

### **Part 3: News and Periodicals**

*The deviser of headlines and placards is not the son of later times, but an old and grey-haired disturber of the public peace.*

—Arundell Esdaile, 1940 (Ford & Emery)

People are always curious to know the latest developments that may affect their lives, and enlightened rulers have from time to time recognized the value of an informed populace.

According to Seneca, Julius Caesar decreed that the proceedings of the Senate should be written and posted in the Forum at the center of Rome on a large white board, called an *album*. These daily postings were called *Acta Diurna*—“events of the day”—and from *diurna* comes the English word *journal*. The delivery process has been revised as technology advanced, but pedestrians in Times Square who watch the news scroll above their heads are enjoying essentially the same service Caesar provided. (Lee, 3 ; Andrews, 1, 9)

Professional newsletter writers (*actuarii*) emerged during the days of the Roman empire. These correspondents would attend meetings of the Senate, gladiatorial matches, trials, and other important events, and report to their customers, usually wealthy citizens in the provinces. Antony and Cicero were among the many newsletter subscribers. Some writers would summarize the *Acta Diurna* and deliver private copies to subscribers early the next day, foreshadowing today’s morning newspaper.<sup>1</sup> (Lee, 3f ; Andrews, 1, 10)

In the empire of the Aztecs, citizens were required by law to go to market periodically, so they could learn the latest news. This undoubtedly had a salutary effect on the economy as well as informing the populace. The Aztecs used a system of colored banners, hung in a public square, to communicate matters of public importance.

In other parts of the world, various means of communications have been developed to transmit the news, among them an elaborate system of messenger runners developed by the Incas (whose messages were recorded in knotted cords), a network of scribes in the empire of the Persians, talking drums used by Africans, and a complex set of trails used by couriers to carry messages between tribes of native North Americans.

During most of the European middle ages, information traveled no faster than it did among the Aztecs. Communication of current events among the general populace was mostly by word of mouth. Although the troubadors’ usual stock in trade was romantic love, which they put into song and verse, they sometimes took politics as a subject. (Bonner, 1) Likewise, the “town criers” of Paris told the city’s news and gossip from street corners, then passed the hat. In some parts of Europe, town criers endured into the early 20th century. (Lee, 5)

Just about the only time news was written down was in private correspondence, though merchants would sometimes circulate handwritten newsletters among themselves, addressing market conditions

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<sup>1</sup> News in those days was sometimes as slow as it is in ours. In 1740, Johnson summarized a few items from the *Acta Diurna*: “Fourth of the Calends of April. The fasces with Livinius the Consul. It thundered... an oak was struck with lightning... a fray happened in a tavern.... Tertinius the Aedile fined butchers for selling meat which had not been inspected...” etc. (The items’ authenticity is doubtful.) (Andrews I, 11)

and other relevant commercial developments. This was a useful and enduring practice. In New England., the practice of circulating handwritten newsletters continued into the 18th century. (Mott, Jnl 7 ; Bleyer, 13)

Like the wealthy Romans before them, well-to-do Londoners of the late Middle Ages who were resting in the country or traveling abroad hired professional writers to keep them informed of important doings back in the city. These correspondents were called intelligencers.

Printing dramatically reduced the time it took for information to spread and dramatically increased the number of people who could receive it. The press's ability to produce material with immediate relevance to current events was recognized by the earliest printers. Luther's sermons and polemics were reproduced by the hundreds of thousands in tracts and pamphlets in the early 16th century... along with Catholic rejoinders. These were called *flugschriften* —“flying writings.” We still print “flyers,” though these days they're more likely to advertise department stores than to contain sermons.

### *The First Printed News*

Following the invention of printing, it didn't take long before people began to print items of current interest, but it took about 400 years for newspapers, magazines, and journals as we know them today to evolve. Although the newspaper is the oldest type of periodical in English, it didn't appear until the first half of the 17th century, and didn't attain its present form until the late 19th century. The same holds true for other types of periodicals: it took time for them to appear, and time for them to develop. In 1810, American printer and historian Isaiah Thomas wrote that, considering how useful newspapers were,

...it may appear strange that they should have arisen to the present almost incredible number from a comparatively late beginning. (8)

Of course, the newspaper and other print media have enjoyed two centuries of further development since Thomas wrote.

