinely help each other outside of the Associated Press or other wire-service networks.[6] This assistance included consulting one another for expert advice about regional or technical issues, such as interpreting press releases from the U.S. Department of the Interior, or seeking help in writing about the auto industry. Sometimes reporters who attended the same press conferences would help each other find new or different angles for their stories.[7] Most directly, however, reporters would share carbon copies of their news dispatches with each other. These "blacksheets" provided critical background information and sources, and were the physical manifestation of the wealth of tips and gossip political reporters passed among their friends and colleagues. These practices were particularly prevalent among reporters from different markets or regions, but correspondents from the same city occasionally cooperated. This was not just limited to data—practices like the sharing of blacksheets helped to shape news priorities and opinions among reporters.[8] If a reporter knew what was important to his or her colleagues, they knew what was important for them, too. And it was no accident that correspondents shared their work so freely: they had learned to do so at home.

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[6] Leo Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937); please note that this paragraph was originally written by myself for, but not included in, the final draft of Michael Barthel, Ruth Moon and William Mari, "Who retweets who? How digital and legacy journalists interact on Twitter." (Tow Center for Digital Journalism, 2014). towcenter.org (http://towcenter.org/research/who-retweets-whom-how-digital-and-legacy-journalists-interact-on-twitter/).
[7] Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents*, 88-9.
[8] Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents*, 88-93.

During the late 1930s, the choice to join or resist a combination was a critical one for a new beat reporter. If the latter, one had to be determined enough to "work like hell and maintain a never-ending, nerve-racking vigilance to keep from being scooped."[9] Sometimes one dissident beat reporter was enough to break a combination, at least for a while. For retribution, a combination might "gang up on the renegade" to generate enough scoops to get the dissident in trouble with an editor. Breaking away from a combination required good communication, and "an understanding," with one's editor. While many editors barely tolerated their existence, it was important to sell him or her on the necessity of leaving it.[10] But it was sometimes wiser to wait. A new beat reporter needed help to learn the lay of the land. This was not always possible. Sometimes a combination of beat reporters would be excessively "clannish" to the point of exclusion. Happily, other combinations were more welcoming, and would help the newcomer.[11] The ideal combination would focus its efforts on certain topics, with other topics designated as free-for-all. This was not always easy to keep up, as temptation to scoop, and anger at being scooped, was quite real.[12] If a "non-co-operative or overenterprising reporter" attempted to cultivate a series of scoops over time away from a combination, the latter would sometimes work especially hard to counter-scoop the renegade "until the city desk howls, and the nonconformist gives way."[13] Even if a reporter decided to stay with the combination, it could possess bad or inaccurate information, and an individual reporter, otherwise known for his or her accurate reporting, would suffer from an overreliance on colleagues. This could

[9] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 71.
[10] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 71.
[11] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 72.
[12] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 72-3.
[13] Kihss, "General assignment," 44.

damage both reporters' relationships with their home newsrooms. But any fraying of ties to home newsrooms could be avoided by *careful* collaboration, include verification of tips, or, better yet, volunteering to be part of the smaller subset of the combination which did the actual reporting, to make sure it was done correctly.[14] Looking at a generation before, Smythe found similar collaboration at work.[15]

"Bring the Mayor's statement down later, neatly typed!"[16]

[14] Kihss, "General assignment," 45.
[15] Ted Curtis Smythe, "The reporter, 1880-1900: working conditions and their influence on the news," *Journalism History* 7, no. 1(1980): 1-10.
[16] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, March 27, 1948, 36. As this cartoon shows, reporters' combinations could quickly become focused on gaming and socializing.

Beat reporters and other forms of collaboration

Away from their individual newsroom spaces, competitive tensions could be eased by the comradery of the "press room," or "reporters' room," the assigned workspace for reporters in or near sources of news, including city hall, the courts and police stations.[17] A great deal of work, at all hours, would take place in these shared journalistic work spaces. Telephone connections back to home newsrooms and typewriters were shared. These rooms were also places to swap stories, smoke, drink and, infamously, play endless card games. Some reporters even pooled resources to make meals for one another.[18]

Reporters would help each other in less systematic ways. If a reporter was late to a press conference, "it doesn't matter in the least whether he is an old friend or a complete stranger; it is a matter of course to give him what we call a 'fill in' on what he has missed," wrote Frank Adams, a veteran *New York Times* reporter in 1945. Reporters did so when their peers missed something through no fault of their own, expecting to be helped, in turn, someday. This was part of larger sense of collegiality. With its "goldfish-bowl lack of privacy," and a daily product open to inspection by the "City Editor, fellow reporters, and friends," work was consumed and compared to others constantly. "This is more effective in keeping reporters on their toes . . . than any system of rewards and punishments that could possibly be devised." This need to have the ready measurement of comrades was acutely felt in its absence. Adams said that some of his friends, covering distant parts of the Pacific and European theaters during World War Two as correspondents, wrote to him about the sensation, when far from the

[17] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 73.
[18] "Newsmen cook own meals on police beat," *Editor & Publisher*, May 6, 1944, 50.

civilian newsroom, of living and working "in a void."[19] They looked forward to being back in an all-encompassing work environment.

Case study: Arthur Gelb

Arthur Gelb's second police beat in the late 1940s for the *New York Times* involved covering crime in the evenings on Manhattan's East Side. Sharing one room on the first floor of an old brownstone, just two doors west of the precinct station, it was a quiet assignment, with two public telephone booths shared by the handful of reporters using them.[20] But his first assignment as a police-beat reporter had taken him to the much larger Police Headquarters building, with a correspondingly more complex "shack" for reporters. With three floors of offices, rented as separate spaces by the city's newspapers and news services, it was housed in an old tenement building purchased as an investment by a former reporter. With fire-alarm bells on the outside, three rings signaled that a conflagration worth reporting was happening somewhere in the city. Colored lightbulbs, also on the outside of the building for each paper, summoned a reporter in from the street. The *Times*' workspace contained two phones, desks and typewriters, to be used by leg men and women and beat reporters before returning to the office.[21] Press rooms were open constantly, and so the presence of friends and rivals helped to develop a kind of newsroom in miniature, Gelb recalled:

> When a report came over the police radio, I did indeed follow the pack as they ran from the shack with homemade notepads of folded copy paper stuffed into their back pockets and thick soft-lead pencils enabling them to scribble fast. By foot, cab, bus or subway, we

[19] Frank S. Adams, "The job of the reporter," in *The Newspaper: Its Making and Its Meaning* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), 122-123.
[20] Gelb, *City Room*, 156; in this smaller, shared space, Gelb had to arrive early to be near the phones to receive his daily orders from his editors, who used wire-service bulletins to develop starting leads for his work; Gelb needed pockets "bulging with nickels" to keep up.
[21] Gelb, *City Room*, 151.

> converged on a scene in a haphazard frenzy. Though we rushed to meet edition deadlines, we didn't compete against one another. Before anyone called the office, we came together and shared every scrap of information we each had gathered.[22]

This provided the reporters with a "sense of security," protecting them from reprimands by bosses. Not sharing facts could result in shunning. But even this group work resulted in some individual stories, since the rewrite staff back at their home newsrooms would inject their own "sensibility . . . wit . . . [and] skill" interwoven in the newspaper's style.[23] At Gelb's and other large newspapers, leg men and women, beat reporters and rewrite staff interacted in a constant and self-contained milieu of peers and near-peers. He relates how he knew the "pack" had accepted him after some of the more hardened police reporters showed them their revolvers and let him in on their sources and routines.

Reporters in the pack were loyal to each other to an intense degree, helping one reporter who could barely write because the police "loved him for his natural Irish wit," and gave him exclusive tips. Later assigned to the Mid-Manhattan Magistrates Court, Gelb left the comparatively tight company of the police beat and had to learn to work with a veteran AP reporter, Dick Feehan. A gradual and more one-to-one relationship of the junior-to-senior kind ensued, with Gelb sharing information with Feehan before calling in his own stories. Eventually, Feehan accepted and mentored him in this more challenging beat.[24]

Work routines: newsroom life for beat reporters during the Depression

While long an undefined category, since "beats" could extend from the relatively easy-to-start-in police beat and range all the way to powerful political beats, by the 1920s many beat

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[22] Gelb, *City Room*, 153.
[23] Gelb, *City Editor*, 153.
[24] Gelb, *City Editor*, 154-55, 162.

reporters (especially for any beat beyond cops and crime) were regarded as newsroom veterans. [25] But veterans or not, by the early 1920s the collaborative nature of some of the more routine beats was firmly in place, reinforced by a lingering pay-by-space system in which reporters, even those nominally on staff, would be compensated only for what appeared in the paper. This led to an ingrained sense that work should be shared, since there was too much of it anyway. Others criticized this phenomenon, which continued into the era when salaries became more common. Too often, "beat men from the various papers sit around waiting for something to turn up," and when something did, they would often delegate one of the men to go and get the story and bring it back to share with the rest."[26] Even after the influence of the Guild was felt in many newsrooms, reporters could agree to 'syndicate' and loaf on a beat." The practice was too ingrained to give up. One editor feared that this comradery among beat reporters would erode good coverage: "When reporters are 'palsey-walsies' on a beat there is no use of keeping more than one of them on the job as their comradeship has eliminated rivalry."[27] Reporters, however, seemed fine with the arrangement.

Women as beat reporters during the interwar years

Prestige beat reporting, due to its perceived "masculine" challenges—with the police beat, especially—remained a tough field for female reporters to break into before World War

[25] It should be noted, briefly, that while a "beat" described an assigned news routine and set of sources, it could also describe a scoop, or the beating of a rival to a story. For the purposes of this chapter, I will be using the former definition unless otherwise noted. For an example of the latter, see "Editorial: W.R.—reporter," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 13, 1928, 30, which describes how "chasing a real beat is something to celebrate."

[26] "Too much writing, no reporting, Allen finds in New York papers," *Editor & Publisher*, June 18, 1921, 13, 35. This assessment by Eric Allen, the chair of the University of Oregon's School of Journalism, was rebuffed by J.E. Hardenbregh the managing editor of the *New York Evening Post*, and the president of the New York City News [service], along with Bruce Bliven, the managing editor of the *New York Globe* (and an author of a textbook on newspaper business practices).

[27] Malcolm W. Bingay, "An editor's case against the Guild," *Editor & Publisher*, June 26, 1937, 12. Bingay, the "editorial director" for the *Detroit Free Press*, was an avowed opponent of Guild influence on newsrooms like his own, believing that union membership eroded a reporter's loyalty to the paper.

Two. There were pioneers, however. In Seattle, Mari Brattain, a University of Washington journalism student, guest reported and edited the *Seattle Star*, and Lucille Cohen, another UW journalism major, covered the police beat. Both took a hard-edged approach to covering Depression-related local news.[28]

But these sorts of isolated experiments were just that—not part of a trend. Long-term cultural change in the newsroom would have to take place for women to regularly work as beat reporters. Some veteran editors, such as Stanley Walker, thought so too. Among tabloid newspapers (which had fewer qualms about hiring women for positions considered more appropriate for men), Walker pointed to the examples of Grace Robinson, Edna Ferguson and Inez Callaway (also known as Nancy Randolph) employed by the *New York News* in the mid-1930s on challenging assignments, including everything from sensational murder trials to off-limits-to-the-public society events. On more conventional daily papers, he noted that other women were pioneering beats traditionally covered by men, including Lorena Hickok, who reported for the AP in New York, and Genevieve Forbes Herrick, who worked for the *Chicago Tribune* in the 1920s and early 1930s. The latter advocated for a wider scope for women, beyond "the woman's angle in journalism," since "typewriters are sexless." Better assignments from editors who treated them as reporters, not as *women* reporters, were also crucial, she said in a 1933 address to the Chicago Woman's Club.[29] Many women reporters did not like the

[28] "Girl edited Seattle daily," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 27, 1930, 34. A managing editor criticized their coverage for being too "graphic," and they were forced to adopt a softer approach with a "heartbalm" story, truer to what was culturally expected of them in the newsroom. Brittain went on to a long and distinguished career in local advertising. See Vanessa Ho, "Outspoken Pioneer Mari Brattain made advertising women's work," *The Seattle Times*, Aug. 24, 1992. Accessed at http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=19920824&slug=1509194 on July 9, 2015.
[29] Walker, *City Editor*, 256-58, 260-62, 262. As Herrick put it, "Let her strive to write all her news better than as many men as she can. Let her write the way the world says a man writes; not the way a man says a woman writes."

traditional advancement options they were offered, in which all career paths led to "society" editorships, and instead preferred to "think of themselves as regular reporters."[30]

Staff shortages during the war meant that more women worked as reporters on the police and other beats. This was the case, for example, at the *New York Daily News*. Some women, such India McIntosh at the *New York Herald Tribune*, believed that the war "hastened" the arrival of a more "benevolent" openness to the presence of women in the newsroom. "The woman reporter got the biggest chance she ever had to prove that she could cover, at home and abroad, anything that came under the heading of news," she reflected. McIntosh believed women had already established a strong "beachhead" in the newsroom, and were no longer "considered a damn nuisance." Women reporters were a more accepted and expected part of many newsrooms, and not just in supporting roles, but as part of the reporting team: "She is seldom reminded of her sex or her supposed limitations by the men with whom she covers fires and homicides, meets ships, shares taxis, and sits in on that diabolic institution known as the press conference [;] . . . most of the men in her office seem to like her."[31] The larger question for McIntosh and others, was, "how are women treated by the city desk, that upper-case POWER which can annihilate with a word, a knitted brow, or a pantywaist assignment every major triumph that the girl reporter has gathered unto herself?" Whether working as a GA or beat reporter, a woman reporter endured the same challenges and then some as men, were "joshed, instructed, bawled out, or complimented in the same manner as a man," and so deserved the same kinds of "running stories—the big stories, with many facets, which splash

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[30] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 182.
[31] India McIntosh, "Girl reporter," in Joseph G. Herzberg, *Late City Edition* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), 48.

page one for days or even weeks, surging to a climax or boiling over into half a dozen stories or fading to a one-line head as imperceptibly as the Cheshire cat faded to a grin."

Women were too often assigned "tidy little episodes that can be packaged in three-quarters of a column and then forgotten." Compounding this, the male-dominated city desk, "with all its democratic leanings, is wary of the woman reporter's emotional equipment," and hesitated to give higher-stakes stories to women. McIntosh was optimistic about women in the newsroom in the future, however. Women could use existing prejudices to their advantage, including the still-pervasive belief that they could write better about other women or children. They could also take advantage of "Worthy Cause" stories, often ordered either directly or indirectly by the paper's ownership, to showcase their work. They could use cultural biases toward women, including an inclination by male sources to give women reporters an extra tip, to their advantage. While many women were not driven to use this advantage, and "indulge in feminine sorcery," many felt that "being pleasingly feminine, in the better sense of the phrase," could not hurt.[32]

But the stereotype of the "jittery, tough-talking, picture-snatching girl reporter of the mystery thriller" had less and less basis in reality. Most women were as down-to-earth and practical as their male counterparts. They could be distinguished from their "glamorous magazine . . . trade journal . . . [and] radio" counterparts at press conferences, despite the latter's nominal possession of press cards, by the way the print reporters carried themselves. Some of their male colleagues insisted that their female reporters be identified first by their

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[32] India McIntosh, "Girl reporter," in Joseph G. Herzberg, *Late City Edition* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), 47-48. 49, 50-1.

workplace identities ("reporters"), and less by their gender, especially in the presence of newsroom outsiders.[33] After the war, women were able to break into some of the more "he-man" beats, as one contemporary put it, including covering the timber industry in Oregon.[34] Other women tried the more dangerous sides of police reporting, such as immersing themselves in daily inner-city life.[35] Other women had the opportunity cover courts.[36] And still others advocated for themselves, and for chances to prove their worth as beat reporters.[37] Pay disparities remained and were sometimes stark: a survey conducted by the Ohio Newspaper Women's Association in 1958 found that while reporters made an average of $106 or more a week, society editors made just under $74, and suburban editors—a position often held by women—made $70.[38]

Newsroom life for beat reporters after the war

After the war, one of the places on a newspaper where openings were more plentiful, due to the influx of returning former reporter-veterans, was on specialized beats.[39] Beat

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[33] India McIntosh, "Girl reporter," in Joseph G. Herzberg, *Late City Edition* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), 50-1, 54, 55; McIntosh relates one story of a group of New-York-based reporters and photographers dispatched to cover an explosion and fire at a U.S. Navy base in New Jersey. A Navy shore patrolman (military police officer) stopped a truck containing two women reporters, including McIntosh, explaining that no women could pass. A male photographer spoke up, "these aren't women," he explained, "they're reporters." The patrolman, momentarily confused, waved them forward.

[34] Bob Frazier, "Timber! Lady crashes he-man forestry beat," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 17, 1949, 26. Majorie Goodwin was a "lady lumber reporter" for the Eugene (Oregon) *Register-Guard*.

[35] Richard Brooks, "'Round their beats: gal reporter lives teen gang violence," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 3, 1955, 12; "Round their beats" was a recurring feature in *Editor & Publisher* during the 1950s, showcasing reporters—both men and women—and unique beat experiences.

[36] "The judge likes a good story: reporter tells a cub where news is hidden," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 8, 1956.

[37] "Why women are superior as reporters," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 14, 1957, 88. According to Gay Pauley, UP women's editor, "We are better endowed psychologically. We can out report any man on a beat because Nature has blessed us with insatiable curiosity. We were born nose-y." It can be surmised from the context—namely, the first meeting of the New Jersey Association of Daily Newspaper Women—that Pauley was speaking more than a little in jest, in the midst of serious advocacy for an enhanced role for women.

[38] "Women want equal chance and pay in editorial work: lack of opportunity is blamed on men with bustle-era views," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 30, 1958, 13, 54.

[39] William Reed, "Huge re-employment effort cuts job openings in NYC," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 16, 1946, 7, 60.

reporters resumed or kept up their old habit of group collaboration, even on more specialized beats, such as coverage of federal courthouses.[40]

Some beat reporters stayed in their beats "for years and years," becoming experts in their fields, and transitioning more toward niche writers and columnists.[41] Unionization brought more standardized pay scales, which affected all experienced reporters and encouraged them to stay at one paper longer. The location of beats was changing, as well. Beats near expanding suburbs in the post-war years could encompass thousands of square miles in the West and Southwest. In Houston, the reporter on the country beat had to sell news to the city desk, "where much of the mental emphasis of desk men is on the . . . 'city.'"[42] Back in the newsroom, reporters from similar beats were sometimes positioned near one another.[43] In Rochester, New York, during the 1940s and 1950s, the two rival daily newspapers, the *Times-Union* and *Democrat & Chronicle*, possessed highly refined, and similar, beats, including science, health, education, labor, the arts and especially police and politics. Three or four reporters were regularly assigned to the latter two beats at both papers.[44] This concentration of beats reflected the city's high-tech orientation as the home of Xerox and Kodak.

In the near future, some editors felt that fewer reporters would be assigned to routine beats, and that newspaper staffs themselves, with more and more specialized beats, were too complicated, "great factory operations" that had "become gigantic tails on the editorial dog of

[40] Rick Friedman, "Meet Dan Lehane: On the job—No. 1: federal courthouse," *Editor & Publisher*, July 16, 1960, 60-1.
[41] James H. Wright, "Cog vs. wheel: No, thanks – I'll stay in small city," *The Quill*, June 1949, 9.
[42] Louis Alexander, "Here's how to cover 1,578 square miles … in Texas, of course," *The Quill*, 11, 15. Alexander was the county editor, and reporter for the *Houston Chronicle*.
[43] Eugene S. Pulliam, Jr., "Just seat 20 next to each other: how to streamline a big city newsroom," *The Quill*, February 1950, 8-10.
[44] Bonnie Brennen, *For the Record: An Oral History of Rochester, New York, Newsworkers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 32; Brennen's extensive oral history and interviews of 18 news workers (17 of which appear in her study) from the town's two papers is invaluable.

Pekinese dimensions."[45] Still, most considered beat reporting essential to thorough news coverage, especially in the face of new TV (and radio) newsrooms that could beat newspapers at breaking news. Business reporting, for example, continued to be regarded as a consequential—and influential—beat.[46] In the late 1950s, the *Wall Street Journal* experimented with "team reporting," in which a veteran reporter would work as a "team leader" of a group of beat reporters "and with as many reinforcements as the story demands, coordinating and directing the overall effort on the spot." This brought faster and more thorough coverage of "top stories," and promised independence and scalability as reporters led themselves, apart from direct supervision by editors.[47] These elite beat reporters would sometimes form the basis for investigative teams on larger metropolitan newspapers.

Status in the newsroom: a hierarchy of beats

Newsrooms had a hierarchy of beats, and reporters could either intuit from their stories' prominence in the paper or from the ways their peers talked about their work, or the kinds of stories they were allowed to pursue, which beats were more prestigious than others. Some, including religion, were thought of as comprising sleepy church news, and "not usually handed to the stars of the street and rewrite staffs."[48] Later, some reporters sought it, claiming that innovation and advancement were possible.[49] Other beats were driven by technological or scientific developments. Aviation in particular surged in popularity after the First World War,

[45] J. Russell Wiggins, "Journalism faces challenges," *The Quill*, November 1950, 13, 86;
[46] Vermont Royster, "Journalism ethics: no margin for error in business reporting," *The Quill*, November 1960, 15, 24.
[47] "Continuing study ["CS"] report: new techniques and technical progress committee," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Aug. 12-15, 1959, 136.
[48] Arthur Robb, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, July 1, 1939, 36.
[49] Roger Yarrington, "Church editor job offers professional and personal challenge far from dull," *The Quill*, January 1958, 10.

later supplemented by aerospace and science beats.[50] The latter could produce a “city room prima donna complex,” warned one such writer in the mid-1950s. Such a complex could result a reporter becoming “petulant if his copy is changed or trimmed, or left out.” The identity as an expert thus sometimes conflicted with the idea that he was “a newspaperman first.”[51] Reporters practiced various rhetorical strategies to distance themselves from this apparent contradiction. Their expertise was earned on the job, and not usually gained via college. Specialized reporters engaged in this boundary-work in order to reinforce their own status in the newsroom.[52] Science reporters, for example, insisted that they had “come up” via the newsroom and had fallen into their beat by accident, acquiring a taste for science along the way. They were often called “doc” by their non-science reporter colleagues, who tolerated, and sometimes appreciated, their eccentricities.[53] Generally, beats dealing with local, state, or federal government, especially the latter, were thought of as steps toward work as a specialist, columnist or correspondent.

Newsroom outliers: specialists, feature writers, columnists and editorial writers

Reporters who were not tied as closely to the daily (or even hourly) cycle of news and who could devote their time to specialized beats were sometimes called “specialists.” These

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[50] M. Allen Parker, “Scanning the skies for news stories,” *The Quill*, April 1941, 6-7, 12; some newspapers assigned an aviation “editor” to this beat, though that title, along other, more narrow section titles, could be misleading. See Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 181-2.

[51] Arthur J. Snider, "A science writer has his problems, including the habits of scientists," *The Quill*, October 1955, 15.

[52] Thomas F. Gieryn, "Boundary-work and the demarcation of science from non-science: strains and interests in professional ideologies of scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48, No. 6 (1983): 781-795. While Gieryn is addressing how “boundary-work” is used by scientists toward non-scientists, journalists perform similar discursive work. See also, Barbie Zelizer, "Journalists as interpretative communities," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 10 (1993): 219-37. Zelizer discusses how reporters enact boundaries temporally, too, bounding their group in the past as well as the present through the use of historical memory.

[53] Snider, "A science writer has his problems, including the habits of scientists," 15. Snider was a science reporter for the *Chicago Daily News*.

"nonconformists of the newspaper profession" had arrived at the pinnacle of nonfiction writing, and remained "away from the grind of the city room."[54] While often still working out of it when they wanted, the true specialist was "more than a newspaperman, because in addition to being a skilled writer he is an authority in a chosen field." Freed from most daily newsroom chores, a specialist was the envy or his or her peers, who aspired to the position.[55] These were essentially beat reporters who advanced in autonomy and authority. "Specialist" was the name given to especially experienced beat reporters.[56] Generally, however, specialists were just that, special, and granted privileges not awarded to regular beat reporters.

Under this broad grouping could be considered popular sports writers and the writers for sections on fashion, beauty, business and finance, science, agriculture, food, drama (as well as music and film), politics, religion, art, books and radio/television, travel, labor, child care, photography, real estate or education.[57] Feature writers were a related, if also rare, breed. Employed by bigger papers for their Sunday sections or the occasional longer piece in the daily newspaper, feature writers were known for their interviewing and investigative skills. Often bylined in an era when that was still uncommon, they could make up to $300 a week by the early 1950s.[58] Some feature writers were able to travel the world and write books about their experiences.[59]

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[54] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 62.
[55] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 62.
[56] James H. Wright, "Cog vs. wheel: No, thanks – I'll stay in small city," *Editor & Publisher*, 9-10.
[57] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 61-79; it should be noted that some of these highly specialized beats were only offered at the largest newspapers as full-time positions, and at smaller newspapers were sometimes a collateral duty for a regular beat reporter.
[58] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 60; $300 was a remarkable sum when the ANG's stated goal by the late 1950s was $150 a week for veteran reporters in the biggest cities. See John Barry, "A modest wage goal: $150? Magazines, radio & TV already pay more," Sept. 11, 1953, *Guild Reporter*, 1, 7.
[59] "Our own world of letters," *Editor & Publisher*, May 20, 1933, 26; such more lofty writers as Robert H. Davis, a former *New York World* reporter, were able through their work to be "removed… from the hurly-burley of the city room and the worries of an editor's office."

While specialists could write for a variety of sections, among other prized specialties were labor, politics, and finance. Labor coverage could affect a reporter directly, especially if it involved the Guild. But it was politics that offered "just about the best steppingstone in the office to bigger things." The local and state political beat, and the nominal editorship of both, could lead to postings far from the newsroom, as Washington correspondents, or in the newsroom but very much aloof from its daily workers, as an editorial writer. Access to publishers, who often harbored political aspirations, did not hurt in this regard. Political writers had "more of a sense of power than any other on the paper," due to their external influence on readers and office holders and internal influence on the paper's informal and formal positions on issues.[60] Young politicians were known to seek the advice of experienced political reporters. At the state level, these kinds of reporters would eventually come to know those in power, an invaluable set of connections if they had ambition.[61]

But as a corollary to perceptions of access to power in and out of the newsroom, contemporary observers noted that just because a reporter had a title with "the imposing word 'editor'" did not mean they had actual power over either coverage or peers. Rank-and-file reporters turned special writers knew that they were sometimes paid less than a reporter's salary. An extra title was "often dished out to unlucky rewrite men as part-time responsibilities." The best way to get out of the rut that a superfluous, non-authoritative "editorship" offered was to work hard and hope that your supervisors "realize you're fit for

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[60] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 178-9; political "specialists" could be distinguished from those who covered politics as beat reporters by specialists' comparative independence, though differences between the two roles could become hazy, and varied by newspaper organization.
[61] Because correspondents existed so far out of the newsroom's orbit, they are not a focus of this study. They did tend to bring newsroom norms with them, however.

better things, or to do it so poorly (without getting fired) that they'll have to take you off it."[62] Navigating "dinky editorship titles" could just be another part of surviving at a larger, more compartmentalized newspaper. Despite this reality, some positions, which on the surface seemed like dull dead ends for reporters—including section editing of financial, ship-news, society, drama (theater and movies), radio (and later TV), music and art beats—could provide interesting breaks from traditional beats or general-assignment reporting, and become careers unto themselves.[63]

During the Depression, working as a specialist was thought to bring you extra job security.[64] In the midst of it, Helen Rowland, a syndicated advice columnist (of "The Marry-Go-Round'), advised aspiring reporters to "find a specialty," since "your reputation is a cumulative thing."[65] Reporters sought bylines, in some cases, in order to build enough a reputation to someday become columnists. Leveraging detours was a hallmark of the savvy reporter. At the end of World War Two, Hanson Baldwin, himself a military analyst and specialist for the *New York Times*, reflected on how experts were "now a fundamental part of the modern newspaper," with a definite trend "toward departmentalization of the news." Reporters and specialists were similar, he said, and "indeed, I claim that a specialist has to be a good reporter." Some GA reporters at the *Times* were part-time specialists, whereas some specialized departments could staff dozens of dedicated writers (though only at the biggest papers). A specialist was in the unique position to fuse "facts, background and opinion—with

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[62] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 180.
[63] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 182-85.
[64] Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 13, 1934, 44.
[65] John W. Perry, "Helen Rowland says 'find a specialty,'" *Editor & Publisher*, March 22, 1930, 9. She went on: "Hit the same nail over the head year in and year out. Sooner or later your proficiency—if it really is proficiency—will be noticed. When you . . . find your niche, concentrate on quality rather than quantity."

particular accent upon *background* and *interpretation*." He was quick to say that while specialists had tacit and explicit permission to engage in what was then called news "interpretation," or analysis of current events, they were not, strictly speaking, columnists. They could be roving columnists, as was the case with Ernie Pyle, who had just then died while covering combat operations on Okinawa.[66] A more comfortable parallel for Baldwin, himself an in-demand specialist in the closing days of the war, was reporting, and he argued that specialists were in fact specialist reporters, an important, if category-collapsing clarification in a newsroom united by the act of creating a daily and weekly product but also subdivided into groups of peers and near-peers. A specialist could occasionally diverge from the paper's editorial policy, and have a wider latitude than the ordinary reporter in doing so. In Baldwin's case, perhaps because of the unique situation with the war, and his own expertise, this was not uncommon.[67]

With newsrooms, creating specialist-reporting jobs was a trend that outlasted the war. By the 1950s an observer noted that the "age of specialization in the news room" had arrived.[68] A generation earlier, "any reporter worth his salt was confident that he was competent to cope with whatever assignment came his way, whether it was a general alarm fire, a juicy murder, or interviewing the latest literary lion." But the traditional expectation of reportorial flexibility had changed, he said, with an increasing emphasis on, and encouragement of, specialists at even smaller newspapers.[69]

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[66] Hanson Baldwin, "The job of the specialist," in *The Newspaper: Its Making and Its Meaning* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), 151, 152, 153. Emphasis in original.
[67] Hanson Baldwin, "The job of the specialist," in *The Newspaper: Its Making and Its Meaning* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), 159.
[68] Charles C. Clayton, "Age of specialists," *The Quill*, September 1959, 7.
[69] Charles C. Clayton, "Age of specialists," *The Quill*, September 1959, 7.

Columnists: career progression, work routines and status

Columnists were a breed apart in the newsroom's editorial universe. While specialists were considered experts among newspaper people and the public alike, they still focused on news and developments in their particular field. Columnists, likewise, were specialists on particular topics, but far more focused on developing a first-person persona. This distinct voice was critical. Successful columnists approached topics from a unique angle that readers enjoyed.

The only requirement was consistency, up to about 500 to 1,000 words per day for the more gossipy type, aka "the keyhole boys," who needed to be "lively and not too libelous."[70] They could of course, also write and break news. Circulation boosters, columnists could range widely in content, from advice, political, drama and history, to sports, and humor. They could "make more money than editors and have more fame and fun."[71] The freedom to consistently write under their bylines daily or weekly was about all many columnists had in common, however, as their salaries and backgrounds could also vary, from humble, small-town daily newspaper columnists to the high-powered, well-remunerated and nationally known columnists such as Heywood Broun or Westbrook Pegler.[72] On the lower end, full-time columnists could make as much as a GA reporter, but on the higher end, he or she could take home as much $10,000 a year or more. In some rare cases, with extra income generated by lectures, books, endorsements and appearances on TV and on the radio, columnists could make up to $250,000 a year, an extraordinary sum for the time.[73]

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[70] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 221-2.
[71] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 79-81, 221.
[72] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 81.
[73] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 82; though Sugarman does not mention him by name, Duncan Hines (1880-1959), of food-writer fame, was one such columnist. Sontheimer cited 1937 U.S. House of Representative Ways and Means Committee

Columnists found time for these extra activities if they could confine their drafting work to a few hours a day, which the wealthier were able to do.[74] These highly successful columnists tended to be in the widest syndication, their material filling up editorial and feature pages in hundreds of newspapers around the world. With "this volcano of the newspaper field," column writing and columnists were a big business, and an outsized influence on the opinions of powerful and ordinary Americans alike during this period.[75] The extreme disparity in pay between reporters and columnists concerned some editors, however. "We are workers," one managing editor in Chicago noted in 1931, "and to my mind, there never could be any sense in paying a columnist $25,000 a year, and maybe syndicate percentages, and then having a fellow who is writing for the first page all the time, paid $100 a week."[76] The majority of columnists, however, made a more modest income. A survey in 1960 of 153 managing editors found that veteran reporters and columnists made an average of $8,344 a year on newspapers of 150,000 circulation or more; extra compensation brought that closer to $8,705.[77]

Cultivating material could be challenging. A columnist, even a creative one, could run his or her "subject so far into the ground it should come [out] in China, or in Chinese." It was important to develop new sources.[78] Starting out involved getting as many bylines as possible

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data that showed that well-known columnist Walter Winchell was making more than $74,200 a year, Walter Lippman more than $62,400, and Broun and Pegler $36,200 and $46,200, respectively; see Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 222; at one point Broun was known as the "'highest paid reporter in the country'" see Philip Schuyler, "Personal journalism is coming back—Broun," *Editor & Publisher*, March 15, 1924, 7. By 1945, Pegler was making $90,000 a year. See Luther Huston, "If columnists are giving you cat meat for top sirloin: hire better reporters!" *The Quill*, Jan.-Feb. 1945, 5;

[74] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 222.

[75] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 83.

[76] "Shop talk: building a city staff," Problems of Journalism, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 17, 1931, 163. The editor in question was Henry Justin Smith, the managing editor of the *Chicago Daily News*, who seems to have empathized with his reporters more than some.

[77] "Manpower recruiting, pay and turnover: personnel panel," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors Nov. 15-19, 1960, 75.

[78] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 222.

and writing guest columns, as well as working steadily on “some dinky local column on fishing, radio, ship news, sports or such,” so that over time, and “with enough individuality, good writing and pungent observations . . . somebody will ‘discover’ you for a real columning job.”[79] Cementing their reputation as newsroom elites, columnists often got their own offices, putting them on par with senior editors, cartoonists and editorial writers.[80] Barring that, they might get their own corner spot in the newsroom.[81] Either move signaled status and removed columnists from the work and social spheres of regular reporters.

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[79] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 223.

[80] Walter H. Wood, “The Chicago Tribune’s new home latest in plant construction,” *Editor & Publisher*, June 5, 1920, 36; “stars” had their own “private compartments above the local room, which in reality is only a half story or balcony. Among these satellites with special work rooms will be B.L.T. (Burt Leston Taylor), who is nationally known for his ‘Line O’ Type’ column; ‘Doc’ W. A. Evans . . . health expert; Sidney Smith, creator of ‘Dok Yak’ and ‘Andy Gump’ in the cartoon world; Carey Orr, able cartoonist and father of the ‘Tiny Trib;’ and Frank King, who has immortalized the auto-owning clan through his cartoon strip on ‘Gasoline Alley.’”

[81] Peter Kihss, “When a reporter turns columnist,” *The Quill*, January 1936, 9.

LINES OF THE TIMES

"You're doing today's 'Advice to the Lovelorn' column, and that settles it!"

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Women as well as men could be successful columnists. Many of the former were advice columnists, focusing on relationships and romance.[83] Others, however, covered broader social issues and politics.[84] Columnists of both sexes were advertised in trade publications, with some newspapers hoping their local talent could be syndicated nationally.[85] Later, columnists added TV to their repertoire of topics.[86] Some papers looked to replace syndicated features with local, "signed" columnists.[87] This was an attractive option if an editor could save money while also

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[82] "Lines of the times," *The Quill*, March 1957, 28; not every columnist was either well-known or powerful.
[83] Rosalie Armistead Higgins, "Her beaux started Helen Rowland on career as 'Solomon's Wife,' *Editor & Publisher*, April 17, 1920, 8, 58.
[84] Mildred E. Phillips, "Forum of feminine fraternity of Fourth Estates," *Editor & Publisher*, June 4, 1921, 30-1.
[85] "Take it from Beulah, by Beulah Schacht: you've got to hand it to Beulah," *Editor & Publisher*, March 14, 1953, 25.
[86] James L. Collings, "Syndicates: Oh Marie! Whatta gal and whatta reporter," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 7, 1956, 40.
[87] "It's an ill wind—" The Quill, January 1932, 10.

increasing circulation with a locally known writer. Colorful and capable, columnists were a prized asset for a newspaper. Some editors advocated for treating local news columnists as direct extensions of the newsroom's reporter pool, or at least a logical arrangement of their staff. These could include the "pundit," the "reporter-commentator, "loss-and-tell boys like Winchell," and "the funny boys like Bob Hope and Gracie Allen."[88] Giving reporters latitude and paying them a little more to use them as commentators was a better use of resources, versus paying "out millions," one editor insisted, "for canned columns."[89] Some local columnists, contrary to their aloof reputation, also enjoyed interacting with newsroom life and with rank-and-file news workers[90]

Editorial writers: role in the newsroom, career path and work routines

The most anonymous and routine (if still creative) copy was produced by the editorial writers at daily newspapers. On smaller newspapers, the more powerful editors, such as the managing editor and editor-in-chief, wrote the editorials, which became the official point-of-view of the paper.[91] Editorial writers themselves were "of high rank" after having commonly worked their way up. While the job was known for attracting older news workers, due to its "sedentary nature" and its more reflective routine, by the early 1950s it was attracting younger writers. In either case, former and current specialists in certain beats made good editorial

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[88] Luther Huston, "If columnists are giving you cat meat for top sirloin: Hire better reporters!" *The Quill*, Jan.-Feb. 1945, 5; Huston, manager of the Washington Bureau of the *New York Times* and a ranking official in Sigma Delta Chi, said, echoing others, that "Except for the comic artists, no other journalistic field open to the man who lives by his typewriter offers such rich rewards."
[89] Luther Huston, "If columnists are giving you cat meat for top sirloin," 5.
[90] Erich Brandeis, "It may be tough, so what! Thanks, says columnist, I'll take the big city," *The Quill*, October 1949, 9, 13. Broun was known, for example, for his ability to mix it up with the humblest leg man.
[91] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 55; "editorial workers," somewhat confusingly, was the term applied occasionally to all of a newspapers non-mechanical (and non-business staff), though still distinguished from "editorial writer," the term I have tried to use for the sake of clarity in this section.

writers, depending on the topic of the day.[92] Not as limited by space, and free to opine (at least in accordance with the official and unofficial policies of the paper), editorial writers worked on teams as large as the copy desk at larger newspapers. This was done in conjunction with an editorial board, often including the publisher, the managing editor, available editorial writers, and any other interested section editors. Assignments for individual and group-written editorials would flow from this meeting. Thus operating in a world apart from the newsroom, editorial writers were the most loosely affiliated "peers" of more ordinary news workers. They felt "less the excitement, glamour, and press urgency of most newspapermen," but were still considered part of the broader newsroom team, definitely more closely aligned with the writing side of the paper, for example, than any staff member on the business side.[93] Along with other newsroom groups, they had their stereotypes, too. As Hugh S. Balllie, executive vice president of the UP, reminisced in 1935, "The editorial writer usually sat on a pile of back numbers and had his office so stuffed with old papers and musty paste pots that it constituted a fire hazard."[94]

It was considered comparatively easy, steady work, with hours much more akin to a non-newspaper job and the compensation higher than other newsroom jobs. "The work is seldom heavy and is accomplished in an atmosphere of quiet and leisure compared with news writing," noted one reporter. An editorial writer, however, often labored in "complete anonymity," so much so that it was "not unusual for even most of the staff to be unacquainted

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[92] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 56, 57; some editorial writers were more generalists, while others focused on state politics, for example, 58.
[93] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 58.
[94] Hugh S. Balllie, "Headwork behind the headlines: initiative and enthusiasm help newsmen steer their course safely past perilous shoals of standardization," *The Quill*, February 1935, 9-10.

with the man in the little private office who pounds out the editorials."[95] Removed as it was "from the rushing, tearing, glamour centers of newspaper production," it was sometimes not much sought after and thus had more openings than other jobs at the paper. Pitching opinion pieces steadily, ideally to a city editor, but barring that, to an existing editorial writer, increased a reporter's chances. Learning by trial and error to not criticize the publisher's "pets," and instead align oneself with his or her perspective, helped. Only over time and after editorial writers had established themselves could one gainsay the opinions of the paper's ownership. A well-rounded education on everything from "transit to totalitarianism" was also necessary.[96]

[95] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 199.
[96] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 199-200.

Specially Drawn for EDITOR & PUBLISHER by Louis A. Paige, Utica (N. Y.) Observer-Dispatch. [97]

Editorial writers before the war

Editorial writers remained physically separated from the rest of the newsroom, enhancing their status as quasi-outsiders, and aligning their perspectives more with ownership and management than with their rank-and-file colleagues. This was partially pragmatic. In an era when newsrooms were as lively and loud as a "firecracker," with telephones, typewriters,

[97] Louis A. Paige, "The other fellow's job," *Editor & Publisher*, April 18, 1936, 70; news workers sometimes envied their peers' work routines.

pneumatic tubs and shouting editors and reporters creating a rich aural landscape, it was helpful for editorial writers to have their own space apart to think, debate and compose.[98] There was also the traditional, and increasingly stark, separation of "opinion" from "fact" on many newspapers, as objectivity became an entrenched norm (or at least a strived-for ideal) and more overt political patronage receded further into the past.[99] The editorial page and its writers were the paper's best avenues when it wanted to express its official response to business and government activities and decisions. It was imagined as a powerful, activist counter-force to state and federal governments.[100] Internally, next to the business office, it was as sealed off as possible from the workaday concerns of the regular newsroom.

In contrast, some editorial writers, even those who worked as newsroom supervisors, felt that editorial writing kept them close to the pulse of the newsroom. H.V. Kaltenborn, associate editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, and later a well-known radio commenter, enjoyed writing editorials. As a profile on Kaltenborn put it, doing so "keeps [him] in the class of working newspapermen and keeps him also in active touch with the news department."[101] But the arrival of the Depression—and the ANG—caused some anxiety as to the role and status of the editorial writer. The generally pro-publisher *Editor & Publisher*, for example, worried that unionizing the newsroom would lead to a less creative, less independent worker, especially if that worker was coming from a position that required more creativity and independence to begin with, including editorial writers.[102] And while there were some exceptions, editorial

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[98] "Small city daily best to start on, journalism students told," *Editor & Publisher*, July 7, 1923, 12.
[99] As Marion Marzolf explains in *Civilizing Voices: American Press Criticism, 1880-1950* (New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1991), the "objectivity standard" had a long and complex origin (and application) in the U.S. journalism tradition. See 119-32 in *Civilizing Voices*.
[100] Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 24, 1928, 44;
[101] Philip Schuyler, "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, March 1, 1924, 16.
[102] "Editorial: picking a fight," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 22, 1936.

writers remained a minority on most papers during this era. A survey by the ASNE estimated that small to medium-sized daily newspapers employed just about two editorial writers out of about fifty dedicated newsroom staff. A typical range was about one to four on staffs that totaled between 25 and 68.[103] One study of the *Milwaukee Journal*, a relatively large daily with a circulation of 260,000, found only a single dedicated editorial writer out of the 55 men and women surveyed in the news and "other editorial departments" (and with a total staff of 84).[104]

Editorial writers during the war and beyond: an elite status confirmed

Newspaper buildings and newsroom in the 1940s and 1950s continued to apportion separate spaces for editorial writers, putting them on the same level as artists, critics, senior editors and feature writers.[105] Editorial writers' proximity to power was obvious. The *Los Angeles Examiner* in 1956 located its editorial writers close to the office of H.H. Krauch, the managing editor, with his corner office in the renovated newsroom.[106] Even when not as ostentatiously placed near supervisors, they were commonly removed from other writing news workers, occasionally located on their own floor.[107]

Editorial writers remained a special breed apart from other newsroom workers, and especially from beat and other kinds of reporters. But they all shared the mission of writing "material which will interest the public and keep the paper sold to the public."[108] Like other

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[103] "How editors deal with administrative problems,' American Society of Newspaper Editors, *Problems of Journalism*, April 19, 1940, 142; these were from papers of under 100,000 circulation, and thus out of the usual range of this study; the numbers make it clear, however, that editorial writers were a proportionally small part of a newspaper's staff.
[104] Francis V. Prugger, "Social Composition and Training of Milwaukee Journal News Staff," *Journalism Quarterly* 18, 3 (1941): 232, 237.
[105] "St. Paul Dispatch-Pioneer Press now printing in new plant," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 11, 1941, 44.
[106] "Ex-back shop now city room," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 22, 1956, 67.
[107] Eugene S. Pulliam, Jr., "Just seat 20 next to each other: how to streamline a big city newsroom," *The Quill*, February 1950, 8-10.
[108] Arthur Robb, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 16, 1941, 36.

more fixed creative news workers, editorial writers continued to battle perceptions that they were less relevant than the "spot news reporter and hard-holed editor."[109] They were thought to live in their own "Ivory Tower" as part of the "egghead department" and were seemingly aloof (and privileged to be removed from) the concerns of the newsroom, the newspaper and readers in general. Other reporters thought they "enjoyed an undeserved sinecure." Editorial writers "sat with their feet on their desks and gazed thoughtfully into space. The end result of a day's work was less than any competent rewrite man could turn out in less than an hour," noted a newsroom observer in 1958.[110] Reporters and other lower-level newsroom staff usually "did not achieve the dignity of an editorial writer's chair until the years began to weigh on him." And so younger reporters, including cubs, came to believe that the sole qualifications for the assignment were a lack of bounce . . . [in the step] . . . and a mentality not quite quick enough for the copy desk." But such internal folk tales were not true, or the basis for them was changing, some argued. There were still unique stresses to the job, and they did, in fact, help to influence their community for the good. With its "own compensations," an editorial writer need not live an "austere existence behind the sterile walls of his Ivory Tower." Editorial writers were writing "much closer to the news" and were more willing, especially as they began to include younger newsroom staff, and former reporters, to "stick their editorial necks out with far more abandon."[111]

While editorial workers remained quiet members of the newsroom, there were also attempts to capture more information about them. A survey by the University of Oregon's

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[109] Robert Eastabrook, "'Forgotten men' to meet: editorial writers form new newspaper group," *The Quill*, August 1947, 5, 13.
[110] Charles C. Clayton, "Defense of the eggheads," *The Quill*, January 1958, 4.
[111] Charles C. Clayton, "Defense of the eggheads," *The Quill*, January 1958, 4.

School of Journalism found that 15 of the 23 editorial writers working in the state from 1950 to 1951 had other journalistic duties; two covered regular beats and three wrote for the AP and *Oregonian*. The average age was 56, and average weekly time spent on the job was 60 hours; all but four belonged to some kind of civic club, echoing a more general involvement in life outside the news organization.[112] Reporters were comparatively insular. The American Press Institute, started in the wake of the war and holding meetings hosted by Columbia's School of Journalism, held a special session just for editorial writers, putting them on par with managing and news editors, "picture editors" and specialized reporters, including covering city hall and labor.[113] In continuing public debates with the Guild, representatives of the ANPA also contended that reporters and editorial writers, due to the independent nature of their work, qualified as "professional" workers. Because they produced creative work outside of the direct control of their supervisors, "all of them must be inspired and motivated in their production efforts by considerations that are intellectual and creative and must, of necessary, therefore, have qualities of studiousness, scholarliness and trained thinking."[114] The ANG disagreed, claiming that reporters and editorial writers alike faced severe restrictions on their work.[115] In other ways, editorial writers continued to operate with an older, more traditional set of newsroom customs. It seems to have stayed even less diverse in terms of gender and race than the rest of the newsroom, for example. Whereas women and minorities were slowly, though

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[112] Gordon A. Sabine, "J-school surveys all Oregon: Editorial writers yearn for 'another hour a day,'" *The Quill*, January 1951, 5, 10.
[113] "Press Institute formed for working newsmen," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 16, 1946, 5, 56.
[114] "Publishers and Guild differ on 'profession,'" *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 17, 1948, 15, 60; at least this was the line of reasoning offered by Cranston Williams, general manager of the ANPA; this debate will be analyzed in greater detail in the chapter on supervisors and news workers, as well as the chapter on unionization in the newsroom.
[115] "Publishers and Guild differ on 'profession,'" *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 17, 1948, 15, 60.

haltingly, hired to fill other news-worker roles, many newspapers' editorial writers remained primarily older white men.[116]

Conclusion: peers and newsroom community

Reporters' roles, power dynamics and levels of autonomy in the newsroom were varied. But within this variegated milieu, they formed a unique *occupational community*, with its own norms, standards, ethos and mythos. As the newsroom ethnographers of the late 1960s and 1970s (and 1980s) discovered, this community shaped the meaning and form of news. It also shaped and formed the newsmakers. The work-saving and sharing practices detected by Rosten in the mid-1930s and the subtle "policy" shaping pressures from editors picked up by Breed in the mid-1950s foreshadowed this.[117] Other contemporaries, including a number of memoirists and writers for trade publications, reflected on how cub reporters, leg men, GA reporters, beat reporters and other newsroom-based writers operated within their own larger circle (within the broad category of news gatherer), distinct from other newsroom support staff (who were more focused on news production).[118] Put another way, reporters of various kinds were gatherers. Copy editors, rewrite staff and middle- and senior-level editors were producers. Within the inner circle of gatherers, both junior and senior reporters created their own sub-groups, with idealized pathways to independence. Junior reporters had less power and autonomy. Senior reporters had more of both. But through their own discourse about themselves, their work and

[116] "J-education: jobs becoming more available for Negro grads," *Editor & Publisher*, July 2, 1949, 35. See also Gwyneth Mellinger, *Chasing Newsroom Diversity: From Jim Crow to Affirmative Action* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2013).
[117] Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents*; Warren Breed, "Social control in the newsroom: a functional analysis," *Social Forces* 33, 4 (1955): 326-335; and Breed, *The Newspaperman, News and Society* (1952. Ph.D. dissertation, New York: Columbia University, 1952).
[118] As noted above, I have put "newsroom-based writers" under a larger umbrella category of "outliers," including specialists, feature writers, columnists and editorial writers.

their workplaces, reporters, as the centering figures in the newsroom, also created their own *interpretative community* in the stories they told one another about these groups.[119] As Barbie Zelizer describes it, through this discourse reporters navigated changing circumstances, technologies and the status and role of their work in American society.[120]

These micro-workplace communities could create intense tensions and rivalries. They could also create necessary relational space, an important buffer against the ups and downs of work in print journalism. Whether working together out in the field, or in the physical newsroom space, recent recruits formed friendships, packs and symbiotic connections. Their presence near one another was crucial. It was no accident that newsroom proximity for these workers had profound social and occupational meanings. The very physicality of the newsroom space helped to foster this sense of occupational and interpretive community. Lefebvre, among other spatial theorists, discusses these concepts (just not applied directly to newsrooms) in great depth and theoretical nuance. In very broad strokes, he speaks of "space" (and in my case, newsroom space) as *conceived* (produced), *perceived* (imagined) and *lived* (manifested in news product(s) or places). At a basic level, reporters socialized one another into their distinctive roles in the newsroom in all three spaces. Newsrooms were built spaces, and thus conceived with particular purposes (i.e., news production, displays of publisher power) in mind. They were perceived places—were written about extensively in memoirs and trade literature, and left an indelible social impression on news workers. They were lived spaces, too, in that

[119] Zelizer, "Journalists as interpretative communities," 219-37.
[120] Zelizer, "Journalists as interpretative communities," 233.

reporters created products that were consumed and shared by other newsroom peers and by members of their audience.[121]

Within this space, a "secondary socialization" was part of the division of labor, and led, determined and bounded by peers. With this socialization, news workers engaged in a social construction of their workplace reality and roles.[122] Due to the special similarity and immediacy of their work practices and products, reporters tended to identify strongly as part of groups, even as an ideology of individualism was also present. These contradictions were reinforced in reporters' reactions to the demands of near-peers and peers. Reporters who had more power—including "star reporters," specialists, columnists and editorial writers—were held up as different and important among their colleagues, and inspired junior reporters' aspirations to autonomy. Finally, reporters were shaped by the authority of editors, and how that authority pushed against their own aspirations for agency and control over their work routines. This is the topic of the next chapter.

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[121] As is elaborated further elsewhere in this study, the physicality of the newsroom space helped to foster this sense of occupational and interpretive community. Henri Lefebvre's *Production of Space* (translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), among other spatial theorists, discusses these concepts (though not explicitly applied directly to newsrooms). Another important spatial theorist is David Harvey, whose work is wonderfully explicated by Nikki Usher in the latter's work on newsroom transitions in the early twenty-first century; see Nikki Usher, "Newsroom moves and newspaper crisis evaluated: space, place, and cultural meaning," *Media, Culture & Society*, (2015): 1-17; and also David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1991, 1992) and Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London and New York: Verso, 2006). As Usher has demonstrated, and I also hope to show, the work of spatial theorists such as Lefebvre and Harvey can be helpfully applied to journalism-studies research, and to a social history of newsroom life in the twentieth-century U.S. context. Usher's work is particularly helpful, as noted elsewhere (especially in the conclusion), in unpacking theories of relational space as applied to newsrooms.

[122] For more on the ideas of "secondary socialization," and social constructionism as a theoretical concept that has some utility (with caveats) for understanding newsrooms and their relational dynamics, see Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York, Doubleday: Anchor Books, 1966, 1989), especially 138-47. I do not pretend to be an expert on this body of work, but it does influence, even if it is unacknowledged, older newsroom studies within journalism studies. For example, in regards to how Gaye Tuchman (*Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, 1978) used Berger and Luckmann in her research on newsroom life (and also for how I have used their work, though more in passing), please see Sarah Stonbely, "The social and intellectual contexts of the U.S. 'Newsroom Studies,' and the media sociology of today," *Journalism Studies*, 16, 2 (2015), 265-67.

Chapter 6

Reporters and their bosses: power-sharing in the newsroom

The traditional tension between reporters and editors has been the stuff of newsroom legend.[1] For generations, reporters of all kinds thought of editors as "our friendly enemies."[2] Focused on getting and writing the news, reporters constantly pushed for more autonomy. Editors pushed back. They believed they had to be a "fountain of knowledge; a glutton for work and able to put over a bluff," knowing how to both engage with their paper's sometimes-enigmatic ownership and the erratic tastes of their readership.[3] Sometimes reporters and editors could agree. Often they could not. The latter was nominally in charge, but the paper could not function without the former.

