

MASS COMMUNICATION, MEDIA, AND CULTURE



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Preface

Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication is adapted from a work produced by a publisher who has requested that they and the original author not receive attribution. This adapted edition is produced by the University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing through the eLearning Support Initiative. Though the publisher has requested that they and the original author not receive attribution, this adapted edition reproduces all original text and sections of the book, except for publisher and author name attribution.

According to the author, the world did not need another introductory text in mass communication. But the world did need another kind of introductory text in mass communication, and that is how *Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication* was birthed.

The only question was: What would be the purpose of another introductory mass communication text?

Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication was written to squarely emphasize media technology. The author believes that an introduction to mass communication text should be a compelling, historical narrative sketching the *ongoing evolution* of media technology and how that technology shapes and is shaped by culture — and that is what he set out to deliver with his new textbook.

Today's students are immersed in media technology. They live in a world of cell phones, smart phones, video games, iPods, laptops, Facebook, Twitter, FourSquare, and more. They fully expect that new technology will be developed tomorrow. Yet students often lack an historical perspective on media technology. They lack knowledge of the social, political and economic forces that shape media technology. This is not knowledge for knowledge's sake. It is knowledge that can help them understand, comprehend, appreciate, anticipate, shape and control media technology.

With this focus, *Understanding Media and Culture* becomes an appropriate title. Indeed, the title has particular significance. Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* is a key text in media studies. Written in the 1960s, *Understanding Media* was the subject of intense debates that continue to this day. Its central message was that the technology of media — not their content — was their most important feature. In a typically pithy phrase, McLuhan said, "The medium is the message." The title, *Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, situates the introductory text in a large, engrossing theoretical conversation.

The goal is to adopt a textbook that will support and complement your teaching of this course. *Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, will support an engaging and interesting course experience for students that will not only show them the powerful social, political and economic forces will affect the future of media technology, but will challenge students to do their part in shaping that future.

About the Author

Jack Lule

Dr. Jack Lule is the Joseph B. McFadden distinguished professor of journalism and the director of the globalization and social change initiative at Lehigh University. His research interests include globalization and media, international communication, international news reporting, cultural and critical studies of news, online journalism, and teaching with technology.

He is the author of *Daily News, Eternal Stories: The Mythological Role of Journalism*, published in 2001 by Guilford Press. Called “a landmark book in the sociology of news,” the book argues that ancient myths can be found daily in the pages of the news. The book won the 2002 Lewis Mumford Award for Outstanding Scholarship. His current book is a study of globalization and the media.

The author of more than forty scholarly articles and book chapters, Dr. Lule is also a frequent contributor to numerous newspapers and periodicals and has served as a commentator about the news on National Public Radio, BBC, and other media outlets. His most recent book, *Globalization and Media: Global Village of Babel*, was published in 2012 by Rowman & Littlefield.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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1.1: The Lost Cell Phone



Figure 1.1

A New York City woman lost her cell phone in the back of a taxi cab. Sasha Gomez, 16, of Queens, ended up with the phone. She decided to keep it and use it. She did not realize the consequences. She was humiliated, harassed, and arrested. And she became the subject of a public shaming ritual only possible by today's media in today's culture.

The phone was an expensive model, a T-Mobile Sidekick that sold for \$350. Sasha began using the phone to take photographs and send instant messages to friends and family. The woman who lost the phone thought she would never see the phone again. She bought another Sidekick, logged onto her account and found that the old phone was being used. She saw photographs and messages by Sasha. The woman wanted her old phone back. She had a media-savvy friend, Evan Guttman. Evan was able to track down Sasha by her instant messages. He contacted Sasha and asked her to return the phone to his friend. "Basically, she told me to get lost," Evan later told *The New York Times*. Nicholas Confessore, "Tale of a Lost Cellphone, and Untold Static," *The New York Times*, June 21, 2006. Web. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/21/nyregion/21sidekick.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=evan+guttman&st=nyt

Evan decided to fight for his friend's phone—through the media. He put up a web page that told the story of the lost cell phone. He put up the pictures of Sasha and her family. The story spread. Evan began getting dozens and then hundreds of sympathetic emails from other people who had lost phones and understood his frustration with Sasha. Two technology blogs, Diggs and Gizmodo, linked to the story and web page. Evan then got thousands of emails, some from as far off as Africa and Asia. Lawyers and police officers contacted Evan about property law and told him how to approach the police. Some people went further than writing supportive emails. They found Sasha's MySpace page. They sent Sasha and her friends messages demanding the return of the phone. Other people learned her home address in Queens, drove by her apartment building and shouted "thief."

Sasha and her family were outraged and alarmed. They contacted Evan. Sasha still refused to return the phone. Her brother too communicated with Evan. He said he was a military policeman, and he warned Evan to leave Sasha alone. Evan posted those comments online. He soon heard from others in the military. They told him that the brother's threats were a violation of military policy. They said they would report the threats to the brother's superiors.

Armed with all this information, Evan contacted Sasha one more time. He said he and his friend would next go the police. Evan said he was threatened again. He and his friend went to the police who then arrested Sasha. The charge was possession of stolen property. Sasha's mother came forward and said she had bought the phone for \$50 on a subway platform and given it to Sasha. Police confiscated the phone for the original owner. And Evan became a minor cultural celebrity. The story appeared in *The New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune* and was broadcast on MSNBC and other outlets. It was a modern morality tale caused by, and then made possible by, the intersection of media technology and culture.

I thought the story of the lost cell phone would be a great introduction for a text on understanding media and culture and used *The New York Times* story to write the previous paragraphs. Long after, when I showed the introduction to a colleague, he looked at me and said, "Are you kidding?" He showed me a then-recent book by media scholar Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*, a book on the power of organizing through new media. Shirky begins his book—with the same story of the lost cell phone. With some wry amusement over fate, I decided that I would keep my introduction as well. In some ways, the movement of the lost cell phone story from Evan's website through *The New York Times* through MSNBC through Clay Shirky's text through my book on understanding media and culture is symbolic, as we will see, of the multitude of flows between media and culture.

Understanding Media and Culture

This book's title tells its intent. It is written to help you understand media and culture. The media and culture are so much a part of our days that sometimes it is difficult to step back and appreciate and apprehend their great impact on our lives.

The book's title, and the book itself, begin with a focus squarely on media. Think of your typical day. If you are like many people, you wake to a digital alarm clock or perhaps your cell phone. Soon after waking, you likely have a routine that involves some media. Some people immediately check the cell phone for text messages. Others will turn on the computer and check Facebook, email, or websites. Some people read the newspaper. Others listen to music on an iPod or CD. Some people will turn on the television and watch a weather channel, cable news, or Sports Center. Heading to work or class, you may chat on a cell phone or listen to music. Your classes likely employ various types of media from course management software to PowerPoint presentations to DVDs to YouTube. You may return home and relax with video games, television, movies, more Facebook, or music. You connect with friends on campus and beyond with text messages or Facebook. And your day may end as you fall asleep to digital music. Media for most of us are entwined with almost every aspect of life and work. Understanding media will not only help you appreciate the role of media in your life but also help you be a more informed citizen, a more savvy consumer, and a more successful worker. Media influence all those aspects of life as well.

The book's title also has links to a highly influential book in media studies, *Understanding Media*, by the social theorist and critic, Marshall McLuhan. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1964. In the midst of the 20th century and the rise of television as a mass medium, McLuhan foresaw how profoundly media would shape human lives. His work on media spanned four decades, from the 1950s to his death in 1980. In the 1960s and 1970s, during the height of television's popularity and the emergence of computers, he became an international celebrity. He appeared on magazine covers and television talk shows. He had a cameo appearance in the Woody Allen film, *Annie Hall*. *Wired* magazine listed him on its masthead as "patron saint." In universities, however, McLuhan was often dismissed, perhaps because of his celebrity, his outlandish style, and his broad and sweeping declarations. Yet as media continued to develop in ways anticipated by his writings, McLuhan again found an audience in media studies.

In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan offered some provocative thoughts. He said that the media themselves were far more important than any content they carried. Indeed, he said, each medium, such as print or broadcast, physically affects the human central nervous system in a certain way. Media influence the way the brain works and how it processes information. They create new patterns of thought and behavior. Looking back over time, McLuhan found that people and societies were shaped by the dominant media of their time. For example, McLuhan argued, people and societies of the printing press era were shaped by that medium. And, he said, people and societies were being shaped in new ways by electronic media. Summing up, in one of his well-known phrases, he said, "The medium is the message."

This book's title uses McLuhan's title—and adds culture. McLuhan well understood how media shape culture. However, one weakness in McLuhan's work, especially his early work, is that he did not fully account for how culture shapes media. Culture can be a vague and empty term. Sometimes culture is defined in a very narrow sense as "the arts" or some sort of fashionable refinement. Another definition of culture is much more expansive, however. In this broader sense, culture is a particular way of life and how that life is acted out each day in works, practices, and activities. Thus, we can talk about Italian culture, Javanese culture,

or the culture of the ancient Greeks. Another communication theorist, James Carey, elegantly captures this expansive view of culture. In “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” Carey wrote the following:

“We create, express, and convey our knowledge of and attitudes toward reality through the construction of a variety of symbol systems: art, science, journalism, religion, common sense, mythology. How do we do this? What are the differences between these forms? What are the historical and comparative variations in them? How do changes in communication technology influence what we can concretely create and apprehend? How do groups in society struggle over the definition of what is real?” James Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. 2nd ed. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006, p. 24.

That large sense of culture will be used in this book. The chapters to come will provide an in-depth look at the relationship of media and culture. We will look at many kinds of media and how those media shape and are shaped by culture. Media and culture shape each other around the globe, of course. The focus in this book primarily will be on the United States. This focus is not because U.S. media have such global reach but because understanding media and culture in one setting will allow you to think about media and culture in other settings. This intellectual journey should be interesting and fun. You live, study, work, and play with media in culture. By the book’s end, you should have a much deeper appreciation and understanding of them.

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1.2: Intersection of American Media and Culture

Learning objectives

- Distinguish between mass communication and mass media.
- Define culture.
- Pose questions that will be explored in the rest of the text.

Mass Communication, Mass Media, and Culture

We use all kinds of terms to talk about media. It will be useful to clarify them. It will be especially important to distinguish between mass communication and mass media, and to attempt a working definition of culture. You likely are reading this book as part of a class dedicated to mass communication, so let's start with mass communication first. Note that adjective: *mass*. Here is a horrible definition of *mass* from an online dictionary: Of, relating to, characteristic of, directed at, or attended by a large number of people. But the definition gets the point across. Communication can take place just between two people, or among a few people, or maybe even within one person who is talking to himself. *Mass* communication is communication of, relating to, characteristic of, directed at, or attended by a large number of people. That's pretty ugly. Let's try the following: **Mass communication** refers to communication transmitted to large segments of the population.

How does that happen? The transmission of mass communication happens using one or more of many different kinds of **media** (people sometimes forget that media is the plural of the singular, *medium*). A medium is simply an instrument or means of transmission. It can be two tin cans connected by a string. It can be television. It can be the Internet. A mass medium is a means of transmission designed to reach a wide audience. It is not tin cans on a string, unless you have a lot of cans, but it can be television or the Internet. Media are more than one medium. So **mass media** refers to those means of transmission that are designed to reach a wide audience. Mass media are commonly considered to include radio, film, newspapers, magazines, books, and video games, as well as Internet blogs, podcasts, and video sharing.

Lastly, let's define culture a bit more. All this mass communication over mass media takes place among people in a particular time and place. Those people share ideas about reality and the world and themselves. They act out those ideas daily in their lives, work, and creative expressions, and they do so in ways that are different from other people in other places and other times. We can use *culture* to refer to the acting out of these shared ideas.

One of the great scholars of culture, anthropologist Clifford Geertz, offered this definition. He said, culture is "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life" (1973, 89). That's difficult language, but you can get the idea—culture is historically transmitted knowledge and attitudes toward life expressed in symbolic form. Or perhaps more simply, **culture** is the expressed and shared values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of a social group, organization, or institution. It is OK if that still seems broad and fluid. Scholars too wrestle with the term because it must capture so much. Culture should not be easy to define.

What this book will do is bring together media and culture in the context of the American experience. Throughout American history, evolving media technologies have changed the way we relate socially, economically, and politically. Here's one example from long ago that is still talked about today. In 1960, the first televised presidential debates changed American history forever. The young senator, John F. Kennedy, looked wonderful on television. He appeared energetic, crisp and at ease, while Vice President Richard Nixon looked nervous and uncomfortable. His makeup was caked on. He hunched and slouched. People who listened to the debate on the radio considered it a tie. But most people who watched the debate on television believed that Kennedy crushed Nixon. Kennedy upset Nixon and won the presidency. A few months later, the newly-elected president gave credit to technology for changing public perceptions and enabling his win. He claimed that "it was TV more than anything else that turned the tide." Louis Menand, "Masters of the Matrix," *The New Yorker*, January 5, 2004. Ever since Kennedy, American presidential hopefuls have had to be increasingly television-ready and media savvy. Indeed, evolving technology has helped change what the American public wants out of its leaders.



