

Introduction to Media

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7/9/22

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Preface

This book is a work of passion from the authors and the result of a deluge of requests from students.

The authors

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Britten regularly teaches campaigns, writing, strategy, branding and mass media courses. She developed the new permanent course, Event Planning for Branded Experiences + Activations, and the special topics course, Keeping Up with the Kardashian Brand.

In addition to teaching courses, Britten served as the UNL Ad Club advisor since for five years, growing its membership and fundraising efforts to record levels. She advised the UNL National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) team for three years. Britten planned the annual NYC Media Tour for last three years, yielding the largest groups to take advantage of this opportunity. She regularly mentors students through independent studies, graduate professional projects and honors projects. Her students have won Gold and Silver ADDYs awards, AMA Prism and merit awards, and Best in Show at AIGA Nebraska SHOW.

Britten is the Lieutenant Governor for AAF's District 9. In this role she is responsible for the district American Advertising Awards competition as well as supporting AAF clubs in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri. Britten served on the AAF Lincoln board for five years. She was the last president of AAF Lincoln as she was instrumental in the merging of Lincoln and Omaha chapters to create AAF Nebraska. In addition to her presidency, she served as a co-chair for the 2021 American Advertising Awards for Nebraska. Prior to those roles she was the Education Co-Chair and worked with other volunteers and students to revitalize and rebrand the fall professional development conference for students.

Prior to joining the CoJMC faculty full time, Britten was the head of marketing for the Americas region at a global manufacturing company largely focused on branding, event planning and copywriting. Concurrently she was an adjunct instructor at University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Nebraska Wesleyan University. Britten also spent several years in non-profit programming and marketing, as well as working at advertising and marketing agencies in Lincoln.

She earned her undergraduate degree in business administration from Peru State College in Peru, Nebraska, and graduated from University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2013 with a master's in journalism and mass communications. Britten is pursuing a Ph.D. in human sciences with a specialization in leadership studies at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research interests include female leaders using humor as a discursive strategy.

In her spare time, she loves DIY projects, talking about her dog Kevin, runs a growing small business, and traveling. She and her husband are closing out their quest to tour all U.S. state capitol buildings, with only Alaska to go.

Matt Waite is a professor of practice at the College of Journalism and Mass Communications, teaching reporting and data journalism. He is also a graduate of the college, earning a Bachelor of Journalism degree in 1997. In 2020, he earned a Masters of Science in Business Analytics.

Prior to joining the faculty, he was the senior news technologist for the St. Petersburg Times of Florida and the principal developer of the Pulitzer Prize-winning PolitiFact.

In 2007, he began working as a hybrid journalist/programmer, combining reporting experience and Web development to create new platforms for journalism. The first platform he developed was PolitiFact, a website that fact checks what politicians say. The site became the first website awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2009. After PolitiFact, he and the New Products Development Team built journalistic products involving entertainment listings, high school sports, local crime and real estate. His projects tripled traffic to high school sports content, doubled local audience, won awards and accounted for more than 50 percent of all traffic to the St. Petersburg Times websites in less than a year.

Before becoming a Web developer, he was an award-winning investigative reporter. He began his journalism career at the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette in Little Rock, covering police and breaking news, including deadly tornadoes and the crash of American Airlines flight 1420 in 1999. In 2000, he moved to the St. Petersburg Times, covering crime and city government in a suburban county. In 2003 he moved to the metro staff of the Times and later the investigative staff. From 2005-2007, he co-authored a series of award-winning stories about Florida's vanishing wetlands. That work was later expanded into a book, "Paving Paradise: Florida's Vanishing Wetlands and the Failure of No Net Loss," published in 2009 by the University Press of Florida.

In 2009, he co-founded Hot Type Consulting, a company that builds applications for media outlets. Hot Type has helped launch a major new non-profit journalism entity in the Texas Tribune and has produced award-winning websites for other clients.

He is married to fellow University of Nebraska-Lincoln CoJMC graduate Nancy (Zywiec) Waite and has two children.

1 The First Amendment

Without it, media looks very different in the United States

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” – The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Catch all that? It's only 45 words but they may be among the most important 45 words in American life.

Put simply: The First Amendment of the Constitution guarantees five freedoms:

1. Speech - you are free to speak your mind.*
2. Press - the government has to stay out of media.*
3. Religion - the government can't start a religion and can't stop you from practicing yours.*
4. Assembly - you can peacefully gather for whatever you want.*
5. Petition - you can tell the government what you don't like.*

* Some restrictions apply; more on this over this entire course.

! Important

Arguably the most important word of the First Amendment is the very first: Congress. What does the amendment mean by Congress? Just the 535 Senators and Representatives in Washington? No. **Congress means The Government** from the President down to the local dog catcher. Any layer of government is covered by Congress in that first word of the first amendment.

As you will find, nothing in media and its intersection with culture is simple. There are tons of quirks, exceptions, wrinkles and situations that just don't fit simple narratives. And the history of a free press and free expression in the United States is often impacted by the direction the wind is blowing. As this is a course in media, we're going to focus on freedom of expression – speech and press specifically.

1.1 Origins of the freedom of the press

For most of history around the world, expression was not free. The last thing you wanted to do was say something bad about the king, or the khan or the Pope for that matter. People with a lot of power tend to want to protect it, which is why history is littered with stories of people being hung, burned, banished and worse for speaking out against the government.

The advent of the Gutenberg Press in 1450 is one of the most significant inventions in world history. It made written materials more widely available to the masses. Literacy flourished. And so did censorship.

For centuries, the English crown regulated the printing press through licensing the printers and authors, appointing censors to decide what could and could not be printed (Blasi (1995)). But in 1640, a new Parliament implemented a series of changes that amounted to the suspension of the licensing regime. The result: an explosion of publishing of religious and political ideas that weren't seen before. One historian found that in 1640, 22 pamphlets — think of a kind of a cross between a book and a magazine, not the throwaway folded paper we have now — were published. In 1642, the number jumped to 1,966.

But in 1642, civil war broke out in England between royalist and anti-royalist factions. And in 1643, Parliament re-instituted government licensing of printers, and with it the attending censorship.

Enter John Milton of Paradise Lost fame. As in one of the greatest writers in the English language. The circumstances of Milton coming to write one of the greatest works about the importance of a free press are interesting — see Blasi (1995) — but in 1644 he wrote Areopagitica, a work that appealed to Parliament to do away with government control of the printing press. Milton's argument? How can people understand arguments if they can't get all sides? For example: How can they understand Good if they don't also understand Evil? (Milton (1882))

It was from out the rinde of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evill as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the World. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evill, that is to say of knowing good by evill. As therefore the state of man now is; what wisdome can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without the knowledge of evill? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian.

Also in Areopagitica is one of the most influential passages on what became early American thinking about freedom of the press: That government controls of speech hurt the search for the truth, and that the free exchange of ideas does more to suppress bad ones than the government can.

And though all the windes of doctrin were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licencing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falshood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the wors, in a free and open encounter. Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing.

The American colonists experience with the crown and the English experience with government shaped the creation of the U.S. Constitution.

One significant milestone was the trial of John Peter Zenger, publisher of the *Weekly Journal*, in 1735. Zenger's publication criticized an unpopular royal governor of New York - see Linder (2001) for just how unkind history is to this governor. Zenger faced trial for "seditious libel", a trial where the unpopular governor attempted to influence things by rigging the jury pool. At trial, Zenger's attorney, Andrew Hamilton, was not allowed to defend Zenger with the truth – a foundational principle in libel law to this day. Instead, with no law to back him up, Hamilton could only appeal to the jury's sense of justice (Linder (2001)). Hamilton told the jury:

It is natural, it is a privilege, I will go farther, it is a right, which all free men claim, that they are entitled to complain when they are hurt. They have a right publicly to remonstrate against the abuses of power in the strongest terms, to put their neighbors upon their guard against the craft or open violence of men in authority, and to assert with courage the sense they have of the blessings of liberty, the value they put upon it, and their resolution at all hazards to preserve it as one of the greatest blessings heaven can bestow...

The verdict: Not guilty. Linder (2001) says no law changed that day, but the signal that colonial feelings about freedom of expression were made clear.

Indeed, 53 years later, in Federalist 84, written in 1788, Alexander Hamilton actually argues *against* a Bill of Rights, arguing that putting popular rights into words isn't necessary. In fact, saying that putting these rights into words would open the door to people who would seek to infringe upon them. In other words: Why say what the government can't do when the Constitution never gave them the power in the first place? (Hamilton, Madison, and Jay (2009)).

I go further, and affirm that bills of rights, in the sense and to the extent in which they are contended for, are not only unnecessary in the proposed Constitution, but would even be dangerous. They would contain various exceptions to powers not granted; and, on this very account, would afford a colorable pretext to claim more than were granted. For why declare that things shall not be done which there is no power to do? Why, for instance, should it be said that the liberty of the press shall not be restrained, when no power is given by which restrictions may be imposed? I will not contend that such a provision would confer a regulating power; but it is evident that it would furnish, to men disposed to usurp, a plausible pretense for claiming that power. They might urge with a semblance of reason, that the Constitution ought not to be charged with the absurdity of providing against

the abuse of an authority which was not given, and that the provision against restraining the liberty of the press afforded a clear implication, that a power to prescribe proper regulations concerning it was intended to be vested in the national government. This may serve as a specimen of the numerous handles which would be given to the doctrine of constructive powers, by the indulgence of an injudicious zeal for bills of rights.

Hamilton's argument would not win, and the First Amendment, along with the Bill Of Rights, was ratified in 1791 when Virginia becomes the 11th state to approve of them.

But by 1798, Hamilton is proved right, ironically by his own political party. The Federalist majority in Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts aimed at silencing criticism of President John Adams, a Federalist, and the Congress, controlled by Federalists. The Sedition Act made "any false, scandalous and malicious writing" against Congress or the President illegal.

Imagine the Sedition Act in the age of Twitter.

But really, you don't have to. The acts were, to put it mildly, unpopular.

Within weeks of the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts, thousands of people swarmed into the small town of Lexington, Kentucky, and passed ten angry resolutions that called the acts void and the entire Federalist agenda "unconstitutional, impolitic, unjust and a disgrace to the American name." As the summer wore on, the assault on the recent legislation spread from Kentucky to the crucial states of Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. (Bradburn (2008))

John Adams, the Federalist president at the time, would go on to lose the next presidential election to Thomas Jefferson and by 1802, most of the Alien and Sedition Acts had been repealed.

They would not be the last attempts by the U.S. Government to restrict the press.

1.2 What is not protected by the First Amendment?

Censorship is the prohibition or suppression of information considered obscene, politically unacceptable or a threat to the state/government/security. Typically, when people talk about censorship, they talk about the government or the sovereign – someone with power to arrest people if they publish something. And typically, when we talk about censorship, we talk about direct action – arrests, closing businesses, destroying pamphlets, confiscating works.

A consistent refrain through American history is that Censorship is Bad. But throughout history, not all censorship comes from the government and not all action is direct. And not all cases are clear cut.

And, under the law, not all government restriction of speech is censorship. There are a handful of instances where the courts have said government interventions into free expression are constitutional.

