

# *Historiography*

in Mass Communication



Volume 8 (2022). Number 2

# *Historiography in Mass Communication*

## Editor

Wm. David Sloan

## Editorial Board

Mark Bernhardt  
Jackson State University

Bruce Evensen  
DePaul University

Thérèse L. Lueck  
University of Akron

Erin Coyle  
Temple University

Thomas A. Mascaro  
Bowling Green State University

Erika Pribanic-Smith  
University of Texas at Arlington

Leonard Ray Teel  
Georgia State University

Bernell Tripp  
University of Florida

Debra van Tuyll  
Augusta University

Yong Volz  
University of Missouri

## Editorial Purpose

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

## Copyright

The contents of this website, including the contents of the digital journal *Historiography in Mass Communication*, are copyrighted.

## Essays

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

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

To submit an essay for consideration, email a Word file to the editor at [historiography.jmc@gmail.com](mailto:historiography.jmc@gmail.com)

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

If you have an essay accepted for publication, you will be required to affirm that you are the owner of it and that it violates no law.

Your essay will include a copyright notice that you are its owner. However, you must agree that your essay may be used in accord with the following policy: The essay may be used for personal research purposes and for classroom teaching material. Multiple copies may be made for classroom teaching. However, no one (other than yourself) may sell the essay or include it in any collection that is sold.

# *Historiography*

## in Mass Communication

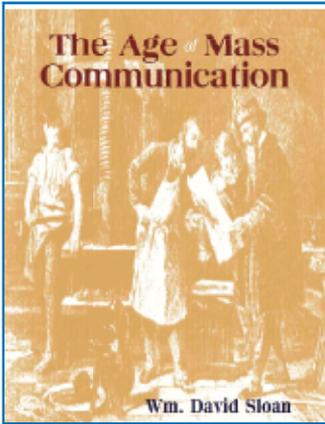
Volume 8 (2022). Number 2

### Contents

From the Editor: "How Media History Matters"	page 1
Pat Washburn, In Memorium: Mike Sweeney	page 5
Erin K. Coyle, "Analyzing Journalists' Collective Conceptions of Press Freedom"	page 13
Historian Interview: Andrew Pettegree	page 19
Hiley H. Ward, How Media History Matters: "The Media and Political Values"	page 31
Book Award Interview: Harold Holzer: <i>The Presidents vs. the Press</i>	page 53
News and Notes	page 62

After you download the pdf of this issue, you can go directly to an article by clicking on its title.

**Terms of Use:** The essays in *Historiography in Mass Communication* may be used for personal research purposes and for classroom teaching material. Multiple copies may be made for classroom teaching. However, no essay may be sold or be part of any collection that is sold. Violations of copyright are subject to prosecution.



## The Most Comprehensive Textbook on JMC History

*The Age of Mass Communication* provides a comprehensive history of the various fields of mass media and the changes they brought about.

It offers students a knowledgeable and thoughtful survey of the events, people, and processes that shaped the development of the mass media. Beginning with mass communication's faint origins in prehistoric times, it details the story from Gutenberg's invention up to the present revolution that the Internet and other technology have made. Its special attention to historical context gives students a broad perspective on the cultural setting of mass communication.

The authors' use of primary sources for their research assures a fair, balanced, unprejudiced account of the history of mass communication.

Yet it is one of the very lowest-cost textbooks for the field. Its suggested retail price is only \$43.95.

A **teacher's manual** is available when you adopt the book. It contains sample syllabi, PowerPoint presentations, and multiple-choice quizzes for each chapter.

To request an exam copy, email [vision.press.books@gmail.com](mailto:vision.press.books@gmail.com)

VISION PRESS

Outstanding textbooks at affordable prices

# How Media History Matters

By Wm. David Sloan ©



Sloan

**H**istorians want their work to matter. That may be the main reason they attempt to answer perennial questions such as “Why study history?”

The question is an acute one for JMC historians. They not only have their own interest to consider; they also must defend themselves from their colleagues in schools of communication. They even fear that historians in other fields ignore them.

Perhaps a vague sense of inferiority helps explain why neoteric propositions appeal to some. “New theories” offer rescue. Jim Carey’s proposal for a cultural approach remains popular almost fifty years after he made it because, in part, it offers a way to justify the study of JMC history.

So we can’t blame our historians for trying to find ways to demonstrate JMC history’s significance. I’m as guilty as anyone.

In fact, with this issue of *Historiography* we’re beginning a series of essays that offer reasons why the media, and by extension the study of

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

© 2022. The author owns the copyright to this essay.

JMC history, have been important. The essays will be more than ungrounded opinion. They will be supported by documented historical accounts.

An obvious way to validate JMC history is to demonstrate that the media, mass communication, and journalism have been meaningful in the past.

In fact, for more than 200 years JMC historians have been trying to do that. But the conscious effort seems to be peculiar to modern historians. Here's an abbreviated refresher.

The Nationalist and Romantic historians of the nineteenth century believed newspapers had been an indispensable factor in the advance of freedom. Isaiah Thomas in his seminal account, *History of Printing in America* (1810), provides an obvious example of that early approach. The essential story of the history of printing generally and newspapers particularly involved the progress of freedom within an overall story of the developing liberty of humankind. In that story, America was the nation chosen to lead to the eventual liberty of all, and the press was one of the key instruments.

Progressive historians of the early twentieth century also thought the media were important, but they emphasized the media's ideological role. In contrast to earlier historians, they argued that the history of America did not consist in equality of liberty but could be found in the conflict between the rich and the poor, the aristocratic and the democratic. The media, which America's powerful self-interested conservative forces sometimes manipulated, were a main tool in their ability to maintain control. In opposition, a few journalists and outlets had been central to the successful efforts of liberals to bring about reform and progress.

The Consensus interpretation emerged as the United States con-

fronted the international threats of World War II. In the face of the dangers, historians reasoned that America's past was marked more by general agreement than by conflict, as Progressives had argued. Americans, rather than sundered by class differences, tended to be more united than divided. While from time to time they might disagree on particulars, their differences existed within a larger framework — such as a belief in democracy, human freedom, constitutional government, and the national welfare — that overshadowed their differences. The significance of the media, Consensus historians reasoned, lay in their capacity to help Americans achieve their common values.

In JMC historiography, the importance of the media began to wane once the Developmental interpretation appeared in the 1870s. It began with Frederic Hudson's *Journalism in the United States, from 1690 to 1872* (published in 1873). He and hundreds of historians who followed him were primarily interested in the journalistic progress of the press rather than in its participation in the broader public affairs of the nation. History seemed to them to be the story of how journalism had advanced to become proper and professional. (If you're not familiar with the Developmental school but with the "Whig" interpretation, you'll have a general sense of some of the Developmental outlook.)

Developmental historians thus turned inward. They discarded the earlier historical concept of the interaction between the media and the nation's affairs and replaced it with a narrower view of the operation of the media. In the process they killed off the earlier assumption of the natural importance of the media.

By the 1920s a group of Cultural (or Sociological) historians had begun to react to the narrow Developmental perspective. They gave more consideration to outside factors that affected the media. They assumed that the media usually were a mirror of society and that social,

political, cultural, and economic factors greatly influenced their character. The most prolific writer in the Cultural school was Sidney Kobre. In a number of works he attempted to explain journalism as “a product of environment.” Cultural historians painted a historical situation in which outside forces buffeted and shaped the media. Since they concentrated on the effect of society on the media, rather than vice versa, they minimized the media’s significance.

It was in this milieu of JMC historiography, influenced by both the Developmental and the Cultural interpretations, that modern historians began to search for convincing arguments that JMC history was worth studying.

Some believe Carey’s cultural history provided the prescription. Others don’t find its ritual role entirely satisfying. The reason lies mostly in the fact that his proposal — that the press’ importance lies in the “way in which men in the past have grasped reality” — has been difficult to document.

For those historians still interested in ways the media have been important in the past, a number of possibilities exist. In this issue of *Historiography* we begin our series with an essay by the late Hiley Ward. We think the series will appeal especially to historians who believe historical claims need evidence to support them.

It will become clear as we publish other essays that many ways exist to justify JMC history. One monolithic explanation won’t work. Hiley’s essay focuses on the connection between the press and a society’s political values. Hiley was one of the preeminent historians and thinkers ever to work in JMC history. His essay begins on page 31. We think you’ll be well rewarded for the time you spend with it.

[CLICK HERE  
TO RETURN  
TO TABLE OF  
CONTENTS](#)

# Mike Sweeney

November 6, 1958 - January 15, 2022

By Pat Washburn ©



Washburn



Sweeney

**M**ike Sweeney was number sixteen.

As I have gotten old (I'm eighty), I have found myself counting the deaths of colleagues with whom I taught at Ohio University's journalism school from 1984 to 2012. The number rose to sixteen on January 15 when Mike, who was only sixty-three, died after a nine-year battle with cancer.

Mike was noteworthy because of the three areas in which faculty members are evaluated annually — teaching, research, and service. Unlike most, who excel in one or two areas each year, he excelled year after year in all three. That made him a rarity who unquestionably would have been a success at any mass communication department in the country. OU was lucky to have him.

I met him thirty years ago when he applied for

*Pat Washburn is a professor emeritus at the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University. In 2002-2003 he served as president of the American Journalism Historians Association and received its Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2008. He served as editor of the journal Journalism History for more than eleven years.*

© 2022. The author owns the copyright to this essay.

the doctoral program. When I saw his GRE scores, his thirteen years of newspaper experience in Texas and Missouri, and his recommendation letters, and then talked with him when he came for a visit, I immediately began recruiting him heavily. He was exactly what I wanted — the potential to be a star in our field — and he later told me that my interest in him was why he chose OU.

Carolyn, Mike's wife of forty-one years, recalls why he decided to leave newspaper work to teach. After giving some guest lectures about journalism at a local community college, he ascertained that teaching was "what he was meant to do."

As a doctoral student, Mike excelled in teaching and quickly demonstrated a zeal for research. He took my graduate historical research course, and after I suggested a dissertation topic that he liked, a history of the government's Office of Censorship in World War II, I chaired his dissertation committee. The result was an outstanding dissertation that, at 700 pages, apparently was the longest in the school's history. I was not surprised when the University of North Carolina Press published it, but in a shorter version than he had written at Ohio.

After graduation in 1996, Mike spent thirteen years at Utah State University, where he chaired the journalism department from 2005 to 2009. He continued to excel in teaching. Carolyn recalls a day when he was so thrilled with a student's response to a question that he leapt in the air only to have his awkward landing reinjure a torn knee ligament. He dubbed the incident his "freak editing accident." The story reflects the kick that he always got from seeing his students succeed.

One time while Mike was at Utah State, he invited me to give a talk on the Black press in World War II. I stayed at his home in a bedroom normally inhabited only by the family cat, and on the wall was a picture of a cat with the word "Welcome." The cat and I got along fine, but on

the last night I was there I was awakened at 4 a.m. by the sound of the cat scratching. When I got up several hours later, I discovered that the cat had defecated in my open suitcase because the closed door had barred access to its litter box. When I told Mike and Carolyn, she had a concerned, oh-no look on her face, but Mike burst out laughing. From that moment on, Mike and I would laugh about that incident every year, and I would beg him not to sic his cat on me again.

In the fall of 2008 at the annual AJHA meeting, my colleague Joe Bernt and I had a two-hour dinner with Mike because he was interested in a faculty position that was being advertised and had questions about the school. We went over the positives and negatives of the position, and he got the job.

