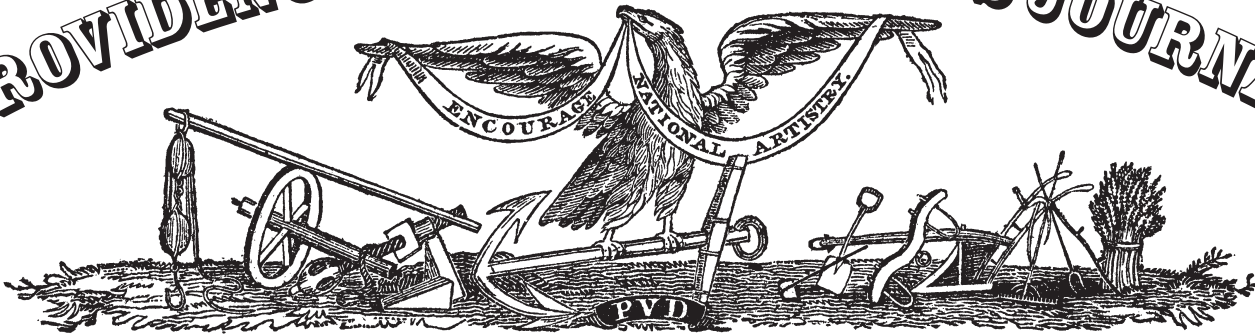




# PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY'S JOURNAL

FINAL EDITION

2020 EXHIBITION & PROGRAM SERIES



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# THE KING IS DEAD\*

...OR IS HE? If you lived in Providence in 1811, you might have spent days living in a world where King George III was presumed dead, not because anyone willfully lied to you, but because the mechanisms for delivering news worked more slowly than they do today, and rumors had to spread by sail across oceans before being distributed in print. At least you and your neighbors would have been on roughly the same page: a few centuries earlier hand-written newsletters, predecessors to the modern newspaper, were available only to the rich and powerful, while sporadically-produced and cheaply-printed pamphlets offered biased news of major events to the general public.

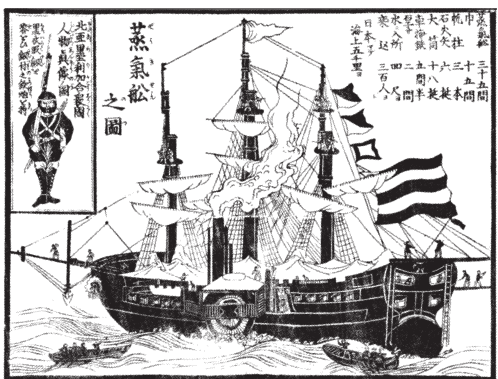
• *IN THIS CASE:* 1811 diary of Sanford Ross kept in the *New England Almanack* (courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society); *The Rhode Island American and General Advertiser* (January 8, 1811); *Exceeding Good News from Ireland* (London, 1646); 1675 manuscript *aviso* (courtesy of the John Hay Library, Brown University).



## Parallel Universes

PRINTED NEWS HAS ALWAYS meant more than just text on a folded page. Other formats occupy a parallel space to the newspaper, delivering information in different ways and filling different needs. In Japan, news was publicized for centuries via *kawaraban*—broadside that featured large illustrations of current events. Meanwhile, broadside ballads in Ireland and elsewhere fed the popular appetite for crime and punishment, telling of grisly murder and the executions of criminals in rhyming verses. Sometimes the news was local and personal, as when a Rhode Island clergyman found his hypocrisy exposed to the public in a broadside, and sometimes it had a national importance, like Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* pamphlet. In most situations, these alternative genres were anonymously authored, modestly produced, and intended to be sold for pennies and then quickly discarded.

• *IN THIS CASE:* Three Japanese *kawaraban* (1850s-1880s); Six Irish broadside ballads (19th century); Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (Newport, 1776); "Sports of Election!" broadside (1830); Two Skellig lists (1848 and 1849); "Description of the Rise and Fall of a Clergyman" broadside (1820s).