1.2.1 Sedition

Any reading of American history will find a consistent tension between free expression and the government during times of war. Sedition is conduct or speech that incites rebellion against authority. The Crown commonly accused colonists of sedition prior to the American Revolution. The Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798 were a response to a potential war with France. During the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln and the government he lead would suppress more than 300 newspapers – many sympathetic to the Southern cause. An example, from Bulla (2009), gives a taste: “Marcus ‘Brick’ Pomeroy, editor of the LaCrosse (Wisconsin) Democrat, called Lincoln a widow-maker and wrote that the president deserved to be assassinated.” Some historians have argued that Lincoln had a change of heart during the war about the suppression of newspapers, but this remains an area of significant criticism of Lincoln.

Another Sedition Act passed Congress in 1918 that imposed severe penalties for any criticism of the government’s efforts around World War I. President Woodrow Wilson, congressional leaders and even leading newspapers urged passage of the act (Boyd (2009)). The impacts were profound: Newspaper coverage of the war – as you’ll see below – could hardly be called objective during the period. And around the country, people were persecuted for criticizing the war. According to Boyd (2009), More than 2,000 cases were filed against people, with more than 1,000 convictions.

One of the most significant court rulings to come from the Sedition Act came in *Schenck v United States* where Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. attempted to draw a line between protected and unprotected speech by using the “clear and present danger” test. Schenk, a socialist, was convicted for discouraging draftees to respond to draft notices. Holmes, in upholding the conviction, wrote that the line between protected and unprotected speech should be “whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent.” (Purdy (2009))

Congress repealed the Sedition Act in 1920, and Holmes’ Clear and Present Danger test in free speech cases continued to be used until the 1950s, when the courts began using other tests for balancing rights vs restrictions.

And if sedition sounds familiar to you, it should: More than a dozen members of far right groups have been charged with seditious conspiracy in relation to the January 6 attack on the US Capitol. A significant issue at trial: Where does free speech end and sedition begin?

i Sedition vs Free Expression at UNL



Figure 1.1: The front page of the Omaha World Herald, June 19, 1918. Among headlines claiming “United States Smashes Hun Battle Plan” and “Germans Realize U.S. Will Turn Tide” is a headline naming three professors the Regents demanded be removed from UNL for insufficient patriotism.

In April of 1918, the Nebraska Council of Defense - which dedicated itself to snuffing out criticism of the war effort and identifying people who weren’t sufficiently patriotic - sent a letter to the Nebraska Board of Regents that there were professors on campus who were not supporting the war to their satisfaction.

The council accused the university’s American history department and the graduate school “lacks virile American leadership: but in place of this a spirit of philosophic pacifism has obtained; and in the department first named, sympathy has been expressed for those who have lately outraged the patriotic sentiment of the loyal people of Nebraska.” The Board of Regents – the elected body that oversees the university system – convened a loyalty inquiry to determine who wasn’t patriotic enough. By the time they were done, 14 professors would be publicly accused of not being sufficiently patriotic toward the war. What did these professors do to draw the attention of the Council of Defense and the Regents?

Witnesses accused Professor G.W.A. Luckey, who founded the Teachers College (now the College of Education and Human Sciences), of saying German Kaiser Wilhelm II was “a nice looking man” and that the German school system was good. Previously, he had been accused of saying the U.S. should only send old men to die in the war, saving the young, which was construed as trying to sabotage the war effort.

These accusations were front page news on May 31, 1918.

Later, the defense council accused Professor Harry Wolfe, who brought the study of psychology to UNL when he came to the school and was considered one of the top psychology scholars in the world at the time, of insufficient patriotism. Why? Because he kept his donations to the Red Cross private, instead of posting a card displaying his donation. He also warned of the dangers of patriotism.

“He said that patriotism was inclined to carry people off their feet and lead them to extremes. It was this tendency, he said, that made patriotism dangerous. Patriotism, he said, got Germany into the war,” the Omaha World-Herald quoted a witness telling the Regents. Wolfe did not deny saying it.

In the end, 11 professors publicly accused would be exonerated, including Wolfe. The regents would demand Luckey’s resignation, along with two others. Luckey would be the only one to resign – the other two professors retired.

Wolfe would die suddenly of a heart attack one week after he was exonerated. That December, the Daily Nebraskan student newspaper would memorialize him in an editorial, writing “He gave to the limit of his physical, mental and moral strength to his students.”

1.2.2 Prior restraint

It isn’t until 1931 that prior restraint – the government stopping the publication of something it doesn’t like – is found to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. In *Near vs Minnesota* in 1931, the court ruled that prior restraint was unconstitutional, but left the door open to cases where the speech was obscene, incites violence or reveals military secrets.

But in 1971, the New York Times and the Washington Post were leaked a massive trove of documents called the Pentagon Papers. It was a secret history of the Vietnam War, filled with never-before-seen memos and frank assessments of the war that contradicted the government’s public statements about the war.

On June 13, 1971, the Times began publishing stories based on the Pentagon Papers. Within 48 hours, the attorney general of the US asked the Times to stop, saying it would do “irreparable injury to the defense interests of the United States.” The Times refused, and the Nixon Administration went to court, and won an injunction stopping the Times from publishing more stories on June 15. The Post then began publishing stories from the trove, and were similarly sued, but were not stopped from publishing. (Pember (1971))

In 15 days, the case made its way to the Supreme Court, a record. The government, echoing Near, argued the publication of secret documents would cause harm to national security. The court, however, ruled on June 30 that the Nixon Administration had not proved its case, and that “Any system of prior restraints of expression comes to this Court bearing a heavy presumption against its constitutional validity.”

1.2.3 Copyright infringement

Copyright is an exclusive legal right given to creators – or someone they dedicate – for their creative work. The copyright protects the copyright holder from people taking it and using it for their own purposes. As such, using someone's copyrighted materials without their permission is not protected by the First Amendment.

This happens every day on social platforms. In the first half of 2021, there were 772 million copyright claims on YouTube alone (Trendacosta (2021)). That's 4 million *per day*.

Congress passed the first Copyright Act in 1790, which granted copyright holders their rights for 14 years. At the end of that time period, a work would enter the public domain, meaning anyone *could* use it for any purpose. In 1976, Congress extended creator rights to 50 years after the author's death – corporate copyright holders got 75 years to hold on to their works. Then, in 1998, Congress extended the copyright grant another 20 years. Why? Because Mickey Mouse was set to become public domain in 2003. (Christiansen (2004))

In 2022, Winnie the Pooh entered the public domain. Shortly after, a Hollywood studio announced they were making a horror movie starring the beloved bear from the children's stories.

The grant of copyright isn't absolute: There is something called **fair use** which *is* allowed under the First Amendment. Fair use grants some limited uses of copyrighted materials for things like criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship and research (Office (n.d.)). What constitutes fair use is complicated – more complicated than we will go into here. The most important factors to determining if something is fair use vs a copyright violation are the purpose of the use, the amount of the work used and the effect on the copyrighted work. Drawing the line is hard, but quoting from a copyrighted work, such as been done here many times is fine. Reprinting that document is too much. Uploading copyrighted works to YouTube to try and get the ad money? Violation. Using bits and pieces in your video critique on YouTube? Allowed. A clip of a movie that doesn't give away the ending? Fair use. A half hour that gives it all away, keeping people from having to go to the movies to find out what happens? Violation.

1.2.4 Libel and slander

Can your professor get up in front of class and call you a dim-witted, bed-wetting Iowa fan? Ignore the redundancy for a moment. Can your professor get up and defame you like that?

The answer is ... it depends.

First, we have to figure out what kind of suit you're going to file. **Libel** is defamation in written or broadcast form. **Slander** is defamation in spoken form. So our professor accusing you of ... shudder ... liking Iowa is spoken, so it's in the slander neighborhood. This determines what kind of suit you're going to file.

Now, there's a three part test to figure out if you're going win your defamation case:

1. Is falsely accusing you an Iowa fan defamatory – meaning, does it hurt your reputation? In this class, it absolutely does hurt your reputation.
2. Does your professor falsely accusing you of being an Iowa fan do actual harm to you? You are going to have to prove that the defamatory statements did actual harm to you – a lost job, emotional anguish, something like that.
3. Did your professor do anything to determine the truth? Were they negligent in saying what they said? Should they have known better?

So falsely saying defamatory things is not protected by the First Amendment. Sort of.

Because libel suits have the power to limit a free press, there's complications to this that the courts have put into place.

Truth is the first defense in a defamation suit – libel or slander. If it's true, it's not defamation, no matter how much harm was done to your reputation. If you showed up to class, even just once, wearing an atrocious mix of yellow and black with a diseased bird logo on your shirt, then you're likely to lose your suit. You just get to suffer because of your poor choices.

It gets harder still if you're a public person. Famous people and elected officials are two types of public persons. One of the most important free press cases to come to the Supreme Court was New York Times vs Sullivan. In 1960, a group of civil rights activists took out a full page ad in the New York Times criticizing police tactics in southern cities. The ad didn't name anyone, but the police commissioner of Montgomery, Alabama sued the times for libel. In an Alabama court, the commissioner won, and the New York Times was fined \$500,000 (that's about \$5 million in today's dollars). ("New York Times Company v. Sullivan" (n.d.))

The Times appealed to the Supreme Court, where the court ruled that Alabama libel law violated the First Amendment. What the court determined – unanimously – in 1964 was that it wasn't enough for a public person to prove something was false. Instead, the public person has to prove that the statement was made with "actual malice", a reckless disregard for the truth. In other words, the newspaper would have to know the statement was false and published it anyway, knowing it would hurt the person ("New York Times Company v. Sullivan" (n.d.)).

Times vs Sullivan is seen as one of the cornerstones of a free press in the US, but it's come under new criticism recently. On June 22, 2022, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas filed a dissent in a case the court refused to hear that challenged Times vs Sullivan. A religious group called the Coral Ridge Ministries Media, Inc. sued the Southern Poverty Law Center in Alabama Court (again) for defamation after the SPLC labeled them a "Anti-LGBT hate group." The Alabama Court ruled that the religious group could not prove their case that being called a hate group was false because it was a debatable and ambiguous label. Thomas, in his dissent, said the court should review the actual malice standard because it has "no relation to the text, history, or structure of the Constitution." Thomas – no stranger to media

criticism – wrote that Times vs Sullivan media organizations can “cast false aspersions on public figures with near impunity.”

1.2.5 Obscenity

In 1968, Marvin Miller – called by some the “King of Smut” – mailed advertisements for four books. They were called, and no we are not making this up:

- *Intercourse*
- *Man-Woman*
- *Sex Orgies Illustrated*
- *An Illustrated History of Pornography.*

Also included in the ads? A film called “Marital Intercourse.” Miller was charged under California law prohibiting the distribution of obscenity, and Miller appealed his case all the way to the Supreme Court, claiming the materials were not obscene and his First Amendment rights had been violated.

Unlike many of these tales of people fighting for their rights before the court, this time the court upheld the convictions 5-4. However, in the process, they established a three-part test for obscenity cases.

1. “Whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest”
2. “whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law”
3. “and whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.”

Prior court rulings had ruled that any material designated as obscene was “utterly without any redeeming social value.” The Miller ruling, however, granted some leeway, requiring the material to have “serious value” and that “local community standards” would guide if something was obscene or not (Jr. (2009)).

“It is neither realistic nor constitutionally sound to read the First Amendment as requiring that the people of Maine or Mississippi accept public depiction of conduct found tolerable in Las Vegas, or New York City,” Chief Justice Warren Burger wrote for the majority. He also added that materials that “depict or describe patently offensive ‘hard core’ sexual conduct” constituted obscenity. (Jr. (2009))

In other words: A nude painting was not obscene. A porn video depicting intercourse might be.