When he came into the school in 2009 as a full professor, Mike immediately took over the graduate program. Then, three years later, he became the editor of *Journalism History* when I retired. Meanwhile, he continued turning out research at an astonishing rate. Much of it came from a phone call that I had received while he was at Utah State. A book agent said he had an unnamed client who wanted a book on U.S. war correspondents and asked if I was interested in writing it. Since I was already working on a book, I suggested he should call Mike. He did, and that was the start of Mike writing fourteen books for National Geographic.

The books told several things about Mike. One was his versatility. Unlike that first book, most of the books were not about mass communication. Instead, he wrote about such things as the Lost Boys of Sudan, the brain, Utah's Logan Canyon, and Robert Ballard's return to the *Titanic* in 2004. Writing on a subject about which he initially knew little or nothing was an adventure for him. He loved to learn new things.

And there was his adherence to deadlines. Every book had a specific

word count and a due date, often only a matter of months. He was always proud that he never missed a deadline and, in fact, sometimes beat it. When National Geographic expressed surprise at his consistency in meeting deadlines, he explained that it was because he had worked on newspapers, which always had deadlines. When he gave his word, he meant it.

He also wrote other books along with conference papers, journal articles, book chapters, and a journalism monograph. I co-authored four AJHA papers with him, three of which won Wally Eberhard awards, one of which became a book chapter, and one that was expanded into a monograph that won a Covert Award from the History Division of AEJMC. We meshed because of our storytelling backgrounds and because we both understood the importance of “keeping the reader turning the page.” Together, we satisfied both academic audiences as well as general ones.

We developed a smooth system. I would tell the story in a chronological fashion, and then Mike added details before putting together the conclusion. After that, I would make any further changes to the conclusion and write the introduction and the headline. The final part involved Mike adding some theory to satisfy the social scientists. He knew far more about theory than I did, and what he wrote about it was absolutely essential to our success as researchers.

Our 2014 monograph was the highlight of our collaborations because it cracked a cold case of more than seventy years. It was on the *Chicago Tribune's* Battle of Midway story in 1942 and how the government attempted to get an Espionage Act indictment because of it. Numerous historians had attempted unsuccessfully to find out how war correspondent Stanley Johnston had gotten the story, resulting in a lot of speculation. Over about twenty-five years, I had used the Freedom of

Information Act to obtain thousands of pages of government documents about the case. We combined that with archival visits and interviews. Because I had some health problems, I asked Mike to join me in completing the research, and he found some particularly important information in the *Tribune* archives. While we knew more than anyone else about the case, we still did not have the “smoking gun” on how Johnston had gotten the story.

One day on my computer, I saw a citation for a letter to the editor about the *Tribune*'s Midway story that had appeared in an obscure naval journal in 1982. The magazine was in the Ohio University archives, and the letter from a World War II naval officer explained how Johnston had done it. When I read this, I literally uttered “holy shit” out loud in the archival reading room. The information had been available to other historians, but none had apparently seen the letter. I raced into Mike's office to tell him, and he let out a loud shout with a big smile. We had finally done it after years of work, and his excitement was just as exuberant as when he took the leap in his classroom at Utah State with injurious consequences. It was one of many times that I saw him celebrate like that over a research coup.

That joy carried over to his teaching at OU, which resulted in his being named the university's Outstanding Graduate Faculty Member in 2018 and speaking at the graduate graduation. Colleague Aimee Edmondson commented recently on his teaching:

“Students flocked to his classes, which were always well planned and organized. His passion for his subjects came through in the undergraduate and graduate journalism history classes and in his feature writing classes. His classroom was a stage, and he was the performer. He could connect with freshmen and doctoral students alike. Mike taught as long as he could because he lost himself in the subject — he told me

it was the one time he didn't think about cancer.... He was fantastic at teaching research methods. Graduate students who initially thought of themselves as quantitative researchers found themselves doing historical theses and dissertations because of Mike's classes and mentorship."

When asked about his teaching, Carolyn agreed with Aimee that Mike loved it, so much so that he sometimes was "physically exhausted" because he put so much effort into it. She noted that doing research was fun for him, just as teaching it was, and she said he particularly liked seeing his students have success doing it.

Another thing he loved was the AJHA, which he served as president and from which he received the Kobre Award in 2015 for lifetime achievement in journalism history. Carolyn said the AJHA was his favorite professional organization. "He thought of AJHA members as a family for him," she said. Many in that "family" will undoubtedly recall the times when he was the auctioneer for a money-raising event at the annual meetings. He created a stunning excitement that encouraged people to give money.

OU's journalism school misses him. "He was one of the best colleagues that I ever had," said Aimee. "He did the work of three people. I've never seen anyone work harder than Mike.... I'm going to miss his jokes and his generosity. He was my biggest cheerleader. He was genuinely interested in other people. He was religious and had a strong moral compass. He always did the right thing."

She also recalls that when Mike needed a favor from her, he would promise to pay her back with "a beer bigger than my head."

I can vouch for his dry humor, for which he was famous. I was not very computer literate, and around 2010, he helped me with some pictures that I wanted to show in my undergraduate journalism history class. I was so excited when this worked that I said to him, "Now I am

up to date on the computer!” And he replied immediately with a wicked smile, “No, you are about up to the year 2000.”

Over the years after I retired in 2012, we would ride bicycles together on the bike path, sometimes have lunch together, occasionally meet up with our adopted dogs at a local dog park, and play poker together in a low-stakes game. He was a smart poker player who hardly ever lost money and would smile broadly while raking in the chips. But he never did it in such a manner that anyone got angry.

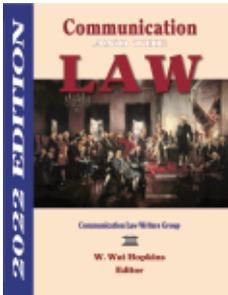
The final time that I saw Mike, although we had emails and phone calls after that, was on his front porch last summer. By this time, he had been forced to retire in the middle of the spring semester because his cancer made it impossible for him to continue. The four-hour trips to the Cleveland Clinic, which had been every three or four weeks for years, were over. He had courageously fought for as long as he could and told me that he hoped to make it to Christmas. I was glad when that occurred.

We talked for about an hour, just old friends recalling old times, some good and some bad. And I will never forget him paying me one of the best compliments that I have ever gotten: “You are one of the best editors that I ever had.” As I write this, I have tears in my eyes. Remembering what he said is very emotional for me. And what I will regret forever is not telling him that he was the best doctoral student whom I ever worked closely with. I had some outstanding ones — three of them won the AJHA’s dissertation award and twelve had their dissertations published as books — but he was the best.

Hopefully he can look down and realize what I should have told him. But at least his family can hear it and be proud of it. He was the best, and I miss him.

[CLICK HERE  
TO RETURN  
TO TABLE OF  
CONTENTS](#)

# GET A FREE EXAM COPY OF THE 2022 EDITION



978-1-885219-91-6

*Communication and the Law* is in its 24th year of publication, and it has been used at more than 130 schools. New schools have been adopting it with each new edition. We believe its popularity confirms that professors recognize its superior quality.

A distinguishing feature of *Communication and the Law* is that a **new, updated edition is published each year**. Thus, you can be assured that your students will have the most timely information in one place, rather than in a textbook and a separately published supplement.

Each year, the **prices of other books continue to go up**, but the suggested retail price of *Communication and the Law* is only \$54.95. That is **lower than for any other textbook in the field** — in fact, less than for used copies of other books.

**If you do not already have a copy of the 2022 edition, to  
[vision.press.books@gmail.com](mailto:vision.press.books@gmail.com)**

**Vision Press**

**“Outstanding Textbooks at Affordable Prices”**

# Analyzing Journalists' Collective Conceptions of Press Freedom

By Erin K. Coyle ©



Coyle

Generations of journalists have advocated for greater free press rights in the U.S. and abroad. Members of professional organizations actively studied, discussed, and publicly addressed press rights after World War II. In relation to those coordinated efforts, journalists individually and collectively advocated for their rights to gather and report information. Historians examining journalists' advocacy for press freedom must consider important contexts, such as social, cultural, and political factors that can influence how journalists collectively conceive of press freedom.

In *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory*, Barbie Zelizer has described journalists as part of interpretive communities whose narratives lend legitimacy and authority to their roles. Ultimately, narratives construct collective memory. Patrick File has posited that journalistic discourse constructs cultural meaning. File's institutional history, "'Watchdog' Journalists and

*Erin Coyle is an associate professor of journalism at Temple University. Former AJHA Research Chair, she is the author of *The Press and Rights to Privacy* (2012) and peer-reviewed articles on press freedom, editors' advocacy for press freedom, and privacy.*

© 2022. The author owns the copyright to this essay.

‘Shyster’ Lawyers: Analyzing Legal Reform Discourse in the Journalistic Trade Press, 1895-1899,” analyzes how trade journals reflected professional values in relation to social and political factors.

My recent historical research with Elisabeth Fondren builds upon foundational work in which Emily Erickson, Michael Schudson, Margaret Blanchard, and Kiyul Uhm have explored advocacy for free flows of information and rights to know. In “Encountering the ‘Other’ by Lifting the Iron Curtain: American Newspaper Editors’ Global Campaigns for Bridges of Understanding, 1961-1970,” Fondren and I explored how members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors attempted to share American conceptions of press freedom with Soviet journalists when the cultural Cold War influenced American and Soviet perceptions of one another. We focused on their transnational advocacy for press freedom through four exchange trips in which Soviet journalists visited the United States and U.S. journalists visited Soviet states between 1961 and 1970.

To evaluate institutional perspectives and influences, we reviewed ASNE reports, draft meeting minutes, and trade publications. Those records reflected organizational and political factors that influenced the exchanges. The ASNE International Committee had a goal for ASNE members to participate in exchanges with journalists from communist countries. Through those trips American newspaper editors, publishers, and executives advocated for journalists from communist countries to visit the U.S, to improve the free flow of information internationally, and to protest international censorship.

To evaluate institutional and individual perspectives, we carefully read correspondence, draft articles, diary entries, and research stored in the archival records of seven ASNE members involved with the exchanges. Diaries, letters, and handwritten notes revealed individual edi-

tor's hopes and anxieties related to these trips. ASNE member records revealed common stories and themes that reflect collective conceptualization and efforts to advocate for press freedom.

Historical analysis of American letters, diaries entries, handwritten notes, draft articles, and publications revealed ASNE members hoped that the exchanges ultimately could help Soviet people attain greater access to U.S. news and U.S. journalists with greater freedom to travel in the Soviet Union. Their advocacy for greater free flows of information and less censorship did not bring about immediate changes. For example, their 1962 meeting with Nikita S. Khrushchev, the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, did not persuade Khrushchev to afford greater freedom to foreign correspondents or Soviet people. American assertions that the Soviet press needed to provide more than Soviet perspectives reflected conceptions of press freedom that contradicted the Soviet press model.

Article drafts and notes revealed that American and Soviet journalists held different conceptions of truth during the 1960s. While Khrushchev was in power, American journalists detailed disappointment that Soviet people had not received accurate information about the U.S. due to Soviet restrictions. Several editors recalled an American editor's personal advocacy to reduce censorship. Addressing punishment of people who wrote about or smuggled anti-Communist messages, he asked to see a writer sent to a labor camp in 1966. He was not amused when a Soviet Journalism Union member joked that he could do so if he violated several serious laws. Americans collectively were concerned about censorship, even after Khrushchev fell from power. By the end of the decade, however, Americans recognized that restrictions had resulted in people in both countries receiving inaccurate information, reflecting a shift in collective perceptions.