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[1] For the purposes of this chapter, "reporter" will refer to "leg men," general-assignment (GA) reporters, beat reporters or specialists (with the latter two categories often overlapping), unless it is specifically spelled out that the reporter is a cub or a columnist, or some other unique kind of reporter. As centering figures in the newsroom, reporters exemplified the supervisor-news worker interaction that is examined in this chapter. Other types of news workers, including support personnel, such as copy editors and rewrite staff, could, of course, experience versions of this relationship. But for the sake of my argument and the overall social history of the American newsroom from 1920 to 1960, the reporter and his or her editor(s) will remain our focus here. Other studies, such as the work of Susan Keith, have pointed out the interesting dynamics of the copy desk, and inform this chapter. See Keith, "Horseshoes, stylebooks, wheels, poles, and dummies: objects of editing power in 20th-century newsrooms," *Journalism* 16, 1 (2015): 44-60. An "editor" in this chapter is defined as any newsroom worker having the ability, power and/or authority to manipulate the content of other news workers and direct their daily labors, especially via assignments, rewrite tasks, or copy-editing duties, or supervise others in the newsroom. "Managing editor," or "M.E.," was a broadly used term to describe the newsroom executive with the most power on the staff, second only to an editor-in-chief or publisher. The M.E. could determine newsroom policy, the newsroom's daily routine, and was the final decision-maker on hiring, firing, spending and coverage, sharing power only with the business manager. This latter figure's duties could be assumed by the M.E. See "Baltimore Hearst papers sign with editorial group," *Editor & Publisher*, April 2, 1939, 26; see also Howe V. Morgan, "Entertainment or enlightenment?" *The Quill*, July 1932, 8.

[2] Mildred E. Phillips, "Forum of feminine fraternity of Fourth Estates," *Editor & Publisher*, June 4, 1921, 30-31.

[3] L.A. Wilke, "As they view it: those city editors," *The Quill*, November 1931, 2.

From 1920 to 1960, editors changed from being top-down autocrats to acting more as managers. As with other American business organizations, newsrooms were in the midst of a white-collar shift, with college becoming a more acceptable way to enter the field. As Richard Edwards has argued, a "system of control" pervaded this process, with direction, evaluation and discipline enacted within a shared workplace.[4] Newsrooms, though, were unique constructs, with their own rich traditions. The paternal (though some might add autocratic) attitude some owners and senior editors held toward their reporters would give way to a more strictly managerial, or corporatized employer-employee dynamic. This did not happen overnight, or easily. The arrival of the American Newspaper Guild (ANG) made arbitrary decision-making more costly for editors, who found that their supreme power to hire, direct and fire news workers was fading. They also found that their power had to be shared with human-resource departments, which functioned as a new institutional structure that regulated authority. Reporters, for their part, went from surviving and tolerating abusive bosses to interacting with them not quite as equals, but on less-terrified and increasingly respectful terms. This chapter tells the story of how the newsroom's hierarchal dynamic changed.

The conflict between the newsroom's leaders and its nominal followers is complex. Both groups thought of the other as a distinct "them," and sought to minimize and share the others' power. Reflecting on his experiences in the early 1960s, one reporter remembered how editors thought of themselves as "'idea men.'" Reporters, for their part, thought of editors as "manipulators of both reality and men," operating within their "own, separate hierarchy"

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[4] Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1979), 18. Edwards is interested in how capitalism in large industrial and then later corporate firms altered relationships between managers and workers.

designed to enforce conformity.[5] As Warren Breed described it, the newsroom's "social control," centered on these editor-reporter interactions, was subtle. It had much more to do with editing marks, quiet nods and unvoiced acts of shunning than it had to do with verbal correction, shouting matches or thrown objects. Editors were enforcers of newsroom power. But this control (and resistance to it) did not exist in a vacuum. Breed's examination of newsrooms in the 1950s, for example, came during a relatively white-collar era.[6] He noted an overarching collegiality to most newsroom staffer interactions, even between those of markedly different ranks, and postulated that news workers controlled themselves more than they were controlled by others. Far from being an entirely top-down workplace, power was shared among newsroom inhabitants (granted, with newsroom bosses still retaining more of it). From their entry into the newsroom, reporters learned primarily on the job and from each other, as well as from interactions with their bosses, during a "wiring-in" period.[7]

Through the middle of the century, however, newsroom life retained elements of a more blue-collar existence. The work of reporters, with long hours, unreliable transportation and time outdoors or standing for long periods, could tax even the most energetic people. Stress was ever-present, and not just from these and other external factors. Working closely together in a shared space, reporters and their editors throughout the period had ample opportunity to exhibit their frustrations with one another. Reporters and their bosses engaged

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[5] Robert Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," *Daedalus* 104, 2 (1975), 179.

[6] Warren Breed, "Social control in the newsroom: A functional analysis," *Social Forces* 33, no. 4 (1955): 326-335; see also his dissertation, Breed, *The Newspaperman, News and Society* (New York: Columbia University, 1952). As noted elsewhere, Breed's work, along with Leo Rosten's, prefigured the classic newsroom ethnographies of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

[7] Breed, *The Newspaperman, News and Society*, 147, 154-5. This "wiring-in" season, i.e. the period in which a reporter passed through their cub stage, is explored elsewhere in this study.

in conflict, fighting for control over their work processes. Editors sought to more tightly direct their reporters' workflows and products.

Editors and reporters tended to be wired differently, and that had to be taken into account when managing the latter. While both groups were more normal than might be expected by outsiders (not the "screwballs, alcoholics, dope addicts and so on" depicted in films, novels and later television), it was also felt that "editors tend to be much more serious than the successful reporter." Reporters were more socially aggressive, and were "more like salesmen." Unlike editors, they did "not mind getting out there and knocking on doors to get a story."[8] Editors had power and used it. But reporters and their bosses were also similar. They engaged in collaborative activities, sharing aspects of their work and its processes. This involved establishing and respecting routines and boundaries in a kind of time- and workflow-management. As in the conflict and collaboration between copy editors and reporters (and to a lesser degree, between rewrite staff and reporters), an uneasy détente could be reached. Ideally, some editors and reporters recognized that they worked best when they respected each other's agency, and imposed limits (in the case of bosses toward their workers) on it. In addition, both roles and routines were set by the production needs of the newspaper.

Writing in the mid-1930s, a city editor noted that his job was "a little less piratical and adventurous than in the old days." With larger, better organized staffs, editors had to rule less by fear and could manage more through collaboration: "he may compare himself with the manager of a baseball team, impresario of a road show, the driver of a mule team, a school

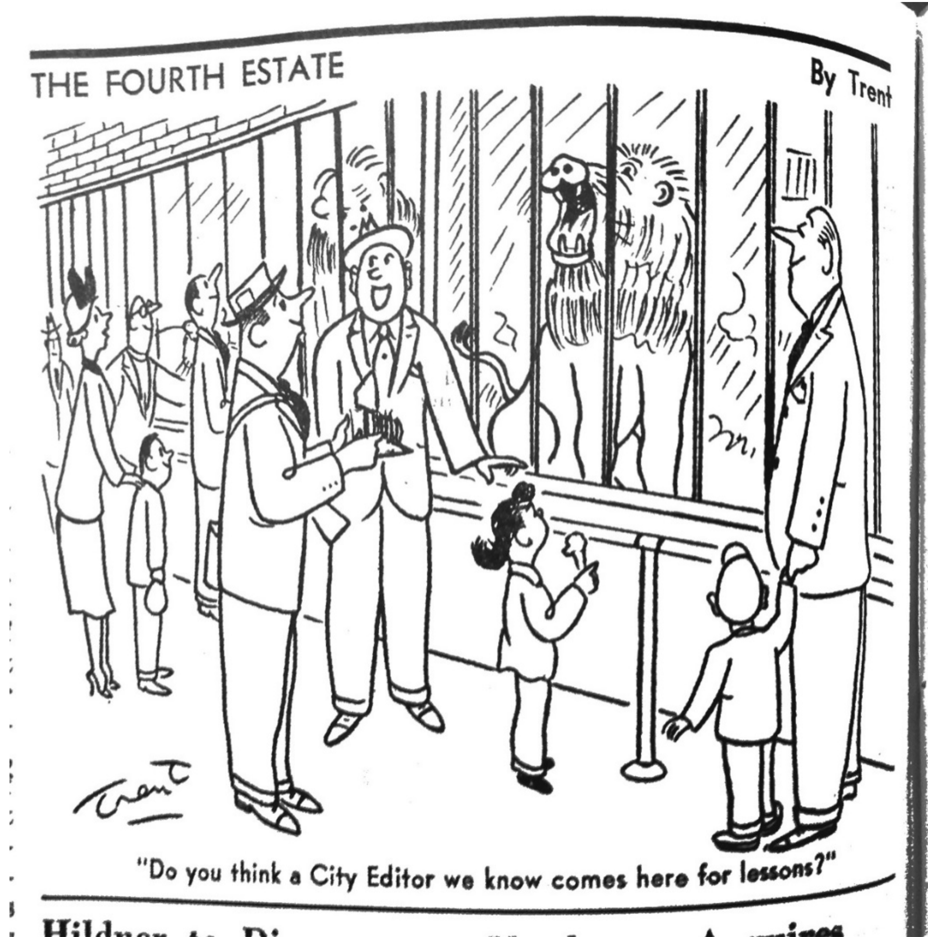
[8] "News and administration: personnel and recruiting," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21-3, 1955, 171-2. This perspective was from Byron Harless, of the *St. Petersburg Times*, though his precise role is unclear.

teacher hammering knowledge into the backwoods crackers, an overworked and underpaid hangman, the boss of a chain gang, a priest with a parish in Hell's Kitchen."[9] Editors could be crafty and cruel, insightful and distant. They could come in "hard, soft, and medium" flavors, and tended to be "hard-boiled." There were reasons for this almost chameleon-like set of characterizations. As "the boss of the city room," the editor needed to maintain a persona of power, complete with a certain fierceness of temper. He (and it was nearly often a "he" during this era) was also human, suffering from "migraine and buck fever," and subject to "moments of fumbling and fright."[10] There was a noted decline in the presence of the angrier, louder type of editor who had inspired old stereotypes. But "sometimes, it may be, there is too much politeness and consideration. The moderns may be at times too soft for the good for the business. The 'good fellows' can overdo it."[11]

[9] Stanley Walker, *City Editor* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, Inc., 1934), 18-19. Walker knew much about the temperament and changing norms of city editors, having been one at the *New York Herald Tribune*. "The boss of the city room . . . invents strange devices for the torture of reporters, [he is] this mythical agate-eye Torquemada with the paste-pots and scissors. Even his laugh, usually directed at something sacred, is part sneer. His terrible curses cause flowers to wither, as the grass died under the hoofbeats of the horse of Attila the Hun. A chilly, monstrous figure, sleepless, nerveless, and facing with ribald mockery the certain hell which awaits him."

[10] Walker, *City Editor*, 1-2.

[11] Walker, *City Editor*, 4.



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Changing newsroom dynamics

Reflecting on newsroom life in 1925, a writer noted that the "newspaper office often seems a hard, cold semi-military institution in matters of discipline, a machine that takes little thought for the individual, yet there is passion for service, [and an] ideal of duty, often tucked away there."[13] The authority of editors could be the envy of foremen on the mechanical side and was similar to that of a classified-advertising manager, with the latter's direct control over a "telephone staff."[14] The power of editors was such that they could "ruin" reporters through

[12] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 19, 1959, 68. Editor-as-lion was a familiar metaphor for newsroom cartoonists. For another example, see the appendix on newsroom humor in editor-reporter interactions.
[13] Philip Kinsley, "Reporting must be improved to clarify news stream," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 7, 1925, 44.
[14] "Editorial: The mechanical side," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 25, 1930, 56.

"unsympathetic treatment."[15] Reporters could and were summoned by shouts, intercoms, loudspeakers and buzzers.[16] If a reporter failed to come back to the newsroom or phone in copy, or, worse yet, was scooped by a rival paper, he or she would often endure a familiar ritual, a "session with the old man."[17] A textbook author noted that a city editor acted as the "commander in chief" during breaking news, directing the "activities of his troops—the general assignment, beat and special reporters, the leg and rewrite men." Operating "like an advancing army" the newsroom demanded of its members "organization, discipline, partition and specification of duties and co-ordination." Editors prized, perhaps ironically, both obedience and independent initiative.[18] The military metaphors continued: "like a company of soldiers, the entire staff may be shifted or realigned by the editors as the day's events dictate."[19]

Other commentators noted that over time the distance between rank-and-file reporters and their bosses had begun to ease. A generation before, editors were "hell-roaring," and would pride themselves on their ability "to curse out a reporter and … [a] willingness to 'fire' him on very slight provocation." Some editors were so well known for their rages that they earned a kind of celebrity for "their tendency to go into perfect paroxysms of rage, to climb on their desks, tear their hair and then rush through every department of the paper like a cyclone, leaving terror and confusion and vacant jobs in their wake." Editors and reporters only talked when they needed to, and the former's "aims and purposes were a mystery" to most of the

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[15] "Our own world of letters," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 13, 1934, 34.
[16] Edith Bristol, "Get the story!" *Editor & Publisher*, May 25, 1935, 7.
[17] James Philip MacCarthy, *The Newspaper Worker: A Manual for All Who Write* (New York: Frank-Maurice, Inc., 1925), 12. To be fair, as MacCarthy points out, even in the 1920s even traditional editors would sometimes be understanding if circumstances were beyond a reporter's control.
[18] Carl Warren, *Modern News Reporting* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), 450. This edition was revised from its initial 1934 itineration. A version was adopted by the U.S. military for use by media personnel during the Second World War.
[19] Carl Warren, *News Reporting: A Practice Book* (New York: Harper & Harper, 1929), 6.

latter.[20] This mythos was a mix of fact and newsroom gossip, with the typical editor known to arrive at 6:30 a.m. and leave after 5 p.m., "frantically shouting, storming, criticizing and laboring throughout the day."[21] Managers "ruled" their city rooms (i.e. newsrooms) and were known for their "sharp" words that instilled a self-driven desire in reporters to avoid the "humiliation of being beat on a story."[22]

Despite a mild mellowing of this tradition of angry editors (who used their anger to maintain control in often-rowdy newsrooms), a strong psychological barrier remained for generations between the two groups. Top-down, or unilateral, was the most common management style. Reporters rarely met with editors to decide assignments. Daily conferences occurred on some newspaper staffs, but did not catch on until the 1940s and later.[23] Instead, editors would typically tell reporters their assignments without preamble, or pass them out at the beginning of a shift based on their estimation of a reporter's ability. Depending on how much they liked a reporter's "originality and style, the city editor naturally singled him out for the fattest assignments thereafter." Before the First World War, this personality-driven assignment process awarded those whose talents meshed with an individual editor's tastes, and punished those whose did not. They would be relegated to "sit around the city-room for a week and never earn a cent."[24] Being paid on space, this tendency could create real economic

[20] Eric W. Allen, "Journalism as a profession," *The Quill*, April 1920, 3.
[21] Orien W. Fifer, Jr., "Tales from the police beat: experiences of all sorts fall to the lot of the reporter at headquarters," *The Quill*, August 1931, 13.
[22] Charles C. Clayton, Is the bloom off the peach?" *The Quill*, Dec. 1956, 6.
[23] "How editors deal with administrative problems,'" *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 18-19, 1940, 146. See also, "I told you," March 17, 1956, 57; an ad for the Teletype Corporation shows a flying [into a rage] city editor, watched by two female staffers, with the caption, "I told you he'd fly into a rage if we misused those trade-marks."
[24] Hugh S. Balllie, "Headwork behind the headlines: initiative and enthusiasm help newsmen steer their course safely past perilous shoals of standardization," *The Quill*, February 1935, 8, 10; Balllie was executive vice president of the United Press. He was reflecting on his first few jobs in daily newspaper journalism, starting with *Los Angeles Record* in 1908. He observed that newspapers had since become "modern factories, of complete and blanket coverage of all events out [of] the city limits by the press associations, of fixed standards of all sorts."

hardships for reporters. Gradually, the assignment process was systematized as salaries became common. But assignments and other directives still retained an impersonal air in many newsrooms, large and medium-sized alike. An editor in Springfield, Massachusetts, demonstrated this when he posted signs around the newsroom admonishing his reporters to "CONCENTRATE YOUR MIND," "WRITE LEGIBLY," "TAKE TIME" and not to "SPEAK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS AT WORK."[25]

Newsrooms were often laid out so that editors could keep a close watch on their reporters. For example, the managing editor at the *Wichita Daily Eagle*, John Reed, would watch his reporters at work in the city room. "If I hear one reporter calling to another: 'is there one t or two in City Manager Elliott's name,' I watch that fellow." If this kind of questioning continued, Reed would provide a "regular sermon on the beauties of accuracy."[26] Editors were by tradition trained to be observant. They developed an "eagle eye" for trouble or perceived loafing.[27] Reporters, for their part, noticed when their bosses were monitoring them and changed their behavior accordingly.[28] Into the post-war years, designed (or redesigned) spaces helped editors to see who was and who was not working, even when the former was otherwise busy or on the telephone.[29] Editors placed their desks in prominent places, such as at the front of the room, or had them raised, so that they could be seen and heard in a chaotic workplace.[30] As late as 1951, this practice of "visual control," in the words of an editor from the *Yakima Morning Herald* and *Daily Republic* in Washington state, could be practiced from a corner office

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[25] "What about accuracy? Editors tell how they make reporters careful," *The Quill*, April 1927, 12.
[26] "What about accuracy? Editors tell how they make reporters careful," *The Quill*, April 1927, 13.
[27] "Now they can tell twins apart," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 10, 1934, 12.
[28] "The shop talkers," *Editor & Publisher*, June 16, 1923, 40.
[29] Eugene S. Pulliam, Jr., "Just seat 20 next to each other: how to streamline a big city newsroom," *The Quill*, Feb. 1950, 8-10.
[30] "*N.Y. World* adopts universal desk," *Editor & Publisher*, May 27, 1922, 36.

with walls partially made of glass.[31] As Robert Darnton put it, "The most expert eye in the city room belongs to the city editor. From his point of maximal visibility, he can survey his entire staff and put each man in his place, for he alone knows the exact standing of everyone."[32]

Other editors tried to appeal to a reporter's "pride of workmanship," believing that correcting errors every time they occurred was "the very best medicine in such cases." Posting errors on bulletin boards, listing common errors in in-house newsletters and, less indirectly, calling reporters into an office and questioning them about their mistakes were all ways editors exerted control over work processes and workers.[33] Editors were expected to be active, inspirational and advocate for their staffs in the face of pressure from circulation and advertising department heads. They were also supposed to drive their staffs to perfection. "Chivvying" was accepted as a natural part of this.[34]

Editors had different styles of verbal rebuke. Some, like the managing editor of the *Cincinnati Times-Star*, preferred the direct and public approach in 1919. The wielder of a "sort of beneficent czarism," he was a self-described "boss," and "a cross between a dynamo and a mule's kick," according to a contemporary. Instead of privately reprimanding a reporter, "he prances into the workroom, fixes the offender with a stabbing sort of stare, and then proceeds to burn him up. He is an expert in this sort of newspaper arson." Nonetheless, when he liked a reporter's or copy editor's work, he would just as publicly praise him, which his profiler claimed

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[31] "Equipment review: *Yakima Republic* and *Herald* move into new million dollar plant," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 8, 1951, 46. In this case, Robert W. Lucas, the executive editor, utilized a "wall facing the newsroom . . . paneled in clear glass."
[32] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 177; Darnton was, of course, in time a noted historian. His account of newsroom life helps to inform chapters that touch on near-peer and peer dynamics in the newsroom.
[33] "What about accuracy? Editors tell how they make reporters careful," *The Quill*, April 1927, 14, 22. For more on bulletin boards, which were classic sites or at least expressions of newsroom control and tension, see also Donald Janson, "Everybody in the act: news awards for enterprise," *The Quill*, Dec. 1959, 9-10, 18.
[34] Steuart M. Emery, "The Cub Spirit," *Editor & Publisher*, March 25, 1922, 8.

made him popular among the staff, who would "walk down Vine Street in Cincinnati town, clad in a one-piece bathing suit," for him.[35] This mix of anger and staff loyalty was a theme in accounts of newsroom life. Editors who had a "terrible temper" could also be accessible and fair to the "lowest paid reporter."[36]

Even while the openly frank editors of the later interwar years were heralded for their gruffness, some of the more belligerent tendencies of editors were discouraged by peers. Some bosses were known for their "uncomplimentary never-ending directness" toward those they had a hard time accepting as worthy of being in the newsroom, including women.[37] But editors who focused on "picking little flaws and brutally insulting those who make them, are particularly obnoxious and incompetent executives," noted Marlen Pew from his perspective at *Editor & Publisher*. It was important to recognize how the combination of human fallibility and high-pressure work could lead to mistakes, he believed, and how highlighting the latter too much could undermine a newsroom's morale. Editors could be imbued with a "high-speed spirit" and still be fair to their workers, he argued.[38] Pew represented a more progressive approach to newsroom management. A good editor set the tone for the rest of the staff.[39] It made sense, then, for that editor to be consistent and a source of inspiration. Younger reporters, especially, needed good mentorship, but older reporters could also sense "the spirit

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[35] "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, March 29, 1919, 12.
[36] "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, April 5, 1924, 14. In this case, Victor F. Watson is profiled; Watson was the assistant publisher and managing editor of Heart's *New York American*, known for his "littered desk in a cubby hole on the 7th floor."
[37] Mildred Philips, "Forum of female fraternity of Fourth Estaters," *Editor & Publisher*, May 28, 1921, 301. Philips is remarkably frank for her era, at least for a trade-journal columnist, and addresses sexism by editors, as well as the challenges of being a woman in a male-centric newsroom environment, foreshadowing the work of women such as Nancy Mavity. Philips noted that editors had a particularly hard time accepting women in more traditionally male-dominated positions, including crime reporter.
[38] Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 12, 1929, 48.
[39] "City staff luncheon," and "discussion," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 17-19, 1930, 246.

of the office" and work harder if a paper's leadership was competent.[40] "The problem is to get a good City Editor, and turn him loose," claimed a managing editor in 1930.[41] Another believed that "if you have a fellow at the city desk who is good-natured, nervy, well-balanced, and knows enough, you are through with your problems." Granted, this emphasis on leadership from above came from those already there. But good editors also seemed to recognize the limits to their power. Morale could be built and reinforced "through encouragement," and not by "crabbing" or grouchy "post-mortems."[42]

And yet there was a general sense, too, that reporters had become the focus of newsroom work, and that the age of larger-than-life editors had passed by the 1930s. Editors, while still powerful in newsroom, found themselves in a more supportive position (in terms of workflow). Reporters got the glamour and attention in popular depictions of newsrooms, despite the poor pre-Guild working conditions. "The editor's thoughts may find exposition in the editorial columns, but it is the Reporter's life blood that goes into the news story," noted an industry observer in 1922.[43] Reporters were the new "power generators," even as they still needed the strong leadership of editors.[44] And the former did not always just clash with their editors over assignments or angles on stories. They could also disagree over more mundane issues. When the staff of the *Chicago Daily News* moved to a new building in 1929, a reporter dragged a battered hat rack to the new newsroom, much to the consternation of "an executive

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[40] "City staff luncheon," and "discussion," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 17-19, 1930, 246.
[41] "City staff luncheon," and "discussion," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 17-19, 1930, 246. This thought was from A.R. Holcombe managing editor of the *New York Herald-Tribune*.
[42] Don C. Seitz, *Training for the Newspaper Trade* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1916), 57.
[43] Chester B. Bahn, "I am the post," *Editor & Publisher*, April 8, 1922, 5.
[44] Philip Schuyler, "Romances of American journalism: stories of success won by leaders of the press," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 13, 1928, 10.

who had a good deal of respect for efficiency." Ordered to remove it, the reporter responded, "Well, then I quit." Another executive intervened and a compromise was reached, wherein the rack was placed in an unused area of the new newsroom.[45]

These kinds of conflicts could prove to be a sore spot and involve the publisher or editor-in-chief as arbiter. Below the managing editor on many larger newspapers sat the city editor, who was often "permitted full authority over the local news and personnel," and who helped interpret and direct policy as set by the managing editor for the various section editors. They could also operate as the point of contact for the "eternal struggle between the composing room and the editorial department."[46] But city editors who acted counter to a managing editor's wishes, including firing entry-level reporters without consulting them, could find themselves in trouble.[47] In smaller daily newsrooms, the managing editor shared power with other editors more equally.[48] The larger the newspaper, the more power was disbursed or negotiated.

Case study: Robert Darnton at the *New York Times*:

Robert Darnton, reflecting on his experiences as a young *New York Times* reporter in the early 1960s, noted that reporters and editors engaged in a delicate dance of shared agency. Editors knew how to manipulate a subtle reward system "from the other end of the room," though how this worked was not always clear to reporters (and often this lack of clarity was

[45] "Shop talk: building a city staff," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 16-18, 1931, 162. This story was recounted by Henry Justin Smith, the managing editor of the *Chicago Daily News*.
[46] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, April 6, 1940, 14.
[47] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 28, 1937, 20.
[48] Elias E. Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism* (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, Vocational Guidance Manuals, 1951), 58-9; this author's impression of a variety of other contemporary sources, including memoirs and trade literatures, aligns with these thoughts by Sugarman.

useful for editors). Upon getting a run-of-the-mill story, Darnton describes how a reporter could "[console] himself with the hope that he might get a better assignment . . . but . . . knows that the story did not make his stock rise with the assignment editor."[49]

For a more important story, a city editor or other assigning editor might purposely make his way over to a reporter's desk, and "discuss the story with him in a kind of conspiratorial huddle before a sea of eyes." If the editor did not like the copy that the reporter wrote, he would summon the reporter back to his desk via the public address system. The reporter would meet the editor in "enemy territory" and then walk back through a room full of appraising peers. After writing a version of the story that he felt was closer to his editor's perspective, but still had some of his own thoughts, he might worry about his position with the editor. In either case, "he does not enjoy walking the tightrope between his desk and the city editor before the crowd of reporters waiting for his status to drop."

Younger reporters felt this power deferential (and horizontal peer pressure) more than others. Many learned "to escape to the bathroom or to crouch behind drinking fountains when the hungry eye of the editor surveys the field." Editors used this discomfiture, and the competitiveness among their reporters, to their advantage. Reporters sometimes wished for their rivals to get so-so assignments or to fail on important ones. Editors knew this and would "sometimes try to get the best effort out of their men by . . . advocating values like competitiveness and 'hustling.'"[50] In one example:

> 'Did you see how Smith handled that garbage story?' the city editor will say to Jones. 'That's the kind of work we need from the man who is going to fill the next opening in the Chicago bureau. You should hustle more.' Two days later, Jones may have outdone Smith.

[49] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 178.
[50] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 178-9.

> The immediacy and the irregularity of reinforcement in the assignment-publication process mean that no one, except a few stars, can be sure of his status in the newsroom.[51]

The situation at the *Times* was exacerbated by that newsroom's status in American journalistic culture. But editors at other large metropolitan dailies were aware of similar tendencies by their reporters and, to different degrees, were also capable of manipulating them. Too much of this could lead to "peer-group solidarity [developing] as a counter-force to the competitiveness." It could also, in turn, lead to a rift between even newsroom veterans and editors, with the former thinking that the latter were guilty of "selling out to management and for losing contact with the down-to-earth reality that can only be appreciated by honest 'shoe-leather men.' This anti-management ideology creates a barrier to the open courting of editors and makes some reporters think that they write only to please themselves and their peers."[52]

Editor power

Many sources of conflict animated newsroom life, but most revolved around issues of hiring, firing, retention and pay. In the days before human-resource, or HR, departments, newsrooms would handle hiring through word-of-mouth and on an as-needed basis. This was done on the spot with little in the way of formal interviews. Sometimes a reporter would be asked to go through a brief trial, or be told to track down a lead, as a kind of final test. References would sometimes be called. But otherwise news workers were hired by editors haphazardly. Applicants took care to be deferential.[53] Personality fit and claimed experience mattered more than college education or formal vetting.

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[51] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 179.
[52] Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," 179.
[53] "How to get a job," *Editor & Publisher*, May 1, 1926, 49.

By common social definition in the newsroom, an editor, especially a senior editor, was the "Man who Hires and Fires," in the words of a self-deprecating newspaper librarian in 1919.[54] A key aspect of the boss-worker dynamic in many American newsrooms during the early to mid-twentieth century was the stark power difference between editors and reporters. As has been explored elsewhere, the arrival of unions (the ANG and in-house) in the early 1930s tempered this power. The economic reality was that firing an experienced, unionized reporter could be an expensive proposition, due to the required severance a union contract demanded and the expenditure of time in training a replacement.

Some editors worried about the erratic standards that guided their power, including those that policed the hiring and subsequent training of reporters, and tried to govern themselves. "Too often the editor does not know just what he wants, or why," noted James Pope, managing editor of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, in 1947. "He [the typical editor] cannot explain to the confused youngster what was wrong, what was right." Facing competition from radio, editors had to do better, he urged.[55] It was often believed that the city editor (an often vaguely defined position only just below that of the managing editor's), was best suited for the actual rituals of hiring. A reporter was considered more loyal (at least by some city editors) if he or she possessed a "consciousness that the man who gives him his orders is the man who gave him his job and who, within a somewhat more limited range than heretofore, can take his job away from him." Even if the city editor was not able to hire at will, it was also considered good internal (albeit informal) policy to have the managing editor check with various department

[54] Harry Pence, "The 'morgue man' and his job," *The Quill*, April 1919, 1.
[55] James S. Pope, "A managing editor discusses need for higher standards," *Journalism Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1947), 30.

heads before hiring a new staff member.[56] Likewise, editors in different departments at some larger newspapers "very carefully channelize authority to maintain administrative order," avoid wasted effort and reduce personality-driven conflict.[57] Editors would continue to complain of newfound Guild prerogatives to influence, object to or at least limit their power.[58] Even sympathetic editors who agreed that the Guild had a role in newsrooms believed that they still needed to retain some kind of control over wages and hours, and that they could do a better job than a union representative at determining staffing levels.[59] The union intervened and restructured the dynamic between reporters and editors, and altered the critical "individual relationship between the writer and editor."[60] How severance clauses and other union-driven developments disrupted editor power is explored in the chapter on unionization in the newsroom.

By the early 1920s, some editors were frustrated by what they felt were wasteful tendencies in hiring reporters. The "employing factotum" would ask if a casual applicant was a "desk man or a street man," the new hire was "broken in," but then would quit a few weeks later or was fired because "he cannot make good." A second new hire would replace the first, meaning two salaries would be paid for the same job over the course of a week.[61] "In cities off the main run," such as El Paso, Texas, the turnover for a telegraph editor could be as severe as every week and a half. In one instance a managing editor returned from an absence of three

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[56] "How editors deal with administrative problems,'" *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 18-19, 1940, 143; this was from a discussion facilitated by J.R. Wiggins, managing editor of the *St. Paul Dispatch and Pioneer Press* during a panel on newsroom-management issues.
[57] How editors deal with administrative problems,'" 145.
[58] How editors deal with administrative problems,'" 143.
[59] "Editorial: Unanswerable," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 27, 1934, 22.
[60] Editorial: Which way?" *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 28, 1936, 24. See also, "Editorial: Guild legalism," *Editor & Publisher*, May 8, 1937, 30.
[61] L.E. Claypool, "Cutting the editorial 'turnover,'" *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 12, 1921, 18.

months to find just two familiar faces. While rarely this extreme, a lack of familiarly between middle-level leadership and lower-level editors and reporters involved "disruption of the entire force." Moving staff members around, the active management of reporters, the use of meetings, good pay, encouragement, life insurance and other quality-of-life factors, like maintaining a clean, well-let and well-ventilated office, were thought to help with retention. No longer could you let the "editorial department just run itself." An "efficiency system" had to be put in place.[62] "Efficiency" systems were, of course, a long-running fad in the industry beginning around the last turn of the century and continuing through the 1950s.[63] Some of this concern was driven not by worries about how workers were being treated, but by anxiety about maintaining healthy profit margins in a competitive industry.

Editors were aware of their power, but also of its limitations, especially when it came to ownership or the actual day-to-day movements of their reporters once they left the newsroom. Many otherwise "hard-boiled" editors knew their own capacity for mistakes.[64] Mistakes could cost stories, readership, advertising dollars and ultimately revenue. But abundant self-confidence was more common. To achieve their positions, they had to survive office purges, multiple moves across a region or the country and sometimes treacherous newsroom politics. While "superior to the average reporter because he can answer all his questions," a middle-grade editor was less important to the newsroom hierarchy than a managing or other senior

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[62] L.E. Claypool, "Cutting the editorial 'turnover,'" *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 12, 1921, 18.

[63] Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift; Scientific Management in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964). See also, Milton J. Nadworny, *Scientific Management and the Unions 1900-1932: A Historical Analysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955). For larger trends in management theory, see Daniel A. Wren, *The History of Management Thought* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2005). For a critical perspective on the use of labor in a free market during this era, see Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

[64] John W. Moffett, "What does he mean—myth? Lyle Webster's article about the country weekly field draws a spirited reply," *The Quill*, January 1931, 7, 15. Moffett was co-editor of *The Eldora* (Iowa) *Herald-Ledger*.

editor. But ultimately a good mid-level editor, “recognizes his readers’ appetites and dishes it up a la mode.”[65]

Editors valued their independence, and resisted efforts to become “reduced to the ignoble status of a floor-walker and glad-hander for the Advertising Department.” Succumbing to business pressure would lower “his respect for his own paper and his own work may be destroyed.”[66] An idealized newspaper, at least from the perspective of many editors, would operate with only the most minimal influence from the business staff. This world, “in which the men from the advertising department are not permitted to enter the editorial rooms, and where the business manager merely agrees with everything the managing editor does,” was the aspiration.[67] This could be a more complex reality than some editors would have liked, however. During the Depression, out of necessity newsroom managers felt compelled to collaborate more with the business side of the newspaper. No longer could they function “in watertight compartments.”[68]

Editor power: pay and rewards

Issues of pay were flashpoints of newsroom tension between news workers and editors. The former were often either confused or frustrated by the latter’s apparent stinginess, and the latter either felt pressure from ownership to keep payroll costs down or genuinely felt some workers did not deserve pay raises. This was especially the case if managers had requested raises from management but had been turned down themselves. Conflict was sometimes tied

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[65] L.A. Wilke, “As they view it: those city editors,” *The Quill*, November 1931, 2. Wilke was city editor of the *Fort Worth Press.*
[66] “As they view it: editors or floor-walkers?” *The Quill*, September 1934, 14. From a letter-to-the-editor by J.N. Heiskell, editor of *The Arkansas Gazette*.
[67] Marlen Pew, “Shop talk at thirty,” Nov. 10, 1928, 44.
[68] James E. Pollard, “Who’s a journalist? Writers no longer have sole claim to tile many have scorned in past,” *The Quill*, Nov. 1937, 9. Pollard was the author of *Principles of Newspaper Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937).

to bylines, which for the first few decades of the century implied a definite status in the newsroom. Considered a "rarity" on many papers, they were "only given as a reward for a scoop or a story written with a special flair." But because "they were bestowed with no prior notice by the city editor," this became a "tormenting tradition that all local reporters believed had been designed to make their lives a misery and drive them to drink."[69] As discussed earlier, editors often held the final power over this act of peer (and public) recognition, to the chagrin of reporters. It was not until the awarding of bylines had become more routine, by the late 1950s and early-to-mid 1960s, that their connection to pay and status (due to the continued effect of Guild and other union contracts) became less associated with editor-reporter confrontations.[70] Some editors also simply avoided conversations about pay. This passive approach was satirized by cartoonists.[71]

[69] Arthur Gelb, *City Room,* (New York: Putnam, 2003), 66. The euphoria of seeing one's byline as a reporter, and that shared experience among reporters, is discussed in the chapter on peer-to-peer dynamics.
[70] Zvi Reich, "Constrained authors: bylines and authorship in news reporting," *Journalism* 11, no. 6 (2010), 707-725.
[71] "The paths of glory," *Editor & Publisher*, April 21, 1934, 17.

routine newsgathering had been a simple matter for most newspapers so far as national and international affairs were concerned. One subscribed

tion to bringing about the rise of the Associated Press, its various rivals and auxiliaries, the telegraph prepared the way for the more open discussion of political problems in the state and sectional editorial associations shortly

"THE PATHS OF GLORY"

"I went and won the Pulitzer Prize, Jack, and the managing editor hasn't spoken to me for a month because he's afraid I'll ask for a raise.

Contributed to EDITOR & PUBLISHER *by Denys Wortman, New York World-Telegram*
(Winner of second prize)

[72]

While many editors avoided or stubbornly refused to budge on raise requests, others took a more proactive approach. An editor at the *Buffalo Courier-Express* urged his peers to reward reporters with bylines more often, instead of only discussing stories at length when "you want to 'bawl them out.'" Giving a five-dollar or other small raises with an admonition to

[72] "The paths of glory," *Editor & Publisher*, April 21, 1934, 17.

"keep up the good work" could be more effective at retaining quality reporters. This also had to come with a willingness to cut staffers who were "dead timber . . . drawing large salaries and not worth a tinker's damn but kept on for sentimental reasons."[73]

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Low pay could discourage reporters, since many less-educated workers, including auto mechanics, or any number of workers on the mechanical side of a newspaper, could make more per hour, especially before the Guild asserted itself. As one managing editor noted in 1927,

[73] Eugune H. Gutenkunst, "An answer to editor Poe: in which the writer makes reply to the question, 'where are the good reporters,'" *The Quill*, March 1931, 8, 15. This was part of an ongoing discussion, in the midst of the early part of the Depression, over the "living wage."
[74] "I need a dollar," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 8, 1956, 34.

"We already have too many editors and not enough good stuff to edit."[75] The largest newspapers, such as the *Los Angeles Times*, could regularly raise pay across the staff, even in the midst of economic downturns as severe and prolonged as the Depression. These kinds of standardized pay raises rewarded "particularly brilliant work, long service or [were used] to encourage promising young reporters on the staff."[76] They also demonstrated how the variegated the industry was in terms of pay—in one city, reporters and editors could have wildly different salaries before the Guild standardized pay scales.

Editor power: a changing work culture

During the interwar period and into the early Cold War, the U.S. Department of Labor helped to differentiate workers from bosses. As has been noted elsewhere in this study, most American publishers, represented by the ANPA, argued for a "professional" status for news workers, while the Guild countered that the vast majority of workers were not "professional" because they lacked final control over their own work routines and products. As late as 1948, the ANPA's general counsel proposed that "executive" status be restricted for the purposes of contract negotiations to someone "who can hire or fire and directs the work of others and makes at least $30 a week," and that an additional status, that of "administrator," be defined as someone who worked for an executive and was "engaged in transporting goods or performs responsible outside work of a specialized or technical nature and makes at least $200 a month." This widening of a "professional" status would exempt more workers from non-executive

[75] "Higher pay for reporters urged to raise news writing standard," *Editor & Publisher*, July 16, 1927, 12. This is part of a summary of an editorial by Olin W. Kennedy, managing editor of the *Miami* (Fla.) *Herald*, written for the ASNE's *Bulletin*, and titled, "A recipe for better reporting." The highest pay brackets, he argued, should still be reserved for editors.
[76] "L.A. salary increases," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 26, 1936, 20.

standing (and thus union membership). Publishers chafed under industry codes and then later more permanent federal rules that limited their ability to define this status.[77] While this definitional tussle related to boss-worker tensions during early newsroom unionization, clashes over what constituted the best path toward professionalization (and whether news workers could and should aspire toward a "profession") would continue through the century.[78]

More to the immediate point, however, many publishers continued to view reporters as working independently, "beyond [their] immediate control" due to their "creative nature" of newsroom work. They argued that reporters could, in fact, act as "their own bosses, regulating their own time," and were "inspired and motivated in their production efforts by considerations that [were] intellectual and creative." Their work was *not* measured by quantity alone, the Associated Press Managing Editors (APME) claimed, as was the work of "non-professional workers." The Guild disagreed strongly, citing a 1927 essay by H.L. Mencken:

> [The journalist] remains, for all his dreams, a hired man—the owner downstairs, or even the business manager, though he doesn't do it very often now, is still free to demand his head—and the hired man is not a professional man. . . . even the most competent journalists face at all times a severe competition, easily expanded at need, and cannot afford to be too saucy.[79]

Of course, newsroom life had changed considerably in the years since 1927. But the Guild's case was bolstered by previous federal appeals court rulings, as well as federal policy that defined reporters as not being professional workers due to a failure to meet then-traditional

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[77] The work of Marc Linder is especially helpful to understanding this topic. See his *"Time and a Half's the American Way:" A History of the Exclusion of White-Collar Workers from Overtime Regulation, 1868-2004* (Iowa City, Iowa: Fănpíhuà Press, 2004), and his other, comprehensive, studies. Much more on this topic is also explored in the chapter on unionization in the newsroom.

[78] This topic is elaborated on further in this chapter's conclusion and elsewhere.

[79] Publishers and Guild differ on 'profession,'" *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 17, 1948, 60.

benchmarks of professional status (examination for entry to the occupation, a license to practice and a mandatory college education).[80]

Workers successfully pushed back against claims that they were "professional" people. This had an effect on newsroom hiring practices and led, in time, to a slight flattening of hierarchies of power. A more systematized process for hiring reporting was in place by the end of the 1940s, in which editors worked with reporters "better trained, more carefully chosen, prayed and watched over for the first sign of flair for any specialty of the business." Editors still tended to "lean heavily on the instinctive newspaperman who recognizes the exceptional story, handles it competently and plays it hard before the competition realizes what has happened." In other words, on the "veteran," a critical resource in many newsrooms, where the difference between lower-echelon editors and experienced reporters could be a narrow one, in terms of experiences (if still not in delegated authority).[81] Editors believed that they had a quick and even innate ability to "discern a promising young newspaperman."[82] Knowing how to reward that reporter—and knowing when—was a further talent.[83]

Editor power: curtailed?

By the 1950s, and even earlier, "scientific hiring" with help from HR departments was increasingly advocated. Screening an applicant would help "avoid hiring the glib youngster who may make a good showing in his early years and then turn into the office drunk because basically he didn't have the stamina, the drive, the integrity and character for the work." While

[80] "Publishers and Guild differ on 'profession,'" *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 17, 1948, 60.
[81] Carl Kesler, "'[My] guess' not good enough," *The Quill*, November 1947, 3.
[82] Carl Kesler, "Journalists' choice," *The Quill*, July 1956, 4.
[83] Louis Alexander, "What shall we tell the high school senior?" *The Quill*, September 1959, 18.

not all editors appreciated or liked the power of an HR department, others felt it provided a more convenient and efficient means to organize and staff larger newspapers.[84]

But an editor at a 1955 panel on personnel and recruiting observed the slow pace of adoption of "personnel departments." Claiming that with more than 275,000 workers in the industry, "an appalling amount of mediocrity finds its way into our organizations because of hit and miss methods of screening, hiring, training and handling of staff."[85] Retaining good staff members involved creating opportunities for the development of new skills "over and beyond the routine . . . when he [a new reporter] first got the job," argued a journalism professor on the same panel. Enhancing "mobility in the newsroom," and the chance to be more "a useful cog in the news machine" was crucial.[86] As concerns about recruitment manifested themselves in the 1950s, editors fretted continually about competition with radio and TV newsrooms. New newsmagazines also sought recruits from print journalism, along with corporations such as GE, GM and Westinghouse, which had large and expanding advertising and public-relations departments that could out-offer any salary and incentives the newspapers industry could muster.[87] In more traditional fields, such as law and medicine, a young hire was made to feel like he could "he can stand on his own feet, if he will, and gain a sense of personal status and, thus, of personal satisfaction." In journalism, it was harder to establish the same "human

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[84] "Scientific hiring," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Nov. 16-19, 1955, 194; in this case, Tom C. Harris, probably an editor at the *St. Petersburg Times*, and Byron Harless, a psychologist and personnel director for the paper, led a discussion on "scientific methods of testing, hiring and training personnel." HR department's role in shaping newsroom life, especially after World War Two, is explored further in the chapter on unionization.

[85] "News and administration: personnel and recruiting," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21-3, 1955, 161; Lee Hills, affiliated with the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Miami Herald*, though his exact role was left unclear.

[86] "News and administration: personnel and recruiting," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21-3, 1955, 169; in this case, Ralph Casey, at the University of Minnesota.

[87] "News and administration: personnel and recruiting," 167-8.

relations with the organization."[88] Editors were trying to compete with these industries over pay and prestige, and scrambled to adjust their own attitudes and behaviors toward the labor market. Other editors during this era worried that "the level in our seed bin is going down." With "uncomfortably empty application files," even the military had begun to seem preferable, one noted, to life in the newsroom. A woman reporter had left to join the Air Force, decried one editor: "we didn't blame her. It seems that our newsroom couldn't compete with the marriage opportunities of an army camp." For too long publishers had tried to pay their reporters in "romance instead of cash," with "wampum, glass beads and cigar coupons," after paying their composing-room staffs competitively.[89] In this more white-collar environment, editors had to treat reporters better, and not just in terms of pay, if they hoped to keep them.

Management culture: offices, and other forms of discipline and control

Long before the 1950s, some editors had actively resisted their tyrannical image and literally asked for the walls to come down between themselves and their staff. Management culture was changing. A managing editor at the *New York Evening Post* insisted on moving from his "goldfish bowl" of an office to a desk "out [in] the center of activities." Sitting within "arm's length" of his telegraph and city editors, this particular M.E. wanted to avoid a "cyclonic" style and instead insisted on praise and cooperation. It was his duty, he thought, "to strive for [a

[88] "News and administration: personnel and recruiting," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21-3, 1955, 167.

[89] "Are we getting the cream of the crop?," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 15-17, 1954, 71, 72. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, of the *Tulsa Tribune*, noted that this was partially an issue of perception, as pay for entry-level reporters had improved: "Our newspaper's average reporter and deskman weekly salary is right at $100. We'll put a freshly bediapered college tyro to work for $65 a week for the first three months with raises or dismissal guaranteed. The bottle-fed, ink-stained wretches of tradition, with their Bohemian bachelorhoods, their shiny blue serges, and their unfinished novels, are figments of the past."

more] co-operative effort than to boss."[90] In contrast, editors who worked out of private offices, unless they were more titular editors-in-chief, risked being labeled "pseudo-hermit[s]."[91] In this vein, O.O. McIntyre observed that after World War One, "the boss who thunders orders at an underling is likely to receive in reply a quaint travel suggestion not included in Cook's itinerary." Lower-level managers, including city editors, had found that getting reporters to work *with* them instead of just *for* them made for a happier newsroom dynamic.[92]

The representation of editor-as-lion gradually gave way to depictions of them as the "captain of a team, a captain who plays as hard a game as his teammates."[93] Being in the "thick of things," as when the editor of the *St. Louis Times* ordered that his desk be moved to an airfield during an air race, was another way of describing the better kind of editor.[94] The city editor, or other senior editor, had the "dual responsibility of getting news and handling a large body of men." This meant that he had to be a "cross between a steel trap and encyclopedia," who needed to know as many movers and shakers as possible, along with a fair collection of people from less wealthy walks of life. His telephone should "always be jingling."[95]

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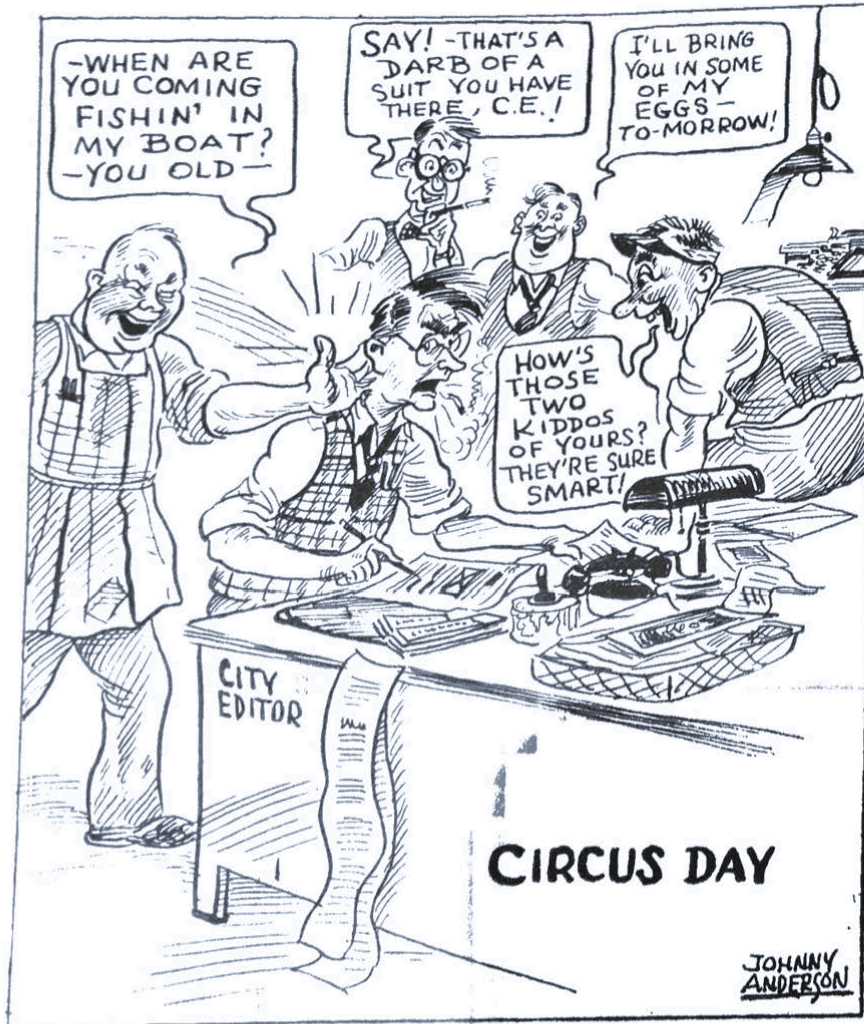
[90] Philip Schuyler, "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, May 3, 1924, 34. The editor profiled was Merritt Bond, who was at this point the exception to the rule.
[91] Philip Schuyler, "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 19, 1924, 16.
[92] James Melvin Lee, "Our own world of letters," *Editor & Publisher*, April 14, 1928, 46; note this last thought was Lee commenting on McIntyre, who was a writer for *Cosmopolitan*.
[93] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 19, 1959, 68; Philip Schuyler, "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, March 15, 1924, 12. Though sometimes written by others, Schuyler was the primary writer of this recurring column through the mid-1920s in *Editor & Publisher* that profiled editors, in this case, Joseph J. Early, managing editor of the *Brooklyn Standard Union*.
[94] "Folks worth knowing," *Editor & Publisher*, May 17, 1924, 23. The profile here was of Aaron G. Benesch.
[95] Don C. Seitz, *Training for the Newspaper Trade* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1916), 58.



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The "perfectly poised director," such as Edward S. Beck, the mellow managing editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, was the new model. Beck acted "like the general who directs the battle, and affairs move so swiftly that one is scarcely conscious of the power [of] leadership which he exhibits." Directing activity from the middle of things, and not from the corner office, meant that regular staffers could have "the greatest confidence in his fairness," as well as access to

[96] Johnny Anderson, "Circus day," *Editor & Publisher*, April 20, 1940, 36.

the boss. This was in an era when most reporters quite rightly believed that a typical "managing editor hardly knew they were on the payroll" and had a habit of doing "spasmodic things."[97]

The managing editor of the *Chicago Evening American* after the First World War found this to be the case, at least according to a contemporary profile in *Editor & Publisher*. His "boys" gave him their "100 percent esteem" and insisted they "work with, not for him." He kept his staff's "confidence in a quiet, unassuming way, and without the slightest apparent consciousness of the importance of his own position in the local room," partially due to his insistence on "working right with his men out at the battered news desk." Reports like these are almost *too* glowing—after all, *Editor & Publisher* was a pro-management publication. But there was some truth to the idea of working with the troops as a way of gaining their trust and affection. Eschewing the private office was way to gain the respect of lower-level editors and reporters.[98] Separate offices were a sign of achievement and status. They provided privacy in an open work environment. Throughout the era, they belonged exclusively to senior-level editors, some star columnists, cartoonists and ownership.[99] To purposively give these up meant something. British visitors to American newsrooms noticed this, too. Representatives of the Newspaper Society of Britain marveled at American innovations like a heavier reliance on rewrite staff, horseshoe desks for copy editors and the universality of cigarette butts, ice-water dispensers and air conditioning, so much so in the latter case that "architects are not concerned

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[97] Lucile Brian Gilmore, "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 16, 1924, 14.
[98] "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, June 26, 1919, 11. This was William "Bill" Curley. For another example, see "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, July 24, 1919, 17.
[99] "Remodeling plant," *Editor & Publisher*, March 20, 1926, 54. In this case, the *Chicago Daily News* had private offices for its managing editor, the assistant managing editor, and news editor. See also "*Syracuse Herald* in million dollar plant," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 25, 1928, 7. Though it be should be noted in this latter case that it was the "sporting" and managing editors who "alone" had their own offices. And see also, "*Los Angeles Times* new $4,000,000 home combines beauty and efficiency: magnificent marble and limestone structure is air-conditioned throughout and protected against earthquake tremors," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 10, 1935, II-VIII, XII-XIII, XVII, XX-XIV (from a special section detailing newsroom technology and architecture).

with windows." But among their most intriguing observations was of the open floor plan and the role editors played in it. "Editors have no private room," they noted. They thought that the idea was to motivate reporters, and in their words: "'See that guy there! We have him right on the floor, so's the other fellas see they can be managing editor too!'"[100]

Younger editors may have been more inclined to lead from the front. As a 22-year-old managing editor argued in 1925, his place was "in the news room from 7:30 in the morning until the final edition has gone." The same editor found that he "can't keep in fighting trim and on his toes unless he knows every major story going over the desks," and believed that "only constant leadership in the news room brings about the proper fighting organization." The "old routine methods" needed invigoration, and part of that came from direct leadership.[101] To a generation of reporters and editors who had experienced the First World War, this militarized perspective made sense. After the Second World War, they would continue to resonate.

Some publishers noted a decline in the older and more paternalistic management approach, in which the publisher (or, in some cases, a senior editor) acted as "the Old Man," and "father confessor, fixer, and financier." They blamed the Guild and unionization, but also an increasing emphasis on chain ownership. The "thinning of that tie between the employe and the boss" meant that there were fewer publishers and senior editors who would "keep a man on the payroll long after his useful days are past and find him work that will not lower the

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[100] "Iced water, gum, cig. urns amaze British," *Editor & Publisher*, July 14, 1951, 20. This organizational form contrasted severely to the much more hierarchal and private system of offices and routines that governed British national newspapers at the time. The work of Carole O'Reilly at Salford University in the United Kingdom addresses newsrooms in the British Commonwealth, and is important to note here. It should be noted, too, that British newsrooms made use of "telephone reporters" (their term for rewrite staffer) and often contained a somewhat open floor plan. For more, see C. Denis Hamilton, "The making of a newspaper," 3-37, in *The Kemsley Manual of Journalism* (Ipswich, United Kingdom, 1950).
[101] "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 15, 1925, 20; this particular column profiled James W. Irwin, the 22-year old managing editor of the *Wisconsin State Journal*.

man's respect for himself." Instead, a distant and corporate approach was taking over, in which profit margins and "'strictly business' methods" were encouraging a removed, though recognizably modern, office dynamic. Some publishers went further and blamed this new environment for rising conflict between ownership and the Guild.[102] A flashpoint for this fear was the 1937-38 Guild strike of the *Brooklyn Eagle*. *Editor & Publisher*'s Arthur Robb believed that such strikes were endemic in this new, more hostile environment. The "old paternalism" was being replaced by interactions conducted on a "complete[ly] impersonal basis."[103] It should be noted that this move to corporatized leadership was slowed briefly during the Second World War. Because editors were sometimes considered "essential men," and were often older than their reporters, copy editors, photographers or copy boys, they did not face the draft in as many numbers during the war. Of course, younger editors could be drafted. But for those who remained, including managing editors and other senior newsroom supervisors, double-duty was expected, some also acting as copy editors to help make workforce ends meet. Editors continued to work more than the Guild-mandated five days a week.