The Miller test remains today, but it has taken on new criticism in the internet era. How do you apply “community standards” for porn over the internet? What community, the sender or the receiver? What does community even mean in the internet era?

1.2.6 Violation of privacy

All of these other areas that the First Amendment doesn't protect have big court rulings that define them as offer a legal guide going forward. One area that doesn't is the **right to privacy**. Courts, generally, have established that there is a right to be left alone, a right to not have your daily business become public. The courts have also granted leeway to news media covering public figures, who because of interest in their lives have reduced privacy rights.

Lines are always being drawn and tested. California has paparazzi laws which are designed to reduce some of the worst behaviors of paparazzi and give celebrities some breathing room, but come perilously close to infringing on free press rights.

In a recent significant case, a Florida court in 2016 ordered Gawker, an entertainment site, to pay \$140 million to Terry “Hulk Hogan” Bollea after the website published a two-minute video involving the former professional wrestler, nine seconds of which show him having sex with a friend's wife. There's a lot to the case – including Bollea's legal fees being funded by a billionaire with a grudge against Gawker for outing him – but ultimately, Gawker settled for \$31 million and was sold off and shut down months later. Gawker had argued that Bollea was a public figure - the legendary wrestler also had a reality TV show about his life around the time - and that publication of the tape was protected by the First Amendment. The jury disagreed, saying the tape had no news value and that Bollea's privacy had been violated. There's substantial disagreement over if the case has any real impact on First Amendment law, but it illustrates how privacy cases are decided in the United States: Does a jury view the actions as a gross violation? If so, it is. If not, it isn't.

1.3 Current controversies and misunderstandings

Public misunderstanding of just what the First Amendment does and does not do have been around as long as the Republic. A 2019 Freedom Forum survey of Americans found that 4 percent could name the right to petition the government as a right in the First Amendment. Meanwhile, 16 percent thought the First Amendment granted the right to bear arms and 14 percent thought it granted them the right to vote. (“State of the First Amendment Survey” (2019)).

Public understanding of the First Amendment would come to head during the Trump presidency, where supporters of the former president were removed from social media platforms, culminating in Trump himself being removed from Twitter and Facebook.

Prior to Trump being removed from the major social media platforms, the Freedom Forum found that 65 percent of Americans believed social media companies violate users' First Amendment rights when they ban accounts. Not surprisingly, more Republicans (71 percent) thought this than Democrats (62 percent).

Reminder: The First Amendment applies to the government. Remember *Congress shall make no law?*

1.4 More Reading

- Read 15.2, 15.3 and 15.4 in Understanding Media and Culture
- Read pages 1-10 of The Knight Foundation's [College Student Views on Free Expression and Campus Speech 2022](#).

2 Newspapers

The creaking backbone of our news media diet

Very few students of media these days read a printed newspaper, but they were enormously important in the foundations of the country and in what we know as media today. Thomas Jefferson, famously, wrote that if presented with a choice between government and no newspapers and newspapers but no government, he'd choose newspapers.

The people are the only censors of their governors: and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution. To punish these errors too severely would be to suppress the only safeguard of the public liberty. The way to prevent these irregular interpositions of the people is to give them full information of their affairs thro' the channel of the public papers, & to contrive that those papers should penetrate the whole mass of the people. The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers & be capable of reading them.

Newspapers – or more specifically what they have evolved into now – form the backbone of the reported factual information we get through media. There are still, even now, more reporters working in written media than any other. Most of the reported information you see people talking about – facts around major news events – were first reported by people who work for what used to be newspaper companies.

To get a foundation, read Media And Culture 4.2 and 4.3.

2.1 Professionalism and ethics

Now that you've read a little of the history of newspapers, let's focus in on a period of time around the late 1800s and early 1900s. Prior to this time, the daily newspapers in a city were funded by the political parties and were nakedly partisan. If you were this party, you read this

paper, and the circulation of your paper depended on the size of the party. The papers had no issue at all accepting patronage from the parties – when the party was in power, the paper would get government printing contracts. It was in the late 1800s that you had the rise of the Penny Press, where newspapers learned they could make more money selling to *everyone* instead of just one party. They shoved the nakedly partisan stuff to the editorial pages and put the news on the front page. Around that same time, you had the rise of Yellow Journalism, where newspaper publishers realized they could make *even more* money by sensationalizing the news – playing up the lurid and titillating aspects to get people to buy it. More readers meant more ad dollars and that meant more profit.

Around this same time – at the turn of the century – Adolf Ochs, publisher of the New York Times, tried a new strategy. Instead of sensationalizing the news with the other yellow journalism papers, he and his Times would professionalize the news. They would begin hiring educated men (and later women) – people with a college education, which was far less common than it is now – as editors and reporters to build a news product based on accuracy and the idea that an informed democracy was a healthy democracy.

Slowly, other papers began to join this professionalization movement. According to the history of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 10 editors from midwestern papers met in 1912 on a trip to Montana and started talking about what became the ASNE. The organization formally began in 1922, electing officers and more importantly drafting a code of ethics.

That code of ethics would form the backbone of professional journalism ethics to this day. The Society of Professional Journalists would, in their words, borrow it in 1926, wrote their own in 1976 and revised it in 1984, 1987, 1996 and 2014.

The main points of the current SPJ Code of Ethics are:

- Seek Truth and Report It: Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.
- Minimize Harm: Ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect.
- Act Independently: The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public.
- Be Accountable and Transparent: Ethical journalism means taking responsibility for one's work and explaining one's decisions to the public. (Spj (2014))

Does every news organization achieve these high minded principles every day? Of course not. Some not ever. But few, if any, other professions have these kinds of ethical principles publicly stated and adhered to.

2.2 The death of newspapers

Newspapers have been killed off more times than a horror movie villain who keeps coming back in a half-dozen sequels. The first invention to kill newspapers was radio. Then television was to do in both radio and newspapers. The internet has killed newspapers at least a half dozen times since the rise of the commercial internet in 2006.

A consistent theme of this class – which you will hear about here first - is this: Technology does not kill off a form of media. It does, however, force that form of media to evolve.

Among the most comprehensive views of media in the United States is the Pew Research Center's State of the News Media report. They maintain a wide array of datasets about various forms of media over time and we will spend a great deal of time with them in this course.

If all you looked at was print circulation, then yes, newspapers are clearly in trouble. Weekday circulation of all newspapers in the US is now 24.3 million on the average weekday ("Newspapers Fact Sheet" (2022)). That's the lowest point since the data was tracked starting in 1940, when weekday circulation was 41 million.

But let's put that another way. In 1940, there were 132 million Americans. That means in 1940, 31 percent of the total population – from babies to elderly people - got a newspaper during the week. But total population isn't a great metric here. How about households? According to the Census, there were 35 million households in the US. That means not only did most households get a paper, millions of them got *more than one*.

By 2020, there's 126.8 million households. That means less than 20 percent of households got a newspaper during the week. And it's been declining every year since 1988. Peak newspaper circulation happened in 1973, and while the number of newspapers remained relatively stable until the late 80s, it was not keeping up with population growth.

Now, while that is bad, for decades it didn't seem to matter in terms of newspaper revenues. Circulation had been flat or declining since the 1970s, and started declining every year in 1988, but newspaper revenues from advertising, the main source of income for newspapers since the Penny Press days, peaked in 2005, and has fallen off a cliff since.

Sometime in 2019 or 2020, the industry as a whole crossed an inflection point: More revenue now comes from circulation revenue – now meaning digital subscriptions – than advertising. Newspapers are now entering a new phase not seen since the Penny Press – the business model is based on keeping subscribers happy, not advertisers.

All of this disruption has had a profound impact on the number of jobs in newspapers.

Newsrooms – where the news product is made – employ reporters and photographers as the people who go out and gather the news. They report to editors, who assign stories, edit them and figure out what the most important news of the day is to guide decisions on what to emphasize. In the old days, that meant laying out the front page and the various sections.

What was the biggest news of the day? That got the biggest headline on the front page. Now, editors have a variety of emphasis points, from the website, to mobile apps to push notifications, email newsletters and social media channels.

The free-fall of advertising dollars in newspapers has meant a similar free fall in newsroom employment. According to Pew's data, newsroom employment since 2004 peaked in 2006, right before the real estate bubble popped dragging the global economy down with it. In 2006, more than 74,410 people worked in newsrooms in the US. By 2020, it was 30,800.

2.3 New business models

For most of the history of the US, newspapers have been a for-profit business. The size and quality of the paper has been dependent on the business that fueled it through the twin sources of revenues – advertising and circulation. And for more than a century, advertising dollars were print advertising dollars.

Surprisingly, that story remains largely the same, even though newspapers have been chasing digital ad dollars since the late 1990s. According to Pew, digital ads make up only 40 percent of newspapers advertising revenues.

That share should continue to grow, as audiences for newspapers online continues to grow.

But a growing number of news organizations are adopting a not-for-profit model. The first major news organization to be a non-profit was The Associated Press, which was founded as a non-profit. A few other non-profit journalism organizations – most notably the Center for Public Integrity in 1989 – had been around but it was not commonplace.

In 2007, the news world changed with the founding of ProPublica, funded by a multi-million gift from the Sandler Foundation – to the tune of \$10 million per year. ProPublica is a non-profit entity. They publish stories on their website, but their main channel for publication has been distributing stories to news partners – other news organizations. The organization has since won six Pulitzer Prizes.

Since ProPublica's founding, hundreds of non-profit entities have sprung up. The Institute for Nonprofit News claims there are more than 400 independent news organizations.

In Nebraska, two events since 2020 have altered the journalism landscape in the state significantly.

The first event was Warren Buffett selling the Omaha World-Herald and 30 other newspapers owned by Berkshire Hathaway to Lee Enterprises, which until then had owned the Lincoln Journal-Star, the Columbus Telegram and the Fremont Tribune, among others. After the sale, every daily newspaper in the state save two – the Norfolk Daily News and the McCook Gazette – would be owned by Lee Enterprises.

Then, in 2021, two non-profit newsrooms formed in the state: [The Flatwater Free Press](#) and the [Nebraska Examiner](#). Both were started by former World-Herald journalists. The Flatwater Free Press has been focused more on statewide issues, investigative reporting and the ProPublica model of distribution. The Examiner is more focused on politics and state government coverage.

3 Radio

The birth of mass communications

Ask a college kid if they listen to the radio and you'll get a shocking number who say yes. Peel the layers back a bit and you'll find out that most of them are listening in the car and they're doing it because their car is too old to have an aux cord to play Spotify through it.

Sound familiar?

Believe it or not, you're not alone — not close — and you're a small part of the second great revolution in media after the invention of the printing press: The ability to broadcast sound over dozens of miles, creating mass audiences around something other than written words for the first time in history. And just like the printing press, radio changed the world.

You need to read Chapter 7 in Media and Culture through 7.4. You can skip 7.5.

3.1 Radio since the internet

Read the [Pew Research Center's Audio and Podcasting Fact Sheet](#). That'll give you some solid background, but here's some more context, along with some highlighting of important bits from Pew.