Some archival records provided social context through photographs, captions, and stories of journalists that addressed American experiences and observations during their travels abroad. Several photographs provided opportunities for fact-checking who was present during meetings. Some images showed American editors clustered together as they posed for pictures, reflecting their camaraderie as they traveled to advocate collectively for spreading their free press ideals. Other images showing Soviet people were accompanied by captions or stories that contrasted the Soviet way of living with the American way.

Recognizing ASNE members' records could include selectively curated information, we also triangulated findings from American writings with letters and articles written by Soviet journalists, U.S. Department of State letters and reports, and other publications. To contextualize and check the accuracy of American descriptions, we analyzed descriptions of the exchanges and press freedom found in Soviet exchange participants' letters and articles. Comparing Soviet to American descriptions revealed how U.S. and Soviet journalists valued freedom of the press. Press freedom, however, had different cultural and political meanings in each country. Whereas Americans writing about press freedom addressed independence from government and political influence, Soviet journalists contrasted their freedom from economic influence with the American press's reliance upon advertising. Their writings revealed different conceptions for press freedom and independence than U.S. writings did.

Analyzing government documents also provided important political context. Those documents revealed U.S. journalists involved in the Soviet exchanges were not fully independent from government influence. The U.S. Department of State advised ASNE members involved in each exchange. Correspondence with U.S. Department of State offi-

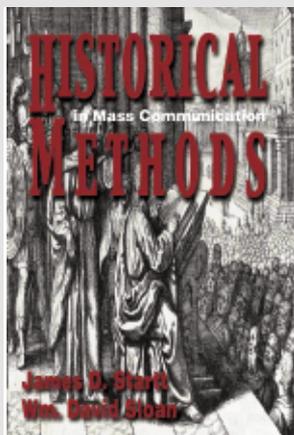
cialists explained logistics and shed light on the involvement of American and Soviet government agencies in these trips. U.S. Department of State documents also identified U.S. and Soviet goals for the exchanges. The state department and ASNE shared goals for the exchanges to increase information flows and understanding between both countries. Documents from the U.S. Department of State provided important political and cultural context for journalists' initiatives.

We examined trade publications, professional organization records, ASNE member archival records, and government records to explore how journalists advocated for press freedom and greater access to information and places. Historical analysis of trade journals, journalism organization records, and journalists' archival records may shed light on how members of the U.S. press individually and collectively have conceived of press freedom and advocated for press freedom. To learn about institutional history, journalism historians may compare narratives in individuals' records and organizational records to understand institutional intentions in relation to social, cultural, and political factors. Our research found that American journalists had some success in attempting to build bridges of cultural understanding, and they learned about significant differences in American and Soviet collective perceptions of press freedom.

[CLICK HERE  
TO RETURN  
TO TABLE OF  
CONTENTS](#)

## THE STANDARD — NEW, 4TH EDITION

With its first edition, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication* quickly became the standard manual for research in the field.



This highly praised book guides historians and history students in the methods of proper research. Its underlying concept is that communication historians must master the well-prescribed methods that have proven themselves in the general field of history.

The new, fourth edition retains the qualities that made the earlier editions so successful, but it adds features that make it even better. You will find substantial revisions in several chapters, an expanded chapter on Internet research for historians, an updated bibliography, an expanded index, and other improvements.

To request a free exam copy, please email Vision Press at [vision.press.books@gmail.com](mailto:vision.press.books@gmail.com)

Vision Press

“Outstanding Textbooks at Affordable Prices”

# Historian Interview

By Andrew Pettegree ©



Pettegree

Andrew Pettegree, FBA (Fellow of the British Academy), is Professor of Modern History at the University of St Andrews and Director of the Universal Short Title Catalogue (an online bibliography of all books published in the first two centuries after the invention of print). He is the author of thirteen books in the fields of Reformation history and the history of communication including *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), *Brand Luther: 1517, Print and the Making of the Reformation* (Penguin, 2015) and *The Bookshop of the World: Making and Trading Books in the Dutch Golden Age* (Yale University Press, 2019). *The Library: A Fragile History*, co-authored with Arthur der Weduwen, was published by Profile in 2021. *The Book in the Renaissance* (Yale University Press, 2010) won the Phyllis Goodhart Gordan Prize of the Renaissance Society of America, *The Invention of News* (Yale University Press, 2014) won the Goldsmith Prize of Harvard University. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2021.

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

***Andrew Pettegree:*** I was brought up in Shropshire, so a country boy.

© 2022. The author owns the copyright to this article.

My father was a land agent, and there was plenty of space for dogs, walking and bikes. I was the fourth of five children, so used to holding my own in a busy house. My first school was a church of England primary school with two classes, the big room and the little room. The two teachers coped admirably. At the age of ten I went away to boarding school on a scholarship from Shropshire County Council, so for the next eight years lived between two worlds, both of which I enjoyed. I relished both schoolwork and sport, the two vital ingredients for a happy life at public school, though the fact that I was accelerated ahead of my year group was a social disadvantage. Home was always there, and I was always happy. Whatever the challenges of their own life (this was not a household with a lot of money), I had an easy and sparky relationship with my parents. I am pleased they had the chance to get to know my own children before they died, after fifty-five years together.

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

***Andrew Pettegree:*** Since I was so young doing A levels (16), I allowed two years to elapse before I went on to university. The second of these years I spent teaching Math, History and English at a small Shropshire prep school. That was a great year: I was given a pony to look after, sorted out the cricket team and persuaded the younger boys that I played football for Leeds United in the holidays. I think they were quite proud of me. I also learned how much children of that age yearn to be inspired, and how important teachers can be in inculcating a love of reading and scholarship.

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

## Historian Interview

**Andrew Pettegree:** After the year teaching children aged 10-13, I taught a few tutorials when a research fellow at Cambridge. My pupils there included the young man with whom I opened the batting in the college cricket team — I admired enormously the aplomb with which he switched back and forth between teammate and tutee. Since leaving Cambridge I have spent thirty-five years and counting teaching at St Andrews. I have taught the introductory foundation course on early modern history ever since, along with a rolling programme of honours modules on the Reformation, Dutch Republic, history of printing and libraries. I set up two master's programmes on Reformation History and Book History and have enjoyed seeing many of those students on to PhDs and careers. By the time I retire I will have supervised fifty PhDs to a successful conclusion, and see many of them launch careers and publish books.

**Historiography:** *Tell us about your background in history: When did you first get interested in historical research? How did your education prepare you to be a historian? etc.*

**Andrew Pettegree:** I became a historian at the age of four. Like many of my generation I am the product of Ladybird books and *Look and Learn*. I remember vividly a strategic temperature, and from my sickbed pressing a sweaty half-crown into the hand of my great aunt Gladys, asking her to bring me back a Ladybird book from a shopping trip in Shrewsbury. As I had secretly hoped, she brought me the entire history series. There was also a negative prompt, in that I was the sort of child who if you rubbed a balloon on your sweater, it would resolutely refuse to stick to the wall. So that was science closed off. It didn't get better at school, where the chemistry block was pungent and the physics teachers

boring, whereas I caught a golden age of teachers in both history and English.

Looking back, I don't think I was particularly well taught at Oxford, except by my contemporaries — the tutors were very good at identifying talent at the interviews, and so we nudged each other forward. A group of us recently enjoyed dinner to mark 45 years since graduation, and we just about avoided bladders and prostates. With twelve essays to be written in every eight-week term, it was a highly pressured environment — you can see why it is a breeding ground for broadcasters, journalists and people in finance. In fact, I got the distinct impression that that was the college's preferred destination, a well-paid or interesting job so that alumni could give generous cheques to the college (as they do) or at least provide some jolly stories of derring-do for entertaining new generations of undergraduates. Continuing on to a PhD was not much encouraged, though in fairness these were the years of 1980s austerity, and although I was lucky, many of my contemporaries found it hard to establish themselves in academic jobs.

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

***Andrew Pettegree:*** I spent two years between Oxford and Cambridge as a postdoc in Hamburg. This was 1982-1984, so I experienced a lot of anniversaries of big bombing raids forty years before. My father was an RAF flier, and I thought deeply on the morality of war and the impact of total war. I remember standing on the viewing platform in West Berlin looking out over the Berlin Wall, an unforgettable experience. Several times I took the one-day pass into East Berlin, enjoying not least the German History Museum, with the Communist perspective on the

Reformation. Back then those on the political left were exploring with interest the Eastern European concept of the *Frühbürgerliche Revolution*. Then came 1989 and the fall of the wall, those East German scholars all lost their jobs, and no one raised a fraternal whimper of protest. The *Frühbürgerliche Revolution* was buried with their careers. I pretty much abandoned theory then.

As for people, my splendid doctoral supervisor Joan Thirsk provided a model of generous but measured supervision that I have tried to follow with my own students. She was a discerning reader, but never pushed a particular interpretative framework upon me. I welcomed the independence this gave me. We kept in touch, and she even knitted for the birth of my first child. Alan Midgley, head of history at my school, was a big influence, and I owe a special word of thanks to Philip Waller, who conducted the informal chat on the eve of my main Oxford interview in such a way as to make me feel at home and relaxed.

Lectures did not play a big part in our university life (we were too busy reading), but I did learn a great deal from hearing Hugh Trevor-Roper and Simon Schama. They were at opposite ends of their career, but both taught me that to write history you need a good narrative — they were both mesmerising storytellers. I have tried to honour their example in my own work. They also taught me that simplicity and clarity of expression is not simple minded, but the art of good writing.

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

***Andrew Pettegree:*** I worked for the first half of my career on the social history of religion: first on the immigrant refugees from continental Europe who found homes in London and then in Emden, north Ger-

many. Later I broadened out to write on the European and British Reformations more generally.

I then switched to writing more broadly about the history of communication. This started with an attempt to reconstruct the print output of sixteenth-century France, a project which involved ten years of travelling around the marvellous French provincial municipal libraries. From this emerged the St Andrews book research group and the *Universal Short Title Catalogue*, which has furnished the foundational data for a string of my publications. In 2015 I was able to bring together these two strands of work in a study of Martin Luther's interactions with the printing press, *Brand Luther*.

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

**Andrew Pettegree:** I have written as sole author or co-author thirteen books, as well as a number of edited collections. I have also been the lead editor of two series, the *St Andrews Studies in Reformation History* and *The Library of the Written Word*, a book history series. Together they have published over two hundred volumes. The edited volumes have included three titles that have helped define the St Andrews contribution to the recalibration of book history: *Lost Books* (2016), *Broadsheets* (2017), and *Book Trade Catalogues* (2021).

In my books, I have tried to conceptualise the experience of reading and communicating ideas through an expanding range of periods from the introduction of the printing print to the present day. Increasingly, this has been directed to a public extending beyond the academic community, without, I hope, failing to offer new and challenging interpretative work to colleagues in the field and students studying history and

allied disciplines. The principal theme that runs through all of this work, is an understanding that mass communication has always relied on a multi-media environment: new innovations can be transformative, but without pushing out the old. Thus manuscript, oral dissemination, and hand-written newsletters and correspondence all continued to flourish alongside the multiple functions of print. The digital age has similarly demonstrated the extraordinary resilience of legacy media.