Figure 1.2

In today's wired world of smartphones and streaming satellite feeds, our expectations of our leaders, celebrities, teachers, and even ourselves are changing in drastic ways. This book aims to provide you with the context, tools, and theories to understand changes brought about by the commingling of media and culture. Rather than telling you what to think, this book hopes to provide you with a framework to consider some of the crucial issues affecting media and culture in today's world. The following are some questions to consider now and to keep in mind as you move forward in this book:

- The second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century saw a huge growth of media forms, including radio, cinema, television, the Internet, and cell phone. Understanding the evolution of media technology can help you understanding not only the media of today but also the media of tomorrow. What then are the roots of media in U.S. history? What were the dominant forms of media present in the United States during the Revolution? The Industrial Revolution? World Wars I and II? How did these forms of media differ from the ones we have today? How did they help shape the way people interacted with and understood the world they lived in?
- Contemporary Americans have more means of getting information and entertainment than ever before. What are the major media present in the United States today? How do these forms of media interact with one another? How do they overlap? How are they distinct?
- What is the role of media in American culture today? Some people argue that dramatic and controversial events help fuel the demand for 24-hour news access. In June 2011, people around the world spent hours glued to coverage of the Casey Anthony trial. More recently, in November of 2011, sports coverage moved from football scores to the Penn State football sex-abuse scandal. What are some other ways that culture affects media? Conversely, how do media affect culture? Do violent television

shows and video games influence viewers to become more violent? Is the Internet making our culture more open and democratic, or more shallow and distracted?

- Though we may not (yet) have space-age technology, such as time travel, hover cars, and teleportation, today's electronic gadgets would probably stun Americans of a century ago. Will we be stunned by future media? How can today's media landscape help us understand what might await us in years to come? What will the future of American media and culture look like?
- Mass communication refers to a message transmitted to a large audience; the means of transmission is known as mass media. Many different kinds of mass media exist and have existed for centuries. Both have an effect on culture, which is a shared and expressed collection of behaviors, practices, beliefs, and values that are particular to a group, organization, or institution. Culture and media exert influence on each other in subtle, complex ways.
- The 1960 election is an example of how changes in media technology have had a major impact on culture. But the influence goes both ways, and culture shapes media in important ways, even how media evolve.

? Exercise 1.2.1

Reread the previous questions about media and culture. Write down some of your initial responses or reactions, based on your prior knowledge or intuition. Keep the piece of paper somewhere secure and return to it on the last day of the course. Were your responses on target? How has your understanding of media and culture changed? How might you answer questions differently now?

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1.3: How Did We Get Here? The Evolution of Culture

Learning Objectives

- Define cultural period, and give examples of recent cultural periods.
- Discuss particular characteristics of the modern era, and explain how it was shaped by the Industrial Revolution.
- Explain the ways that the postmodern era differs from the modern era.

We have spoken easily of *historical eras*. Can we speak of *cultural eras*? It can actually be a useful concept. There are many ways to divide time into cultural eras. But for our purposes, a cultural period is a time marked by a particular way of understanding the world through culture and technology. Changes in cultural periods are marked by fundamental changes in the way we perceive and understand the world. For example, you may have had readings about the “Middle Ages,” a marker for European history from the 5th to 15th Century. In that era, technology and communication were in the hands of authorities like the king and church who could dictate what was “true.” The Renaissance, the era that followed the Middle Ages, turned to the scientific method as a means of reaching truth through reason. This change in cultural period was galvanized by the printing press. (In 2008, *Wired* magazine’s editor-in-chief proclaimed that the application of Internet technology through Google was about to render the scientific method obsolete. Chris Anderson, “The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete,” *Wired*, June 23, 2008, http://www.wired.com/science/discoveries/magazine/16-07/pb_theory (accessed July 15, 2010).) In each of these cultural eras, the nature of truth had not changed. What had changed was the way that humans used available technology to make sense of the world.

Using technology to make sense of the world? You likely can anticipate that for the purpose of studying culture and mass media, the modern and postmodern ages are some of the most exciting and relevant ones to explore, eras in which culture and technology have intersected like never before.

The Modern Age—Modernity

The Modern Age is the post-Medieval era, beginning roughly after the 14th century, a wide span of time marked in part by technological innovations, urbanization, scientific discoveries, and globalization. The Modern Age is generally split into two parts: the early and the late modern periods. Scholars often talk of the Modern Age as modernity.

The *early modern period* began with Gutenberg’s invention of the movable type printing press in the late 15th century and ended in the late 18th century. Thanks to Gutenberg’s press, the European population of the early modern period saw rising literacy rates, which led to educational reform. As noted earlier, Gutenberg’s machine also greatly enabled the spread of knowledge, and in turn spurred the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation. During the early modern period, transportation improved, politics became more secularized, capitalism spread, nation-states grew more powerful, and information became more widely accessible. Enlightenment ideals of reason, rationalism, and faith in scientific inquiry slowly began to replace the previously dominant authority of king and church.

Huge political, social, and economic changes marked the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the *late modern period*. The Industrial Revolution, which began in England around 1750, combined with the American Revolution in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789, indicated that the world was undergoing massive changes. The Industrial Revolution had far-reaching consequences. It did not merely change the way goods were produced—it also fundamentally changed the economic, social, and cultural framework of its time.

The Industrial Revolution doesn’t have clear start or end dates. However, during the 19th century, several crucial inventions—the internal combustion engine, steam-powered ships, and railways, among others—led to other innovations across various industries. Suddenly, steam power and machine tools meant that production increased dramatically. But some of the biggest changes coming out of the Industrial Revolution were social in character. An economy based on manufacturing instead of agriculture meant that more people moved to cities, where techniques of mass production led to an emphasis on efficiency both in and out of the factory. Newly urbanized factory laborers no longer had the skill or time to produce their own food, clothing, or supplies and instead turned to consumer goods. Increased production led to increases in wealth, though income inequalities between classes also started to grow as well. Increased wealth and nonrural lifestyles led to the development of entertainment industries. Life changed rapidly.

It is no coincidence that the French and American Revolutions happened in the midst of the Industrial Revolution. The huge social changes created changes in political systems and thinking. In both France and America, the revolutions were inspired by a rejection of a monarchy in favor of national sovereignty and representative democracy. Both revolutions also heralded the rise of secular

society, as opposed to church-based authority systems. Democracy was well-suited to the so-called Age of Reason, with its ideals of individual rights and its belief in progress.

Media were central to these revolutions. As we have seen, the fusing of steam power and the printing press enabled the explosive expansion of books and newspapers. Literacy rates rose, as did support for public participation in politics. More and more people lived in the city, had an education, got their news from the newspaper, spent their wages on consumer goods, and identified themselves as citizens of an industrialized nation. Urbanization, mass literacy, and new forms of mass media contributed to a sense of mass culture that united people across regional, social, and cultural boundaries.

A last note on the terminology for the cultural era of the Modern Age or modernity: A similar term—modernism—also has come into use. However, modernism is a term for an artistic, cultural movement, rather than era. Modernism refers to the artistic movement of late-19th and early-20th centuries that arose out of the widespread changes that swept the world during that period. Most notably, modernism questioned the limitations of “traditional” forms of art and culture. Modernist art was in part a reaction against the Enlightenment’s certainty of progress and rationality. It celebrated subjectivity through abstraction, experimentalism, surrealism, and sometimes pessimism or even nihilism. Prominent examples of modernist works include James Joyce’s stream-of-consciousness novels, cubist paintings by Picasso, atonal compositions by Debussy, and absurdist plays by Pirandello. It’s not too confusing—modernism was an artistic movement taking place during the modern age.

The Postmodern Age

If you go on to graduate study in almost any field in the humanities or social sciences, you will eventually encounter texts debating the *postmodern era*. While the exact definition and dates of the postmodern era are still debated by cultural theorists and philosophers, the general consensus is that the postmodern era began during the second half of the 20th century, and was marked by skepticism, self-consciousness, celebration of difference, and the reappraisal of modern conventions. Modernity—the Modern Age—took for granted scientific rationalism, the autonomous self, and the inevitability of progress. The postmodern age questioned or dismissed many of these assumptions. If the modern age valued order, reason, stability, and absolute truth, the postmodern age reveled in contingency, fragmentation, and instability. The aftermath of World War II, the Holocaust, the Cold War, the digitization of culture, the rise of the Internet, and numerous other factors fed into the skepticism and self-consciousness of the postmodern era.

Modernity’s belief in objective truth is one of the major assumptions turned on its head in the postmodern era. Postmodernists instead took their cues from Schrödinger, the quantum physicist who famously devised a thought experiment in which a cat is placed inside a sealed box with a small amount of radiation that may or may not kill it. (Remember, this is a thought experiment, and is not real.) While the box remains sealed, Schrödinger proclaimed, the cat exists simultaneously in both states, dead *and* alive. Both potential states are equally true. Although the thought experiment was devised to explore issues in quantum physics, it appealed to postmodernists in its assertion of radical uncertainty. What is reality? Rather than being an absolute objective truth, accessible by rational procedures and experimentation, the status of reality was contingent, and depended on the observer.

“The postmodern” affected fields from philosophy to political science to literature. Novelists and poets, for example, embraced this new approach to reality. While Victorian novelists took pains to make their books seem more “real,” postmodern narratives distrusted professions of “reality” and constantly reminded readers of the artificial nature of the story they were reading. The emphasis was not on the all-knowing author but instead on the reader. For the postmodernists, meaning was not injected into a work by its creator, but depended on the reader’s subjective experience of the work.

Another way postmodernity differed from modernity was in its rejection of what philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard deemed “grand narratives.” The Modern Age was marked by different large-scale theories that attempted to explain the totality of human experience, including theories of capitalism, Marxism, rationalism, Freudianism, Darwinism, fascism, and so on. But the postmodern era called into question the sorts of theories that claimed to explain everything at once. Such thinking, postmodernists warned, led to 20th-century totalitarian regimes, such as Hitler’s Third Reich and the USSR under Stalin. The postmodern age, Lyotard theorized, was one of micro-narratives instead of grand narratives—that is, a multiplicity of small, localized understandings of the world, none of which can claim an ultimate or absolute truth. The diversity of human experience also was a marked feature of the postmodern world. As Lyotard noted, “eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture; one listens to reggae, watches a Western, eats McDonald’s food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and retro clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games.” Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

Postmodernists even mistrusted the idea of originality—the supposed arrogance of thinking one had a “new thought”—and freely borrowed across cultures and genres. William S. Burroughs gleefully proclaimed a sort of call-to-arms for his postmodern

generation of writers in 1985: “Out of the closets and into the museums, libraries, architectural monuments, concert halls, bookstores, recording studios and film studios of the world. Everything belongs to the inspired and dedicated thief.... Words, colors, light, sounds, stone, wood, bronze belong to the living artist. They belong to anyone who can use them. Loot the Louvre! *A bas l’originalité* (down with originality), the sterile and assertive ego that imprisons us as it creates. *Vive le sol* (long live the sun)-pure, shameless, total. We are not responsible. Steal anything in sight.” Burroughs’s words embodied the mixed skepticism and glee that marked the postmodern era. As the new millennium began, Bob Dylan’s album, “Love and Theft,” carried on Burroughs’s tradition. Its title and many of its lyrics are taken from numerous sources across cultures, eras and fields.

- A cultural period is a time marked by a particular way of understanding the world through culture and technology. Changes in cultural periods are marked by fundamental changes in the way we perceive and understand the world. The modern era began after the Middle Ages and lasted through the early decades of the 20th century, when the postmodern era began.
- The modern era was marked by Enlightenment philosophy, which focused on the individual and placed a high value on rational decision making. This period saw the wide expansion of capitalism, colonialism, democracy, and science-based rationalism. The Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the American and French Revolutions, and World War I are all significant events that took place during the modern era. One of the most significant, however, was the Industrial Revolution; its emphasis on routinization and efficiency helped society restructure itself along those terms as well.
- Postmodernity differed from modernity in its questioning of reason, rejection of grand narratives, and emphasis on subcultures. Rather than searching for one ultimate truth that could explain all of history, the postmodernists focused on contingency, context, and diversity.

? Exercise 1.3.1

Draw a Venn diagram of the two cultural periods discussed at length in this chapter. Make a list of the features, values, and events that mark each period. Is there any overlap? How do they differ?

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1.4: How Did We Get Here? The Evolution of Media

Learning Objectives

- Discuss events that impacted the adaptation of mass media.
- Explain how different technological transitions have shaped media industries.
- Identify four roles the media perform in our society.

“Well, how did I get here?” a baffled David Byrne sings in the Talking Heads song, “Once in a Lifetime.” The contemporary media landscape is so rich, deep, and multifaceted that it’s easy to imagine American media consumers asking themselves the same question. In 2010, Americans could turn on their television and find 24-hour news channels, as well as music videos, nature documentaries, and reality shows about everything from hoarders to fashion models. That’s not to mention movies available on-demand from cable providers, or television and video available online for streaming or downloading. Half of American households receive a daily newspaper, and the average person holds 1.9 magazine subscriptions. [Journalism.org](http://www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2004/), *The State of the News Media 2004*, <http://www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2004/> (accessed July 15, 2010); Jim Bilton, “The Loyalty Challenge: How Magazine Subscriptions Work,” *In Circulation*, January/February 2007. A University of California San Diego study claimed that U.S. households consumed around 3.6 zettabytes of information in 2008, the digital equivalent of a 7-foot high stack of books covering the entire United States, including Alaska—a 350 percent increase since 1980. Doug Ramsey, “UC San Diego Experts Calculate How Much Information Americans Consume.” University of San Diego News Center, December 9, 2009. Americans are exposed to media in taxicabs and busses, in classrooms and doctors’ offices, on highways and in airplanes.

Later chapters will offer in-depth explorations of how particular media developed in different eras. But we can begin to orient ourselves here by briefly examining a history of media in culture, looking at the ways technological innovations have helped to bring us to where we are today, and finally considering the varied roles the media fill in our culture today.

A Brief History of Mass Media and Culture

Until Johannes Gutenberg’s 15th-century invention of the movable type printing press, books were painstakingly handwritten, and no two copies were exactly the same. The printing press made the mass production of print media possible. Not only was it much cheaper to produce written material, but new transportation technologies also made it easier for texts to reach a wide audience. It’s hard to overstate the importance of Gutenberg’s invention, which helped usher in massive cultural movements like the European Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation. In 1810, another German printer, Friedrich Koenig, pushed media production even further when he essentially hooked the steam engine up to a printing press, enabling the industrialization of printed media. In 1800, a hand-operated printing press could produce about 480 pages per hour; Koenig’s machine more than doubled this rate. (By the 1930s, many printing presses had an output of 3000 pages an hour.) This increased efficiency helped lead to the rise of the daily newspaper.