Current trends in radio show both the continued reach of radio, but also a industry in flux:

1. Nielsen reports that the number of people who listened to the radio in the last month is above 80 percent. The lowest group, obviously: Gen Z, who still reported listening to 50 minutes of radio each month. The largest listeners by percentage? Gen X, who can still remember recording songs off the radio onto cassette tapes so you could listen to your favorite song whenever you wanted. The people who listen to the most radio by minutes a month? Boomers, to no one's surprise.
2. [According to Inside Radio](#), revenue at radio stations – all formats – is growing.
3. At the same time, Radio and Television Business Report shows that in 2021, [nearly 800 radio stations closed down](#). The reason: consolidation. Audiences are being funneled toward fewer stations.

4. According to the Pew Research Center, revenues for “all news” format stations is down.

As is the number of newsroom jobs in radio.

5. Meanwhile, online audio listening is going steadily up.

6. And podcast listening is approaching 50 percent of the adult population have listened to a podcast in the last month – roughly half the same group of people who listened to old school radio in the same time period. In 2008 it was only 9 percent of people had listened to a podcast.

! Important

Spotify, over the last two years, has invested \$1 billion in podcasting. The platform told investors in June that they now host 4 million podcasts, up from 500,000 in 2019. Revenue on that billion dollar investment? In 2021, it was about \$215 million. However, Spotify believes podcasts will be a *\$20 billion* market eventually.

4 Television

Radio with pictures

Some of the most indelible moments of the last 50 years happened, for most of the world, on television. Ask your grandparents where they were when men landed on the Moon and it's likely they'll remember watching it on television. Ask your parents about the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, or the fall of the Berlin Wall. Or the first Gulf War. If you have older siblings, their historic memories will be from watching 9/11 on television.

On Thursday, Sept. 8, 2022, Bernard Shaw, a longtime anchor at CNN, died at age 82. Shaw was perhaps most famous because he was based in Baghdad in 1991 when the first Gulf War broke out with the American air campaign beginning. Shaw went live on CNN as bombs struck buildings around him. At multiple points during the night, CNN broadcast images of tracer fire streaking the skies in a vain attempt to defend against the American onslaught. At multiple times throughout the night, Shaw and fellow correspondent Peter Arnett broadcast from under a table in case the windows blew in. Eventually, Iraqi military authorities cut CNN off.

Many believe Shaw's broadcasts from Baghdad officially launched 24-hour news as a viable format.

It's worth watching the first few minutes Shaw went on air, paired with video from the control room as history happened.

Television is such an important technology that it's difficult to envision modernity without it. And it's hard to underestimate just how important it was in media and culture.

You need to read Chapter 9 in Media and Culture through 9.3. You can skip 9.4.

4.1 Technology + Television

The difficulty with studying television right now is that things are changing so fast that you can get a wildly incorrect view of things depending on when you look. For example, media outlets shouted from the mountaintops that in the end of 2020 and the start of 2021, their audiences were a record levels. Driving that audience: A global pandemic. A summer of

protest around the violent death of a black man in Minneapolis at the hands of a police officer. A presidential election that garnered massive interest and generated similarly massive turnout. Then, a defeated president, like never before, attempted to stop his election loss. There was an insurrection on January 6 – leading to a historic *second* impeachment.

In short, there was a few things going on. And people tuned in by the millions.

Then, by the summer, those ratings tanked.

Who could have predicted? Donald Trump, for one. And it wasn't post election sour grapes. He predicted it in 2017. Farhi (2021)

"Newspapers, television, all forms of media will tank if I'm not there," Trump said, "because without me, their ratings are going down the tubes."

He wasn't wrong.

Cable television news channels, after record ratings in 2020, have fallen off a cliff in 2021. Grothaus (2022)

In 2020, Fox News was up more than 40 percent over their 2019 ratings. CNN was up a staggering 78 percent over 2019. Since then? Fox down 35 percent. CNN down 40. Both over their 2020 numbers.

It's continued in 2022.

Cable news isn't the only change happening.

Widespread broadband internet access is changing how we consume television in massive ways that will take decades for us to truly understand the impact. Example: For 30 years, cable television was the dominant technology for getting a signal into American homes. The numbers only went up.

No longer.

According to the Pew Research Center, 76 percent of American households had cable or satellite TV in 2015. By 2021, it's 56 percent. Rainie (2021)

It's likely that sometime in late 2021 or early 2022, we crossed the line where fewer than half of all American households get TV through cable. Biggest declines: the 18-29 and 30-49 age brackets. In the 65+ age group, 86 percent had it in 2015, 81 by 2021. Grams and Gramps aren't switching to streaming just yet.

The impacts aren't well known just yet. There's mixed messages.

4.1.1 Local TV news

According to Pew, the audience for local television news is largely steady over the years: Down about 500,000 viewers from 2016 to 2020, but up from 2018.

Also steady is newsroom employment. There are almost exactly the same number of local TV newsroom jobs in 2020 as there were in 2003.

4.1.2 Network news

The audience news in network news – ABC, CBS, NBC – is that audiences grew year over year up to 2020. But that's where this data ends. Like cable news and newspaper subscriptions, network news audiences likely have dipped since as well.

5 Advertising

Read Understanding Media and Culture Chapter 12.1. We'll read 12.2 next week.

5.1 Advertising evolved

You've taken a spin through the Understanding Media and Culture's advertising section to learn about the history of the industry. Just as media has evolved, changes in society and technology have ensured the advertising industry keeps time with these changes and is sometimes the cause of change.

So, what is advertising? Let's start with what is marketing. According to the [American Marketing Association](#), "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." Marketing is also easily understood through the four Ps of marketing: product, place, price, and promotion. Advertising, and public relations, falls under the fourth P, promotion.

Advertising is any paid placement of content intended to reach an audience about an organization, good, service or idea. In advertising, you are communicating a simple, fixed message to encourage a group of people (or target audience) to do something. You want them to think, feel, or behave in a specific way by motivating them to purchase, attend, believe, understand, sign up, show up or encourage them to take action. It could be as simple as having them comment, like and subscribe below. Advertising is not always about selling, but that is generally a key element in what the brand wants the audience to do.

5.2 Brands and branding

As consumer culture grew and more products were available on shelves it was crucial for them to distinguish themselves from one another. Think for a moment, how do you know Tide is Tide and Colgate is Colgate? Do those products mean something to you? It's because of the brand that has been built. According to Hanson, a brand name, "is a word or phrase attached to prepackaged consumer goods so that they can be better-promoted to the general public through advertising" Hanson (2022). Some of the oldest brands around are still in production (and maybe your dorm room) today. Levi Strauss & Co. has been around since

1853, Quaker Oats since 1877 and Campbell's Soup since 1869. Each of these brands has built and maintained brand equity—perceived value—in the minds of their consumers by focusing on generating a favorable image, perception and attachment to the product, company name, brand name or trademark. However, brands go beyond just consumer packaged goods like Kellogg's cereals or Starbucks coffee. The National Parks Service, the NFL or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln likely have some level of brand equity built with you and they are not something tangible.

The goals of branding are simple to list but hard to do. Belch & Belch define the goals of branding as:

1. “Building and maintain brand awareness and interest
2. Develop and enhance attitudes toward the company, product or service
3. Build and foster relationships between the consumer and the brand” Belch and Belch (2021)

Brand identity is the visual approach to brand building. When you read Nike you may immediately think of the swoosh, the line “Just do it” or the block logo... but you may also recall a personal experience you’ve had with the brand, recollections of quality products or an athlete associated with the brand. Branding is achieved through the help of advertising, and public relations.

5.3 The advertising business

For the advertising business to work, there are a handful of players involved. The client is the brand, product or organization that desires to reach a group of people. Those people are the audience. An audience is a targeted group of folks based on several characteristics. The avenue to reach the audience is through media. And who makes all this happen? Well, that is the advertising agency.

5.3.1 The client

The client is the brand, product or service that wants the interest or attention of a specific group of people. The client at a large company would consist of a team of folks in a marketing department, but the client could also be one person who owns a local candle shop. The client will generally source an agency and come to the meeting with a list of goals an advertising campaign hopes to achieve. These goals could include increase sales, launch a new product, rebuild trust or get the current audience to buy more of something. The client is responsible for paying the agency a fee for their research and creative output, but also the cost of placing that creative output to reach the audience.

Spending in advertising is grand, look at the clients who spent the most in 2021.

5.3.2 The audience

The audience is a group of people that are attractive to the client. Typically referred to as the target or target audience, they are segmented by demographics, psychographics and geodemographics. Demographics are if we had to put folks in categories like age, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, household income, and education. This information helps the agency better understand the basics of an audience. Psychographics is more about what the target believes and values, and how it behaves. One common framework is the VALSTM Framework. This framework measures the motivation and resources of the audience. [Visit the website](#) to learn more about each category in the framework.

Geodemographics follow the understanding that people who live in the same area have similar demographics and psychographics. A resource for understanding geodemographics is Claritas Prism. [Visit the resource and type in your own zip code to learn more about the audience profiles in your area.](#) This program breaks audiences into social and lifestyle groups. For example, the Lincoln zip code 68506 has five distinct groups of people who live there. Looking at one of them, the Middleburg Managers, we can learn the following:

Upscale Younger Family Mix

Middleburg Managers tend to be upper middle-class with solid white-collar jobs and graduate-level educations. Established in their suburban and second-city lifestyles, they enjoy attending sporting events with their families when they aren't traveling frequently for business. They are more thrifty with their spending, despite an upscale income, investing in a college savings plan and their future retirement.

Then, Claritas Prism shows us where this group of people can be commonly found across the U.S.

Why is this important? Because you need to know who the audience is so the client and agency can work together to define:

- What message will resonate with this group
- Where the audience consumes media

5.3.3 The media

It is so important that agencies recommend smart strategy and tactics for where to place media. The agency is spending the client's money afterall. The golden rule in media placement is to meet the audience where they are. If I was a media planner I would not recommend a client trying to reach Gen Z to purchase ad space on the radio or even Facebook. That generation