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

*Andrew Pettegree:* I have enjoyed *The Library: A Fragile History* (2021) because of its breadth, the engagement with a diverse reading public who value libraries and for the pleasures of co-authorship (this was written with my St Andrews colleague Arthur der Weduwen, with whom I have now written four books). I enjoyed *The Bookshop of the World* (2019) as a welcome return to my roots in Dutch history, and *Brand Luther* (2015) for the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation of which it formed part. I am hugely enjoying writing *The Book at War*, a study of the role of books in wartime, where they served both as comfort and inspiration but also played a key role in fomenting the ideologies that bring nations into conflict — books are not always mute victims. It is largely written and due out in 2023. *The Book in the Renaissance* (2010) was my first real success with a wider non-academic audience, and *The Invention of News* (2014) introduced me to a new audience of policy makers and journalists, and resulted in some interesting professional contacts.

*Historiography:* We realize that it is difficult to judge one's own work —

*and that the most accomplished people are often the most modest — but if you had to summarize your most important contributions to the field of JMC history, what would they be?*

**Andrew Pettegree:** I am very fond of *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, a book which I am sure is virtually unknown to practitioners in this field, since it explores mass communication in the context of the dissemination of the Reformation message in the sixteenth century. *The Invention of News* is my most direct contribution to the literature of journalism, and I intend that this story of the birth of commercial news will ultimately be followed by two further books bringing the story up to the present. But undoubtedly my most substantial contribution has been the *Universal Short Title Catalogue* ([ustc.ac.uk](http://ustc.ac.uk)), a survey of all books published in the first age of print, bringing together a century of bibliographical research in a convenient and easily searched portal. That has been particularly important to scholars who do not have easy access to a major academic collection, and is available free online to anyone with computer access.

I have also enjoyed the opportunity through my book history series, *The Library of the Written Word*, to publish the work of a large number of scholars presenting their research in the English language for the first time. Edited collections are often disparaged and some of the university presses are most reluctant to publish them, but in a relatively new discipline like book history, they have played an important role in building a network of practitioners.

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

## Historian Interview

**Andrew Pettegree:** I have been too lucky and had too satisfying a career for this to be an easy question to answer. St Andrews has given me an enormous amount of scope to put on new courses, to build new research groups, to move across fields and publish in a variety of areas. It has been a wonderful place to bring up a family. Most of the things that did not come off, most notably moving to the United States in 2001, have proved to be a blessing in disguise. Perhaps if I was forced to choose one thing, I should probably have sought out an agent a decade earlier. Certainly the turn towards publishing with trade publishers in the last ten years has been hugely rewarding, and brought my work new audiences with which I enjoy interacting.

**Historiography:** *Tell us about your “philosophy of history” (of historical study in general or of JMC history in particular) or what you think are the most important principles for studying history.*

**Andrew Pettegree:** Remembering that history is about the past. The job of a historian is to understand the past in its own terms, hopefully by unearthing previously unconsidered evidence, or explaining the relevance and importance of previously known materials. It is not the job of historians to judge the past by the standards of the present, as if we are investigating the extent to which past centuries measure up to our own perfection. This narcissism of the present is all too prevalent, and always corrosive.

I always urge my graduate students to start with a body of materials, rather than a theory which they intend to test. The latter approach always means bending the evidence to fit with a pre-conceived notion as was so tragically required of our central and eastern European colleagues during the Cold War. If you have a historian’s eye any coherent

body of archives or data will tell you something interesting.

There's no great mystery about interdisciplinarity. Working across disciplines, skilling up as you go, is the normal process of research: you accumulate what skills are required to follow the evidence trail. That's the fun of it.

If I had to look for a label, I would say I am a radical empiricist. Good data and a good eye will take you to the heart of good history writing.

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

***Andrew Pettegree:*** If I say that I am being introduced to the acronym JMC for the first time answering this questionnaire, this is proof of my unfittedness to answer this question. I will say in my own areas of interest, book history, library history and the history of news, I have hugely benefitted from the range and quality of work I have read digging into new areas for the first time. *The Library: A Fragile History*, was my first sustained sortie into writing on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which I am now repeating with a study of books in wartime. What is most striking is the range of people engaged on the study of modern centuries, compared to my usual beat, the early modern period. Given the relative absence of public interest in serious research on the early modern period, I have spent most of my career reading the work of fellow academics and graduate students. Studying the twentieth century, I have profited enormously from works of outstanding quality written by authors with a mass following. For my work on the history of libraries, I read a great deal of superb research undertaken by librarians, usually in the form of articles rather than monographs.

What I most admire in these works, is the interpretative insight, the seriousness of the research and the clarity of the writing. There is no point whatsoever in studying mass communication and wrapping those conclusions in impenetrable jargon. It is a great academic failing to confuse complexity of writing for sophistication of thought. My first lesson for my graduate students is that if a sentence has to be read twice, that is a failure of writing.

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

***Andrew Pettegree:*** When I published *The Invention of News*, journalists reviewing it were very kind, but you could feel the unspoken question hovering in the background — would they have a job in twenty years? So for the purpose of selling books I briefly became a futurologist, though this is never the best look for a historian — we are not at our best with a moving target.

What I learned writing about a different though equally traumatic media transformation six hundred years ago, from manuscript to print, was that all predictions were wrong. Boosters of print wanted books for people like themselves; they would have been appalled by the proliferation of cheap print, the splintering of the western church with the Reformation. Likewise, I don't remember Tim Berners-Lee promoting the dark web, internet betting and trolling as the glories of the new democratic invention the Internet.

The future, as it turns out is very temporary; looking ahead even ten years is fraught with peril. I hope JMC history recognises that the future of media will continue to be a mixed economy, that the new never pushes out the old, though the period of transition can be traumatic.

Much of this trauma comes from worrying about things which actually never happen, like the death of journalism. When I first entered the profession one of my friends, impressed by the speed of change predicted that I would never write a book: that books would be redundant before I could put pen to paper. Well, that didn't work out. Now, forty years later, more books are printed than ever, and a new independent bookshop opens in the UK each week. Ninety percent of the trade books I have published have been sold as hard copy books.

In the last three years we have conducted a huge experiment with our young people, with closed schools, shuttered libraries and enforced online study. In the short-term digital media have had a good pandemic, but what of the long-term consequences? The field needs to promote some serious research into this — the impact on attention span and retention, and beyond study, the impact on public discourse. Such neurological research of which I am aware is not reassuring. And what are we doing to our eyes? This is work I am not qualified to do, but should be a major priority of the field over the next ten years.

[CLICK HERE  
TO RETURN  
TO TABLE OF  
CONTENTS](#)

# How Media History Matters

## The Media and Political Values

By Hiley H. Ward ©



Ward

Daily rituals for political and social life derive from a ranking of values. Whether one goes to a church or bowling alley or a movie on a certain evening will depend on a ranking of values. For example, entertainment values might win out over religious values or vice versa. Media as sources of information, opinion, and advice contribute to the ranking of values.

The media role in setting — and reflecting — values is never more evident than in the political process, especially during presidential campaigns. In such durations, media attach themselves

*Hiley Ward (1929-2009) was the author of fifteen books. In 1999 the American Journalism Historians Association awarded him its Sidney Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement. He founded, in cooperation with Editor & Publisher, the journal Media History Digest in 1981 and served as its editor for twelve years. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1977. While serving as religion editor of the Detroit Free Press (for fifteen years) he was president of the national Religion Newswriters Association. He was a member of the reporting team that won a Pulitzer Prize for the Free Press in 1967. He taught journalism at Mankato (Minn.) State University, Wichita State University, and Temple University. In the last several years of his life, he suffered from Parkinson's disease. He died of leukemia. This essay first appeared in the book *The Significance of the Media in American History*, James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, eds.*

© 2022. Vision Press owns the copyright to this essay.

to certain themes — little or small — and produce variations of their own and repeat them. In fact, the media create their own value system.

The role of the media setting the values through political reporting was certainly evident in the first real clash of political parties, the Democrats and Whigs, in the 1830s and '40s. Established then were symbolic values that persist and shape political activity today. Particularly out of the image-creating campaign of 1840 — with all of its emphasis on positing candidates in conflict and bestowing mantles on the anointed — came values asserted in future elections.

Media give life to instrumental and lower intrinsic values that are normally not scaled on a high level in various ordering of values. And these values are interrelated. The media, for instance, pay heed to instrumental values of (1) paucity (poverty, low beginnings, humble origins, deprivation, being an underdog) and (2) alienation (myth of the outsider, the dispossessed, the excluded). Their value comes in an association. The humble, unknown individual is thrown into a society and must struggle. He or she achieves — as a survivor and/or as a deliverer, Moses; avatar or savior, Jesus; one of great political rank, as Napoleon or Abraham Lincoln.

Such achievement out of nowhere involves conflict, the oppression from society (Moses, badgered in Egypt; Jesus in Judaea; emperors and politicians, faced off with political and ideological rivals). The media continue to put value on the role of the humble and the outsider who in the narrative orientation of media are tried by conflict. The media are on the side of the underdog. Once the underdog emerges, media are likely to scout out other candidates for underdog status. That is why candidates in recent campaigns and at other times have declined to boast very loudly about wearing the mantle of front-runner, knowing the course in a “bounce” easily shifts to the perceived underdog.

Never more clearly than in the last decade of the twentieth century was the role of outsider paramount, from the entry into the political arena in 1992 of anti-Washington Ross Perot; the emergence of westerner and southerner Bill Clinton, against a besieged, well-born president attempting to come back from somewhere out there where the public had relegated him. Many modern politicians — notably Democrats Harry Truman and Jimmy Carter and Republican Dwight Eisenhower — relished roles of Washington outsiders. Hard-pressed President George H.W. Bush sought to compare himself to Truman in an attempt to stay politically alive. Yet the outsider from Arkansas won. The media kindle Horatio Alger, rag-to-riches myths, divine the outsider, and relish conflict, even violence (demonstrations, riots), the stuff that news stories are made of.

Modern media offer their own classification of values, even turning topsy-turvy some traditional rankings. What are values? To attempt to define them is an invitation to ranking. They also appear in classifications that can also be ranked. Most elementary they suggest a dichotomy — something that has immediate worth, bringing present gratification, and second, something that is a goal to be achieved, or a standard to be replicated, or a principle to be embodied.

Value can be described as anything that has some worth. On the lower level, a bargain sale has its worth. You save money. On the other hand, security and happiness in old age may prove to be of more worth than an immediate comfort; so one invests in pensions, etc. Certainly those who hold to a Deity-directed and God-settled course of history will see assurances of salvation and participation in some unique God-plan as more worth than the present promises.