Management culture: best practices

Ideal editors, "the plain unvarnished short-sleeved editors," were regarded as earthy but engaged with their staffs and readers alike.[104] These idealized editors worked long hours,

[102] Arthur Robb, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 17, 1938, 76. Much more on this general theme can be found in the chapter on unionization.
[103] Arthur Robb, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 1, 1938, 36. See "Selective Service further clarifies 3-B status," *Editor & Publisher*, March 27, 1943, 32; Arthur Robb, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 13, 1943, 48; "Knickerbocker News, Guild sign contract," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 13, 1943, 20.
[104] Tom Wallace, "Editors in shirtsleeves: the 1930 kind are less colorful but more independent than the giants of the nineteenth century," *The Quill*, September 1930, 7. For another example of the "short-sleeve" metaphor for the idealized editor, see Marlen Pew, *Editor & Publisher*, "Shop talk at thirty," June 8, 1935, 40. See also, "What do they do? (The M.E.'s that is)," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 8, 1953, 10. And see also James Collings, "What do they do? (The M.E.'s that is)," Aug. 15, 1953, 53.

did not force their ideas for stories on reporters (unless they judged it necessary), refined content but did not over-edit it, and inspired their people to greatness, which could include awards but mostly consisted of the creation of a healthy work environment where personalities collaborated instead of conflicted. The better editors in mid-twentieth century American newsrooms recognized the importance of turning their reporters' abilities toward stories, and not against each other or back to their bosses.

The age and backgrounds of editors, like all newsroom denizens, could also vary wildly. Generally, however, editors were older, often former reporters, and, as time went on, college graduates. There were always exceptions, of course. Some managing editors could be exceptionally young. But while "the boy wonder" was perhaps not as wondrous as it once was by the early 1930s, especially on smaller papers, it was still a comparative rarity. In a field known for its physically and mentally demanding nature, gray hair often meant that a reporter had transitioned to the role of an editor.[105] They had undergone years of newsroom rituals, including working overnight or early-morning shifts. The "dog watch" or "lobster-trick," positions were sometimes used as a way to test out an up-and-coming reporter-turned editor.[106] As one editor explained, looking back on his career, first as a reporter, "traditions were baked into a reporter's marrow, and by the time he was offered a promotion to editor he was in no doubt about what his paper stood for, and how and why its standards had to be fiercely protected."[107]

[105] O.O. McIntyre, "As they view it: in the United States," *The Quill*, October 1930, 2.
[106] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 7, 1954, 36. See also, "What readers say: 'realism' in movies," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 22, 1953, 2, 56,
[107] Gelb, *City Room*, 23.

Management culture: "good night" rituals

In "an extremely healthy situation" a reporter rose to management not by taking shortcuts but from "pulling an oar along with the other galley slaves."[108] The newsroom norms that governed day-to-day routines in newsrooms could center on the most mundane things. As Arthur Gelb reflected on his life at the *New York Times*, starting in the late 1940s, he observed that even "quirky habits" were accepted "if they did not impede the sacred task of getting the paper out on time." Insubordination, however, was "dealt with severely." At the *Times* (as on many other papers), an unofficial rule called for reporters to check in with their editors before leaving, and not to go home "until you received a 'Good night' from the editor." Leaving without it "was tantamount to a felony. The ritual was not unreasonable, since it gave the editor an opportunity to raise questions about a reporter's copy before he departed for the night." Because reporters were otherwise hard to reach, this ritual was not just about control—it was necessitated by the paper's relentless production schedule.

One evening, a reporter failed to tell Bruce Rae, the city editor, "good night." This reporter was known as "the gumshoe," since he "served as in-house informer" and dug up unsavory details on those who had caused trouble for management in the ranks. For this reason, of course, he was uniformly despised by reporters and editors. Rae dispatched a clerk to retrieve the errant reporter:

> "What's it about?" Gordon [the reporter] asked, assuming there was some hot story or other breaking [news]. "I don't know," said the clerk, "but you'd better get back, quick!" Gordon dashed for the subway and started the long commute from his home to Times Square, raced to the city room and presented himself at Rae's desk, breathless. "What's

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[108] Robert M. Neal, *News Gathering and News Writing* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1942), 37. Neal was the news editor of the *Wisconsin State Journal*, former assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin's School of Journalism, and author of journalism textbooks.

> up?" he asked of what seemed to be a strangely calm city editor perusing some paperwork. Without looking up, Rae paused a moment and said, simply, "Good night."[109]

Editors sensed that demanding obedience in small matters like this would pay off later. They knew, too, that conceding too much too soon could result in an unmotivated newsroom. Unlike other occupations, daily print journalism was not as merciful to those who rose through the ranks by marrying into the owner's family or through office politics. While those kinds of maneuverings still helped, many editors prided themselves on at least the aspirational idea that their work ethic and ability to lead newsroom staffs had led to their promotions. Many city editors and other senior leaders believed they had survived being "scorched by the same flames" they ordered their "assistants to plunge" into every day. Fakes could be easily spotted:

> For all his suavity and dignity, or for all his brusqueness, and bark, the word circulates that "he's never done what we're doing; he hasn't been up against the things we're running into." Newspaper folk are independent enough, irreverent enough, to enjoy letting "the boss" know what they think of him. If he is executive in fact as well as name, he must be genuine.[110]

City editors knew their communities, friends of the paper and thus reliable sources, and those who were more manipulative. Editors also knew the paper's policies, readership and people. Editors needed the fresh talent and perspective that new reporters could bring to a staff. Considering this, it made sense for new reporters to stay on staff in order to get properly acculturated to their newsrooms. This allowed them to get used to, and then work more effectively, with their peers and bosses.[111] A belief in potential could motivate both groups.

Contemporaries believed that newsroom bosses should "blend the work of always disparate groups, talented, creative and sometimes temperamental," including the composing-

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[109] Gelb, *City Room*, 36-37.
[110] Neal, *News Gathering and News Writing*, 38.
[111] Neal, *News Gathering and News Writing*, 40-44.

room staff and the editorial staff, who tended to have contact "most often during moments of tension." Getting the paper published through the day's multiple editions involved the work of a personality "conductor," who could "create harmony of persons and their products."[112] This metaphor of music making was apt in an era big bands with equally big personalities.

When it came to controlling their staffs, some editors were subtle and avoided direct confrontation, appealing instead to powerful peer pressure to conform. The managing editor of the *Chicago Daily News*, when faced with the prospect of losing reporters to another paper due to higher salaries, counseled that an editor appeal to newsroom friendships, and to tell the reporter in question, "'you are not going. You belong with this gang and you are going to stay here.'" The idea was "to convince that fellow that he was just adventuring when he moved away."[113] Under deadline pressure, savvy editors had another tactic for controlling their workers: simply standing close to them. "A newspaper reporter in civilian life is inclined to believe that he is working 'under fire' when the city editor, standing behind him as he writes 'hot' copy near deadline, tears short takes from his typewriter almost as fast as the reporter puts a period to a sentence," wrote a U.S. Marine Corps correspondent.[114]

Management culture: the unlikely power of bulletin boards

Bulletin boards were a communal space, often regulated by editors and management, but showing workers' spunk too. Particularly active reporters were recognized through notes tacked there.[115] Prizes or shout-outs could be posted. More seriously, important changes in

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[112] Victor Green, and Edmund C. Arnold, "What makes a good editor," *The Quill*, May 1959, 22. *The Quill* ran a "Good Editor" contest that sought examples of exemplary editors.
[113] "Shop talk: building a city staff," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 16-18, 1931, 165; this was Henry Justin Smith, managing editor of the *Daily News*.
[114] Bryan Putman, "The Marines have landed," *The Quill*, Sept.-Oct. 1944, 9. Putman was a sergeant in the U.S. Marine Corps.
[115] A.T. Newberry, "Reporter on 'spite' assignment wrote model Christmas story," *Editor & Reporter*, Dec. 27, 1930, 18.

newsroom policies, including the introduction of the five-day work week, were noted on these boards.[116] Less kind, or conflict averse, editors preferred edicts on boards to in-person announcements, but some used both. And while satirical signs could be posted in other parts of the newsroom, it was the bulletin board that garnered the most attention.[117] News workers knew that these boards were read by everyone—the best place to post jokes or wordplay. Reporters also pushed back with their own unauthorized, and more serious, protests via written or typed messages. As sites of newsroom discourse, the boards belonged to both parties.

Editors as much as reporters engaged in "relentlessly" chiding each other, but especially beginners, for errors in newsroom routine or clueless early attempts at imitating a newspaper's unique style.[118] Editors were also easy targets of this kind of teasing. Managing editors, wrote a *Quill* columnist in 1942, were "housebroken . . . and know the kidneys can't stand anything stronger than milk." Self-possessed city editors tended to be "ambitious young men who can handle eight telephones at a time but only one blond." And managing editors, again, could not really wrangle their cubs, even if they were "fortified by the publisher and a writ of habeas corpus."[119] Awarding nicknames, too, was the informal specialty of editors and senior reporters, who shared in the ability to christen new reporters.[120] Junior staff were singled out and incorporated into a newsroom's community through this process.

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[116] "5-day week for staff," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 14, 1935, 38. See also, "*Indianapolis Star* starts new wage, hour schedule," *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1937, 16. See also, "Ray Erwin's Clippings Column: editor's memo to staff," *Editor & Publisher*, July 17, 1954, 4.
[117] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 2, 1941, 14.
[118] George A. Brandenburg, "Imagine my embarrassment: in which a writer reveals how he felt when he summoned the fire department by mistake," *The Quill*, November 1930, 7.
[119] William A. Rutledge III, "The write of way, *The Quill*, Feb. 1942, 13.
[120] Margaret Ellington, "Wherein a feminine scribe reports what happens when through whims of war: Girl meets 'boys' of the city room!" *The Quill*, Jan. 1943, 6-7.

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Management culture: a shift to limited collaboration

Concerns about newsroom staff recruiting and retention in the late 1950s again focused attention in journalism's trade journals on the dynamic between supervisor and reporter. As an editor for the *Washington Star* put it, "the biggest factor in any man's morale is his relationship with his immediate boss." This relationship depended on recognizing the reporter "as a human being, with his peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, not as just another piece of office machinery."

[121] "Yesterday's news today," *Editor & Publisher*, April 21, 1934, 92.

Encouragement, opportunities to improve, and increasing responsibility helped to maintain a healthy rapport between boss and reporter.[122] At panels on how to stem the flow of talented young people out of newspaper journalism, editors were told that more individual care and attention, conducting exit interviews, "finding out what makes" workers "tick" and developing relationships could help. "Get to them," one panelist urged, "Get to know them. Everybody will understand much better. You'll be amazed at how they'll decide you're not such a bad guy after all, and really interested in them."[123] With the avowed goal of avoiding grinding a "reporter into revulsion," interest could be expressed via the sharing of reporters' stories around the newsroom, and recognizing that good work involved more than a byline. Bonus pay, but also backing up reporters in "controversial situations" with upper-level management, could help. As a general rule, too, "The older an employee, the more he has to be led, rather than pushed."[124]

Despite the sometimes autocratic nature of newsroom relationships between management and workers, there was often an underlying ethic of democratic input, at least among near-peers. Some newspapers as early as the 1920s took great pride in labeling their newsrooms "democratic."[125] This was often an idealized ethic, but claimed nonetheless in the rhetoric of editors like Norman Shaw, associate editor of the *Cleveland Press*. A "firm believer in what we call democracy in the news room," Shaw believed this meant that "everybody can offer ideas and criticism to anybody; that the editor himself should not be locked up or even put away in a corner in his office, and that you should be able to see him without having to

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[122] "Personnel," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Nov. 12-15, 1958, 152. The senior staffer quoted here is I. William Hill, chairman of the APME Personnel Committee c. 1959.
[123] "Manpower today and tomorrow: personnel panel," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Aug. 12-15, 1959, 52.
[124] "Continuing study report: personnel committee," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Nov. 15-19, 1960, 143.
[125] "Policies of the 'Little Twinkler' live," *The Quill*, March 1926, 3-5.

make an appointment with his secretary." This principle of accessibility—not authority—extended to sharing ideas. "A good newspaper is built on ideas and the more people who are offering ideas, the better it is," declared Shaw. A copy boy or girl should be able to "catch the managing editor or the city editor at the drinking fountain or on his wanderings around the room" for a quick conversation. Some of the architecture of the day sought to inspire this democratic mingling, as Nikil Saval explores in his study of the early-to-mid century American workplace.[126] Newsroom management guides also emphasized the democratic nature of the newsroom. "Industry has become more social minded," and therefore there was more interest in training, claimed one such text: "everyone in a democracy must have equal opportunity to improve himself and his family according to his ability."[127]

A reporter was integral to a newspaper's daily operation, and an editor could not "function were it not for the reporter."[128] Due to their more stationary (or as some of their reporters might argue, sedentary) nature, editors could lose touch with the world outside their newsroom, becoming "mahogany-bound hermits." Aware of this old concern, editors were told to cultivate their reporters' gossipy tendencies, in order to avoid ending up like chair-bound, department store executives. Reporters should be encouraged, a crime reporter noted in 1937, to "bring him [the editor] all the gossip, all the street-talk, even all the dirty stories that they may hear."[129] A good editor would listen in on conversations, contribute to them, and be seen casually engaging with reporters throughout the newsroom.

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[126] "Managing editors panel," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21-23, 1949, 54. Nikil Saval, *Cubed: A Secret History of the Workplace* (New York: Doubleday, 2014). See also, "Good editors must anticipate news trends, says Harry Grant," *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1937, 14.
[127] Donald J. Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations* (Oakland, Calif.: Newspaper Research Bureau, 1952), 42.
[128] "Reporters find friend in Col. Geo. McCain," *The Quill*, Oct. 1923, 11.
[129] Dan Albrecht, "Editors shouldn't be hermits!" *The Quill*, Feb. 1937, 3, 16.

To outsiders, editors and reporters tended to emphasize their better collaborative selves. In *Without Fear or Favor*, a 1940 book that profiled the journalism industry for the general public, newsroom staff members were portrayed as “fast-functioning machines, one of the most competent of this age of efficiency. The reporter and his city editor are quiet, capable, and educated gentlemen.”[130] While they might deviate from this refined characterization, most newsroom mangers and reporters were keen to be perceived as advocating for their readers.[131] Internally, they would highlight conflict, but even then mutual reliance was held up as the better path.

A kind of craft pride in mentorship also connected some reporters more closely to their editors. This could be expressed more readily from the latter toward the former, as when a “long-suffering” city editor from a newspaper in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, proud that he had “broken in quite an array of new men,” urged young reporters to “try to pick a good boss, keep your feet on the ground the first couple of years and be fair to your city editor, because he will be fair to you.” Loyalty to editors could manifest itself in refusals to accept better offers on other papers.[132]

Journalism educators, often former editors themselves, encouraged their students to continue their education in the newsroom, since “news writing is best learned at a rickety typewriter under the glaring eye of a city editor who won’t be put off with makeshifts.” The goal of some journalism schools and educators was to recreate “the newspaper atmosphere,”

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[130] “The book beat: inside picture,” *The Quill*, June 1940, 15. Published by Harcourt, Brace and Co., it was authored by Neil MacNeil, a former assistant managing editor at the *New York Times*, and whose expressed intent was to bust myths about newsrooms.

[131] For more on the relationship newspapers had with their readers, see Thomas C. Leonard, *News for All: America’s Coming-of-Age with the Press* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[132] Walter J. Pfister, “This word-weary, long suffering city editor prints a catechism for cubs,” *The Quill*, Nov. 1940, 10, 12.

complete with this imitation of editor-reporter mentorship, so that their students would "feel at home" in the real thing when the time came.[133] Classrooms would become miniature newsrooms, with the instructor acting as the editor. Mentorship could take a variety of forms. Editors could unofficially adopt reporters they thought had potential, meeting with them in and out of the newsroom to offer career advice. They could also devote time to marking stories and offering suggestions. Editors imparted moral lessons to young reporters, urging them to stay on the straight and narrow in a world where sources could offer bribes or reporters, in turn, could use their influence to get out of speeding tickets or worse.[134]

This mentorship benefitted reporters because they could gain newswriting skills more quickly and thoroughly. Reporters chosen for unofficial mentorship efforts (and for most of the century these were highly contingent on personalities) could advance quickly in their careers, getting plumb assignments or good beats. While this could come with some accompanying resentment from their peers, reporters weighed this against the potential pluses. From the editors' perspective, they could develop reliable and loyal workers. As Pew explained, reflecting on his own experiences, it was a "deadly thing to work for a dull person in the newspaper business, mainly because ideas are our stock and trade and to lack them is to lack all."

As a young cub reporter, Pew had an editor who took a personal interest in marking his reporters' stories. They were "used by the chief as the basis of pungent, humanistic notes addressed to members of the staff, roasting the tar out of them when they blundered, praising them for strokes of genius, suggesting this and that, and in generally keeping red hot the

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[133] "City editor best teacher," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 11, 1922, 27. These comments were from Walter A. Washington, "supervisor of news writing at the Medill School of Journalism, and city editor of the *Chicago Evening Post*."
[134] "My city editor is one swell guy…" *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 19, 1938, 19.

contact between the editor and the men who worked for him." This kind of commentary built newsroom morale, and was "proof that the good chief was not asleep at the switch."[135] As collaboration could be informal most of the time, overt displays of camaraderie could be rare. It might take a city-wide disaster, such as a flood, in which all hands were needed and appreciated, to help reporters feel better connected to their editors. The closing of a newspaper could also move emotionally reticent workers and bosses to express appreciation for each other.[136] If editors suddenly died in accidents or of natural causes—and editors passed away not too uncommonly from heart disease or strokes on the job, i.e. "in harness"—reporters would grieve the loss of their "chief."[137] Stress was thought to be a leading contributing factor to this mortality rate.[138] In one instance in the summer of 1956 in Chicago, two city editors on the same newspaper died in rapid succession.[139] Because editors, especially senior editors, were expected to be present or on call, taking vacations could be challenging. This was especially the case on smaller newspapers.[140] More happily, national recognition via journalism awards, or coverage of a story of national import, could foster newsroom bonds. Such acts of newsroom affection included profiles of staffers, impromptu parties, group visits to local bars, bonuses from management to editors and reporters alike, or just quick huddles of casual conversation in the midst of the newsroom work space.[141]

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[135] Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 8, 1934, 36.
[136] George Robert Harris, "But the old spirit lives on," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 5, 1920, 5,8.
[137] "Shadow of tragedy filled news room," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 22, 1928, 1928. In this case, the newsroom at the *Long Beach* (Calif.) *Press-Telegram* mourned their "chief," who died in a plane crash.
[138] "Editorial: John Anthony Malloy," *Editor & Publisher*, March 27, 1943, 22.
[139] "Heart-breaking job, being a city editor," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 25, 1956, 53.
[140] "Editorial: vacations," *Editor & Publisher*, July 24, 1948, 40.
[141] Editors along with reporters often found that their closest friends were their fellow practitioners. At the same time, though, some felt that for routine to be effective, it had to be more impersonal. See William T. Ellis, "J.K. Ohl, the man and the editor," *Editor & Publisher*, July 3, 1920, 10. Ohl was a former *New York Herald* editor and foreign correspondent.

Newsroom routines

While journalism textbooks from the 1920s through the 1950s outlined a tidy set of procedures for how reporters interacted with their bosses, newsroom routines were often deeply affected by personalities from both groups. Routines, while helpful, could be circumvented, replaced or modified. Marlen Pew made this clear in his portrayal of a typical newsroom scene:

> Flushed reporter enters, throws off coat, yells to the city editor, "The mayor has thrown us down," [and] starts to pound the keys of his typewriter. City editor tears out a sheet and puts a flashing eye on the purple line of words. Managing editor approaches from his office. City editor tells him the news. Managing editor disappears behind the door of the editor's office. Talk register indignation. An editorial writer puts a fresh sheet in his typewriter, and punches out the line, "triple-lead and lead all."[142]

In this environment, workers fulfilled pre-set roles: the reporter gathered the news and wrote up stories, the city editor and managing editor edited content, argued over policy and the editorial writers interpreted it.[143] This was a fluid process of control, subject to change, dependent on the memories of those involved, and rarely quite as smooth. Because assignments and newsroom routines were often unevenly written down, especially before the Second World War, the presence of older news workers, and in some cases, retired editors, helped to maintain consistency. These could include old reporters-turned-semi-retired editors, sometimes working less-taxing jobs that still allowed them to be present in the newsroom (and thus available for quick questions or longer conversations).[144]

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[142] Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," Nov. 24, 1928, 44.
[143] Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," Nov. 24, 1928, 44. In this case, the fictional newspaper in question had been conducting a campaign advocating for a new highway "diverting heavy automobile traffic from residential and retail shopping streets to more appropriate thoroughfares. . . ."
[144] "Ask Ed Moore; they still do, he won't retire," *Editor & Publisher*, July 1, 1950, 38. This profile of a reporter, on the *Portland Press Herald*, in Portland, Maine, who was also a semi-retired state editor of nearly 50 years' experience, emphasizes how he was relied on for his institutional memory.

Routine-making and maintenance by editors and reporters was a stressful process. "Almost everything in the news field demands that workers strain their capacities to the utmost and errors creep in when tension is high," wrote an editor in 1929. This "high-pressure work" could drive workers "to achieve the seemingly impossible," but the very routines that drove fast production schedules could produce tensions.[145] Outside the newsroom, editors had less control, but their presence could still be felt. Even overseas correspondents, arguably the news workers with the most independence, could find it helpful to think like their bosses back home, and be their "own city editor," in the absence of clear direction from far away.[146]

The transition to the role of editor could occur gradually and was itself a kind of collaborative process. A "top-ranking reporter" could find himself helping to plan coverage and develop stories, and could become "an authority while covering some major assignment himself." Having "managerial ability" did not often result in a formal title, but could result in higher status in a newsroom. This could occur even if the reporter in question explicitly rejected the trappings of a management position.[147] The idea of a meritocratic newsroom hierarchy remained part of newsroom culture. If a reporter "really wants to succeed, he must always be preparing himself for the next job ahead." The best, brightest and most driven reporters, so this mythos went, eventually became editors, and then eventually these editors aspired "to the city desk, the city editor to the managing editor's chair, the managing editor to the position of publisher, and so on." This brought a "singleness of purpose" to the newsroom and drove a culture of internal advancement that honored loyalty while also somewhat paradoxically

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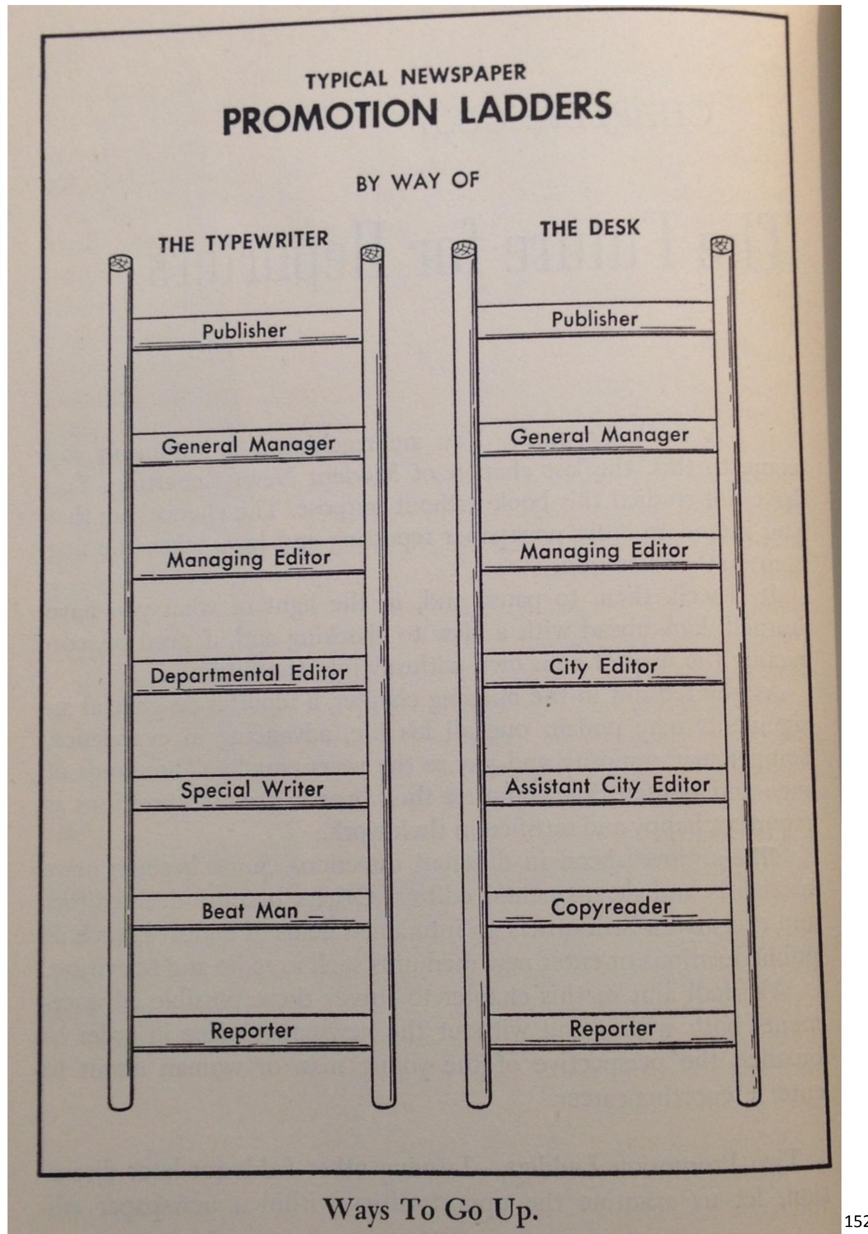
[145] Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 12, 1929, 48.
[146] George A. Brandenburg, "Local room training is essential to men on overseas assignments," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 21, 1931, 20.
[147] George E. Simmons, "Serendipity of Summer Internships," *Journalism Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1956), p. 518.

rewarding mobility.[148] Conversely, an editor could fall from power and still work in a newsroom, just with diminished (or little) power. Newsroom lore included tales of defrocked editors who reverted to the role of reporter.[149] Nomadic copy readers were rumored to be "fallen managing editor[s]."[150] Editors' fortunes shifted in both directions. If an editor worked for a chain, he or she would be shifted around. Sometime one city, such as Cleveland, would serve as a training center for a chain (in this case, Scripps) from which multiple editors would be sent.[151] If a newspaper was locally owned, editors tended to be promoted from within. Editors-in-chief and managing editors could be nomadic, too. Expanding chains exacerbated the trend. For middle management or junior editors, however, they could come just as easily from within an organization as without.

[148] "Romances of American Journalism," *Editor & Publisher*, April 12, 1930, 14. From a profile of Robert P. Holliday, publisher of the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*.
[149] Howard Long, "The book beat: newspaper novel," *The Quill*, October 1960, 21.
[150] Carl Kesler, " 'By guess' not good enough," by Carl Kesler, *The Quill*, November 1947, 3.
[151] Daniel J. Leab, *A Union of Individuals: The Formation of the American Newspaper Guild, 1933-1936* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 56.



Ways To Go Up.[152]

Newsroom routines: the role of the boss

For a newspaper to be a "masterpiece of cooperative brains," with words speeding "over telephone and telegraph and cable and wireless," it had to be edited by editors and reporters who "deliberated, toiled and gave of their best" efforts.[153] An editor, sometimes

[152] Carl N. Warren, *Modern News Reporting* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), 460.
[153] George C. Bastian and Leland D. Case, *Editing the Day's News: An Introduction to Newspaper Copyreading, Headline Writing, Illustration, Makeup, and General Newspaper Methods* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), 38. Bastian had been a copy

differentiated from a copy editor with the title "news executive," had the exclusive discretion to review finished stories before they went to the copy desk. They could also kill a story before it went anywhere else, or send it back to a reporter to be rewritten by either the reporter or a rewrite staffer if it had "taken the wrong perspective or is otherwise defective."[154]

While editors were generally aware of cooperative story-gathering efforts among reporters away from the newsroom, most either tolerated them or tacitly approved. There were occasional efforts to break them up, and to encourage reporters to act more like "lone eagles . . . leaving the wolf-packs to their own devices."[155] Most efforts to push back against them ran up against the simple fact that many such "combinations" were formed and sustained outside of their newsrooms, often in the press rooms of police stations and state and city government headquarters. These were neutral spaces ruled by reporters and not by newsroom bosses, whose power to regulate routines in some ways ended at the newsroom's doors. Reporters could "loaf on a beat" away from the office but still call in or "write a routine story about which the city editor cannot complain; or, he can put a sparkle into it that will make the whole office hum with appreciation." This could go on for some time, and "a newspaper reporter who does not want to work and has no ambition can get by . . . without having his derelictions detected by even the best of city editors."[156]

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editor at the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, and a lecturer in news editing at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, while Case had been a staff member of the Paris edition of the *New York Herald Tribune*, and a former assistant professor at Medill. Their textbook's breakdown of the ideal day was quoted verbatim by Frank Thayer in his text on *Newspaper Management* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1938), pp. 46-50. It follows below.

[154] Bastian and Case, *Editing the Day's News*, 48, 50.

[155] "*N.Y. Times* attacks 'pack' system," *Editor & Publisher*, May 12, 1928, 16; in this case, *New York Times* managing editor Frederck T. Birchell declared war on the "pack system" in the city, to unclear results. For more on this, see the previous chapter on peer-to-peer interactions in and out of the newsrooms.

[156] Malcolm W. Bingay, "An editor's case against the Guild," *Editor & Publisher*, June 26, 1937, 12.

Managing editors helped set but were also bound by newsroom routines. When to intervene and when to let events play out could be a tough call. Many erred on the side of action. A managing editor at the *Chicago Tribune* in 1941 believed that he should "butt in all I can," and "operated on the general theory that a 'kick in the pants and a pat on the back' is the best method of getting good results." But an engaged "M.E." should deliver "more pats on the back and fewer kick[s] in the pants." As much delegation as possible was desirable, and a sign of confidence, and not weakness.[157] Within the assignment system, editors were ultimately responsible for what kinds of stories were uncovered and how well their staff performed. If reporters performed badly, it could be because their editors had given them bad assignments or unclear directions.[158] Reporters expected "competent supervision by editors who know their business" even if they rebelled against it on occasion.[159]

Several specific practices were designed to enhance the efficiency of newsroom routines: streamlining workflow by redesigning or moving desks, organizing meetings and maintaining written records of current and future reporting activities. The post-war renovation of the Detroit *Free Press*' newsroom included centralizing copy-desk operations, and brought the telegraph editor, the copy chief, the photo editor and news editor physically closer together. It was important to place the various section editors within "easy reaching and conversing distance of the News Editor." This kind of workplace conversation was thought to reduce tensions and mistakes and improve morale.[160] An increasing emphasis on the need for

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[157] George Brandenburg, "Malony, *Chicago Tribune* M.E., tells how he runs his job," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 22, 1941, 5. Note that this from a profile, and thus some of the thoughts of J. Loy Malony, a WWI veteran and M.E. and *Chicago Tribune*, are paraphrased.
[158] "Dear lauds women in journalism," *Editor & Publisher*, July 1, 1944, 45.
[159] "Q and A panel," *Editor & Publisher*, July 14, 1956, 7.
[160] "New layout eases confabs, copy flow," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 28, 1948, 10. The effect of these streamlining efforts on the copy desk in particular is discussed further in the chapter on copy editors and reporters.

weekly or daily conferences followed, even if took some time for these to catch on. Internally, this innovation paralleled the instillation of a dedicated photo editor, especially as photo staffs became more mobile and worked in conjunction with, rather than just for, reporters.[161] Staff meetings ranged from an occasional informal gathering of star reporters with a city editor, to a regularly scheduled encounter between the managing editor and the entire staff down to the lowliest copy boy or girl. Meetings were used to lay out any aspects of new routines (or updated old routines), assign stories and trouble-shoot roadblocks to the latter.[162]

How these worked out varied in practice. But on afternoon newspapers ranging from the smallest to the largest dailies, newsroom routines often included a mid-day huddle with the senior editorial staff, including the managing editor, city editor, news editor and makeup editor.[163] Meetings of the "bull pen" could prevent future problems, address current issues and debrief past ones.[164] Work rhythms on afternoon papers also often dictated earlier starts, at around 9 a.m., for city editors, with reporters and lower-ranking editors arriving throughout the morning. [165] Keeping a "future book" helped some city editors track their reporters and their assignments. Often written as a kind of story-planning calendar or "an enormous ledger," it included clippings from recent stories and notes (including summaries of information from rival papers). Tips from reporters and readers and event calendars from civic-groups suggested

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[161] How editors deal with administrative problems,'" *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 18-19, 1940, 145-6. Though even this innovation was slow in coming. For many years at most newspapers assigning photos was still under the aegis of the city editor or his (or in some rare cases, her) equivalent. See, for example, "Reporting first qualification of picture editor," *Editor & Publisher*, July 1, 1950, 40.

[162] See, for example, Allen M. Widen, "Round their beats: half-hour staff forum breeds opinions, ideas," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 7, 1950, 48.

[163] George Brandenburg, "At *Chicago Tribune*: news hole is filled by percentage system," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 26, 1952. See also "What our readers say: hiss and make-up," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 20, 1955, 2, 55.

[164] "Bears in the bull pen," *Editor & Publisher*, July 16, 1955, 6.

[165] George Brandenburg, "At *Chicago Tribune*: news hole is filled by percentage system," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 26, 1952.

coverage ideas.[166] As a way of bringing a level of certainty to an uncertain day, it also helped manage a unique set of reporters and their varying abilities, from green cubs to jaded veterans.

The Midland Times

SCHEDULE SHEET

Date.........*March 16*.......... Desk Editor........*Baxter*.......

REPORTER	SLUG	SPACE
Donnelly	FIRE	.50
Wheeling	FLOOD	1.75
	DOG	.40
Simpson	GANGSTERS	1.80
Markham	KIDNAP	1.25
	MOVIE	.40
Shaw	SUICIDE	1.00
Nestor	JEWELS	.60
	WOMEN	.35
Wilson	GRAFT	.75
	MAYOR	.50
Schafer	STREETS	.70
Fenwick	MERGER	1.00
Ramsey	SOCIETY	2.00
Lowell	DRAMA	.75
Clancy	SOX	1.50
Dillard	TRACK	.75
	FIGHT	1.20
Total Local Schedule................		17.20 cols.

HOW THE SCHEDULE SHEET IS COMPILED [167]

When Agness Underwood became the pioneering first female city editor of a major metropolitan newspaper, the *Los Angeles Evening Herald & Express*, in 1946, she relied on just

[166] Neal, *News Gathering and News Writing*, 51-4.
[167] Carl N. Warren, *News Reporting: A Practice Book* (Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1929), 10. While this is for a smaller daily, it represents an example of newsroom-workforce management, i.e. a version of a daily assignment schedule. While its form could vary, the basic idea was to track scarce reporters and their time.

such a future book to navigate and "to disprove expectations that a woman would be too scatterbrained to cope with a fast city desk."[168] Underwood's daily routine involved considerable bookkeeping that could not be delegated, including working with the rewrite desk and managing the "slugsheet," which contained details on story assignments for that day. Underwood found that maintaining a written record of her routine helped to settle disputes between reporters and the copy desk. It also helped to keep other senior-level executives and publishers happy.[169] Editors like Underwood cultivated relationships among friendly or supportive groups in the newsroom, including, in her case, news photographers, who she made a career-long point of treating well. As a former reporter, Underwood found it difficult to direct newsroom routines as an editor rather than being driven by them. Instead, a "city editor is paid to direct and co-ordinate the activities of the city-side staff," not to "spank a typewriter" or spend time "hotshotting around."[170] Letting reporters police themselves maintained good newsroom morale, she found. She still would not "take any back talk, insulting loafing, or smart-aleck insubordination," in her words, from her mostly male reporters.[171]

Newsroom routines: the shared ritual of scheduling

To process the never-ending flow of information-turned-news, editors, especially assistant day city editors (though this title fluctuated from paper to paper), came in early in the newsroom's day. For morning papers, this could be around 9 a.m., and for afternoon papers,

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[168] "Agness M. Underwood Collection," Special Collections & Archives, California State University Northridge, accessed Dec. 6, 2015. http://library.csun.edu/SCA/Peek-in-the-Stacks/Underwood; Agness Underwood, *Newspaperwoman* (NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1949), 279.
[169] Underwood, Agness., Newspaperwoman (NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1949), 279-80.
[170] Underwood, Agness., Newspaperwoman (NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1949), 284, 286-7.
[171] Underwood, Agness., Newspaperwoman (NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1949), 292; On reporters calling in from bars: "I don't ask reporters or photographers what saloon they're calling from when they phone the city desk; I ask whether they have the story."

around 6 a.m. Reviewing stories from rival papers, the latest from local and national news services, and material left over from the previous shift, the first junior editor-in-charge would make initial assignments and prepare the way for his boss, the city editor. The latter would arrive by about 10 a.m. on a morning paper and by about 7:30 a.m. for an afternoon daily. The assistant city editor would brief the boss on news tips, potential story ideas (including the "futures book" as it was also called), set up a tentative coverage schedule and decide which general-assignment reporters would go where (once they reported in at around 1 p.m. or 7 a.m., at morning or afternoon papers, respectively) with photographers to follow throughout the day. City editors would keep an active account of who had been sent out, and who remained behind, just in case their stories developed. Many editors on morning papers were so concerned about being scooped or short-handed that a reporter, photographer and a rewrite staffer acted a a newsroom reserve.

A mid- or late-day conference of the various editors, including the city and managing editors, copy chief and makeup editor would resolve differences or discuss how to make up shortages of copy, but these decisions and their consequences had to be passed onto the managing editor, who would often arrive later in the afternoon. On morning papers, the late afternoon and evening hours could get particularly hectic, with "incoming and outgoing telegraph wires clattering; messengers coming and going; pneumatic tubes clicking; news being written, edited and set in type; proofs arriving at the managing editor's desk;" late-breaking stories, changes in layout and other last-minute modifications demanding precious time. This was when a good editor would take the "helm of [the] city room," until the various editions went out and the "late watch" arrived with the "dog watch man," or "sunrise editor," remaining

in charge (often a senior copy editor) until the morning came again. This "Night Managing Editor," as the position was sometimes called, "was the nearest person to a czar," a "despot whose word is law when the question of news space is disputed by the city, telegraph and other desks."[172] Even as editors mellowed and became more managerial in style, and less stridently boss-like, they could still summon their old habit of claiming absolute authority in emergencies. Depending on the circumstances, this was justified even by the more independent reporters, who recognized the need for top-down control in the midst of crises. Morning editors felt doubly pressed because they had to set the news agenda for the day without the benefit of as much material from rival papers.[173] Afternoon papers, in contrast, might face more pressure to work faster and update stories with wire copy.[174]

Afternoon papers followed a similar process, but with the busiest part of the day from late morning through early afternoon. Because of their schedule, afternoon papers often updated morning newspapers' stories and pursued different angles to stories that had already been written. Reporters would be assigned stories by about 7:30 a.m. and their progress tracked. As with their morning paper counterparts, it was important for editors to stay aware of what was being covered, how much space was left in the various upcoming editions, and what to do with late-breaking news. Afternoon papers had a staggered shift system in which reporters and support staff (copy editors, rewrite staffers) would leave throughout the afternoon. A skeleton crew would be in place by about 6 p.m., including a make-up editor designated as the "editor-in-charge" (of all but the sports section and its editor, who remained

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[172] Edwin L. James, "The organization of a newspaper," in *The Newspaper*: *Its Making and its Meaning* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), 13; MacCarthy, *The Newspaper Worker: A Manual for All Who Write*, 9.
[173] Seitz, *Training for the Newspaper Trade*, 56.
[174] Warren, *News Reporting: A Practice Book*, 1929, 4.

independent). Some afternoon papers had more rewrite staff than "writing reporters" present since the latter tended to stay out of the newsroom on assignment. Editors would reassign them by phone as needed throughout the day, sometimes to the point where they would not return to the office. On morning and afternoon dailies, a high level of coordination and control was necessary to manage limited resources, namely, the number of personnel available at any one point.[175] While technology enhanced an editor's ability to track and instruct reporters, both in and outside the newsroom, most editors had to make do with educated guesses.

Cost-saving could also move city editors and other newsroom bosses to carefully watch who was being sent where and why (and who needed to remain in the newsroom). Tracking absences, avoiding duplication of coverage by news services, having reporters otherwise not employed write evergreen copy and training reporters to take photos in a pinch were considered good practices. The shift from thinking of reporters more as resources to be spent or saved, instead of as personalities, was uneven, however. Most editors struggled to implement these kinds of efficiency-driven routines.[176]

Regardless of their publication schedule, on those newspapers with circulations of more than 100,000, a typical newsroom might have around 35 dedicated staff members, with about four to five editors (not counting assistants).[177] But in a 1930 study of 211 newsrooms, organizational structures varied wildly. Only a handful maintained an organizational chart prior to the study (though some created them in response).[178] Many utilized a loose system in which

[175] George C. Bastian and Leland D. Case, *Editing the Day's News* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), 259-61. The chapter on technology adoption in the newsroom discusses these issues further.
[176] Frank W. Rucker and Herbert Lee Williams, *Newspaper Organization and Management* (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State College Press, 1955), 160, 164, 167.
[177] Bastian and Case, *Editing the Day's News*, 261.
[178] Donald Hornberger and Douglass Miller, *Newspaper Organization* (Delaware, OH: Bureau of Business Service, Ohio Wesleyan University, 1930), 3-4, 5-7; Hornberger and Miller were business administration and English faculty members at Ohio Wesleyan.

a comparatively small group of powerful editors determined the day-to-day mission of the newsroom. They negotiated enough functional independence for their staffs from publishers and business managers to cover news with as little interference as possible (except when "policy" was infringed, or "something unusual" arose that necessitated a meeting of senior editors with ownership).[179] Newspaper chain organization differed from family ownership when it came to pathways for promotion: the former would promote and send editors to other papers, while the latter would promote and keep them local. In both cases, within the "operating organization," a senior editor, often identified as a "managing editor" would collaborate closely with the editor-in-chief, who was associated more directly with the publisher or owner of the paper. Newsroom routine dictated that at most of the papers analyzed in the 1930 study, mid-level and junior editors reported, in turn, to the managing editor. Sometimes this power was shared with a city editor, or news editor. The news editor position eventually evolved into a senior-level position between managing and city editor roles, since the managing editor often focused on personnel issues and interdepartmental cooperation, and the city editor concentrated on local news operations. This middle role, of course, could vary, if it existed at all.[180] Managing editors still set overall newsroom routine, and could hire and fire section editors.[181] More detailed newsroom routines were the purview of city editors, who could hire within budget limits and fire reporting staff within union constraints. But "personal factors" drove most power-sharing arrangements over time.[182]

Their work echoes memoirs and "how-to" vocational guides from this era in their emphasis on the informality of most newsroom structures. For more, please see Will Mari, "'Bright and inviolate:' editorial–business divides in early twentieth-century journalism textbooks," *American Journalism*, 31:3 (2014), 378-399.

[179] Hornberger and Miller, *Newspaper Organization*, 9.

[180] Rucker and Williams, *Newspaper Organization and Management*, 34.

[181] Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 58-9.

[182] Hornberger and Miller, *Newspaper Organization*, 17-18, 26.

Temporal power management, and journalistic values such as speed, were enhanced by the newsroom routine. Timeliness did not become an important journalistic value ex nihilo.[183]

A new newsroom: the advent of "personnel relations"

As management strategies shifted with the post-war world, human-resource managers and departments claimed that refined "scientific" methods would help newspapers retain quality staff and quell labor strife. Toward that end, the Newspaper Personnel Relations Association was formed in 1949 and held its first convention that year. Donald Wood, an early proponent of the use of then-new HR methods in newsrooms, wrote *Newspaper Personnel Relations* a few years later.[184] It foreshadows later management texts, and, as noted elsewhere in this chapter, the resulting concern that corporate interests and attitudes were permeating newsroom culture.[185] But it was also part of an existing, if niche, subgenre within then-existing

[183] For examples of an emerging and rich literature on journalistic concepts (and debates over) time, see Mike Ananny, "Networked news time: how slow—or fast—do publics need news to be?" *Digital Journalism* (Published online, Feb. 2016): 1-18; Richard B. Kielbowicz, "Regulating timeliness: technologies, laws, and the news, 1840-1970," *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 17, no. 1 (2015): 5-83; Ford Risley, "Newspapers and Timeliness," *American Journalism* 17, no. 4 (2000): 97-103. Both media historians and media technology theorists are interested in how ideas of temporal proximity have changed, and why. While this study does not delve too deeply into the question, suffice it to say that the newsroom helped to develop timeliness as we know it in journalism due its intense time-regulating routines and workflows.

[184] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 1952. It should be noted that Wood uses an expansive definition of "newspapermen," more so than newsroom workers themselves would have been, since he includes circulation, advertising and other support personnel in his target audience.

[185] See Robert H. Giles, *Newsroom Management: A Guide to Theory and Practice* (Indianapolis, Indiana: R.J. Berg and Company, Inc., 1987). These issues are explored thoroughly—and at the time, concurrently, in Doug Underwood's *When MBAs Ruled the Newsroom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). While this study is looking at an earlier era, some of the issues and methods identified by Wood some 30 years before continued to emerge in later, and more detailed, management guides. Giles' text, for example, includes lengthy discussions of newsroom leadership roles and newsroom conflict, topics that were also discussed in earlier texts, but which were also more implicit. Perhaps a direct descendent of Wood would be the American Society of Newspaper Editors' *Newsroom Management Handbook* (Washington, D.C.: American Society of Newspaper Editors Foundation, 1985). Jointly produced by the Human Resource Committee of the ASNE, the ASNE Foundation and Scripps-Howard Newspapers, it is designed to be easily accessible, with short, tabbed, easy-to-read articles on the following topics: "hiring," "firing, "evaluations," "employee training," "turnover," promotion, "fringe benefits," internship programs, "new technology," "sticky situations," "labor relations," management style/skills/techniques/training, "burnout & stress," "coping with your boss," "time management," "the total newspaper," "community relations," "budget building," "tips for saving money," "setting salaries" and entrepreneurship. These topics are divided into three main sections, "the editor as manager," "the editor as a real person" and "the editor as money manager," and were written specifically for the handbook and also summarized from the ASNE's *Bulletin* (and in both cases written by editors from across the country at mostly mid-sized daily metropolitan newspapers, with notably no contributors from New York City). With input from the Newspaper Personnel Relations Association, it was intended to be "something solid, simple—and fast" for editors facing immediate management crises, with

journalism literature. Published by the Newspaper Research Bureau, Wood's book is intended for supervisors, reporters and journalism students. But because it outlines how to administer an internal personnel-management and training program, it is really designed for junior bosses, specifically the versatile "department heads," whose actual job was to hire and fire. Wood acknowledges that most newspapers did not and would not have the resources to have a dedicated HR department, but his solution was to encourage the creation of more concrete management and training programs.

With the exception of a handful of pioneering programs, such as at the *Milwaukee Journal* in the late 1940s, the majority of newspapers, even larger dailies, leaned heavily on their younger management for the day-to-day indoctrination and supervision of reporters. In Wood's own study, less than a third of 94 newspapers surveyed had an HR department, and instead deferred the job of management and training to these junior or middle-grade supervisors.[186] Newspapers had, of course, long been slow to adopt more formal business-management methods, or what Wood called "scientific personnel programming," from other industries.[187] But that was changing. Before the 1950s, "more attention was given to [the processes of] editing, manufacturing and selling newspapers, than to the human beings who were the newspapermen responsible for the publisher's success." These former times, "when more attention was given to machines than to human beings," were gone, Wood claimed, by the early 1950s, and the newspaper industry was adopting best practices from other fields.

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only about "ten minutes" to prepare. A hotline was offered to the ASNE's Newspaper Center in Reston, Virginia, and a copy of the handbook was sent to all ASNE members for free, with additional copies available for $15 (subsidized by the Scripps-Howard Foundation).

[186] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 1.

[187] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 24.

These occupations recognized “that the greatest wealth of any and all business is . . . the human beings in the organization.”[188] Among these exemplary fields was public relations, whose firms were believed to be good models for management practices despite tensions with journalism.

In his text, Wood discusses the need for a “personnel” program, the current state of HR in the industry, and employee hiring and “job introduction.” As one of the chief goals of formalizing training was “to break in a new man,” he emphasized how important it was to introduce a new worker to the publisher, if possible, but also to the editor, the advertising director and all available department heads. Workers should be made to feel “at home” and “part of the family.”[189] In an era of increasingly depersonalized relationships, his choice of metaphors is telling. While management and labor forces were both keen to move on from an older, more paternalistic model, the desire to create a familial level of interaction lingered. Wood believed that a new hire’s career began with these kinds of cozy introductions. These would give the new hire “a feeling of importance and loyalty at a time when it is necessary.” That worker would “never forget the courtesy extended to him,” and would be more effective as a result.[190]

The underlying goal of more systematized training was “maximum efficiency at minimum costs.” But this efficiency could come, Wood claimed, through better training. The middle of the century brought a “new era of management-employee relationship,” and one that had “resulted possibly through a more educated class of workers, a growing awareness by

[188] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 2.
[189] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 3, 18.
[190] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 22.

management of their responsibilities toward employees, unionization and government intervention."[191] Wood sincerely believed, and makes the case in his guide, that "most employees are driven by the basic desire to better themselves," and were thus eager to improve their pay, secure their current jobs and gain more responsibility. It was important to involve both management and the rank-and-file in training sessions, and for the former to be responsive to feedback, because "the employees will not be sold" on the idea otherwise.[192]

Getting the "old-timers" involved, and going further and building a program around them, would help draw in younger, or newer, workers. A "wise manager" would recognize and work with this reality, and recognize, too, that the nature of newspaper work, with much of the how-to knowledge still passed on verbally, required the participation of peers. It was important for any training to take place on company time, because "most employees, no matter how conscientious and ambitious, are jealous of their leisure hours."[193] Alongside more informal meetings designed to train the trainers, other formats recommended by Wood included conferences and lectures. The former could help kick start the collection of material needed for handbooks, manuals or new programs, and were the most effective at helping older workers pass on their knowledge. Lectures were less ideal, unless carefully planned, on topic, and short.[194] Other helpful elements of a training program, from management's point of view, included the use of in-house publications, which ranged from highly produced magazines to

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[191] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 26-7.
[192] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 27, 29. He follows with a detailed description of a "personnel training" program, including chapters on "actual training," "methods of training," how to build a training manual, how to evaluate a training program and how to find and train new executives. While he refrains from specific recommendations for workshops, Wood does encourage newspaper management to run training that is "practical and interesting" and to "sell the program continuously" to workers, with more experienced workers encouraged to participate. See 27, 30.
[193] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 32, 34.
[194] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 37, 38, 66; they should also be held in the mornings, and kept closer to 45 minutes, since any later or longer would result in staff members probably becoming "restless and disinterested."

mimeographed sheets. Even an unassuming “house organ” could reduce labor strife. The use of "academic schooling" for one-off correspondence courses in newspaper management, advertising, "industrial relations," and "office procedure . . . benefits . . . the company as well.”[195]

“Department heads should not expect miracles overnight” from their training, Wood advised. But “the pulse of the staff” could be quickened and morale generally improved, even if gradually, through it. Satisfied and better trained workers ultimately needed less supervision. For supervisors doing the training, the goal was again to increase efficiency and reduce personnel costs by determining who was worth investing in for the long haul. Before, a lower-ranked editor or supervisor, the “sub-department head,” was “the forgotten man of industry.” Now newspapers needed to adopt a "scientific business management operation.” Wood quotes the business manager of the *Sound Bend Tribune*, based in Indiana, who called for faster selection and training of managers. Due to an aging management class, “personnel departments will be looking for young men who will be future department heads,” he predicted.[196]

The team-based nature of newsroom work created opportunities for the delegation of authority, but not ceding responsibility. Younger or newer editors should be taught to use strategic praise of their workers, since it was the “greatest human relations tool available to any executive.” As always, Wood tied this to the theme of efficiency: “decadence and inefficiency” were hallmarks of a poorly led and trained staff. These staffs could forget that “criticism,

[195] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 59.
[196] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 40-42, 43, 45; Wood, in turn, is quoting from Franklin D. Schurz, who appeared in the March 25, 1950 issue of *Editor & Publisher*, 18.

flattery, and public reprimand are taboo, and will kill the morale of any group." Sharing power, coupled with encouragement, brought "a feeling of belonging." This tapped into the desire of "all newspaper employees . . . to assume responsibility, and [to] want to share and to do things."[197]

Wood borrowed from then-current literature on personnel management (including material from the American Management Association) to emphasize the importance of open communication between workers and their supervisors, as well as workers' growing insistence on job security.[198] Various "security programs," included life and hospitalization insurance, severance pay, sick leave and pensions helped keep workers happy with their bosses. A "progressive personnel program" provided information about these kinds of benefits, which were still relatively new compared to other aspirational white-collar occupations.[199] Even as programs such as the one he advocated were becoming more common, Wood conceded that a more active role for any new HR departments or personnel-management programs would have to wait "for the future."[200]

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[197] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 45-6. 47.

[198] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 51, 54. For examples of then-current HR literature that Wood cites, see Vernon G. Schaefer and Willis Wissler, *Industrial Supervision—Controls* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. 1941), Dale Yoder, *Personnel Management and Industrial Relations* (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1942) and Burleigh B. Gardner and David G. Moore, *Human Relations in Industry* (Chicago: Richard D. Irwin, Inc.,1950).

[199] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 1952, 56; Wood reiterated that a good personnel director also assisted with core functions such as staff selection, job introduction, training and evaluations. Initial hiring was overwhelming done by department heads at most newspapers (only about one percent of the newspapers Wood surveyed deferred to nascent HR departments). But screening was done at more, using batteries of aptitude tests. Perhaps the best early example of this could be found at the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, where Phillip J. Kruidenier worked as the paper's personnel director, pioneering more quantitative methods for staff selection. More often, if a newspaper possessed personnel staff, or editors with that as their collateral duty, their job was to track and train new hires brought in by department heads.