As the first Europeans settled the land that would come to be called the United States of America, the newspaper was an essential medium. At first, newspapers helped the Europeans stay connected with events back home. But as the people developed their own way of life—their own *culture*—newspapers helped give expression to that culture. Political scientist Benedict Anderson has argued that newspapers also helped forge a sense of national identity by treating readers across the country as part of one unified group with common goals and values. Newspapers, he said, helped create an “imagined community.”

The United States continued to develop, and the newspaper was the perfect medium for the increasingly urbanized Americans of the 19th century, who could no longer get their local news merely through gossip and word of mouth. These Americans were living in an unfamiliar world, and newspapers and other publications helped them negotiate the rapidly changing world. The Industrial Revolution meant that people had more leisure time and more money, and media helped them figure out how to spend both.

In the 1830s, the major daily newspapers faced a new threat with the rise of the penny press—newspapers that were low-priced broadsheets. These papers served as a cheaper, more sensational daily news source and privileged news of murder and adventure over the dry political news of the day. While earlier newspapers catered to a wealthier, more educated audience, the penny press attempted to reach a wide swath of readers through cheap prices and entertaining (often scandalous) stories. The penny press can be seen as the forerunner to today’s gossip-hungry tabloids.

The Real Joy Gould. THE UNFOLDING STORY OF THE MAN'S CHARACTER AND LIFE. In The Sunday World.

PRICE ONE CENT.

SIBERIA A LIVING HELL.

LAST EDITION. THE PAUPER-SMUGGLERS.

New York Officials Seeking Method to Bring Them to Justice.

THIS CITY A DUMPING GROUND.

Massachusetts Authorities Practically Confirm the Stories of Hoax and Folly.

GEN. BEN BUTLER SAYS IT'S SO.

Paupers and Lunatics Have Been Shipped Here Systematically for Years.

The paper published yesterday its special feature on the pauper-smugglers in the State of New York. It is a story of the most sordid and disgusting traffic in the history of the world. It is a story of the most sordid and disgusting traffic in the history of the world. It is a story of the most sordid and disgusting traffic in the history of the world.



THE PAUPER-SMUGGLERS. The paper published yesterday its special feature on the pauper-smugglers in the State of New York. It is a story of the most sordid and disgusting traffic in the history of the world. It is a story of the most sordid and disgusting traffic in the history of the world. It is a story of the most sordid and disgusting traffic in the history of the world.

GEN BUTLER SAYS IT'S SO.

The Times-Sunday Herald.

THE TIMES-SUNDAY HERALD.

THE TIMES-SUNDAY HERALD.

THE TIMES-SUNDAY HERALD.

THE TIMES-SUNDAY HERALD.

THE TIMES-SUNDAY HERALD.

THE TIMES-SUNDAY HERALD.

THE TIMES-SUNDAY HERALD.

THE TIMES-SUNDAY HERALD.

BROOKLYN EVENING EDITION The World.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1892.

SEE THE SUNDAY WORLD.

PRICE ONE CENT.

MANY PATIENTS EXPOSED. Typhus Carried Off in Innards of Bellows' Alcoholic New.

Park Near Lodging-Houses New. Inquest to Be Held by Coroner Drew This Afternoon.

It Seems That the Prisoners Were Never Released from the Jail.

OLDST BANDSMAN DEAD.

CHARLES HAYES DIED THIS MORNING.

DR. CECIL ARRESTED.

MAN BURNED TO DEATH.

FORGER WALLACE INDICTED.

WEDDED FOUR TIMES A YEAR.

RECEIVER RESTRAINED.

HEAVEN OR HELL?

NEXT SUNDAY WORLD?

HEAVEN OR HELL?

NEXT SUNDAY WORLD?

HEAVEN OR HELL?

NEXT SUNDAY WORLD?

HEAVEN OR HELL?

NEXT SUNDAY WORLD?

HEAVEN OR HELL?

NEXT SUNDAY WORLD?

HEAVEN OR HELL?

NEXT SUNDAY WORLD?

HEAVEN OR HELL?

NEXT SUNDAY WORLD?

HEAVEN OR HELL?

NEXT SUNDAY WORLD?

I Want That \$500.00. I estimate that the average number of copies of the World printed per day during 1892 will be found to have been.

NAME: ADDRESS: REGISTERED IN—ADDRESS THE WORLD, NEW YORK, N.Y.

PRICE ONE CENT.

LABRETAGNE'S MASH.

The French Lady Bally Damaged by Clearing Italy's Fin.

She Will Be Unable to Go to Sea for Ten Days.

Her Health and Her Passengers Transferred to America.

The big French liner La Bretagne (captioned) was damaged by the explosion of a boiler in the engine room on the 27th inst. at the mouth of the Adriatic. She is now lying at anchor in the harbor of Trieste, and will not be able to start on her voyage to New York until the 10th inst.

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Figure 1.3. The penny press appealed to readers' desires for lurid tales of murder and scandal.

In the early decades of the 20th century, the first major non-print forms of mass media—film and radio—exploded in popularity. Radios, which were less expensive than telephones and widely available by the 1920s, especially had the unprecedented ability of allowing huge numbers of people to listen to the same event at the same time. In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge's prelection speech reached more than 20 million people. Radio was a boon for advertisers, who now had access to a large and captive audience. An early advertising consultant claimed that the early days of radio were "a glorious opportunity for the advertising man

to spread his sales propaganda” thanks to “a countless audience, sympathetic, pleasure seeking, enthusiastic, curious, interested, approachable in the privacy of their homes.”Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005).

The reach of radio also further helped forge an American culture. The medium was able to downplay regional differences and encourage a unified sense of the American lifestyle—a lifestyle that was increasingly driven and defined by consumer purchases. “Americans in the 1920s were the first to wear ready-made, exact-size clothing...to play electric phonographs, to use electric vacuum cleaners, to listen to commercial radio broadcasts, and to drink fresh orange juice year round.”Digital History, “The Formation of Modern American Mass Culture,” *The Jazz Age: The American 1920s*, 2007, www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/dat...y.cfm?hhid=454(accessed July 15, 2010). This boom in consumerism put its stamp on the 1920s, and, ironically, helped contribute to the Great Depression of the 1930s.Library of Congress, “Radio: A Consumer Product and a Producer of Consumption,” <http://lcweb2.loc.gov:8081/ammem/amrlhtml/inradio.html> (accessed July 15, 2010).

The post-World War II era in the United States was marked by prosperity, and by the introduction of a seductive new form of mass communication: television. In 1946, there were about 17,000 televisions in the entire United States. Within seven years, two-thirds of American households owned at least one set. As the United States’ gross national product (GNP) doubled in the 1950s, and again in the 1960s, the American home became firmly ensconced as a consumer unit. Along with a television, the typical U.S. family owned a car and a house in the suburbs, all of which contributed to the nation’s thriving consumer-based economy.

Broadcast television was the dominant form of mass media. There were just three major networks, and they controlled over 90 percent of the news programs, live events, and sitcoms viewed by Americans. On some nights, close to half the nation watched the same show! Some social critics argued that television was fostering a homogenous, conformist culture by reinforcing ideas about what “normal” American life looked like. But television also contributed to the counterculture of the 1960s. The Vietnam War was the nation’s first televised military conflict, and nightly images of war footage and war protestors helped intensify the nation’s internal conflicts.

Broadcast technology, including radio and television, had such a hold of the American imagination that newspapers and other print media found themselves having to adapt to the new media landscape. Print media was more durable and easily archived, and allowed users more flexibility in terms of time—once a person had purchased a magazine, he could read it whenever and wherever he’d like. Broadcast media, in contrast, usually aired programs on a fixed schedule, which allowed it to both provide a sense of immediacy but also impermanence—until the advent of digital video recorders in the 21st century, it was impossible to pause and rewind a television broadcast.

The media world faced drastic changes once again in the 1980s and 1990s with the spread of cable television. During the early decades of television, viewers had a limited number of channels from which to choose. In 1975, the three major networks accounted for 93 percent of all television viewing. By 2004, however, this share had dropped to 28.4 percent of total viewing, thanks to the spread of cable television. Cable providers allowed viewers a wide menu of choices, including channels specifically tailored to people who wanted to watch only golf, weather, classic films, sermons, or videos of sharks. Still, until the mid-1990s, television was dominated by the three large networks. The Telecommunications Act of 1996, an attempt to foster competition by deregulating the industry, actually resulted in many mergers and buyouts of small companies by large companies. The broadcast spectrum in many places was in the hands of a few large corporations. In 2003, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) loosened regulation even further, allowing a single company to own 45 percent of a single market (up from 25 percent in 1982).

Technological Transitions Shape Media Industries

New media technologies both spring from and cause cultural change. For this reason, it can be difficult to neatly sort the evolution of media into clear causes and effects. Did radio fuel the consumerist boom of the 1920s, or did the radio become wildly popular because it appealed to a society that was already exploring consumerist tendencies? Probably a little bit of both. Technological innovations such as the steam engine, electricity, wireless communication, and the Internet have all had lasting and significant effects on American culture. As media historians Asa Briggs and Peter Burke note, every crucial invention came with “a change in historical perspectives.”Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005). Electricity altered the way people thought about time, since work and play were no longer dependent on the daily rhythms of sunrise and sunset. Wireless communication collapsed distance. The Internet revolutionized the way we store and retrieve information.

The contemporary media age can trace its origins back to the electrical telegraph, patented in the United States by Samuel Morse in 1837. Thanks to the telegraph, communication was no longer linked to the physical transportation of messages. Suddenly, it didn’t

matter whether a message needed to travel five or five hundred miles. Suddenly, information from distant places was nearly as accessible as local news. When the first transatlantic cable was laid in 1858, allowing near-instantaneous communication from the United States to Europe, *The London Times* described it as “the greatest discovery since that of Columbus, a vast enlargement... given to the sphere of human activity.”Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet*(Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005). Celebrations broke out in New York as people marveled at the new media. Telegraph lines began to stretch across the globe, making their own kind of world wide web.

Not long after the telegraph, wireless communication (which eventually led to the development of radio, television, and other broadcast media) emerged as an extension of telegraph technology. Although many 19th-century inventors, including Nikola Tesla, had a hand in early wireless experiments, it was Italian-born Guglielmo Marconi who is recognized as the developer of the first practical wireless radio system. This mysterious invention, where sounds seemed to magically travel through the air, captured the world’s imagination. Early radio was used for military communication, but soon the technology entered the home. The radio mania that swept the country inspired hundreds of applications for broadcasting licenses, some from newspapers and other news outlets, while other radio station operators included retail stores, schools, and even cities. In the 1920s, large media networks—including the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS)—were launched, and they soon began to dominate the airwaves. In 1926, they owned 6.4 percent of U.S. broadcasting stations; by 1931, that number had risen to 30 percent.Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005).

The 19th-century development of photographic technologies would lead to the later innovations of cinema and television. As with wireless technology, several inventors independently came up with photography at the same time, among them the French inventors Joseph Niepce and Louis Daguerre, and British scientist William Henry Fox Talbot. In the United States, George Eastman developed the Kodak camera in 1888, banking on the hope that Americans would welcome an inexpensive, easy-to-use camera into their homes, as they had with the radio and telephone. Moving pictures were first seen around the turn of the century, with the first U.S. projection hall opening in Pittsburgh in 1905. By the 1920s, Hollywood had already created its first stars, most notably Charlie Chaplin. By the end of the 1930s, Americans were watching color films with full sound, including *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

Television, which consists of an image being converted to electrical impulses, transmitted through wires or radio waves, and then reconverted into images, existed before World War II but really began to take off in the 1950s. In 1947, there were 178,000 television sets made in the United States; five years later, there were 15 million. Radio, cinema, and live theater all saw a decline in the face of this new medium that allowed viewers to be entertained with sound and moving pictures without having to leave their homes.

How was this powerful new medium going to be operated? After much debate, the United States opted for the market. Competing commercial stations (including the radio powerhouses of CBS and NBC) owned stations and sold advertising and commercial-driven programming dominated. Britain took another track with its government-managed British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Funding was driven by licensing fees instead of advertisements. In contrast to the American system, the BBC strictly regulated the length and character of commercials that could be aired. U.S. television, propelled by prosperity, advertising and increasingly powerful networks, flourished. By the beginning of 1955, there were 36 million television sets in the United States, and 4.8 million in all of Europe.Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005). Important national events, broadcast live for the first time, were an impetus for consumers to buy sets and participate in the spectacle—both England and Japan saw a boom in sales before important royal weddings in the 1950s.



Figure 1.4. In the 1960s, the concept of a useful portable computer was still a dream; huge mainframes were required to run a basic operating system.

For the last stage in this fast history of media technology, how's this for a prediction? In 1969, management consultant Peter Drucker predicted that the next major technological innovation after television would be an “electronic appliance” that would be “capable of being plugged in wherever there is electricity and giving immediate access to all the information needed for school work from first grade through college.” He said it would be the equivalent of Edison’s light bulb in its ability to revolutionize how we live. He had, in effect, predicted the computer. He was prescient about the effect that computers and the Internet would have on education, social relationships, and the culture at large. The inventions of random access memory (RAM) chips and microprocessors in the 1970s were important steps along the way to the Internet age. As Briggs and Burke note, these advances meant that “hundreds of thousands of components could be carried on a microprocessor.” The reduction of many different kinds of content to digitally stored information meant that “print, film, recording, radio and television and all forms of telecommunications [were] now being thought of increasingly as part of one complex.” This process, also known as convergence, will be discussed in later chapters and is a force that’s shaping the face of media today.