Archie J. Bahm, professor of philosophy at the University of New Mexico, has cited the classical distinction between “instrumental val-

ues” and “intrinsic values.” That is, “any fact, whether in my experience or out of it, which tends to produce the experience of intrinsic value” is an instrumental value, while “whatever is desired or enjoyed for its own sake, as an end in ‘itself’ is an intrinsic value.”<sup>1</sup>

While value scholar Milton Rokeach regards values as “multifaceted standards that guide conduct in a variety of ways,”<sup>2</sup> he also stratifies them into two classes. He offers eighteen “instrumental” and eighteen “terminal” values — example: being ambitious (hard-working, aspiring) is an instrumental value, while its coordinate as an intrinsic value is a comfortable life (a “prosperous life”).<sup>3</sup> Earlier Edgar Sheffield Brightman separated values into “(1) purely instrumental values — including natural values (forces of nature, life, light, etc.) and economic values; (2) lower intrinsic values — including bodily values (good health, etc.), recreational values (satisfaction from play, humor, etc.) and work values; and (3) higher intrinsic values — including social values (value experience through sharing, etc.), character values, aesthetic values, intellectual values and religious values (an encompassing, coalescing value).”<sup>4</sup>

Media, preoccupied with processes and techniques, rather than endowing certain ends, invert the instrumental and intrinsic ranking, seemingly putting their own stamp of approval on certain instrumental or lower intrinsic values for their own sake. The humorous article or sidebar or box in newspapers, for instance, exists for no higher reason than to induce an instant laugh and “moment of satisfaction.” Some who would construct media codes would posit considerable importance in the idea of humor itself, elevating it to higher intrinsic or near higher intrinsic “status.”<sup>5</sup> In a journalistic code it is also possible to coalesce the intrinsic values into one or several axioms, such as “Do that which is human, whether to protect or to expose, never forgetting acts of chari-

ty.”<sup>6</sup> Some of the great codes come down to this: consider the Golden Rule found in several religions — treat others as you would want to be treated; or consider what Jesus did: summarize all the commandments into two, loving God and fellow “humankind.”<sup>7</sup> But implicit even in these high idealistic thematic all-purpose guidelines that elevate the benefit of humanity as primary is the value of compassion for the down-and-outer — the outsider.

The media preoccupation with the underdog and outsider certainly had roots in the colonial press. Consider the Bradfords and Franklins and John Peter Zenger as they challenged authority, or consider the blossoming of full-scale revolution against the British king. The development of party politics assured the perpetuation of the underdog and outsider perspectives, prescribed by perennial conflict. Remember the elections of 1824 — when challenger Andrew Jackson, with a rough frontier reputation (somewhat fictitious), almost won — and of 1828, when Jackson won and, accompanied by his “frontier” buddies, moved into the seat of power.

### IMAGE BUILDING IN THE 1840 LOG CABIN CAMPAIGN

The media’s heightened role in imaging the value or worth of the humble and the outsider — becoming susceptible to the professional myth-makers — came full bloom in the election of 1840. William Henry Harrison, a washed-up general with a somewhat undistinguished record, was presented in the media as coming from humble, “log-cabin” origins and as an outsider to Washington. The media had found two important themes they could “value” and turn to in the ensuing years: The preoccupation with (1) the humble-origin theme, the *underdog*, and (2) the *outsider*, in conflict with the rich and privileged, would pro-

vide direction. Even in an aristocratic privileged press, such paradigms by which to gauge crimes, social ills and presidential politics would prevail. Andrew Jackson, with his “common man” theme, and William Henry Harrison, with the log-cabin and hard cider slogans, generated not only a *modus vivendi* of conducting politics but essential themes of value for today’s media.

To get elected in 1840, a candidate had to be bigger than life. He still had to run in the image of the great hero, Andrew Jackson, the victor of the War of 1812 and a man identified with the rigor and strength of the frontier.

The new candidate had to be an astute politician with a knack for knowing when to lunge forth or when to lay back and let the people come to him. He would ride in on a wave of discontent, just as Jackson capitalized on the discontent with the unpopular John Quincy Adams, who held the press at bay and was virtually unconcerned with image making.

The new president elected in 1840 would also likely be one who countered the aristocratic, high-handed image of Jackson’s hand-picked successor, Democrat Martin Van Buren, who had won in 1836. Van Buren’s administration was cursed largely by an economic panic started in 1837. Yet the successful candidate in 1840 would be a frontier hero, a “pseudo-Crockett,” as Bernard A. Weisberger put it, filling in for the logical missing frontier candidate (Davy Crockett had failed in a bid for Congress in 1834 and perished at the Alamo in 1836).<sup>8</sup>

### *William Henry Harrison*

The man to fit the bill was near at hand. Aging General William Henry Harrison, largely retired at his farm in North Bend, Ohio, sixteen miles

west of Cincinnati, had spent much of his life on the frontier, was a war hero, made friends easily, was identified with the fresh new party, the Whigs, and was free of the accumulated baggage of Jackson and Van Buren.

Harrison came from a rich Virginia family. His father, Benjamin Harrison V, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The young Harrison studied medicine with the distinguished Benjamin Rush but soon opted for the glamour of the military, using his connections to be appointed an officer. He served under General Anthony Wayne in the battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 at Maumee, Ohio, against an Indian confederacy. Then Harrison led troops victoriously against Indians at Tippecanoe Creek near Lafayette, Indiana, in 1811. During the War of 1812, he crushed once and for all Tecumseh's Indian confederacy at the Battle of the Thames (October 5, 1813) in Ontario — a victory over a sizable force of British troops and Indians.

Harrison had a considerable career in government, first as administrator of the Northwest Territory and then as governor of the newly created Indiana Territory for over ten years. Indicative of his personality, Harrison, seeing himself as a kind of benign but stern father-God figure, patronized the Indians. He always referred to them, in communication after communication, as “My Children” — “My Children, what is it you wish for?” he wrote in a message to the chiefs and warriors of the Kickapoo tribe. “Have I not often told you that you should inform me of all your grievances, and that you would never apply to your father in vain? My Children, be wise; do not follow the advice of those who would lead you to destruction....”<sup>9</sup>

And Harrison did not rock the boat on slavery, when a select committee at a convention of the Indiana Territory called for Article Six of a compact between the U.S. government and the Territory be suspend-

ed. The article banned slavery from the Territory; its suspension would encourage entrepreneurs with slaves to stay in the Indiana Territory instead of heading south and west. Harrison endorsed the action of the convention which called for the suspension of the ban for ten years, thus “requesting the gates be open for slavery for that period.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, in the presidential campaign, some papers regarded Harrison as one who would deny full rights to Black people, even free ones. One reason given for voting for Harrison by the *Sangamo Journal*, of Springfield, Ill., was Van Buren’s “love for Free Negroes.” As an example, the paper cited Van Buren’s “official sanction to the measure” of letting “two Negroes testify against a white officer in a court martial trial.”<sup>11</sup>

Harrison served in the Ohio Senate and the U.S. Senate. As the first U.S. minister to Colombia, under President Jackson, Harrison had foreign experience, but his taking sides — criticizing the Colombian liberator Simón Bolívar for despotic leanings — prompted his recall.

Yet he would need something more than a record to run for president, which he did the first time in 1836 and lost. His chief detractor, former president John Quincy Adams, saw him, as did others, as fluff. In the campaign, Adams observed that, among the challengers, “White [Hugh Lawson White of Tennessee, a disgruntled former Jackson supporter] and Harrison are now the golden calves of the people, and their dull sayings are repeated for wit, and their grave inanity is passed off for wisdom.”<sup>12</sup> Adams did not change his mind much in 1840 when he summed up his views of Harrison: “His present popularity is all artificial. There is little confidence in his talents or his firmness.”<sup>13</sup>

In 1840, Harrison waited, like the Roman Cincinnatus at his plow, ready to be summoned to lead his nation from suppression. He was now merely a clerk of the Court of Common Pleas in Hamilton County as he enjoyed the good life in the magnificent mansion built around a

four-room cabin he had bought from his father-in-law in 1796.<sup>14</sup> He fit the Whig perennial stance of an underdog. “Whig candidates were often underdogs, usually running against Democratic incumbents,” said campaign chronicler Keith Melder. “And Whigs tended to nominate leaders not closely identified with partisanship, such as old generals.”<sup>15</sup>

### *Building the Log-Cabin Image*

The rural outsider image — out of the loop of Washington and eastern bureaucracy and aristocracy — was cultivated by an “interview” with Harrison, in fact one of the earliest newspaper interviews on record. The lengthy interview, most of it presented indirectly, as it appeared in the *Sangamo Journal*, reprinted from the *New York Express*, reflected the impressions of the unnamed writer. It said in part:

It has been among the happiest visits of my life.... His rural dwelling, the antique sideboard, the Lord’s Prayer in its time worn frame, the plain and the home wrought carpet, the spacious fire-place, tended to by himself, and kindled in the morning always by his own hand; the rustic, but generous and abundant face, what a contrast all this with the teeming and advancing luxury of our day!<sup>16</sup>

There were still the battles and skirmishes to be fought figuratively with the hordes of editors cultivated by the media-conscious Jackson, who through his spoils system had rewarded editors in virtually all the states. Jackson’s devotee Francis Blair was still at *The Globe* (Washington) and Jackson’s closest aide, Amos Kendall, was editor of *The Extra Globe* and before the inaugural in 1841 had launched the sixteen-page

fortnightly *Kendall's Expositor*. Blair and Kendall together captained Democratic forces to re-elect Van Buren. Being an underdog and outsider forced Harrison into an aggressive mode despite his moderate countenance. Harrison became the first presidential candidate “to go out on the stump in his own behalf,” making twenty-three speeches (all in Ohio), according to Melder.<sup>17</sup>

Harrison had the backing of the influential Thurlow Weed and his Whig-bent organ, the *Albany (N.Y.) Journal*. But Harrison also had a youthful, ambitious moon-faced newcomer, Horace Greeley. Fresh out of the print-shop, Greeley, the future founder of the *New York Tribune*, listened to Weed and Weed's ally, Gov. William H. Seward of New York, and launched the *Log Cabin*, a full-size weekly paper devoted unashamedly to fostering the presidential bid of General Harrison in 1840. Much of Greeley's space was given to debunking at length any rumor or criticism belittling the general. For example, in a May 1840 issue, the first item led off with the head, “Slanders of Gen. Harrison Refuted,” with the subhead, “No. 1. Gen. Harrison voted to sell white man into slavery for debt.”<sup>18</sup> There also were rumors that the general was never much of a soldier, and Greeley had his responses. Greeley carried splendid woodcuts of the general and detailed narratives of the general's military crusades against the Indians. And Greeley curiously included songs — words with music — praising the general.

Some fifteen songs — with actual musical notes — were printed during the campaign by the *Log Cabin*. Most notable was the one dedicated to the familiar political slogan about the general and his running mate, “Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too.”<sup>19</sup>

What has caused this great  
commotion, motion, motion,

Our Country through!  
It is the Ball a rolling on,  
For Tippecanoe and Tyler too —  
Tippecanoe and Tyler too,  
And with them we'll beat little Van,  
Van, Van is a used up man,  
And with them we'll beat little Van.

And there are fifteen more stanzas, all printed in Greeley's *Log Cabin*:

So the marching of mighty waters,  
waters, waters,  
On it will go,  
And of course will clear the way  
For Tippecanoe [etc. etc.].

Tippecanoe was more than a symbol of a battle once fought and won. As a small creek near Lafayette and linked with other creeks in Indiana, it was a symbol of the west and the newness of the frontier. In its hyperbole calling for political battling for Harrison, the *Sangamo Journal* picked up on the freshness and invincibility of the nation's tributaries (creeks, crooks), such as Tippecanoe, resounding: "Brother Whigs! Gird on your armor for the contest! Pass the watch-word to our friends up the crooks, down the ravines, far in the distant prairies, every where! Let there be one universal rising for the country...."<sup>20</sup>

John Tyler, a less pleasant man, was a southerner brought on to give balance to the ticket. Curiously, Van Buren's vice president, Richard Johnson, was a rugged, woodsy war hero whose five scars from bul-

let wounds and a shattered hand made Harrison look as if he had only been to Sunday school picnics. Johnson, while serving under Harrison, was credited (though incorrectly) with killing the Indian war chief Tecumseh. Nicknamed “Rumpsey Dumpsey,” Johnson was conspicuous by his style. He wore bright red vests, and he was a thunderous orator. He once lived with a young black woman.