[200] Wood, *Newspaper Personnel Relations*, 1952, 6, 57, 58. His own guide was intended to encourage adoption of management and training programs under the loose umbrella of "human relations" (though also called industrial or labor relations, or as he describes, "personnel programs"). Appendixes include a checklist, a how-to review guide for how to run a training meeting, and a further guide to developing a training program. Some of the suggested interview questions, which focus finding out whether a candidate during a "diplomatic interview" possessed "enthusiasm," an "attractive personality," a "tendency to lead the conversation," a "willingness to be social," "to lead," or had "qualities of aggressiveness," reflect the era's newsroom values.

Conclusion: from dictators to managers

From the end of the First World War through the start of the 1960s, the social and managerial roles of editors in the newsroom changed dramatically. While editors were still the "boss," they recognized that they functioned as a corporation's managers. Many still resisted (if not resented) this label, and continued to lead their staffs in more idiosyncratic ways. But even these more traditional editors were less powerful than their predecessors had been. While they retained the ability to hire, fire and direct the daily routines of reporters, photographers, lower-level copy editors, rewrite staff and other support personnel, their power had been reduced and shared. Whereas before reporters lacked agency, they had developed it and had become far more assertive.[201] While not a workers' nirvana, the newsrooms of the 1950s and 1960s were places reporters could do their work more independently, and where they had more hope of advancement and security. This affected management in several ways.

Newsroom bosses and management styles changed because the industry had changed. But more than that, the workers and the organizational structure of newspapers changed. Newspapers became more complex, influenced by a broader corporatization and consolidation of business culture. The presence of HR department and personnel directors were responses to these changes. And while middle management had existed for some time in American firms, newsrooms also gradually adopted an intermediate role that meant most news workers did not directly encounter senior editors or ownership. At smaller newspapers, these interactions continued to be the norm. But the larger dailies became ever more variegated and complex. A

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[201] Hanno Hardt and Brennen, Bonnie, *Newsworkers: Toward a History of the Rank and File* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995.

reporter would engage with a "boss" only a few years older and more interested in his or her problems than the editors of half a century before.

While strikes and external conflict continued, some of the more explicit internal conflicts had diminished. Collaboration had become more common, and editors took more pains to get their staff to work with, rather than just for, them. Power-sharing rituals, such as the daily or weekly news conference, helped to inscribe these changing values into newsroom routines. As more reporters ascended the ranks to their own editorships, they brought these practices with them and normalized them. Editors no longer felt they had to (or could) scream and shout to motivate their workers. They could let them work in peace and expect them to finish the work of reporting. As the occupation continued to aspire to a more "professionalized" standard, and bylines became more common, newsroom bosses could control their workers in more subtle ways, using the existing hierarchies of power already present in the newsroom (an old guard versus cub reporters, for example).

Editors had given up some of their power in the face of the newsroom's unionization. This dovetailed with editors' own white-collar aspirations. They, too, wanted a more balanced and well-compensated working life. Reflecting the rest of the country's middle-management (and white-collar occupations in general), newsroom managers were still deeply embedded in the top of the hierarchy of power. There was no question that in the newsroom, at least, editors controlled content. But a general flattening of this power meant that reporters, previously portrayed as heroic underdogs, became more powerful. The 1970s would witness the publication of dozens of new alternative journalism trade publications, reflecting a shift toward the reporter as the most important force in the newsroom.

When imagining the future of the newsroom later in the century, editors definitely believed their role would be as important if not more important. Even as technology promised more mobile reporting, the coordination and control of stories was still expected to be under the purview of a team of editors.[202] As will be examined in chapters on technology adoption in the newsroom and the impact of unionization on working life (as well as quality of life), editors remained vital to a newsroom's cultural and working life. But their tyranny (if they ever ruled that completely) was over. They, and the newsroom, had mellowed.

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[202] Robert U. Brown, "Shop talk at thirty," Jan. 20, 1945; Brown, the editor of *Editor & Publisher*, predicted "a network of 'walkie-talkies' linking the star reporters of a newspaper all over town" that would also connect them back to the desk. For more on these and other predictions, as well as the effect of the telephone and other news-collecting technologies, please see the next chapter, on technology adoption in and out of the newsroom.

Chapter 7

Technology and the newsroom: news workers connect to produce

As a fixture in the workaday world of journalism, telephones connected those who gathered news with the newsroom staff that processed and produced it. Reporters telephoning the newsroom became a common motif in popular-culture representations of news work ("give me rewrite!"). Journalists' own accounts of their work lives sometimes matched Hollywood portrayals of the dramatic role telephones played, as suggested by this 1941 vignette from *The Quill*: [1]

> *Elbowing a group of professional bondsmen away from the police blotter, the station reporter gets the framework for this story. Then he climbs up to his ivory tower [his press room] in the police station. He pick up his phone (a straight line to the newspaper's PBX board).*
>
> *"Hello, Sweetheart. Wake up and buzz the desk for me," he says familiarly.*
> *"Say, Mac, I've got a few paragraphs on drunk drivers and a new angle on that Tenth Avenue hold-up." (The C.E. signals a rewrite man, who puts on the earphones as the call is switched.)*
>
> *And back in his ivory tower the police reporter says "OK," bug-eyed and beetle-brained, ready to take some arkmalarky on what our guardians of law and order are doing?'*
>
> *The man under the earphones replies, "shoot the copy to me, Sloppy!" And the "crime author" glances at his scrawly notes and begins: "A man listed as…".* [2]

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[1] Published by Sigma Delta Chi, later the Society of Professional Journalists, *The Quill* had evolved from a college fraternity publication when it was launched in 1919, to a more alumni-centered organization and then finally a professional group. See Charles C. Clayton, *Fifty Years for Freedom: The Story of Sigma Delta Chi's Service to American Journalism, 1909-1959* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959), 35.

[2] Charles M. Cowden, "Cub reporter's ordeal by wire comes the first time he faces 'phone and must dictate—or be damned!" *The Quill*, July 1941, 7.

The telephone and other news-gathering technologies had been used in the newsroom since the late 1800s. But increasing access to them by the mid-1930s meant more agency and autonomy for news workers, freed from having to either share phones with colleagues in the newsroom, or fight for access to phones outside of it (at least not as much). Granted, not every newsroom was awash in phones. Increasingly, however, after 1920 reporters and their phones became as common a vocational tool as typewriters. The car closely followed, and soon the two technologies were united, via radio, on an experimental basis in the "radio car." This latter technology allowed the reporter to increase his or her reach (and independence) beyond the newsroom. This chapter briefly explores the adoption of these disruptive technologies on newsroom relationships and news workers during the decades after the First World War.

Situating technology in the newsroom

The adoption of the phone and car as reporting tools accelerated a trend in U.S. journalism in the early part of the twentieth century: the increasing divergence between the process of gathering news and the related but separate process of writing, editing and publishing it. The telephone encouraged this bifurcation of newspaper processes, especially in urban areas. This could be seen in how technology emphasized differences between a newspaper's "leg men"—reporters out in the field—and an ever-more complex newsroom staff structure to support them. With both the news-gathering and news-production processes, newsrooms had long functioned as simultaneously reluctant and innovative testing grounds for communication technologies. By the 1920s, within and without these newsroom spaces, news workers' relationships with technology, and the effect of technology on their own relationships,

had been formed by complex, contingent choices. The twin technologies of the telephone and the car exemplified how these choices amplified the agency of news workers, giving them increasing autonomy to do their jobs, as well as the ability to coordinate better with colleagues (or compete, as the case may be).

At the same time, both the desk phone in the newsroom and public and private phones outside the newsroom limited this agency. By creating a tethering effect that bound news workers to their supervisors (i.e. editors), it reinforced what the economist Richard Edwards has defined as control within a production process: the ability of "managers to obtain desired work behavior from workers."[3] The ability to both leave the newsroom space to do work, and to be more autonomous in that work, was thus limited by editors, who, from afar, attempted to curtail it. And yet the phone and the car remained particularly disruptive newsroom tools, even as they both built on older routines and power dynamics. As they helped to inspire new routines, they created new centers of power.[4] As Bruno Latour has described in his "sociology of the social," technology can alter "power relationships between the different *actors involved in the development of an innovation* in a newsroom."[5] Telephones may have been purchased by publishers, and their use may have been regulated by editors, but it was reporters and their peers who made full use of them, utilizing them to streamline and enhance their work, and express their independence in the newsroom space. The telephone helped to spur a "titanic transformation . . . in newspaper operations."[6]

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[3] Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books), 17.

[4] C.W. Anderson and J. De Maeyer, "Objects of journalism and the news," *Journalism* 16, no. 1 (2014): 6.

[5] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: an Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Amy Schmitz Weiss, and David Domingo, "Innovation processes in online newsrooms as actor-networks and communities of practice," *New Media & Society* 12, no. 7 (2010): 1156-1171.

[6] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman, A Book About the Business* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1941), 190.

The use of technology, with news-gathering tools such as the phone and car, has reflected power differentials in newsrooms through the twentieth century. Susan Keith has shown this with her examination of ubiquitous newsroom-work objects, including the horseshoe-shaped copy desk, the stylebook, the pica measuring stick, the photo-proportion wheel and the paper page dummy.[7] By looking at how "frontline newsworkers" have used tools, or the "objects of editing," she examined how newsrooms absorbed internal shifts in the balances of power, from copy editors to reporters to designers.[8] As Keith points out, comfort level, speed of adoption, and innovation with that adoption affects who has more control over their work in a media organization's dynamic workplace. Generally, the faster and more creative one is at adopting a technology, the more autonomy one enjoys or carves out. This is important as technology adoption (and improvement in current technology) tends to shift control among groups of peers and near-peers in the newsroom. Control over work processes, as empowered by technology, is one of the hallmarks of a professional identity.[9]

Comfort with technology, and the ability to use it in one's routines, as a news worker, also has a direct connection to the reskilling, multiskilling and deskilling processes that simultaneously occur in journalism work, according to Henrik Örnebring. [10] He defines the act of news gathering as the locus of "journalistic labor," or the process of finding, selecting and presenting the news. News workers regularly acquired new skills and modified old ones.[11]

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[7] Susan Keith, "Horseshoes, stylebooks, wheels, poles, and dummies: Objects of editing power in 20th-century newsrooms," *Journalism* 16, no. 1 (2015): 44-60.
[8] Keith, "Horseshoes, stylebooks, wheels, poles, and dummies," 5, 8-10.
[9] Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988).
[10] Henrik Örnebring, "Technology and journalism-as-labor: historical perspectives," *Journalism* 11, no. 57 (2010); note that he describes "deskilling" in particular with technology's use in increasing productivity and the gradual erosion of skills from various forms of work, 59, 60.
[11] Örnebring, "Technology and journalism-as-labor: historical perspectives," 60-1, 66-7.

Indeed, technology use in multi- or reskilling processes grows out of “existing value systems, and these value systems have cultural, social and economic roots.”[12] In our case, these systems encompass work routines in journalism that have been driven by discourses of speed, economy and efficiency. These arose during the era of factory, or industrial journalism, during the first two decades of the twentieth century. These routines have continually been modified by technology, not suddenly and recently. The telephone and the car are, in fact, lingering examples of that long modification. News workers have been made both less mobile but also *more* mobile through the use of the telephone. News-gathering technology thus entrenches established work routines, and less often creates entirely new ones. New or emerging work patterns, such as the use of the telephone for interviews, or the use of the radio car to wirelessly update a newsroom from a distance, take time and experimentation to develop. But news workers during this era were committed to such innovation.

As labor historian Marianne Salcetti has noted, the technology driving the creation and revision of work routines has also created unique divisions of labor in the newsroom, not always to the benefit of workers.[13] This story is complex, however. With the arrival of the American Newspaper Guild and other unions, even replaceable reporters were harder to fire.[14] The widespread adoption of the telephone and car as reporting tools, by that point, was an important historical juncture. New technology, and the arrival of rival media, such as radio,

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[12] Örnebring, "Technology and journalism-as-labor: historical perspectives," 68.

[13] Marianne Salcetti, “The emergence of the reporter: mechanization and the devaluation of editorial workers,” 48-74, in Hanno Hardt, and Bonnie Brennen, *Newsworkers: Toward a History of the Rank and File*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 67.

[14] Morton Sontheimer points this out in his autobiographical how-to for young news workers, *Newspaperman, A Book About the Business*. By the end of the 1930s, “Salaries went up and hours went down, and heedless firings began to drop off when each one meant several hundred dollars in dismissal pay,” 325. This topic is explored thoroughly in the chapter on newsroom unionization.

meant that new skills were required. Rival newsrooms that relied on broadcasting could more readily beat newspapers in breaking news. But newspapers, adopting and refining both the phone and car as reporting tools, were able to maintain an edge in a competitive media ecosystem. At the same time, the broad division of many larger newsrooms' workforces into those who gathered the news, and those who edited and published it, increased the need for the kinds of skills needed to operate news-gathering technologies. The more skilled, stable workforce produced by this process helped reinforce the importance of reporters by the 1920s and 1930s. Management benefited less from culling annually from a pool of skilled, hard-to-fire workers—workers who possessed familiarity with the phone, and later, the radio car—and instead gained more from maintaining, training and equipping them. This happy historical confluence led to an increasingly better quality of life for news workers, as their agency was strengthened, even as it was contested and in flux.[15]

Telephones: adoption before the 1920s

Telephones gave agency to news workers, who for the most part gladly—though only eventually—adopted them in their work. Their incorporation into the newsroom and news-gathering routines, however, was neither inevitable nor swift. And some news workers were unsure of, or not comfortable with a relatively new technology. Telephones had been in the newsroom since the late 1800s. By 1901, *The Fourth Estate* could describe the reportorial accomplishments of the *New York Evening Post* in describing a boat race via telephone reports from its correspondents in Poughkeepsie, some 87 miles north of New York City.[16] Other

[15] I should thank my colleague Matt Bellinger for helping to inspire some of the ideas contained here.
[16] "Reporting in a storm," *The Fourth Estate*, July 6, 1901, 10.

newspapers in Ohio and Missouri were also experimenting with the use of phones for news-gathering. In the latter case, the editor of the *Sturgeon* [Mo.] *Leader* called a network of farmers and others to collect the news, holding up with one hand his desk receiver and taking notes with the other.[17] Another small paper in Missouri was in the process of establishing a similar rural-phone network for its correspondents, and trained its staff, including printers, to operate the telephone switchboard. Telephone operators, conversely, were trained to set type just in case.[18] This was not unusual. Many mechanical workers earlier in the century were cross-trained. Only later, with increasing specialization, did such training become rarer. Still, the appearance of the phone in newsrooms around the turn of the nineteenth century could startle or amuse a newsroom's residents and mechanical workers alike. When H.L. Mencken was a young reporter on the *Baltimore Herald* in 1899, he noted that there were only two telephones, "paleozoic instruments attached to the wall," and that "no one ever used them if it could be avoided." He also noted that no phone arrived on the city editor's desk until he took the position in 1903.[19] In contrast, one early adopter was the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* installing its first phone in the mid-1880s, when there were fewer than 1,500 in the city. By the first years of the new century, the paper had "enough telephones to make the device convenient to reporters and to advertising salesmen."[20]

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[17] "News by telephone," *The Fourth Estate*, Feb. 24, 1900; 4; "Gathering the news by aid of telephone," *The Fourth Estate*, Aug. 29, 1903, 15.

[18] "Telephone and newspaper office combined," *The Fourth Estate*, Feb. 23, 1901, 15.

[19] H.L. Mencken, *Newspaper Days 1899-1906* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 18.

[20] Thomas Harrison Baker, *The Memphis Commercial Appeal: The History of a Southern Newspaper* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 217. Note the presence of an early parallel communication technology, a telegraph sounder, in use by a reporter in the bowler hat on the right.

[21]

The second decade of the new century saw further experimentation with phones. *Telegraph and Telephone Age* noted how much faster stories could be sent by telephone. Seventy-five words per minute on average could be sent over the phone by an unskilled operator, it was claimed, versus 40-50 words a minute on average by a skilled telegraph operator writing in Phillips code (with a receiver decoding it).[22] The advantage to sending stories, or parts of stories, in whole words versus in code increased the numbers of potential correspondents as well as the flexibility of news-gathering. Being able to update stories over the phone allowed a paper to receive last-minute news up to the moment of going to press and helped to eliminate "the waste of special [copy] delivered too late for the press that day," noted a contemporary.[23] The adoption of the phone by news workers was both a deskilling

[21] Newsroom scene from c. 1908 at the *New Orleans Item*. John Wilds, *Afternoon Story: A Century of the New Orleans States-Item* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).
[22] By the 1940s, these ambitious claims had been tempered as the rewrite desk's function matured and its staff members were expected to be more creative, as noted earlier in this study.
[23] "The telephone in news service," *Telegraph and Telephone Age*, Feb. 16, 1914, 110; "Special" or "specials" were dispatches by a newspaper's own correspondents, in contrast, to wire-service stories, which were provided by a third-party service.

process, because less technical savvy was needed to phone in a story versus transmitting it via telegraph and decoding it, but also an up-skilling or reskilling process, since one had to be able to not only operate a phone, but also reimagine telling (versus writing by longhand or typing up on a typewriter in a newsroom in the presence of peers) one's stories. Anecdotes from memoirs by reporters who worked in this era make frequent reference to how the best of their number could start writing stories in their heads before finding a phone or reaching the newsroom. As a news-gathering tool, the telephone did not cause a loss of skill among reporters, but it did emphasize certain skills over others, contemporaries realized. This happened as a culture of timeliness increasingly pervaded newspapers and journalism in the early era of radio.[24] Newspapers, which had always exhibited considerable interest in scooping one another to get the latest news, became more and more focused on breaking news, covering it with hourly updates, and then exploiting any news breaks better and faster.

Some speculated that the telephone could help speed copy directly to the typesetter. An early experiment to that effect in South Carolina, in which a short news article was telephoned directly to a linotype operator in Columbia from a transmitter in Charleston, hinted at the possibilities. Of course, the rewrite man would soon rise as a class of news worker to serve as an intermediary between the wire and the process of setting type, before the technical challenges could be worked out further. The rise of new newsroom technology could, of course, result in the loss of jobs, especially on the production side of the newspaper. A case in point: when automatic telegraph machines were adopted in the 1910s and 1920s, thousands of

[24] Richard Kielbowicz, "Regulating Timeliness: Technologies, Laws, and the News, 1840-1970," *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 17 (March 2015): 5-83.

telegraph operators lost their jobs. Western Union employed 35,000 such operators in 1913 but only 10,000 in 1928; the AP had cut its force down to 600 from 1,200 during that same time period.[25] "Before I get lost in the story of the derelict telegrapher, permit me to point the moral," warned one author: "do not learn one trade, and one only one trade, on which you are wholly dependent. . . . A machine may come along almost any day which can and will do your job better than ever you could. And there where are you?" asked one writer, directing his question at his fellow news workers.[26] One news account from 1928 reported that Chester L. Guernsey, a 49-year-old AP operator (who had worked for the AP and the UP for 30 years) on the Jamestown (N.Y.) *Journal*, apparently committed suicide "within 72 hours after losing his position . . . as the result of installation of a 'printer' [automatic telegraph machine]."[27] The implication was that because his job was replaced by a machine, he lost his will to live. Less grimly, the position of telegraph operator, with a team of assistants, was solidified even with the arrival of automated equipment.[28] There were also attempts, only partially successful, to retrain older telegraph operators.[29] But concerns about job displacement were generally overshadowed in journalistic trade publications by a pervading optimism. Typesetters in the future, it was predicated, would have "head telephones" and chest-mounted transmitters, to speed their work (though again, these gadgets would actually, in time, become part of the gear

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[25] George Saint-Amour, "Veteran Morse men on 'block' as 'mux' chases them from jobs: Automatic printers have telegraphers on the run—some learn to be chiropractors; others study law—appeal to editors for a chance," *Editor & Publisher*, March 10, 1928, 22.
[26] Saint-Amour, "Veteran Morse men on 'block' as 'mux' chases them from jobs," 22.
[27] "Telegrapher commits suicide," *Editor & Publisher*, April 14, 1928, 40.
[28] The focus of his chapter is on news-*gathering* technology, not on news-*producing* technology, such as the above-mentioned telegraph machines, but the latter's adoption shows some of the complexities for news workers who fit somewhere between the editorial and mechanical sides of a newspaper.
[29] Saint-Amour, "Veteran Morse men on 'block' as 'mux' chases them from jobs," 22.

of the rewrite desk).[30] The AP, for its part, adapted the telephone to deliver 1,000 to 5,000-word news reports to about 30 papers at "regular intervals at day or night."[31] News was typed as it was heard over the phone, after speakers and listeners perfected their rates of speaking and copying to adjust to the new technology.[32]

In many newsrooms in the early 1920s, there were few phone lines, and reporters and editors alike had to share access. This was especially the case on smaller dailies. An illustration for a "space-saving table" in 1919 shows a desk meant to accommodate four reporters, with drop shelves for four typewriters and a telephone on a "top shelf for use by all four workers."

SPACE-SAVING TABLE FOR CROWDED LOCAL ROOM

THE sketch shown above is of a reporter's table in use in the office of the Wausau (Wis.) Daily Record-Herald. It has attracted a great deal of attention among visitors to the local room and should prove of interest to other publishers whose office space is limited.

J. L. Sturtevant, president and manager of the Record-Herald Company, describes the table, which was designed by George D. Derby, secretary of the company, as being 7.6" x 3.6", with accommodations for four men. It is built of birch with mahogany finish, has drop shelves for typewriters and ample drawer and working space. A telephone is conveniently located on the top shelf for use of all four workers.

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[30] "News by telephone direct to the type-setter," *Telegraph and Telephone Age*, Dec. 16, 1913, 735.
[31] These were sometimes called "pony reports."
[32] "Associated Press telephone service," *Telegraph and Telephone Age*, May 1, 1911, 322.
[33] "Space-saving table for crowded local room," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 7, 1919, 19; this table combined a relatively new technology, the telephone, with another new idea: "efficiency" and turning an office space into a factory.

This was in the office of the Wausau (Wisc.) *Daily-Record Herald*.[34] Similarly, a 1921 profile of the new Chattanooga (Tenn.) *News* describes how, "in one corner of the editorial room a telephone booth has been arranged."[35] This booth would have been, presumably, used by all the paper's reporters. The Washington *Star*, exalted for the efficiency of its newsroom, had desks made of "the inevitable restful green metal, flat topped, with disappearing typewriters." Two desks were served by telephones on flexible brackets."[36] Indeed, it was more common for business department staff members to have telephones, in the 1920s, than for reporters.[37]

Even though they were not yet on every reporter's (or even every editor's) desk during this decade, telephones had already altered work routines. Journalism textbooks, initially distrustful of their use, for fear that a reporter could be duped by someone claiming to be someone else, gradually advised on their best use. Face-to-face interviewing and observation still held primacy of place in journalistic practice, but the telephone had become a useful auxiliary. Beat reporters started to use telephones to call back to the newsroom. Roving reporters on general assignment checked back in with the newsroom and their editors repeatedly throughout the day. The device was both a tethering and a liberating force, reinforcing the hierarchy of power in the newsroom between the reporter, the city editor and the managing editor, but also allowing the reporter to cover more ground and be more independent, within and without the newsroom and its constraints. Editors could both control,

[34] "Space-saving table for crowded local room," 19.
[35] "Looking ahead in construction of newspaper homes," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 29, 1921, 11.
[36] "Human touch vitalizes efficiency in *Washington Star*'s plant," *Editor & Publisher*, April 18, 1922, 18.
[37] "*Scranton Republican* in new home," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 13, 1928, 38. "Every desk in the business departments is equipped with a telephone."

but also better coordinate, coverage of unplanned events.[38] It might be hard for us to envision what having more access to one's own phone would mean, for a reporter, either at a desk or out in the field, but overall it meant more agency. The phone was a sign of freedom.

As the phone was slowly adopted in the newsroom, it changed news routines, though at first slowly. Instead of taking hours to gather the facts, return to the newsroom, and write up a story, breaking news could be related from the scene of a story by a reporter via a rewrite man, who "whips the happenings into a story as rapidly as he can write it," according to a 1923 account by a *New York Times* reporter. This same reporter claimed that "all the greatest stories of the last decade have been telephone stories." Indeed, after about 10 p.m., any breaking news would be covered over the phone. The New York Press Association used the telephone to great effect that same year, with reporters letting their editors know where they could be reached. And long before any "sensational fire, murder, or robbery" occurred, private phone lines could be secured in certain neighborhoods. This would save the reporter time from having to hunt down a "coin booth box," and allow other reporters to be sent to the vicinity to aid in news-gathering.[39] Long-distance phone-calling also helped the larger newspapers in New York, which would have staff members check in daily with correspondents, sometimes several times a day, in other big cities, such as San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Chicago, St. Louis and Detroit. Reporters by the early 1920s were also finding that some of their subjects preferred to be interviewed over the phone. A busy source could seek to control an interview, keeping it, for example, to a specified length. Although some reporters still preferred to see their sources in

[38] A helpful working definition of "coordination," inspired by Richard Edwards, is the production of goods by individual workers operating as a unit, as achieved by tradition, established routines and/or the mutually beneficial distribution of power among these workers in a production process. See Edwards, *Contested Terrain*, 17.
[39] "Newspapers get biggest 'beats' over telephone," *Telegraph and Telephone Age*, July 16, 1923, 352.

person, especially if they needed descriptive details, many were content to have limited contact with their sources via a phone call versus none at all.

On the *Boston Globe* in the years after the First World War, telephone calls were used to check on press releases or stories rewritten by the night-shift staff for the morning edition. They helped the smaller, less talented overnight crew cover any news that happened to break at night.[40] Another *New York Times* reporter from this era said that a “telephone interview makes it easier to confine a man to the subject you want him to talk on. We have found that a big man is better pleased to talk to reporters over the telephone than face to face in his office.”[41] A phone call, it turned out, improved access to some sources. It could also save face, even a generation later, when a rival paper had a major scoop or story not reported in your paper. In New Orleans, the competing *Item* and *States* relied on last-minute phone calls to include bulletins in later editions if one had a story the other did not.[42]

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[40] Louis M. Lyons, *Newspaper Story: One Hundred Years of The Boston Globe* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 261.
[41] “Newspapers get biggest ‘beats’ over telephone,” *Telegraph and Telephone Age*, July 16, 1923, 352.
[42] Wilds, *Afternoon Story: A Century of the New Orleans States-Item*.

[43]

Guy F. Lee, a reporter manning “the dog watch,” or overnight shift, for the *Chicago Tribune* in the winter of 1921, used the phone to monitor news across the sprawling city. For long stretches of the night, he would be “left alone with the rodents and the office boy,” composing poetry on a “battered old typewriter.” But a phone call would invariably break this reverie, as a “sleepy police reporter” called with news of a bomb explosion, for instance. Lee would rush into action, typing up a story based on the call and supervising the night-shift composing room crew. But the same cause of his interruption enabled him to perform his solo work. He would resume his poetry, once the story was set for the morning paper, and keep “hammering at his typewriter while the rats rustled across the paper-littered floor of the local

[43] “Glimpse behind the scenes in a great newspaper office—city room of *Chicago Tribune*, showing local staff in action,” *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 14, 1919; note the appearance of phones on reporters’ desks.

room and the phone clamored intermittently at his elbow."[44] The telephone, in this sense, was a force multiplier, and an extender of the newsroom's—and the news worker's—capability.

Even in this relatively early era for the phone, reporters needed to quickly learn how to efficiently convey details to the rewrite desk. Young reporters, perhaps those who had not used the phone for more than the occasional social call during their college years, would not know what to do. An anonymous rewrite man complained in 1924 that "the first time a new reporter gets hold of a telephone, he looks at the transmitter and forgets his name." The story would tumble "out backwards and upside down" since "his voice is not tuned to the receiver, and his story, to the rewrite man, sounds like a lot of mixed signals." The author urged journalism schools to spend six months practicing "talking over the telephone." The room for error, even when using a relatively new medium, was slight for "embryo journalists."[45]

The use of the phone was not only difficult for beginners. Some reporters and editors complained that this news-gathering technology was changing journalistic standards, and not always for the better. In 1925, Karl M. Anderson, managing news editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, said that "fifteen or twenty years ago, before the day of the telephone and the early edition, when a story broke, a man went out and got it, cleaned it up, came back to the office and wrote it. If it wasn't written right, he got hell for it." Now the "wretched telephone . . . the biggest detriment and the greatest help the newspaper world has ever known" had changed stories into "fragmentary bulletins and scrap-ends."[46] News workers, tending toward nostalgia, had found a reason to rue the day that this new news-gathering machine had appeared.

[44] Paul D. Augsburg, "The dog-watch poet," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 26, 1921, 12.
[45] "Rewrite man sorrows for sins of the cubs," *The Quill*, March 1924, 12.
[46] Philip Schuyler, "Newspaper makers at work," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 17, 1925, 20.

This sense of greater haste, of a faster newsroom pace, spurred by the widespread adoption of the telephone in society at large, as well as in the newsroom, found its way into news workers' attempts at poetry. Stewart Emery's "Big News," from a 1920 issue of *Editor & Publisher*, describes what happened when news broke in the newsroom, aided by the phone:

> There's a room of racked reporters pounding type keys to and fro
> And a harried desk a-slaving with their reeking pipes aglow;
> Crazy telephones are jangling and the 'boss' is yelling speed,
> Never mind the fancy English, simple facts are what we need.
> It's 'emergency,' a welter of wild orders, rush and noise,
> And the staid dramatic critic's chasing copy with the boys.[47]

In addition to the mechanical clanking of the typewriters, the constant ringing of the phone, even if reduced by removing the receiver (a trick a reporter or editor would resort to if a caller was particularly insistent) became part of the barrage of aural stimuli. It was a constant accompaniment in the newsroom. Throughout the interwar era, the soundscape was continually altered by the ubiquitous presence of phones on reporters' desks. One editor who worked in the women's department of the Pittsburgh (Penn.) *Sun-Telegraph*, noted that "you'd have to seal yourself in the wall or climb into an empty file drawer to escape the noise around this place." With "50 reporters who "think out loud, and countless voices who scream out for copyboys, janitors, candy salesmen and telephone repairmen," 30 typewriters "with the hiccups," and eight telephones in her department alone, the rings could be indistinguishable from one another. "If a call happens to come into the society department announcing the engagement of the Wild Man of Borneo to the daughter of the Neanderthal Man, all the phones ring with the same dialect."[48]

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[47] Stewart Emery, "Gathered at random: 'Big news,'" *Editor & Publisher*, April 17, 1929, 47.
[48] Louis Flood, *Editor & Publisher*, ""Among those present in [the] social dept.: pix or people perhaps, but penguins—phooey!" 56.

[49]

The pace of reporting had changed. More disturbingly, for some older news workers, especially editors, technology affected the underlying relationships that in their opinion had steadied and inspired the newsroom. The era of "daring individual journalism" had arrived, and its power was "now vested in the reporter instead of the editor," according to an anonymous editorialist in 1922. The failures of this power shift from his perspective at least partially lay with the "men who give assignments. It is they who have not kept pace with mechanical advancements, except in a mechanical way." The writer quotes Victor Murdock, the vice-chairman of the Federal Trade Commission and former editor of the *Wichita Eagle*, when he called the reporter the new "high priest of the craft." This worker was weakened at the same time by a new spirit of "haste, the telephone, a practice called 'rewrite,' multiplied editions,

[49] "Modern appointments of newest metropolitan newspaper building," *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1929, 13. Note how news workers' desks in the *Chicago Daily News* newsroom have their own individual phones.

and other innovations." Reporting was more than "accurate narration," and needed the "expression of opinion, vigorous or otherwise."[50]

J. Charles Poe, the executive editor of the *Chattanooga News*, complained, in this vein, in 1931 that the quality of applicants to his newspaper had declined. Too many, now that they were on salary and married, spent less time at the paper or out on the town pursuing leads. Some would make "one feeble effort to get the story over the telephone, and failing, report to the desk that the man wasn't in."[51] Other editors complained about their reporters' use of the phone. Arthur J. Sinnott, the managing editor of the *Newark News*, chaired a "Shop talk" panel on "building a city staff" at the 1931 convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Reporting was now so fast-paced, he said, that "very few men that are out in the field come in or have time to come in." Now that the "telephone intervenes," most reporters either chose to, or had to, telegraph or phone in their stories, which led to "the most curious and idiotic mistakes—getting names wrong, the fellow blurs it or something on the telephone." The convenience of transmitting information had consequences, he said, such that "the telephone is our great friend and enemy."[52] Another writer related that "before telephones, reporters would write their own stories. Now they do so only where the time element is not so important."[53] As late as 1957, editors were meeting to find ways to "discourage reporters from depending on the telephone."[54]

[50] "The high priest of the craft," *Editor & Publisher*, April 22, 1922, 56.
[51] J. Charles Poe, "Where are the good reporters? Inexperienced boys or broken down veterans and incompetents apply at this editor's door," *The Quill*, January 1931, 10.
[52] Arthur J. Sinnott, *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 17, 1931, 172-3.
[53] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 190.
[54] "How a reporter should spend his time," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 23, 1957, 71.

But while some editors and older reporters feared the telephone would encourage lazy reporting, younger reporters were using it to manage their own independence both in and out of the newsroom. This conditional independence was reinforced by the telephone, which both connected and distanced a reporter from the immediate control of his supervisors. Mitchell Charnley, a reporter-turned-journalism-professor, related how he, having been assigned to cover a divorce early in his career, encountered the divorcee's mother. She begged him and another reporter from a rival paper to not publish her daughter's story. As Charnley relates it: "I was new at the job, and, although I was most willing to accede, I felt that the presence of my seasoned, hardboiled rival (he was a rat-faced little chap and it was easy to believe all that had been said of him) would force me to print it. He must have sized up my attitude, for he didn't even consult me." Charnley was surprised at what happened next, however.

"'Okay,' he said. 'We'll kill it.'" The older reporter then called his city editor, and spoke into the receiver. "'Nothing to the story,' he reported, 'bum steer.'" Charnley left the house, and the other reporter turned to him. "'You got to do that now and then,' he explained. 'That old girl got to me. No sense in putting her on the spot just to satisfy a lot of moron readers.'"[55] This was probably a relatively rare case, but editors did delegate to their older reporters a certain level of judgment as to the newsworthiness of stories, once on the scene. Reporters made use of this technology to carve out their own freedom of action.

Some reporters could push this phone-empowered independence to its limit. Orien W. Fifer, an editorial writer for the *Indianapolis News*, recounted the story of a reporter who had taken advantage of a quiet afternoon to see a movie. He thought he was playing it safe, when

[55] Mitchell Charnley, "City room cynics unmasked," *The Quill*, April 1932, 4.

he called to check in with the newsroom, one last time from the theater. As it turns out, however, he only narrowly avoided missing the breaking story of the governor's resignation. He was saved by a friend from a rival paper, who knew he liked to frequent movies on slow days and found him in time.[56] They both proceeded to cover the story, probably using the telephone.

Even at larger newspapers into the 1930s, telephones appeared only gradually on an individual reporters' desks, dependent on the whims and priorities of publishers. But generally speaking, reporters came into increasing contact with, and use of, phones in their work. When the *Los Angeles Times* opened its new $4 million building in 1935, its lavish, air-conditioned spaces included a 4,576 foot "city room" on the third floor that contained two rows of steel desks for reporters. On an opposite wall was a row of telephone booths to be shared.[57] Other newspapers ranged telephone booths along a wall for their reporters, separate from their rewrite space.[58] Designated rewrite "batteries" with multiple desks became a common sight in newsrooms.[59]

In August 1937, when the Toledo (Ohio) *News-Bee* renovated its building, every reporter's desk had a phone installed.[60] A reporter reflecting on his early experiences in journalism during this same era recalled how his local daily paper used phones, and how every reporter's desk was "equipped with headphones" for dictation.[61] A 1928 photo of the new

[56] Orien W. Fifer, Jr., "Tales from the police beat: experiences of all sorts fall to the lot of the reporter at headquarters," *The Quill*, August 1931, 13.
[57] "*Los Angeles Times'* new $4,000,000 home combines beauty and efficiency: magnificent marble and limestone structure is air-conditioned throughout and protected against earthquake tremors," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 10, 1935, II, VI.
[58] Marion May Dilts, *The Telephone in Changing World*. (New York: Longmans, Green and Co. 1941), 75.
[59] Gelb, *City Room*, 209.
[60] "Toledo News-Bee renovates plant," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 14, 1937, IV.
[61] Cowden, "Cub reporter's ordeal," 6.

newsroom of the Canton (Ohio) *Repository*, shows that most of the editors and reporters had access to a phone.[62] Other images show a similar trend. Some twenty years later, the Dallas *Morning News* had renovated its newsroom to equip each reporter's desk with a phone.[63] The *Oregon Journal*'s newsroom had "ample space for each reporter to have his own desk, telephone and typewriter" in 1948.[64] Similarly, photos of newsrooms by the early 1950s show plentiful telephones on nearly every news workers' desk.

MODERNIZED NEWSROOM AT WORK—This is how the Indianapolis News solved the old problem of having a score of busy news executives so seated that they are all "next to each other." At the left, seated at his desk as managing editor, is Eugene S. Pulliam Jr., who tells how it was done. A floor plan of the newsroom is shown on the next page. [65]

Cartoon depictions of newsroom life by this point also showed the prevalence of individual phones on reporters' desks.[66] Phones had long been considered a critical part of the daily workflow.[67] One young cub reporter working summers at the *Wenatchee World* while an

[62] "Canton repository now printing from high-speed plant," *Editor & Publisher*, April 28, 1928, 140.
[63] "On convention program at Dallas," *The Quill*, November 1949, cover photo.
[64] "Dailies' news plants rise all across the U.S.," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 14, 1948, 59.
[65] Eugene S. Pulliam, Jr., "Just seat 20 next to each other: how to streamline a big city newsroom," *The Quill*, February 1950, 8-10. As managing editor, Pulliam was interested in designing, or at least reworking, the existing newsroom space at his family's paper, the *Indianapolis News*. By mid-century, older routines that once made sense were less relevant in the face of TV and radio competition, such as having such tightly drawn newsroom roles (rewrite vs. copy vs. news desks).
[66] "The Fourth Estate…" *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 10, 1953, 40.
[67] "Here are 'inside' stories … from new newspaper buildings," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 3, 1959, 14-15

undergraduate at the University of Washington in the mid-1950s described them as ubiquitous.[68]

Training and acculturation

By the Second World War, “telephone reporting” was ingrained in journalistic culture. The phone’s presence in U.S. journalism during the 1930s and 1940s had expanded beyond the simple addition of a new reporting tool in the newsroom. In 1942, new reporters at the *Washington Post* were told to call or “personally report to the desk” when they went on and off duty for the day. If they were away from the newsroom during the afternoon or evening on city or suburban assignments, they were expected to call at least once to check in. If traveling out of town, the city desk had to be informed of where they would be reached. Even leaving the newsroom during the work day, when not on assignment, required some kind of notification, especially if a reporter was expecting an incoming call. Before answering machines, a memo “saying what the telephone call is about and where you probably can be reached” was needed.[69] A reporter was expected to call more often, particularly during and after covering a story, if he or she had been assigned a photographer.[70] The latter were limited newsroom resources. Phone-call status updates ensured they could be deployed effectively. These norms, of course, had already been established. But technology reinforced some aspects of them, while loosening or creating others.

At bigger papers, cub reporters and copy boys were sometimes expected to staff the phones, not for rewrite, necessarily, but fielding calls from readers and sources. There was an

[68] Private conversation with author, Feb. 19, 2015.
[69] Frank Landt Dennis, “City room ‘short course’ saves tempers and time,” *The Quill*, August 1942, 5.
[70] Dennis, “City room ‘short course’ saves tempers and time,” 8.

expectation that learning the phones was one of your first experiences in the newsroom.[71] Women were also working more as dictationists, regarded as a lower-level stepping stone to reporting work, by the early 1940s.[72] Back in the newsroom, skilled rewrite men and women, who worked primarily over their earphones and typewriters, were valuable: they were "almost as important to this type of coverage of local news as are those who write with their voices instead of their hands." In a fast-paced environment, both ends of the information-collection system were vital, since it was "not easy to go back and edit over the telephone."[73] Telephones in the workplace also influenced how new reporters were indoctrinated into newsroom culture. Sam Justice, a special-assignment reporter for the *Charlotte Observer*, noted how the "news room force" enjoyed playing pranks on each so much that it seemed that "it is April Fool's Day every day." One common trick was leaving fake messages for the less-savvy, or experienced, members of the staff. While veterans would check numbers in a directory before calling back, others, "hopeful that it might be that big story, will grab the telephone first and do their reporting later." Teased and chastened by their colleagues, these reporters would go back to work. In time, however, they, too, would break in new reporters using similar tricks. Looming deadlines and demanding editors, alongside continually ringing phones, meant that one's "patience punches the time clock and goes home when an old sister from Route 3 calls to find out 'what that peculiar light is in the north sky.'"[74]

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[71] James H. Wright, "Cog vs. wheel: No, thanks—I'll stay in small city," *The Quill*, June 1949, 9.
[72] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 229.
[73] Cowden, "Cub reporter's ordeal," 7, 12.
[74] Sam Justice, "Grab that phone! But heaven help you if you find you've drawn a gagster or a nut," *The Quill*, November 1939, 12.

In the midst of this, certain basic decorum covered the use of the phone in the office. While this was often unspoken, and reinforced by casual reminders, such as pranking each other, some staffs operated under more explicit rules. The "office conduct" code for the Glendale (Calif.) *News*, admonished reporters to answer the phones promptly, and not "leave it for the 'other fellow' to do." Tact was expected, along with instructions not to argue or "'hang up,'" or otherwise express personal views while on the job with a caller. If management felt the need to be so exacting, these behaviors must have been fairly prevalent.[75] Other rules tied the telephone to authority. *Washington Post* reporters were told in 1942 to give their names immediately, with their title.[76] A reporter was better off saying his or her paper's name, and not their own, first, since "it carries greater prestige than the individual and usually the business at hand can be transacted more quickly, in the name of the paper."[77] Outside the newsroom, telephones were sometimes positioned near recurring sources of news, as part of newsroom outposts. In that vein, Bill Cunningham, a feature writer for the *Boston Post*, covering sports, appealed to stadium and race track owners for less-leaky press boxes. He noted that his peers,

> The gentlemen of the press . . . are chained to their seats, even as the Germans were chained to their machine guns. They must take notes, keep charts, operate typewriters, feed wires, use telephones. They can't raise umbrellas and they can't leave their stations. Furthermore, their hands must be free to work their various instruments that perforce must be spread wide open.[78]

As newsrooms and their auxiliary spaces became more wired, news services helped lead the way with new developments. In 1924, one such service, the Standard News, installed a

[75] "Daily posts model rules of conduct," *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1937, 29.
[76] Dennis, "City room 'short course' saves tempers and time," 5.
[77] Yandell C. Cline," "Reporters' questions often suggest 'no' answer when they want 'yes,'" *Editor & Publisher*, June 18, 1927, 43.
[78] Bill Cunningham, "Demands press box for football writers," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 10, 1928, 26.

customized phone system in its offices in New York City that bypassed a switchboard and took calls from reporters straight to the rewrite desk, where a system of lights and bells would show which calls had not yet been answered. Especially during peak news cycles, this had the effect of "economizing on every hand the minutes that count."[79] Six years later, the *Buffalo* (N.Y.) *Courier-Express*'s new building used an internal phone system that did not rely on switchboard operators.[80] These developments would bear fruit later in the century.

Case study: Morton Sontheimer

In 1941, Morton Sontheimer, writing semi-autobiographically for young men and women interested in breaking into journalism, outlined how one would go about reporting a story via the phone. Echoing older tales of competition, Sontheimer encouraged the "tricky little art of tying up phones." These "lines of communication are as important to you as a reporter as they are to an army." Among your first actions when arriving at the scene of a developing story, whether in the city or out the country, he advised, was to find a phone and secure it until you needed it. "You don't know what sweat is until, with a hot story burning your fingers, you run from one phone to another, only to find an opposition reporter phoning in oceans of detail on each one and none left for you to use."[81]

Though he did not explicitly endorse this, he observed how some reporters faked talking on a phone to "tie up the wire," and how it would be a "handy thing for a newspaperman to know how to disconnect a phone neatly at the bell box by simply loosening the connection, and

[79] "Special telephone equipment speeds work of rewrite battery," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 2, 1924, 20.
[80] "*Buffalo Courier-Express* in new plant," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 13, 1930, 19, 78.
[81] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 119.

then later restore service again."[82] He was hardly alone in these practices. In Detroit in the late 1920s, competition over beats or scoops on stories drove similar stratagems. Ray Girardin, a veteran crime reporter on the Hearst-owned evening-paper, the *Detroit Times*, faced rival reporters from the *News*, and the morning paper, the *Free Press*. He recalled how one day he "raced from a courtroom to a nearby telephone booth but found an 'out of order' sign on the door." Immensely frustrated, and facing a deadline with minutes to spare, he dropped a coin into the phone out of desperation. It worked, and Girardin made his call, suspecting a rival's purposeful obstruction had been involved.[83] AP reporter Dick Feehan, covering a suicide victim's jump from a 160-foot tall ledge in Manhattan in 1938, tossed out another reporter from a nearby phone booth. Dialing the AP's rewrite desk, he asked "his rewrite man to keep the line open."[84] Having a clear view of the scene, he reported what he saw directly to the AP desk. He then unscrewed the phone's mouthpiece, "put it in his pocket, and walked away," leaving other reporters to scramble for working phones and earning himself a five-minute beat. This was especially upsetting for Feehan's rivals in an era when papers updated their stories to the minute and the hour.[85]

All hints of vandalism aside, Sontheimer observed that the telephone could reinforce lazy reporting or aid thorough reporting. Calling someone had an advantage over visiting them, because asking rapid-fire questions in an authoritative voice could get results if the person on the other end of the line thought you were a police officer. Phone companies could assist the

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[82] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 120.
[83] William W. Lutz, *The News of Detroit: How a Newspaper and a City Grew Together* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 101.
[84] Gelb, *City Room*, 161.
[85] Gelb, *City Room*, 162.

reporter looking for someone in another town, since most were eager to generate a toll. Generally, however, most editors were frugal when it came to justifying long-distance calls. "Even the big American papers, with large sums to spend on coverage, do not squander near the tolls that British newspapers used to pay on long distance phone calls all over the world," Sontheimer noted, describing American editors as "thrifty" by comparison, and more willing to rely on wire services for updates on national and international stories.[86]

The telephone was not an ideal medium for interviews, or stories otherwise needing color, he believed, unless a reporter was on the scene and could describe what was going on. "Vicinity phoning," or the practice of calling known addresses near a fire, murder or other news event, was one way around this. Sontheimer recalled how an editor working the "lobster trick," or dog watch (overnight) shift would readily rouse citizens to find out what was going on in a particular neighborhood, before dispatching a reporter. Aggressive use of the phone could lead to scoops, too, in Southeimer's experience. While working for the *San Francisco News*, he called the address mentioned in a police bulletin and found himself "talking to the surviving victim of a double shooting before police or ambulance had arrived." He got an account of what happened after assuring the victim that a doctor was coming, a "true enough statement."[87]

Finally, he urged young reporters to stay on the "'dearie' list" of the newspaper telephone operator, that "hard-boiled prima donna of the plugs and cords," equally capable of "trading wisecracks with reporters and talking back to impatient editors."[88] A generation later, such operators, even as their positions evolved, were still important. Margaret Whitesides, a

[86] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 121.
[87] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 122, 123.
[88] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 123-4.

city desk coordinator, sat across from the city editor at the *Chicago Daily News* in 1959. She worked as an important part of the social glue that kept the newsroom's various factions on schedule and connected to one another.[89] A receptionist played a similar role at the *Indianapolis News*, taking messages and answering incoming calls to the city desk, the city editor and reporters.[90] Telephone operators, sometimes called "phone girls," were a vital part of the reportorial support staff at the *New York Times*, especially for the rewrite desk. Perhaps the most proficient of any newsroom staffers in the use of phones, telephone operators could find unlisted phone numbers to track down elusive sources, cross-reference phone numbers to addresses, and had sources of their own among friends who worked as city switchboard operators, if they needed help contacting more distant locales.[91] Like Sontheimer's newsroom, these later newsrooms were webs of relationships between staff members, reliant on, but also mastering, reporting technology.

Early radio cars and portable car phones: reactions to radio

In the wake of the Second World War, newspapers reacted to radio as a rival for breaking-news coverage, and even for some longer-form storytelling. The telephone by then was a proven technology, and soon wedded to another proven technology, the car. This, in turn, would be tied to a third, but even newer, technology: the mobile, short-range radio. The result was the "radio car," quickly followed by handheld radios.

Contacting the newsroom wirelessly became feasible before the United States entered the war. Newsrooms, were, of course, by this point well acquainted with phones as a way to

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[89] George Brandenburg, "City desk secretary: quiet Miss Whitesides directs news traffic," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 5, 1959, 10.
[90] Pulliam, Jr., "Just seat 20 next to each other: how to streamline a big city newsroom," 8-10.
[91] Gelb, *City Room*, 211.

remotely contact reporters, or vice versa. Existing norms for telephone use served as the foundation for newer norms for more wireless devices. Moving beyond a dedicated phone line on some newspapers was an innovation that came in two parts. First, portable photo labs developed as a way to speed image transmission to newsrooms.[92] These large vans or trucks, which could cost up to about $1,000, not counting the chassis or car body, allowed the development of photos from near the scenes of stories.[93] The developed images would then be either raced back to the newsroom by courier or other car, or in some pioneering cases, sent by early photo-transmission equipment, as a wireless facsimile.[94] Dedicated car phones, or portable radios fitted into cars (i.e. "radio cars") were a second, distinct development that would "permit city editors to keep in constant touch with roving reporters," it was believed.[95] Unlike photo cars, radio cars served as mobile reporting stations for leg men getting their stories' content back to rewrite desks. An early example of this could be found in 1939, when a newspaper reporter used a telephone installed in his car to cover the sinking of the USS *Squalus*, a U.S. Navy submarine, off the coast of Portsmouth, N.H.[96] Not until after the war, however, did newspapers begin to invest in making radio cars more of a reality as the technology was more commercially available, and with resources freed from wartime contingencies.

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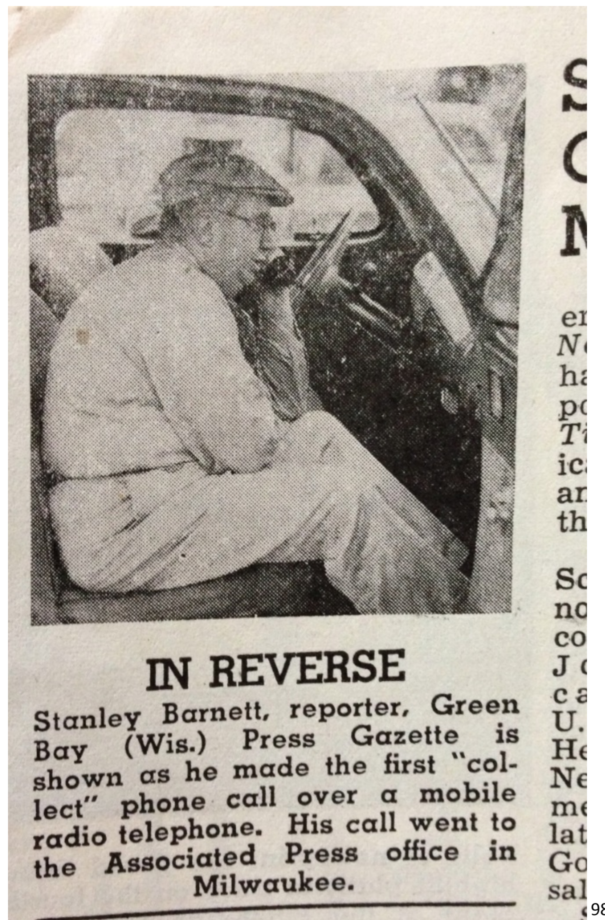
[92] "Photo trailers speed coverage: several newspapers using portable darkroom—picture transmitters, phones, short wave radio aid photographers," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 11, 1941, 41, 45.
[93] "Mobile photo unit," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 14, 1946, 54.
[94] For much more on facsimile technology from this era, see Charles R. Jones, *Facsimile* (New York: Rinehart Books, Inc., 1949).
[95] "Mobilphones due," *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1946, 73; reviews and previews that reported on proposed or recently installed news-gathering gear could often be found in *Editor & Publisher*'s "Equipment Review Section," a monthly installment covering developments in newsroom and mechanical-plant technology.
[96] Dilts, *The Telephone in a Changing World*, 76.

A variety of newspapers throughout the country began experimenting with these devices, installing them in cars and instructing their reporters to use them to increase both their breaking news and beat coverage. Between 1946 and 1948, these papers included the San Francisco *Examiner*, *Chronicle*, *Call-Bulletin* and *News*, the *Boston Traveler*, *New Orleans States*, *Dallas News*, *St. Louis Star-Times*, and the *Denver Post*. The trend also reached smaller papers such as the *Green Bay* (Wisc.) *Press Gazette*. In the latter case, reporters could call the regional AP office directly in Milwaukee.[97]



IN REVERSE

Stanley Barnett, reporter, Green Bay (Wis.) Press Gazette is shown as he made the first "collect" phone call over a mobile radio telephone. His call went to the Associated Press office in Milwaukee.[98]

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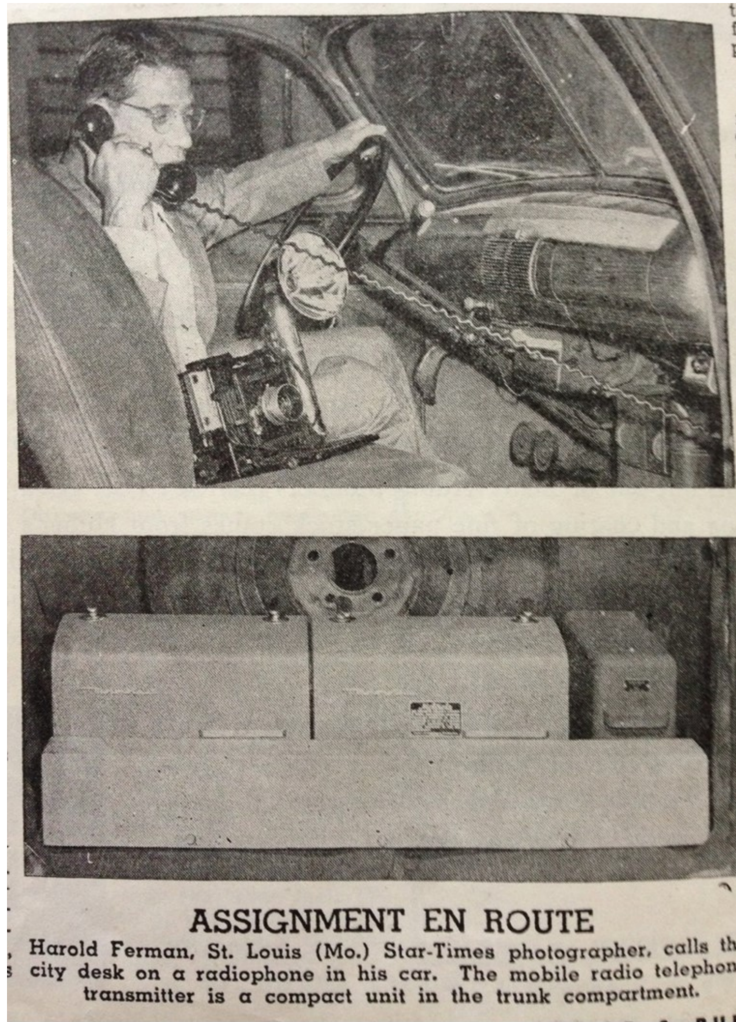
[97] "In reverse," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 14, 1946, 81.