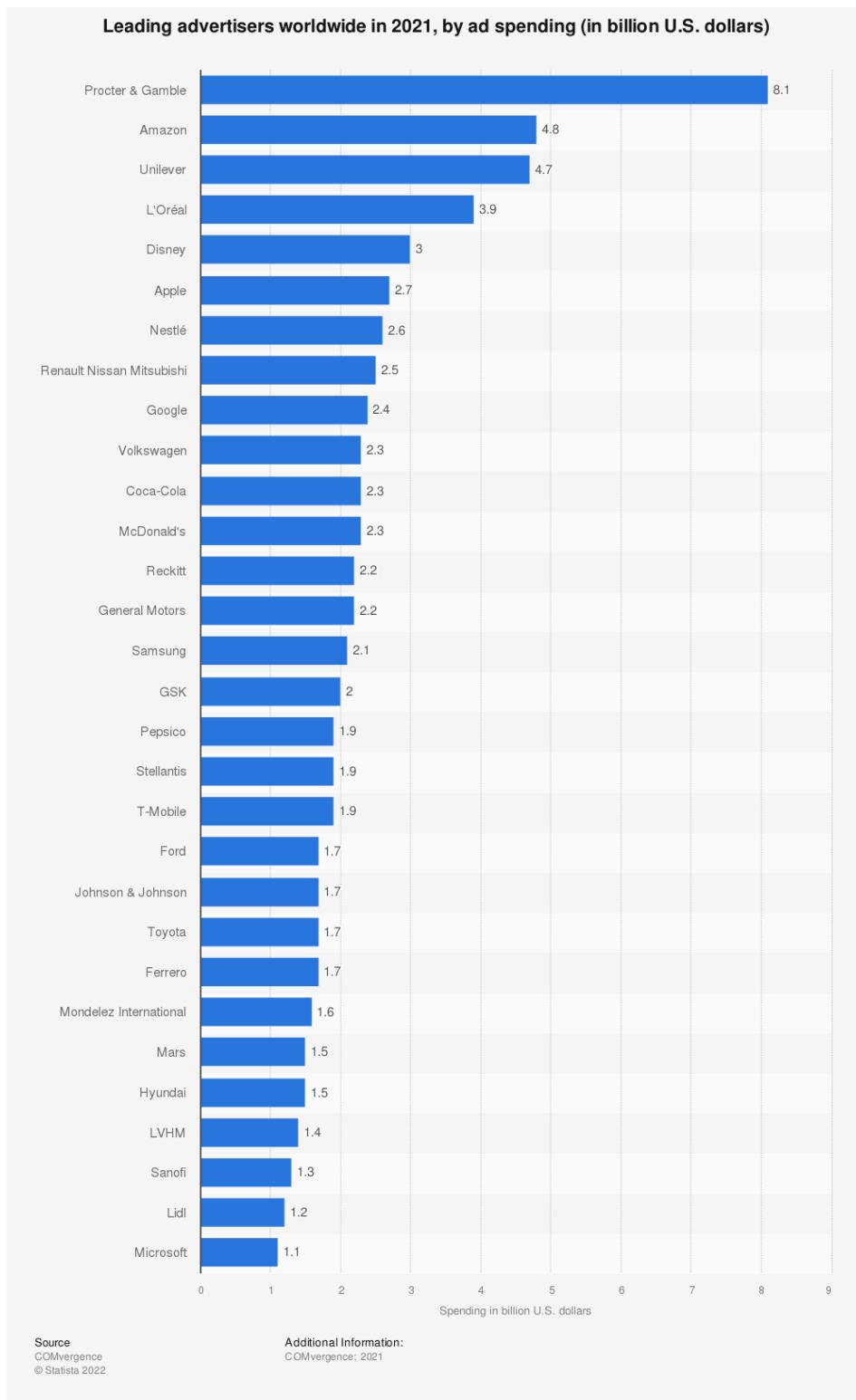


Figure 5.1: Leading advertisers worldwide in 2021. [Source](#)

US VALS™ Framework



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www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals

Figure 5.2: US VALS Framework. [Source](#)

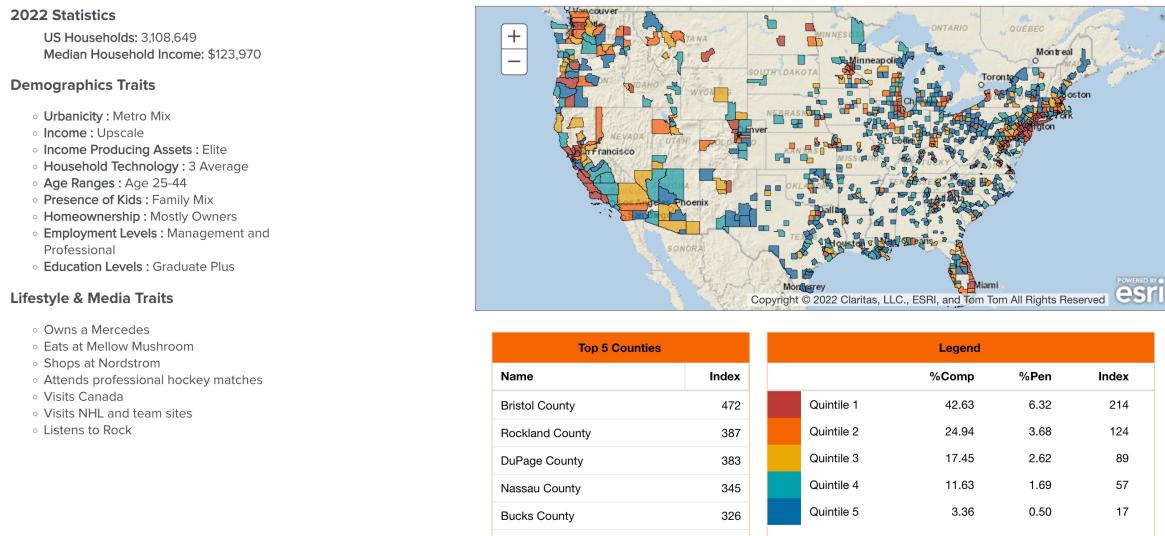


Figure 5.3: A screenshot of the Claritas Prism platform

isn't consuming content on those platforms so it would be hard enough to reach them, let alone motivate them to do something.

Advertising is everywhere, and we work to avoid it. Advertisers are interrupting whatever it is you were doing... watching TV, listening to a podcast or mindlessly scrolling on social media. Regardless it is disruptive and unwelcome. As a society, we work to avoid ads through time shifting, ad blockers and paying extra for premium streaming in video or music to avoid ads. It's estimated [we see between 4,000 and 10,000 ads per day](#), so the media chosen matters. Media planners need to cut through the clutter and noise to reach the intended audience. The places we see advertisements almost feel endless nowadays. It seems advertising can be placed anywhere now, here are some common locations:

- Newspaper
- Radio
- TV
- Magazines
- Out-of-home
 - Busses
 - Bus Stops
 - Taxi toppers

- Billboards
- Digital billboards
- Wallscape
- Shopping Malls
- Airports
- Movie theaters
- Podcasts
- Internet
- Search Engines
- Social Media
- Video games
- Mobile apps

Traditional media refers to any form of media that existed before the internet. Looking at the list above traditional media encapsulates print (newspaper and magazines), radio, TV and non-digital elements of out-of-home. [Digital advertising spend surpassed traditional ad spending in 2019](#). The future of advertising is digital, and the dollars spent in that space continues to climb.

[Alpha Efficiency](#) takes a dive into the trends of digital ad spending, stating:

“According to [eMarketer.com research](#), the total amount spent on digital advertising this year in the US will grow 19% to \$129.34 billion, which is 54.2% of estimated total US ad spending. Those statistics include all internet-connected devices and various advertising formats, but mobile ads will keep the authority with almost two-thirds out of total ad spending with around \$87.06 billion in 2019.”

5.3.4 The agency

Now to the final player in advertising, the agency. This is the organization that does the work to create an advertising campaign. An ad campaign is done in phases: research, strategy, creative, media buying and measurement. Each of these phases involves a team of people and collaboration with the client.

Research is when the agency works to know everything about the consumer, client, category and brand. Primary and secondary research is conducted to gain a full scope of what is happening in the market. Generally, the client will come with a problem and the research phase looks to find answers and set the direction for the ad campaign. Account planner

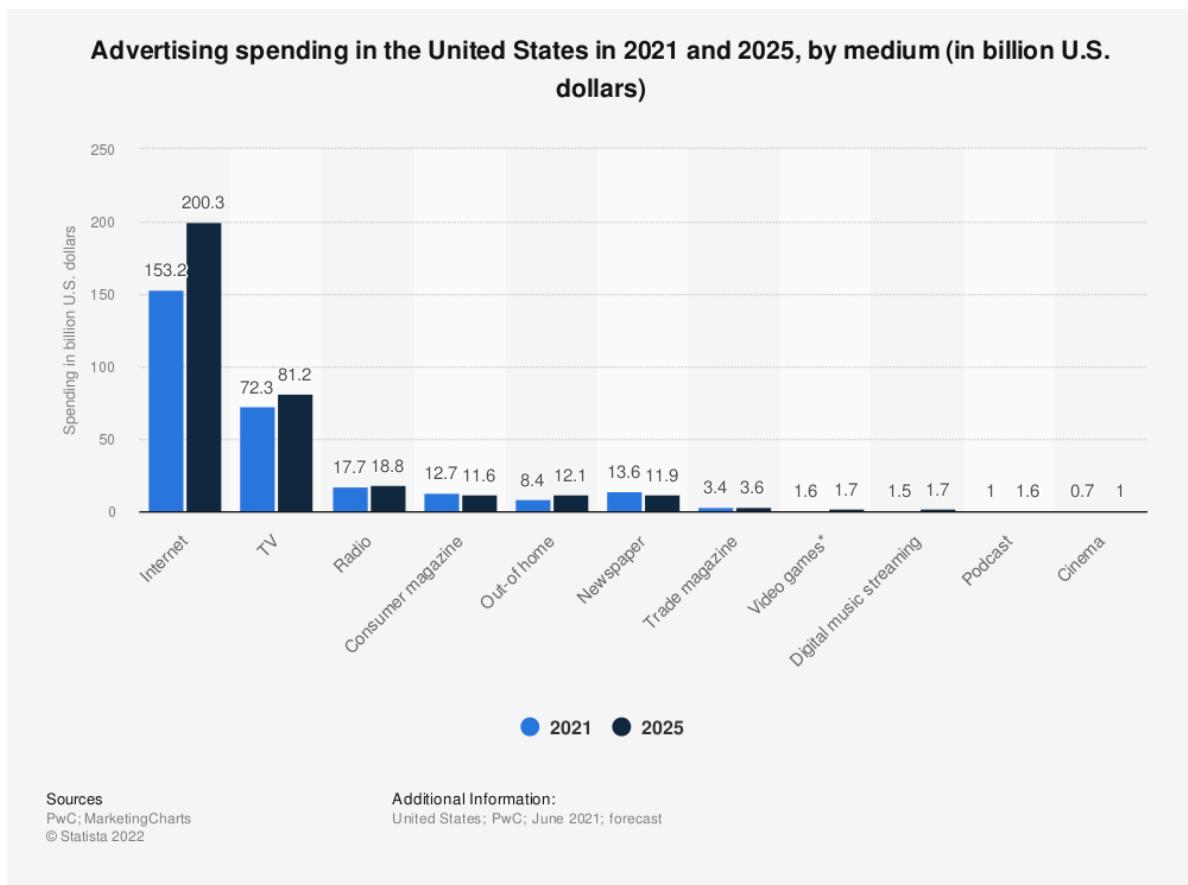


Figure 5.4: Advertising spending in 2021 and 2025 by medium

and strategist are general job titles you might see in an agency for those who conduct the research.

Strategy is the next step. Once the agency has answered the questions on why the problem exists and how to solve it, the strategist develops the plan to move forward. You often see the same person conduct the research and set the strategy for a client. A strategist is a person who often develops the creative brief for the creative team. A creative brief is a short document that synthesizes the consumer problem, campaign goals, information about the audience and initial plans for creative direction. Every agency and organization will have a different approach and outline to the brief.

Creative is the piece we see as consumers. Creative departments are led by a creative director who is the final stop for the creative work before a client sees it. The creative teams are split by written and visual. A graphic designer or art director is responsible for the visual work the audience sees, while a copywriter writes all the content an audience reads or hears. Creative departments can contain photography and videography at larger, full-service agencies, while some outsource this work to a production house.

Media buying is just that. The person is responsible for selecting, placing and negotiating media rates to pay the outlet to run the creative work. The person in this role might be called a media buyer, media strategist or media planner. This individual will often use tools to assist in where the best locations to place media and that will help in the negotiation process. This is also the person responsible for providing metrics and benchmarks for how to work is performing. Programmatic advertising is a new form of media buying where the buying and placement of media is automatic in a real-time bidding situation. This is where that rug will follow you around the internet. You have a digital profile, and the ad space is bought in real-time based on your online behavior.