While some critics called Harrison the “Petticoat General,” General Jackson weighed in simply, saying that Harrison never had “the qualities befitting a commander of an army.”<sup>21</sup> Yet letters to him from high officials during his tenure on the frontier praised him for his heroism and diligence. A book prepared by a Harrison committee for Cincinnati and Louisville early in the election year of 1840 sought to present him as a man of sacrifice: “Throughout the whole of his military campaigns, he shared with his soldiers in all their fatigues, dangers, and privations. We were lately assured, by a member of his military family in the campaign of 1813, that the table of the commander-in-chief was often not as well supplied with provisions, as those of the common soldiers.”<sup>22</sup>

Harrison got some help from a little-known plainsman, Abraham Lincoln. At thirty-one, Lincoln himself, running for the Illinois House of Representatives, stumped the state for the “log cabin” candidate. In one encounter, Lincoln, suspecting his Democrat opponent in a debate of being as vain and pompous as Van Buren, reached over and tore open the Democrat’s coat, showing beneath it ruffled silk and velvet vest and a gold watch and chain. Lincoln went on to joke about his own days growing up in “buckskin.”<sup>23</sup>

Harrison’s supporters not only knew how to capitalize on the foibles of an opponent, but also how to turn around a nasty comment into a cheerful slogan on the general’s behalf.

### *An Image-Based Campaign*

When Harrison began to emerge as a possibility over perennial Whig candidate Henry Clay for the nomination, Clay's followers wondered aloud how could they get rid of Harrison. Jokingly, a reporter, John de Ziska of the *Baltimore Republican*, suggested that the way was to "give him a barrel of hard cider, and settle a pension of two thousand a year on him, and my word for it, he will sit the remainder of his days in his log cabin by the side of a 'sea coal' fire, and study moral philosophy."<sup>24</sup>

A month later the article was remembered when two Harrison men, a banker and a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, editor, met to create some symbols for the Harrison campaign. One of them suggested that "passion and prejudice, properly aroused and directed, would do about as well as principle and reason in a party contest."<sup>25</sup> They decided that the aristocratic-born Harrison would be a "log-cabin" candidate. They drew up a campaign picture of a log cabin which had a coonskin nailed to the wall and nearby were a woodpile and a cider barrel. Pro-Harrison newspapers alternated different Log Cabin drawings on their front pages. The *Sangamo Journal* ran one with a big flag waving over the log cabin; another, with a free-standing flagpole and a gentleman sitting by a barrel marked "hard cider"; another showed an officer (general) welcoming a distinguished visitor in long coat-tails to a cabin with the "hard cider" barrel by the door.

Log cabins were raised across the country as Harrison headquarters; hard cider flowed at picnics and other occasions, courtesy of the followers of "Old Tip," or "Old Tipler," as some critics now began to call him.

When Old Tip showed up at Fort Meigs, Ohio, for a rally in a six-city Ohio swing, he faced a tidal wave of 40,000 persons. In his remarks

— “Harrison’s Great Speech,” as the *Toledo Blade* and historical journals called it — the candidate said the office should seek the man, that Republican rule should be restored, and that “our rulers, fellow citizens, must be watched. Power is insinuating....”<sup>26</sup> The report of the Harrison tour tells of the gaiety at one stop:

At Germantown there were unique preparations for his reception. Among the features were thirteen lads, of whom the writer was one, representing the thirteen original states. These were dressed in blue bunting shirts with coonskin caps, and sang campaign songs from the Log Cabin Song Book.... Another ornamented wagon containing a number of girls dressed in white, and these represented the stars in the Union at that time.<sup>27</sup>

Francis Blair, Jackson’s and Van Buren’s man at the *Washington Globe*, saw the Whig campaign, particularly as it was wrapped in Harrison’s alleged military achievements, as phony. Said the *Globe*: “According to their Jesuitical morality, any means will sanctify a change in the government, and make it meritorious.... The revelations [concerning questions about Harrison’s military valor] that have lately appeared have fastened on the Harrison party a premeditated system of political fraud that reaches from Congress to a felon’s jail....” And the paper further argued that a policy that embraced both keeping hands off and calling for reform was contradictory.<sup>28</sup>

Because of his age — sixty-seven in 1840 — and his delicate personality, “Old Tip” was also often called “Granny” by his critics. Van Buren, too, picked up a nickname from his followers: “O.K.” for Old Kinderhook, in reference to his New York hometown. However, Whig editors switched this to “K.O.,” “Kicked Out.”

The Whig strategy was to avoid taking stands on any issue, for to do so would have fractionalized the party. Whigs would rely strictly on image, the compound values of (1) the underdog, the people's choice, and (2) the outsider.

Some characterized "Tip's" running mate "Ty" as a Democrat. The Whig Party with which the two were running from 1836 on was, as historian Thomas Bailey put it, "a hodgepodge of malcontents — 'an organized incompatibility.'" Their guiding star, he said, was opportunism. "Under the same political roof were gathered all kinds of Whigs; protectionists and free-traders, Southern nullifiers and Northern nationalists, rich Southern planters and poor Northern farmers."<sup>29</sup> Despite developing a common-folk campaign, "Whig leaders were, in general," says Weisberger, "traditionalists, tightly tied to the biggest landholders, factory owners, merchants, and bankers of the country. They took a dim view (much like the framers of the Constitution) of the excesses of popular democracy."<sup>30</sup> Norma Lois Peterson notes the Whigs were "fundamentally a party of big business in the North and large plantation owners in the South, a party that did not really believe in popular rule or in extending the suffrage to the 'common man,'" a party which "pitched their appeals in this election mainly to the laborer, the farmer, the frontiersman."<sup>31</sup>

Says Lynn L. Marshall: "Whig birth coincided with the crest of a ground swell of social change that would shortly reorganize American life around a proliferating series of specialized, large-scale organizations, flexible, functional, and impersonal."<sup>32</sup> Whigs favored continuity of public servants in government rather than ever changing with the "spoils" system of Andrew Jackson with every shift of the wind. "The Whiggish view looked back to a society embodying the Lockean liberalism of the eighteenth century. In it, all affairs, political or otherwise,

moved under the effective control of sagacious men, each within his own locality sufficiently pre-eminent economically, intellectually, and socially to transcend immediate popular control.... Greatest emphasis was placed upon the liberty of the individual to express himself, if he were able and sufficiently educated....”<sup>33</sup> Slavery was looming as a big issue, and Harrison walked down the middle. The created image around humble values carried him in despite the more sophisticated views of himself and his party.

### *Image Without Substance*

His inaugural speech, while praised by some and worshipped by Greeley, was also savaged and mocked by others. To many, it seemed, Harrison quickly proved to be an empty vessel despite the hype and trumped up glitter of instrumental values as commoner and outsider. “No other inaugural address has been ridiculed in the way that Harrison’s has,” noted David Durfee. Harrison had come to power fearful of the excesses of power which he felt were practiced by Jackson, Van Buren, and dictator Bolívar in South America. “The address, therefore, emphasizes what he would refrain from doing as President rather than what he would do. Most notable was his declaration that he would not run for reelection in 1844.”<sup>34</sup>

Kendall, tongue in cheek, made Harrison out to be a giddy old “granny” whose inaugural substance could be boiled down to some simple statements. Kendall began his coverage of the inaugural speech: “It was our purpose to lay the Inaugural address of the new President before our readers; but we are prevented by its great length. The substance of the document, however, can be compressed into a very narrow compass.... I have been elected President of the United States. I rely on the

Almighty to aid me....” And so on, Kendall went, summarizing what he regarded as a vacuous speech.<sup>35</sup>

In New York, the *Herald* gave the one-hour, 9,000-word address a few good marks but for the most part found it “trash”: “... The address is one of the most unevenly composed and written documents that ever came from the brain of a public functionary. Parts of it are most excellent, and other parts of it are most trashy.... The sentences are involved, complicated, and tortuous; they may be contrived to mean anything or nothing. The balderdash about Oliver Cromwell, Caesar, and Bolívar, will elevate the president in the eyes of no one. He does not understand the character of either....”<sup>36</sup>

In that month of March — in the first month and the only month of the Harrison presidency — the newspapers began to hint of the President’s illness from pleurisy. Most brushed it off with a paragraph each day. The President began to sink fast on Saturday, April 3; and at 12:30 a.m. on Sunday, the fourth, he passed away.

Most editors expressed sorrow over his death, running black borders on page two where national news was normally carried. In New York, William Cullen Bryant at the *Post* was alone in his contempt for the President, even in death. Bryant mused that he was sorry about Harrison’s death “only because he did not live long enough to prove his incapacity for the office of President.”<sup>37</sup>

Over at the *Log Cabin*, Greeley wrote about the “painful tidings” from his heart but used the occasion to wonder about the future with the new president, John Tyler — “He has not that tried and proved popularity and strength with the people — his armor has not been tested against the storm of vindictive hostility....”<sup>38</sup>

Greeley also took the occasion to turn philosophical: “The toils, the anxiety, the importunities, the pomp and ceremony of exalted station in

one brief week are exchanged for the perfect, enduring rest and solitude of the narrow house appointed for all the living. How solemn is the thought! how impressive the lesson! ... [O]ne month ago who dreamed that he stood on the brink of the grave!

“Leaves have their time to fall,  
“And flowers to wither at the North wind’s breath,  
“And stars to set — but all,  
“Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death.”

## CONCLUSION

With the death of the “log cabin” president, it is possible to note — but not with a direct connection — one of the fallouts of candidates running and achieving from a humble “log cabin” stance. There is an equalizing — the outsider is as good as the insider. Never is that equality more evident than in the presence of the great Equalizer itself, Death. That is one of the messages of Greeley’s eulogy to his fallen hero.

In the early years of American newspapers, glowing tributes and testimonies appeared in the obituaries, no matter how small or insignificant the person. Then developed the standardized news obituary that gave the particulars and deleted hyperbole and elements of eulogy. No doubt something is owed to the urbanization and growing complexity of society, making it difficult to pay particular tribute to every deceased person. But perhaps it is in line with the discussion here to suggest that the positing of value in humility and the underdog and the outsider contributed to the near uniform policy of treating people generally equally — just the facts — in obituaries. The outsiders, recognized for his or her regular achievements, from school teachers to proprietors —

have their day on an equal footing in the news.

Another indirect fall-out of the outsider, humble “log cabin” Harrison mentality is a legacy that begat objectivity. As reporters began covering happenings directly — largely with an initiative from the aggressiveness of James Gordon Bennett’s early penny paper, the *Herald*, beginning in the mid-1830s — the reporter showed up at news occasions as an outsider. Readers were interested in the facts, and while literary interests reigned, now the facts as observed, even with attention to literary-making significant details, prevailed.

While objectivity is never entirely free of individual and class bias, nevertheless the myth prevails akin to the general myth, propagated in media campaigns and nursed by media attention. With the media’s passion for conflict reporting, and positing and reflecting special value in rags-to-riches and outsider themes, so observable in the Harrison successful campaign, the rituals, fostering an outsider “objectivity,” persist today.