[98] "In reverse," *Editor & Publisher*, 81. The AP was interested early on in investing in innovative ways for its correspondents to file stories, both domestically, as seen here, but also outside the United States.



ASSIGNMENT EN ROUTE

Harold Ferman, St. Louis (Mo.) Star-Times photographer, calls the city desk on a radiophone in his car. The mobile radio telephone transmitter is a compact unit in the trunk compartment.[99]

The radios, and the batteries that powered them, despite advances in miniaturization brought by the war (and the fact that many such batteries could be charged by the car) were still bulky, taking up large portions of the spacious trunks common in cars at the time.[100] Radio phones allowed for increasing the range of leg men, allowing for “two-way radio-phone communication

[99] “Assignment en route,” *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 14, 1946, 54. Note the size of this *St. Louis Star-Times* “mobile radio telephone transmitter.”
[100] “Assignment en route,” *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 14, 1946, 54.

for covering a news story" via the rewrite desk.[101] The early installation and use of these devices was not without its challenges, however.

Case study: San Francisco

For the system shared by the four metro papers in the Bay Area, 16 cars (four at each paper) received 25-watt transmitters from the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company for a one-time fee of $25 and a $22 monthly rental. The phone company had to treat all four newspapers the same, in terms of service and equipment. Messages cost 30 cents each, with most of the papers running well over the minimum monthly charge of $7. Most of the newspapers made ten calls or more a day on a six-day-a-week schedule, with the whole venture racking up about $1,153 each month. A reporter-photographer team was assigned to each car, and its respective newspaper would contact one of their radio-phone cars by dialing a special number on a regular phone; an answering operator switched the call to a central 150-watt transmitter, relayed by six receiving stations positioned throughout the city.[102]

"A light flashes on . . . the dashboard, a bell rings, and the hapless reporter is again in the clutches of his boss," related the reporter who profiled the system. But all the other bosses could hear these commands, too. Since in this early experiment all four papers shared the same 50-party radio-phone channel, they could listen in on each other, and in response reporters and their editors developed a kind of secret shorthand to communicate discretely about breaking news.[103]

[101] "*Boston Traveler* uses radio-phone," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 28, 1946, 50.
[102] W.H. Hornby, "*San Francisco News* pattern: radio-phone links editor and reporter," *The Quill*, February 1947, 8-10.
[103] Hornby, "*San Francisco News* pattern," 8.

The presence of the newspapers on an in-the-clear radio network had another side effect. Some reporters found themselves “smarting under [a] phone company order to pretty up their language, for newspapers aren’t the only radiophone users.” City editors, for their part, liked the extended coverage the system brought, enjoying the confidence that breaking news could be covered more thoroughly. But this early system had a 30-mile radius, not much beyond the “public nickel phone area.” Still, photographers and their assignment editors liked the ability to coordinate photo coverage. Reporters had slightly more mixed reactions: “The disadvantage of being continually under the desk’s thumb is outweighed by the saving in leg power. The reporters are getting more stories, more fully covered, in less time.” [104]

The older method of calling in from stationary phones had provided more freedom than having to call in routinely via a radio. And the in-the-clear nature of the network was a distinct disadvantage. Private lines, which would come not too long after, would encourage more rapid adoption and use by individual papers. Less time would be spent hunting for open phones, and more time providing extra details for the next edition back at the paper. Indeed, in the-then near future, the role of rewrite staff was expected to become more important. Using radio-equipped cars, as well as “walkie talkies” would make the reporter, “little more than a mechanism for placing gifted rewritemen in contact with the actors on the scene of a story.”[105] Breaking news would get more vivid, with more thorough coverage as a result. With television in its infancy, newspapers were keen to compete with its live broadcasts (and also with a maturing radio-news industry).

[104] Hornby, “*San Francisco News* pattern,” 9.
[105] Hornby, “*San Francisco News* pattern,” 9.

And yet, the radio car was thought of as enhancing, not supplanting, other kinds of coverage, especially the visual. "Photographers will get to the big fires while they're still big, to the murders and wrecks while they're still gory, and to rescues still in progress."[106] No longer would editors worry that a big newsbreak would catch an empty newsroom off guard. They could position their writers and photographers near news faster than ever before.

Increasing adoption of radio cars

The reality, of course, was messier, and contingent on local circumstances, including economic expediency, how competitive a local news market was and how many resources a newspaper could invest in purchasing equipment and training its staff. Small advancements in radio-car technology enabled the installation of photo-transmission gear, such as when an AP WirePhone machine was modified to fit in a truck by the Southern Bell Telephone Co. for use by the *New Orleans States*.[107] The "wirephoto-radio telephone reporter" car and its portable photo lab were cutting edge for the time.[108]

[106] Hornby, "*San Francisco News* pattern," 10.
[107] "Pictures and stories 'phoned on-the-spot," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 4, 1947, 28.
[108] "For on-spot pictures with story," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 11, 1947, 59.

Cro Duplantier, States reporter, gives C. E. Walter Cowan (r.) a story via the radiotelephone.

28

[109]

[109] *Editor & Publisher*, "Pictures and stories 'phoned on-the-spot," Jan. 4, 1947, 28. While probably staged, this image shows how early "mobile" tech also tethered reporters to their newsrooms via their editors.

[110]

The *Denver Post* also operated a dual-purpose vehicle built on a Chevrolet Suburban chassis. In addition to a photo transmitter, its operator could tap into telephone lines, with permission from phone companies, using a portable kit. The radio-truck/photo lab was used to cover remote stories in Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming, and in the course of a year had transmitted more than 100 photos.[111] Other modified vehicles from the time relied on a mix of off-the-shelf and custom-build components.

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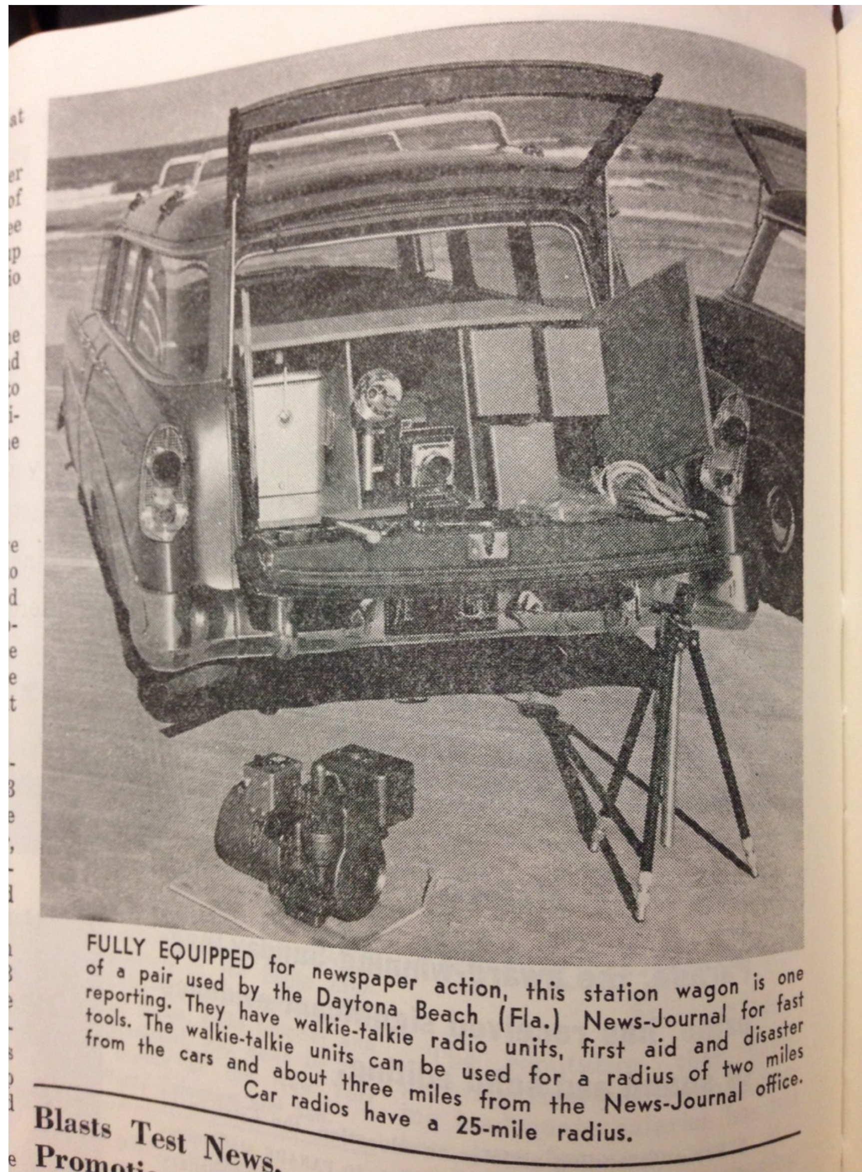
[110] "Pictures and stories 'phoned on-the-spot," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 4, 1947, 28. Many radio cars used a combination of off-the-shelf and custom-built components, as this example from the *New Orleans States*.

[111] "Equipment review: *Denver Post*'s mobile photo unit described; model of compactness," *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1948, 50.


FULLY EQUIPPED for newspaper action, this station wagon is one of a pair used by the Daytona Beach (Fla.) News-Journal for fast reporting. They have walkie-talkie radio units, first aid and disaster tools. The walkie-talkie units can be used for a radius of two miles from the cars and about three miles from the News-Journal office. Car radios have a 25-mile radius.

[112]

By the start of the 1950s, photographer-reporter teams assigned to radio cars were becoming less of a novelty. The ANPA lobbied the FCC to keep open their access to part of the commercial wavelength spectrum, opposing any efforts to reduce this access. Indeed, the publishers argued that "the present experimental relay press wave-lengths over which news

[112] "Fully equipped," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 23, 1957, 44. Even smaller newspapers, including the *Daytona Beach News-Journal* experimented with radio cars in the 1950s.

reports and pictures are transmitted from reporters' cars [should] be placed on a permanent basis."[113] As newspapers such as the *Des Moines Register & Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times* adopted them, a more standardized method for their use was worked out. At the latter paper, using an intercom in the newsroom, assignments were usually relayed from the photo manager through to the city desk. These were informal arrangements, however, and supplemented by individual reporters' cars fitted with police-band radio scanners to provide the paper with "spot news coverage otherwise not obtainable." [114] The use of radio cars was a work in progress, as seen in a spoof of one such car in action.[115]

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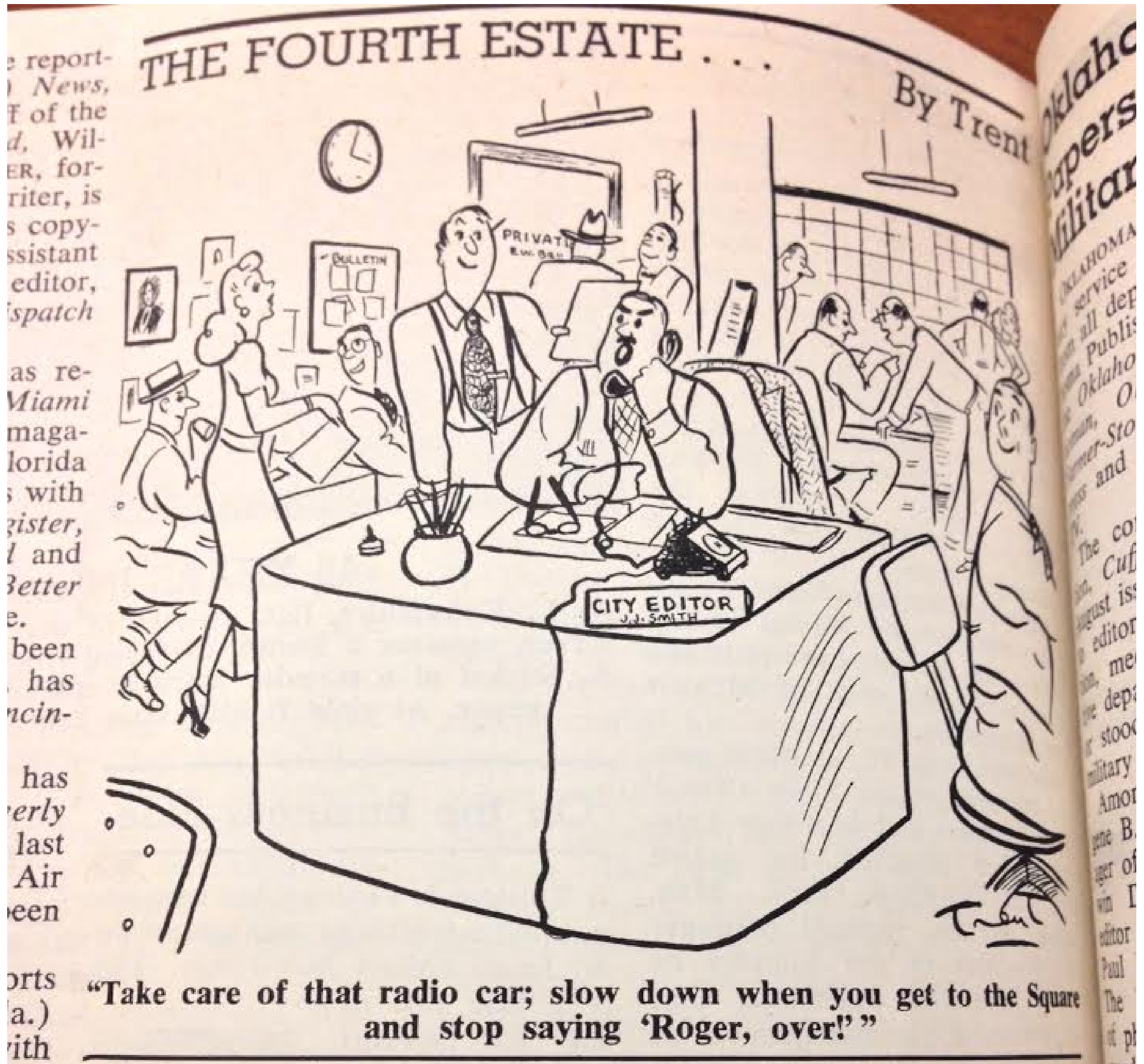
[113] "55 dailies join pleas for mobilphone service," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 9, 1948, 6.
[114] James L. Collings, "Photography: more regarding those picture assignments," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 28, 1950, 24.
[115] "The Fourth Estate…" *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 16, 1950, 42.

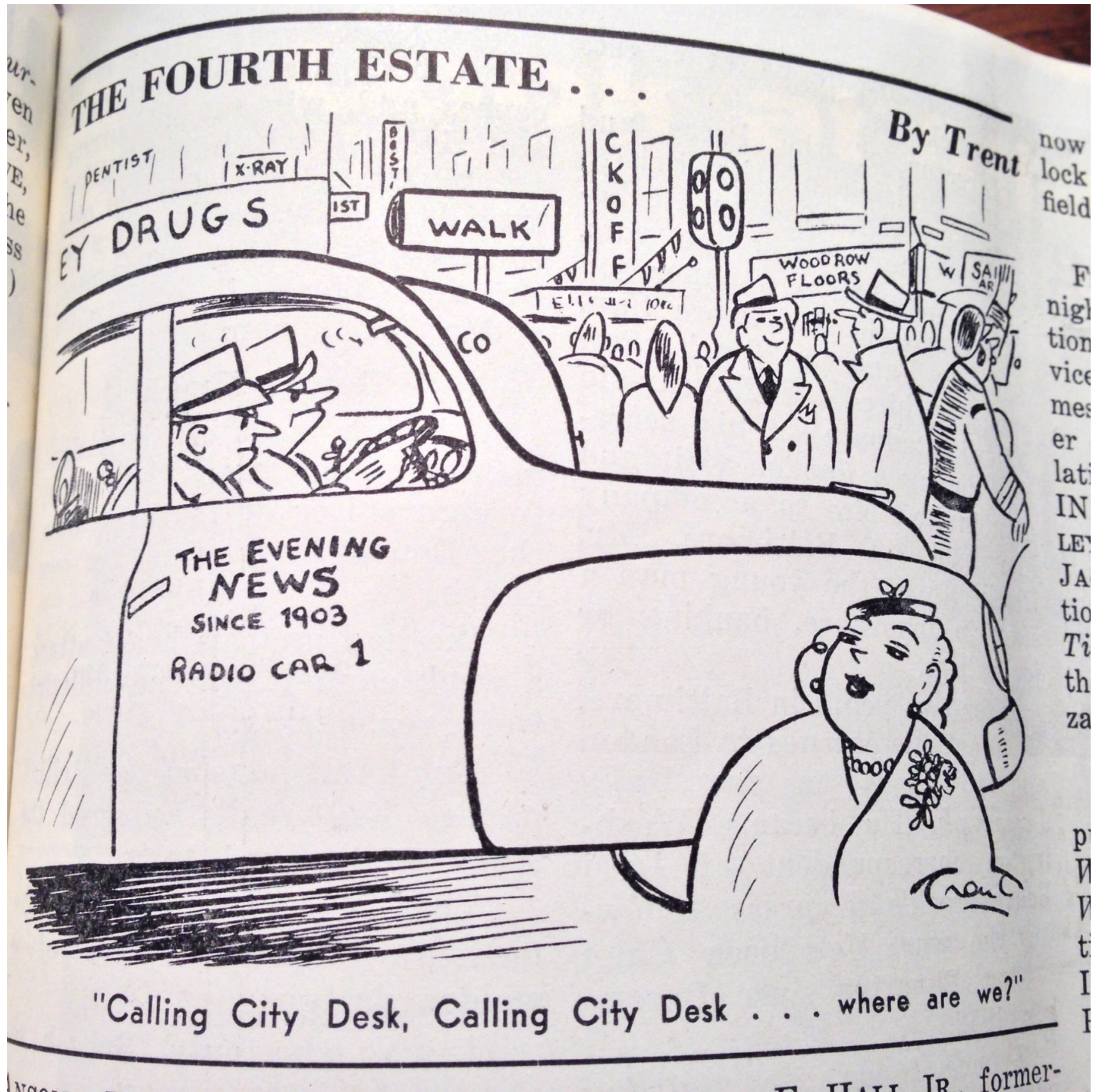


"Take care of that radio car; slow down when you get to the Square and stop saying 'Roger, over!'"

[116]

Another cartoon, by the same artist, also pokes fun at radio cars, pointing out the ironically interconnected nature of radio cars and newsrooms:

[116] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 16, 1950, 42. Technology could be a source of bemusement as well as anxiety for those back in the newsroom.



[117]

Despite the technological challenges, the *Chicago Tribune* invested in a fleet of 36 cars, including twenty-nine dedicated to supporting photographers, and seven assigned to reporters.

[117] "The Fourth Estate …" *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 18, 1956, 47. New technology often found itself reliant on older technology, as least in spoofs of the former.

All were equipped with Motorola-manufactured radiophone sets, with a 250-watt base station in the *Tribune*'s building that was "remotely controlled from the City Room by Chief Photographer Lyman Atwell and Assistant City Editor [George] Schrieber." All *Tribune* photographers, with the exception of those on society, sports, Sunday features, neighborhood and other regular (i.e. non-breaking news) beat coverage had radios in their cars. The seven reporters driving the radio-equipped cars mostly covered "hot assignments." The paper had an old system, costing the paper $1,200 to $1,800 a month, that involved dialing out of the city room to a telephone exchange, which then called the car, and then back again when the car called the city room. Its new "radio relay system," which cut out the middle man, had been installed in April 1952, and was expected to cost $600 to $900 to operate. Generating about 10 calls a day, the radio gear was installed in the trunk with cables running to the transmitting/control unit in the dashboard.[118] A General Electric-designed system at the *Indianapolis Star* included a base station and "13 mobile units in the cars of staff photographers and reporters." With a 35-mile range, the system's antenna was mounted 170 feet above the paper's building in the middle of the city. It had been planned by Joe Jarvis, "news picture editor," who had worked with GE engineers.[119]

Some reporters were already reflecting on the change in their news routines that more plentiful telephones, both in and out of the office, brought. Joe Finn, a reporter for the *Ottawa* (Ont.) *Citizen*, was impressed by the mobile telephone unit which had been installed in the paper's photo-car. "No mad dash for a telephone anymore when you are out in the country on

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[118] "*Chi. Tribune* has 36 cars linked to radio relay," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 10, 1953, 58.
[119] "Car-radio system has 35-mile range," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 25, 1956, 42.

a story. Just [get] back to the car, pick up the phone and ask for the city desk. Not like the old days," he observed.[120] Though this is a Canadian example, it does show how a more mobile reporting culture was emerging in response to TV and radio.

Second case study: *The New York Mirror*

John J. Reidy, Hearst Newspapers' "mobile radio coordinator," also doubled as the *New York Mirror*'s chief photographer. He outlined at a 1953 conference how his newspaper used mobile-communication technology to coordinate coverage.[121] The *Mirror* used the "two-way mobile radio to quickly assign staff photographers to spot news stories or to feed additional information such as changes in location while the photographer is underway." Using a radio-equipped car, the paper's Motorola transmitters, along with a customized International News Photo Soundphoto machine, could send a 3.25 by 4.24 inch photo that could be enlarged to 6.5 by 8.5 inches, a sequel to a system that used a darkroom-equipped car to send 8-by-10 inch photos.

These transmissions, and assignments of the photo or radio cars, were controlled from consoles in the newsroom. One console was located in a sound-proofed "radio room in the photo department" that had "a sliding window looking out on the City Room between the City and Picture Editors." The other was located in the photo desk out in the city room. Headsets connected both desks, and a switch was installed that allowed "radio control from three rewrite desk positions to which points reporters may radio in their stories direct from the news

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[120] "'Not like old days' with mobile telephone," *Editor & Publisher*, March 28, 1953, 57.
[121] Reidy spoke at the Rochester Photo Conference in upstate New York, which was attended by representatives from newspapers, as well as the camera and film industry.

scene."[122] (Headsets, headphones and earphones had been, in fact, a common way to minimize disruptions in the newsroom with the telephone and the rewrite desk).[123] To further avoid disturbing reporters and editors nearby, the speakers for the radio-intercom console in the newsroom were turned off except during the early morning "lobster" shift. A reporter was assigned to take calls in the sound-proofed space and to handle tips.

But when a photographer called the desk, the radio conversation could be relayed via the intercom and the headsets to editors. Reidy also noted that the *Mirror*'s rivals, including the *New York Journal-American*, used photographer-reporter pairings "cruising the city," and the radio as a news-reporting dispatch for their photographers out in the field. The versatility of Reidy's radio cars was increased with the use of 9 to 18-pound "Handi-Talkies" ("small low-powered transmitters"), connected via the radios in the cars to the newsroom:

> When a photographer or reporter goes on an assignment he will be transported into the immediate area of the story by the vehicle which is carrying the automatic relay equipment. It is only necessary to keep the engine running, set the control switch on relay and lock the car. He will then be able to operate with his lower-power two-way portable all over the area as well as from within buildings. The Handie-Talkie signal has only to get to the receiver in his car. The main station because of its power will be able to reach the portable directly and without the relay. This is now under development and when put into regular use should be a forward step in wider acceptance of two-way radio by newspapers and press associations.[124]

By using the car's more powerful transmitter, and by allowing the reporter and photographer teams to split up and get closer to the scene of the action, the paper had a distinct edge over its competitors. Reidy predicted other papers would follow suit, and mentioned that the *Mirror* was working on developing an even smaller hand-carried radio, the "Micro-Handie-Talkie."[125]

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[122] John J. Reidy, "Mobile radio improves reporting techniques," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 26, 1953, 38.
[123] "Iced water, gum, cig. urns amaze British," *Editor & Publisher*, July 14, 1951, 20.
[124] Reidy, "Mobile radio improves reporting techniques," 38.
[125] Reidy, "Mobile radio improves reporting techniques," 38.

This increasing portability and mobility enhanced the agency and ability of news workers to exercise independent news judgment, even as new means to coordinate, and control, their behavior were also introduced.

TINY AND POWERFUL—New York Mirror Photographer Bernie Aumuller keeps in touch with his office from the scene of airplane crash on Rikers Island, using the new 14-pound handie-talkie outfit which is eight times as powerful as previous units. The equipment, which gives eight hours service without battery recharging, is used in connection with the Mirror relay press station KEA-461, under the direction of John J. Reidy, mobile radio coordinator for Hearst Newspapers.

A Governor Says—

[126]

Walkie-talkies and tape recorders: more mobile reporters

After the technological developments of the Second World War, batteries and radios grew smaller, more reliable and longer-lasting, complementing the increasingly compact radios

[126] "Tiny and powerful," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 9, 1957, 68. The *New York Mirror* was among the first newspapers to deploy field telephones in conjunction with radio cars in an attempt to extend the mobility of its reporters.

that were integrated into a newsroom's routine. Technical innovations introduced on the business side migrated slowly but steadily to the editorial side of most newspapers, foreshadowing how computerization would enter the newsroom in the 1960s and 1970s.[127]

Newspapers moved away from using switchboard systems to providing their reporters the ability to take outside calls directly. As early as the 1940s, newspapers had their own directory listings, for their own internal switchboards.[128] But in ways that transcended the experimental use of radio cars, reporters also added new tools to their technological arsenal, or dreamed of acquiring them. Robert U. Brown, editor of *Editor & Publisher*, writing in 1945, speculated about the effect of the war on reporting technology. He imagined reporters in the near-future having the ability to cover a big fire, or other large-scale disaster, "filing an eye-witness story direct to the desk as the event is unfolding before him." Even the coverage of routine news, including that of ship and police beats, could be improved. He visualized "a network of 'walkie-talkies' linking the star reporters of a newspaper all over town who [then] can work in unison on a single story without waiting to contact the other by telephone. Think even of the time saved by a reporter not having to locate a phone."[129]

[127] Anthony Smith, *Goodbye Gutenberg: The Newspaper Revolution of the 1980's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).
[128] Dilts, *The Telephone in a Changing World*, 150.
[129] Robert U. Brown, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 20, 1945, 72.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT for newsmen nowadays on fast-moving stories like the Inauguration of President Eisenhower is the powerful lightweight walkie-talkie developed by RCA Victor for the U. S. Army Signal Corps. Here you see Rewriteman Paul Gocke taking the story via walkie-talkie from Art Edson, who rode the atomic cannon in the Washington parade.

February 14, 1953 [130]

While he says he was “dreaming a little,” he also pushes back against “the experts’ claims that [the] ‘walkie-talkie’ will not be of value to newspapers because anyone can tune in on the conversation.” Treating the newspaper use of radios and walkie-talkies as a de facto “party line” would probably lead to fierce new competition in the field, he said. But “scrambling

[130] “Standard equipment,” *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 14, 1953, 41. Newspapers and magazines showcased their capacity to equip their reporters with the latest in mobile technology.

devices" could negate that disadvantage, down the road, despite their then-present bulk.[131] The concern about eavesdropping, combined, however, with reflections on the time gained from not having to search for a free phone, reflects how Brown and others were thinking of these devices in terms of older technologies. Within a few short years, Brown's predictions were becoming a reality. During a visit by Winston Churchill to New York City in January 1952, two reporters from the *New York Journal American* used two-way, walkie-talkie radio sets to cover the British politician's cross-town appearances. The portable radios "enabled them to give on-the-scene details of the running story instantly to the city desk and to rewrite men."[132] Other early ventures into mobile reporting included a then-rare 1947 air-to-ground telephone interview by a reporter from the *Grand Rapids Herald* with the two Michigan senators, and the installation of a two-way radiophone service, based on FM radio, to "speed news coverage through the Lehigh Valley" at the Allentown (Penn.) *Call-Chronicle* newspapers.[133] The *Dallas News* used a "radio mobilphone" in a news photographer's car to report a plane crash in 1947.[134] A cartoon from 1953 shows a reporter equipped with a back-pack radio interviewing a mayor; the caption reads (showing him speaking into a microphone), "Hi Betty, this is Al; give me the Desk."[135]

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[131] Brown, "Shop talk at thirty," 72.
[132] "Walkie-talkie for Winnie's welcome," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 12, 1952, 71.
[133] "Radio-phone used to get story in air," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 25, 1947, 10; "Radiophones added," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 23, 1953, 40.
[134] "The working press," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 23, 1947, 11.
[135] "The Fourth Estate…" *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 19, 1953, 40.

"Hi, Betty, this is Al; give me the Desk."

[136]

The mass-market introduction of the transistor and its adoption by manufacturers increased the portability of reporting gear by the end of the 1950s. William R. Hearst trumpeted the edge "transistorized two-way radiophones" would give his reporters at "political

[136] "The Fourth Estate…" *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 19, 1953, 40. Then as in now, journalism, especially print journalism, had a complex relationship with technology, and its adoption could be both slow and rapid, far-fetched and practical, reactionary and proactive.

conventions, keeping Hearst reporters and photographers in constant touch with central headquarters."[137]

THE LAST WORD in communications equipment—portable, transistorized two-way radiophones—will have its say at the political conventions, keeping Hearst reporters and photographers in constant touch with central headquarters. William R. Hearst Jr., editor-in-chief, is seen testing one of the devices. At left, Eugene S. Goebel of Motorola, Inc.; at right, John J. Reidy, New York Mirror chief photographer who will be mobile radio coordinator at the conventions.

August 11, 1956

[138]

Portable write and tape recorders also made their first appearance during this era. Raymond Moley, a political columnist for *Newsweek*, used "the Dictet," a "portable voice recorder" manufactured by the Dictaphone Corporation, weighing in at two pounds, 11 ounces, for research and interviews. It had enough tape for an hour-long recording.[139] A compact recorder produced by the Mohawk Business Machines Corporation sold for $229.50 in 1954.

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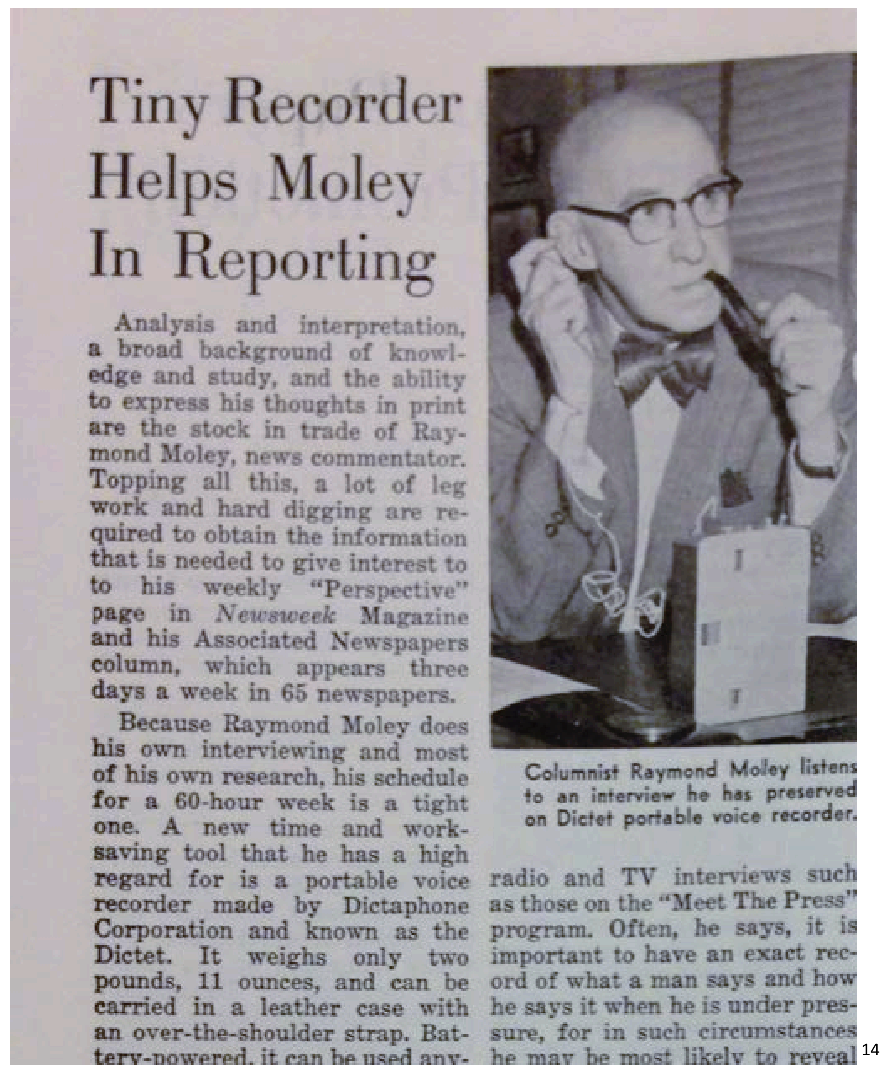
[137] "The last word," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 11, 1956, 13.
[138] "The last word,"13. Two-way radio phones were less of a novelty over time. These Motorola radiophones were designed to be used at political conventions by Hearst newspaper reporters and editors.
[139] "Tiny recorder helps Moley in reporting," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 9, 1958, 14.

Roughly the size of a book, it came with its own shoulder holster. Before, the "enthusiastic scribble of a quote which may make or break a story" could be recanted by a source in the presence of a notepad. The recorder's size and portability, combined with "several microphone attachments which may be hidden from the interviewee's eyes . . . behind the wrist watch, on the tie clasp, or behind the lapel" could lead to a candid interview. It could also be attached to a telephone receiver. In the latter case, bringing two kinds of technology together helped reporters hone their ability to tell complex stories.



Tiny Recorder Helps Moley In Reporting

Analysis and interpretation, a broad background of knowledge and study, and the ability to express his thoughts in print are the stock in trade of Raymond Moley, news commentator. Topping all this, a lot of leg work and hard digging are required to obtain the information that is needed to give interest to his weekly "Perspective" page in *Newsweek* Magazine and his Associated Newspapers column, which appears three days a week in 65 newspapers.

Because Raymond Moley does his own interviewing and most of his own research, his schedule for a 60-hour week is a tight one. A new time and work-saving tool that he has a high regard for is a portable voice recorder made by Dictaphone Corporation and known as the Dictet. It weighs only two pounds, 11 ounces, and can be carried in a leather case with an over-the-shoulder strap. Battery-powered, it can be used any-

Columnist Raymond Moley listens to an interview he has preserved on Dictet portable voice recorder.

radio and TV interviews such as those on the "Meet The Press" program. Often, he says, it is important to have an exact record of what a man says and how he says it when he is under pressure, for in such circumstances he may be most likely to reveal[140]

[140] "Tiny recorder helps Moley in reporting," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 9, 1958, 14. Raymond Moley was an example of an elite journalist who could afford an expensive early tape recorder.

Compact Recorder

The Cub Corder, a portable tape recorder all housed in one compact unit, has been placed on the market by Ectro, Inc., of Delaware, Ohio. The unit, which weighs less than 13 pounds, is designed to record for two full hours, or sufficient time to record up to 20,000 words before battery recharging is necessary. (*See Cut.*)

The motor is powered by a 4-volt, non-spill storage battery which has a normal life span of 450 hours. When in need of recharging, the battery can be brought back to full strength either by connecting it directly from the recorder into an automobile cigarette lighter outlet or from the Cub Corder accessory charger which recharges the battery from regular 115-230 volt current.

(*More on page 57*) [141]

[141] "Equipment review: what's new. "New typewriter," "Compact recorder," and "Portable composer," *Editor & Publisher*, July 11, 1953, 56-7. One characteristic of early tape recorders was their weight—this example came in at "less than 13 pounds."

The ethical issues raised by such devices were not often discussed in the enthusiasm over their potential labor-saving.[142] But even student newspapers were experimenting with these technologies. In 1948, the staff of the Syracuse University paper, the *Daily Orange*, used an off-the-shelf wire recorder owned by a student to help cover a campus political debate. Retailing for about $150 at music stores, its spools cost $2, $3 and $5 for 15-minute, 30-minute and one-hour spools, respectively. Because one 15-minute spool and then a second one (on a second recorder) was needed to capture speeches, there were downsides. A reporter had to carefully coordinate swapping spools, for example. But the overall idea was to avoid accusations of being misquoted. The spools themselves could be reused.[143]

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[142] ""Reporter's dream? – may be," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 18, 1954, 66.
[143] Harvey L. Katz, "Wire recorded: Inaccurate? Play that quote back!" *The Quill*, October 1948, 11-12.

WON'T MISQUOTE CAMPUS POLITICIANS—A wire recorder takes down every word at a Syracuse University political session for use of reporters who will use it in writing the story. Harvey Katz (left), managing editor of the Daily Orange, watches as Lester Jacobs operates the machine.[144]

AP reporter Herman R. Allen used an early tape recorder to help cover the 1955 convention of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals. Allen noted that he "wrote stories from playbacks of his tapes," recorded during the convention. National Editorial Association publicists were so proud of this innovation that they distributed mimeographed copies of his stories to attendees.[145] A pair of Oregonian reporters, William Lambert and

[144] Katz, "Wire recorded," 11. Campus newspapers such as the *Daily Orange* at Syracuse also experimented with the use of tape recorders in their journalism.
[145] *Editor & Publisher*, "Tape recorder used at education parley," March 5, 1955, 36.

Wallace Turner, used tape recorders (in their case, recording audio via a wire worn by an informant) in 1956 to write their series of stories on corruption in Portland.[146] The high-profile nature of their expose warranted the use of a then still-relatively rare piece of reporting technology. Reporters pooled resources to share this kind of equipment, which was the purview of celebrity reporters and writers into the 1960s. Tape recorders were otherwise prohibitively expensive for the average reporter, costing more than $100 a device. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, that would be the equivalent of $875 in 2015 U.S. dollars.[147]

The infrastructure used to support this more mobile reporter was also improving by the end of the 1950s, and affected more traditional land-line desk phones. The *Detroit Free Press*' newsroom underwent a modernization in 1948, with a new, "streamlined" layout designed to increase efficiency, inspired by the "continuous production line made famous by auto makers in this Auto Capital." Instead of an older "push-button multiple setup in which reporters fumbled around piccolo-style with the buttons to get the caller," the paper had a box system, which allowed for the "taking or holding of calls at eight positions;" colored lights showed which lines were "clear, in use, or in 'HOLD' position."[148] Classified-ad departments, as well as business departments in general, were responsible for pioneering more advanced phone systems that eventually spilled over to editorial departments.

This was happening throughout the country. An advanced set up could be found in the ultra-modern UPI Newspictures bureau in San Francisco, based in the *San Francisco News*

[146] "Oregonian pursues explore of rackets," *Editor & Publisher*, July 14, 1956, 10.
[147] Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Labor, "CPI Inflation Calculator." April 22, 2015. http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm
[148] "New layout eases confabs, copy flow," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 28, 1948, 10.

building. Individual calls could be fielded from external phone lines and internal intercoms installed in the newsroom.

EVERYTHING'S UNDER CONTROL with Sam Mikulin, photographer-deskman, talking on the network microphone in the ultra-modern UPI Newspictures bureau in San Francisco. Each leg of circuit can be opened or closed with turn of a dial. Intercom facilities link every segment of the headquarters and news desks in the San Francisco News building. Cliff McDowell is division news-pictures manager.

[149]

Conclusion: the legacy of news-gathering technology

Writing in 1952, *Editor & Publisher*'s Robert Brown speculated, jokingly, that "it won't be long before we will have a completely automatic newspaper—one that puts itself out without manpower of any kind." Eventually "automatic devices" would combine to squeeze the

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[149] "Everything's under control," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 6, 1960, 36. The coordination and control of radio cars and other mobile technology spelled over into improvements in more old-fashioned desk phones, as direct lines and other innovations came to the fore.

humanity from newsrooms and newspapers, he claimed. Even the cub reporter and copy boy might find themselves replaced by "pneumatic types and automatic coffee and soft drink dispensers." These fears were farcical, but they contained a grain of truthful anxiety, and spoke to worries about how newsroom relationships were being altered by technology.[150]

The telephone and the radio car, along with some their ancillary news-gathering technologies, including battery-powered recorders and hand-held radios, both disrupted and strengthened work routines in and out of the newsroom. They gave agency to news workers, requiring a set of practiced skills for their mastery, whether it was giving dictation over the phone or using a radio-equipped car to beat the competition. Conversely, the power of editors to coordinate and control their reporters was also enhanced. As disruptive objects of news-gathering technology, the telephone and radio car were two-way, negotiated tools, freeing and tethering, empowering and disempowering, reporters vis-à-vis their supervisors. The affordances brought by these technologies created and changed newsroom routines, culture and the power dynamics between reporters, other types of news workers, and their editors.[151] Reporters and other news workers, including photographers, continued to answer to editors and other supervisors. But reporters had carved out more freedom in their work routines with new or updated reporting technology. It was neither a panacea, nor a harbinger of doom. Workers deskilled, but also reskilled and up-skilled with it. The newsroom, as *Editor & Publisher* columnist Jack Price described it in 1937, had become a "hair-sensitive organization equipped

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[150] Robert U. Brown, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 13, 1952, 80. Brown added: "We've already eliminated most of the time-honored workers in the newspaper vineyard, as related above. All we need are one or two more automatic devices."

[151] Briefly defined, an affordance is "the type of action or a characteristic of actions that a technology enables through its design." See Jennifer Earl, and Katrina Kimport, *Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age*. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2011), 10

with every known device for receiving and translating news into reading matter with incredible speed."[152]

The adoption and use of this technology was thus part of a long-established pattern of news workers using technology to increase their storytelling potential. They also required new ways of acculturating young reporters to their effective use, and helped establish new routines built out of and on top of (or sometimes within) older ones. Case studies of their use show the nuances that come from a human-driven construction of technology, and how tools share agency, in a limited sense, with their users—in this case, news workers (and specifically reporters). They show, too, how developments in one side of the newsroom—toward mobile technology—reinforced older technology, such as desk phones. As newsrooms adopted computers for sorting data and word processing in the 1960s and 1970s, they continued these trends. Business departments continued to drive innovation. With a vested interest in efficiency—part of a legacy from the era of industrialized newsrooms—ownership invested in innovation. Reporters and editors sometimes resisted, and at other times coopted, these changes. Coming into a space already structured by both vertical and horizontal hierarchies of power, the potential of radio, the car and then the radio car was mitigated and molded by an existing culture of work practices. It accelerated and then cemented the separation of news-gathering from news-production, and set the stage for the computerization of the newsroom.

[152] Jack Price, *News Pictures* (New York: Round Table Press, 1937), 14; Price went on: "Wire flashes have been converted into paragraphs and the papers put on the street within two minutes of the time they were received. The telegraph, telephone, teletype, cable and radio are the instruments that flash world news to the 'desk,' whose high interpreter is the city editor."

Chapter 8

Unionization in the newsroom: how organizing affected news workers' quality of life

For a generation, reporters and other newsroom workers looked for relief from their daily newsroom toil through socialization: "loyal, unorganized and proud, [they] sought satisfaction in their labor or quenched their burning humiliation or relaxed their exhausted bodies and minds at the nearest bar."[1] They adapted new technologies to their work. They organized hierarchies of power and control to delegate, gather and produce the news. But they also organized themselves, fighting for a better quality-of-life through the American Newspaper Guild (ANG), in-house unions or aspirational-professional organizations like the Society of Professional Journalists. It was the unions, however, and the unionization of the newsroom that brought about the most dramatic changes in working conditions in newsroom culture for the rest of the century. Shorter hours, better and more consistent pay (and annual raises), paid vacations, binding promises of job security, some control of the hiring and firing of peers, agreed-upon job descriptions, health insurance and healthcare, pensions, and even incentives to get married and have children were either the direct or indirect fruits of unionization. Gradually gaining force in the early-to-mid 1930s, by the late 1950s unionization was the norm

[1] Carl Ackerman, "A New Deal newspaper salaries," *The Quill*, May 1934, 4.

and not the exception in newsrooms. This paralleled a broader development, one in which unions of all kinds reached an apex of popularity and influence during the decade.[2]

While previous chapters have explored intra-newsroom dynamics involving peers and near-peers, peers and bosses, the impact of unionization on those relationships changed news workers' lived experiences. The history of the ANG and the legal maneuverings of publishers regarding white-collar regulation have been explored before by other scholars.[3] But as Bonnie Brennen has pointed out, the actual day-to-day lives of news workers during and after unionization has remained under-examined in traditional media histories.[4]

Not every reporter was a member of the Guild, or even supported it as it transformed from a loose confederation of reformist newsroom workers to a more traditional labor and then an "industrial" union. Some worked hard to stay affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) after the Guild moved toward affiliation with the more radical Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Others formed alternatives. Some unions fought over the right to represent news workers, sometimes requiring the intervention of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) under the Wagner Act.[5] Alfred McClung Lee, in his classic study of the history of

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[2] Phillip M. Glende, "Labor makes the news: newspapers, journalism, and organized labor, 1933-1955," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2010), 10.

[3] Glende, "Labor makes the news," 2010, Daniel J. Leab, *A Union of Individuals: The Formation of the American Newspaper Guild, 1933-1936* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), Marc Linder, *"Time and a half's the American Way:" A History of the Exclusion of White-Collar Workers from Overtime Regulation, 1868-2004* (Iowa City, Iowa: Fǎnpìhuà Press, 2004). See also Marianne Salcetti, "Competing for Control of Newsworkers: Definitional Battles Between the Newspaper Guild and the American Newspaper Publishers Association, 1937-1938." Ph.D. dissertation (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1992).

[4] Bonnie Brennen, "Newsworkers during the interwar era: a critique of traditional media history," *Communication Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1995), 197-209.

[5] "Anti-CIO Guildsmen form AFL union in Chicago for newsmen only," *Editor & Publisher*, July 24, 1937, 5, 13, 32; fears of radicalization drove some of these departures, and they sometimes resulted in odd situations where groups of differently unionized news workers in the same newsroom would find themselves on opposing sides of a picket line, due to differing union policies. See also "*N.Y. Sun* news staff forms own union to deal with management," *Editor & Publisher*, July 24, 1937, 5; the Sun Editorial Employes Union, not connected to the ANG, was formed by members of the *Sun* in New York as an alternative to the ANG. And see "Duluth papers forced to suspend by strike," *Editor & Publisher*, April 16, 1938, 8. In one instance, a suit was filed by the Portland, Oregon, Guild local over an alleged attempt by publishers and management at the Guy P. Gannett chain paper there to form a "company union." Typically, in these disputes, the NLRB would notified, a representative sent to ascertain the

American journalism, noted in 1937 that seven news worker chapters of the AFL lasted through 1936, but that five of these eventually joined the ANG. [6] Since the CIO generally encouraged the unionization of all trades working at a newspaper, some reporters and editors wanted to distance themselves from these more industrial unionization efforts.

The unionization of the newsroom went through several stages. The successful organizing movement that began in 1933 was at first widely diffused, with its main centers of power in New York City and Cleveland. But others sprang up in parallel, including in the Twin Cities and Philadelphia. The unionization movement reacted to the efforts of publishers attempting to evade federal regulation, with a "guild" response in which improving wages and hours was given equal weight to a general impetuous to bettering working conditions. After the failure of more overt attempts to regulate industries like newspapers after 1935, unionization took a more militant, or industrial, turn, interrupted by the Second World War, but resuming in earnest afterward. From about 1945 through the early 1960s, then, unionization took root and became part of the newsroom workers' aspiration to white-collar status.[7] This was part of their larger professionalization project and coincided with post-war generational, societal and cultural changes reflected in the newsroom.

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facts, report back to the NLRB, then either an initial ruling would be issued or the NLRB would send more representatives to facilitate an election of the news workers there.

[6] Alfred McClung Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America*: *The Evolution of a Social Instrument* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937). See his Table XXXII, "Newswriters' unions under the jurisdiction of the American Federation of Labor: 1923-1936," 753.

[7] "White collar" as a label for workers, and as an economic and social status, can be complex and rife with hidden assumptions. For our purposes, "white collar" will refer to an aspirational middle-class status. See Mark McColloch, in *White Collar Workers in Transition*: *The Boom Years, 1940-1970* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983). For other classic studies of these workers, see C. Wright Mills, *White Collar*: *The American Middle Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), and Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

Unionization was more than a legal movement. It disrupted newsroom dynamics, created new ones and reinforced old patterns. It lessened the power of bosses, empowered more established reporters and editors and created a more standardized workplace in terms of pay and advancement. When women and minorities had the opportunity to enter largely white, male newsrooms, the union also advocated for them. It helped to enable their own agency as workers and treated them less like pioneers and more as colleagues. But it was not a cure-all: publishers and senior editors still retained power, new personnel still endured (and later recreated for others) newsroom-indoctrination, and some reporters were marginalized when they declined to embrace more total unionization, whether through the ANG or its alternatives. The unionization of the newsroom is thus worth its own examination, because workers struggled against existing constraints while creating new patterns of power.

Before the Guild: first attempts

Early efforts to form a union for news workers on the editorial side began in earnest after the First World War. Workers at newsrooms across the country attempted short-lived affiliations with International Typographical Union (ITU) chapters. Most of these did not survive into the 1920s, or if they did, were the exception to the rule. But for brief moments, in the early 1890s and from 1919 to 1920, unionization of newsrooms seemed possible.[8] Media-labor historian Daniel Leab characterizes the ITU as the umbrella union for mechanical workers in the newspaper industry, which attempted to organize reporters and editors as part of a bid to strengthen its own bargaining position with publishers before the turn of the last century. The

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[8] Beside the excellent work of Leab, see also Bonnie Brennen, "Work in progress: labor and the press in 1908," in Betty H. Winfield, ed., *Journalism, 1908: Birth of a Profession* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 147-61.

ITU did so at a time when many editorial workers could still set type and perform other mechanical tasks on the production side of the newspaper. In this capacity, some helped to break strikes by full-time mechanical workers. But efforts to organize faltered. Of the 59 local ITU chapters chartered with the express purpose of organizing editorial workers in more than 40 U.S. and Canadian cities between 1891 and 1923, only a handful—six—survived for more than five years, with most lasting no more than a year and a half.[9] News workers either could not afford or simply choose not to pay the relatively expensive ITU dues that were used to fund pension and insurance plans. They also tended, due to their mendicant nature, to move from city to city, and idealized their occupation as being above or not in need of unionization.

After the First World War, however, as the cost of living spiked some 15 percent, newspapers closed and millions of young men returned to the job market, there was renewed if fleeting interest in the ITU. Fifteen ITU locals were authorized in 1919 alone.[10] Joining a national movement that was already prone to labor agitation, the summer and fall of that year held special potential. Walter Williams, dean of the University of Missouri's School of Journalism, predicted that as long as publishers invested in their machinery more than the "the salaries or wages of the men and women whose brain cells feed the presses and machines," non-mechanical news workers would be tempted to join forces with the ITU.[11] Even the conservative *Editor & Publisher* commented that with the dollar having lost half its buying power, salaries for the men "'upstairs'" was inadequate, so much so that "it would, indeed, be

[9] Leab, *A Union of Individuals*, 13.
[10] Leab, *A Union of Individuals*, 14, 16.
[11] Walter Williams, "Barbed entanglements of the press," *The Quill*, July 1919, 6.

hard to find a publisher who does not admit that a capable reporter should receive at least as high a wage as a capable printer."[12]

But that moment faded as most publishers struck back hard, blackballing reporters who organized ITU locals and refusing to cover their efforts in the news pages. When they were in the news, news workers' rancor and collapse tended to be highlighted, especially after the first wave of interest had passed.[13] As one publisher, W.B. Bryant, of the Patterson (N.J.) *Press Guardian*, explained, he had been open to negotiating with editorial workers' groups if they did not unite with mechanical workers. But once they did, he and others refused to negotiate. Newsrooms, already workplaces where news workers held comparatively little power, stayed that way. The reality remained that if the ITU did not support reporters and editors, newsroom unionization would have had little teeth. Opposition was framed as a freedom-of-the-press issue, as it would be during the 1930s and 1940s. In Bryant's words, "Which, I would ask, would be in the majority. The mechanical or the brain workers? Could there be an independent press under those conditions?"[14] In New York City during the summer of 1919, despite support from the Typographical Union No. 6 (i.e. the "Big Six"), arguably the most important ITU chapter in the country, the ANPA's chief union negotiator expressed skepticism that a "skilled newspaper man" would want to be "fettered by an arbitrary wage scale," since so many treated reporting

[12] "Editorial: trend toward organization," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 11, 1919, 32. See also "Editorial: craft organization," Oct. 9, 1919, 22. In another officially voiced *Editor & Publisher* response to the then-recent spate of early unionization attempts and demands for better wages by journalists: "It is folly to assume that editors and reporters are the one class that is immune and exempt under the present reign of high costs of living. . . . the movement for normal salaries for news writers under present conditions has made rapid strides lately and this is due to a recognition by publishers of the principle of a fair wage for everyone who has a part in the making of a newspaper."
[13] "Detroit is against writer' unions," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 20, 1919, 24. See also "No union at Portland," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 28, 1919, 12.
[14] "Dailies in four cities oppose news writers' union," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 4, 1919, 10.

as a stepping stone to "some other kind of work that pays them much better."[15] This skepticism was not unfounded. Editorial workers themselves continued to resist organization, falling prey again to their own self-perceptions as entrepreneurs first, and a class of workers second.[16]

Only a handful of ITU locals continued into the new decade, including the well-known Scranton Newswriters Union, founded in 1907. A 1932 *Quill* profile identified the "benign" nature of the local ownership as responsible for its survival.[17] More often, these nascent chapters folded or if they survived, became a more pliable in-house union, as happened in Rochester, New York, where the Newswriters' Union No. 16 of the ITU became the Rochester Newspaper Writers' Association.[18] For most news workers, even in cities with more than one competing newspaper and multiple owners, such as Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Seattle and Boston, organizing was a hot or cold proposition.[19] Unless they tapped into a pre-existing source of unity, such as language or ethnicity, there were simply too many competing interests, and little experience with, organizing.[20] In St. Louis, where the ANG would later have some of its most ardent early supporters, reporters and editors managed to organize themselves enough to successfully demand, and receive, a cost-of-living bonus. This approximately $5-a-week increase in salaries at the St. Louis *Times*, *Post-Dispatch* and *Republic* empowered the

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[15] "Plan to form union of N.Y. writers," *Editor & Publisher*, July 17, 1919, 12.
[16] Leab, *A Union of Individuals*, 16-21.
[17] Joseph Loftus, "Unions in the city rooms? 'Never,' declares this newspaperman in telling the story of the Scranton scribes' organization," *The Quill*, Nov. 1932, 3-4. This particular ITU chapter was sometimes also referred to as "Scranton Newswriters Union No. 3."
[18] "Why writers' union died in Rochester," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 23, 1919, 24.
[19] Leab, *A Union of Individuals*, 20-2, 26. See also "Period of labor unrest: methods of enforcing wage demand draws rebuke from I.T.U—406 new contracts in 1920—writers organize," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 15, 1920, 22. Other cities were writers reportedly organized included: Baltimore; Bridgeport, Conn.; Brockton, Mass.; Butte, Montana; Chicago; Evansville, Ind.; Fresno, Calif.; Hartford, Conn.; Louisville, K.Y.; Lynn, Mass.; Manchester, N.H.; Montreal, Canada; New Haven, Conn.; Omaha, Neb.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Portland, Ore.; Rochester, N.Y.; Salt Lake City, Utah; San Francisco, Calif.; San Diego, Calif.; Springfield, Mass.; Toronto, Canada; Syracuse, N.Y.; Waterbury, Conn.; Wheeling, W.Va.; Worcester, Mass. Most of the strikes and other organizing efforts in these cities soon petered out.
[20] "N.Y. German press workers plan labor union," *Editor & Publisher*, July 3, 1919, 20. See also, "Now propose labor union of Chicago news writers," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 11, 1919, 24.

reporters and editors of that city, who reveled in the rare 20 percent overall boost in pay.[21] This concession also undercut their resolve to organize their newsrooms further.