Why Media? What Do Media Do for Us?

Even a brief history of media can leave one breathless. The speed, reach, and power of the technology are humbling. The evolution can seem almost natural and inevitable, but it is important to stop and ask a basic question: Why? Why do media seem to play such an important role in our lives and our culture? With reflection, we can see that media fulfill several basic roles.

One obvious role is *entertainment*. Media can act as a springboard for our imaginations, a source of fantasy, and an outlet for escapism. In the 19th century, Victorian readers, disillusioned by the grimness of the Industrial Revolution, found themselves drawn into books that offered fantastic worlds of fairies and other unreal beings. In the first decade of the 21st century, American television viewers could relax at the end of a day by watching singers, both wonderful and terrible, compete to be idols or watch two football teams do battle. Media entertain and distract us in the midst of busy and hard lives.

Media can also provide *information* and *education*. Information can come in many forms, and often blurs the line with entertainment. Today, newspapers and news-oriented television and radio programs make available stories from across the globe, allowing readers or viewers in London to have access to voices and videos from Baghdad, Tokyo, or Buenos Aires. Books and magazines provide a more in-depth look at a wide range of subjects. Online encyclopedias have articles on topics from presidential nicknames to child prodigies to tongue-twisters in various languages. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has posted free lecture notes, exams, and audio and video recordings of classes on its OpenCourseWare website, allowing anyone with an Internet connection access to world-class professors.

Another useful aspect of media is its ability to act as a **public forum** for the discussion of important issues. In newspapers or other periodicals, letters to the editor allow readers to respond to journalists, or voice their opinions on the issues of the day. These letters have been an important part of U.S. newspapers even when the nation was a British colony, and they have served as a means of

public discourse ever since. Blogs, discussion boards, and online comments are modern forums. Indeed, the Internet can be seen as a fundamentally democratic medium that allows people who can get online the ability to put their voices out there—though whether anyone will hear is another question.

Media can also serve to *monitor government, business, and other institutions*. Upton Sinclair’s 1906 novel *The Jungle* exposed the miserable conditions in the turn-of-the-century meatpacking industry. In the early 1970s, *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein uncovered evidence of the Watergate break-in and subsequent cover-up, which eventually led to the resignation of then-president Richard Nixon. Online journalists today try to uphold the “watchdog” role of the media.

Thinking more deeply, we can recognize that certain media are better at certain roles. Media have characteristics that influence how we use them. While some forms of mass media are better suited to entertainment, others make more sense as a venue for spreading information. For example, in terms of print media, books are durable and able to contain lots of information, but are relatively slow and expensive to produce. In contrast, newspapers are comparatively cheaper and quicker to create, making them a better medium for the quick turnover of daily news. Television provides vastly more visual information than radio, and is more dynamic than a static printed page; it can also be used to broadcast live events to a nationwide audience, as in the annual State of the Union addresses given by the U.S. president. However, it is also a one-way medium—that is, it allows for very little direct person-to-person communication. In contrast, the Internet encourages public discussion of issues and allows nearly everyone who wants a voice to have one. However, the Internet is also largely unmoderated and uncurated. Users may have to wade through thousands of inane comments or misinformed amateur opinions in order to find quality information.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the 1960s media theorist Marshall McLuhan took these ideas one step further, with the phrase “**the medium is the message.**” McLuhan emphasized that each medium delivers information in a different way and that content is fundamentally shaped by that medium. For example, although television news has the advantage of offering video and live coverage, making a story come vividly alive, it is also a faster-paced medium. That means stories get reported in different ways than print. A story told on television will often be more visual, have less information, and be able to offer less history and context than the same story covered in a monthly magazine. This feature of media technology leads to interesting arguments. For example, some people claim that television presents “dumbed down” information. Others disagree. In an essay about television’s effects on contemporary fiction, writer David Foster Wallace scoffed at the “reactionaries who regard TV as some malignancy visited on an innocent populace, sapping IQs and compromising SAT scores while we all sit there on ever fatter bottoms with little mesmerized spirals revolving in our eyes...Treating television as evil is just as reductive and silly as treating it like a toaster with pictures.” David Foster Wallace, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again* (New York: Little Brown, 1997).

We do not have to cast value judgments but can affirm: People who get the majority of their news from a particular medium will have a particular view of the world shaped not just by the *content* of what they watch but also by its *medium*. Or, as computer scientist Alan Kay put it, “Each medium has a special way of representing ideas that emphasize particular ways of thinking and de-emphasize others.” Alan Kay, “The Infobahn is Not the Answer,” *Wired*, May 1994. The Internet has made this discussion even richer because it seems to hold all other media within it—print, radio, film, television and more. If indeed the medium is the message, the Internet provides us with an extremely interesting message to consider.

- Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press enabled the mass production of media, which was then industrialized by Friedrich Koenig in the early 1800s. These innovations enabled the daily newspaper, which united the urbanized, industrialized populations of the 19th century.
- In the 20th century, radio allowed advertisers to reach a mass audience and helped spur the consumerism of the 1920s—and the Great Depression of the 1930s. After World War II, television boomed in the United States and abroad, though its concentration in the hands of three major networks led to accusations of conformity. The spread of cable and subsequent deregulation in the 1980s and 1990s led to more channels, but not necessarily more diverse ownership.
- Technological transitions have also had great effect on the media industry, although it is difficult to say whether technology caused a cultural shift or rather resulted from it. The ability to make technology small and affordable enough to fit into the home is an important aspect of the popularization of new technologies.
- Media fulfill several roles in culture, including the following:
 - Entertaining and providing an outlet for the imagination
 - Educating and informing
 - Serving as a public forum for the discussion of important issues
 - Acting as a watchdog for government, business, and other institutions

? Exercise 1.4.1

Choose two different types of mass communication—radio shows, television broadcasts, Internet sites, newspaper advertisements, and so on from two different kinds of media. Make a list of what role(s) each one fills, keeping in mind that much of what we see, hear, or read in the mass media has more than one aspect. Consider the following questions: Does the type of media suit the social role? Why did the creators of this particular message present it in the particular way, and in this particular medium?

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1.5: Media Mix - Convergence

Learning Objectives

- Define convergence and discuss examples of it in contemporary life.
- Name the five types of convergence identified by Henry Jenkins.
- Examine how convergence is affecting culture and society.

Each cultural era is marked by changes in technology. What happens to the “old” technology? When radio was invented, people predicted the end of newspapers. When television was invented, people predicted the end of radio and film. It’s important to keep in mind that the implementation of new technologies does not mean that the old ones simply vanish into dusty museums. Today’s media consumers still read newspapers, listen to radio, watch television, and get immersed in movies. The difference is that it’s now possible to do all those things and do all those things through one device—be it a personal computer or a smartphone—and through the medium of the Internet. Such actions are enabled by media convergence, the process by which previously distinct technologies come to share content, tasks and resources. A cell phone that also takes pictures and video is an example of the convergence of digital photography, digital video, and cellular telephone technologies. A news story that originally appeared in a newspaper and now is published on a website or pushed on a mobile phone is another example of convergence.

Kinds of Convergence

Convergence isn’t just limited to technology. Media theorist Henry Jenkins has devoted a lot of time to thinking about convergence. He argues that convergence isn’t an end result but instead *a process* that changes how media is both consumed and produced. Jenkins breaks convergence down into five categories:

1. *Economic convergence* is the horizontal and vertical integration of the entertainment industry, in which a single company has interests across and within many kinds of media. For example, Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation owns numerous newspapers (*The New York Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*) but is also involved in book publishing (HarperCollins), sports (the Colorado Rockies), broadcast television (Fox), cable television (FX, National Geographic Channel), film (20th Century Fox), Internet (Facebook), and many others.
2. *Organic convergence* is what happens when someone is watching television while chatting online and also listening to music—such multitasking seems like a natural outcome in a diverse media world.
3. *Cultural convergence* has several different aspects. One important component is stories flowing across several kinds of media platforms—for example, novels that become television series (*Dexter* or *Friday Night Lights*); radio dramas that become comic strips (*The Shadow*); even amusement park rides that become film franchises (*Pirates of the Caribbean*). The character Harry Potter exists in books, films, toys, amusement park rides, and candy bars. Another aspect of cultural convergence is participatory culture—that is, the way media consumers are able to annotate, comment on, remix, and otherwise talk back to culture in unprecedented ways.



Figure 1.5. Nigeria’s Nollywood produces more films annually than any other country besides India.

4. *Global convergence* is the process of geographically distant cultures influencing one another despite the oceans and mountains that may physically separate them. Nigeria’s “Nollywood” cinema takes its cues from India’s Bollywood, which of course stemmed from Hollywood; old *Tom and Jerry* cartoons and newer Oprah shows are popular on Arab satellite television channels; successful American horror movies like *The Ring* and *The Grudge* are remakes of Japanese hits; the hit television show, “American Idol” was a remake of a British show. The advantage of global convergence is worldwide access to a wealth of cultural influence. Its downside, some critics posit, is the threat of cultural imperialism, defined by Herbert Schiller as the way that developing countries are “attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating centre of the system.” That is, less powerful nations lose their cultural traditions as more powerful nations spread their culture through their media and other forms. Cultural imperialism can be a formal policy or can happen more subtly, as with the spread of outside influence through television, movies, and other cultural projects.
5. *Technological convergence* is the merging of technologies. When more and more different kinds of media are transformed into digital content, as Jenkins notes, “we expand the potential relationships between them and enable them to flow across platforms.” Henry Jenkins, “Convergence? I Diverge,” *Technology Review*, June 2001, p. 93.

Effects of Convergence

Jenkins’ concept of “organic convergence”—particularly, multitasking—is perhaps most evident in your own lives. To many who grew up in a world dominated by so-called old media, there is nothing organic about today’s mediated world. As a *New York Times* editorial sniffed, “Few objects on the planet are farther removed from nature—less, say, like a rock or an insect—than a glass and stainless steel smartphone.” Editorial, “The Half-Life of Phones,” *The New York Times*, Week in Review section, June 18, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/20/opinion/20sun4.html?_r=1 (accessed July 15, 2010). But modern American culture is plugged

in as never before, and many students today have never known a world where the Internet didn't exist. Such a cultural sea change causes a significant generation gap between those who grew up with new media and those who didn't.

A 2010 study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that Americans aged 8 to 18 spend more than 7.5 hours with electronic devices each day—and, thanks to multitasking, they're able to pack an average of 11 hours of media content into that 7.5 hours. Tamar Lewin, "If Your Kids Are Awake, They're Probably Online," *The New York Times*, Education section, January 20, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/20/education/20wired.html> (accessed July 15, 2010). These statistics highlight some of the aspects of the new digital model of media consumption: participation and multitasking. Today's teenagers aren't passively sitting in front of screens, quietly absorbing information. Instead, they are sending text messages to friends, linking news articles on Facebook, commenting on YouTube videos, writing reviews of television episodes to post online, and generally engaging with the culture they consume. Convergence has also made multitasking much easier, as many devices allow users to surf the Internet, listen to music, watch videos, play games, and reply to emails and texts on the same machine.

However, this multitasking is still quite new and we do not know how media convergence and immersion are shaping culture, people, and individual brains. In his 2005 book *Everything Bad Is Good for You*, Steven Johnson argues that today's television and video games are mentally stimulating, in that they pose a cognitive challenge and invite active engagement and problem-solving. Poking fun at alarmists who see every new technology as making children more stupid, Johnson jokingly cautions readers against the dangers of book reading: it "chronically understimulates the senses" and is "tragically isolating." Even worse, books "follow a fixed linear path. You can't control their narratives in any fashion—you simply sit back and have the story dictated to you... This risks instilling a general passivity in our children, making them feel as though they're powerless to change their circumstances. Reading is not an active, participatory process; it's a submissive one." Steven Johnson, *Everything Bad Is Good for You* (Riverhead, NY: Riverhead Books, 2005).

A 2010 book by Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* is more pessimistic. Carr worries that the vast array of interlinked information available through the Internet is eroding attention spans and making contemporary minds distracted and less capable of deep, thoughtful engagement with complex ideas and arguments. He mourns the change in his own reading habits. "Once I was a scuba diver in a sea of words," Carr reflects ruefully. "Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski." Carr cites neuroscience studies showing that when people try to do two things at once, they give less attention to each and perform the tasks less carefully. In other words, multitasking makes us do a greater number of things poorly. Whatever the ultimate cognitive, social, or technological results, though, convergence is changing the way we relate to media today.

Video Killed the Radio Star: Convergence Kills Off Obsolete Technology—Or Does It?

When was the last time you used a rotary phone? How about a payphone on a street? Or a library's card catalog? When you need brief, factual information, when was the last time you reached for a handy volume of *Encyclopedia Britannica*? Odds are, it's been a while. Maybe never. All of these habits, formerly common parts of daily life, have been rendered essentially obsolete through the progression of convergence.

But convergence hasn't erased old technologies; instead, it may have just altered the way we use them. Take cassette tapes and Polaroid film, for example. The underground music tastemaker Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth recently claimed that he only listens to music on cassette. Polaroid Corporation, creators of the once-popular instant film cameras, was driven out of business by digital photography in 2008, only to be revived two years later—with pop star Lady Gaga as the brand's creative director. Several iPhone apps promise to apply effects to photos to make them look more like Polaroids.

