



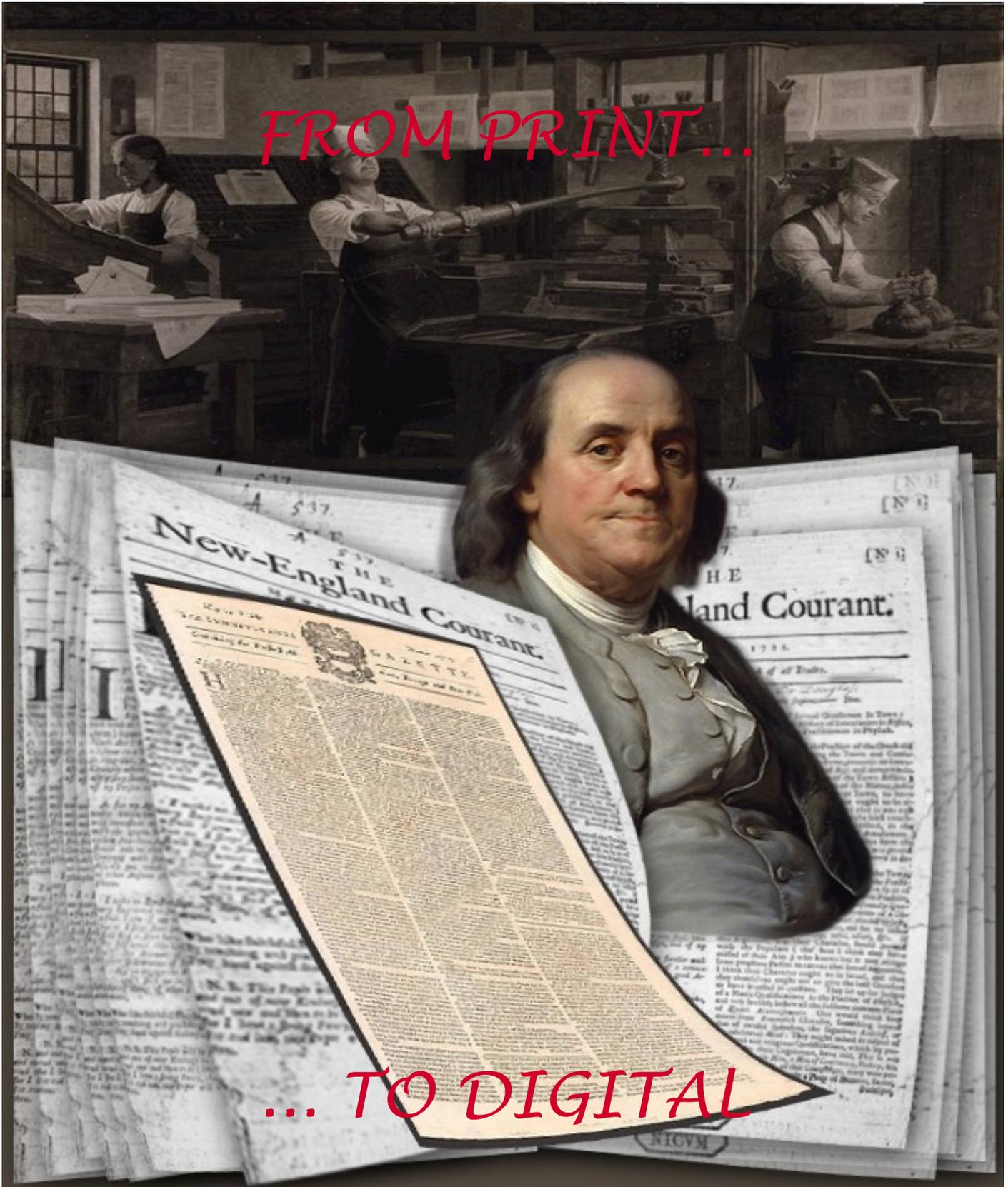
April 2013

ZOOM

in on america

By the U.S. Missions of Austria and Poland

Volume IV Issue 4.



In this issue: American Press

Zoom in on America

American Papers Evolve

The December 31, 2012 issue of *Newsweek* was the American magazine's last print issue. Since January 4, 2013 the weekly has been available in digital form only. The event prompted us to look at the history of American journalism and newspapers.