Measurement is an overall look at how the campaign is performing. Is the work that is out in the world helping the client meet the goals that were set? This is an ongoing process once media is placed. Especially with the growth in digital media, it is easy to adjust both the placement and timing as well as creative in real-time.

Account services is the final group of people involved in the advertising campaign process; they are not responsible for a specific step but rather involved in the entire process. This is the client-facing group made up of account executives, account coordinators, account managers and project managers. This team is responsible for keeping in communication with the client, ensuring timelines are met and budgets are not exceeded. This is the group that often works to upsell the client on additional work and services and is responsible for ensuring the client is happy with the process and progress.

Many of the world's largest advertising agencies are part of larger holding groups. The big four are WPP, Omnicom Group, Publicis Groupe and Interpublic Group of Companies (IPG). Other notable holding companies include dentsu inc. and Havas. [Read this article](#) to learn more about what agencies fall under the groups, annual revenue, locations, services offered and notable clients.

5.4 More reading

Read [Evolution, influence, and trends in digital advertising](#)

Read [Ethics and advertising](#)

Read [Michelob Ultra Courtside Campaign case study](#)

6 Public Relations

Read Understanding Media and Culture Chapter 12.2

6.1 Public Relations and Advertising

You already know a great deal about PR from your first reading. We hope you took notes over the Four PR Models, the functions of PR and the anatomy of a PR campaign. While this reading discusses how PR is replacing advertising, we live in a society where the two work together not against one another. We teach from an integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach in our college, and that is what you will see in the industry at some of the biggest firms like Edelman and Weber Shandwick. According to the [American Marketing Association](#), IMC is, “a planning process designed to assure that all brand contacts received by a customer or prospect for a product, service, or organization are relevant to that person and consistent over time.” It notes all brand contacts here, thus incorporating the functions of both advertising and public relations.

While the two work together, there are big differences, here are some common characteristics to distinguish the two:

Advertising	Public relations
Simple/fixed messages	Complex messages evolve over time
Paid placement of content	Transmitted indirectly
Controlled publicity	Attempts to secure favorable media coverage
Owned, earned, paid (OEP)	Paid, earned, shared, owned (PESO)

The [Public Relations Society of America](#) defines public relations as, “The total communication strategy conducted by a person, a government, or an organization attempting to reach and persuade an audience to adopt a point of view.”

6.2 Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and Ethics

PRSA is the professional development and guiding body of the public relations profession. You may have heard of PRSSA? That's the student chapter here at UNL. This organization works to educate and connect public relations professionals and students. This organization has a guiding code of ethics, read more below:

PRSA Code of Ethics

The PRSA Code of Ethics applies to PRSA members. The Code is designed to be a useful guide for PRSA members as they carry out their ethical responsibilities. This document is designed to anticipate and accommodate, by precedent, ethical challenges that may arise. The scenarios outlined in the Code provision are actual examples of misconduct. More will be added as experience with the Code occurs.

PRSA is committed to ethical practices. The level of public trust PRSA members seek, as we serve the public good, means we have taken on a special obligation to operate ethically.

The value of member reputation depends upon the ethical conduct of everyone affiliated with the PRSA. Each of us sets an example for each other – as well as other professionals – by our pursuit of excellence with powerful standards of performance, professionalism and ethical conduct.

Emphasis on enforcement of the Code has been eliminated. But, the PRSA Board of Directors retains the right to bar from membership or expel from the Society any individual who has been or is sanctioned by a government agency or convicted in a court of law of an action that fails to comply with the Code.

Ethical practice is the most important obligation of a PRSA member. We view the Member Code of Ethics as a model for other professions, organizations and professionals.

PRSA Member Statement of Professional Values

This statement presents the core values of PRSA members and, more broadly, of the public relations profession. These values provide the foundation for the Code of Ethics and set the industry standard for the professional practice of public relations. These values are the fundamental beliefs that guide our behaviors and decision-making process. We believe our professional values are vital to the integrity of the profession as a whole.

Advocacy

We serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those we represent. We provide a voice in the marketplace of ideas, facts, and viewpoints to aid informed public debate.

Honesty

We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public.

Expertise

We acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience. We advance the profession through continued professional development, research, and education. We build mutual understanding, credibility, and relationships among a wide array of institutions and audiences.

Independence

We provide objective counsel to those we represent. We are accountable for our actions.

Loyalty

We are faithful to those we represent, while honoring our obligation to serve the public interest.

Fairness

We deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, vendors, the media, and the general public. We respect all opinions and support the right of free expression.”

Source: [PRSA Code of Ethics](#)

6.3 Crisis Communications

There are several functions of PR, but one that we will focus on in this class and an industry exercise is crisis communications, also called crisis management. Crisis management is the process by which an organization deals with a major unpredictable that threatens to harm the organization, its stakeholders, or the general public. Every organization or PR professional may deem a crisis different based on its industry and defined publics, but the following are common features of a crisis:

- Situation materializes unexpectedly
- Decisions are required urgently
- Sense of lost control
- Pressure builds over time
- Reputation suffers
- Communications are difficult to manage

A PR crisis isn't always when there is a mechanical failure like the BP Oil Spill or the unethical treatment of people like The Body Shop, crises can be categorized in any of the following types:

- Natural disasters
- Malevolence
- Technical breakdowns
- Human breakdowns
- Challenges
- Mega-damage
- Organizational misdeeds
- Workplace violence
- Rumors
- Recent PR Disasters

It is not hard to find a brand, organization or public figure getting itself into trouble with something that was said, done, posted or something they didn't do and should have. Here is a recap of a few recent PR disasters and how the company responded.

6.3.1 Ulta Beauty

On May 1, 2022, the first day of mental health awareness month, Ulta Beauty sent the following email to its subscribers:

Initially seems harmless if you don't follow designers and brands. Casual language to match the brand's tone and highlight a popular brand of perfume the retailer carries. The issue? Kate Spade died by suicide in 2018 from hanging. The internet was not kind to the brand due to its insensitivity. Shortly after realizing the error, the brand sent an apology email, seen below.

Come hang with Kate Spade 💕

Free shipping on any \$35 purchase



Figure 6.1: A screen capture of an email from Ulta Beauty

6.3.2 Kendall Jenner and Pepsi

In April 2017, on the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination, Pepsi launched a short-form video commercial with white supermodel Kendall Jenner. This is also on the heels of a growing Black Lives Matter movement across the US, Canada and UK after the deaths of Alton Sterling and Philando Castille in July 2016. Watch the spot below.

The reaction across the internet was swift and unpopular. Bernice King, Dr. Martin Luther King’s daughter, tweeted, “If only Daddy would have known about the power of #Pepsi.”

Pepsi quickly realized its error in attempting to join the conversation about social justice reform and the Black Lives Matter movement. The brand responded to Bernice King’s tweet with the tweet below, issued a separate statement and pulled the ad.

The consequences of this PR blunder had lasting effects on both Pepsi and Kendall Jenner’s brand. According to BrandWatch, Pepsi had an increase of 21,000% in mentions, but the sentiment was negative. The most common phrase associated with online discourse was “tone deaf.”

6.4 More reading

Read [Crisis Management and communications](#)

We're sorry.



TO OUR ULTA BEAUTY COMMUNITY,

In an email we recently sent featuring the kate spade new york brand of fragrances, a very insensitive choice of words was used and for that we are very sorry. We have the utmost respect for the kate spade brand and the joy it brings to the beauty and fashion industries. At Ulta Beauty, our teams are human, and this was truly an error with no intent to do harm.

We're keenly aware that May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Mental health is a very serious and important issue in this country, and not something we would ever take lightly. We are working internally to ensure something like this never happens again.

To the Spade family and to our kate spade brand partners, we're deeply sorry - and to our guests, we apologize for this upsetting mistake. Simply put, this is below our standards.

Thank you for understanding as we strive to do better.

Figure 6.2: A screen capture of Ulta's emailed apology



Be A King ✅
@BerniceKing

...

If only Daddy would have known about the power of
[#Pepsi](#).



11:15 AM · Apr 5, 2017 · Twitter for iPhone

127.2K Retweets **6,778** Quote Tweets **250.3K** Likes

Figure 6.3: [Bernice King's tweet](#)



Pepsi @pepsi · Apr 5, 2017

Replying to [@BerniceKing](#)

...

We at Pepsi believe in the legacy of Dr. King & meant absolutely no disrespect to him & others who fight for justice.

Pepsi was trying to project a global message of unity, peace and understanding. Clearly we missed the mark, and we apologize. We did not intend to make light of any serious issue. We are removing the content and halting any further rollout. We also apologize for putting Kendall Jenner in this position.

333

1,497

2,151



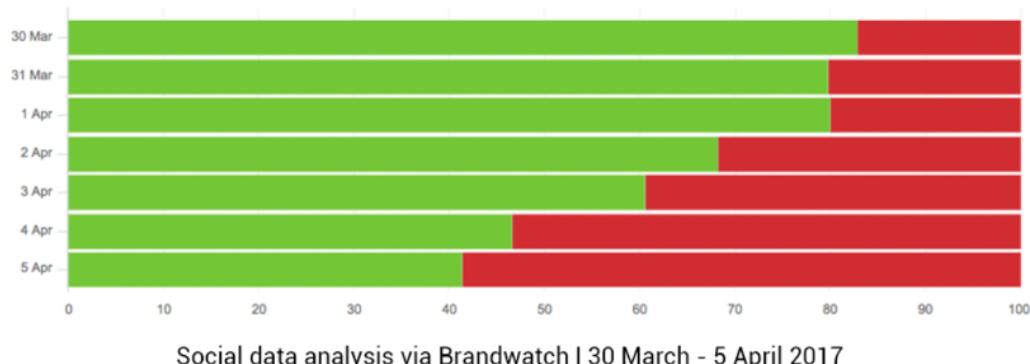
Figure 6.4: A screen capture of Pepsi's apology tweet.

Plummeting sentiment

People were not pleased with the brand's commercial.

Looking at sentiment-categorized mentions, April 4th's conversation sentiment was 53.3% negative. The 5th was more negative still, with 58.6% of mentions categorized as negative.

Sentiment towards Pepsi plummeted after ad release



Read Susan G. Komen: Know Your Girls case study

7 Media Economics

One of the oldest discussions in media is What Killed (insert old form of media here)? One of the most common forms of this game is What Killed Newspapers?

The contestants over the years:

- Craigslist, which made classified ads free, [and took 40 percent of newspaper revenues with it.](#)
- Google/Facebook/Twitter which have separately and collectively been blamed for “stealing” newspaper’s content by displaying headlines.
- Newspapers themselves, for being slow to adapt to the internet, and then when they did, doing so with ad-choked experiences that load slow and look like newspapers on the internet.

All three of those arguments fail, for different reasons. But one of the most common is the [“original sin” argument](#). It goes something like this: To encourage people to use newspaper websites, they gave their content away for free, when people were paying a premium for getting the paper delivered to their home. When people learned they could get it for free vs hundreds of dollars for a paper product that was getting less and less useful, they went for the free version.

This argument fails because it collapses years of internet evolution into a modern understanding of what is possible today. The truth is, many newspapers did charge for their services early, or partnered with platforms that did. And in the very early days of news on the internet, using a credit card to buy something was difficult, and dangerous to your account because of rickety security. But people voted with their feet and their dollars: paid services like AOL and Prodigy gave way to people just wanting the open web. And newspapers online profits faded along with consumer’s distrust and dislike of increasingly aggressive advertising schemes on the internet.