Just as we trace the evolution of species in biology, and the evolution of language in linguistics, print media can be traced backwards to ancestral forms. In 1859, British journalism historian Alexander Andrews described the path that led to the newspaper:

First we have the written news letter furnished to the wealthy aristocracy ; then, as the craving for information spread, the ballad of news, sung or recited ; then the news pamphlet, more prosaically arranged ; then the periodical sheet of news ; and lastly, the newspaper.<sup>2</sup> (Andrews 1, 25)

The ballads Andrews refers to (sometimes spelled “ballet”) flourished in 16th-century Britain. They were printed as broadsides, on a single sheet of paper, and sold for a few farthings. Their authors committed events of interest to verse. Sometimes music was printed along with the words, but usually the words were intended to be sung to a familiar melody and only the verse was printed.

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<sup>2</sup> Andrews later wrote, “Among adventure and danger, in hardship and peril, in distress and starvation, surrounded by savage tribes, sunk in a swamp, encamped on a mountain, afloat on the sea, blocked up in the ice, no five hundred Englishmen can live long together without a newspaper springing up in their midst...” (I, 298)

These aren't timeless folk ballads like those collected by Francis James Child. Instead, they were printed to exploit the public's interest in events of the day, and they lost currency as interest faded. As precursors to the newspaper, they're closer to the *National Enquirer* than *The New York Times*. Hangings...fires... satires...moral exhortations...monstrous births...any item that could titillate the popular taste was committed to verse (usually pretty bad verse), illustrated with crude woodcuts, and printed in as large a quantity as the market would bear.

A pamphleteer wrote in 1591:

...scarce a cat can look out of a gutter, but out starts a half-penny Chronicler, and presently A propper ballet of a strange site is ended. (Bleyer, 3)

When Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth, Steven Peele, a professional poet-journalist, wrote a tuneful response, intended to be sung to "Row Well, Ye Mariners:" (Esdaille in Emery & Ford, 19]

Wherefore, Sir Pope,  
In England you have lost your hope.  
Curse not, spare not,  
Your knights are like to go to pot.

Peele's ballad went on like this at some length. It's hard to believe that he was a contemporary of Shakespeare.

When an attempted assassin of the queen was apprehended, one popular ballad reported his arrest: (Esdaille in Emery & Ford, 21)

He was committed to the gaile, at consellers grave regarde,  
That they might judge what vilest death were fit for his reward.

Ballads proved enduringly popular. New England printers were still profitably publishing ballads at the close of the 18th century. (Thomas)

The earliest attempts at print journalism in prose were also on single, unbound sheets (which may be why we call them "papers"), produced at irregular intervals, not fixed frequencies. Around 1500, sporadic publications called *Zeitung* (tidings) began to appear in Germany—the oldest surviving dates from 1505. Through the 16th century this format grew popular—by 1599 there were almost 900 in production in Germany. Similar publications were called *gazetta* in Italian. The earliest known is from Venice, dated 1531. (Durant VII, 579 ; Thomas, 9)

In England, reports of foreign and local news were produced both in booklet or pamphlet form and in single sheets. The earliest were prose descendants of the ballads, reporting "news" on single subjects, such as:

"Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable life of Doctor Finn, a notable sorcerer, who was burned at Edenborough in January last" (1591)

"Newes from Brest, or a diurnal of Sir John Norris" (1594)

"Wonderful and strange newes out of Suffolk, where it rayned wheat the space of six or seven miles" (1583)

"Strange newes from Lancaster, containing an account of a prodigious monster..."

(1613)

“Woful Newes from the West parts of England” (1612)

“Vox populi, or Newes from Spaine.” (1620)

(Andrews I, 26ff)

The news booklets were not held in high regard by playwright Ben Jonson, who observed that the public can be found, “hungering and thirsting after published pamphlets of news, set out every Saturday, but all made at home, and no syllable of truth in them ; than which there cannot be a greater disease in nature.” And for credulity...

Unto some  
The very printing of ’em makes them news,  
That have not the heart to believe anything  
But what they see in print.

(Andrews I, 29)

Broadsides, ballads, pamphlets, and the early news sheets and news booklets all predate any attempt to publish serially or periodically under a consistent title. It wasn't until the early years of the 17th century that a few enterprising publishers began to make efforts to produce news periodicals, and the phenomenon started on the continent before reaching Britain.