Cassettes, Polaroids, and other seemingly obsolete technologies have been able to thrive—albeit in niche markets—both despite and because of Internet culture. Instead of being slick and digitized, cassette tapes and Polaroid photos are physical objects that are made more accessible and more human, according to enthusiasts, *because of* their flaws. "I think there's a group of people—fans and artists alike—out there to whom music is more than just a file on your computer, more than just a folder of mp3s," says Brad Rose, founder of a Tulsa-based cassette label. The distinctive Polaroid look—caused by uneven color saturation, under- or over-development, or just daily atmospheric effects on the developing photograph—is emphatically analog. In an age of high resolution, portable printers, and camera phones, the Polaroid's appeal has something to do with ideas of nostalgia and authenticity. Convergence has transformed who uses these media and for what purposes, but it hasn't run them out of town yet.

Key Takeaways

- Twenty-first century media culture is increasingly marked by convergence, or the coming together of previously distinct technologies, as in a cell phone that also allows users to take video and check email.
- Media theorist Henry Jenkins identifies the five kinds of convergence as the following:
 1. Economic convergence, when a single company has interests across many kinds of media.
 2. Organic convergence is multimedia multitasking, or the “natural” outcome of a diverse media world.
 3. Cultural convergence, when stories flow across several kinds of media platforms, and when readers or viewers can comment on, alter, or otherwise talk back to culture.
 4. Global convergence, when geographically distant cultures are able to influence one another.
 5. Technological convergence, in which different kinds of technology merge. The most extreme example of technological convergence would be the as-yet hypothetical “black box,” one machine that controlled every media function.
- The jury is still out on how these different types of convergence will affect people on an individual and cultural level. Some theorists believe that convergence and new media technologies make people smarter by requiring them to make decisions and interact with the media they’re consuming; others fear that the digital age is giving us access to more information but leaving us shallower.

? Exercise 1.5.1

Which argument do you find more compelling, Johnson’s or Carr’s? Make a list of points, examples, and facts that back up the theory that you think best explains the effects of convergence. Alternatively, come up with your own theory of how convergence is changing individual and society as a whole. Stage a mock debate with a member of the class who holds a view different from your own.

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1.6: Cultural Values Shape Media; Media Shape Cultural Values

Learning Objectives

- Name and discuss two limitations on free speech that are based on cultural values.
- Identify examples of propaganda in mass media.
- Define gatekeeper, and explain the role of the gatekeeper in mass media.

In a 1995 *Wired* magazine article, Jon Katz suggested that the Revolutionary War patriot Thomas Paine should be held up as “the moral father of the Internet.” The Internet, Katz wrote, “offers what Paine and his revolutionary colleagues hoped for—a vast, diverse, passionate, global means of transmitting ideas and opening minds.” In fact, according to Katz, the emerging Internet era is closer in spirit to the 18th-century media world than the 20th-century’s so-called old media (radio, television, print). “The ferociously spirited press of the late 1700s...was dominated by individuals expressing their opinions. The idea that ordinary citizens with no special resources, expertise, or political power—like Paine himself—could sound off, reach wide audiences, even spark revolutions, was brand-new to the world.” Jon Katz, “The Age of Paine,” *Wired*, May 1995, <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/3.05/paine.html> (accessed July 15, 2010).

As we continue our introduction to understanding media and culture, Katz’s impassioned defense of Paine’s plucky independence reminds us of how cultural values shape media. Paine’s values led to his books and pamphlets that helped lead to a new nation. In all eras, cultural values shape the way media are created, used, and controlled. Keeping Katz’s words in mind, we can ask ourselves further questions about the role of cultural values in our media today. How do cultural values shape our media and mass communication? And how, in turn, do media and mass communication shape our values? We’ll start with a key American cultural value: free speech.

Free Speech as Cultural Value

The value of free speech is central to American mass communication, and has been since the nation’s revolutionary founding. The U.S. Constitution’s very first amendment guarantees the freedom of speech and of the press. Thanks to the First Amendment and subsequent statutes, the United States has some of the broadest protections on speech of any industrialized nation. We can see the value that American culture places on free speech. However, speech and the press are not always free—cultural values have placed limits and those limits, like values, have shifted over time.

Obscenity, for example, has not often been tolerated. Indeed, the very definition of obscenity has shifted over time with the nation’s changing social attitudes. James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, ranked by the Modern Library as the best English-language novel of the 20th century, was illegal to publish in the United States between 1922 and 1934. The 1954 Supreme Court case, *Roth v. The United States*, tried to lessen restrictions and defined obscenity more narrowly. It allowed for differences depending on “community standards.” Obscenity became even more of an issue during the sexual revolution of the 1960s. Cultural changes of that era made it even more difficult to pin down just what was obscene and what was meant by “community standards.” Today, obscenity continues its tug-of-war with cultural values. Sexually explicit magazines, such as *Playboy*, are available in nearly every U.S. airport, but pornography on the Internet is still a subject of concern.



Figure 1.6 Artist Shepard Fairey, creator of the iconic Obama HOPE image, was sued by the Associated Press for copyright infringement; Fairey argued that his work was protected by the fair use exception.

Copyright law also puts limits on free speech. Here we see a conflict between cultural values of free speech and the right to protect your creative rights. Intellectual property law was originally intended to protect just that—the proprietary rights, both economic and intellectual, of the originator of a creative work. Works under copyright can't be reproduced without the authorization of the creator, nor can anyone else use them to make a profit. Inventions, novels, musical tunes, and even phrases can all be covered by copyright law. The first copyright statute in the United States set 14 years as the maximum term for copyright protection. This number has risen exponentially in the 20th century; some works are now copyright protected for up to 120 years. In recent years, an Internet culture that enables file sharing, mixing, mash-ups, and YouTube parodies has raised questions about copyright. Can you refer to a copyrighted work? What is *fair use* of a copyrighted work? The exact line between what expressions are protected or prohibited by law are still being set by courts; and as the changing values of the U.S. public evolve, copyright law—like obscenity law—will continue to change as well.

Persuasion and Cultural Values

Cultural values also shape mass media messages when producers of media content have vested interests in particular social goals. The producers offer media content that promotes or refutes particular viewpoints. Governments, corporations, nonprofits, colleges, indeed most organizations, all try to shape media content to promote themselves and their values. In its most heavy-handed form, at the level of government, this type of media influence can become propaganda, communication that intentionally attempts to persuade its audience for ideological, political, or commercial purposes. Propaganda often (but not always) distorts the truth, selectively presents facts, or uses emotional appeals. In war time, propaganda often includes caricatures of the enemy.

During World War I, for example, the U.S. government created the Creel Commission to act as a sort of public relations agency for the American entry into the war. The commission used radio, movies, posters, and in-person speakers to present a positive slant on the American war effort and demonize the opposing Germans. George Creel, chairman of the commission, acknowledged the committee's attempt at influencing the public, but he shied away from calling its work propaganda:

In no degree was the committee an agency of censorship, a machinery of concealment or repression...In all things, from first to last, without halt or change, it was a plain publicity proposition, a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world's greatest adventures in advertising...We did not call it propaganda, for that word, in German hands, had come to be associated with deceit and corruption. Our effort was educational and informative throughout, for we had such confidence in our case as to feel that no other

argument was needed than the simple, straightforward presentation of the facts. George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920).



Figure 1.7 World War I propaganda posters were sometimes styled to resemble movie posters in an attempt to glamorize the war effort.

Of course, the line between the selective (but “straightforward”) presentation of the truth and the manipulation of propaganda is not an obvious or distinct one. (Another of the commission’s members was later deemed “the father of public relations” and authored a book titled *Propaganda*.) Advertisers craft messages so viewers want to buy their products. Some news sources, such as cable news channels or political blogs, have an explicit political slant. For our purposes, we simply want to keep in mind how cultural values shape much media content.

The Cultural Value of Gatekeepers

In 1960, journalist A. J. Liebling wryly observed that “freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.” Although he may not have put it in those terms, Liebling was talking about the role of gatekeepers in the media industry, another way in which cultural values influence mass communication. Gatekeepers are the people who help determine which stories make it to the public, including reporters who decide what sources to use, and editors who pick what gets published and which stories make it to the front page. Media gatekeepers are part of culture and thus have their own cultural values, whether consciously or unconsciously. In deciding what counts as newsworthy, entertaining, or relevant, gatekeepers use their own values to create and shape what gets presented to the wider public. Conversely, gatekeepers may decide that some events are unimportant or uninteresting to consumers. Those events may never reach the eyes or ears of a larger public.

In one striking example of how cultural values shape gatekeeping, journalist Allan Thompson points to the news media’s sluggishness in covering the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Almost one million people were killed in ferocious attacks in just 100 days. Yet, as Thompson notes, few foreign correspondents were in Africa, and the world was slow to learn of the atrocities in Rwanda. Instead, the nightly news was preoccupied by the O. J. Simpson murder trial, Tonya Harding’s attack on a fellow figure skater, or the less-bloody conflict in Bosnia (a European country, where more reporters were stationed). Thompson argues that the lack of international media attention allowed politicians to remain complacent. With little media coverage, there was little outrage about the Rwandan atrocities, which contributed to a lack of political will to invest time and troops in a faraway conflict. Richard Dowden, Africa Editor for the British newspaper *The Independent* during the Rwandan genocide, bluntly explained the news media’s larger reluctance to focus on African issues: “Africa was simply not important. It didn’t sell newspapers. Newspapers have to make profits. So it wasn’t important. Cultural values by gatekeepers on the individual and institutional level downplayed the genocide at a time of great crisis, and potentially contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people.” POLISMedia, “The

Media and the Rwanda Genocide,” Lecture Delivered at The Crisis States Research Centre and POLIS at the London School of Economics, January 17, 2007, <http://www.polismedia.org/rwandatranscript.aspx> (accessed July 15, 2010).

Gatekeepers had an especially strong influence in old media, in which space and time were limited. A news broadcast could only last for its allotted half hour, 22 minutes with commercials, while a newspaper had a set number of pages to print. The Internet, in contrast, has room for infinite news reports. The interactive nature of the medium also minimizes the gatekeeper function of the media by allowing media consumers to have a voice as well. News aggregators like Digg.com allow readers to decide what makes it on to the front page. That is not to say that the wisdom or cultural values of the crowd is always wise—recent top stories on Digg have featured headlines like “Top 5 Hot Girls Playing Video Games” and “The girl who must eat every 15 minutes to stay alive.” Media expert Mark Glaser noted that the digital age hasn’t eliminated gatekeepers; it’s just shifted who they are: “the editors who pick featured artists and apps at the Apple iTunes store, who choose videos to spotlight on YouTube, and who highlight Suggested Users on Twitter,” among others. And unlike traditional media, these new gatekeepers rarely have public bylines, making it difficult to figure out who makes such decisions and on what basis. Mark Glaser, “New Gatekeepers Twitter, Apple, YouTube Need Transparent Editorial Picks,” *PBS Mediashift*, March 26 2009.

Observing how distinct cultures and subcultures present the same story can be indicative of those cultures’ various cultural values. Another way to look critically at today’s media messages is to examine how the media has functioned in the world and in the United States during different cultural periods.

- American culture puts a high value on free speech; however, other cultural values sometimes take precedence. Shifting ideas about what constitutes obscenity, a kind of speech that is not legally protected by the First Amendment, is a good example of how cultural values impact mass communication—and of how those values change over time. Copyright law, another restriction put on free speech, has had a similar evolution over the nation’s history.
- Propaganda is a message that attempts to persuade its audience for ideological, political, or social purposes. Some propaganda is obvious, explicit, and manipulative; however, advertising and public relations also are persuasive strategies that try to influence audiences.
- Gatekeepers influence culture by deciding what stories are considered newsworthy. Gatekeepers can promote cultural values either consciously or unconsciously. The digital age has lessened the power of gatekeepers somewhat, as the Internet allows for nearly unlimited space to cover any number of events and stories.

? Exercise 1.6.1

1. Find an advertisement—either in print, broadcast, or online—that you have recently found to be memorable. Now find a non-advertisement media message. Compare and contrast the ways that the ad and the non-ad express cultural values. Are the cultural values the same for each of them? Is the influence overt or covert? Why did the message’s creators choose to present their message in this way?
2. Go to a popular website that uses user-uploaded content (YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, Metafilter, etc.). Look at the content on the site’s homepage. Can you tell how this particular content was selected to be featured? Does the website list a policy for featured content? What factors do you think go into the selection process?

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1.7: Mass Media and Popular Culture

Learning Objectives

- Define tastemakers, and give examples of their influence in traditional media.
- Examine the ways the digital age is undermining the traditional role of tastemakers.
- Analyze how Internet culture now allows creators to bypass gatekeepers, and discuss the potential effects of this.

In 1850, an epidemic swept America—but instead of leaving victims sick with fever or flu, this was a rabid craze for the music of Swedish soprano Jenny Lind. American showman P. T. Barnum (who would later go on to found the circus we now know as Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus), a shrewd marketer and self-made millionaire, is credited with spreading “Lindomania” through a series of astute show-business moves. Barnum promised Lind an unprecedented thousand-dollar-a-night fee (the equivalent of close to \$30,000 in today’s dollars) for her entire 93-performance tour of the United States. Ever the savvy self-promoter, Barnum turned this huge investment to his advantage, using it to drum up publicity—and it paid off. When the Swedish soprano’s ship docked on U.S. shores, she was greeted by 40,000 ardent fans; another 20,000 swarmed her hotel. Congress was adjourned during Lind’s visit to Washington, DC, where the National Theater had to be enlarged in order to accommodate her audiences. A town in California and an island in Canada were named in her honor. Enthusiasts could purchase Jenny Lind hats, chairs, boots, opera glasses, and even pianos.



Figure 1.8 Source: Used with permission from Getty Images.