But this notion that newspapers started giving it away and always gave it away is wrong. History is much messier than that.

7.1 The strange early days of online news

To trace the steps to how news companies got onto the internet, we're going to divide our time up into two chunks: the Viewtron era, and the internet era.

7.1.1 The Viewtron disaster

It might surprise you to know that newspapers were trying to break out of the ink-on-paper format as early as the 1970s, when Knight Ridder, one of the largest and most successful newspaper chains of the time, and communications giant AT&T began partnering on a technology called **videotex**. They built a product on it called **Viewtron**, and in it, you can *see* the internet era coming.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/sgYkp9nJnE>

Knight Ridder invested millions into making Viewtron work. They recruited other newspapers – including the Omaha World Herald – and many of them were still trying to make it videotex-based systems work into the early 1990s.

Viewtron was an utter failure.

Between research and development and business start-up costs, AT&T and Knight Ridder invested more than \$150 million – that would be \$447 million today – to get Viewtron off the ground.

The AT&T Spectre system, which you needed to get videotex to your TV, cost \$600 originally. Inflation adjusted, that's \$1,788 today. That's before the monthly costs of the service. And AT&T expected to charge \$900 per terminal after getting people onto the platform.

The business proposition here is that you're going to spend \$2,000 and tie up your phone line and one of your televisions to read text on your TV.

The public didn't buy it. Viewtron, as a company, lasted from 1983 to 1986. Experiments with videotex went on longer. Knight Ridder shut down their Boulder-based R&D shop working on videotex in 1991. The same year, the Omaha World Herald quit trying to sell their videotex service, saying “the public didn't buy it.”

But go back and look at the commercial. Everything you see there, you see today. That commercial is almost 40 years old.

7.1.2 The early internet era

The videotex disaster didn't stop newspapers from trying to put their work onto something other than dead trees. Many local newspapers were pioneers in bringing the internet to their communities – several of them became internet service providers. Newspapers were some of the first content on commercial internet services like Prodigy and AOL. Newspaper's put their work on old internet technologies that pre-dated the web you know today – things liked bulletin board services (BBS) and gopher.

And many of them charged people for access, before advertising became viable. Then, when online advertising began to work, many websites were profitable.

Follow Dave Carlson's timeline of the 1990s, and you'll see a story of fits and starts in the early 1990s to *exponential* growth, to a pivotal moment when the .com bubble popped in 2001 and the world had changed completely in less than a decade.

The roots of media
A selection of events

Year	Event
1990	Oct. 1: GEnie, the online service owned by General Electric, announces it will offer unlimited news and entertainment.
1990 con't	October: Access Atlanta becomes local dialup system offering classifieds, the business section and news.
1990 con't	Oct. 15: Rocky Mountain News in Denver launches an 8-week trial of Ala Carte Edition, a main menu-based electronic newspaper.
1990 con't	Dec. 13: The Electronic Trib, first multi-line, PC-based electronic newspaper system, is launched.
1990 con't	December: USA Today and Prodigy announce an agreement to create classified advertising on Prodigy.
1991	Jan. 26: E&P article says "such daily newspapers" as the Ft. Worth Star-Telegram, Omaha World-Herald and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch have online editions.
1991 con't	February: Omaha World Herald closes its videotex service saying, "The public just didn't buy it."
1991 con't	June: Prodigy, overwhelmed with E-mail, begins charging users who send more than 30 messages a month.
1991 con't	Sept. 6: Despite the E-mail debacle, Prodigy boasts 1 million accounts less than a year after launching.
1991 con't	November: Tribune Co. says it will offer Chicago Online, an America Online service combining its 110 newspapers.
1992	May: Chicago Online, the first newspaper service on America Online, is launched by the Chicago Tribune.
1992 con't	The St. Louis Post-Dispatch launches Post-Link, a service based on the StarText software.
1992 con't	NAA reports 11 newspapers have an online presence in the U.S. and Canada and more than 250,000 subscribers.
1992 con't	February: Gannett's Florida Today launches on CompuServe. Content focuses on U.S. space program.
1992 con't	June 9: Congress removes restrictions prohibiting commercial use of the Internet.
1992 con't	November: Delphi becomes the first consumer online service to offer access to Internet mail, ftp, gopher and news.
1993	January: AOL introduces its Windows version. It adds 290,000 subscribers in the next year.
1993 con't	July 7: Cox Newspapers and Prodigy announce a partnership to put Cox's Atlanta and Palm Beach newspapers online.
1993 con't	May 10: San Jose Mercury News launches Mercury Center on America Online.
1993 con't	August: Mosaic, first graphical Web browser for Windows, is released by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
1993 con't	September: Time magazine says it will launch a service on AOL.
1993 con't	Sept. 25: CompuServe, Prodigy and AOL have a combined 3.9 million subscribers.
1993 con't	Nov. 12: Washington Post says it will create Digital Ink, a separate company to explore online publishing.
1993 con't	Dec. 8: First article about the Web appears in the New York Times under the byline of John Markoff.

1994 More than 3 million hosts exist on the Internet. Editor & Publisher reports about 20 newspaper
1994 con't Jan. 19: The first newspaper to regularly publish on the Web, the Palo Alto Weekly in California.
1994 con't January: The first online venture from the Raleigh News & Observer is Nandoland, a bulletin bo
1994 con't February: America Online hits the 600,000 subscriber mark.
1994 con't March: Nando.net is launched in Raleigh as an ISP, and it begins offering gopher and telnet-based
1994 con't March 13: Access Atlanta, the first newspaper site on Prodigy, is launched by the Atlanta Journal
1994 con't March: Washington Post announces it will put Washington Post Extra on Interchange, Ziff-Davis' ne
1994 con't March 31: Journalist, the first software package allowing users to make a "personalized newspaper" o
1994 con't April: Trib.com is launched as an ISP and Internet news service by the Casper (Wyo.) Star-Tribune.
1994 con't June: The New York Times launches @Times on AOL. The content, mostly arts coverage, is wid
1994 con't June 20: Minneapolis Star-Tribune becomes second newspaper to sign on with Interchange.
1994 con't July: Raleigh News and Observer goes to the net, launching the NandoTimes and the SportsServic
1994 con't August: AOL tops the 1 million subscriber mark.
1994 con't August 24: San Jose Mercury News announces it will add a Web site to its online ventures in the
1994 con't Sept. 7: New York Times says it will put its classifieds on the Internet for a six-month experimen
1994 con't Oct. 18: AOL says it will introduce a Web browser for its more than 1 million members.
1994 con't Times Mirror's Los Angeles Times and New York Newsday launch online editions on Prodigy.
1994 con't Nov. 1: A Guild strike shuts down San Francisco's daily newspapers. Strikers and management
1994 con't Nov. 22: Microsoft launches The NBA Basketball Daily, a proprietary online news service, in con
1994 con't Dec. 6: Boston Globe announces formation of an electronic publishing venture to launch in secon
1994 con't Dec. 12: Seattle Times says it will launch a BBS-based electronic newspaper.
1994 con't December: Prodigy becomes the first consumer online service to offer Web browsing.
1995 Jan. 20: Mercury Center Web launches, complete with advertising.
1995 con't Nando.net reports having 12 employees, 600 paying subscribers at \$20 a month and some 7,700 user
1995 con't March: Chicago Tribune's first Web site, a classified ad service called Career Finder, ramps up.
1995 con't April 19: Eight major newspaper publishing companies announce formation of New Century Netw
1995 con't April: USA Today launches a direct-dialup service that actually is hosted on CompuServe.
1995 con't StarNet from the Arizona Daily Star in Tucson debuts on the Internet. The Star also is an ISP.
1995 con't May: More than 150 newspapers now have online editions, Quill reports.
1995 con't June 10: Rupert Murdoch says he'll put all of News Corp.'s 130 papers online within two years.
1995 con't Consumer online services experience 64% growth rate in 1995 and now reach 8.5 million member
1995 con't June 18: Minneapolis Star Tribune Online launches on Interchange.
1995 con't July: Microsoft launches its online service, the Microsoft Network, or MSN. Charter subscriber p
1995 con't July 17: Washington Post's service, renamed Digital Ink, debuts on Interchange, which has been
1995 con't Aug. 21: Gannett's USA Today begins offering its content free via the World Wide Web.
1995 con't Aug. 28: StarText, the oldest newspaper BBS, announces it will begin a transition to the Web.
1995 con't October: The Boston Globe launches Boston.com on the Web, a unique site bringing most Boston
1995 con't October: Careerpath.com, a joint jobs database, is launched by six major newspapers, the Boston
1995 con't November: The Arizona Republic launches Arizona Central on AOL, months after opening its fin
1995 con't Nov. 20: Microsoft Network hits 500,000 subscriber mark.
1995 con't Editor & Publisher reports there are about 330 newspapers online: 38 BBSs, 45 affiliated with AOL
1995 con't December: AOL passes the 4 million subscriber mark.
1996 Jan. 21: The New York Times on the Web opens to the public. Registration is required, but acc

1996 con't	February: Chicago Tribune announces it turned a profit in 1995 with Chicago Online, its AOL service.
1996 con't	February: AOL hits the 5 million member mark.
1996 con't	March 14: Chicago Tribune launches its full-newspaper Web site.
1996 con't	April: NAA reports about 175 North American dailies are currently available on the World Wide Web.
1996 con't	May: Wall Street Journal launches its Interactive Edition, a pay Web site. Cost: \$49.95 a year.
1996 con't	May: Prodigy is sold to International Wireless Corp. for an estimated \$200 million. IBM and Seagate buy CompuServe.
1996 con't	June 15: The Washington Post and Minneapolis Star Tribune launch Web sites as their Interchangers.
1996 con't	July: San Jose Mercury News announces it will leave AOL and concentrate on its Mercury Center.
1996 con't	July: Microsoft and NBC partner and launch a cable TV channel and online news service called MSN.
1996 con't	Aug. 7: Overwhelmed with traffic, AOL crashes for nearly a whole day. It is nicknamed "America Online."
1996 con't	October: The Associated Press launches AP Online, a wire service to provide content for online publications.
1996 con't	Oct. 21: Microsoft announces it will relaunch MSN with some content free to Internet users and others pay.
1996 con't	Oct. 30: AOL breaks the longtime consumer online service business model by announcing flat-rate pricing.
1997	April: Largest consumer online services are AOL, 8 million, CompuServe, 5.3 million, Microsoft Network, 4 million.
1997 con't	April 15: Prodigy announces it will focus on being an Internet service provider and ramp down its AOL service.
1997 con't	Sept. 8: Worldcom buys CompuServe for \$1.2 billion and, in a complex deal, AOL ends up with 10 percent of the company.
1997 con't	Nov. 14: The Pulitzer prize board opens the public-service prize competition to articles published online.
1997 con't	November: America Online hits the 10-million subscriber mark.
1998	February: AOL buys CompuServe for an undisclosed price..
1998 con't	July 14: New York Times ends charges to overseas users of its New York Times on the Web.
1999	January: America Online says it has added 4 million members in a single month, taking its total to 20 million.
1999 con't	February: One-quarter of U.S. newspaper Web sites are said to be profitable at E&P's Interactive Media.
1999 con't	March: America Online buys Netscape Communications, the company whose browser first popularized the term "Web."
1999 con't	The New York Times says it will discontinue its @Times product on America Online.
1999 con't	Nov. 10: Chicago Tribune says it will stop producing its AOL edition, concentrating on its Web site.
2000	Jan. 10: America Online announces it will acquire Time Warner in a deal worth \$162 billion, and AOL becomes AOL Time Warner.
2000 cont.	Feb. 23: Stock prices for online companies have risen so high that Michael Bloomberg tells the Economic Club of New York that they are overvalued.
2000 con't	July: America Online announces it has hit the 25 million subscriber mark.
2000 con't	Fall: Studies show that fewer Web users are clicking on banner and button ads. Percentages, once high, are dropping.
2001	Internet-related stocks, flying high for years, drop dramatically. Yahoo, for example, goes from \$125 to \$10.
2001 con't	March: With advertising revenue falling, major news organization lay off staff in their online operations.