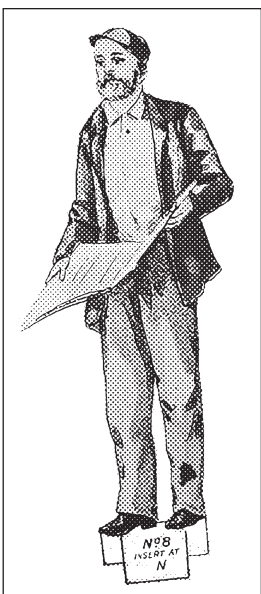


## REPORT, ADVERTISE, DELIVER

THE TERM "JOURNALISM" originated in the 1830s, but it was the muckrakers of the early 20th-century Progressive Era who solidified the role of reporters as investigators speaking truth to power. Readers began to open their daily papers expecting information instead of just opinions. Meanwhile, print advertising strategies became more advanced, even if Madison Avenue advertising executives were still targeting the same impulses that street hawkers had been exploiting for centuries. The effects of more recent technological changes — from Craigslist's appropriation of classifieds revenue to the news ecosystems created by Facebook and Google — have made the old models look more and more like a golden age that is gone forever.

• *IN THIS CASE:* Ida Tarbell, "The History of the Standard Oil Company," *McClure's Magazine* (November, 1902); Epinetus Webster, *The Young Reporter: Or, How To Write Short-Hand* (1852); Receipt for a subscription to *The Massachusetts Spy* (1788); Photograph of newsboys (1906); Portrait of "John Bexley, Fifty-Four Years the Canterbury News-Carrier" (1788); Five books of cries (19th century); Three postcards of the Providence Journal building (early 1900s); *Advertising & Selling* (August 1939).

## START THE PRESSES



TECHNOLOGY has always played a role in shaping the news we read, and the machines we use to record and publish the news have their own biases and predispositions. The output of industrial printing presses in the early 19th century matched a new industrial-sized appetite for the news, and the pages of penny newspapers told stories that were

a far cry from those told to a limited, wealthy audience in a former age of hand-written newsletters delivered through the mail. Even people's sense of what to expect from images has changed through the decades: someone in the 20th century listing a home for sale or reading an account of a battle would expect unique images, rather than the stock cuts that satisfied earlier audiences.

• *IN THIS CASE:* "Quadruple Perfecting Press" insert from the *Baltimore American* (1898); *The Revolution* (October 29, 1868); *La Tipografia Mexicana* (October & November, 1878); *Образцы*

*устройства и украшения* (Moscow, 1925); *Heads and Bodies: For Use in the Study and Planning of Linotype Newspaper Typography* (Mergenthaler Linotype Company, [1946]); *Specimen of Printing Types from the New England Type Foundry* (Boston, 1834).

## The Changing Newspaper

THE MODERN BROADSHEET NEWSPAPER may look old-fashioned in an age of screens, but it's actually the culmination of four centuries of evolution by degrees, in format, appearance and content. Trends in newspaper titles have evolved as well, reflecting changing expectations for the news itself. An "Advertiser" is likely to have a very different outlook on the activities of industry and commerce than a "Sentinel," "Intelligencer," "Spy" or "Scout." The "Mercury," "Dispatch" and "Express" will provide the news as quickly as possible, but will they offer the well-rounded, sober analysis of "The Times"? • *IN THIS CASE:* *The United States Chronicle* (September 3, 1789); *Manufacturers' & Farmers' Journal, Providence and Pawtucket Advertiser* (March 2, 1820); *The Microcosm*, (March 23, 1827); *Liberia Herald* (March 6, 1830); *The Thibodaux Sentinel* (February 14, 1863); *The Searchlight* (April 15, 1915).