In 1605, Johan Carolus of Strasbourg published the world's first scheduled newspaper, *Avisa Relation oder Zeitung*. Carolus had previously produced a handwritten merchants' newsletter for a small circle of subscribers, with news gathered by network of correspondents. In 1604 he bought a printing press, deciding he could profit by selling more subscriptions at a lower cost each. By October of 1605 he had found it necessary to petition the Strasbourg city council, asking for protection against unauthorized reprints.<sup>3</sup>

Soon similar periodicals began to appear in other locations. Papers were launched in Austria in 1610 and Switzerland in 1611. The Frankfurt *Oberpostamzeitung*, launched in 1616, remained in continuous publication until 1866. (Durant VII, 579)

In England, news sheets reporting foreign events were called *courants* or *corantos*. The earliest of these began to appear around 1620, imported from Holland, where the press was unlicensed. Like their foreign counterparts, English corantos were produced on single sheets, and although the earliest weren't produced serially, it didn't take long for the idea to catch on.

The first English news periodical appeared in 1622, edited by Thomas Archer, a former intelligencer, and produced in partnership with Nicholas Bourne (and later Nathaniel Butter). Archer called the first issue of his coranto *The Weekly Newes*. Subsequent issues carried different titles but were numbered sequentially, and eventually the original name stuck. (Bleyer, 8 ; Andrews I, 28 ; Chappell, 127)

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<sup>3</sup> “Copyright problems already!” was the comment of Timothy Balding, Director General of the World Association of Newspapers, on the 400th anniversary of Carolus's first issue. (World Assoc. Newspapers)

As the 17th century progressed, the early news sheets were succeeded by a torrent of “diurnals” and “mercuries,” which—along with pamphlets, broadsides, and every other format that could be bent to a political purpose—flourished during the English Civil War (1642-1651). Roughly 350 different titles were produced in that period. (Andrews I)

*Diurnal* is simply an alternative form of the word *journal*, and generally speaking, the title referred to domestic news. At the time of the Civil War, diurnals were associated with reports from Parliament.

At the outset of the war, the House of Commons encouraged publication of its proceedings in order to present Parliament's side of the conflict. A weekly news booklet, *Diurnal Occurrences*, was launched by William Cooke and John Thomas, and was soon followed by several other weeklies which also reprinted the speeches and acts of Parliament. One of these, *A Perfect Diurnall* (1643 to 1655), was considered very authoritative. Bleyer (9) referred to *A Perfect Diurnall* as England's “first important periodical of domestic news.”

Winged-foot Mercury was the messenger of the gods, and many writers adopted a modified version of his name as an appropriate nom de plume during the Civil War. Given the penalties for publishing “without authority;” that is, without prior approval from the government, anonymity was a benefit to anyone printing news, whether trivial, sensational, or of national importance... as were quick feet, presumably.

Unlike the single-sheet corantos, diurnals and mercuries were booklets, resembling pamphlets. The mid-17th century reader probably didn't see much difference between a pamphlet and a periodical.<sup>4</sup> All were biased; each writer pled his case in the court of public opinion with unbridled enthusiasm. Printers were attached to the contending forces and produced mercuries from army encampments. Charles I employed a printer named Barker; Cromwell's printer was named Higgins. (Andrews I, 36, 48f)

Examples of mercuries from the period of the Civil War include:

“Wednesday's Mercury; or, Special Passages, collected for those who wish to be informed” (1643)

“Mercurius Medicus; or, a Sovereign Salve for these Sick Times” (1647)

“Mercurius Melancholicus; or, News from Westminster and Other Parts” (1647)

“Mercurius Pragmaticus; Communicating Intelligence from all Parties, touching all Affaires, Designs, Humours, and Conditions, throughout the Kingdome, especially from Westminster and the Head Quarters” (1647)

“Mercurius Bellicus; or, an Alarm to all Rebels” (1647)

“Mercurius Rusticus; or, the Countrey's Complaint of the Barbarous Outrage began in the year 1642 by the Sectaries of this once Flourishing Kingdome\*"

“Mercurius Mastix; faithfully lashing all Scouts, Mercuries, Posts, Spyes, and others (1652)

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<sup>4</sup> A 1679 pamphlet refers to mercuries as “small trifles,” in the same category as funeral tickets, playhouse bills, hackney coach bills, and quack doctor bills—an indication of the esteem in which 17th-century journalism was held (Andrews I, 60)