War correspondents relish reporting on the “outsiders.” William Randolph Hearst’s persistence in seeing the war with Spain prosecuted was at least in his view a rising up in defense of the helpless and abused Cubans. Most U.S. entries into wars have been seen as battling back as an outsider, underdog (after the Pearl Harbor attack), or assisting the underdog, as going to the aid of Panama, Kuwait, and the starving in Somalia and eastern Bosnia.

In writing about the wars, the little man and outsider were themes for the great correspondents and photographers. Ernie Pyle in World War II reported from the trenches the stories of the common soldier. Joe Rosenthal is remembered not by photographing generals but battle-weary foot soldiers raising a flag on Iwo Jima. Richard Ben Kramer of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* won a Pulitzer Prize for his foreign reporting

in which he paid most of his attention to the conversations of rank and file people in the Near East. Dave Zucchino of the same paper won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting of the ordinary lives and deaths of people in South Africa. Richard Harding Davis is perhaps the best known of the twentieth-century foreign reporters. As his most recent biographer noted, "In every war he covered, he sided emotionally with the underdogs."<sup>39</sup>

Presidential primaries, such as those of 1992, offer a cast of underdog populist candidates, shades of an influential farm rebellion of the 1870s and 1880s and the development of a political populist party in the early 1890s. The *New York Times*, for instance, during the primaries of the spring of 1992, managed, it seemed, to designate every Democratic party contender as a populist; and the role of focus groups made up of average Americans to determine policy and opinion for candidates and poll takers was largely in play.<sup>40</sup>

But the *Times* did not forget William Henry Harrison in 1992. A discussion headlined "Tips Not Needed if Born in Log Cabin," besides offering strategies for insiders, made points, such as, "Because they have been out, women are in."<sup>41</sup> The media are quick to note the roles of the humble, the outsider, and underdog and draw a page from the image-creating campaign of the otherwise silent William Henry Harrison. From Greeley's bleating excesses in the *Log Cabin* in support of Harrison to other Whig papers, even critical non-Harrison papers, to today, media have helped to elevate certain instrumental values to a higher pedestal, namely the values of log-cabin, humble origins (the common person) and the frontiersperson (or at least an inhabitant of recent frontier territory) who battles with the insider. Such selective values were to go on to play a role in sorting out the news, reporting the news, and formatting and illustrating the news. The sense of drama and conflict —

the little person pitted against the bigger person, the disadvantaged against the advantaged, the outsider against the insider — became the basis for a news formula and a validation of a free non-authoritarian press.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Archie J. Bahm, “What Is Religion?” unpublished manuscript. See also Archie J. Bahm, “How Intrinsic Values Interdepend,” in *Human Values and Natural Science*, eds. Ervin Lazzlo and Wilbur James (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1970), 237.

<sup>2</sup> Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (c. 1940; reprint ed., New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1947), 94-100.

<sup>5</sup> Hiley H. Ward, *Reporting in Depth* (Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield, 1991), 412.

<sup>6</sup> Hiley H. Ward, *Professional Newswriting* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 534.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 22: 37-40.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard A. Weisberger, “Whangdoodling,” *American Heritage*, February 1989, 24.

<sup>9</sup> William Henry Harrison, “Governor and Commander in Chief of the Indiana Territory, and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to his Children, the Chiefs and Warriors of the Kickapoo tribe,” message, July 1806, in *Governors Messages and Letters: Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, 2 vols., ed. Logan Esarey (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1922), 1:193.

<sup>10</sup> William Henry Harrison, as “President and Delegate from the County of Knox,” reporting the agreement on a “Resolution of Vincennes Convention,” 25 December 1802, *ibid.*, 1:61.

<sup>11</sup> “Sketches of the Life of Mr. Van Buren,” *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Ill., 10 July 1840.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1876), 11 November 1836, 9: 312.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 December 1840, 10: 366.

<sup>14</sup> For Harrison’s life story, see Dorothy Goebel, *William Henry Harrison: A Political Biography* (Indianapolis: Historical Bureau of the Indiana Library and Historical Department, 1926), vol. 14; Freeman Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1939).

<sup>15</sup> Keith Melder, *Hail to the Candidate: Presidential Campaigns from Banners to Broadcasts* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 89.

<sup>16</sup> “A Visit to North Bend,” reporting from the *New York Express*, in the *Sangamo Journal*, 11 June 1840.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>18</sup> *Log Cabin*, 2 May 1840.

<sup>19</sup> “Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too — The New Whig Song, and Chorus, Arranged for The Log Cabin,” in the *Log Cabin*, 26 September 1840.

<sup>20</sup> *Sangamo Journal*, 20 December 1839.

<sup>21</sup> See Robert Gray Gunderson’s *The Log Cabin Campaign* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), citing various newspapers, among them the *Richmond Enquirer* and the *Logansport (Ind.) Herald*.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Stewart Todd, Benjamin Drake, *Sketches of the Civil and Military Services of William Henry Harrison* (Reprint of the 1840 ed. published by U.P. James, Cincinnati; New York: Arno

Press, 1975), 161.

<sup>23</sup> Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln — The Prairie Years* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., c. 1958), 1: 236.

<sup>24</sup> *Baltimore Republican*, 11 December 1839.

<sup>25</sup> Gunderson, *The Log Cabin Campaign*, 76.

<sup>26</sup> "Harrison's Great Speech at the Wonderful 'Log Cabin' Campaign Meeting at Ft. Meigs, in 1840," from the *Toledo Blade*, in the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 17: 2 (April 1908): 206.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>28</sup> *Washington Globe*, 29 October 1840.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Bailey, *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1956), 274.

<sup>30</sup> Weisberger, "Whangdoodling," 24.

<sup>31</sup> Norma Lois Peterson, *The Presidencies of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 29.

<sup>32</sup> Lynn L. Marshall, "The Strange Stillbirth of the Whig Party," *American Historical Review* 72 (January 1967): 445.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 461.

<sup>34</sup> David A. Durfee, ed., *William Henry Harrison 1773-1841 — John Tyler 1790-1862: Chronology, Documents, Bibliographical Aids* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1970), William Henry Harrison's "Inaugural Address, March 4, 1841," 35.

<sup>35</sup> *Kendall's Expositor*, 17 March 1841.

<sup>36</sup> *New York Herald*, 5 March 1841.

<sup>37</sup> Gunderson, *The Log Cabin Campaign*, 274, quoting Philip Hone, *Diary*, entry for 6 April 1841, 2: 536.

<sup>38</sup> *Log Cabin*, 10 April 1841.

<sup>39</sup> Arthur Lubow, *The Reporter Who Would Be King: A Biography of Richard Harding Davis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992), 144.

<sup>40</sup> See Elizabeth Kolbert, "Test-Marketing a President," *New York Times Magazine*, 30 August 1992, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Sam Roberts, Metro Matters column, "Tips Not Needed if Born in Log Cabin," *New York Times*, 20 April 1992, B3.

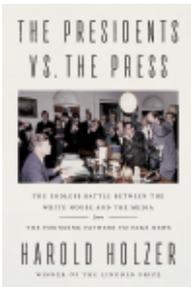
[CLICK HERE  
TO RETURN  
TO TABLE OF  
CONTENTS](#)

# Book Award Interview

By Harold Holzer ©



Holzer



**H**arold Holzer won the Goldsmith Book Prize from Harvard University in 2016 for *Lincoln and the Power of the Press*. He is a notable Lincoln scholar and an authority on the relationship between the press and American presidents. His latest book is *The Presidents vs. the Press*, which he discusses in the following interview. Dutton published the book in 2020. Holzer is director of Hunter College’s Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute. Previously, he spent twenty-three years as senior vice president for external affairs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He has written or edited more than fifty books and won numerous awards for his scholarship as well as his professional achievements.

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

**Holzer:** The book explores the fraught relationship between presidents and journalists — dating back to the administration of George Washington. As I say in the introduction, the first president to bemoan “fake news” was the first president — and ever since, chief executives have

© 2022. The author owns the copyright to this article.

generally felt themselves unappreciated and besieged by the media, while the media has felt excluded and misled by presidents. When the relationship is healthy, the tension is good for democracy; it compels accountability. When it breaks down, as it did in the days of John Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Richard Nixon, and, of course, Donald Trump, it spells trouble — endangers our right to know. The book also examines the gray area of giving national security precedence over freedom of information — an ambiguous one, as JFK pointed out (without real justification in his case). The book also takes a look at those presidents who handled the press brilliantly, especially the two Roosevelts; those who got too chummy with reporters, like Kennedy; and those who ingeniously went around the press by utilizing the newest communications tools, especially FDR (radio), JFK (television), and Trump (social media).

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

**Holzer:** I'd written a book exploring the subject of Lincoln and the press of the 19th century, focusing on the three leading New York editors of the period. So I knew the topic pretty well, especially the Civil War period, which tested freedom of the press like no other since the days of the Sedition Act. Then, when Trump's relationships with the press began breaking down, and dangerously so — it's one thing to talk about "fake news," but another to call journalists "enemies of the people" — I thought about doing a brief, quick book called "Fake News: A History," which would have explored the fraught White House-media relationship around the idea of malignant reporting and presidential overreaction. At around that time I ended a twelve-year relationship with my publishing house, with this project sadly unrealized. My new

publisher, Dutton, not only agreed to let me postpone another promised book and do this one (I really wanted it out in time for the 2020 presidential campaign), but to make it a bigger book exploring a dozen or so administrations in full detail.

***Historiography:** Tell us about the research you did for your book: What were your sources, how did you research your book, how long did you spend, and so forth.*

**Holzer:** Well, it still took a good year or two to do, which for me these days is a rush job, since I was still holding down a full-time job at Hunter College's Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute, at age 70. I made great use of the web for the first time — presidential papers particularly — newspaper accounts — and meanwhile collected shelves full of (used) books on leading 18th, 19th, and 20th century journalists. Fortunately, great reporters like Merriman Smith, Sam Donaldson, and Helen Thomas, and, earlier, those who covered TR, Wilson, and FDR, wrote wonderful, highly revealing, extremely quotable memoirs. One thing I enjoyed doing for the first time — since I've never before written about the 20th, much less the 21st century — is using YouTube technology to listen to FDR's Fireside Chats, and watch press conferences with JFK, LBJ, Nixon, and on and on. I also got a chance to interview a few veterans of the late 20th-century administrations and press corps, on and off the record — including Lyndon Johnson's then-precocious White House aide, Joe Califano. What a treat that was — again, new for me — I haven't interviewed folks (except on stage here at Roosevelt House and other venues) since I was a reporter 50 years ago. I will always be grateful to President Clinton for answering key questions forthrightly and intriguingly — although I must say, he

talked to me for about an hour-and-a-half after he read the book, and told terrific inside stories that he hadn't offered the first time around. When I said, "I wish you'd told me some of this while I was writing the book," he said something like, "I bet you do."

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

**Holzer:** Well, I wish I had gotten a chance to talk to President [George W.] Bush, who's always been very kind and generous to me. But he just doesn't want to comment on current affairs, or even say much about his administration beyond what he's written already. I wish I'd gotten to talk more than briefly to the late *New York Times* publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, whom I got to know quite well when I served as vice president for external affairs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and "Punch" was its chairman. He nonetheless emerges as a hero of my book for his courage during the Pentagon Papers pushback, but I never got to speak to him at length about that period before he died. Frankly, my great regret is not convincing my longtime friend and onetime colleague Bill Moyers to speak about the Johnson years, when he served as White House press secretary, and simultaneously as a policy advisor. He has never done interviews on LBJ — not even for Robert Caro. At one time I thought we were getting there — with his approval, I sent him a list of questions — but in the end he just couldn't bring himself to break his longtime rule against reliving that part of his life, about which, it should be noted, he's never written himself. I do know he saw the LBJ chapter in my book; he told me it was emotionally draining just to read it.