It All Starts with ... Benjamin Franklin

The search for the beginnings of American journalism leads us to a man associated with many events connected to the building of the United States of America. Benjamin "Ben" Franklin, one of America's so-called "Founding Fathers," was a member of the committee that drafted the *Declaration of Independence*. He acquired many of his literary skills early in life. At the age of 12, he was appointed apprentice at his brother James' print shop in Boston. James published *The New England Courant*, the first newspaper in colonial America. Young Ben wanted to write for the paper from the beginning, but James would not accept anything

written by his brother. In order to achieve his goal of writing for the paper, Ben resorted to a little trick. He wrote letters to the paper and signed them Mrs. Silence Dogwood. At night he would shove the letters under the print shop door. James and his editorial team, who decided what articles to publish in the paper, would discover the letters the following morning. The letters were written so well that the newspaper published no fewer than 14 of them before Ben's trick was discovered. James was very angry with his brother and, as a result of the quarrel between the brothers, Ben decided to quit and establish his own career elsewhere. With just a few cents in his pocket he left



A statue of Benjamin Franklin working on the printing press in Philadelphia
Photo Bozena Pilat

and soon established his own printing business and started publishing a newspaper.

Modeled on London's *Spectator*

American newspapers of the early 18th century generally followed the British style of journalism as used by *The Spectator*, which consisted of an introductory article on some general topic by the publisher accompanied by the facetious letters of imaginary correspondents. Generally newspapers tried to make these articles and letters humorous and witty.

Here is the ending of the article that appeared in the 1721 issue of *The New England Courant*:

This Paper will be published once a Fort-

night, and out of mere Kindness to my Brother-Writers, I intend now and then to be (like them) very, very dull; for I have a strong Fancy, that unless I am sometimes flat and low this Paper will not be very grateful to them.

Franklin - A Forerunner

Benjamin Franklin's ideas usually put him ahead of his times in all walks of life in which he engaged. Journalism was one of them. It was his idea to establish a network of newspapers in different cities, which turned out to be a characteristic feature of 19th and 20th century journalism. One of his papers was run by Elizabeth Timothy, who was one of the first woman printers in America. His papers favored impartiality in political matters while creating the opportunity for public debate.



*A house in Philadelphia where Benjamin Franklin had his print shop
Photo Bozena Pilat*

Newspapers and Morality

Franklin was convinced that the press has a mission to educate society about moral virtues. He set himself the task of achieving this goal with *The Philadelphia Gazette*. He employed his literary talents in the service of this goal. In the process he established a certain didactic character of journalism, which was typical of the colonial era. With his literary talent, Franklin was able to combine humor and satire with intellectual discourse. Benjamin Franklin's lasting literary heritage is the proof that the voice of a good journalist is distinct and lasting and may indeed leave an imprint on the literary heritage of his or her time.

Media at the Birth of the New Country

Before and during the battle for American independence, it was of great importance

to be able to reach the public through the media. This task was very difficult, however. The existence or suppression of papers mirrored the political situation. Paper itself was scarce and distribution was possible only through the postal system, which functioned very badly. As the new country was born, however, there was both room for and need of newspapers to familiarize people with the current situation and with the new laws of the country. *The Declaration of Independence* was published by *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* on July 6, 1776. During America's Revolutionary War (1775-1783), papers helped to unite the American colonies and awaken a spirit of common interest. This purpose achieved, the papers retained their political character throughout the next century. Some papers were established to support the president and administration officials. *The National Intelligencer* was one



The Washington Post building in Washington, photo AP Images

such title founded in 1800. While most papers of the time were partisan and supported one of the leading political parties, editorial writing gained in importance. There were calls for improving manners and abandoning “indecorous” language. With the introduction of new high speed printing presses, however, it became possible to print more copies than ever before. Newspaper publishers discovered that scandals and sensational articles were a way to attract new readers. James Gordon Bennett, Sr., for example, printed the *New York Sun*, a one-cent paper based on gossip and sensation rather than fact.

The First Daily

The first newspapers were published weekly or a few times a week, some-

times on irregular basis. In 1784 *The Pennsylvania Packet* became the first newspaper to be published daily.

New Inventions, New Ideas

Another major breakthrough came with the invention of the telegraph in 1844, which resulted in more immediate and more direct news coverage. Older papers, in an effort to compete with cheaper tabloid papers, expanded their news gathering efforts. In 1848, several newspapers jointly formed the Associated Press in New York, whose task was to provide news for its member papers.

Pulitzer v. Hearst

America’s newspaper industry was marked at the turn of the 20th century by a fierce rivalry between two