“Mercurius anti-Mercurius” (1648)

“Mercur’us Insanus Insanissimus” (1648)

(Archer I, 40f ; Thomas, 9)

Charles I had an official mercury, *Mercurius Aulicus*, produced by John Birkenhead and Peter Heylin between 1643 and 1645. After the Restoration, Birkenhead was appointed licenser of the press. (Bleyer, 10)

Light and amusing as the titles may seem from a 350-year distance, some mercuries were written with talent, and many were instrumental in influencing public opinion, demonstrating that using media for propaganda purposes is hardly a new development.

Along with Birkenhead and Heylin, other talented writers included Marchmont Nedham (also spelled Needham), Bruno Ryves, John Taylor, John Booker, and George Wharton. Satire was their weapon, and their incisive invective made these early journalists very public figures. (Archer I, 41-49)

Beyond providing a chronicle of the Civil War and representing an important step in the evolution of journalism, the mercuries bequeathed an important innovation. It was in a mercury—the *Impartial Intelligencer*, March 1-7, 1648—that the first advertisement in an English periodical appeared: a reward for two horses stolen from a gentleman in Candish, Suffolk. (Andrews I, 49)

### *Censorship and Repression*

We should note that his first attempt at newspaper publishing in England landed Thomas Archer in jail. (Chappell, 127) A predominant interest of church and state, naturally, is preservation of religious and social orthodoxy. Consequently, (unlike Caesar and the Aztecs) many rulers have been nervous of the power and risk to the status quo that knowledge of current affairs—and therefore the press—represents. The Durants tell us that in the 16th century,

Censorship of publications was practically universal in Christendom, Catholic and Protestant, ecclesiastical and secular. The Church set up in 1571 the Congregation of the Index to guard the faithful against books considered injurious to Catholic belief. Protestant censorship was not as powerful and severe as the Catholic, but it was as sedulous... (VII, 580)

On the subject of “Newes, or No Newes, to be the Question,” Roger L’Estrange, licenser of the press, wrote in 1663,

...A Publick Mercury should never have My Vote ; because I think it makes the Multitude too Familiar with the Actions, and Counsels of their Superiors ; too Pragmaticall and Censorious, and gives them, not only an Itch, but a kind of Colourable Right and License, to be Meddling with Government. (Bleyer, 12)

The exception to universal censorship was Holland, where journalism in a variety of languages, including German and English, thrived. In the mid-17th century, when England and France each had only two cities with presses, the Dutch had five, producing material in Latin, Greek, German, English, French, and Hebrew (as well as Dutch). Amsterdam alone boasted 400 book printers and booksellers (Durant VIII, 168). One of the first instances of foreign news printed in English (a two

page coranto without title dated December 2, 1620) came from Holland. Two Pilgrim leaders, William Brewster and Edward Winslow, worked as printers in Leyden before emigrating in the *Mayflower* in 1620, and had undoubtedly seen Dutch news sheets. It's an interesting coincidence that the *Mayflower* landed and English corantos began to emerge in the same month.

In Britain, legal restriction on printing dates from 1476, the year William Caxton became the kingdom's first printer. Early legislation required printers to inscribe their name, location and titles of works they wanted to print in a central register. If approved for publication, the Crown granted a "cotype," effectively a license, to the printer—not the author. By this process the state maintained control over content, and printers acquired an exclusive right to the content once it was approved—in other words, a copyright. Printing grew increasingly regulated over the next century, with additional laws imposed throughout the 16th century. Some of the new regulations were aimed at foreign printers, limiting and finally prohibiting the free importation of books. (Chartrand)

One law, the Licensing Act, made it necessary to secure a license from the Court of the Star Chamber before printing or distributing any book. (Bleyer, 2) The Star Chamber, named for the apartment in Westminster palace where the king's council sat, was a court charged with enforcing royal decrees. It functioned independently of the courts of common law.

As the system evolved, the Worshipful Company of Stationers of London took on an increasingly important role. The Company was a guild whose members were largely printers and publishers. On May 4, 1557 the Company was granted a monopoly by Mary Tudor, and for the next century and a half, the only people permitted to operate printing presses were members of the Company of Stationers. (Chartrand).