Their "St. Louis Plan" helped to inspire the short-lived formation of the American Journalists Association (AJA), complete with its own column in *Editor & Publisher*.[22] But this organization lost momentum by 1925, coopted by publishers and subject to the same malaise that seemed to afflict all news workers.[23] In 1923, the ITU disbanded its attempts to organize non-mechanical news workers. The AFL moved into some of this vacuum, chartering six locals over the next decade, but three soon collapsed and the survivors had only limited memberships, such as in Chicago, where members worked primarily for that city's Jewish-language newspapers.[24] It did not help that by the mid-1920s the American economy had improved and workers felt less urgently drawn to proto-union efforts. Foreshadowing later developments, Heywood Broun, the well-known *New York World* columnist and animating spirit of the ANG during the 1930s, petitioned the AFL for a charter for his small "Organization of News Writers" (identified elsewhere as the "New York News Writers Union"). Some 75-members strong, it kept most of its members' identities secret for fear of retaliation by publishers. [25]

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[21]"American journalists association forms as editorial workers national body," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 16, 1919, 5, 20. See also "'St. Louis Plan' may be solution of writers' discontent," Sept. 18, 1919, 74.

[22] Richard L. Stokes, "The American journalists' forum: salutatory," *Editor & Publisher*, June 5, 1920, 19. James W. Brown, *Editor & Publisher*'s publisher, donated a weekly column's worth of space to the American Journalists Association, "a growing professional and non-union organization of editors, reporters and newspaper writers and artists, together with instructors and students of schools of journalism."

[23] Leab, *A Union of Individuals*, 22.

[24] Leab, *A Union of Individuals*, 20, 22. See also, "Writers seek way out of I.T.U," *Editor & Publisher*, May 6, 1922, 6. In the latter case, the ITU was frustrated that the Newspaper Writers' Union No. l of Boston was not paying its dues, a common problem with these early, abortive ITU chapters made of reporters and editors. See also, "Writers ask A.F. of L. aid," *Editor & Publisher*, May 27, 1922, 24.

[25] Sam G. Riley, *Biographical Dictionary of American Newspaper Columnists* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), 42-43. See also, "New York reporters ask union chapter," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 24, 1923, 16. In Broun's words, part of his motivation was that "newspaper work is unduly precarious. In all large cities there is a disposition to discharge certain members of staffs to encourage others." See also "Reporters' union marks time," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 15, 1923, 4. While Leab downplays Broun's

Before the Guild: newsroom relationships

Ted Curtis Smythe examined the brutal newsroom work conditions of the last turn-of-the-century, and other historians have touched on them.[26] They are worth revisiting here, briefly, as they directly pertain to the early interwar period. News workers, in their memoirs, or in union-friendly publications such as the *Guild Reporter* (or mostly union-neutral publications such as *The Quill*) recalled not a dark era, in which all was harshness, but a more uncertain one, even in bigger cities on bigger publications.

Reporters were hired and fired haphazardly, publishers and owners generally intervened readily and directly and news workers were often mobile between and within cities. This was the generation preceding the working détente arranged between publishers and editorial staffs, as described by Daniel Hallin, in which the former gave the latter freedom to oversee their internal affairs in exchange for a product that produced a steady profit.[27] How one recalled pre-Guild conditions depended distinctly on whether one exercised supervisory power in the newsroom. As explored in the chapter on reporter-supervisor interactions, most middle- and senior-level editors disputed the idea that unionization was necessary. Many reporters, however, even those who later soured somewhat on aspects of "industrial unionism," appreciated the Guild's influence.

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role in these early efforts (he writes that Broun did "little more . . . than serve as a name on a letterhead;" see Leab, *Union of Individuals*, 44), Broun *did* use his popularity to attract attention to the nascent cause. It is true that it was only later that he threw himself more into the proverbial breach. His was a unique personality that would lead disparate groups of reporters and editors into unionization, but not quite yet.

[26] Ted Curtis Smythe, "The reporter, 1880-1900: working conditions and their influence on the news," *Journalism History* 7, no. 1(1980): 1-10; Ted Curtis Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press*, 1865-1900 (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2003). See also the chapter on newsroom working conditions in Phillip M. Glende, "Labor makes the news: newspapers, journalism, and organized labor, 1933-1955" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2010).

[27] Daniel C. Hallin, "Commercialism and professionalism in the American news media," 242-260, in *Mass Media and Society*, James Curran, and Michael Gurevitch. eds. (London: Arnold, 2000). Hallin calls this the "provisional resolution."

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Moe Raiser, a member of the San Francisco-Oakland Guild and a reporter for the *Call-Bulletin*, recalled how “you never refused an assignment, no matter how many extra hours it took, if you wanted to hang onto your job.” To do otherwise led to be being “fired on the spot.” Wage cuts appeared arbitrarily. First they might appear on a bulletin board with an apology, then via a note without an apology, and then reflected in paychecks. Some more humane

[28] “Afoul of those rules,” *Guild Reporter*, Nov. 22, 1937, 3.

bosses would give time off in lieu of pay, or try to give some kind of notice of pay and hour reductions, but others would either fail to track or track time off haphazardly, or announce cuts without preamble.[29] According to a former treasurer of the ANG, and a former staff member on the New York *Evening News*, the average weekly wage in 1934 for reporters was $30, with no set hours, "stretched to fill all the time in which any news developed."[30]

But from the perspective of management, even before the Guild and unionization helped to change newsroom life, the culture of work was beginning to change. Writing two years before the formation of the ANG, the executive editor of the *Chattanooga News* noted that reporters used to work "for the joy of chasing news and cared little for the comforts of life so long as they could . . . borrow a cigarette." [31] Reporters had changed, and went home as soon as possible "in their own car," and had the free time to "to help [the] wife plant roses or take the baby for an airing." Better educated, they enjoyed "poring over a book of poems or writing a book review for the literary editor." Salaries meant investment in real estate, stocks and bonds, radios or automobiles. And even their conversation was less salty, involving "philosophy or the latest play or their golf scores rather than about some brewing political scandal." Having forgotten the "art of intelligent loafing," this meant, from the editor's perspective, that their reporters were less keen to take on tough stories, government pressure or business influence.[32] This was an unfair conclusion, as editors typically felt more pressure from advertisers and local politicians than a typical reporter. Some editors, in contrast,

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[29] Moe Raiser, "20 years later 'Mau-rice' still remembers," *Guild Reporter*, Oct. 8, 1954, 7.
[30] Charles A. Perlik Jr., "Newspaper Guild now in 26th year," *The Quill*, November 1959, 80.
[31] J. Charles Poe, "Where are the good reporters? Inexperienced boys or broken down veterans and incompetents apply at this editor's door," *The Quill*, January 1931, 10.
[32] Poe, "Where are the good reporters?" 10-11.

acknowledged the negative sides of the arbitrary work conditions of the pre-Guild era. An editor at the *Cleveland Press* remembered how his peers used to be able to "sweep out a lot of people on a Saturday afternoon and on Monday morning hire a lot of others to replace them." But the Guild meant more security, other editors admitted, and that meant that there were "fewer men leaving jobs and fewer good men being fired and the time is past, it seems to me, when any newspaper can expect to find good men wandering around looking for jobs." This also meant that "good men are staying on their jobs. They are not being fired and they are not quitting and, when a vacancy comes, if there is not somebody already in the organization ready to fill it, then the chances of getting competent help in that job are not very good."[33]

Even later management skeptics of the Guild like Marlen Pew at least initially believed it could provide a needed safety net. He predicted in September 1933 that "brutal uncertainty, lack [of] appreciation, surly official snarling, cynical disrespect of sensitive and striving people in some offices are bitterer pills than low wages and long hours." If and when unionization occurred under the federal government's industry codes,[34] "it will not be half so much because they are impoverished in pocket as that they have been kept miserable in their souls." Hiring practices that only recruited "hard-boiled, ruthless and essentially ignorant people" that looked

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[33] "Managing editors panel," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21-23, 1949, 51-2.

[34] To clarify, the National Industrial Recovery Act was signed into law in June 1933. The FDR administration created the National Recovery Administration to draft and administer codes for separate industries. Eventually, the NIRA was struck down as unconstitutional in May 1935 (it had been set to expire that June). "National Industrial Recovery Act (1933)," The National Archives and Records Administration, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=66?> Accessed Jan. 30, 2016. "An Act to encourage national industrial recovery, to foster fair competition, and to provide for the construction of certain useful public works, and for other purposes, June 16, 1933;" Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11, National Archives. It is important to note that the Wagner Labor Relations Act, i.e. the National Labor Relations Act, passed later in July 1935, guaranteed the right to form, join, and negotiate as a union, and created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), with its regional system of facilitators and arbiters. "National Labor Relations Act (1935)" The National Archives and Records Administration, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=67> Accessed Jan. 30, 2016. "An act to diminish the causes of labor disputes burdening or obstructing interstate and foreign commerce, to create a National Labor Relations Board, and for other purposes, July 5, 1935;" General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.

out first for the interests of a publisher, with low pay and morale pervading newsrooms, could be an “explosive” combination. [35] Less than a month later, his magazine, responding to dueling ANG and ANPA estimates of average newsroom salaries, conceded “that editorial pay is scandalously out of line, in view of the creative character of the work and the obligations the editorial department places on employes.” This begrudging acceptance by industry observers such as Pew had its limits. The ANG, *Editor & Publisher* also commented, was developing too quickly “into a radical labor union, with A.F. of L. affiliations, called ‘co-operation,’ and publishers in general are rejecting it.”[36]

“Shop talk at thirty” columnist Arthur Robb, commentating in *Editor & Publisher* (for which he also served as the editor-in-chief after the passing of Pew in 1936),[37] found the expansion of the Guild into the *New York Times* hard to understand in 1941. A victory for the ANG, it helped to legitimize the spread of unions to other elite East Coast newspapers.[38] Particularly confusing to Robb was the all-encompassing approach the now-CIO-affiliated Guild had taken, and why the writing-and-editing members of a newspaper would want to be associated with office support staff.[39] Reporters and editors had been “sold” and “swindled” on

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[35] Marlen Pew, “Shop talk at thirty,” *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 16, 1933, 48. He adds, “The first essential of the journalist is a decent regard for his fellows. Petty tyrants do not surround themselves with talent. And unless a light of decency and fairness burns in a newspaper office the publisher may well turn the key in the lock, for [he] has no mission.” As noted, Pew and the other editors and commenters at *Editor & Publisher* (and generally those who represented groups like the ASNE, ANPA, or even the APME) would later take on a far more oppositional perspective toward unions, unionization and the Guild in particular, before reaching a détente of their own by the late 1950s. He also quotes an anonymous “young reporter,” who says that low pay is not as much of a concern for him, since the “romance of newspaper life is compensatory,” as is “this business of being fired without notice, or even any reason beyond the whim of some duffer who doesn’t like the cut of my job or slashes the payroll by checking off every other name on the list. Newspapermen yield unbounded loyalty and deserve some.”
[36] “Editorial: editorial pay,” *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 13, 1934, 24.
[37] "Marlen Pew is dead; held post at Columbia," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Oct. 19, 1936. Retrieved Dec. 28, 2015. <http://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/columbia?a=d&d=cs19361019-01.2.29#>
[38] Glende, “Labor makes the news,” 251.
[39] Arthur Robb, “Shop talk at thirty,” *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 16, 1941, 36. “Their interests are not those of circulation solicitors or route men, nor of advertising salesmen, nor of accountants, stenographers, clerks, office boys or copy boys. The primary function of reporters, desk men, make-up editors, editorial writers, and writing specialists is the production of material which will interest the public and keep the paper sold to the public.”

"the idea that they were mechanical craftsmen," an idea that puzzled Robb. He believed this meant they were now the "tail of the guild kite, outnumbered and outvoted by people of far less importance in the newspaper picture," and that this was "another evidence of the insane years through which we have been passing." But he did concede the ANG's raison d'être. Reflecting on its first ten years and rocky expansion, he admitted that "the championship of such men as Heywood Broun, Kenneth Crawford, Harry Martin, and other sincere writing people who looked to it for no personal gain but as a necessary protection for their fellows" gave it legitimacy.[40]

Writing in *The Quill* in 1956, the managing editor of the Louisville *Times* acknowledged that the "Guild came into being because of the blindness and the economic stupidity of newspaper owners." While "it was the inevitable development of a fantastic imbalance—of a period when the pay to printers was double that of skilled reporters," the Guild had become a "trade organization dedicated to a leveling process." That process pushed against publishers, who were still "fundamentally dedicated to the proposition that profits have to be maintained even at the expense of responsible performance."[41] Also in 1956, Carl Kesler, the editor of *Quill*, admitted that he still had mixed feelings about the Guild. While he was not entirely sure of the soundness of management's argument that the "union accent on minimum salary scales, particularly in the starting brackets and the semi-editorial classifications, takes the money that might go into merit raises," he believed a different kind of work culture had taken root in the newsroom. Without the Guild and its "flat unionization," the "old pro," or older reporter,

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[40] Arthur Robb, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 16, 1941, 36.
[41] Norman Isaacs, "A newspaperman's job is also a high calling," *The Quill*, June 1956, 7.

"would have been cherished [,] . . . kept around on most newspapers without . . . contracts saying just how well he would be treated."[42] Other critics believed that the Guild had moved from its "original craft union purpose into a vertical industrial union" in how it had merged "the editorial forces and many other kinds of employees on newspapers and periodicals."[43] Opposition had generally increased from publishers when the Guild moved toward its affiliation with the CIO in June 1937 and away from its initial affiliation with the AFL (which had taken place less than a year before, in July 1936).[44] Publishers also accused the federal government of favoring labor over their interests, and encouraged criticism or published their own.[45] Franklin Roosevelt's perceived pro-labor bias supposedly fueled "coddling laws and practices."[46]

The Guild, though, speaking through Milton Murray, its president in 1947, was proud of this merger and of its identity as more "industrial" than "craft." In a rare speech to publishers at their annual convention, and representing a slight thaw in the tensions between the ANG and the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), Murray defended the legacy of the former. Murray focused on the issue of wages, claiming that "the Guild is raising the standards of journalism by raising the rate of pay." Raising pay had helped to keep young workers in

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[42] Carl R. Kesler, "The case of the old pro," *The Quill*, June 1956, 3.
[43] "The Guild and the labor situation," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 21-22, 1944, 28, 29. The ANPA reported that as of Jan. 1, 1944, there were 141 newspapers with contracts with the Guild (at least from their membership), of which some 69 included both news and business departments, 56 for news, and 16 just for business; this included high-profile NY-based newspapers such as the *New York Herald Tribune*, as well as the *Chicago Tribune*; the Guild's own accounting varied slightly, with 173 contracts, covering more than "200 editorial shops," 129 of which were with 165 daily or Sunday newspapers, a total of about nine percent of the daily and newspaper field. It is important to remember that newspapers with Guild units would remain in the minority.
[44] "Editorial: no closed shop," *Editor & Publisher*, June 26, 1937, 30.
[45] "NLRB saturated with anti-press feeling," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 4, 1941, 6. See also "Editorial: signed labor pacts," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 11, 1941, 62.
[46] "Editorial: Rights of management," *Editor & Publisher*, May 20, 1944, 34. Publishers also accused unions of leftist tendencies, including infiltration by communists. Since the history of the Guild and the Communist party could be the basis of its own study, I will avoid delving too deeply into an analysis of the ANG's internal politics except for where it bears directly on the unionization of the newsroom. See Morton Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*: *A Book about the Business* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. 1941), 325.

journalism who would have "drifted off into other fields." Publishers and the Guild shared the same basic goal of hiring "competent and capable staffs." Ultimately, Murray defended the Guild's "industrial union" status as "a community of interest among newspaper employees," and encouraged a continued working peace.[47] How this state of things got this way was not preordained.

Newsroom relationships during the ANG's formation

In 1933, as editorial workers around the country endured a deepening Depression, they found themselves again at the mercy of their publishers and the industry's habit of weathering economic storms by cutting salaries (or, in many cases, jobs, via mergers and closings). News workers reacted to publisher resistance to the National Recovery Administration (NRA)'s efforts. But unlike in former times, they were better organized, motivated and led. Inspired by the "prime mover," Heywood Broun, now a columnist for the *World-Telegram*, some of the first and largest efforts to organize came in New York City. In an early August 1933 column in the *World-Telegram*, Broun called for a "union of reporters."[48] Two months later, "a massive meeting of New York newspaper writers" helped to create "the Guild of New York Newspaper Men and Women." In announcements posted to newspaper bulletin boards throughout the city, the group called for a 40-hour, five-day work week, $35-minimums for those with a year or more of experience, paid vacations, discharge notice, minimum wages, and elimination of clause 14 of the revised publisher's code (which discouraged unionization for collective

[47] "Arbitration voted for Guild's own staff," *Editor & Publisher*, July 14, 1956, 15, 74. See also George A. Brandenburg, "Big city Guilds strives anew to block wire service local: issue flares at 24th convention; New England publishers warned," *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1957, 14, 73.
[48] Leab, *A Union of Individuals*, 44.

bargaining).[49] The nascent New York chapter of the Guild starting meeting in August and September during the lead up to the NRA's industry code hearings in September. It formed officially on Dec. 15, 1933, and quickly began to organize locals throughout the country.

Other newspaper workers in other cities, notably Cleveland, had also been organizing haphazardly before Broun's column. Reporters repurposed newsroom mimeograph machines, and their personal networks of friends and colleagues, to rally support for the cause, even if it was vague beyond opposing the publishers' proposed code.[50] As before, reporters had a hard time staying together. Meetings were fractious, erratically attended and unfocused, as many had little or no experience creating such a collective enterprise as a union. The labor reporters among them were often elected to leadership positions because they, at least, had some exposure to how union meetings were run.

But the hearings themselves, taking place Sept. 22 and Sept. 23, 1933, formed a further rallying cry for the first wave of unionizing editorial workers. With the organizing efforts of the New York City group, 11 spokespersons, representing 15 proto-ANG chapters, were present at the NRA's meetings at the Department of Commerce in Washington, D.C. They testified after the publishers' delegates, calling for a five-day, forty-hour week, with a minimum wage scale of $20 a week for news workers with less than a year's experiences and $30 for those with one to two years' experience. They also asked for discharge notice except in egregious cases, and appealed provisions in the temporary code banning unions from representing workers. Three months later, the NRA would ignore these appeals and ultimately adopt most of the publishers'

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[49] "Writers to oppose newspaper code," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 16, 1933, 9. See also, Leab, *A Union of Individuals*, 60.
[50] Leab, *A Union of Individuals*, 51.

demands, including hour-and-wage exceptions for those deemed “professional” by their bosses, based on a forthcoming Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) survey of “news department worker” salaries. The temporary code, with its $35-a-week standard for that “professional” status, was not replaced by a baseline dollar figure, pending the results of the BLS survey. This caused confusion on behalf on news workers, who insisted that they were not “professional” workers if that meant they could be paid less. Despite their protests, the final code went into effect in February 1934.[51]

The one minor concession news workers’ won was the removal of a clause ensuring an “open shop” status that would have practically blocked organizing. Otherwise, the nascent groups that would form the ANG in December were dissatisfied—fueling the birth of the national organization. Leab believes that if the code had made even a few more concessions, the ANG would never had developed enough momentum to develop as it did. More importantly, for the first time on a national stage news workers had spoken on a (more or less) united front, “as workers consciously concerned with common economic problems” and speaking on behalf of their fellows.[52] The publishers, for their part, remained unconvinced their industry needed to adhere to it in either the spirit or the letter of the law. Of the 540 codes adopted, it was among the most difficult to write and administer, and continually opposed by owners, who believed, sincerely or not, that their editorial freedom was in danger.[53]

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[51] Edwin Emery, *History of the American Newspaper Publishers Association* (Minneapolis, Minn: The University of Minnesota Press, 1950), 225.

[52] Leab, *Union of Individuals*, 40, 67-70, 71, 75-77, 79

[53] Emery, *History of the American Newspaper Publishers Association*, 225. While it might be easy to dismiss this perspective, the open and unabashed antagonism between FDR and many conservative publishers helped to create and sustain a climate of hostility and suspicion by both sides that was not aided when the ANG took a more unionist stance from mid-1934 onward.

Two schools of thought guided how and why to organize in the Guild's early, more formative days: the first emphasized an economic orientation—its goal was to raise salaries and advocate for better hours. In this regard, it was more a traditional union. The second kind of organization effortwanted a more "professional" approach that highlighted career development and vocational advocacy in the vein of the British Institute of Journalists (versus the more pragmatic and working-class National Union of Journalists).[54] Ultimately, the economic orientation prevailed, but an element of a professionalizing faction remained.

The later success of the ANG in unionizing the newsroom remained constrained by several factors. ANG contracts never covered an overwhelming majority of working reporters and editors. While pro-union or at least neutral sources like the *Guild Reporter* and *Quill* tended to emphasize the growth and power of the Guild and in-house unions, publications and organizations antagonistic to the Guild (such as *Editor & Publisher*, and the various monthly and annual publications of the ASNE, APME and ANPA) downplayed the newsroom unionization movement. They also highlighted in-house union activity, especially when it was friendly to publishers.[55] Undaunted, the Guild claimed an exaggerated membership of more than 10,000 by May 1937, with some 88 active chapters.[56] Some of these estimates were skewed toward the higher end as non-newsroom office workers began to affiliate with local ANG chapters. In 1938, for example, out of a claimed membership of 16,797, some 3,292 were "commercial" workers. And more than half of the Guild's growth over the previous year was due to the latter

[54] Leab, *Union of Individuals*, 84.
[55] "Guild defeated on Quincy daily," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 16, 1946, 14.
[56] "Office Guild formed for N.Y. dailies," *Editor & Publisher*, May 22, 1937, 16.

kind of worker.[57] Data from the Department of Commerce and Labor identified a field with 51,844 men and women working as reporters and editors in 1930, and 58,253 in 1940 (and 90,325 in 1950).[58] This shows that even as the Guild grew to more than 17,000 reported members in 1941, and then 26,000 in 1951, its membership never encompassed the majority of American news workers.[59] A labor historian of the era notes that "the Guild was essentially a big city organization, based upon several strong points, and extending into smaller communities mainly where these were already strong union territory."[60] Still, as their numbers and chapters grew, so did a working détente with publishers. After World War Two, publishers became more pragmatic and accepting in their interactions with the Guild, even as they still complained about its power.[61]

[57] Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement*, 1935-1941 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 559.
[58] Linda Steiner, "Gender at work: early accounts by women journalists," in *Journalism History* 12:1 (spring 1997), 2-12, specifically, Table 1, "number of male and female editors and reporters in the newspaper and magazine industry, 1890-1950, and U.S. population increase over precious census #," 4. Steiner notes the total population of the U.S. over this same period, from 106,000,000 in 1920 to 151,000,000 in 1950; the number of working men and women in the field was 33,773 in 1920. Steiner uses data from the U.S. Dept. of Commerce and Labor.
[59] Elias E. Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1951), 92.
[60] Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL*, 560. He goes on to note that in an ANPA survey in 1939, of the 266 cities with ANPA members, the ANG had locals in 79. That meant that there were Guild elements of various sizes in 88 percent of cities with a population of more than 200,000, in 39 percent of cities between 100,000 and 200,000 people, and in just 10 percent of cities below that (see 560). Granted, this number probably did not encompass in-house unions and some newspapers which had Guild units but no contracts (lingering verbal agreements). Still, it remains true that Guild influence was not felt in rural areas and smaller cities (or even in larger cities in the South, where the Sothern Newspaper Publishers Association remained opposed to Guild contracts) to anywhere near the degree it was in the larger cities. The limited impact of the Guild was a subject of some derision in the pro-publisher trade press, at least initially. See, "Editorial: pressure by writers," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 8, 1936, 26. *E&P*'s editors derided the ANG's early membership, saying the latter only had 4,000 out of a possible 40,000 members. This would change, of course, but the cultural barriers (not to mention the economic ones) were high to a more total unionization of the field.
[61] Emery, *History of the American Newspaper Publishers Association*, 238. Emery went as far as to describe them as "quite normal."

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A result of this détente could be seen in the development of a new union-influenced, newsroom relationship dynamics during the 1930s and into the 1950s. Editors and managers were dealing with a new kind of reporter. News workers had become more college-educated, assertive and independent. Publishers and senior editors could no longer act as unilaterally in

[62] "Pardon us for pointing--" *Guild Reporter*, Oct. 1, 1942, 12.

the newsroom. This became clear during strikes organized by chapters of the ANG. Publishers believed strikes over wages and hours were "clear evidence that management has lost the control it ought to hold." To reassert control involved remaining calm during negotiations with union leadership over contracts: "it takes genuine manliness, as compared with the spurious variety that resorts to the punch in the jaw, to convince a negotiating committee that their demands are impossible and that the proposition is the honest best that can be offered." A publisher could be concerned about the wellbeing of his or her workers but could not "carry it into the conference room with labor unions." It is perhaps telling that for publishers, union assertiveness meant "the idea that a man has an interest in his job—a new and unproven concept of the relations of employer and employ[ees]." For many employers, the presence of unionized workers represented at first a threat, then a sustained interruption, to their power.[63] Some reacted with subtle threats. Speaking through their mangers, publishers told reporters and junior-level editors that Guild activity could cost promotions or would result in a more unpleasant work environment. Even if they were not fired, reporters or sometimes editors could be reassigned to different beats, or even to the newspaper's library (i.e. its "morgue") in apparent retaliation.[64] Sometimes reporters or other newsroom staffers would be told directly that they had to quit organizing or leave the Guild, especially before World War Two. A copy editor at the San Francisco *Call-Bulletin*, after a prominent rewrite staffer was intimidated into resigning for his union activity, was lectured by a managing editor, who said that the Guild was

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[63] Arthur Robb, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 1, 1938, 36.

[64] "Toledo Blade bans reporters' outside jobs," *Editor & Publisher*, July 26, 1947, 61. A Toledo *Blade* reporter, Eleanor Coakley (and president of the local ANG chapter), was transferred to the "newspaper's reference library" after she was elected to the position of recording secretary for the Toledo Industrial Union Council, the primary organizer of union activity in the city. The guild filed a petition to the NLRB, even as the paper's management insisted that Coakley's salary would be the same, and that her transfer was necessary for maintaining the appearance of neutrality in news reporting.

"an 'anti-Hearst organization . . . run by a bunch of crack pots.'" The copy editor was also told that he was "'making a mistake by putting your neck in a noose.'"[65]

While more formalized, negotiations themselves were a sign that publishers had lost the ability to ignore or effectively punish attempts to organize. As the ANG formed, publishers sometimes refused to sign their names to union contracts, agreeing to demands informally through representatives or on posted signs, in what a contemporary called "the bulletin-board agreement era." That ended when the NLRB recognized the Guild increasingly in the 1940s and 1950s as the majority bargaining agent on newspapers that had voted to elect the union as its representative with ownership.[66] While the transition of the ANG to a more powerful force within the industry was heralded by many rank-and-file workers as a good thing, many publishers already opposed to the Guild believed that it had encouraged a "gleeful haste from a quasi-professional status into the security of unionism."[67] By the 1950s, staff relationships had moved to the "impersonal," and the emphasis for many newspapers was on financial imperatives, especially in the wake of the Depression. For a long time there had been

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[65] Leab outlines the influential early case of Dean Jennings in his ANG history, on 182-88. Taking place over 1934-35, it showed the limits of early federal industry codes. The ANPA resisted attempts by the NLRB to intervene, creating a chilling effect on unionization and on the ANG that nearly led to the movement stalling completely. The Wagner Act and a more militant ANG after 1935 helped to embolden news workers enough for it to continue—long enough, at least, for World War Two and post-war prosperity to intervene. The immediate effect in the Bay Area was to slow down the ANG's efforts there, however, and it led to intimidation like the example mentioned here: "the circumstances of Jennings' resignation greatly affected the other employees. Many of them, professing fear for their jobs, resigned from the Guild." See, "RG 25: Records of the National Labor Relations Board; Administrative and Other Records of the Regional Offices of the National Labor Relations Board, ca. 1934. Seattle Administrative Files, Miscellaneous Correspondence, District 17, Decisions-Elections, Box No. 1," folder labeled, "Decisions, Mr. Smith's File," box 1, NLRB report on Jennings' dismissal, 5-7, located at the National Archives-Pacific Northwest Region, Seattle, Wash. This particular report indicates that testimony with a transcript had been sent from the regional board to the national board. The report appears to be a copy possibly requested by Charles W. Hope, who directed District 17 (which covered Washington and Oregon) from the Federal Office Building in Seattle. Hope, incidentally, made an annual salary of $3,400. He may have been interested in comparable cases because the Hearst paper in Seattle would soon strike. For more on that confrontation, see William E. Ames and Roger A. Simpson, *Unionism or Hearst: The Seattle Post-Intelligencer Strike of 1936* (Seattle, Wash.: Pacific Northwest Labor History Association, 1978).
[66] Morton Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*: *A Book about the Business* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. 1941), 325.
[67] "Editorial: cross-currents," *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1937, 24; Glende, "Labor makes the news," 28;

consequences to applying "'strictly business' methods to the artistic and professional side of putting out a newspaper," claimed one industry observer. Among them was the creation of an over-zealous union, in which "radical labor union tactics" had tended to play "to the gallery and, intentionally or not, forced drastic action when the mutual interests of both parties indicated moderation."[68] While this impersonal management style was portrayed by publishers as more antagonistic, it reflected a broader change for many U.S. firms: fewer papers were owned by local business people and more were owned by chains and corporations.[69] This new reality represented, in the words of the general manager of the *New York News*, a "division of interests."[70]

Early and brief forays into proactive collaboration between management and unions were not unknown though. At the Los Angeles *Daily News* in 1942, a "Management-Employe Advisory Council" was formed to manage the multiple unions (not just newsroom workers, but mechanical, business and circulation, to name a few) that could exist on the same newspaper. Representatives from management, the AFL-affiliated, CIO-affiliated, newsboy and typographical unions would meet regularly to engage with specific departmental problems from "all angles of the question involved." This sort of power-sharing was ahead of its time, and spurred by the effect of World War Two on union relations (in the newspaper industry, this meant setting aside severe disagreements for a time). While there were strikes by mechanical

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[68] Arthur Robb, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 17, 1938, 76.

[69] For an extended and classic discussion of this process, see Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1977).

[70]"Editorial: two speeches," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 18, 1954, 38. The editorial cited M. Flynn, president and general manager of the *New York News*: "Management changes from something you work for and are loyal to, to the antagonist on the other side of the bargaining table. . . . The natural pride in the paper one represents changes to a sense of [a] division of interests."

workers, the ANG generally avoided aggressive confrontations with publishers, holding to a truce during the war years.[71]

After the war, the role of mediator (or arbiter) was taken up in some cases by newly formed human resource departments. As discussed in the chapter on changing boss-worker interactions, these HR units negotiated to reduce tensions at larger newspapers such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. There, Stewart Hooker, the personnel director, and a committee member of the Newspaper Personnel Relations Association, affiliated with the ANPA, emphasized screening and placement of new workers on the editorial side. Working within a more unionized environment, HR directors like Hooker could not only recommend, but directly hire, reporters or other workers. With 15 union locals represented at the paper—five alone in the rotogravure (or photo-printing) divisions—and 3,400 workers, Hooker had a busy job.[72] Some publishers had to engage with up to about 25 separate unions.[73] HR managers thus took on an important role as part of a growing middle management class within newsrooms.

By the middle of the 1950s, newspaper unions could negotiate from a stronger position than ever. This was helped by an intervention-inclined NLRB and rules like the so-called "Kiss-and-Tell-Doctrine," which required management to share with unions their payroll data, including "jobs, names, [and] amounts received in salary and merit for the purposes of collective bargaining." Publishers worried that this rule and others like it would further

[71] "*L.A. News* staff participates in advisory council," *Editor & Publisher*, July 11, 1942, 27.
[72] Joseph Dragonetti, "Phila. paper expands personnel activities," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 6, 1949, 30. In 1948, there were 11,300 job applications to the *Inquirer*, with 3,780 interviews, and 501 placements, meaning a one in eight applicant-to-job ratio.
[73] Frank W. Rucker and Herbert Lee Williams, *Newspaper Organization and Management* (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State College Press, 1955), 498.

disempower them from offering raises based on merit.[74] Several years later, the NLRB would limit the expansiveness of this transparency measure, deciding that unions would have to be content with consolidated tax returns and financial statements during wage bargaining with management.[75] But the ANG was not going away, and indeed had already influenced the industry, bringing it more in line with other white-collar occupations.

[74] Robert C. Bassett, "'Kiss and tell' doctrine impractical and indecent: NLRB urged to review rulings and be more realistic and moral," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 5, 1955, 52. Bassett, incidentally, was the publisher of the *Milwaukee Sentinel*.
[75] "Financial report enough for union," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 25, 1958, 10.

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Debates about reporters' "professional" standing did not fade away in the midst of this, however. The ANG continued to advocate for the older standard of a $500-a-month-salary as

76 "Grin and bear it," *Guild Reporter*, Sept. 26, 1952, 7.

the definition of a "professional" person. This higher salary level meant that the upper echelon of newsroom management could be restricted from labor-union membership. Unions, for their part, wanted to expand their membership, but also keep ownership-influenced senior editors out of their ranks. Ultimately, the debate over "professional" status "centered on the type of work performed, with the editorial and reportorial workers being the focus of difference," according to a contemporary.[77] The ANPA had argued unsuccessfully, even if consistently since the second stage of New Deal-era reforms for the widest possible application of a "professional" standing for news workers.[78] Somewhat ironically, the gradually growing acceptance of college as a route into journalism was tied by publishers to these professional claims (as understood at the time). As part of the federal government's test for professionalism in an industry, the ANPA believed that "an individual who has studied at a school of journalism may be regarded as professional; newspapermen, who have not attended such institutions, non-professional."[79] Some publishers also felt that the consistent use of bylines could help

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[77] "Publishers and Guild differ on 'profession,'" *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 17, 1948, 15, 60. This is from one of several crucial hearings during the decades from 1930 to 50 in which the federal government established a working definition of a "professional" news worker. The ANPA was represented by Cranston Williams, its general counsel, in this instance, and the Guild by Sam B. Eubanks, its executive vice president.

[78] Newspapers seek exemption from wage-hour provisions: brief submitted to administrator asserts journalism is a profession, not manufacturing process . . . business preponderantly intrastate," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 15, 1938, 3, 29, 30, 33. See also "Hearings loom on wage-hour press exemption, *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 22, 1938, 4. The federal government's test at the time for a "professional" included the following criteria: " 'A professional is any employe:
(a) Who is customarily and regularly employed in work
(1) Predominantly intellectual and varied in character as opposed to routine mental, manual, mechanical or physical work, and
(2) Requiring the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment both as to the manner and time of performance as opposed to work subject to active direction and supervision, and
(3) Of such a character that the output produced or result accomplished cannot be standardized in relations to a given period of time, and
(4) Based upon educational training in a specially organized body of knowledge, as distinguished from a general academic education and from an apprenticeship, and from training in the performance of routine mental, manual, mechanical or physical processes in accordance with a previously indicated or standardized formula, plan or procedure, and
(b) Who does no substantial amount of work of the same nature as that performed by non-exempt employes of the employer."

[79] "Hearings loom on wage-hour press exemption, *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 22, 1938, 4.

distinguish “professional” reporters from those not considered professional.[80] Keen to minimize the power of unions to grow and organize, these definitions were based less on altruistic desires to elevate news workers, as noted elsewhere, and driven far more by financial concerns about the increasing personnel costs brought by an assertive Guild presence.

From the federal government’s perspective, the capacity to hire and fire remained the crucial distinction between an employee and a supervisor during the 1930s and 1940s for all news workers. Elmer E. Andrews, administrator of the Wage and Hour division of the Department of Labor, addressed the 1939 ANG convention regarding this point. He urged union members to resist attempts to “pay off in the form of titles, as well as in by-lines, in lieu of cash.” Because, for example, a copy editor was “under the constant supervision of the head of the desk, and the sports editor and other departmental heads generally are under the supervision of the managing editor,” they were not independent enough to be considered an “executive” and thus not “professional” enough to be exempt from negotiations. Andrews and his office (and his successors) disregarded the liberal sprinkling of “editor” in titles. The ANG and other unions were right to contend for a much more restricted definition of “executive,” as a result, Andrews urged.[81] The unions were concerned with actual control over work processes and workers. In a way, they foreshadowed more holistic definitions of “professional” status as defined by sociologists later in the century.[82]

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[80] “Editorial: let reason rule,” *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 5, 1938, 20. Part of the publishers’ argument went: “the service that newspapers render through the expert and conscientious work of people whose job keeps them alert for 24 hours a day over a long period should not be jeopardized by making those services cost more than they are worth either to the newspapers or the people who buy newspapers.”

[81] “Andrews speech cheers Guild in sixth annual convention,” *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 5, 1939, 9, 34.

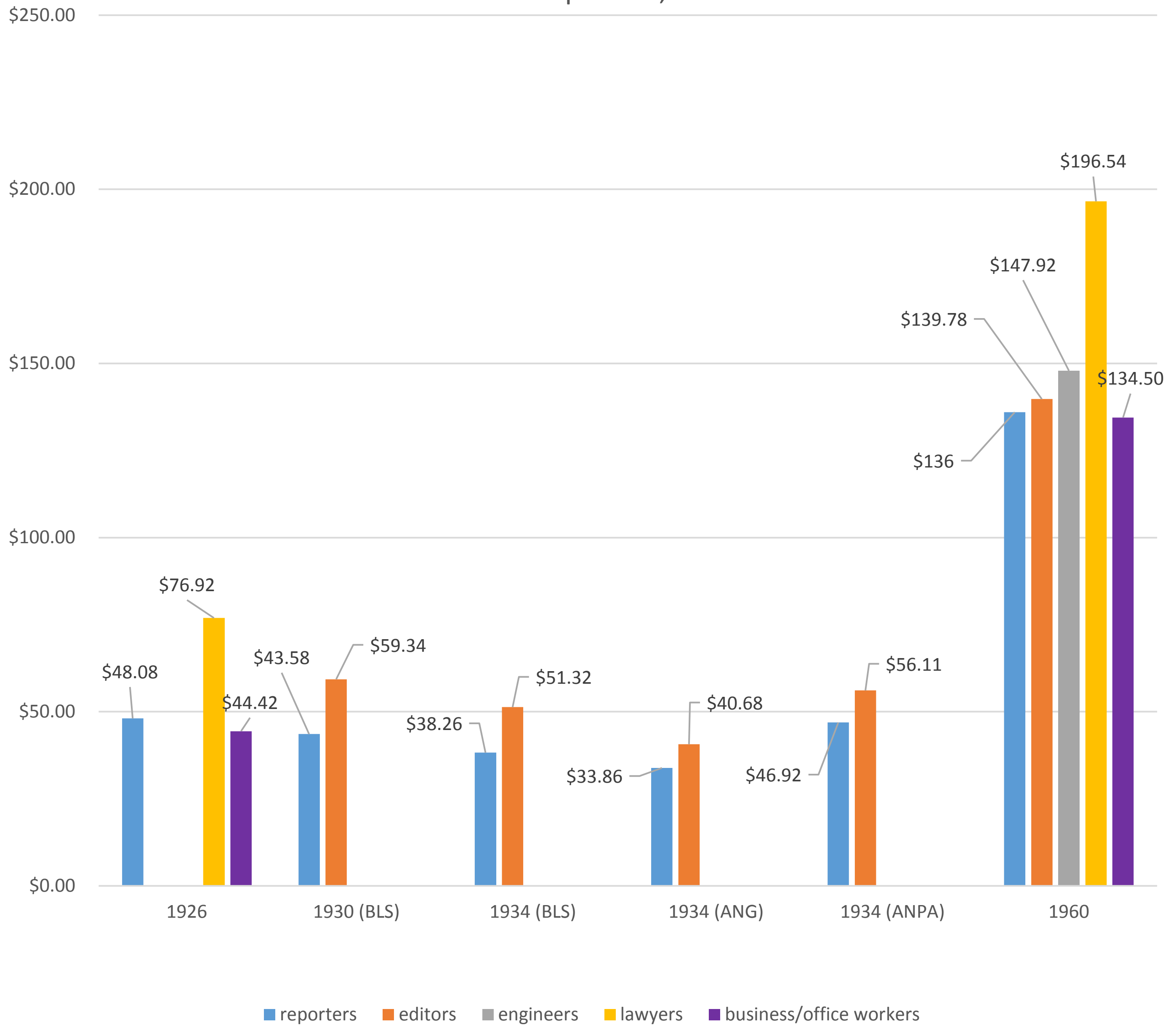
[82] See, for example, Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

Salaries/wages/severance/pensions: trends under unionization[83]

Unionization generally helped raise and stabilize, as well as standardize, news workers' wages, even in non-ANG newsrooms. In time, the union's presence also helped to raise salaries to levels on par with other white-collar jobs. While this took a generation, news workers in 1960 were far better off than they had been in 1920: they worked shorter hours, made more money more consistently per week, were better protected from dismissals, layoffs or misfortune, were better educated, and had more opportunities to venture outside of journalism into lucrative fields like public relations (and within journalism, try upwardly mobile careers in other media such as radio and television). A general rise in weekly salaries lay at the root of this improved socioeconomic status.

The Guild was particularly successful at boosting salaries for those in the lower pay brackets, including entry-level reporters, younger editors, copy boys and girls, and photographers. Editorial staff who had been fairly well paid, comparatively, before the advent of unionization (copy editors, rewrite staff, senior editors, correspondents, columnists, et al.) continued to be well paid.[84] While management (and some reporters and editors) worried union contracts would keep less-talented workers employed and thus have a flattening effect on achievement, that did not generally prove the case. Instead, news workers enjoyed a rare parity with colleagues in business, banking, marketing, government, and to a lesser degree, engineering. Medicine and law continued to far outpace journalism's pay scales, but as part of the field's acceptance of college graduates, weekly salaries were never better for newsroom staff by the end of the 1950s (see chart below)

[83] For more on national trends with newsroom salaries, please see the table found in Appendix A.
[84] Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL*, 564.



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[85] Based on surveys of self-reported "actual" salary data as collected in *Journalism Quarterly*, *Quill*, *Editor & Publisher*, Associated Press Managing Editors (APME) *Red Book*, *Guild Reporter* and other primary, contemporary sources. These estimates are for reporters who were "veterans" (often considered three to six years into a career), vs. cubs or beginners, working for larger daily newspapers of 100,000 circulation or more, as distributed nationally as possible, but possibly partially inflated due to the presence of New York City in some of the survey results (which almost always, along with certain other cities such as Chicago and San Francisco, had an effect on the total average). Note that "editors" are usually middle-grade news or assistant managing editors, copy editors, and rewrite staff, (these groups had, historically, approximately the same salary

While variable, pay for reporters and editors had been slowly improving in the years before the Depression. In a general move away from the “space” system (in which reporters had been paid only for what was published), the industry had reduced uncertainty by moving to weekly salaries. But the lack of any sort of collective bargaining meant that these salaries, and any raises, were entirely at the whim of the employer. Job security was also extremely tenuous. While many publishers thought of their role as paternalistic, others did not hesitate to cut payroll (either by reducing pay or firing people for “economic” reasons). The payroll of newsroom workers was one area that owners could trim prior to the Guild to lower publication costs. In contrast to the ITU’s members, reporters and editors had no one to appeal to if they were laid off. This led to a national 12 to 16 percent decline in wages for reporters, photographers and “desk men” (a broad category that included copy editors, but also special-section editors, assistant city editors and news editors) between the spring of 1930 and the fall of 1934. In contrast to executives (i.e., senior editors), who faced a 10 percent decline, rank-and-file newsroom workers could not hope for quick restorations of these cuts (or leave for other jobs in the same city, as newspapers closed and consolidated in many places).[86] As Glende and Leab have pointed out, the arrival of the ANG coincided with a particularly grim forecast in the economic outlook for lower-ranking news workers. But unlike other moments

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range), sometimes referred to as “desk men” or “desk workers.” Note that other variations in salary data could be influenced by the requirement in the post-World War Two era by two-year, compulsory military service. Note also that specific data for white-collar obligations was not routinely tracked by the BLS until later in the century. Other organizations, such as the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, also did not begin tracking this data routinely until later. Data for manufacturing/production workers, however, is more readily available, and there are scattered hints as to the weekly salaries of white-collar workers, broadly defined. For example, McColloch, in *White Collar Workers in Transition*, estimated that bank clerks made about $30 a week in 1940 (see 14, 30). Leab, in his *Union of Individuals*, believed most office clerks made about the same in 1929 (see 4). For more details on sources, see bibliographic essay.

[86] “Salaries and working conditions of newspaper editorial employees," *Monthly Labor Review*, Published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. May 1935, 1142.

when these workers tried but failed to sustain organizing, white-collar news workers were successful, ultimately, in raising their base pay across the country. The Guild had not accomplished this on its own—the national mood tolerated unionization generally across industries—but its plucky efforts and motivated members had brought publishers to the bargaining table.

Publishers were more confident and comfortable negotiating with the ITU. In the words of S.E. Thomason, publisher of the *Chicago Times*, in 1941, "the guild had not attained that degree of responsibility shown by printing trades unions which enjoy closed shop conditions."[87] The concept of the "closed shop," in which newsroom workers could not be hired unless they joined the ANG chapter or an in-house or other union, was firmly opposed by most publishers, who feared further erosion to their ability to hire and fire staff. But critics not associated with either the ANG or the ANPA believed that some publishers overreacted to the ANG's demands. The editors of the Topeka *State Journal* and St. Louis *Star-Times*, while decrying what they called a "mob union," pointed out that calling a "Guild shop" a "closed shop" was unfair, and that there was place for some kind of worker representation, especially since reporters' wages were especially vulnerable to cuts.[88] Another divisive issue was "maintenance of membership" contracts. These required editorial workers under union contract to stay members of their local chapters of the ANG.[89] Members could be dismissed for failing to renew their membership, and

[87] "Thomas firm against Guild shop," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 22, 1941, 45.
[88] Henry J. Allen and Irving Brant, "This conflict between the publishers and the Guild," *The Quill*, Dec. 1937, 12, 14, 16. Allen was editor of the *State Journal* and Brant was editor of the *Star-Times*.
[89] "Editorial: maintenance provision," *Editor & Publisher*, July 15, 1944, 34. *Editor & Publisher*'s editorial board felt this was yet another sign of the Guild's radicalization: "The guild is no longer a professional organization as it was first intended. It is a trade union committed to the CIO and taking sides on all political issues." See also "Sacramento publisher protests Guild clause," *Editor & Publisher*, March 3, 1945, 67. The publisher of the *Sacramento Union*, William H. Dodge, protested the membership clause that was part of a recent contract with the *Union* and its ANG unit; the contract was being accepted "under protest and

in some cases that membership could be renewed automatically. ANG chapters and locals believed this would help stabilize or even increase their numbers, while publishers and some dissatisfied staff believed this limited their necessary freedom to hire and fire.[90]

After the war, the Guild became more assertive and sweeping in its demands, at least symbolically. In 1946, the ANG set as its national goal $100 for "experienced employees," including reporters, with a $50 minimum. In 1951, claiming to adjust for inflation, the Guild raised that standard to $138.40 and in 1954 adjusted it up to $150. The first $100 minimum contracts appeared in 1948, with eight contracts. By 1952, 26 contracts had some kind of $100-minimum. This fit the ANG goal of "full union security" for its members.[91] And though this was much more of a reality in the big East Coast cities, especially New York, other large metro areas, including Chicago and the Bay Area, were also known for high salaries. In San Francisco in 1952, the Guild was able to ask for a $140 minimum for workers of more than six years' experience, compared to the original pay scale of $113.50. Management opposed the increases, claiming that profits, and not the cost of living or differentials in pay, should drive the ability of owners to raise salaries. Eventually, with help from an outside arbiter, the Guild local was able to win $2 to $6 increases, with "top reporter minimums" for those with more than six years' experience topping out at $119.50, meaning the area's reporters were among the highest paid outside of New York City.[92]

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because the nation is at war." The NLRB had recently ruled that the editorial and circulation departments at the paper were to act as a single unit for bargaining purposes

[90] A Guild "chapter" covered a city or region or press association/syndicate, while a "local" was the unit at the organizational or newspaper level (and locals were sometimes referred to, slightly confusingly, as "units.")

[91] Campbell Watson, "Guild debate flares up over local autonomy: powers sought by ANG officers termed too broad; aid for Tacoma," *Editor & Publisher*, July 12, 1952, 11, 70. It is unclear from Guild claims at this point, however, how close the majority of its members were to its $100-a-week goal.

[92] "S.F. conducts arbitration on pay and hours," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 9, 1952, 63. And "Awards in S.F. bow to N.Y. for top Guild pay," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 23, 1952, 13.

But even as reporters' and editors' salaries improved, there were lingering worries from unionized news workers about the sustainability of the "living wage." Many issues of the *Guild Reporter* through the 1950s contained anxious analyses of cost-of-living increases in a generally improving U.S. economy. Their authors pointed out that even as baseline minimums hit and then exceeded $100-a-week for many reporters (not just experienced workers, either), that still only brought the typical worker to within approximate parity with non-newsroom office workers. Anxieties also persisted that unionization was not doing enough to stem the perceived tide of college graduates into other fields. As college normalized as a route into newsrooms and up the ladder of power within them, minimums of $77.50 a week were considered too low by some observers in 1956. Advertising and public relations remained especially lucrative alternatives for print journalism graduates, as well as established news workers, who could work more regular hours and earn more for less stress.[93]

Such was the attempt to portray print journalism as a college-graduate friendly career that the ANPA put ads in *The Quill* in 1954 claiming that reporters could make $50 to $75 a week to start, and $5,000 to $7,000 a year after five years, with newspaper executives making $10,000 a year; pension plans and hospitalization insurance were offered too, it claimed. Part of this white-collar appeal was the idea that "the newspaper office . . . presents an atmosphere so relaxed as to compare favorably with the annual picnic and clambake of more prosaic places of business." Reporters could stash their coats and keep on their hats, and the grooves on the desks were probably inflicted as much by heels as elbows, contemporaries claimed. In an era

[93] "Commentator hits reporters' low pay," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 18, 1956, 60.

characterized by formality in office settings, newsrooms stood out with their sense of "comradery" and social bonhomie.[94]

In an admonition to newsroom managers in 1955, the authors of a journalism business textbook summarized post-war Guild expectations for salaries. The authors went on to claim that the newspaper industry had reached or exceeded pay parity with other industries in the United States, and cited the BLS Wage-Hour Report to prove it: in May 1953, the average weekly salary of *all* non-supervisor and non-supervisor news workers was $92.48 for a 26.7 hour week, as compared to "all manufacturing" workers, at $71.63 a week for 40.7 hours of work a week. Newspaper work weeks could vary depending on shifts were arranged—the lower average hours per week for news workers reflects the fact that mechanical workers (often grouped together with editorial workers by federal salary surveys) generally worked fewer hours. But this number was simplified, as it included mechanical workers, who made more than their editorial brethren into the late 1940s.[95] These workers made an average of $2.17 an hour at an average of 37.2 hours per week in 1948, the ANPA's official history claimed. That would translate into $80.72 a week.[96] Contemporary data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census indicates that in 1945, the average weekly pay rate for newspaper printers for the whole industry was even higher, at $116.70.[97]

Publishers would routinely claim this as proof that the industry paid its workers better, but such claims nearly always focused on the high-paying ITU-protected jobs, and not on the

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[94] George C. Biggers and Morton Sontheimer, "Should your child be a newspaperman?" *The Quill*, June 1954, 4-5.
[95] Rucker and Williams, *Newspaper Organization and Management*, 497-8.
[96] Emery, *History of the American Newspaper Publishers Association*, 185. The ANPA's data was from 36 cities, based on day wages and a six-day workweek.
[97] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945* (Washington, D.C., 1949), 69. See "Series D 152-163, Hours and Wage Rates, Indexes of Union Hourly Wage Rates and Weekly Hours, Building and Printing Trades, 1907-1945."

lower-paying newsroom positions. Weekly wage data from the BLS for mechanical workers from 1955 (assuming a 40-hour work week for those in the "printing and publishing industry") shows a $90.40 national average (translating into about $4,680 a year). In 1960, that rate would increase to $107.20 a week.[98] Note that this is a simple average, and a typical reporter, or other editorial worker, on the average daily newspaper would be making closer to $60 or $70 to start in the early 1950s.

But the reality on the ground was improving. A 1953 survey of Ohio State University's School of Journalism graduates anecdotally confirmed that better pay was becoming a reality, even for younger reporters. The average annual salary for that year for those with newsroom jobs was $3,492, or $67.15 a week. The end of the decade would see an increase of 85 percent (the average salary, according to one study, of editorial workers in 1959 was $6,378, or $122.65).[99] In other areas, too, editorial-worker pay was improving markedly.