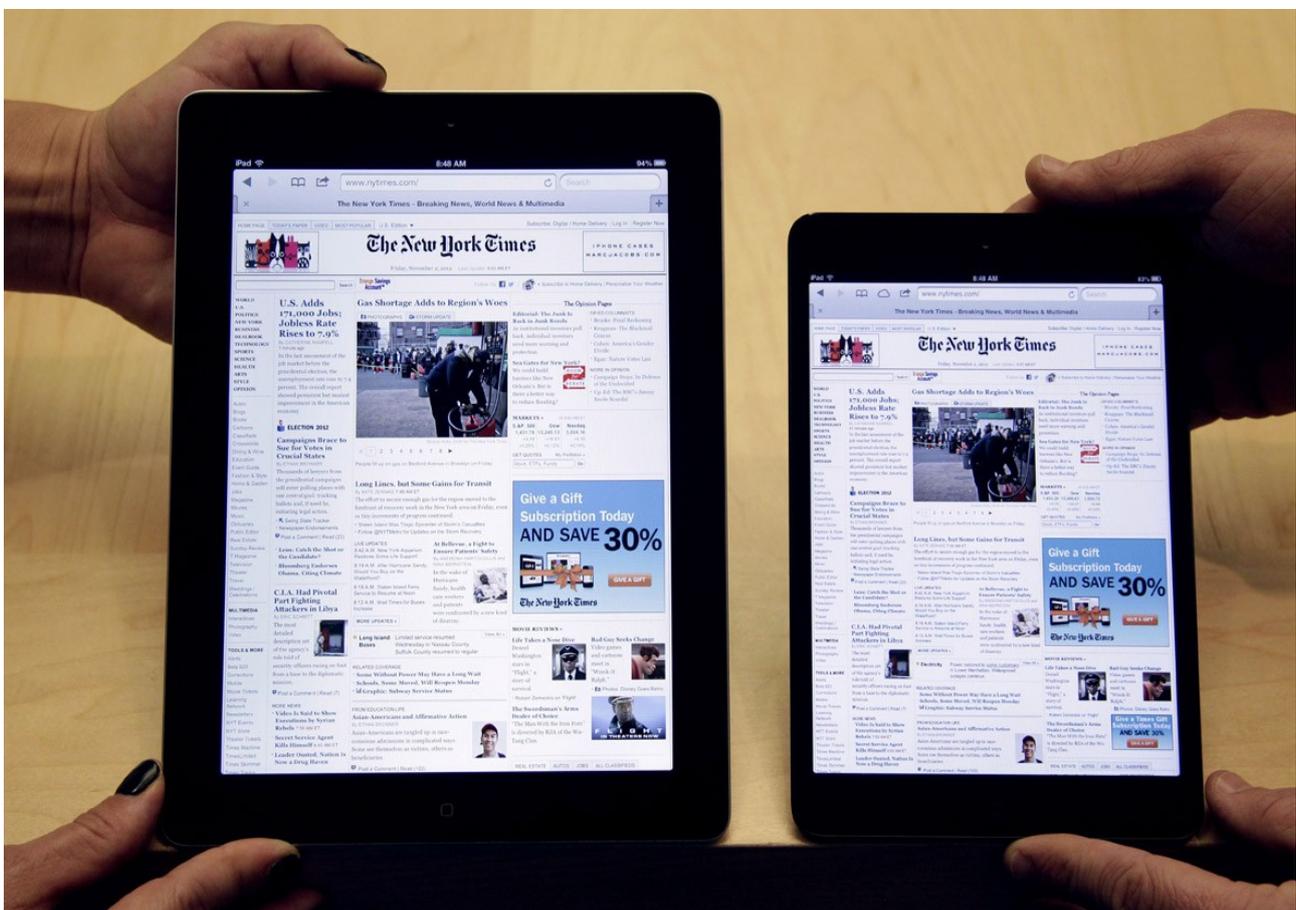


World Report and Newsweek in Los Angeles
Photo AP Images

newspaper owners and editors, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst. The journalism they used extensively in their papers is known now as “yellow journalism”, i.e. journalism based on sensationalism and scandal-mongering, and associated with unethical and untrustworthy media practices. The aim of yellow journalism was to drive up circulation. The impact of the competition between Pulitzer and Hearst did not stop at the personal level. Many people believe that sensational stories printed by Hearst, which alleged Spanish brutality in the conflict with Cuba, influenced public opinion and led to the Spanish-American War: an outcome for which Hearst proudly credited himself.

Readers’ Expectations Change Media

Since the times of the great media moguls such as Pulitzer and Hearst, newspaper readership has changed a lot. New media, particularly the television and recently the Internet, have changed our reading and newsgathering habits. Revenue from advertising and circulation of newspapers has declined significantly in recent years. Many newspapers have switched from daily publications to weeklies or have gone out of business entirely. In a 24/7 news environment, with Internet portals providing immediate coverage of events, print stories become old within hours. Only the future will show whether *Newsweek’s* switch from paper to digital form becomes the norm or an exception.