A little more than a century later, a new craze transformed American teenagers into screaming, fainting Beatle-maniacs. When the British foursome touched down at Kennedy Airport in 1964, they were met by more than 3,000 frenzied fans. Their performance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* was seen by 73 million people, or 40 percent of the U.S. population. The crime rate that night dropped to its lowest level in 50 years. Beatlemania was at such a fever pitch that *Life* magazine cautioned that “A Beatle who ventures out unguarded into the streets runs the very real peril of being dismembered or crushed to death by his fans.” Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs, “Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun,” In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (New York: Routledge, 1992). The BBC helpfully pointed out that there was plenty of paraphernalia for true fans to spend their money on: “T-shirts, sweat shirts, turtle-neck sweaters, tight-legged trousers, night shirts, scarves, and jewellery inspired by the Beatles” were all available, as were Beatles-style mop-top wigs.

In the 21st century, rabid fans could actually help decide the next pop stars through the reality television program *American Idol*. Derived from a British show, *American Idol* hit the airwaves in 2002 and became the only television program ever to earn the top spot in the Nielsen ratings for six seasons in a row, often averaging more than 30 million nightly viewers. Rival television networks quaked in fear, deeming the pop behemoth “the ultimate schoolyard bully,” “the Death Star,” or even “the most impactful show in the history of television.” Bill Carter, “For Fox’s Rivals, ‘American Idol’ Remains a ‘Schoolyard Bully,’” *The New York Times*, February 20, 2007, Arts Section. Newspapers put developments on the show on their front pages. New cell phone technologies

allowed viewers to have a direct role in the program's star-making enterprise through casting votes. Fans also could sign up for text alerts or play trivia games on their phones. In 2009, AT&T estimated that *Idol*-related text traffic amounted to 178 million messages.

An important consideration in any discussion of media and culture is the concept of *popular culture*. If culture is the expressed and shared values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of a social group, organization, or institution, then what is popular culture? Popular culture is the media, products, and attitudes considered to be part of the mainstream of a given culture and the everyday life of common people. It is often distinct from more formal conceptions of culture that take into account moral, social, religious beliefs and values, such as our earlier definition of culture. It is also distinct from what some consider elite or high culture. For some people, *American Idol* is pop culture and opera is culture.

Pop culture and American media are inextricably linked—it's no coincidence that Jenny Lind, the Beatles, and *American Idol* were each promoted using a then-new technology—photography for Lind; television for the Beatles; the Internet and text messaging for *American Idol*. For as long as mass media have existed in the United States, they have helped to create and fuel mass crazes, skyrocketing celebrities, and pop culture manias of all kinds. Whether through newspaper advertisements, live television broadcasts, or integrated Internet marketing, media industry “tastemakers” help to shape what we care about. Even in our era of seemingly limitless entertainment options, mass hits like *American Idol* still have the ability to dominate the public's attention.

“The Tastemakers”

Historically, popular culture has been closely associated with mass media that introduce and encourage the adoption of certain trends. We can see these media as “tastemakers”—people or institutions that shape the way others think, eat, listen, drink, dress and more. Similar in some ways to the media gatekeepers discussed above, tastemakers can have huge influence. For example, *The New York Times*' restaurant and theater reviews used to be able to make or break a restaurant or show with their opinions. Another example is Ed Sullivan's variety show, which ran from 1948 to 1971, and is most famous for hosting the first U.S. appearance of the Beatles—a television event that was at the time the most-watched television program ever. Sullivan hosted musical acts, comedians, actors, and dancers, and had the reputation of being able to turn an unknown performer into a full-fledged star. Comedian Jackie Mason compared being on *The Ed Sullivan Show* to “an opera singer being at the Met. Or if a guy is an architect that makes the Empire State Building....This was the biggest.” John Leonard, “The Ed Sullivan Age,” *American Heritage*, May/June, 1997. Sullivan was a classic example of an influential tastemaker of his time. *American Idol*'s Simon Cowell had similar influence as his show helped turn unknown local performers into international stars. Television hosts and comics Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert can be understood as tastemakers of progressive national politics.



Figure 1.9 Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert at Comedy Central's “Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear”.

Source: Photo by Jeff Snyder/PictureGroup via AP Images

Along with encouraging a mass audience to keep an eye out for (or skip) certain movies, television shows, video games, books, or fashion trends, tastemaking is also used to create demand for new products. Companies often turn to advertising firms to help

create a public hunger for an object that may have not even existed six months previously. In the 1880s, when George Eastman developed the Kodak camera for personal use, photography was the realm of professionals. Ordinary people simply did not think about taking photographs. “Though the Kodak was relatively cheap and easy to use, most Americans didn’t see the need for a camera; they had no sense that there was any value in visually documenting their lives,” noted *New Yorker* writer James Surowiecki. James Surowiecki, “The Tastemakers,” *The New Yorker*, January 13, 2003. George Eastman’s advertising introduced the very idea of photography to everyday Americans. Kodak became a wildly successful company not because Eastman was good at selling cameras, but because he understood that what he really had to sell was photography.

Tastemakers can help keep culture vital by introducing the public to new ideas, music, programs, or products. But the ability to sway or influence the tastes of consumers can be worth millions of dollars. In the traditional media model, media companies set aside large advertising budgets to promote their most promising projects. Tastemakers are encouraged to buzz about “the next big thing.” In untraditional models, bribery and backroom deals also have helped promote performers or projects. For example, the Payola Scandal of the 1950s involved record companies paying the disc jockeys of radio stations to play certain records so those records would become hits. *Payola* is a combination of the words “pay” and “Victrola,” a record player. Companies today sometimes pay bloggers to promote their products.

A Changing System for the Internet Age

In retrospect, the 20th century was a tastemaker’s dream. Media choices were limited. Many cities and towns had just three television channels, one or two newspapers, and one or two dominant radio stations. Advertisers, critics, and other cultural influencers had access to huge audiences through a small number of mass communication platforms. However, by the end of the century, the rise of cable television and the Internet had begun to make tastemaking a much more complicated enterprise. While *The Ed Sullivan Show* regularly reached 50 million people in the 1960s, the most popular television series of 2009—*American Idol*—averaged around 25.5 million viewers per night, despite the fact that the 21st century United States could claim more people and more television sets than ever before. The proliferation of television channels and other, competing forms of entertainment meant that no one program or channel could dominate the attention of the American public as in Sullivan’s day.

Table 1.1 Viewings of Popular Television Broadcasts

| Show/Episode | Number of Viewers | Percentage of Households | Year |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------|------|
| <i>The Ed Sullivan Show</i> , Beatles’ first appearance | 73 million | 45.1 | 1964 |
| <i>The Ed Sullivan Show</i> , Elvis’s first appearance | 60 million | 82.6 | 1956 |
| <i>I Love Lucy</i> , “Lucy Goes to the Hospital” | 44 million | 71.7 | 1953 |
| <i>M*A*S*H</i> series finale | 106 million | 60.2 | 1983 |
| <i>Seinfeld</i> series finale | 76 million | 41.3 | 1998 |
| <i>American Idol</i> season five finale | 36 million | 17 | 2006 |

The very concept of a “tastemaker” is undergoing a transformation. While the *American Idol* season five finale was reaching 36 million viewers, a low-tech home recording of a little boy acting loopy after a visit to the dentist (“David After Dentist”) garnered more than 37 million YouTube viewings in 2009 alone. The Internet appears to be eroding some of the tastemaking power of the traditional media outlets. No longer are the traditional mass media the only dominant forces in creating and promoting trends. Instead, information can spread across the globe without any involvement of traditional media. Websites made by nonprofessionals can reach more people daily than a major newspaper. Music review sites such as Pitchfork.com keep their eyes out for the next big thing, whereas review aggregators like RottenTomatoes.com allow readers to read hundreds of reviews by amateurs and professionals alike. Mobile applications like Yelp allow consumers to get individual reviews of a restaurant while they are standing outside it. Blogs make it possible for anyone with Internet access to potentially reach an audience of millions. Some popular bloggers transitioned from the traditional media world to the digital world, but others became well known without formal institutional support. The celebrity gossip chronicler Perez Hilton had no formal training in journalism when he started his blog, PerezHilton.com, in 2005; within a few years, he was reaching millions of readers a month.

Email and text messages allow for the near-instant transmission of messages across vast geographic expanses. Although personal communications continue to dominate, email and text messages are increasingly used to directly transmit information about important news events. When Barack Obama wanted to announce his selection of Joe Biden as his vice-presidential running mate in the 2008 election, he bypassed the traditional televised press conference and instead sent the news to his supporters directly via text message—2.9 million text messages, to be exact. Nic Covey, “Flying Fingers,” Nielsen, en-us.nielsen.com/main/insigh...flying_fingers (accessed July 15, 2010). Social networking sites, such as Facebook, and microblogging services, such as Twitter, are another source of late-breaking information. When Michael Jackson died of cardiac arrest in 2009, “RIP Michael Jackson” was a top trending topic on Twitter *before* mainstream media first reported the news.

Thanks to these and other digital-age media, the Internet has become a pop culture force, both a source of amateur talent and a source of amateur promotion. However, traditional media outlets still maintain a large amount of control and influence over U.S. pop culture. One key indicator is the fact that many singers or writers who first make their mark on the Internet quickly transition to more traditional media—YouTube star Justin Bieber was snapped up by a mainstream record company, and blogger Perez Hilton is regularly featured on MTV and VH1. New media stars are quickly absorbed into the old media landscape.

Getting Around the Gatekeepers

Not only does the Internet allow little known individuals to potentially reach a huge audience with their art or opinions, but it also allows content-creators to reach fans directly. Projects that may have not succeeded as part of the established pop culture/mass media machine may get a chance in the digital world. For example, the media establishment has been surprised by the success of some self-published books: First-time author Daniel Suarez had his novel manuscript rejected by dozens of literary agents before he decided to self-publish in 2006. Through savvy self-promotion via influential bloggers, Suarez garnered enough attention to land a contract with a major publishing house.



Figure 1.10 E-readers offer authors a way to get around the traditional publishing industry, but their thousands of options can make choosing hard on readers.

Suarez’s story, though certainly exceptional, points to some of the questions facing creators and consumers of pop culture in the Internet age. Without the influence of an agent, editor, or public relations firm, self-published content may be able to remain closer to the creator’s intention. However, how then does the content reach the public? Does every artist have to have the public relations

and marketing skills of Suarez? And with so many self-published, self-promoted works uploaded to the Internet every day, how will any work—even great work—get noticed?

It's not impossible. Critic Laura Miller spells out some of the ways in which writers in particular are able to take control of their own publishing: Writers can upload their works to services run by Amazon, Apple, and Barnes & Noble, she notes, “transforming them into e-books that are instantly available in high-profile online stores. Or they can post them on services like Urbis.com, Quillp.com, or CompletelyNovel.com and coax reviews from other hopeful users.” Miller also points out that many of these companies can produce hard copies of books as well. While such a system may be a boon for writers who haven't had success with the traditional media establishment, Miller notes that it may not be the best option for readers, who “rarely complain that there isn't enough of a selection on Amazon or in their local superstore; they're more likely to ask for help in narrowing down their choices.” Laura Miller, “When Anyone Can Be a Published Author,” Salon, June 22, 2010, www.salon.com/books/laura_mil...10/06/22/slush (accessed July 15, 2010).

The commingling of the Internet and popular culture poses many intriguing questions for our future: Will the Internet era be marked by a huge and diffuse pop culture, where the power of traditional mass media declines and, along with it, the power of the universalizing blockbuster hit? Or will the Internet create a new set of tastemakers—influential bloggers or Tweeters? Or will the Internet serve as a platform for the old tastemakers to take on new forms? Or will the tastemakers become everyone?

More Reviewers=More Accurate Reviews...Right?

In 1993, *The New York Times* restaurant critic Ruth Reichl visited one of Manhattan's snottiest restaurants, Le Cirque, first as herself, a fashionable New Yorker, and then, one week later, in the guise of a frumpy Midwesterner. In her shocking review, the critic lambasted the restaurant's rude treatment of “Midwestern Molly”—an early battle in the fight for democratic reviews. Part of the point of Reichl's experiment was to find out how ordinary people were treated in restaurants. Now ordinary people can tell their own tales. The Internet, which has turned everyone with the time and interest into a potential reviewer, allows those ordinary people to have their voices heard. In the mid-2000s, websites such as Yelp and TripAdvisor boasted hundreds of reviews of restaurants, hotels, and salons provided by users. Amazon allowed users to review any product it sells, from textbooks to fertilizer to bathing suits. The era of the democratized review was upon us, and tastemaking was now everyone's job.

More Reviewers=More Accurate Reviews...Right?

By crowd-sourcing the review process, the idea was, these sites would arrive at a more accurate description of the service in choice. One powerful reviewer would no longer be able to wield disproportionate power. Instead, the wisdom of the crowd would make or break restaurants, movies, and everything else. Anyone who felt treated badly or scammed now had recourse to tell the world about it. By 2008, Yelp boasted four million reviews.

However, mass tastemaking isn't as perfect as some people had promised. One determined reviewer can overly influence a product's overall rating by contributing multiple votes. One study found that a handful of Amazon users were casting hundreds of votes, while most rarely wrote reviews at all. Online reviews also tend to skew to extremes—more reviews are written by the ecstatic and the furious, while the moderately pleased aren't riled up enough to post online about their experiences. And while traditional critics are supposed to uphold ethics, there's no such standard for online reviews. Savvy authors or restaurant owners have been known to slyly insert positive reviews of themselves, or have attempted to skew ratings systems. In order to get an accurate picture, potential buyers may find themselves wading through 20 or 30 online reviews, most of them from non-professionals. Consider these Amazon user reviews of William Shakespeare's “Hamlet”: “There is really no point and it's really long,” “I really didn't enjoy reading this book and I wish that our English teacher wouldn't force my class to read this play,” and “don't know what Willy Shakespeare was thinking when he wrote this one play tragedy, but I thought this sure was boring! Hamlet does too much talking and not enough stuff.”