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

**Holzer:** Well, I always like to discard or ignore modern interpretations on history, particularly Lincoln- and Civil War-era history, and to go back to original newspaper accounts, and reliable memoirs and reminiscences, and images, too. I've done several books on 19th-century iconography, and helped, I think, to get engravings and lithographs, made for display or illustrated newspapers, taken seriously as source material that genuinely reflects popular taste and public opinion. It's certainly easier than ever to access all such material online. Newspapers from every city in the country can now easily be accessed; I caution only that something published in a newspaper in Dubuque does not carry equal weight with something in the *New York Tribune* or *Times*. I'm not being New York-centric here (maybe just a little); but the pieces in those big-city papers were often reprinted in small-town papers, and both the *Tribune* and *Times* also published national weekly editions that reached tens of thousands of readers beyond New York. Their influence was simply greater, by far. I would also advise young historians to "show up" — that is, put in appearances at major research institutions. Yes, much of their material can be accessed online these days, but the curators and specialists there need to know you're serious about your projects, and there's still nothing like signing in at the Library of Congress or National Archives — and nothing like handling original material, either, if they let you!

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

**Holzer:** For me, it was the need to learn a good deal very quickly — to reach beyond my comfort zone — and to re-examine periods of history through which I lived and formed opinions along the way. I didn't have enough time for this project to do exactly what I advised in my answer to the previous question; fortunately the folks at the Kennedy and other libraries understood my time constraints, knew me, and proved extremely helpful (which, by the way, has not always been the case when I show up at research institutions — 40 years ago, anyway, when I first started out). I work daily in the FDR world, in the very New York City town house where he conducted his presidential transition (Eleanor welcomed reporters to hang out in the lobby when it got cold on the street). So I enjoyed much assistance and encouragement from the folks at the FDR Presidential Library. But for the last few months of fact-checking, sourcing, etc., research institutions were shut down, and the staffs on leave because of the pandemic. And things were no better when I undertook a long new prologue for the paperback edition, which brought things up to date, or tried to, anyway.

***Historiography:** Is it possible to get too close to a research subject? How do historians maintain their neutrality of viewpoint when conducting and interpreting research?*

**Holzer:** I've made my views on Lincoln pretty clear by now; I've been writing about him in journals and magazines since 1974, and in books since 1984. I hope I've been honest, but had I not been an ardent Lincoln admirer, from the time I was a pre-teen, I don't think I would have focused my research and writing on his life and times. By using art, journalism, and iconography as a way into the Lincoln story, I think I've maintained the point-of-view of an "outsider" looking in, and that

concentration, I hope, has made my approach unique. I'm getting old, for sure, but not old enough to second-guess myself on Lincoln, although I do make more of an effort than ever to avoid hagiography and call it out when I see it, just as I call out nit-picking and the application of modern mores to Lincoln's era. I must say I felt the responsibilities, and the danger, of prejudicial interpretation much more keenly when I wrote about presidents and journalists whose work I lived through — and in some cases, whom I met personally. But every serious historian knows: your credibility is crucial, and once forfeited, is impossible to regain.

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

**Holzer:** Well, I think the best way to answer is that readers will be surprised at how long the contention has raged between presidents and journalists, how inept some of our better presidents have been at handling journalists, and how brutally aggressive some journalists have been in provoking and assailing leaders. The anecdotes and stories, I must say, are great — not my doing, but owing to the great recollections and revelations of White House press secretaries and reporters. I suppose in the end, the lesson is: press honeymoons are brief, some criticism should be taken with the proverbial grain of salt (even before the age of unabashed partisan journalism, when the old print press corps yielded in representation and influence to the TV people). And the book, I hope, warns against overreach by either side, and re-enforces the crucial importance of press freedom.

***Historiography:** What findings most surprised you?*

**Holzer:** Unquestionably, the depth of the press animus toward Barack Obama, whose pushback against leaked stories included wiretapping, and who seemed to many White House journalists aloof and distant — not to mention unresponsive. Obama ushered in the first White House website, but when the press secretary’s office began answering reporters’ questions by telling them to consult that website for a pre-recorded answer, they pushed back. I think I was also surprised by Woodrow Wilson’s occasionally furious exchanges with reporters; he was almost pugilistic on several occasions, and his image was professorial. Wilson has been fully re-appraised because of his racism; it is interesting to see how badly he mistreated the one black reporter he ever “welcomed” to the White House. One more surprise: that FDR held 997 press conferences in his 12 years as President beginning in 1933, but his White House allowed no reporters of color into the proceedings until 1944.

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

**Holzer:** My advice is always very practical: find a new or relatively under-analyzed topic; get an agent; make sure your publisher knows how to do marketing and promotion. And start fresh — with the sources, not my books or anyone else’s writing today, or recently. Also, make every effort to get there firstest with the mostest, as the Civil War general once said. I’ve had two moments in my career when other writers published books on the very subject I was publishing, at the very same time. It’s a horrible feeling, even if you come out on top in sales, reviews, and attention. I mean, you never have exclusive rights to a subject, but it’s always best not to dawdle.

*Historiography: What's your next project?*

**Holzer:** I'm back at work on the big project for Dutton that I temporarily abandoned (with their approval) to do "Presidents vs. the Press: Lincoln and Immigration." I'm doing a great deal of research, have found some amazing things, and believe that given the longtime focus on Lincoln, Union, and slavery, this remains a relatively unexplored area — with great meaning for our own time. As I write, I'm also dipping my toe back into the lecture circuit waters, although I now understand what my actor friends complain about, especially those lucky enough to be working again in live theater: it's tough to read, much less reach, an audience whose members are wearing masks. I find that masked audiences even laugh less often and heartily, which is disappointing for me, because I love getting that kind of response from funny period material. But I'm so tired of Zoom, and I so miss in-person book-signings, that I think it will be good to go back on the road — Covid permitting.

[CLICK HERE  
TO RETURN  
TO TABLE OF  
CONTENTS](#)

# News and Notes

## **History of Mass Communication in America: An Internet Biography**

History of Mass Communication in America: An Internet Biography, created and maintained by Dr. Robert Rabe of Marshall University, has been redesigned and is once again online.

The site offers citations for more than 4,500 books, articles, dissertations, and other scholarly writings in the broad field of mass communications in the United States.

The citations are organized into seventy-five categories that cover the period from colonial America through the 1970s and 1980s.

The site is helpful for students and professional scholars alike, and can be found at <https://mupages.marshall.edu/sites/masscommhistory-bibliography/>.

Contact Dr. Rabe at [rabe@marshall.edu](mailto:rabe@marshall.edu) to suggest additional entries or to point out errors.

## **Covert Award Call for Submissions**

AEJMC'S History Division announces the 38th annual competition for the Covert Award in Mass Communication History for entries published in 2021.

The Covert Award recognizes the author of the best mass communication history article or essay published in the previous year. Book chapters in edited collections published in the previous year are also eligible. The AEJMC History Division has presented the award annually

since 1985. <https://aejmc.us/history/about/covert-award/>

The \$400 award memorializes Dr. Catherine L. Covert, professor of journalism at Syracuse University (*d.*1983). She was the first woman professor in Syracuse's Newhouse School of Journalism and the first woman to head the History Division, in 1975. She received the AEJMC Outstanding Contribution to Journalism Education Award in 1983.

Submit an electronic copy in pdf form of the published article /essay/chapter via email to Professor Thomas A. Mascaro, [mascaro@bgsu.edu](mailto:mascaro@bgsu.edu), by March 31, 2022. The publication may be self-submitted or submitted by others, such as an editor or colleague. Essays published exclusively online require date of publication, URL, verification of originality and authorship, and the essay in pdf format.

### **AJHA Calls for Nominations for Two Achievement Awards**

The American Journalism Historians Association invites nominations for two awards honoring significant service to the study and understanding of media history.

#### **Kobre Award**

The Sidney Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement in Journalism History is the organization's highest honor. The Kobre Award recognizes individuals with an exemplary record of sustained achievement through teaching, research, professional activities, or other contributions to the field of journalism history. Award winners need not be members of the AJHA. Nominations for the award are solicited annually, but the award need not be given every year. Those making nominations should present, at minimum, a cover letter that explains the nominee's contribu-

tions to the field and a vita or brief biography of the nominee. Supporting letters for the nomination are welcome and encouraged. For a list of past winners, see <https://ajha.wildapricot.org/kobre>.

### **Distinguished Service to Journalism History Award**

The Distinguished Service to Journalism History Award recognizes contributions by an individual outside our discipline who has made an extraordinary effort to further significantly our understanding of, or our ability to explore, media history. Nominations are solicited annually, but the award is given only in exceptional situations and, as such, is not awarded every year. Those making nominations for the award should present, at minimum, a cover letter that explains the nominee's contributions to the field, a vita or brief biography of the nominee, and an accounting of the richness of the nominees service to journalism history. Supporting letters for the nomination are welcome and encouraged.

**Deadline:** The deadline for submitting nominating materials for both awards is May 15, 2022.

**Submissions:** Electronic submissions are preferred via email to: Tom Mascaro, Professor (ret.), Bowling Green State University: [mascaro@bgsu.edu](mailto:mascaro@bgsu.edu).

Alternatively, postal submissions may be sent to the following address: Tom Mascaro, AJHA Service Awards Chair, 33905 LaMoynne St., Livonia, MI 48154.

### **AJHA Board Seeks Web Editor**

The American Journalism Historians Association is seeking applicants

for the position of Web Editor.

The Web Editor is responsible for maintenance of the AJHA website. Primarily the job involves the following:

- Periodically updating the home page.
- Building the convention microsite each June. (Prior microsite pages can be duplicated easily.)
- Annually updating information on awards, personnel, and convention pages.
- Other updates and creation of new pages as needed.

The AJHA website operates on a user-friendly and intuitive gadget-based system (similar to WordPress). Knowledge of HTML is beneficial but not required.

The Web Editor must be a member of AJHA. An ex-officio member of the AJHA Board of Directors, the Web Editor serves a three-year term, subject to annual review and confirmation. Training and transition will begin immediately upon appointment.

If interested, contact [President Aimee Edmondson](#) with your qualifications.

### **AJHA Extends Deadline for Blanchard Prize Submissions**

The American Journalism Historians Association has extended its deadline by four weeks for entries for its annual Margaret A. Blanchard Dissertation Prize, which honors the best dissertations focused on mass communication history topics each year. The new deadline for entries is March 15, 2022.

Dissertations eligible for the current competition must have been written in English and submitted, defended, revised and formally filed

## News and Notes

with a doctoral degree-granting university within the calendar year that ends Dec. 31, 2021.

The winner of the Blanchard prize will receive a \$500 honorarium. Honorable mentions receive \$200. Honorees will present their work during a session at the AJHA Annual Convention in Memphis, Tenn., from Sept. 27 to Oct. 1.

Complete details about the Blanchard Prize competition and its submission requirements can be found at:

<https://ajha.wildapricot.org/blanchard>

For more information, contact Dale Zacher, the chair of the Blanchard Committee, at [AJHADissertationprize@gmail.com](mailto:AJHADissertationprize@gmail.com).

CLICK HERE  
TO RETURN  
TO TABLE OF  
CONTENTS