Will digital formats replace print media?
photo AP Images

Activity Page

EXERCISE 1: NEWSPAPER WORDS & THEIR MEANINGS

Read the words or expressions in the left column and match them with the correct meaning in the right column:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. BREAK THE NEWS | A. NO NEW INFORMATION MEANS THAT THERE ARE NO BAD DEVELOPMENTS |
| 2. NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS | B. SPREAD INFORMATION ABOUT SOMETHING |
| 3. BAD NEWS | C. NEWLY PRINTED, SENSATIONAL |
| 4. HOT OFF THE PRESS | D. AN UNWELCOME THING OR PERSON, TROUBLE |
| 5. YELLOW JOURNALISM | E. MAIN POINT OF THE NEWS ON RADIO OR TELEVISION |
| 6. TABLOID | F. A STORY THAT APPEARS IN JUST ONE NEWSPAPER |
| 7. MEDIA COVERAGE | G. THE KIND OF JOURNALISM THAT DEVELOPED IN THE 1850S AND USED A LOT OF SCANDALOUS AND SENSATIONAL MATERIAL TO GAIN POPULARITY |
| 8. OBITUARY | H. REPORTING AN EVENT |
| 9. EXCLUSIVE | I. REPORT OF SOMEONE'S DEATH |
| 10. HEADLINE | J. A NEWSPAPER WITH SMALL PAGES AND A LOT OF PHOTOS |
| 11. BROADSHEET | K. A FULL-SIZED NEWSPAPER, USUALLY MORE SERIOUS |

ZOOM
in on america

About ZOOM

Contact us at
arc@usembassy.at

American Reference Center
U.S. Embassy Vienna
Boltzmannngasse 16
1090 Vienna

[http://
austria.usembassy.gov/
arc.html](http://austria.usembassy.gov/arc.html)

EXERCISE 2: PRACTICE THE WORDS & EXPRESSIONS FROM EXERCISE 1

Write sentences with the words and expressions in Exercise 1 so that your sentences explain the meaning of a given word or phrase. For example: "The staff don't want Lucy to get the job; they think she is bad news."

EXERCISE 3: SPEAKING

Would you like to become a journalist? Work in a small groups and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the journalism profession.

If you were to become a journalist, which kind of media coverage would you like to do (e.g. sports, fashion, news, editorials, etc.)? Would you like to be a newspaper photographer? Why? Why not?

THE MCGAIN SAGA CUBA NOW OBAMA AND ISRAEL

Newsweek

July 4, 2009 \$3.95

The Hunt for an **Addiction** Vaccine

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

PAKISTAN'S SHADOWY WAR YOUR MIND & YOUR BRAIN

Newsweek

July 4, 2009 \$3.95

What Women Want

THE PUZZLING POLITICS OF GENDER By Julia Baird PUT PALIN ON THE SUPREME COURT! By Dahlia Lithwick

BILL GRAHAM'S LAST CRUSADE

Newsweek

July 4, 2009 \$3.95

The Scary New World of Identity Theft

40 Million Hacked Credit Cards: Are You A Victim? How to Protect Yourself

WAR OF THE DRONES QUINDLEN ON GAY MARRIAGE

Newsweek

BEYOND IRAQ COLLEGE GUIDE '08 IEDs GO GLOBAL THE HOTTEST SCHOOLS

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

Newsweek

August 22, 2007 \$5.95

The Facebook Effect

Add Mark as a friend?

At 23, Mark Zuckerberg has already changed the way millions of us connect. Now he's facing a new challenge: how to turn an online obsession into a fixture of the digital age. By Steven Levy

Add Friend Cancel

PRIVATE INAUGURAL PHOTOS THE OSCAR ROUNDTABLE

Newsweek

October 15, 2007 \$4.95

I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)

WITH THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS, OBAMA'S SMILE WON'T LAST LONG

ESSAYS BY FAREED ZAKARIA, DANIEL GROSS AND ROBERT J. SAMUELSON

THE POLITICS OF ENDANGERED SPECIES

WHAT MAKES THE LIST— AND WHAT DOESN'T

Newsweek

181 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW

SUMMER DOUBLE ISSUE

Newsweek

August 20, 2007 \$4.95

IRAQ'S WARLORDS RUDY'S NEOCONS TOLSTOY'S REBIRTH

October 15, 2007 \$4.95

Newsweek

WOMEN & POWER

DO WOMEN REALLY LEAD DIFFERENTLY THAN MEN? LESSONS FROM THE FRONT.

TALIBAN CHIC IN LONDON PRINCE'S BIG ONLINE BET

Newsweek

I WANT YOU TO START SPENDING!

INVEST IN AMERICA — BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

OBAMA FIGHTS BACK • 'HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 2'

Newsweek

August 6, 2007 \$4.95

Slaughter in the Jungle

THE WORLD'S MOST MAGNIFICENT ANIMALS FACE NEW THREATS OF EXTINCTION

By Sharon Begley

CONGO'S GORILLA TRAGEDY

By Scott Johnson

THE GOP'S IRAQ REBELLION • MEN IN DRAG, AGAIN

Newsweek

August 6, 2007 \$4.95

This Man Was Dead.

He Isn't Anymore.

How Science Is Bringing More Heart-Attack Victims Back To Life

Past Newsweek covers, photos AP Images