Such unhelpful reviews have begun to remind people of the point of having reviews in the first place—that it's an advantage to have certain places, products, or ideas examined and critiqued by a trusted source. In an article about Yelp, *The New York Times* noted that one of the site's elite reviewers had racked up more than 300 reviews in 3 years, then snidely pointed out that “By contrast, a *The New York Times* restaurant critic might take six years to amass 300 reviews. The critic visits a restaurant several times, strives for anonymity and tries to sample every dish on the menu.” Donald G. McNeil, “Eat and Tell,” *The New York Times*, Dining & Wine section, November 4, 2008. Whatever your vantage point, it's clear that old-style tastemaking is still around and still valuable—but the democratic review is here to stay.

- Traditionally, pop culture hits were often initiated or driven by the active support of media tastemakers. When mass media are limited in number, people with access to platforms for mass communication wield quite a bit of power in what becomes well-known, popular, or even infamous. Ed Sullivan's wildly popular variety show in the 1950s and 1960s served as a star-making vehicle and a tastemaker extraordinaire of that period.
- The digital age, with its proliferation of accessible media, has undermined the traditional role of the tastemaker. In contrast to the traditional media, Internet-based mass media is not limited by time or space and allows bloggers, critics, or wannabe stars to potentially reach millions without the backing of the traditional media industry.
- However, this democratization has its downsides as well. An abundance of mass communication without some form of selection can lead to information overload. Additionally, online reviews can be altered or biased.

? Exercise 1.7.1

Find a popular newspaper or magazine that discusses popular culture. Look through it to determine what pop culture movements, programs, or people it seems to be covering. What is its overall tone? What messages does it seem to be promoting, either implicitly or explicitly? Next, find a website that also deals with popular culture and ask yourself the same questions. Are there differences between the traditional media's and the new media's approach to popular culture? Do they focus on the same subjects? Do they take similar attitudes? Why or why not?

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1.8: Media Literacy

Learning Objectives

- Define media literacy, and explain why it is relevant to today's world.
- Discuss the role of individual responsibility and accountability when responding to pop culture.
- List the five key questions that can be asked about any media message.

In Gutenberg's age and the subsequent modern era, literacy—the ability to read and write—was a concern not only of educators but also of politicians, social reformers, and philosophers. A literate population, many reasoned, would be able to seek out information, stay informed about the news of the day, communicate with others, and make informed decisions in many spheres of life. Because of this, the reasoning went, literate people made better citizens, parents, and workers. In the 20th century, as literacy rates grew around the globe, there was a new sense that merely being able to read and write was not enough. In a world dominated by media, individuals needed to be able to understand, sort through and analyze the information they were bombarded with every day. In the second half of the 20th century, a name was finally put to this skill of being able to decode and process the messages and symbols transmitted via media: media literacy. According to the nonprofit National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), a person who is media literate is able to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information. Put another way by John Culkin, a pioneering advocate for media literacy education, “the new mass media—film, radio, TV—are new languages, their grammar as yet unknown.” Kate Moody, “John Culkin, SJ: The Man Who Invented Media Literacy: 1928–1993,” Center for Media Literacy, www.medialit.org/reading_room/article408.html (accessed July 15, 2010). Media literacy seeks to give media consumers the ability to understand this new language.

Why Be Media Literate?

Culkin called the pervasiveness of media “the unnoticed fact of our present,” noting that media information was as omnipresent and easy to overlook as the air we breathe (and, he noted, “some would add that it is just as polluted”). Our exposure to media starts early—a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 68 percent of children aged two and younger spend an average of two hours in front of a screen (either computer or television) each day, while children under six spend as much time in front of a screen as they do playing outside. As previously noted, U.S. teenagers are spending an average of 7.5 hours with media daily, nearly as long as they spend in school. Media literacy isn't merely a skill for young people, however. Today, Americans of all ages get much of their information from various media sources. One crucial role of media literacy education is to enable all of us to skeptically examine the often-conflicting media messages we receive every day.

Advertising

Many of the hours people spend with media are with commercial-sponsored content. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) estimated that children aged 2 to 11 saw, on average, 25,629 television commercials a year, or more than 10,700 minutes of ads. Adults saw 52,469 ads, or about 15.5 days worth of television advertising. Debra Holt, Pauline Ippolito, Debra Desrochers, and Christopher Kelley, “Children's Exposure to TV Advertising in 1977 and 2004,” Federal Trade Commission Bureau of Economics Staff Report, June 1, 2007. Children (and adults) are bombarded with contradictory messages—newspaper articles about the obesity epidemic are side by side with ads touting soda, candy, and fast food. The American Academy of Pediatrics maintains that advertising directed at children under eight is “inherently deceptive” and exploitative because young children cannot tell the difference between programs and commercials. Donald Shifrin, “Perspectives on Marketing, Self-Regulation and Childhood Obesity,” Remarks given at Federal Trade Commission Workshop July 14–15, 2005, Washington, DC.

Advertising raises other issues as well. It often uses techniques of psychological pressure to influence decision making. Ads might appeal to vanity, insecurity, prejudice, fear, or the desire for adventure. This is not always a negative thing—antismoking public service announcements may rely on disgusting images of blackened lungs to shock viewers. Nonetheless, media literacy attempts to teach people to be informed and guarded consumers, and to evaluate claims with a critical eye. Do “four out of five doctors” really endorse the product?

Bias, Spin, and Misinformation

Advertisements may have the explicit goal of selling a product or idea, but they're not the only kind of media message with an agenda. A politician may hope to persuade potential voters that she has their best interests at heart. An ostensibly objective

journalist may allow his or her own political leanings to subtly slant articles. Magazine writers might avoid criticizing companies that advertise heavily in their pages. Broadcast news reporters may sensationalize stories in order to boost ratings—and advertising rates.

An important part of media literacy is remembering that mass communication messages are created by individuals, each with a set of values, assumptions, and priorities. Accepting media messages at face value could lead to head-spinning confusion, thanks to all the contradictory information that's out there. For example, in 2010, a highly contested governor's race in New Mexico led to conflicting ads from both candidates, Diane Denish and Susana Martinez. Each claimed that the other agreed to policies that benefited sex offenders. According to the media watchdog site Factcheck.org, the Denish team's ad "shows a pre-teen girl—seemingly about 9 years old—going down a playground slide in slow-motion, while ominous music plays in the background and an announcer discusses two sex crime cases. It ends with an empty swing, as the announcer says: 'Today we don't know where these sex offenders are lurking, because Susana Martinez didn't do her job.'" The opposing ad proclaims that "a department in Denish's cabinet gave sanctuary to criminal illegals [sic], like child molester Juan Gonzalez." Both claims are highly inflammatory, play on fear, and distort the reality behind each situation. Media literacy attempts to give people the skills to look critically at these and other media messages—to sift through various claims, and to make sense of the often-conflicting information we face every day.

The Center for Media Literacy's Five Core Concepts

1. All media messages are constructed.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.<http://www.medialit.org>

New Skills for a New World

In the past, one goal of education was to provide students with the information deemed necessary to successfully engage with the world. Students memorized multiplication tables, state capitals, famous poems, and notable dates. In today's world, however, vast amounts of information are available at the click of a mouse. Even before the advent of the Internet, noted communications scholar David Berlo foresaw the consequences of expanding information technology: "Most of what we have called formal education has been intended to imprint on the human mind all of the information that we might need for a lifetime." Changes in technology necessitate changes in how we learn, Berlo noted, and these days "education needs to be geared toward the handling of data rather than the accumulation of data." David Shaw, "A Plea for Media Literacy in our Nation's Schools," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 2003.

Online technology surely has changed how we learn. For example, Wikipedia, a hugely popular Internet encyclopedia, is at the center of a debate on the proper use of online sources. In 2007, Middlebury College banned the use of Wikipedia as a source in history papers and exams. One of the school's librarians noted that the online encyclopedia "symbolizes the best and worst of the Internet. It's the best because everyone gets his/her say and can state their views. It's the worst because people who use it uncritically take for truth what is only opinion." Meredith Byers, "Controversy over use of Wikipedia in academic papers arrives at Smith," *Smith College Sophian*, News section, March 8, 2007. Or as comedian and satirist Stephen Colbert put it, "any user can change any entry, and if enough other users agree with them, it becomes true." In 2007, CIA computers were used to make edits on the site's article about the President of Iran. The Vatican allegedly doctored the entry for Irish activist and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams. A computer registered to the U.S. Democratic Party changed the site's page for Rush Limbaugh to proclaim that he was "racist" and a "bigot." Jonathan Fildes, "Wikipedia 'shows CIA page edits.'" *BBC News*, Science and Technology section, August 15, 2007. Media literacy teaches today's students how to sort through the Internet's cloud of data, ferret out reliable sources, and be aware of bias and unreliable sources.

Individual Accountability and Popular Culture

Ultimately, media literacy teaches that messages and images are constructed with various aims in mind and that each individual has the responsibility to evaluate and interpret these media messages. Mass communication may be created and disseminated by individuals, businesses, governments, or organizations, but they are always received by an individual, even if that individual is sitting in a crowded theater. Education, life experience, and a host of other factors allow each person to interpret constructed media in different ways; there is no "right answer," or one way to read the media. But media literacy skills help us to function better in our

media-rich environment, enabling us to be better democratic citizens, smarter shoppers, and more skeptical media consumers. As a means to this end, NAMLE has come up with a list of five questions to ask when analyzing media messages:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently?
4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent? Center for Media Literacy, MediaLitKit, www.medialit.org/pdf/mlk/14A_CCKQposter.pdf (accessed July 15, 2010).

With these questions as a starting point, we can ensure that we're staying informed about where our information comes from, and why—important steps in any media literacy education.

- Media literacy, or the ability to decode and process media messages, is especially key in today's media-saturated society. Media surrounds contemporary Americans to an unprecedented degree, and from an early age. Because media messages are constructed with particular aims in mind, a media literate individual will interpret them with a critical eye. Advertisements, bias, spin, and misinformation are all things to look out for.
- Individual responsibility is crucial for media literacy because, while media messages may be produced by individuals, companies, governments, or organizations, they are always received and decoded by individuals.
- The following are NAMLE's five questions that can be asked about any media message:
 1. Who created this message?
 2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
 3. How might different people understand this message differently?
 4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
 5. Why is this message being sent?

? Exercise 1.8.1

Find a media message of any kind and apply NAMLE's five questions to it. Did your impression change? How does this piece of mass communication attempt to get its message across? Do you think it's successful? Why or why not?

? End-of-Chapter Assessment

Review Questions

1. Questions for Section 1.1

1. What is the difference between mass communication and mass media?
2. What are some ways that culture affects media?
3. What are some ways that media affect culture?

2. Questions for Section 1.2

1. List four roles that media plays in society.
2. Identify historical events that shaped the adoption of various mass communication platforms.
3. How have technological shifts impacted the media industry over time?

3. Questions for Section 1.3

1. What is a cultural period?
2. How did events, technological advances, political changes, and philosophies help shape the modern era?
3. What are some of the major differences between the modern and postmodern eras?

4. Questions for Section 1.4

1. What is convergence, and what are some examples of it in daily life?
2. What were the five types of convergence identified by Jenkins?
3. How are different kinds of convergence shaping the digital age, on both an individual and a social level?

5. Questions for Section 1.5

1. How does the value of free speech influence American culture and media?
2. What are some of the limits placed on free speech, and how do they reflect social values?
3. What is propaganda, and how does it reflect or influence social values?
4. Who are gatekeepers, and how do they influence the media landscape?

6. Questions for Section 1.6

1. What is popular culture and how does it differ from traditional notions of culture?
2. Who are tastemakers and what are some key examples?
3. How have tastemakers changed with changes in technology?

7. Questions for Section 1.7

1. What is media literacy, and why is it relevant in today's world?
2. What is the role of the individual in interpreting media messages?
3. What are the five questions that NAMLE suggests should be asked of any media message?

? Critical Thinking Questions

1. What does the history of media technologies have to teach us about present-day America? How might current and emerging technologies change our cultural landscape in the near future?
2. Are gatekeepers and tastemakers necessary for mass media? How is the Internet helping us to re-imagine these roles?
3. The idea of cultural periods presumes that changes in society and technology lead to dramatic shifts in the way people see the world. How has the Internet and digital technology changed how people interact with their environment, and with each other? Are we changing to a new cultural period, or is contemporary life still a continuation of the postmodern era?
4. U.S. law regulates free speech through laws on obscenity, copyright infringement, and other things. Why are some forms of expression protected and others aren't? How do you think cultural values will change U.S. media law in the near future?
5. Does media literacy education belong in American schools? Why or why not? What might a media literacy curriculum look like?

📌 Career Connection

In a heavily mediated world, almost every organization, from a university to a multinational corporation, employs media specialists. Many organizations also use consultants to help analyze and manage the interaction between their organizations and the media. Independent consultants develop projects, keep abreast of media trends, and provide advice based on industry reports. Or, as writer, speaker, and media consultant Merlin Mann puts it, the “primary job is to stay curious about everything, identify the points where two forces might clash, then enthusiastically share what that might mean, as well as why you might care.”

Read the blog post “So what do consultants do?” at <http://www.consulting-business.com/so-what-do-consultants-do.html>.

Now explore the site of Merlin Mann at <http://www.merlinmann.com>. Make sure to take a look at the “Bio” and “FAQs” sections. These two pages will help you answer the following questions:

1. Merlin Mann provides some work for free and charges a significant amount for other projects. What are some of the indications he gives in his biography about what he values? How do you think his values influence his fees?
2. Check out Merlin's “Projects.” What are some of the projects that Merlin is or has been involved with? Now look at the “Speaking” page. Can you see a link between his projects and his role as a prominent writer, speaker, and consultant?
3. Check out Merlin's FAQ section. What is his attitude about social networking sites? What about public relations? Why do you think he holds these opinions?
4. Think about niches in the Internet industry where a consultant might be helpful. Do you have expertise, theories, or reasonable advice that might make you a useful asset for a business or organization? Find an example of an organization or group with some media presence. If you were this group's consultant, how would you recommend that they better reach their goals?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Media Effects

- [2.1: Mass Media and Its Messages](#)
- [2.2: Media Effects Theories](#)
- [2.3: Methods of Researching Media Effects](#)
- [2.4: Media Studies Controversies](#)

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2.1: Mass Media and Its Messages

Learning Objectives

- Explain the different ways mass media affects culture.
- Analyze cultural messages that the media send.
- Explain the ways new media have affected culture.