In exchange for handing the Stationers a monopoly on printing, the Crown acquired an effective instrument of control over the country's press. The Stationers' Company functioned as a quasi-governmental agency, handling registry and administration of copyrights for the Crown. Although secret presses existed, official presses were licensed only in three locations—London, Oxford, and Cambridge—and regulation continued through the 16th century almost to the end of the 17th... although the 17th century is marked by varied loosening and tightening of restriction as circumstances and governments changed..

As Parliament gained power, the Star Chamber was eliminated in 1641. This brought on the deluge of printed material from both sides of the Civil War noted earlier. Durant says, "the sky rained radical pamphlets... Milton, at this stage, was not a poet but a pamphleteer." But under Cromwell, the press grew increasingly regulated, with licensing regulation expanded in 1649, renewed in 1653, and expanded again in 1655. (Durant VIII, 184 ; Bleyer, 11)

Two diurnals were authorized by the Puritan government, both edited by Marchmont Nedham: *Mercurius Politicus* and the *Publick Intelligencer* (formerly the *Kingdom's Intelligencer* and the *Parliamentary Intelligencer*). These two weeklies were published on separate days, effectively acting in combination as one semi-weekly.

Following the Restoration, the king reasserted his power to license the press. Charles II granted Henry Muddiman exclusive authority to publish news books from 1660 to 1663, but when Roger L'Estrange succeeded John Birkenhead as press licensor in 1663, L'Estrange took over publication of the two authorized royal diurnals, the *Publick Intelligencer* and the *News*. These continued the same scheme begun by Nedham's two weeklies: they combined to act as a semi-weekly. (Bleyer, 11f)

L'Estrange was a talented writer who introduced several journalistic innovations, including the first obituary section, and the first employment of correspondents in the sense of hired stringers. Earlier "correspondents" had been real letter writers, whose services were unpaid.

While the Court of Charles II avoided an outbreak of plague by decamping from London to Oxford in 1665, intelligencer Henry Muddiman launched the Court's official paper, the *Oxford Gazette*. Printed on a single sheet and published semi-weekly, the *Oxford Gazette* became the first sanctioned English newspaper. When the Court returned to London, the paper was renamed the *London Gazette* and under this title it has remained "published by authority" for more than three centuries. Today, the London, Edinburgh, and Belfast *Gazettes* are the official newspapers of record in the United Kingdom (Bleyer, 13 ; Gazettes Online)

Restriction on printing seems to have given extended life to handwritten newsletters. Since government approval was required only for printed material, some publishers, including Muddiman, published newsletters reproduced using teams of scribes. Subscriptions were expensive, but apparently unexpurgated news was worth the extra cost to some—coffeehouses used their subscriptions to increase traffic. Muddiman was granted the privilege of franking his newsletter, which remained in business until 1689, almost a quarter century after establishment of the *Oxford* (later *London*) *Gazette*, of which he was founding editor. (Bleyer, 12f)

At the outset of the Civil War a growing number of British citizens began to advocate a free press and to oppose regulation and censorship. Milton spoke for many when he addressed Parliament with his *Areopagitica* in 1643:

For books are not absolutely dead things but do contain a potency of life in them...

Almost kill a man as kill a good book ; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image ; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God...

A good book is the previous life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss ; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worst. We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man preserved and stored up in books ; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at that ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself, slays an immortality rather than a life.

Achieving the free press that Milton so eloquently advocated became a goal of the Enlightenment and a cause that many found worth fighting for in the next century and a half. Milton's speech foreshadowed the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights, the legal platform on which American periodicals stand.

The Licensing Act, which restricted the number of British printers, began to be enforced more leniently. Parliament grew increasingly disinclined to recognize the royal prerogative to regulate the press, especially in heated debate in 1679. In 1695, on the eve of a new century, the Act expired and was not renewed. (Cambridge, IX, Ch 1, Sec 9 ; Bleyer, 13)

### *Journals and Magazines*

Following expiration of the Licensing Act and catalyzed by enactment of rigid copyright laws in 1709, British journalism flowered in the first half of the 18th century

Ephemera of all kinds flowed from the presses of early 18th-century Britain: pamphlets, broadsides, newspapers (including the first successful English daily, the *Daily Courant*, launched in 1702), journals, notices, advertisements, and miscellaneous information in every imaginable format. (Abbott, 34)

Publishers across Europe had found that there was a type of content that fell between somewhere between newspapers and books—the timely and the timeless—for which there was ongoing demand that could be met by a new kind of periodical. This content included essays, reviews, reports of scientific discoveries, announcements, poetry, and advertisements—in other words, material that could be produced on an ongoing basis: current in the sense that it was new, interesting, and carried a date, but more thoughtful and of deeper value than the events of the day as published in a newspaper. Packaged together, this content formed a unique and engaging medium.