## HOAXES, LIES & BAD SCIENCE

SOMETIMES THE FIRST DRAFT OF HISTORY needs substantial revision, and there are as many different reasons for second drafts as there are bad news stories. Sometimes an innocent marketing ploy gets out of hand and a nation dreams of giant potatoes and winged men flying on the moon. Sometimes the cutting edge of science isn't quite sharp enough yet. Occasionally a genuine villain uses the news to tell lies for profit. • *IN THIS CASE:* "A Mammoth Potato," *Scientific American* (September 28, 1895); *Proceedings of the Society for Psychological Research* (July, 1892); "Salt," *Federal Republican* (August 22, 1815); P.T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs, Or, Forty Years' Recollections* (1873); Richard Adams Locke, *The Moon Hoax, Or, the Discovery that the Moon Has a Vast Population of Human Beings* (1859).



## Alternative Facts

A.J. LIEBLING WAS ALREADY lamenting the consolidation of the newspaper industry in 1960 when he wrote, "Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one." Many whose voices were excluded by the rise of the 20th-century mass media pursued that freedom, buying a press (or at least a

## FAKE NEWS!

IT CAN FEEL LIKE A PHRASE that belongs distinctly to our current moment, but it actually has been in use for over a century. The idea that our "first draft of history" might be a bad draft has been a source of anxiety for as long as there has been news to tell. We want to feel confident that our news isn't "fake" because it shapes how we start and finish our days, how we understand what's happening around us, and who we are. But our centuries-long history with the news suggests that "fake" is too blunt a term for the ways the news sometimes fails us.

This exhibition doesn't attempt to tell a comprehensive history of journalism, or even the story of the print newspaper. Instead it offers a sense of the many ways the news can fail to do what we need it to do (a ship was too slow, a prank got out of hand, photography didn't exist...), and how our expectations of what we need it to do have changed.

SPECIAL THANKS TO the Rhode Island Historical Society, the John Carter Brown Library, the John Hay Library, Mary Murphy and the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women, Russell DeSimone, Ian Graham, Kim Nusco, Phoebe Bean, DWRI Letterpress and Design Agency.

copy machine) and distributing news on their own terms. From simple zines and newsletters to fully-fledged newspapers with circulations in the hundreds of thousands, alternative media responds to the evolving needs of specific communities of news readers. • *IN THIS*

*CASE:* *The Phoenix's New Paper* (March 14 - 20, 1991); Dan Wood, "Facebook Profits from Selling Lies!" *The Linotype Daily* for November 3, 2019 (DWRI Letterpress); Three issues of *The Black Panther* (January 16, 1971 - September 9, 1972 - February 17, 1973); *No Dakota Pipeline*. (From the Malana Krongelb Zine Collection 1974 - 2018. Pembroke Center Archives, Brown University Library, Special Collections); Three issues of the Women's Liberation Union of Rhode Island newsletter (February 1976 - July 1977 - September, 1982. From the Leslie Doonan Activist Files 1968-2003, Pembroke Center Archives, Brown University Library, Special Collections).

## WAR & PROPAGANDA

WARTIME REPORTING PUTS a special stress on the everyday conventions of journalism and brings the power structures behind the news to the forefront. For much of the history of printed journalism, newspapers explicitly represented political parties, and partisan press was the norm, so it was no great leap for a paper to become a mouthpiece for propaganda during times of war. But in the midst of carnage and darkness, journalism also provides an opportunity for the field to evolve. Wartime photography paved the way for modern photojournalism, and on battlefields around the world reporters have demonstrated tremendous bravery while attempting to inform readers.

• *IN THIS CASE:* *The Illustrated London News* (December 5, 1863); Two Chinese *nianhua*, depicting scenes from the Boxer Uprising (c. 1900); Silver pitcher from a service produced by Gorham Manufacturing and engraved by Babcock of Providence (1845); *Front und Heimat* (Berlin: May, 1944); Matthew Brady photograph of members of the 2nd Regiment, Company F of The Rhode Island Volunteers (July 17-18, 1861); Two reproductions of photographs of Lyn Crost and war correspondent hat of Lyn Crost, 1940s (From the Lyn Crost Papers 1937-1996. Pembroke Center Archives, Brown University Library, Special Collections).