Pensions versus severance pay

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[98] Susan B. Carter, "Table Ba4440–4483, "Hourly and Weekly Earnings of Production Workers in Manufacturing, by Industry: 1947–1999," in *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Millennial Edition Online, edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Accessed Jan. 29, 2016. Data based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), "Nonfarm Payroll Statistics from the Current Employment Statistics: National Employment, Hours, and Earnings," retrieved at BLS Internet site, August 18, 2000. Data from the BLS does make it clear that these numbers are for *production* workers, not office or editorial workers, so as long as that distinction is apparent, there does appear to be evidence that mechanical workers continued to be the better paid kind of news worker through the decade. A final caveat: the BLS data also includes non-newspaper publishing, which may depress the figures slightly—ITU-contracted printers probably made more than other mechanical workers in publishing, which would resonate with the $92.48 amount. See also, Robert A. Margo, "Table Ba4320-4334, Annual Earnings in Selected Industries and Occupations: 1890–1926," in *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Millennial Edition Online, edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Accessed Feb. 12, 2016. Data based on Paul H. Douglas, *Real Wages in the United States*, 1890–1926 (Houghton Mifflin, 1930). As a final note, "mechanical" was the most common adjective (followed by "typographical") used to describe those newspaper workers or staff who produced, but did not write, edit or take photographs. In my case, I will follow this convention, but sometimes also refer to these staff members as "production workers."

[99] "Manpower today and tomorrow: personnel panel," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Aug. 12-15, 1959; a couple caveats: the sample size of the survey was relatively small (some 185 former journalism students), and the actual number of newsroom workers was even smaller, at 33. In addition, the experiences of one program and its graduates may be idiosyncratic. But this data does seem consistent with other news workers' experiences throughout the country during the mid-decade. It is true that in New York, San Francisco, Chicago and other major media centers, editorial workers were approaching parity with their mechanical-worker comrades.

Severance pay and pensions were considered part of the white-collar experience.[100] In the 1920s, severance was often limited to those workers who had long-standing service of twenty or more years to a newspaper. While these kinds of terms were often part of a Guild contract (and had to be negotiated), the pensions were considered standalone good practice, pre-Guild, by some publishers. This was especially true because only a handful of workers worked long enough at the same place to earn it.[101] Still, formal pensions were comparatively rare when the whole industry was considered. Because "other industrial concerns" were doing it, however, more newspapers began to examine the feasibility of pensions by the late 1930s.[102]

Before unions demanded pensions, such benefits had been the individual purview of publishers. They were motivated by the old paternalism that faded with the onset of unionism. The Guild and, to a lesser degree, in-house unions, would gradually include both severance pay and pension plans together. Before this, such plans were often separate. As early as 1924, the *Chicago Tribune* offered an insurance and a pension plan.[103] The AP and the *Washington Star* were other early pioneers in an industry that tended to act like a "machine which feeds on youth." The average age of a news worker on the *Baltimore Sun*—a paper still considered a model for others during the era—was 37.[104] Younger workers were thought of as more reliable: physically and mentally more capable than older workers for the challenging work of reporting (and editing). But news workers wanted to work longer and be treated well. They resented the

[100] Severance pay is as concept is fascinating in its own right; here it will dealt with strictly as it pertains to U.S.-based newsrooms.
[101] A win-win for management arose: by assuring news workers that they would be taken care of in their old age, a publisher could curry favor with these workers with promises for a pension. In the end, though, he or she would not have that many workers to worry about (i.e. pay for).
[102] Frank Thayer, *Newspaper Management* (D-Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1938), 286-7.
[103] "Employees buy stock," *Editor & Publisher*, April 5, 1924, 30.
[104] Philip Schuyler, "Dailies study Carnegie pension plan," *Editor & Publisher*, March 10, 1928, 9.

tendency in newsrooms to give the better beats to younger workers. For this reason the Guild, during its early phase when its members considered themselves part of a professionalizing organization (rather than primarily a union), equated pensions with white-collar aspirations. They were associated, too, with sick leave and hospitalization plans.[105] Early plans were sometimes provided first by the employer, in an attempt to head off Guild influence. They involved a percentage (such as three percent) of a monthly salary.[106] Retirement ages were often set fairly high (such as 65), considering the lower average life expectancy (for males in 1930, 58).[107] There could be considerable variation in other aspects of these plans. Some mandated a retirement age, others permitted workers to work beyond these ages, some involved automatic enrollment and still others emphasized voluntary enrollment.[108] As they became a normalized part of newsroom life, pensions were sometimes called "retirement funds" and considered part of "full union security."[109] Part of that included early cash-out options if a worker was injured on the job.[110] By 1955, 175 newspapers nationally had some kind of pension plan.[111] More generous employers, such as the Pulliam family, which owned the

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[105] "Guild seeks statute covering newsmen," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 13, 1934, 18.
[106] "Adopts pension plan," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 22, 1934, 12. In this case, the pension plan discussed was offered at the *Omaha World-Herald*. See also, "1,800 employes join Gannett pension plan," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 4, 1950, 6. In the latter case, when an employee retired at 65, he or she could collect 25- to 50-percent of his annual earnings, depending on length of service. See also, "Life Expectancy for Social Security," Social Security History, Social Security Administration. <https://www.ssa.gov/history/lifeexpect.html> Accessed Feb. 12, 2016.
[107] "AP offers new pension and insurance plan," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 5, 1938, 12.
[108] "Pension plans of 19 dailies are surveyed," *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1948, 30.
[109] "$275,000 put in fund for Times-Mirror staff," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 1, 1949, 10. See also, Campbell Watson, "Guild debate flares up over local autonomy: powers sought by ANG officers termed too broad; aid for Tacoma," *Editor & Publisher*, July 12, 1952, 11, 70.
[110] "$1,300 annual income in Cox pension plan," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 2, 1954, 33. While it is slightly unclear from the account, a max of $1 per year, up to 25 years, or $25 a year, would be awarded to a workers aged 65 or over; a lower age for those disabled, at 55, were eligible; $15 per week for those with 25 years of service but not aged 55 when they retired was also to be awarded.
[111] Doris Willens, "Publishers promote pension plans on many newspapers: costs run high but successful operation reported by several," *Editor & Publisher*, July 23, 1955, 11, 57-8. See also, ""Pension fund cash assured by S.F. pact," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 11, 1958, 28.

Indianapolis Star and related media properties, including affiliated radio stations, continued to offer their own plans.[112] By the mid-1950s, weekly contributions to a Guild-sponsored pension plan could run up to $1.50.[113] Pensions were considered an essential part of some Guild contracts by the end of the 1950s, to the point that pay increases were sometimes sacrificed in order to beef up benefits.[114] Twenty-five or fifteen years of service were considered normal benchmarks for retirement age.[115] So common were pensions that some editors noted that college-educated reporter-recruits asked for pensions up front.[116] It was an "almost pathetic search on the part of these beginners for security," complained Norman Isaacs, managing editor of the *Louisville Times*, in 1956.[117] But older reporters continued to desire security too. As Andrew Bernhard, editor of the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*, reflected in *The Guild Reporter* in 1955, "A man with five, ten, or fifteen years' credit against a pension is likely to think twice before he pulls up stakes and moves on the way his father did."[118]

While pension plans were considered rewards for loyalty, and sometimes an additional or bonus part of a contract (occasionally initiated by a publisher), severance or dismissal pay covered a wider range of employer-employee separations, rarely as amicable as retirement. Severance benefits were driven by unions, too. Whether it was economic in nature, or, as editors increasingly complained, a painful result of firing a union member for whatever reason, severance pay was a crucial part of union-led contracts. They did not really appear until after

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[112] "Pulliam group covered in pension plan," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 7, 1956, 48.
[113] "Pensions provided in Guild contract," *Editor & Publisher*, March 17, 1956, 16.
[114] "Pension plan for Guild in Chicago pact," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 17, 1959, 49. In this case, the pension age was set at 65 (though automatic retirement at that age was not required; no credit would accumulate after that age).
[115] "Guild-UPI pension trust established," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 5, 1959, 57. The ANG at this point had set up a Comingled Fund for pensions for guild locals.
[116] "Why journalism? How editor sizes up applicants for jobs," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 17, 1960, 15, 64.
[117] Norman Isaacs, "A newspaperman's job is also a high calling," *The Quill*, June 1956, 7, 10, 12, 14.
[118] "'Good-old' days had color, but so did kerosene lamp," *The Guild Reporter*, Oct. 28, 1955, 7.

the Guild began to flex its collective muscle. There is evidence that most Guild contracts included language guaranteeing severance pay already by the end of the 1930s, and a contract without one by the end of the 1940s would have been considered an aberration and violating national ANG policy. This followed a general trend coming out of the Depression for many industries.[119]

While some publishers persisted in citing "economy" concerns, or a "tendency to lop off editorial employees in a tight cost situation," to justify layoffs into the 1940s and 1950s, subsequent contracts tried to limit profit loss as a justifiable reason for dismissals without pay. A reporter could still be fired without severance if an editor or employer had "proof of gross misconduct, neglect of duty, gross insubordination, dishonesty, drunkenness, [or a] willful provocation of discharge to collect severance pay," as well as failure to maintain one's status as a member in "good standing" with the Guild.[120] Publishers, for their part, decried the standardizing effect on hiring and firing that Guild influence portended. A 1936 editorial by a publisher, for example, claimed that "the Guild envisions a day when the city editor will call up union headquarters, saying: 'send over a reporter, editorial writer or Washington

[119] Sam Rosen, "Severance Pay and the American Newspaper Guild," *Journalism Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1951), 205, 207-9.
[120] Sam Rosen, "Severance Pay and the American Newspaper Guild," 205, 207-9. Rosen, assistant professor of economics at the University of Wyoming and author of the study, cited the fact that 204 contracts signed by the Guild as of June 1948 provided for severance pay. He estimated that about 19 percent of publishers' costs were associated with staff pay, referencing the Twentieth Century Fund's "How Collective Bargaining Works," New York, 1945, pp. 35-6. He also claimed that by, and mostly as a result of the Depression, some 500 companies, including presumably many non-publishing companies, had adopted some kind of severance program. He found that "most common" severance packages were about 26-30 weeks (with the weeks in question often determined by years of service), in 116 contracts; 20 had no limit; 8 had 2-10 weeks; the rate of pay itself ranged from the average basic salary during the previous 26 weeks, or the highest regular pay in the previous 26 weeks, to the highest regular salary while working in the United States for the wire services See 209 in his study.

correspondent.'" By limiting their freedom to hiring "bright young fellows [who] come along," the ANG was creating newspapers that acted less like quasi-public institutions.[121]

A generation later, an editor at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* complained that editors used to be able to "cut corners by eliminating less necessary functions and combining others, [and] pay overtime in time off during slack periods, etc." A managing editor, prior to the Guild, "could eliminate deadwood on his staff and thus maintain an [economic] level of efficiency. Most of the time deadwood didn't develop because, in those days, staff members knew they had to produce or else." That had changed, and instead, he complained, "it practically takes an overt act like a reporter busting up the city room furniture or punching the city editor in the nose to separate him from the payroll." He felt he could not reward his higher-producing reporters or consolidate positions "because you immediately have a Guild complaint that you're 'speeding up.'" Even if you could make a convincing case to the publisher and local Guild unit that a worker had to go, "you are stuck with a whopping big severance payment that makes you think twice before canning even the most inefficient worker."[122]

While a discharge notice would give a news worker time to look for and find a new job, severance pay could make the difference between staying in journalism or leaving it. The Guild locals in San Diego, Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Indianapolis in 1937 negotiated severance pay

[121] "Editorial: picking a fight," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 22, 1936.
[122] "Panel on news and editorial costs," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 16-18, 1953, 170-3.

as part of their contracts.[123] An early example of dismissal pay in action involved 40 fired workers from the *Brooklyn Eagle* after the end of the 15-week Guild-led strike on that paper; the severance paid out to these workers emboldened others.[124] Severance pay slowly became more generous, with either a week or two weeks' worth of severance earned per year up to about a decade.[125] Sometimes this could be increased to one week per half year, up to a total of 28 weeks.[126] It could also include a consultation with a Guild unit's representative, or a committee composed of Guild representatives.[127] But publishers were keen to retain some right of discretion with firing. An early Guild contract with the *New York Post*, to that end, included a provision that management retained the "right to discharge any reporter who disobeys orders."[128]

During wartime layoffs at the *Chicago Sun*, Guild members were given two weeks' salary for those with less than six month's work and four weeks for those with more than six months; an "army bonus" of up to four weeks' worth of pay, depending on length of time, would be paid to those who enlisted in the military within 60 days.[129] After the war, severance maximums

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[123] "*San Diego Sun* signs," *Editor & Publisher*, June 26, 1937, 6; "Indianapolis Star starts new wage, hour schedule," *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1937, 16; ""One-year contract signed with Guild in Milwaukee," *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1937, 43. In the latter case, severance pay up to 24 weeks was offered to those with more than 15 years' employment. See also, "Minneapolis papers post agreements with Guild," *Editor & Publisher*, June 12, 1937, 14.

[124] "Dismissals, pay cuts in Eagle, non-Guild group," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 1, 1938, 6, 18.

[125] "*San Antonio Light* signs contract with Guild," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 19, 1938, 32. One week's severance pay after a year's service up to 14 week after 10 years on the *San Antonio Light*; the *Jacksonville Journal* offered two weeks of severance per year of service up to 12 weeks; the *Glendale News-Press* 12 weeks of severance pay prorated after 10 years. See also, "Baltimore Hearst papers sign with editorial group," *Editor & Publisher*, April 2, 1939, 26; "*Phila. Ledger* signs Guild shop contract," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 5, 1939, 25.

[126] "Two Los Angeles dailies sign Guild contracts," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 19, 1939, 16. See also, "New Guild contract," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 22, 1942, 24. In the latter case, the *Fort Worth Press* in its Guild contract offered a week's salary for each eight months' of service.

[127] "Seattle Star goes tabloid, departmentalized," *Editor & Publisher*, March 8, 1941, 52.

[128] "Post signs with Guild," *Editor & Publisher*, July 27, 1935, 22.

[129] "*Chicago Sun* discharges 30 in staff reduction," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 9, 1943, 14. Another example of a dismissal cap could be found in the Guild's wartime contract for the AP, which specified that such pay could range from two weeks for six months to 28 weeks for up to 162 months of service. See, "AP, Guild sign new N.Y. contract," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 12, 1942, 7.

continued to increase partly due to Guild pressure but also due to industry practice: 30 weeks after three years at the San Diego *Union-Tribune* in 1948, and 36 weeks for the United Press in 1949.[130] The Guild would intervene when it believed a fired worker was not given his or her proper severance, sometimes suing on the worker's behalf.[131] By 1951, out of more than 200 Guild contracts, 17 involved severance limits of more than 30 weeks, and 75 percent of contracts involved top minimums of $100 or more.[132] By the early part of the 1950s, even in the South, where the Guild (and newsroom unionization overall) was weaker, severance was increased to 35 weeks on the *New Orleans Item*.[133] On the West Coast, severance was strengthened by a California court of appeals when it ruled that discharged news workers from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and therefore others, could receive unemployment compensation and severance pay simultaneously.[134] One week's dismissal pay for every 26 weeks of service was expanded to a maximum of 52 weeks in a 1959 *Chicago Sun-Times* Guild contract.[135] These kinds of concessions from publishers assured news workers that they would have a monetary buffer in case of job loss. It also made them feel like salaried workers in other fields. Self-perception and confidence mattered: newsrooms still served as launching points to other newsrooms.

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[130] "$92.80 scale for Guild in San Diego," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 25, 1948, 56; "Contract signed by U.P. Guild; pay increased," *Editor & Publisher*, March 26, 1949, 8. Some newspapers did not hvae specific caps, however, perhaps believing that their workers were not likely to max out their possible benefits. See, "$16,500 pay increases for York, Pa., staffs," *Guild Reporter*, Feb. 22, 1947, 58.
[131] "L.A. Guild sues AP in firing dispute," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 17, 1949, 58. The Los Angeles Guild sued on behalf of a Charles DeSoria, a photographer fired by the paper, charging that he was let go without cause and not given severance. For an earlier example, see, "Jennings case decided, then reopened," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 8, 1934, 7. These kinds of firing-and-appeal-by-the-Guild cases tended to be covered by both the pro-publisher trade press and by the *Guild Reporter*, albeit with different perspectives. For example, for a different case, see "Telling the world," *Guild Reporter*, Aug. 1, 1935, 3.
[132] Campbell Watson, "Guild debate flares up over local autonomy: powers sought by ANG officers termed too broad; aid for Tacoma," *Editor & Publisher*, July 12, 1952, 11, 70.
[133] "New Orleans Item signs Guild contract," *Editor & Publisher*, March 28, 1953, 44.
[134] "Jobless pay allowed with severance," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 20, 1955, 46.
[135] "Pension plan for Guild in Chicago pact," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 17, 1959, 49.

Hours: from time off to overtime

Before unionization, many newsrooms operated with an informal system that gave reporters, photographers and editors unpaid time off when they worked late, on weekends or during holidays. This was necessary because breaking news, or developing stories, meant that reporters would sometimes work continuously for days. Both bosses and peers expected an on-call mentality when it came to news coverage. This vocational expectation became embedded in work routines. Morning newspaper staffs, which worked late into the evening hours, were sometimes paid a "night rate" higher than those who worked for afternoon newspapers, who worked during the day. Even on their days off, reporters were sometimes expected to call and check in with the newsroom. Early Guild contracts, however, often specified that time worked above-and-beyond a set number of hours each week had to be compensated. This could be either at the same rate or higher than regular pay. Editors routinely complained that their reporters, especially, worked overtime on purpose, or were lackadaisical when it came to finishing their stories or returning to the newsroom, in order to accumulate overtime pay.

A recurring battle cry during early ANG contract negotiations, especially as federal industry codes were enforced during the FDR administration, were calls for five-day workweeks for non-executive staff. By the late 1940s, these became routine parts of many contracts. But even before the advent of the ANG, some employers had begun to switch to shorter work weeks during the Depression. In an attempt to keep workers on the payroll, they moved to a five-day work week from the more typical pre-Guild six.[136] The 1934 BLS survey of newsroom wages also found a general decline in hours worked between 1930 and 1934; in April 1930

[136] "Six-day week resumed," *Editor & Publisher*, March 3, 1934, 51.

average hours ranged from 45.1 to 50 hours for just over half of all news workers, to more than 50 hours for 10 percent, with the reminder working less than 45 hours a week.[137] Still, longer hours for non-contract workers could go significantly beyond 40- or 50-hour-a-week norms.

As newsroom unionization became more widespread, union members pressed for more than better hours and pay. Concerns about "speeding up," or increasing the rate of production for a news worker (which could take the form of asking reporters to cover more beats, for example, or just write more throughout the day), or combining or changing jobs, would sometimes draw union protests, formally or informally. In 1940, the *Philadelphia Record* tried to hire part-time photographers, and use these part-time workers as leg men. The union objected, concerned that this would take away work from full-time reporters.[138] Most of these attempts seem to have faded by the 1950s, especially as union contracts grew more specific about job classifications. One result of unionization, then, was stabilization of newsroom roles. This benefited photographers and lower-ranked reporters and editors.

The ability of unions to intervene in the hiring and firing process generally increased during this era. There were some setbacks, however, at least from a union perspective. In 1941, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the NLRB could not "police," in its words, "relations between employer and employe after a collective bargaining agreement is in operation," in a case regarding the reinstatement of a Newark (N.J.) *Ledger*, rewrite reporter, Agnes Fahy. The local Guild unit protested, claiming that Fahy was fired for her Guild activities and was, in fact, competent enough for the job. This was a rare loss for the ANG. Most of the time the NLRB

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[137] "Salaries and working conditions of newspaper editorial employees," *Monthly Labor Review*, published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. May 1935, 1144.
[138] "Guild opposing 'correspondent-photog' practice," *Editor & Publisher*, April 20, 1940, 62.

sided with, or gave the benefit of the doubt, to union claims as long as the unit in question was the majority bargaining unit.[139] The Guild also intervened when workers under contract were fired without back pay, usually challenging the grounds by which an employer would try to disqualify a worker from receiving that pay.[140] At first these interventions were relatively ineffectual. With growing unionization, though, in time they became increasingly effective. Editors began to change their behavior as a result. Newsroom life lost more of its uncertainty.

Healthcare/insurance and unionization's effect on family life

As American print journalism and newsroom life experienced the kind of workforce trends affecting other aspiring white-collar occupations by mid-century, on-site health care and health insurance became more common. Some newspapers incentivized loyalty in the unionization era by providing health insurance for family members. On larger newspapers in the biggest cities, providing employee insurance, either life or health, was not unheard of before the Guild. On the *Chicago Tribune* in 1924, the Medill Building and Loan Association was run by employees with the blessing of management. It offered home loans insurance and a pension plan.[141] It was typical in the sense that it was employee organized and led. Owners would sometimes match funds or provide seed money, but would leave further development to workers. This burnished the ownership's image while allowing their employees to make what they would of the plan. In some ways, these early collectivist behaviors presaged the onset of the Guild.

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[139] "Court upsets NLRB order to reinstate Agnes Fahy: board's function is to help set up agreements, not enforce them, U.S. ruling holds … Guild demands that NLRB appeal," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 8, 1941, 7, 49.
[140] "Discharged Guildsman gets 30 weeks' salary," *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1946, 81.
[141] "Employees buy stock," *Editor & Publisher*, April 5, 1924, 30.

Workers who bought houses and believed their company would take care of them if they were injured on the job or when they retired tended to work harder and longer. “Security” in this broader sense for quasi-white collar workers was not widespread, and could attract reporters and editors from rival newspapers. It could also reduce turnover, keeping the natural churn of new staff to a minimum.[142] Other types of job security included funds to help pay for funeral expenses and life insurance.[143] In time, some Guild locals offered health insurance for workers and their families.[144] While these benefits tended to be found only on larger newspapers, smaller papers could and did offer them too.[145] Their inclusion in Guild contracts tended to increase as time went on, as workers began to expect and ask for them.[146] The Guild, not to be outdone by publishers, sometimes offered life insurance through its local chapters.[147] While the details are difficult to glean from contemporary accounts, a typical example for smaller papers was that of the New Bedford (Mass.) *Standard-Times* and the Cape Cod (Mass.) *Standard-Times*, whose owners insured workers up to $1,000, with $1,000 accidental death and dismemberment insurance, $10-a-week accident and sickness benefits, $5-a-day hospitalization benefits, and $150 surgical benefits. Employer-led efforts like this tended to get positive press, but like pension plans, they were not always guaranteed.[148] The ANG and publishers by the

[142] L.E. Claypool, "Cutting the editorial 'turnover,'" *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 12, 1921, 18.
[143] “Curtis gives free insurance to all employees,” *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 30, 1919, 30.
[144] “Sickness insurance for Phila. Guild,” *Editor & Publisher*, May 25, 1935, 39. See also, “*Butte Miner* insures employes,” *Editor & Publisher*, May 1, 1920, 26.
[145] “Hall announces new benefits for employes,” *Editor & Publisher*, July 27, 1946, 32. In this case, on the Anderson, S.C. *Independent* and *Daily Mail*, as well as the affiliated WAIM.
[146] Doris Willens, “Health-welfare programs increase – along with cost: fringe benefits for newspaper workers spiral in range,” *Editor & Publisher*, July 30, 1955, 11, 53. New contracts sometimes included semi-annual increases in health benefits. See, “Job transfer options given in Guild pact,” *Editor & Publisher*, March 17, 1956, 14.
[147] Charles A. Perlik Jr., “Newspaper Guild now in 26th year,” *The Quill*, November 1959, 80.
[148] “Bright ideas: employee insurance,” *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 1, 1944, 14. This plan also covered a radio station, WNBH, also owned by these papers’ publishers; the two areas are geographically adjacent, which may explain the same name for the two newspapers.

1950s were trying to win hearts and minds by making these plans available to workers, or by calling for them. The more generous plans covered dependents, including children up to 18.[149]

For reporters and editors, the important point was that life and health insurance was now within reach. Before, newsrooms were places for single people, or at least people who prioritized career above family obligations, for the most part. But the introduction of corporate- or family-owned social safety nets allowed news workers to cultivate their own family lives. Occupational humor in the form of poetry and cartoons acknowledged this new reality, as workers were increasingly able to afford the cost of children and subsidize the presence of a spouse at home, either part- or full-time. Juggling work and home life was a new and welcome challenge for many news workers, who, like other aspirational white-collar workers in the post-war period, enjoyed the idea of owning their own home, a car, TV set, and other amenities.

Family life

Family life outside of newsrooms reflected changes within them. A telling development was the increasing number of news workers who married each other. Women became common in the newsroom in the 1940s and 1950s, in support jobs such as circulation, transcription and other administrative positions as well as in editing and reporting roles. While any definitive statement on marriage rates (or on the longevity of these unions compared to other occupations) among these workers would be tentative, a representative reading of the trade publications and memoirs in this era hints at the normalization of working spouses in the newsroom. Unlike other occupations where workplace marriage would be frowned upon, or

[149] "Wolfe papers provide insurance for 820," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 14, 1946, 20. In this case, these plans could be found at the *Columbus Dispatch*, *Ohio State Journal*, and *Columbus Star.*

even thought of as dangerous, a healthy tradition of news-worker spousal partnerships had formed in American newsroom culture by the 1950s, enough so that it could be spoofed for a generation in such popular depictions of newsroom life as *His Girl Friday*.[150] While women would sometimes marry and then retire early to focus on homemaking (a social norm that affected newsrooms as well as other workplaces throughout the mid-century) to the ire of editors, who claimed of wasted mentorship and training, others remained or returned to the newsroom once their children were older. Some women, in fact, felt a higher degree of respect from male colleagues after marriage that allowed them to operate with more independence. Some used this identity to leverage their own agency and cover beats reserved for men. Dorothy Ducas, a staff writer for the International News Service, noted some of the limits of this phenomenon in 1932:

> There is nothing very romantic in the association of newspaper reporters. How could there be? Have they not seen each other early in the morning and late night, looking tired, bedraggled and worried? Have they not split the bills in speakeasies, fought for the use of telephones, carried on joint interviews for weeks, months, years? They borrow money from each other, tell each other how terrible they look and feel, share inside tips on stories, and confide the secrets of their hearts during those long waits for verdicts in trials or the deaths of famous men.[151]

The result was often "solid and lasting friendship" for many news workers, since "most newspaper people think each as glamorous as a ham sandwich." Reporters respected each other for their work if it was good, and this helped to transcend some of the barriers between the genders. According to Ducas: "if he [the reporter] does a swell job, he is apt to be thought a pretty swell person." If a woman reporter was "very attractive, she is called over-conscientious, a bore – 'just another newspaper woman!' Just as, if she is good-looking *and capable*, she will

[150] For much more this topic, see Matthew C. Ehrlich, and Joe Saltzman, *Heroes and Scoundrels: The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2015).
[151] Dorothy Ducas, "These newspapermen!" *The Quill*, April 1932, 6.

be spoken of everywhere she goes as 'the best little reporter in—[the] City!'" Generally, though, a woman "who does her work thoroughly was accepted by her "poorly dressed, unshaven, unkempt, [and] sometimes ungrammatical" male colleagues, who did not have to be as "presentable" as their woman colleagues.[152]

One reason for Ducas's success was that she was "happily and permanently married," and thus shared in the family-oriented nature of many of her peers. "The photographs of wives and children I have seen are legion. I am convinced reporters are as much domesticated animals as salesmen or telegraph operators." Marriage helped keep everyone's focus in the newsroom on the work.[153] On the mechanical side, too, women were also married and working. A 1951 survey by Florida State University's School of Journalism showed that of the 123 recent women graduates working in mechanical press rooms in Florida newspapers, 85 were married, and 71 had children.[154] Sometimes employers encouraged these unions, even before unionization. Perhaps reflecting how many news workers married each other, the *Chicago Tribune* offered newly married employees a chest of flat silver, or two weeks' vacation with pay, in 1924.[155] This paper maintained a strong tradition of married workers. Six couples worked in the newsroom together in 1960.[156] A survey of University of Oregon journalism graduates showed that between 1916 and 1928, 257 had worked in journalism, 224 were still involved in the industry, and 26 were married to fellow news workers.[157]

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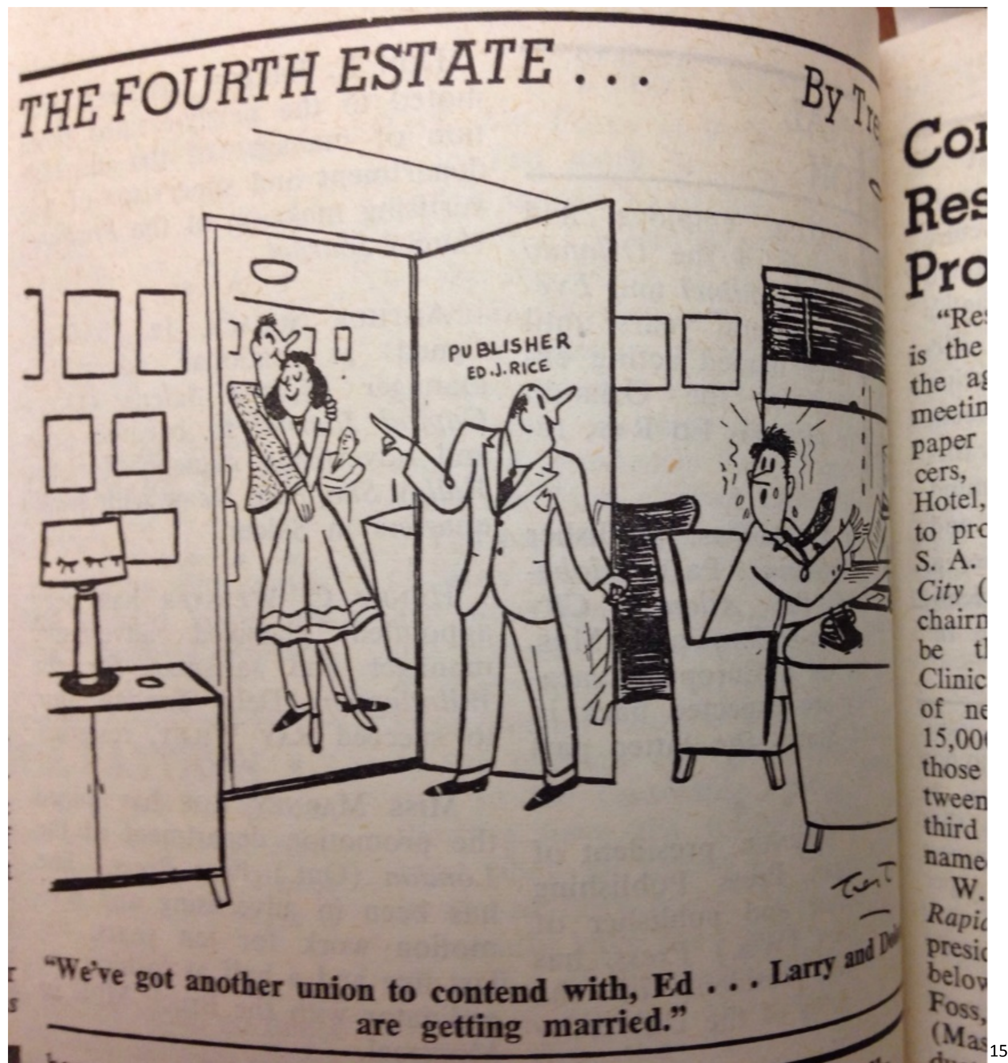
[152] Dorothy Ducas, "These newspapermen!" *The Quill*, April 1932, 6. Emphasis added.
[153] Dorothy Ducas, "These newspapermen!" 6-7. "There are quite a few married women reporters, and in general they get along better with the men because they are married."
[154] "Woman's work," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 17, 1951, 26.
[155] "Tribune underwrites honeymoon," *Editor & Publisher*, March 1, 1924, 12.
[156] George A. Brandenburg, "Until 'thirty' do us part: 6 husband-wife teams toil on daily's editorial staff," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 6, 1960, 15, 65.
[157] "Oregon U. journalism graduates traced," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 25, 1928, 26.



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The *Guild Reporter*, usually focused on the advances (and, more rarely, the reversals) of the ANG in court battles and the development of local chapters, noted examples of reporters or other newsroom staffers marrying each other. Many happened, of course, to be members of local Guild chapters.[159] Some stories also noted that reporters married in the case of strikes.[160] They got married more often and had families when the Guild provided "some promise of

[158] “The Fourth Estate: ‘We've got another union,’” *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 16, 1952, 30.
[159] "City Room romance ends with newshawks covering own wedding," *Guild Reporter*, Oct. 1, 1943, 9. In this case, reporters Charles Voland and Pegge McBride got married.
[160] "Strike can't faze him," *Guild Reporter*, Dec. 1, 1936, 5. Forrest Williams and Lois Read, a Seattle reporter and artist, respectively, got married in the wake of the Hearst strike there.

security" with increases in contracted base pay.[161] How much this was actually a result of Guild pressure is hard to measure, of course, but like other aspiring white-collar workers, it is reasonable to speculate that reporters and editors found assurances of continued employment and promotions equally encouraging for their own formations (or expansions) of family. Reporters' memoirs note that bigger homes and apartments (and often families) followed promotions or pay raises. The editor of the *Toledo Blade*, Grove Patterson, described a "humanitarian aspect" for the hiring of reporters with families. The *Blade*'s "automatic rule" was to hire a reporter at no less than $45 a week if he or she had a family. This was in 1931, and for the time, especially in the midst of the Depression and outside of the large East and West Coast cities, generous. As Patterson put it, "we felt that it was required for a decent living standard."[162]

By the 1950s, news workers generally felt more secure in their occupation, at their individual newspapers, and thus more settled in the pursuit of family life. Especially after industry codes mandated five-day weeks, and wages allowed for a comfortable margin of spending and saving, supporting a family became reasonable for even junior reporters and editors. News workers' ads seeking employment noted marital status as a sign of stability and loyalty (or, conversely, singleness as a sign of flexibility and independence).[163] Some employers, however, would not hire married women as copy girls, fearing they would leave soon after to

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[161] "Ding dong! Ding Dong!" *Guild Reporter*, April 4, 1938, 1. In this case, in Newark, New Jersey, there was a supposed spike in marriages and children there due to the Guild presence on the city's newspapers.

[162] "Shop talk: building a city staff," *Problems of Journalism*, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), April 16-18, 1931, 165. See also Patterson's *I Like People: The Autobiography of Grove Patterson, Editor In Chief of the Toledo Blade* (New York: Random House, 1954).

[163] "Situations wanted," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 1, 1932, 33.

raise families.[164] The mostly male editor-panelists at industry conventions confirmed this tendency to avoid hiring women, or at least remained skeptical because women were supposedly more likely to leave newsrooms due to marriage.[165] Male colleagues would sometimes tease their female coworkers for their tendency to leave.[166] The Guild, for its part, advocated for women against what it called an "unwritten law" in the newsroom, arguing for their reinstatement if fired for getting married.[167] In this the Guild had support from the NLRB, and its wartime equivalent, the National War Labor Board (NWLB). The latter ruled in a case between the owners of the Allentown (Pa.) *Morning Call* and the Lehigh Valley chapter of the ANG in June 1944 that women could not be paid less based on gender alone. The *Morning Call*'s ownership had attempted to classify women reporters as "society reporters" and pay them $30 after five years. Regular male reporters made $41.54 with the same experience. The NWLB proposed that the former's pay be brought up to $34.50 because "women . . . doing the work of reporters . . . should be classified and compensated as such." It is notable that the pay raises did not mean parity with male coworkers. But it was a sign that the ANG could get support from the federal government even during wartime for the former's contention that women reporters should be paid at the same rates as men. While the NWLB hesitated to wade into definitional disputes between the Guild and ownership, in this case, it backed the Guild assertion that "the existence of a separate Society Reporter classification is an indication of sex discrimination."[168]

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[164] "5 girls, 1 boy in Binghampton Press copy boy school," *Editor & Publisher*, June 7, 1941. Part of a short feature on an in-house training program at the Binghampton, NY, *Press*, about a "two-year beginners school to train workers in the editorial department."
[165] "Women in the news room?" *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Nov. 16-19, 1955, 210.
[166] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, March 27, 1943, 18.
[167] "Unwritten law' no sub for pay," *Guild Reporter*, Dec. 15, 1941.
[168] "Report and Rulings of the Commission" in regards to the case of the Allentown, Pennsylvania., Morning Call Publishing Company and The Chronicle and News Publishing CO., vs. the Lehigh Valley chapter of the ANG; from "Records of the National Labor War Labor Board (World War Two): Records of the Daily Newspaper Printing and Publishing Commission: Records

Unlike other work environments, newsroom relationships between male and female peers depended less on power differentials. In non-newsroom office settings throughout the period, male employees often held a position of power over women. In hospitals, laboratories, factories—the same dynamic was at work. But in newsrooms, a male reporter and a female reporter were at least nominal equals (ditto with male copy editors and female rewrite staff, etc.). Of course, male workers had a place of innate privilege. Newsrooms were not immune to larger social forces. As Linda Steiner has shown, women struggled to normalize their presence in newsrooms.[169] But the parallel unionization of the newsroom, as well as the role of college as an equalizing route into it, meant that news workers were among the first vocational peers in a white-collar work environment to marry while holding similar jobs.[170]

Conclusion: unionization solidifies a white-collar newsroom

The Guild had negotiated 216 contracts through 1959, with 151 contracts covering 185 newspapers, 9 wire services, 4 weeklies, 12 magazines, 2 radio stations, 9 foreign-language papers, 13 labor publications, 3 racing papers, and 13 miscellaneous publications. In addition to improved hours and wages, the Guild also worked to protect "reporters against the use of their bylines over their objections," opportunities for outside work, leaves of absence for fellowships and scholarships, and a share of the proceeds from the syndication and reuse of work, if a

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Relating to Newspaper Guild Cases, 1943-45," folder "Report & Rulings A-----G, box 2553, finding aid PI-78, entry 333, stack 530, row 52, compartment 30, shelf 2, located at the National Archives at College Park, Md. Note that this was a smaller newspaper than that normally consideration by this study. The *Morning Call* had a daily circulation of 52,058, and a Sunday circulation of 43,655, and the *News* a circulation of 18,205.

[169] Linda Steiner, "Gender at work: early accounts by women journalists," in *Journalism History* 12, no. 1 (1997), 2-12.

[170] Women were often expected to take an early retirement, or has been explored above, informally and unfairly quit their jobs soon after marriage or at least the arrival of children. But enough resisted these norms, or returned to work in newsrooms, to create a special class of worker that pioneered a new norm among white-collar women.

photographer. But as a long-time ANG member put it, “Of the many things [the Guild] has contributed to the newspaper industry, however, perhaps none has been of more lasting impact than the increased self-respect it has brought to those individuals who work in it.”[171]

Publishers and individual union locals still clashed, of course, but the principle had long been conceded: unionization was a newsroom reality. The ANG had made joining a union, and the union’s advocacy on behalf of news workers, normal. “Its negotiations with publishers are not as bitter and irreconcilable as in its early days,” the author of a career guide noted in 1951. As “the first union in the news-writing field,” the ANG had increased its influence at the organizational and national levels within the occupation, normalizing worker power and limiting the ability of bosses to control every aspect of newsroom life.[172] This built on former newsroom norms of independence and assertiveness. News workers had always found a way to push back. But unionization strengthened and provided legal force to these same norms of autonomy, and helped to build new norms of collective action and the expectation of white-collar benefits and quality-of-life. This was a trend across industries and individual businesses throughout the United States during this era, though it had a unique effect on creative workers. It allowed them to operate with independence within a larger organizational culture in ways previously unavailable. By pushing back against a “professional” identity—the identity that publishers wanted for their workers—journalists won major concessions from ownership.

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[171] Charles A. Perlik Jr., “Newspaper Guild now in 26th year,” *The Quill*, November 1959, 80. Note that the number of newspapers covered by Guild contracts was still in the minority: there were some 1,763 daily newspapers in the U.S. in 1960. "Number of U.S. daily newspapers, 5-Year increments," Pew Research Center, March 12, 2007. <http://www.journalism.org/numbers/number-of-u-s-daily-newspapers-5-year-increments/> Accessed Feb. 13, 2016.
[172] Elias E. Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1951), 92.

In the more oppressive era during and before the First World War described by Smythe, news workers had little in the way of recourse when they were fired, laid off, or docked pay. They were subjected to the complexities of an advertising-fueled free market, one in which publishers looked to cut costs by slashing the payroll as needed. Even when they did push back, news workers were either quickly punished by being blacklisted or, due to their own vocational culture, lost interest in sustained organizing efforts. That changed with the Depression and then the intervention of the federal government with the white-collar regulation of the newspaper industry. The formation of the ANG came about due to a confluence of factors, including dissatisfaction by rank-and-file workers with how publishers tried to mitigate or avoid federal industry codes that regulated wages and hours. Affiliation first with the AFL and then with the CIO moved the ANG toward a more traditional labor union.[173] Reporters and editors alike were conflicted about what to do next. Generally, however, most reporters and lower-ranking editors appreciated the ANG's and other unionization efforts to improve working conditions. "Salaries went up and hours went down, and needless firings began to drop off when each one meant several hundred dollars in dismissal pay," noted Morton Sontheimer, reflecting on changes already occurring in employer-employee dynamics in 1941.[174] Instead of trying to negotiate with individual news workers, publishers had to negotiate with union locals. While some workers left the ANG, others stayed or stayed sympathetic, to it, and the union survived the war years to become a potent force in newsrooms across the country.

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[173] In 1955, the two organizations would reunite as the AFL-CIO. See Joseph W. Bloch, "Founding convention of the AFL-CIO," *Monthly Labor Review*, published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, Feb. 1956, 141-49.
[174] Sontheimer, *Newspaperman*, 325.

New reporters, fresh from college journalism programs, a still-relatively new source of workers, were expected to join Guild locals upon their arrival in a new newsroom—provided, of course, that a Guild local was present.[175] That was not always the case. But it marked a cultural shift in newsrooms. The expectation of a unionized newsroom would have been alien to earlier generations. That it was a reality at all had not been a foregone conclusion. After all, other college-educated workers, and white-collar workers in general, had resisted efforts to organize, and news workers themselves had failed to organize coherently during at least two distinct moments in their history. A few conciliatory moves by publishers earlier on, or a less-severe Depression, or even the absence of key unifying figures like Broun could have led to yet another failed attempt at newsroom unionization.

But it was the ultimate, just not universal, success at organizing that solidified a general trend toward a more secure white-collar status, one in which workers could reasonably presume to afford families, cars and their own homes or apartments. While their salaries reached only a rough parity with comparative white-collar occupations by the end of the 1950s, for many reporters, the independence and security achieved by union representation, or its influence, was enough to look back on the era as a kind of "golden age."[176] Some in the industry, in fact, believed that this new white-collar standing was making it, ironically,

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[175] Louis Alexander, "What shall we tell the high school senior?" *The Quill*, September 1959, 17-18. Alexander, who worked for the Houston, Texas, *Chronicle*, was a freelancer and a part-time journalism lecturer at the University of Houston, responded to a list of 12 questions asked by a University of South Dakota senior. He also reported that, "most large newspapers maintain a forty-hour week, and either pay for overtime or don't permit it. Most small ones expect the reporter to work almost as hard as the editor or publisher, and *he* doesn't wind his wrist watch."

[176] A close reading of dozens of journalists' memoirs from the era, of course, often reflects on their own generation's time as superior to that of the then-present. The romantic nature of news workers and their self-perceptions certainly fueled this tendency. Thus I use it with some caution. But most of the memoirs published through the end of the mid-century, commenting on working conditions of their younger colleagues, concede (and in some cases, even insist) that times had changed for the better, even if this meant a less romantic, and more modern, era had arrived.

increasingly difficult to attract young workers. This was a good problem for those who thought that reporters and editors needed the security of a job more akin to the members of a public-relations firm: well-paid, well-heated in the winter (well-cooled in the summer), managed by human-resource departments and staffed by specialized college graduates. This worried self-educated, older reporters and editors, who felt that unionization had taken something of the romance and excitement out of newsroom life. But this latter view was in the minority.

Most workers preferred to have union representatives negotiate with publishers rather than find their salaries posted on bulletin boards. Worrying less about their next paycheck helped them to focus more on their beats, aspirations to join the copy desk or their goal of becoming a correspondent, and expect, with a reasonable amount of certainty, that they would have a job tomorrow, next week, and next year. The unionization of the newsroom allowed its workers to realize both the aspirations and enjoy the benefits of middle-class status. Reporters and other news workers felt more settled in their jobs as a result of unionization. They were "men of family, registered voters, members of the Parent-Teacher Association." Less nomadic, more settled, they had "savings accounts and worry about mortgages," reported a contemporary. They were thus "no longer harum-scarum, feckless and addicted to bad habits," and would "plod home at day's end with the utmost docility, mow lawns, shovel walks, help with the dishes and play Canasta with their wives instead of helling around town and worrying their families."[177] While it would be simplistic to give the credit for this cultural change to unionization alone, it would be a mistake to ignore the day-to-day impact of the ANG and other

[177] "'Good-old' days had color, but so did kerosene lamp," *The Guild Reporter*, Oct. 28, 1955, 7.

unions—they helped to bring news workers and newsrooms into the ranks of the American middle class.

Chapter 9

Conclusion: the newsroom in American journalism, 1920 to 1960

The social history of the American newsroom is the story of its workers and of their larger occupational community. It is also a story of their physical workplace.[1] News workers were well aware of what desk placement meant, who had a telephone and the importance of reliable access to each other and editors (though some may have preferred not to have been so close). This occupational space was not a cause, but a context, within which American journalism formed. The relational and organizational-level workplace communities known as newsrooms created a unique, shared identity. This identity was aspirational and aimed to be meritocratic: with enough hard work, luck and time, a copy boy (and later, a copy girl) could become an editor-in-chief. The reality of newsroom relationships was much more complex than this, however. Power differentials meant that some news workers could determine the day-to-day work routines of others. Between copy boys and girls, photographers, copy editors and

[1] Aurora Wallace, *Media Capital Architecture and Communications in New York City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Akhteruz Zaman, "Newsroom as battleground: journalists' description of their workspaces," *Journalism Studies* 15, no. 6 (2013), 819-834. Wallace examined newsroom exteriors, and Zaman was focused on news workers' metaphors for their newsroom spaces. This study borrows from both, but is focused on the interiors of newsrooms and how the social lives and work culture of news workers developed therein. Where it does lightly borrow from spatial theory, it relies on the work of such theorists as Henri Lefebvre and his *Production of Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991) and David Harvey and his *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (London; New York, NY: Verso, 2006). I have relied on Nikki Usher's helpful interpretation of these theories; see her "Newsroom moves and the newspaper crisis evaluated: space, place, and cultural meaning," *Media, Culture & Society* 37, no. 7 (2015), 1005-1021.

rewrite staff, reporters (from cubs to veterans), to supervisors drawn from the ranks of former peers (i.e. editors), workers were arranged along a continuum of control.

Newsrooms and power relationships

It was in newsroom spaces that the power relations between peers made sense and were organized. Following Shoemaker and Reese and their hierarchy of influences model, the newsroom and its workers were shaped at multiple levels, but especially by those within individual media organizations and their routine practices.[2] Some of these practices were unique to the historical development of individual newsrooms. But broadly, workers pushed back against the various forms of control deployed by those in positions of power over them. They collaborated on and coordinated work routines and devised time-and-energy-saving strategies. They also resisted overt forms of supervision, working mostly outside the newsroom; upon returning to it, however, they acquiesced to supervision for parts of the day (typically the beginning and end). While away, they brought some of the newsroom's norms with them and left others behind. Rival reporters, for example, combined efforts when working out of police stations and city halls, gathering news together and writing it separately to suit the tastes of their individual publications. When back in the newsroom, they argued with copy editors and rewrite staff. Copy editors and rewrite staff complained about reporters when the latter were gone (and often while there). Newsroom relationships reflected these themes of resistance and

[2] Pamela J. Shoemaker, and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology* Perspective, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2014). In a recent update of their classic work of media sociology, Shoemaker and Reese's original model five layers get a revamping, so now in addition to describing the original three inner layers of influence (individual, routine practices, media organizations) they also describe social institutions and social systems (in place of the older "extraorganizational" and "ideological level of influence").

change. Newcomers to the newsroom endured rituals of initiation. These “cubs” earned their way into the ranks of regulars and then veterans. Editors would sometimes assist in this process, or at least tacitly endorse it, themselves a product of newsroom hazing. Once in the pool of rank-and-file reporters, news workers would further subdivide into groups based on relational, socioeconomic, education, gender, race and political status. More commonly they split up based on career goals. Those fast-tracked to success literally sat apart.[3] Junior editors faced frustration and were placed farther back in the newsroom, away from the locus of power and control that was the copy-editor and rewrite-staff’s desks. But all reporter sub-groups aspired to independence, expressed through roles as rewrite staffers, copy editors, columnists, correspondents or other specialized writing jobs. Reporters were able to think of these upwardly mobile paths because the newsroom itself had changed. The physical and social spaces that comprised it were far more fluid, and far more secure, for the generation working in newsrooms in 1960 than it had been in 1920. The generation of journalists working at mid-century remained fiercely loyal to the idea of working in and for the newsroom, and their occupational mobility within individual news organizations speaks to the strength of the newsroom as a centralizing place.

The newsroom’s occupational community

The newsroom, as the site of power relations, was not merely a backdrop for news work and new workers. It formed the occupational community that shaped both. In the middle of the twentieth century, for example, copy boys and girls still had the least autonomy in the

[3] Robert Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," *Daedalus* 104, 2 (1975), 175-194.

newsroom. Their position was supportive. But that could change quickly. Once they a copy boy or girl made the leap to work as a reporter, a whole new layer of autonomy opened. A reporter, even a junior one, could excel at a beat, earn recognition as reliable and loyal to a newsroom's ownership, and begin to carve out a measure of independence. If he or she finished college, and spent more time in quasi-supervisory roles, including mentoring younger reporters, he or she could advance still further to the copy or rewrite desk, or become a middle-manager. Copy editors saw less action but more regular hours, and their pay was among the highest in the newsroom (in some cases, second only to senior editors). Rewrite staff could return to reporting, or move to the copy desk. Next to copy editors, they were among the more trusted people in the newsroom. Some rewrite staff or senior reporters made the coveted switch to work as columnists or correspondents, which took them out of the newsroom and into positions where their personalities earned salaries. And if a reporter did make the transition to newsroom management, a separate and increasingly steep path awaited. On larger newspapers, even relatively young editors could be tasked with supervising dozens of reporters and coordinating the work of other editors. Of course, not every news worker advanced automatically up the chain of command. Many remained near to where they started. Some liked it that way, preferring the near-constant action of beat reporting to life as a "deskman." Others wanted to remain in the newsroom, but sealed off in a slower pace of work and life, as editorial workers. The fluidity of newsroom relationships and work tasks meant that career pathways were also fluid. Over the twentieth century, however, these pathways became more predictable, reliable and rewarding. Staying in the newsroom could lead to a middle-class existence outside of it.

Newsrooms as sites of technology adoption and white-collar unionization

Technology and unionization disrupted and reshaped newsroom dynamics. The adoption of the office phone, internal switchboard systems and later the mobile phone (either as a radio phone via cars or accessed via static points in the field) bifurcated the gathering and producing processes within and without newsrooms.[4] It created whole new classes of news workers (i.e. rewrite staff), enhanced the status of others (copy editors) and restructured the internal workings of even relatively cohesive groups in the newsroom (separating "leg men" from reporters able to write up their own content back in the newsroom, or substitute as rewrite staff). As journalism-textbook author Robert Neal noted in 1942, "each department is the direct outgrowth of inventions. The machinery of the newspaper is elaborate, expensive and premeditated. It didn't develop by chance."[5] Technology upended established routines and created new ones. It shaped and was shaped by its users, with news workers acting as pioneering members of a future information economy. Dealing in data, they shaped that data into coherent, constantly updated stories. News workers during the pre-computerized era, i.e. before the 1960s and 1970s, wrote for the press-service wires, multiple editions throughout the day, and in some cases, allied radio or TV stations, gathering and producing news with an immediacy that rivals their digital descendants. Far from being reticent to embrace technology, news workers—if they received training and were motivated by their peers—were enthusiastic and early adopters of technology that helped them.

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[4] Alfred McClung Lee makes a critical point in his *The Daily Newspaper in America; The Evolution of a Social Instrument* (New York: Macmillan Co, 1937); it was not so much the telephone itself, but the systematization brought by the switchboards early in the twentieth century, and the development of devoted rewrite staff and leg men, that helped the phone reach its full potential as an instrument of news-collection. See Lee, *The Daily Newspaper*, 628-9, 642-3.

[5] Robert M. Neal, *News Gathering and News Writing* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1942), 16.

Social construction theorists and technological determinists both describe the American newsroom's (and its workers') relationship with technology.[6] Örnebring has pointed out that the dynamic between news work and technology in newsrooms is never static, involving reskilling, multiskilling and deskilling. The work of journalists (and thus the work of newsrooms) tends to be driven by technology, whose developments are never accidental and are usually the result of long processes.[7] The arrival of rewrite staff proves the point—newsrooms had and still maintain a complex dynamic with technology adoption. Reporters and other news workers are neither Luddites nor always savvy. Instead, they took the telephone and car, and later, early mobile-reporting devices like tape recorders, incorporating them into existing routines and building new ones. These brought new norms and built on old norms like timeliness.

The newsroom of the 1930s onward was also characterized by a halting, never totalizing but still hugely influential organizing movement. Facing dramatically reduced income and even more job uncertainty than they had previously tolerated, news workers overcame their traditional antipathy toward "blue-collar" organizing efforts and adopted unionization for their white-collar aspirations. "Realizing that he is a factory worker always is a jolt to the new reporter, but it is a most necessary one," noted an industry observer in 1942.[8] As one of the first creative classes to organize, they realized as never before their collective power vis-à-vis management. In doing so they helped to bring about Hallin's "provisional resolution" and inspire an unprecedented and sustained season of occupational strength and development.[9]

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[6] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality; a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledg*e (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966); while elegant and influential, Berger and Luckmann's theory (and its further development by Michel Foucault) is not easily applied to the multifaceted institution that is the newsroom.
[7] Henrik Örnebring, "Technology and journalism-as-labor: historical perspectives," *Journalism* 11, no. 57 (2010), 57-74.
[8] Neal, *News Gathering and News Writing*, 16.
[9] Daniel C. Hallin, "Commercialism and professionalism in the American news media," 242-260, in *Mass Media and Society*, James Curran and Michael Gurevitch. eds., (London: Arnold, 2000).

While this was not entirely due to the American Newspaper Guild, news workers had ample reason to feel better about their status by the early 1960s. In the 40 years between 1920 and 1960, reporters and editors became white-collar workers and the newsroom became a white-collar workplace. They moved from a working-class, paycheck-to-paycheck existence to a far more comfortable middle-class socioeconomic status. Though it is a relatively simplistic measure, the improvement in baseline salaries (and the reality of salaries instead of payment by space) shows just how far reporters and editors came. In 1930, the average, experienced reporter made about $2,266 a year, or about $32,161 in 2015 dollars. With few if any benefits, that salary could vary wildly and was subject to reduction without notice. In 1960, the average, experienced reporter made about $7,269 a year, or about $58,205 in 2015.[10] The typical reporter at the end of the era also had health insurance, severance pay, paid time off, annual or semiannual pay raises, pensions in some cases and generally far more job security than his or her predecessors. News workers could afford a house, a car, and a family. They could look forward to a varied career, with good chances for advancement. That newfound reality shaped how reporters (and other news workers) felt about themselves and the newsroom.