In 1663, a German publication, *Erbauliche Monats-Unterredungen* (“Edifying Monthly Discussions”) was one of the first executions of this idea. In May 1665, a similar periodical, the *Journal des Savans* was published in France. The *Journal des Savans* contained a broad assortment of content, including a listing of books published, noteworthy obituaries, scientific discoveries, and recent rulings of church and civil courts.

Other journals appeared in France (including the first journal of fashion, in 1672), Germany (1682 and 1689), Holland (1692), and—ultimately—in Britain, where a few publishers began to try their hands at this new type of publication prior to the expiration of the Licensing Act. (Durant VIII, 27)

One of the first to make the attempt was Roger l’Estrange, formerly licenser of the press and editor of the official diurnals, who launched his political journal, *The Observer, in Question and Answer*, in April, 1681. For almost five years *The Observer* appeared three or four times a week, in two pages on a single sheet, examining issues of the day in essays written as dialogues. It was tediously partisan, but influential as a model for later essay-journals, among them the *Athenian Mercury* (1690), the *London Spy* (1698), *History of the Works of the Learned* (1699), and (after the turn of the 18th century) *Memoirs of Literature*, *The Present State of the Republick of Letters*, and several others. (Cambridge IX, Ch 1, Secs 5 and 8 ; Thomas 12 ; Humphreys 8ff)

Contributors to these journals were among the earliest popularizers of the essay form, the origin of which is usually credited to Montaigne. His *Essais*, published in 1580, influenced a succession of British writers, including Bacon, Cornwallis, Cowley, Dryden, and Temple. Three early 18th-century journals or “essay-papers” established an especially enduring model. (Humphreys 8-9)

The first of these was titled, simply, the *Review*. It was edited and largely written by Daniel Defoe, and launched in 1704. Though best-remembered for writing *Robinson Crusoe*, the first English novel to be published serially, Defoe was a caustic commentator on current affairs. The *Review’s* influence extended far beyond its circulation, estimated at about 400. (Chappell 159 ; Humphreys 36)

In April, 1709, Richard Steele launched the *Tatler*, the first of several journals with which he was associated. It ran until January, 1711. In March, 1711, Steele joined with his collaborator Joseph Addison to start a new journal called the *Spectator*. Even more than Steele, Addison became a father figure for generations of future essayists. (Chappell p. 159 ; Humphreys 25)

The *Tatler* and *Spectator* were thin by modern standards: single sheets, printed on both sides. Like the

*Review*, the *Tatler* came out tri-weekly, and sold for a penny. The *Spectator* launched as a daily ; i.e., Monday through Saturday. Its two pages usually held one full essay and a few advertisements, mostly for booksellers and theaters. (Bleyer, 19 ; Abbott)

The *Spectator* was extremely popular: it achieved circulation of 3,000 by its second week of publication, (reaching 60,000 readers, according to Addison), and is estimated to have achieved circulation of 9,000 at its height. Its success was emulated by dozens of other British publishers. Journals became a voice of the Enlightenment—of scientific societies, literary societies, and similar organizations—and their numbers grew dramatically during the 18th century. (Bleyer, 20, 36 ; Abbott 51ff ; Humphreys 36)

Humphreys reminded us, “a few years earlier it would have seemed inconceivable that such extended intellectual themes should appear in a popular journal.” (32)

Despite its influence, however, the *Spectator* lasted only a few years. It ceased publication in December, 1712, was revived as a tri-weekly in 1714, and closed again after a run of about six months (Humphreys, 25)

Not only did the *Spectator* inspire and influence numerous competitors, such as as the *Female Tatler*, the *Whisperer*, the *Bee*, the *Hermit*, the *Free Thinker*, the *Tory Examiner*, the *Lay Monk*, and the *Gronler*—its editors themselves launched numerous other essay-papers. Among Steele’s other papers were the *Guardian* (1713), the *Englishman* (1713), the *Reader* (1714), the *Lover* (1714, with Addison), *Town Talk* (1715), *Chitchat* (1716), the *Tea-Table* (1716), and the *Theatre* (1720). Addison produced the *Whig Examiner* (1712), the *Free-Holder* (1715), and the *Old Whig* (1719).