Source: [Dave Carlson's Online Timeline](#)

7.2 Media's main moneymaker: Advertising

Since the beginning of nearly all forms of media, advertising has been there to fund the business. Newspapers, radio, television, nearly every social media app you are now on, all rely on advertising dollars to a greater and lesser extent to make money and keep going.

[Columbia Journalism Review published an excellent guide to advertising technologies](#) that's worth reading in full. Here are the highlights:

7.2.1 Early online ads

According to CJR, a main focus of advertising across media for the last 30 years was in **branding**. The ads attempted to establish the brand and what it stood for, and then tried to associate that product with a set of values. The ads were meant to then connect you to those values – imagine a beer ad associating their product with good looking people having fun. Who doesn't want to be good looking and having fun?

So when internet ads came long in the 1990s, it stands to reason that they began with this branding notion in mind. Branding ads, in the early days, were the only ads in digital display advertising.

Digital display advertisements are the rectangular ads which appear on websites visited through a browser on a desktop computer, tablet, or smartphone. They come in several formats, which the **marketing industry trade group the Interactive Advertising Bureau** names for both their longest edge and width-to-height ratio, such as Horizontal 2:1, Horizontal 4:1, and Vertical 1:2. – Columbia Journalism Review

Early internet ads were just aimed at a mass audience. Pepsi just wanted to be on popular sites. They didn't and couldn't know who was there, and the technology to only show Pepsi ads to certain demographics was years away.

That type of advertising is called **targeted** advertising. And targeted advertising starts with something called a tracking cookie.

Tracking cookies are bits of code like HTML and Javascript that websites deposit onto a user's browser. These bits of code track users, recording and reporting back to the website about which future sites you visit and the things you purchase. Websites aggregate all this information into two buckets: 1) behavioral data they have on what kinds of sites you've looked at, how much time you've spent on them, and whether you bought anything, and 2) demographic information that they've estimated based on these online behaviors, such as your age, educational level, family status, income bracket, and interests. – Columbia Journalism Review

Sites that track their users then aggregate this data together. They know how much traffic they get from 18-24 year olds, from racial or gender identities, income levels and education levels. That traffic is called **inventory** that can be sold to advertisers.

There's three types of ads – there's **CPM** or cost per thousand impressions (think of it like page loads). Then there's **CPC** or cost per click. Cost per click, because of fraud, is all but dead as an idea. Lastly, there's **CPA**, or cost per action, where an website gets paid when a user clicks on the ad *and buys something*.

To this day, most ads on the internet are CPM.

7.2.2 Enter ad networks

Very quickly, in the early days of the internet, buying advertising on a website was impossibly messy. There were thousands of websites handling billions of impressions and the only way to get ads on those sites was to go to them and buy them. For major purchasers, this was inefficient. So middlemen formed – recall your readings on the first ad agencies in the early 1900s. These companies were called **ad networks**. Websites would work with an ad network and provide their inventory. Companies would work with ad networks to buy traffic from the demographics they wanted.

All of this aggregation, and the mind-boggling number of impressions bundled, soon led to a confusing environment in which advertisers didn't know where their ads were being placed or who was buying them. Soon enough, ad buyers sought more transparency around what they were getting for the money they were spending. This led to the creation of ad “exchanges:” **open platforms for comparing the price and quality of impressions and buying them.** – Columbia Journalism Review

Even then, the inventory got divided further – into premium and remnant advertising. Premium ads were targeted to the right demographics, at the right times, in the right markets. The remnants, which sold for pennies on the dollar compared to premium, was all the rest. No impression went unsold, but the money made for those impressions varied widely.

Many news organizations responded to this dropping return on impressions by adding more ads. This leads to the concept of **ad bloat**, where a website becomes less and less usable because of all the ads. If your one premium ad position makes \$1 on 1,000 impressions, then how do you make that same dollar on 1,000 impressions when the remnant ad pays a dime? By making 10 ad positions instead of 1. The reason why local news websites, recipe sites and a host of other ad-supported websites are choked with

But for media companies accustomed to selling ads directly to advertisers, the internet era has meant being further and further removed from that transaction with every evolution in technology.

7.2.3 Enter social ads

Advertising's effectiveness on websites has been waning almost from the beginning. People became **banner blind** – a phenomenon where readers don't even see the ads anymore because they know not to look there for the content they are seeking. Then, as ad bloat took over, users started using ad blocking technologies to either strip information going to ad networks to block targeting or just block the ads entirely.

Enter social ads.

Social media offers advertisers unprecedented levels of detail about the user – from minute details of their lives harvested from profiles to behavioral data to other data from other sites layered in to created incredibly detailed profiles. And, because of the app based environment, users have a harder time blocking ads or limiting information sent to the social network and sold to advertisers. Even with waning effectiveness of direct advertising on social, our chapter on Influencers showed you how advertisers are working around that, marketing through people on social. All of that ad targeting data is still useful - where the audiences for the influencer and the product overlap, there you'll find success.

And, for media companies, advertising revenues are coming from other forms as well. Podcasts are big business now, and many of the top podcasts are from old media – public radio, newspapers, commercial radio conglomerates, even television. Podcasts offer similar targeting capabilities with less ability to block it all.

7.3 The path to reader supported news online

With classified advertising revenues a distant memory, print ads revenue declining as print revenues decline, and digital ad revenues struggling against user disinterest in the form, news organizations have turned to reader revenues.

Recall this chart from the newspaper chapter:

Newspapers, for the first time since the 1950s, now make more money from **circulation** – people paying for the product – than advertising - people paying for access to that audience. This number here includes print and digital revenues, but print revenues from circulation are declining and digital are rising.

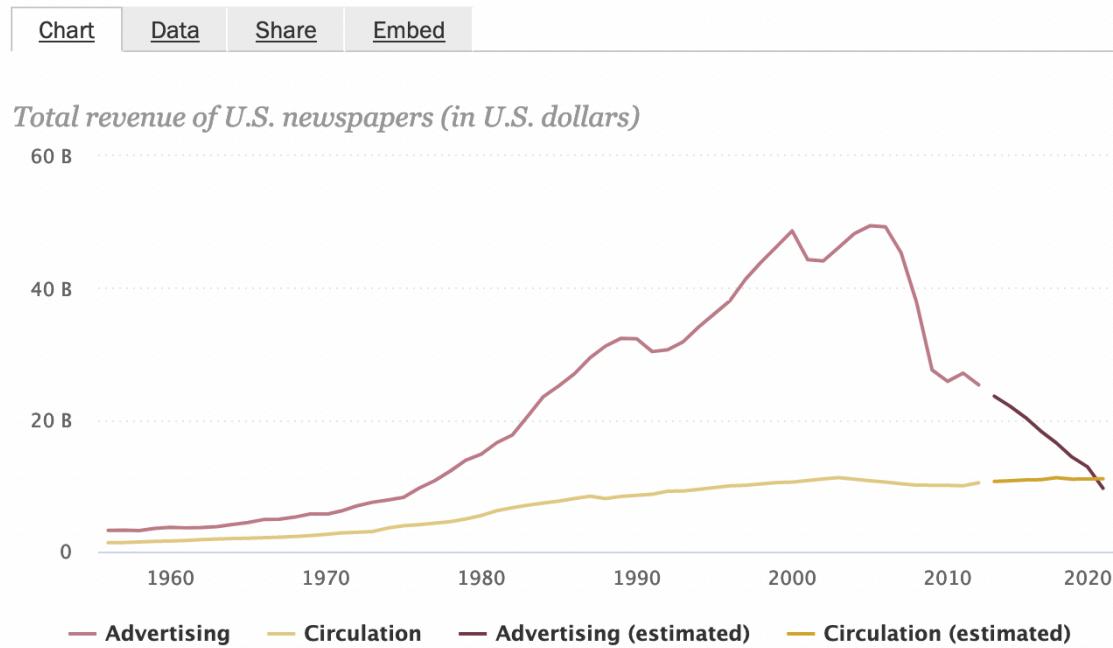
In internet terms, many news organizations have moved their content behind a **paywall**. The meaning in the name is right there – you've got to pay to see in.

CJR defines three types of paywalls where readers have to pay to get in:

1. Hard, where every story is behind the paywall. There is no free content here.
2. Metered, where you get a certain number of stories before you hit the paywall. This is the most common type of paywall in media currently.
3. Leaky/porous, where there's a content limit, but ways around it if you come from another place like a search engine. The Wall Street Journal used to do this – if you searched a story on Google, you could read it, even while the rest of the newspaper was behind a paywall.

Most newspapers are now on a subscription model, and most of them are on the metered system. To publishers, it's the ideal balance – people who come back over and over are more likely to subscribe, and the casual drive-by user will still see an ad or five on the way by.

Estimated advertising and circulation revenue of the newspaper industry



Source: News Media Alliance, formerly Newspaper Association of America (through 2012); Pew Research Center analysis of year-end SEC filings of publicly traded newspaper companies (2013-2020).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 7.1: Pew Research chart showing ad revenues dipping below advertising revenues in 2020.

7.4 New business models for news

Not all news organizations are supported by either ads or subscribers. Their content appears without ads - at least in any traditional sense – and they don’t ask people for money. They are **non-profit news organizations**.

Non-profit news organizations are getting a lot of attention in media circles now as hedge funds buy up newspaper chains and gut them for profits. But they aren’t new. The first non-profit publication in the US started in 1974 with the Chicago Reporter. Prior to 2010, there were more than 170 non-profit news organizations in the use.

In 2010, non-profit news landed on the national map in a big way with the establishment of ProPublica after a \$10 million gift from a wealthy donor who wanted to set up an investigative reporting organization in the public interest. They have since raised millions more from dozens of philanthropic organizations and individual donors.

Since 2010, ProPublica has won seven Pulitzer Prizes, but maybe more importantly have sparked a movement of local news non-profits. According to the Institute for Non-profit News, there’s now more than **400 independent non-profit news organizations**.

The pioneers of this model is NPR. NPR is donor supported – they solicit donations from companies, non-profits and people directly. They don’t have listeners; they have members. They don’t have commercials; they have underwriters. And underwriters who donate at a given level will have an underwriter message read on air or added to the website.

Many non-profit newsrooms across the country have a similar setup.

Nebraska went from zero non-profit newsrooms to two in four months. The [Flatwater Free Press](#) launched in September 2021, helmed by two former Omaha World Herald journalists. The [Nebraska Examiner](#) started in January 2022 and focuses primarily on state government reporting. All four of their initial hires were World Herald journalists.

Both are non-profits, supported through donations and are ad free, though Flatwater does have sponsor messages on stories.

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