How a social history of the newsroom enriches media sociology

The social history of the newsroom and its workers was not one of triumph and perfection. Indeed, it would be a mistake to claim that news workers "professionalized" during

[10] Determined from Bureau of Labor Statistics (http://www.bls.gov/) inflation calculator (http://www.bls.gov/data/#calculators), and rounded up to the nearest dollar, using 1930 and 1960 as reference points. By comparison, the median annual salary for all U.S.-based reporters in 2014 was $36,000. Note that BLS data may not account for experience level (which previous data tended to do), and reflects starting salaries and also work in all mediums of journalism, not just print. Granted, the salary data from the 1920 to 1960 period used in this study reflects larger daily newspapers, which tended and still tend to pay better than smaller daily or weekly newspapers. See "Reporters, correspondents, and broadcast news analysts," Occupational Outlook Handbook, Bureau of Labor Statistics. <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/reporters-correspondents-and-broadcast-news-analysts.htm#tab-5> Accessed Feb. 15, 2016.

the decades between and just after the world wars. As Abbott and others have pointed out, "whether or not" news workers and journalism succeeded is not the interesting question.[11] The bigger question is, how did these workers define success and "professional" standing? The answer, it seems, at least for a substantial number, was a measure of economic stability and reasonable protection from too much managerial interference. How this worked out could still vary greatly depending on where a news worker lived and if his or her newspaper was part of a chain.[12] And there is an important caveat to these generally improved working conditions in the newsroom: they were available to a relative few. Women and minorities were just starting a long road to inclusion in a still white-male-dominated industry. The former had made inroads, and had already helped to transform an all-male space into a more gender-diverse place, from ownership down through the ranks of reporters. Minority news-workers were also only just beginning to be hired by the end of the 1950s, in scattered and often publisher-led initiatives.[13] Only later, beginning in the 1970s, would more systematic efforts be made to diversify newsrooms, as documented in other studies.[14]

Looking at the newsroom as a site of professionalizing discourse, and as a place where practitioners operationalized abstract values into concrete decisions contributes to ongoing

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[11] Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). Abbott's "jurisdictional approach" remains current for scholars of the sociology of occupations and work. For a more extended discussion of the concept of "professionalization" in the newsroom, see Silvio Waisbord's *Reinventing Professionalism: Journalism and News in Global Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 80-93. Beam's *Journalism Professionalism as an Organizational-Level* concept (Columbia, S.C.: Journalism & Mass Communication Monographs. Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1990) also remains relevant and useful for understanding how power dynamics worked out in the newsroom.

[12] Bonnie Brennen, *For the Record: An Oral History of Rochester, New York, Newsworkers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

[13] Gwyneth Mellinger, *Chasing Newsroom Diversity from Jim Crow to Affirmative Action (*Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

[14] For good examples, see Beth Kaszuba, "'Mob Sisters:' Women Reporting on Crime in Prohibition-era Chicago" (Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 2013), and Calvin L. Hall, *African American Journalists: Autobiography as Memoir and Manifesto* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2009).

discussions important to media sociology. How journalists organize themselves, their work flows and how they engage with and attempt to govern temporal limits—these are old problems that remain relevant. As a meso-level analysis, a social history of the newsroom gives rich context to the work of media ethnographers from the 1970s onward. Knowing how the newsroom formed as this aspirational and relational space in the period from the early twentieth to mid-twentieth century is crucial. For example, Abbot and Dooley both identified independence as a theme for workers attempting to carve out creative space in occupations where conformity of production was called for—as in newsrooms.[15]

Knowing why and how that norm developed—partially as a reaction to changes in technology and to the unionization of the newsroom—enriches our understanding of the newsroom's place in the American media system. Newsroom ethnographers found complex communities of workers because they had already been developing for a half century or longer. More recently, journalism-studies scholars seeking to apply spatial theory to newsroom production are also encountering the legacy of a richly *relational* space.[16] These legacies are the result of generations of news workers creating and reinforcing hierarchies of power within particular buildings, sets of desks, arrangements of offices and everyday routines. Journalism enacted in different kinds of spaces would have led to a different kind of journalism.

The continuing legacy of the American newsroom

[15] Patricia L. Dooley, *Taking Their Political Place: Journalists and the Making of an Occupation* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1997), 25-6, 126.

[16] Nikki Usher, "Newsroom moves and the newspaper crisis evaluated: space, place, and cultural meaning," *Media, Culture & Society* 37, no. 7 (2015), 1005-1021;

The primary sources consulted here—memoirs, trade journals, the first generation of journalism-studies research, government reports, textbooks and archival material—were supplemented with diverse visual material that illustrates how workers defined their jobs and shaped ideas of success and status. Future studies could examine the early computerization of the newsroom in the decades that follow this study, through the 1980s and early 1990s. This project would build on the work of Anthony Smith, who analyzed then-contemporary changes in newsroom technology in the late 1970s.[17] Similar influences on the newsroom continued into the period from 1960 to 1990, with the addition of a corporatized approach to newsroom management.[18]

This dissertation confirms the findings of previous and current newsroom ethnographers. It also builds on them. By injecting the social history of historians like Smythe and the sense of space by sociologists like Breed, it seeks to fill a gap in the understanding of newsroom evolution during the twentieth century. While scholars today such as Ryfe, Usher, Anderson and Boczkowski are focused on how the newsroom is changing and dispersing, it is important to remember how the newsroom formed in the first place. It could have moved in several directions. Indeed, there have been several kinds of newsrooms, as Nerone and Barnhurst have helpfully reminded historians, from editor-dominated to reporter-driven ones.[19] The industrial newsroom that dominated the media landscape for much of the twentieth century was large and complex. It had to be, in order to process information, house and equip

[17] Anthony Smith, *Goodbye, Gutenberg: the Newspaper Revolution of the 1980s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).
[18] Doug Underwood, *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom: How the Marketers and Managers are Reshaping Today's Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
[19] Nerone and Barnhurst, "U.S. newspaper types, the newsroom, and the division of labor, 1750-2000," *Journalism Studies*, 4, no. 4 (2003), 435-49.

news-gathering and news-producing workers, and to physically create and distribute the news. This dissertation tries to cultivate a new appreciation for what the newsroom has represented to news workers, and how it has functioned on an organizational level. While a vital part of American journalism's past, its legacy remains alive today, too. Newsrooms are facing vast changes in their size, mission and culture. As recent studies have shown, newsrooms are now part of bigger news ecosystems.[20] News production is much more mobile, distributed and involves complex information flows back from sources and readers, viewers and listeners. It did before, but now these interactions have greater influence and involve a range of technologies. Reporters and editors do not have to meet in the same space to assemble and then publish the news. It is no longer a physical process housed in a news factory or "plant," with the newsroom part of a facility that printed and shipped newspapers. Newsrooms and their workers are continue to collaborate across space and time. The data-driven journalism of the early twenty-first century has relied on joint efforts, even among nominal rivals.[21] By combining their resources even in an era marked by change for the industry, newsrooms will continued to have an out-sized impact.

But some form of newsroom space, even if more mobile or temporary, is important for journalism's future. New or revamped newsrooms will not reflect older, industrialized and corporate spaces, but will instead remain a gathering point for creative work. Like programmers, designers or other creative workers, journalists enjoy and find inspiration from

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[20] As just a few examples of recent journalism-studies scholarship indicate, newsrooms continue to fascinate researchers: Nikki Usher, *Making News at The New York Times* (University of Michigan Press, 2014); David Ryfe, *Can Journalism Survive?: An Inside Look at American Newsrooms* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012); C.W. Anderson, *Rebuilding the News: Metropolitan Journalism in the Digital Age* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press, 2013); Pablo J. Boczkowski, *News at Work Imitation in an Age of Information Abundance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
[21] On the Media, "Behind the Panama papers," WNYC, April 6, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2016. http://www.wnyc.org/story/behind-panama-papers/

the presence of peers. They have historically relished the clashing and mixing of ideas, personalities and roles. Their work, with its ineffable tendencies (defining what is "news" on a daily or hourly basis), demands company. Newsroom ethnographers have long found that reporters and editors rely on each other to decide and determine, tentatively, what is newsworthy.[22] They will continue to make these spaces a physical reality, as well as a digital one. In both cases newsrooms and their workers will become more nimble, bringing the newsroom with them or creating newsrooms wherever they gather.

It would be easy to conclude that the big-city newsrooms of the early to mid-twentieth century represented American journalism's "golden age," and one that we will never see again. This nostalgic perspective paints the newsroom as an idealized workplace. It was not. It was messy and sometimes oppressive. It could liberate the best in its workers or could force them to eke out an existence (and one far out of proportion to the effort required to enter and remain in that world). It was not friendly to women and minorities, not for a long time, at least. But they were also, somewhat paradoxically, empowering. The very act of working together, in a creative space, helped to solidify journalists' occupational identify, and thus their sense of community. It gave them a reason to organize, to adopt technology and to better their working conditions. The newsroom was truly "the soul of the newspaper" and a "weapon for democracy," in the words of Walter Williams.[23] I would also argue that it was and is part of the soul of American journalism. One should hope that there will always be newsrooms.

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[22] Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979); Gaye Tuchman*, Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978). There are other, later examples of solid ethnographic work into the 1980s and beyond. For a summary of this literature, see Sarah Stonbely, "The social and intellectual contexts of the U.S. 'newsroom studies,' and the media sociology of today," *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 2 (2015): 259-74.

[23] Robert. A. Willier, "Dean Williams' last class lecture described by former student," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 10, 1935, 12.

Appendix A

Newsroom salaries

Salary data was collected by newspaper publishers and by the federal government, especially the U.S. Department of Labor and its Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), from the 1930s through the 1950s (though the U.S. Census Bureau also tracked some data on news workers prior to this). The American Newspaper Guild (ANG), through its *Guild Reporter*, and *Editor & Publisher* also collected and published information on salaries. The ANG advocated for higher wages, and *Editor & Publisher* often sought to portray publishers in a more positive light (though on occasion both did attempt more balanced reportage of salaries). Journalism educators and scholars publishing in *Journalism Quarterly* surveyed current, former and future news workers for insight on salaries. This became of acute interest to both researchers and industry observers as rival TV and radio newsrooms emerged to compete for journalism grads by the end of the 1950s. Salary data (based on weekly averages from industry and government surveys) is summarized in the graph found in the chapter on newsroom unionization.[1] The

[1] Sources: "Earnings in Journalism," *The Journalism Bulletin* 2, no. 4 (1926): 29-33; "Journalism is broad road to fame but wealth lies outside: young reporters must become fiction writers, executive or owner or be content with a top salary of $3,000 at 45, journalism teachers' committee reports," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 6, 1926, 20; "News workers among highest paid on newspapers, A.N.P.A. tells NRA," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 8, 1934, 5, 31; "Survey by N.Y. Guild shows average pay," *Editor & Publisher*, May 5, 1934, 6; "A.N.P.A. survey shows editorial wages," *Editor & Publisher*, May 5, 1934, 10, 37; "Editorial: editorial pay," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 13, 1934, 24; "News workers among highest paid on newspapers, A.N.P.A. tells NRA," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 8, 1934, 5, 31; "Salaries and working conditions of newspaper editorial employees," *Monthly Labor Review*, published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 1935, 1137-48; C.E. Shuford, "Do newspaper pay? Three studies show the $30 cub only a myth: a newsroom may not be a royal road to riches, but it has been maligned Texas surveys indicate," *The Quill*, May 1955, 11; Charles T. Duncan, "Slight Drop in Demand for Journalism Graduates," *Journalism Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (1958): 469-71; Charles T. Duncan, "Newspapers Slipping as No. 1 Outlet for Journalism Graduates," *Journalism Quarterly* 36, no. 4

following table is helpful for understanding broad national trends, and for contextualizing the general trend toward better salaries for news workers over time.

Table of *representative* salaries per week, c. 1920 to 1960, by region and category of U.S. news worker	1920s				1930s				1940s				1950s		
	West	Midwest	East (includes NYC and non-NYC)		West	Midwest	East		West	Midwest	East		West	MidWest	East
Photographers			$20		$40	$45	$43-47	$45		$70	$50-$100	$55		$114.70	$122-157
Copy boys/girls			$15				$15-20	$15		$33			$42.50		
Rewrite staff		$40-45			$50	$60-65		$52.50		$83	$85-110	$93		$125.90	$150-200
Copy editors	No Data	$48-52		$70		$60-65		$55-60	No Data	$83	$50-100		$108.50	$101.50-125.90	
Cub reporters				$15	$18	$25	$25	$20		$32.50	$22.50-25			$55	**$50-70**
Veteran reporters				$40	$50	$55	**$45-70**	$50		$70	**$55-80**			**$50-80**	**$80-120**
Editorial writers/specialists			**$30-60**					$55-57.50				$72.50-93			**$100-200**

[2]

(1959): 476-78; "Manpower today and tomorrow: personnel panel," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Aug. 12-15, 1959, 47-55; Charles A. Perlik Jr., "Newspaper Guild now in 26th year," *The Quill*, November 1959, 70, 81-82; "Manpower recruiting, pay and turnover: personnel panel," *Red Book*, Associated Press Managing Editors, Nov. 15-19, 1960, 46. Note that this data is for 1926-era white-collar business workers, and so see Robert A. Margo, "Table Ba4320-4334, Annual earnings in selected industries and occupations: 1890–1926," in *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Millennial Edition Online, edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Accessed Feb. 12, 2016. Data based on Paul H. Douglas, *Real Wages in the United States*, 1890–1926 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930).

[2] **Note**: salary data was generally gathered from later in the decade whenever possible to reflect change over time. Where possible, comparable cases were used. There may be slight inflation due to the fact that many figures were from ANG-negotiated contracts; data was included from salary graph in unionization chapter; used some estimates; avoided averages and looked for specific examples where possible. "Veterans" were often defined as those working five or more years in print newspaper newsrooms. "Midwest" defined as parts of the Southwest, and "non-NYC East" included big cities (with newspapers with 100,000 circulation or more) outside of New York (i.e. cities such as Baltimore and Philadelphia). Bolded numbers estimated. Data is incomplete for some years and categories.

Sources: Marlen Pew, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, July 13, 1929, 70; "Capitol Guild, daily reach agreement," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 11, 1936, 30; "Baltimore Hearst papers sign with editorial group," *Editor & Publisher*, April 2, 1939, 26; "*Detroit Times* giving $62,000 in pay raises," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 28, 1946, 48; Schulman, *Where's Sammy?*, 6; "Bargaining policy up at Guild meet," *Editor & Publisher*, April 7, 1934, 11, 38; "Survey by N.Y. Guild shows average pay," *Editor & Publisher*, May 5, 1934, 6; "Ten metropolitan dailies post minimum wages, hours notices," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 12, 1936, 8; "*Indianapolis Star* starts new wage, hour schedule," *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1937, 16; "News workers among highest paid on newspapers, A.N.P.A. tells NRA," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 8, 1934, 5, 31; "*Boston Herald-Traveler* signs Guild contract," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 19, 1938, 45; "*Buffalo News* signs contract with Guild," *Editor & Publisher*, July 15, 1944, 40; "N.Y. Sun grants $100 minimum for reporters," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 8, 1947, 62; "$3-$6 raises given on 2 Detroit papers," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 23, 1952, 10; Charles A. Perlik Jr., "Newspaper Guild now in 26th year," *The Quill*, November 1959, 80; Irving Brant, "Where are the copy readers of tomorrow?" *Editor & Publisher*, June 19, 1920, 5; "Phila. Ledger signs Guild shop contract," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 5, 1939; "*San Francisco News* sets minimum wage levels; Guild is 'gratified,'" *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 14, 1936, 10; "*Baltimore Sun* signs its first Guild contract," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 3, 1949, 9; "Guild starts talks with *N.Y. Times*," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 20, 1960, 62; "Raise for Scranton newswriters," *Editor & Publisher,* Aug. 20, 1921, 11; "Scranton news writers get new wage scale," *Editor & Publisher* Aug. 18, 1923, 10; "Two Hearst dailies post minimums," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 26, 1936, 4; "New Orleans Item signs Guild contract," *Editor & Publisher*, March 28, 1953, 44; "Feeling the pulse of a dying daily," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 3, 1927, 11; "Three Tacoma papers post wage supplements," *Editor & Publisher*, May 8, 1937, 45; "One-year contract signed with Guild in Milwaukee," *Editor & Publisher*, July 10, 1937, 43; "No *World-Telegram* Guild contract," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 27, 1934, 5; "$70 scale for 5-year reporters in Knoxville," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 22, 1947, 38; "Guild contracts signed by *N.Y. Mirror*, U.P.," *Editor & Publisher*, May 24, 1941, 14; C.E. Shuford, "Do newspaper pay? Three studies show the $30 cub only a myth: a newsroom may not be a royal road to riches, but it has been maligned Texas surveys indicate," *The Quill*, May 1955, 11; "*Boston Herald-Traveler* signs Guild contract," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 19, 1938, 45; "Report and Rulings of the Commission" in the case of the *Buffalo Evening News* and the Buffalo Newspaper Guild, 9; Sugarman, *Opportunities in Journalism*, 58.

Appendix B

From conflict to collaboration—the evolution of newsroom humor

The following is a collection of newsroom humor satirizing life in the newsroom (and news workers) through poetry and other light verse. It is arranged topically by news worker, though in many cases poetry and other forms of humor in the newsroom applied to multiple categories of worker. Explanatory notes will provide some context throughout.

Mocking bosses: newsroom humor directed at editors

Editors were fair game for satirical teasing from reporters. Describing what editors were *not*, one writer said they were "kind, tolerant, gentle, men of courtly manners and nerves of steel, men who always put the welfare of their reporters and photographers uppermost."[1] A common theme involved gullible young staffers being either too obedient, too literal, or both, in regards to orders from editors.[2] A corresponding theme involved the playful manipulation of editors and a mocking of their propensity to lose their tempers.[3]

[1] "Ray Erwin's Column: dog-gone city editor," *Editor & Publisher*, March 22, 1958, 4.
[2] Edith Bristol, "Get the story," Dec. 8, 1934, 8; Bristol was "Women's Editor" for the San Francisco *Call-Bulletin*, and her poem involved a story about a "new photographer" being told to "smash every speed law/On the books" as necessary to cover the Tournament of Roses parade. The new staffer did so, ignoring a stage collapse in order to obey the original instruction to hurry back to the newsroom. See also, "1935 World Almanac: Book of a million facts," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 12, 1935, 15. And see also, "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 5, 1938, 18; and Arthur Robb, "Shop talk at thirty," *Editor & Publisher*, March 19, 1938.
[3] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 15, 1938, 18. "Whatthell!" was a favored interjection.

Some reporters either gently or viciously mocked the “old man” when out of earshot, including at the urinal.[4] Others played the kinds of practical jokes on them that they (reporters) would reserve for peers. Each individual newsroom, however, had its own in-house dictates for how much was too much with this mutual mockery. As a general rule, however, morale seems to have been higher in those newsrooms that allowed their reporters to indulge in friendly, open (if limited) pushback against editors. This often centered on the use of language. An anonymous reporter at the *Chicago Daily News* responded to an admonition written by a “deranged” member of the city desk, and posted to the newsroom bulletin board, to spell “judgment” without an “e.” The reporter wrote:

“dear deranged,
“I tried to spell judgment without an ‘e’ and it came out judgmnt.
“Now I’m a in a predicament.
“confused”[5]

The bulletin board could be the locus of other antics. Embarrassing photos could be blown up and posted on them, as when a young club editor at the *Portland Daily Journal* found herself the subject of just such a prank. Photographed holding a baby at an event, a caption was posted below, reading, “Ruth—in training.” Humor could be gendered, in this regard, with an emphasis, too, on other aggressive pranks.[6]

Who sweats and swears and fumes and boils
Who digs and jumps and grinds and toils,
Who steals and hunts and grabs and moils?
The City Editor

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[4] James Philip MacCarthy, *The Newspaper Worker: A Manual for All Who Write* (New York: Frank-Maurice, Inc., 1925), 12. Robert Darnton, "Writing news and telling stories," Daedalus 104, 2 (1975), 178; “The reporters feel united by the sentiment of 'them' against 'us,' which they express in horseplay and house jokes. (I remember a clandestine meeting in the men's room, where one reporter gave a parody of urinating techniques among 'them').”
[5] “Ray Erwin’s Clippings Column,” *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 20, 1954, 4.
[6] “Women in advertising and journalism,” *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 17, 1927, 51. In this case, Ruth “Peggy” Hopkins was the subject of the newsroom prank. Hopkins was actually a well-regarded member of the staff—hence why she was chosen.

Who has to stand for other's sins,
From getting soused to having twins,
Who is the guy that never wins?
The City Editor

Who's 'sposed to be the end and sum,
An accurate compendium,
Of all the facts in Kingdom Come?
The City Editor

Who's not supposed to have a heart,
But live his life a thing apart,
And let no human feeling start?
The City Editor.

Who learns a tip ain't what it seems,
Who thinks up 'features' in his dreams,
Who's mildest thoughts are piercing screams,
The City Editor.

Who needs the wisdom and the love
Of both the serpent and the dove,
With staff beneath and Boss above?
The City Editor.[7]

Away from the boards, and as was customary, editors were thoroughly satirized by reporters in workplace poetry (who enjoyed satirizing their peers, in turn). This was a tradition going back to before the turn of the century. The tradition, too, of awkward rhymes, continued:

The editor grumbles in his lair,
His position most grotesque;
There ain't no bottom in his chair,
And creditors have tuck his desk.[8]

[7] Morton Birge, "Poor city editors," *Editor & Publisher*, Oct. 30, 1919, 21. Birge was an editorial writer for the *Boston American*.
[8] "Ray Erwin's Column," *Editor & Publisher*, March 17, 1956, 4.

Editors were described as lazy, or entitled, or generally removed from newsroom life and the daily toil of hunting down leads and either writing up stories or phoning them in. Caricatures of editors highlighted the disparity between their power and that of reporters:

The editor sat in his easy chair
Smoking a fat cigar;
His chest stuck out, and he wore an air
Richer than King or Czar.
He touched a bell, and he ordered [in]
With the style of a lazy Turk,
And he lolled 'way back and murmured: "it's fine,
Loving so free from work! [9]

Editors suffered from "mania," with "screaming fits" thta brought "depressive infantile retrogression of the involuntary nervous system."[10] While tongue-in-check, this view of editors is revealing. Good bosses were smart, if neurotic, and could take a healthy dose of criticism. Bad bosses could be smart, but did not enjoy mockery. But managing and city (as well as other kinds of) editors could and did push back with their newsroom poetry. The city editor of the *Lynchburg Advance*, based in Virginia, satirized his reporters' seeming inability to show up when sick:

…I'm sorry, David, I can't work today,
But I'll be down later to get my pay.
My cousin's sick, my aunt's had cats,
The exterminator's due to kill the rats,
The roof is leaking, the bus ain't comin'
I've got a cold and my nose is runnin'

So sorry to hear yube ain't feeling welb,
I'm bot feeling goob too, as yube can telb.
But I'm here, plubbing abay, on by 'ittle machine…
Get the Hell down here 'fore I crack your bean!"[11]

[9] Henry Edward Warner, "Songs of the craft: the editor," *Editor & Publisher*, April 19, 1924, 24.
[10] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, March 2, 1940, 33.
[11] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, March 3, 1945, 32. Note that "CE" and "ME" were fairly common nicknames for bosses.

While of “strange type,” this was the “norm,” a satirical defender of editors wrote.[12] Editors could also take aim at each other, especially if they worked for rival newspapers in the same town:

“Half a Scholar, Half a Wit;
For whom the Comic Books are writ;
Hell to thee, Blithe Spirit!
Your Reasoning is full of Trick,
And Boobied-Trap Suggestion;
No point is where-on-you stick;
You beg the simplest question;
And where my premise is most strong
You help our reader draw inference wrong!”[13]

Some newsroom humor directed at bosses (or from bosses toward workers) involved the writing of fake stories or headlines that were passed around the office: “City editor runs amuck! Threatens to slay entire staff for alleged failure to get first edition stories in before deadline,” or “Girl writer in hysterics: chief’s violent attacks causes poor sob sister in corner to scream ‘damn it, shut up! I’m trying to telephone.’”[14] Much of this playful use of journalism vocabulary was based on occupational inside jokes, but it helped to define who was “in” and “out,” or, internally, who held power and who did not, in a newsroom’s hierarchy. And as with wordplay among reporters, their peers and near peers, humor directed at (and by) editors relied on an earthy command of English:

An editor with men in hand—
Is like a king, with scepter grand,
Who rules his subjects in the land—

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[12] “Ray Erwin’s Column,” *Editor & Publisher*, July 18, 1959, 4.
[13] “Ray Erwin’s Clippings Column,” *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 6, 1955, 4.
[14] Chet Johnson, “News should begin at home: Why search for the Hot Stories? Dozens of them beg to be written in each city room,” *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 7, 1925, 24. They could also reveal conflict between editors, and play with conventions, as with ““Paste Pot theft bared! Sporting editor, branded desk raider by irate copy reader, denies char and uses short, ugly word.”

By dint of rhetoric command![15]

And because they worked in such close proximity over such long hours, reporters and editors often ate next to and with each other. Cartoons poke fun at this reality, and the complexities of eating at one's desk surrounding by sweaty, shouting and running coworkers.[16]

Editors were satirized as being obsessed with the sensational. Ordering their reporters to hustle, their photographers to stage photos, their columnists to crank out speculation and their sob sisters to play up any emotional angle, they were portrayed as masters of plucking stories from disasters.[17] Other anecdotes about editors lionized their supposed leadership qualities. In one example, a reporter visiting a journalism class asked what a city editor did. A female student responded, "He assigns stories to reporters and slugs them."[18] These mythic send-offs of editors extolled their ability, for example, to answer seemingly any question posed to them. In the context of newsroom humor, however, there always a caveat:

What a City Editor has to know
He must be courteous all day long,
Though some of his answer may be wrong.[19]

Some cartoons and other expressions of newsroom humor showed editors in less glamorous environments, including working from home.[20] In either case, editors were often aware of, and encouraging, of the many ways humor could lesson tensions in the newsrooms. Many

[15] "Ray Erwin's Column," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 9, 1957, 4. Poem by Frank Del-Witt, "Predicates, Nouns and Verbs."
[16] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 14, 1956, 47; "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, July 28, 1956, 56. "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, March 9, 1957, 84.
[17] Chet Johnson, "Desperate deadlines: a brave young editor's fight against overwhelming odds to give the public the right kind of news," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 2, 1926, 26.
[18] "Short takes," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 14, 1946, 32.
[19] "City editor's job described in Perk's poem," *Editor & Publisher*, March 18, 1950, 40. From "The city editor," a poem by Charles L. "Perk" Rundell, from Albany, New York, who had been the city editor of the *Albany Times-Union*.
[20] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 10, 1948, 44.

encouraged the "slap-happy combination of what makes a city desk tick."[21] Only the crustiest or most out-of-touch editors would eschew joking, pranking and teasing in their newsrooms.

Creating cubs: newsroom humor directed at new staff

Despite dreary job prospects, uneven training and uncertain possibilities for promotion, cubs remained optimistic about their careers in the newsrooms. Reflecting this, some of the aspirations of cubs made their way into verse. These echoed their hopes, anxieties and daily dramas (and boredoms):

Although I'm a cub still, I'm full of ambition;
I yearn for a money-creating position,
Where I can be treated as equal by editors,
And live like a rajah and sneer at my creditors.
I want to be boss of a Big City journal,
And have some Executive make me a Colonel.
I want to drive leg men insane on my hunches;
I want to take several hours for my lunches. …
I want to be greeted each morning with praises
From harassed reporters to whom I give raises. …
I want all my staff to be elegant creatures,
Who write their news stories as if they were features. …
…I'd be Emperor robed in royal raiment,
If someone would lend me the first small down payment![22]

In this vein, cubs, or at least those writing in the persona of cubs, wrote their own occupational poetry.[23] More broadly, they were depicted in popular culture as scooping each other, a

[21] Jo and Ritz Fischer, "Why city editors grow gray," *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 7, 1950, 28.
[22] Frank P. Gill, "The cub's dream," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 5, 1939, 12.
[23] "Ray Erwin's Clippings Column," *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 3, 1955, 4. This example, by Jack Freeman, titled, "from one cub to another," went:

The executive ed is very well read,
As you see from the columns he writes.
But he hasn't the spunk to glance at the junk
Turned out by us rank neophytes.

contrast to their more prosaic, if still busy, lives.[24] Along with copy boys and girls, cubs received their fair share of attention in newsroom poetry and cartoons. "To all you cubs," an early example of occupational verse by Henry Edward Warner, praises the cubs for their endurance:

To all you cubs who sit and ponder,
Who watch the City Desk and wonder,
Who spot your stars and count the hours
When you shall earn your praise in flowers,
A word with you; From one who knows
Your spirit's agonies, its throes
Its biting anguishes, its fear …
A word, a passing word of cheer.

That man who chews your choicest phrase
And murders it, he had his days
Of agony, tasted defeat
And groveled at Gamaliel's feet!
Ay, Buddy, once he felt as you,
As in the dumps and quite as blue;
He in his time stood by and groaned,
And your same minor thoughts intoned.

So let that be your spirit's balm!
Stiffen your lip, Son, and be calm!
Rave not, that some inferior wight
Works havoc with the junk you write!
You may read copy, too; then, dammit,
You'll get your full revenge, I'll bet it,
As all these copy readers get it![25]

Other newsroom-centric poetry often celebrated the exploits of cubs.[26]

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[24] Walt Munson, "Now – you take in *reel* life," *Editor & Publisher*, April 20, 1940, 54; another example, by

[25] Henry Edward Warner, "Songs of the craft," *Editor & Publisher*, June 20, 1925, 5.

[26] Henry Edward Warner, "Songs of the craft," *Editor & Publisher*, Aug. 15, 1925, 4. Some of Warner's poems were compiled in *Songs of the Craft* in 1929, published by Ransdell Inc., in Washington. D.C.; James Melvin Lee, the chair of NYU's Department of Journalism and an early journalism educator, said they described "the life through which human communication is possible." It featured poems about editors, reporters, copy editors, cub reporters, the pressman, the stereotyper, early printers, the copy boy, the star reporter, the old subscriber, the desk man, the space pirate, the fire reporter, the answers editor, the proof reader, the makeup man, the columnist, the pinch hitter, the tramp printer and the printer's devil. See James Melvin Lee, "Newspaper life depicted in volume of verse written by H.E. Warner," *Editor & Publisher*, June 8, 1929, 45. In Lee's forward to Warner's book, he describes Warner as his friend, someone "whose very blood is printer's ink and whose bones are the steel of the printing press." Warner was a veteran reporter, editor and humor writer.

Making it: newsroom humor directed at leg men and general-assignment reporters

Like other kinds of reporters, leg men were subject to satirizing.[27] In one newsroom-inspired ditty, the leg man comes off as a hopeless optimist, perhaps a necessary condition for his work:

Hope spring eternal
Beneath this old vest;
I'll get my *By*line,
If you do our best;
But, should you "goof,"
In *Y*arns to come,
You're unemployed,
And I'm a *B*um!![28] [italics in the original]

...here's to the gallant reporters,
The boys with the pencils and the pads,
The calm, undisturbable, cool, imperturbable,
Nervy, inquisitive lads.
Each time that we pick up a paper
Their valorous deeds we should bless,
The bold, reprehensible, brave, indispensable,
Sensible lads of the press.[29]

As the common subject of newsroom poetry, copy boys were teased in person and in verse:

Blessings on thee, copyboy,
Editorial pride and joy,
With thy wondrous leaden feet
And thy matching leaden seat,
Taking copy to and fro
You should have moved an hour ago.

With the sunshine on they face –
Vanishing without a trace
Hours on end has brought it there,

[27] "The Fourth Estate," *Editor & Publisher*, July 2, 1960, 64.
[28] "Ray Erwin's Column," *Editor & Publisher*, March 17, 1956, 4. "Lines to a legman" was credited to a Daniel O'Connell. Note, too, that the italics are in the original.
[29] "The reporters," by "Flaccus in The Conning Tower, *New York World*," *The Quill*, March 1924, 2.

While some editor wonders where
All the copyboys are gone,
Truly a phenomenon.

With thy red lip redder still
(A quickie at some bar and grill),
Let they million-dollared ride,
Deals you pull off on the side,
Petty cash you can accrue,
Soon will make you wealthy, too.

Prince though art. The rewrite man
Only is pedestrian.
Though you want so longingly
To be, some day, just like he.
From my heart I give thee joy,
I was once a copyboy.[30]

Like so much of newsroom life, this can be seem in the cartoons and vocational poetry from the era:

"Get back in with those shots
Of the Tournament of Roses parade
In time of the home edition."
The Managing Editor
Told the new photographer,
"If you have to smash every speed law
On the books!"

The novice followed orders.

"But, hang it all," he protested
In the darkroom, printing up the
Chamber of Commerce float,
I sure did hate to hurry back –
Me with the only camera and
Plenty of films. I had to drive
Right past the grandstand just after
It collapsed—and folks were carrying out
The bodies from the wreckage.

[30] "Ray Erwin's Clippings Column: boy!!!" *Editor & Publisher*, Jan. 1, 1955, 4. The poem was by Irving Fang, who spent time working as a reporter for the Lagos, Nigeria, *Daily Times*.

But I got the float pictures in
On time![31]

The *Headliner*, the in-house paper of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, carried these dueling bits of poetry about reporters (and copy editors, respectively):

Reporter: copyreader's version

He's a dubious wit whose infinitives split
And he's shunned by the civilized world.
Whether sober or drunk, he is full of the bunk.
He's a banner that's seldom unfurled.

Though his grammar is bad and his syntax is sad,
His poor spelling is often much worse.
While his simile[s] click, his lame metaphors mix
And it seems that his typewriter's cursed.

His 'reliable source,' as a matter of course,
Is a janitor, bar-fly or crook
And he's often resolved that where libel's involved
For with booze on his breath he can write to the death,
Though an obit is more in his line,
And whatever is best said in five words or ten,
He can say in a hundred and nine."

Copyreader: reporter's version

He can look down his nose at the journalist's prose,
But his burning ambition's to write.
He's his own paramour and his hobby, I'm sure,
Is dissecting the classics at night.

He is quick to berate what he didn't create
And, with errors, his reason for rage,
There's a smirk on his lips as he catches your slips
And condenses your 'book' to a page.
Your selection of words he consigns to the words,
For he figures the hair must be split.
Though his headlines conceal what the stories reveal,
He gets cocky whenever they fit.

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[31] Edith Bristol, "Get the story," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 8, 1934, 8; the poetry of Bristol, the women's page editor for the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, had earlier appeared in the trade magazine.

He’s a frustrated man and he’ll do what he can
To make sure that a story sounds dead.
Like a French guillotine, if you know what I mean,
He’ll do anything just for a head. [32]

Relations between copy editors and reporters improved, but could still inspire both groups to flights of imaginative disparagement. In a tongue-in-cheek spoof of the famous “yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus” newspaper editorial, Don Henahan, a Chicago *Daily News* copy editor, poked fun at reporters’ poor spelling:

> ‘Daddy,’ the tiny tot wailed, ‘Jackie Jones says there are no reporters. There are, aren’t there, huh, Daddy?’
>
> The kindly, grizzled copyreader looked up from his volume of Proust (in the original French, of course) and regarded the little questioner tenderly. His answer was concise, well thought out, free of any error of grammar, rhetoric, or logic. In this he was merely an everyday, run-of the-rim copyreader.
>
> ‘Yes, Virginia,’ he said, ‘there are reporters. Cynical kiddies may tell you different, but you have only to point to the very shoes on your feet, the clothes that you wear, the toys you play with so happily while daddy is away at the office. These are your tangible proofs. All these fine things are yours because of reporters. If there were no reporters, your daddy this instant might be selling shoes in Goldblatt’s basement for $75 a week, and would then be unable to buy you pretty things, not to mention putting a little away each week toward your Thunderbird.[33]

Reporters, continued Henahan in his fictional letter, came in “three readily recognizable sizes; there is (1) the tall, dashing, rather good-looking youngster who can’t spell, (2) the middle-aged, balding beat man who can’t spell, and (3) the wizened elder-statesman type who can’t spell and carries it off with that certain bravado that comes only after generations on rewrite.” Experienced reporters did not “(a) ever [change] their typewriter ribbon until it looks like the

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[32] Ray Erwin’s Column,” *Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 19, 1959, 4. Bold in original.
[33] “Ray Erwin’s Column: Copyreader’s complaint,” *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 23, 1957, 4.

Union flag after the battle of Ft. Sumter, (b) [wonder] about the difference between like and as, or (c) calls in sick on payday." Other not-so-subtle digs followed:

> That group of fellows clustered eagerly around the dictionary? None of them, I'm afraid, is a reporter. …Oh, there have been some reporters who broke faith with their comrades and slipped into the locker room for a quick glance at a book, but when found out they were spat on, drummed out of the corps. [34]

Reporters were simply "different from us, that's all . . . It is because of their cultural lag, as the sociologists call it, that we are able to live in this insanely lavish manner. Your daddy and his fellow copyreaders try never to think of themselves as superior beings, no matter how obvious this fact becomes." The extended spoof of copy editors' aloofness continues: "And so, Virginia, I can assure you that there is a reporter. He exists as surely as the non sequitur, as surely as the misplaced phrase, the lost clause. In the words of that peerless copyreader, Francois M.A. Voltaire: 'If there were no reporters, it would be necessary to invent them.'"[35] A reporter's reply to this lengthy spoof came from Bud Johns, from the *San Diego Tribune*, who wrote an "Open letter to a little girl named Virginia growing up under an obviously adverse paternal influence:

> Yes, Virginia, there are reporters. Your father has described us as being of three types but all three have something in common: fear that someday our usefulness as working newsmen will end and we will be dragged in to confinement on the rim. We really aren't such poor spellers. It's just that since we're providing jobs for people like your father we ought to give them something to do as well.[36]

Johns goes on, describing some copy editors as "notorious for not knowing what belongs in a news story and how it should be phrased," and how some editors are men who have "learned—from hearsay or very brief exposure—that a reporter runs into such occupational

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[34] "Ray Erwin's Column: Copyreader's complaint," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 23, 1957, 4.
[35] "Ray Erwin's Column: Copyreader's complaint," *Editor & Publisher*, Feb. 23, 1957, 4.
[36] "Ray Erwin's Column: reporter's reply," *Editor & Publisher*, March 9, 1957, 4.

hazards as sore feet, rain, cold, heat, news sources and copyreaders . . . [and] learned that a copyreader's only occupational hazard can be conquered by buying a foam rubber cushion." Copy editors were more worried about their coffee than tangling with annoying politicians, taciturn detectives, arrogant judges and everyday "righteous do-gooder[s]."[37] Copy editors, in Johns' telling, would "rather change typewriter ribbons and sharpen pencils" than dig out stories. As one reporter's tale told it, an "editor spotted him [a reporter] and exclaimed, 'A book-reading reporter—just what we need to put some news sense and life into the copydesk!' And the poor man is still there, dreaming of when he too was a member of the working press." Johns went on:

> You see, reporters don't really despise copyreaders. The fact that such positions exist reassures us. We know that if our arches ever fall the rest of the way or our nose for news clogs up and our usefulness to the paper ends we can always find a spot on the rim where, from a distance, we can watch the greatest occupation in action.[38]

[37] "Ray Erwin's Column: reporter's reply," *Editor & Publisher*, March 9, 1957, 4.
[38] "Ray Erwin's Column: reporter's reply," *Editor & Publisher*, March 9, 1957, 4.

Bibliographic essay and note on sources

This dissertation draws on a variety of primary-source documents, including trade publications, memoirs, textbooks, archival material and contemporary research from early journalism-studies researchers. The driving goal with both source selection and methodology was to tell the story (but also to complicate the story) of the typical news worker in the typical newsroom. A representative sample was constructed, detailed below, that accounted for challenges of access and completeness of print runs over the period in question. This constructed sample of texts also attempted to address some of the built-in biases of the authors by triangulating perspectives. If, for example, an issue or issues of a trade publication addressed a trend in the newsroom (like, say, the use of mobile telephones for reporting), I looked for corroborating evidence of this trend in a memoir, textbooks or the correspondence in archival material. And since some of the contemporary observations of the newsroom were often written by editors or other "bosses," I sought out rank-and-file perspectives. My goal was to examine newsroom work culture from several internal perspectives. This was done in order to best recreate as many of the subtle interactions within it as possible (barring actually being present and conducting an ethnography). While not ethnographic history, strictly speaking, it borrows from some of its elements, including its holistic focus on the lived environment. More

properly social history, or social history applied to media history, it uses theory to inform, but not drive, an inductive interpretation of historical evidence.[1]

Related to concerns over how best to balance the points of view of those in power with those less empowered is the matter of geography. The gravitational pull of New York City in American journalistic culture was quite pronounced throughout the twentieth century. Some of the biggest, most well-resourced, trained, staffed and led newspapers were based there, and its influence casts a long shadow over media-history research. This is, of course, quite acceptable if a researcher is looking at the New York region or its influence specifically. But in an attempt to create a more balanced national case study, I attempted to privilege sources where possible that were not based in New York. In many cases this was limited by the simple fact that many key journalistic organizations were based in the city or had key members who hailed from there, or that held events there that were covered by the trade press. It was often possible, however, to look beyond New York for parallel examples in other urban centers important for the development of newsroom culture. These includes cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and San Francisco, where, for example, important chapters of the American Newspaper Guild (ANG) formed independently of New York.

Sources[2]

Trade publications show debates among news workers about best practices in the field. They also show power relationships. Most were written for and by editors or others in positions

[1] For a longer discussion of how theory informs this dissertation, please see the introduction.
[2] Citations for the trade publications, memoirs, textbooks, archival and other material are in the chapter footnotes. More details about the primary sources consulted can be provided upon request. What follows is an overview of sources and a brief description of methods used to analyze them, primarily via close reading of representative samples.

of authority in the newsroom. When reporters are present, their senior status or collaboration with newsroom bosses meant that they may not have represented the majority views of lesser-empowered peers. Some trade publications, however, sought a more middle road or even advocated on behalf of more ordinary news workers. Of the trade publications examined, the American Society of Newspaper Editors' *Problems of Journalism* (its annual proceedings), the Associated Press Managing Editors' *Red Book* (its annual proceedings) and *Editor & Publisher* (published as a weekly newspaper) fell into a broadly pro-publisher camp.[3] The publications of the ASNE and APME included discussions of members' management problems, such as hiring, firing, budgeting, interactions with local and national governments and issues of distribution and sales. *Editor & Publisher* covered the industry's developments more broadly, including ownership moves, merges, technology adoption, newsroom renovation and construction and other national trends.

Sigma Delta Chi's (later the Society of Professional Journalists') *Quill*, published as a monthly magazine, was at first focused on collegiate journalism through the 1910s, but by the 1920s it had expanded its coverage to focus on how its young members were faring as reporters and junior-level reporters. While often in favor of management initiatives, its stories and editorials also included contrarian perspectives, including critiques of how employers treated employees. The *Guild Reporter*, as the official organ of the American Newspaper Guild, was, of course, pro-union and generally anti-management in tone and coverage. It focused on strikes, the news of local chapters and national trends that affected labor law. Finally,

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[3] In the case of *Editor & Publisher*, it had adsorbed several other trade publications by the 1920s, *The Journalist* in 1907, *Newspaperdom* and *Advertising* in 1925, and *The Fourth Estate* in 1927. Note also that while the American Society of Newspaper Editors' *Bulletin* was also occasionally consulted, it was not a major source for this dissertation. The publications of the APME and the ANPA covered many of the same topics and were instead used to acquire a pro-management perspective.

Journalism Quarterly (formerly *Journalism Bulletin* for its first few years of existence, from 1924-27) contained the work of early journalism-studies scholars, reporters-turned-journalism professors, in many cases. These authors tried to take a painfully neutral tone, usually avoiding direct commentary and conducting and interpreting surveys of news workers and college journalism students.

Whenever possible, existing indexes were consulted when searching for topics of interest to the newsroom, including firing, hiring, technology, unionization, relationships between different types of news workers and interactions with managers. *Journalism Quarterly* (1924 through 1960) and the volumes of the *Red Book* of the APME (launched in 1948 and examined through 1960) were covered by thorough published indexes. A working index was constructed from skimming the content pages of the ASNE's *Problems* (from 1923 through 1960). Relevant articles were read for discussions or research pertaining to newsroom life.

In some cases, however, it was necessary to create a representative sample covering 1920 to 1960. Issues that were examined were skimmed closely for any items, photos or text related to newsroom life. Articles or elements that were related to newsroom life were then read more carefully, and, in many cases, scanned with a smartphone or microfilm reader's camera when possible, identified with date, title, and other temporal tags, and described in source notes arranged chronologically. With *The Guild Reporter*, every first issue of the month was examined from 1934 (its inaugural issue) through 1960.[4] For every five years, this was alternated, so the second issue of the month was examined. With *The Quill*, every available

[4] In this case, its microfilm was examined. Most of the other trade publications were examined in bound hard-copy form whenever possible.

issue from 1917 through 1960 was read. Many of the earliest issues of *The Quill* had to be specially requested through interlibrary loan from Depauw University or the University of Oregon. With *Editor & Publisher*, the most exhaustively utilized source for this study (with more than 400 pages alone of notes, or 157,000 words' worth, taken on more than forty volumes of material), a system of volume sampling was used in which every other volume was inspected. There were often several volumes per year, especially as the magazine expanded.

Bound volumes from 1919 to 1947 were requested in batches of three to five volumes from the University of Oregon's Knight Library; bound volumes from the UW Libraries were available from 1948 through 1960. Due to the wide-ranging nature of the information in each issue, and its cartoons, photographs and illustrations, bound volumes were superior to microfilm for this researcher because they allowed for a more thorough skimming. The first and third issues, and then the second and fourth issues were examined, on an alternating five-volume basis. This accounted for most major historical events, including those of the Great Depression and Second World War. If adjacent articles continued discussions, the narrative thread was continued and issues were occasionally read in addition to the regularly sampled sequence.

A list of journalism textbooks was assembled for this study based on previous research, but also on lists constructed by Joseph Mirando, Linda Steiner and Chalet Seidel.[5] A representative set of autobiographical material, collated from Warren Price's and Roland and

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[5] Will Mari, "An Enduring ethos," *Journalism Practice* 9, no. 5 (2015): 687-703; Joseph Mirando, "Journalism by the book: an interpretive analysis of news writing and reporting textbooks, 1867-1987" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Southern Mississippi, 1992); Linda Steiner, *Construction of Gender in Newsreporting Textbooks, 1890-1990*. Journalism Monographs. Columbia, SC: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1992; Chalet Seidel, "Representations of journalistic professionalism: 1865-1900" (Ph.D. diss., Cleveland, Ohio: Case Western Reserve University, 2010).

Isabel Wolseley's bibliographies, was also utilized.[6] Memoirs and textbooks are challenging sources. As one media historian has noted, they are "often produced by atypically successful journalists who worked for large newspapers." That excludes those who worked for smaller newspapers or those who had less successful and more prosaic careers. But memoirs can still be representative because "these reporters or editors likely would be more influential in shaping the field later than the typical news worker." These sources captured ideas of how journalists should act, how they should think, and where they should go to accomplish their work." As sources, "occupational autobiographies offer the historian other advantages: the illumination of the institutional, social, communal, and personal context of a worker's life."[7] Especially if the memoirists worked in a wide variety of publications, their narratives can illuminate a number of different kinds of newsrooms and occupational experiences. As Linda Steiner has also noted, "autobiographies are needed to understand 'how workers felt about their work . . . whether they resented changes, [or] whether they challenged 'standards.'"[8] For example, the desire for autonomy emerges as an enduring value for news workers, and one more successfully realized in the newsrooms at the end of the era under consideration. This could be seen in the numbers of journalism memoirs, which spiked in the era from 1930 to

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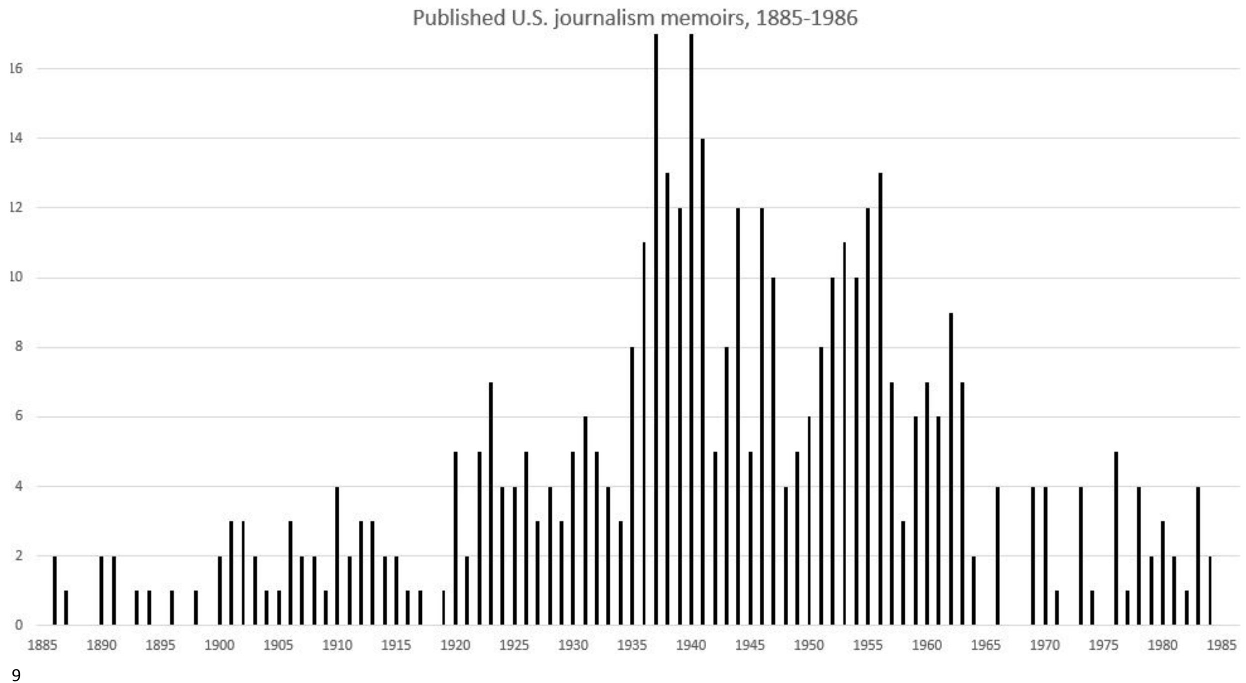
[6] Warren C. Price, *The Literature of Journalism, An Annotated Bibliography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959); Warren C. Price, and Calder M. Pickett, *An Annotated Journalism Bibliography, 1958-1968* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970); Roland Edgar Wolseley, *The Journalist's Bookshelf; An Annotated and Selected Bibliography of United States Journalism* (New York: Chilton, 1961); Wolseley, Roland Edgar, and Wolseley, Isabel. *The Journalist's Bookshelf: An Annotated and Selected Bibliography of United States Print Journalism*, 8th ed. (Indianapolis, Ind.: R.J. Berg, 1986); an older bibliography (one of the oldest, in fact) that was also helpful: New York Public Library, and Carl L. Cannon. *Journalism, A Bibliography* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1924).
[7] Randal Sumpter, "'Practical reporting:' late nineteenth century journalistic standards and rule breaking," *American Journalism* 30, no. 1 (2013), 47.
[8] Sumpter, "'Practical reporting:,'" 48; here he is quoting Steiner, "Sex, lies, and autobiography: contributions of life study to journalism history," *American Journalism* 13, no. 2 (1996): 206-211.

1960. While written about earlier generations of news workers, the fact that so many authors felt triumphant is telling.



[9]

Alongside the memoirs, textbooks, with their idealistic portrayals of news workers, their organizations, and their values show a more static, but still helpful, contrast. Textbooks illustrate, sometimes literally, how newsroom norms have been filtered down through generations of journalists. As long as they are read concurrently with trade literature, memoirs and archival material, they can perform an important triangulating service for the media historian.

[9] These are monthly totals based on the Wolseley and Price bibliographies. While not exhaustive, they do give a good idea of just how popular memoir was as a genre (and despite its challenges to the historian as a primary source) for former and current news workers over the period of this study.

Finally, this researcher made a week-long trip in May 2015 to the National Archives at College Park, Maryland, with funding from the UW's Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies. There, I was able to examine the wartime records of the National Labor Relations Board (renamed the National War Labor Board). These consisted of reports reviewed by the Daily Newspaper Printing and Publishing Commission based in Chicago and composed of representatives from organized labor, the newspaper publishing industry and more neutral representatives, including its chairman, Robert K. Burns, a professor at the University of Chicago. While I had been specifically searching for legal depositions or other court-produced testimonies from news workers, I did encounter the reports of the Commission and the War Labor Board. Some of these reports were important for the chapter on unionization in the newsroom and helped to serve as an additional verification on the salary data reported by (and to) the federal government during the era. A brief follow-up trip to the National Archives-Pacific Northwest Region, based in Seattle, Wash., and conversations with the archivists based there convinced me that there may yet be surviving accounts in various regional centers for the National Archives. These accounts may contain depositions describing newsroom life and conflicts with bosses, specifically pertaining to hours and salaries. Hunting them down is beyond the current scope of this study, however. The Northwest branch of the NA did help confirm how the various regional centers of the National War Labor Board operated, and how its agents and the agents of the peacetime National Labor Relations Board conducted investigations, oversaw elections of labor representatives and generally intervened in labor disputes between publishers and news workers. The intervention of the federal government

through this entity, especially after the war, helped lead to a kind of working détente between the two groups.

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The Quill (Sigma Delta Chi, i.e. the Society of Professional Journalists, or SDC i.e. SPJ)
Editor & Publisher (adsorbed *The Journalist* in 1907, *Newspaperdom* and *Advertising* in 1925, and *The Fourth Estate* in 1927)
The Bulletin (American Society of Newspaper Editors or ASNE)[1]

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Depauw University Archives and Special Collections, Greencastle, Ind.
University of Oregon Knight Library, Eugene, Ore.

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[1] While the other trade publications and primary-source journals were examined for nearly full runs from 1920 to 1960s, the ASNE's *Bulletin* was only consulted occasionally. For more details on these and other sources, see the preceding bibliographic essay.
[2] Interlibrary loans from research libraries around the United States helped to build on the fairly sizable collection of journalism texts held by the UW Libraries, and inherited from the University of Washington's former School of Communications (its journalism school), which merged in 2003 with the former Dept. of Speech to create the Dept. of Communication. I should thank Richard Kielbowicz for lending from his extensive private collection, as well as the estate of Donald E. McGaffin, for also permanently lending dozens of texts from its collection.
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