Steele and Addison established a literary style that was frequently emulated. This was the “Augustan” age of British literature<sup>5</sup>, and the standards were high.<sup>6</sup> Humphreys wrote:

Enlightenment was spread on a broad front of morals and letters. This was achieved by authors who gave their public what it wanted (they had to) but gave it something consistently better than it could have imagined. Entertainment went hand-in-hand with improvement ; if human nature demanded amusement, it had its better self to be considered too. There is here a code of behaviour, as well as a skill of achievement, which in our own times, and with our own standards of practice, should cause us an earnest and critical self-searching. (Humphreys, 5f)

Essays in the Addisonian style were published in newspapers and pamphlets, and collections of essays were republished in book form. These circulated in the colonies as well as in Britain. (Bleyer, 22)

It was easy to imitate Addison, but extremely difficult to equal his well-crafted balance, “the right economy, the right bantering note, the right familiar style. The manner is skillful ; no one could take offence at the humour, but everyone must ask himself whether *he* looks thus to an amused observer.” (Humphreys, 16)

Addison himself wrote in the *Spectator*:

I shall leave it to my Reader’s consideration, whether it is not much better to be let into

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<sup>5</sup> Roughly 1680 to 1750. (Humphreys, 5)

<sup>6</sup> Not everywhere, however. In reference to British newspapers of the time, Abbott wrote, “The ordinary journalist in England was little better than an irresponsible and mischievous gossip.” (35)

knowledge of one's self than to hear what passes in Muscovy or Poland ; and to amuse ourselves with such writings as tend to the wearing out of ignorance, passion and prejudice... (Humphreys, 26)

It's during the mid-18th century that the word *magazine* was first used to describe a new type of periodical. The word is Turkish in origin, and means storehouse. In its earliest meaning in English, a magazine was a place where items of value, especially arms and ammunition, were kept. In France, a *grand magasin* is a department store, as is a *grande magazzino* in Italy.

*Magazine* was first applied in English to collected writing in 1731, in the title of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, edited by Edward Cave in London. The *Gentleman's Magazine* was a successful and popular periodical that inspired numerous imitators on both sides of the Atlantic—Dr. Samuel Johnson was a frequent contributor. The magazine historian F.L. Mott says, “Since English magazines kept close to one pattern, all are reducible to one prototype—Cave’s *Gentleman’s Magazine*.” Benjamin Franklin acknowledged that his *General Magazine* (1741) was “an imitation of those in England.” (Mott I ; Marder, 79)

The concept of a storehouse of assorted literary items must have been appealing during the 18th century. This is how *Massachusetts*, an 18th century American magazine, described itself in 1789:

Monthly Museum of Knowledge and Rational Entertainment, Containing Poetry, Musick, Biography, History, Physick, Geography, Morality, Criticism, Philosophy, Mathematicks, Agriculture, Architecture, Chemistry, Novels, Tales, Romances, Translations, News, Marriages and Deaths, Meteorological Observations, Etc., Etc.

Quite a few early periodicals called themselves museums. Others described themselves as reflectors, reverberators, instructors, censors, monitors, humming birds, and nightingales, but it was the image of incendiary contents that proved most vivid and enduring. Of the 82 American journals launched in the 18th century, 47 incorporated the word *magazine* in their titles.

This demonstrates the significant distinction between journals and magazines still lingering in the second half of the 18th century. The journal was short (two to four pages) and devoted to essays on a single subject. As conceived by Cave and copied by his competitors, the magazine was longer and contained an assortment of content, including poetry, news, and fiction. Like newspapers, journals were published at high frequencies—some daily. Magazines were published weekly or less frequently. Over time the two forms grew less distinct. Essays became a feature of newspapers and magazines. The title *journal* was adopted by newspapers, magazines, and the proceedings of associations—very disparate types of periodicals. Today we often think of journals as scholarly, peer-reviewed periodicals... a far cry from the essay-papers of Defoe, Steele, and Addison.