When media consumers think of media messages, they may think of televised public service announcements or political advertisements. These obvious examples provide a venue for the transfer of a message through a medium, whether that message is a plea for fire safety or the statement of a political position. But what about more abstract political advertisements that simply show the logo of a candidate and a few simple words? Media messages can range from overt statements to vague expressions of cultural values.

Disagreements over the content of media messages certainly exist. Consider the common allegations of political bias against various news organizations. Accusations of hidden messages or agenda-driven content have always been an issue in the media, but as the presence of media grows, the debate concerning media messages increases. This dialogue is an important one; after all, mass media have long been used to persuade. Many modern persuasive techniques stem from the use of media as a propaganda tool. The role of propaganda and persuasion in the mass media is a good place to start when considering various types of media effects.

Propaganda and Persuasion

Encyclopedia Britannica defines propaganda simply as the “manipulation of information to influence public opinion.” *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Propaganda.” This definition works well for this discussion because the study and use of propaganda has had an enormous influence on the role of persuasion in modern mass media. In his book *The Creation of the Media*, Paul Starr argues that the United States, as a liberal democracy, has favored employing an independent press as a public guardian, thus putting the media in an inherently political position. Paul Starr, *Creation of the Media* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 394–395. The United States—in contrast to other nations where media are held in check—has encouraged an independent commercial press and thus given the powers of propaganda and persuasion to the public. Paul Starr, *Creation of the Media* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 394–395.

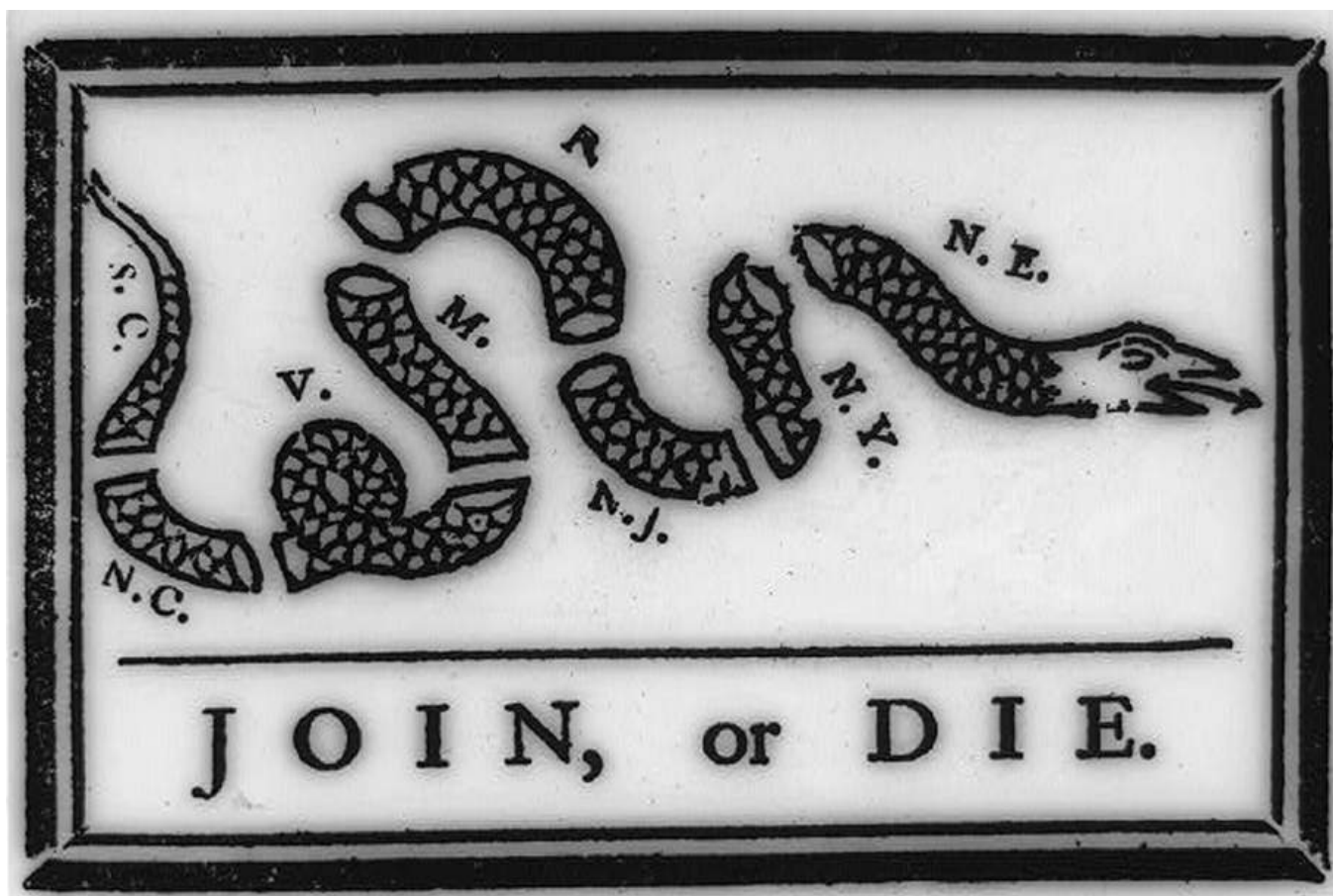


Figure 2.2 Benjamin Franklin used a powerful image of a severed snake to emphasize the importance of the colonies joining together during the American Revolution.

Like any type of communication, propaganda is not inherently good or bad. Whether propaganda has a positive or negative effect on society and culture depends on the motivations of those who use it and the understandings of those who receive it. People promoting movements as wide-ranging as Christianity, the American Revolution, and the communist revolutions of the 20th century have all used propaganda to disseminate their messages. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 60–61. Newspapers and pamphlets that glorified the sacrifices at Lexington and Concord and trumpeted the victories of George Washington's army greatly aided the American Revolution. For example, Benjamin Franklin's famous illustration of a severed snake with the caption "Join, or Die" serves as an early testament to the power and use of print propaganda. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 80–81.

As you will learn in Chapter 4, the penny press made newspapers accessible to a mass audience and became a force for social cohesion during the 1830s. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 95–96. Magazines adopted a similar format later in the 19th century, and print media's political and social power rose. In an infamous example of the new power of print media, some newspapers encouraged the Spanish-American War of 1898 by fabricating stories of Spanish atrocities and sabotage. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 103–104. For example, after the USS *Maine* sunk off the coast of Havana, Cuba, some newspapers blamed the Spanish—even though there was no evidence—fueling the public's desire for war with Spain.

The present-day, pejorative connotation of propaganda recalls the utilization of mass media by World War I-era governments to motivate the citizenry of many countries to go to war. Some media outlets characterized that war as a global fight between Anglo civilization and Prussian barbarianism. Although some of those fighting the war had little understanding of the political motivations behind it, wartime propaganda convinced them to enlist. Mark Crispin Miller, introduction to *Propaganda*, by Edward Bernays (Brooklyn, NY: IG Publishing, 2005), 11. As you will read in Chapter 12, World War I legitimized the advertising profession in the minds of government and corporate leaders because its techniques were useful in patriotic propaganda campaigns. Corporations quickly adapted to this development and created an advertising boom in the 1920s by using World War I propaganda

techniques to sell products. Mark Crispin Miller, introduction to *Propaganda*, by Edward Bernays (Brooklyn, NY: IG Publishing, 2005), 12.

In modern society, the persuasive power of the mass media is well known. In the years after 9/11, there were multiple reports of the death of Osama bin Laden; people desperately wanted to believe he was killed. In reality, he was killed in 2011. Governments, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and political campaigns rely on both new and old media to create messages and to send them to the general public. During and since the 2008 Presidential election, there has been constant scrutiny over Barack Obama's birthplace and citizenship; the reports are discredited, but the questions resurface. The comparatively unregulated nature of U.S. media has made, for better or worse, a society in which the tools of public persuasion are available to everyone.

Media Effects and Behavior

Although the mass media send messages created specifically for public consumption, they also convey messages that are not properly defined as propaganda or persuasion. Some argue that these messages influence behavior, especially the behavior of young people. Alexandra Beatty, "Studying Media Effects on Children and Youth: Improving Methods and Measures, Workshop Summary," March 2–3, 2006, The National Academies Press, http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=11706; "Media Influence on Youth," Crisis Connection, www.crisisconnectioninc.org/t...e_on_youth.htm. Violent, sexual, and compulsive behaviors have been linked to media consumption and thus raise important questions about the effects of media on culture.

Violence and the Media

On April 20, 1999, students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold entered their Denver-area high school, Columbine High School, armed with semiautomatic weapons and explosives. Over the next few hours, the pair killed 12 classmates and one faculty member before committing suicide. Gina Lamb, "Columbine High School," Times Topics, *New York Times*, April 17, 2008, http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/organizations/c/columbine_high_school/index.html. The tragedy and its aftermath captured national attention, and in the weeks following the Columbine High School shootings, politicians and pundits worked to assign blame. Their targets ranged from the makers of the first-person shooter video game *Doom* to the Hollywood studios responsible for *The Matrix*. Tom Brook, "Is Hollywood to Blame?" *BBC News*, April 23, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1999/03/99/tom_brook/326529.stm.

However, in the years since the massacre, research has revealed that the perpetrators were actually attempting a terrorist bombing rather than a first-person shooter style rampage. Greg Toppo, "10 Years Later, the Real Story Behind Columbine," *USA Today*, April 13, 2009, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2009-04-13-columbine-myths_N.htm. But did violent video games so desensitize the two teenagers to violence that they could contemplate such a plan? Did movies that glorify violent solutions create a culture that would encourage people to consider such methods? Because modern culture is so immersed in media, the issue becomes a particularly complex one, and it can be difficult to understand the types of effects that violent media produce.

A number of studies have verified certain connections between violent video games and violent behavior in young people. For example, studies have found that some young people who play violent video games reported angry thoughts and aggressive feelings immediately after playing. Other studies, such as one conducted by Dr. Chris A. Anderson and colleagues, point to correlations between the amount of time spent playing violent video games and increased incidence of aggression. Craig A. Anderson and others, "The Influence of Media Violence on Youth," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 4, no. 3 (2003): 81–110. However, these studies do not prove that video games cause violence. Video game defenders argue that violent people can be drawn to violent games, and they point to lower overall incidence of youth violence in recent years compared to past decades. Jill U. Adams, "Effects of Violent Video Games," *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/may/03/health/la-he-closer-20100503>. Other researchers admit that individuals prone to violent acts are indeed drawn to violent media; however, they claim that by keeping these individuals in a movie theater or at home, violent media have actually contributed to a reduction in violent social acts. Peter Goodman, "Violent Films May Cut Real Crime, Study Finds," *New York Times*, January 7, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/07/technology/07iht-violence.4.9058958.html>.



Figure 2.3 The 1999 Columbine High School shooting led to greater debate and criticism over violent video games. Source: Used with permission from Getty Images.

Whether violent media actually cause violence remains unknown, but unquestionably these forms of media send an emotional message to which individuals respond. Media messages are not limited to overt statements; they can also use emotions, such as fear, love, happiness, and depression. These emotional reactions partially account for the intense power of media in our culture.

Sex and the Media

In many types of media, sexual content—and its strong emotional message—can be prolific. A recent study by researchers at the University of North Carolina titled “Sexy Media Matter: Exposure to Sexual Content in Music, Movies, Television, and Magazines Predicts Black and White Adolescents’ Sexual Behavior” found that young people with heavy exposure to sexually themed media ranging from music to movies are twice as likely to engage in early sexual behavior as young people with light exposure. Although the study does not prove a conclusive link between sexual behavior and sexually oriented media, researchers concluded that media acted as an influential source of information about sex for these youth groups. Kathleen Doheny, “Mass Media May Prompt Kids to Try Sex: Study,” *Health Scout*, April 3, 2006, www.healthscout.com/news/1/531862/main.html. Researcher Jane Brown thinks part of the reason children watch sexual content is related to puberty and their desire to learn about sex. While many parents are hesitant to discuss sex with their children, the media can act like a “super peer,” providing information in movies, television, music, and magazines. Kathleen Doheny, “Mass Media May Prompt Kids to Try Sex: Study,” *Health Scout*, April 3, 2006, www.healthscout.com/news/1/531862/main.html. Reality series, such as *Teen Mom* and *16 and Pregnant*, are prevalent on the popular MTV station. We will explore in greater detail the impact of sexual content in the media in Chapter 14.

Cultural Messages and the Media

The media sends messages that reinforce cultural values. These values are perhaps most visible in celebrities and the roles that they adopt. Actors such as Jake Gyllenhaal and Scarlett Johansson have come to represent aspects of masculinity and femininity that have been adopted into mainstream culture in the last 10 years. In recent years, baseball player Derek Jeter appeared in television,

film, magazines, and advertising campaigns as a model of athleticism and willpower. Singers such as Bono of U2 have represented a sense of freedom and rebellion against mainstream culture.

Although many consider celebrity culture superficial and a poor reflection of a country's values, not all celebrities are simply entertainers. Civil rights leaders, social reformers, and other famous public figures have come to represent important cultural accomplishments and advancements through their representations in the media. When images of Abraham Lincoln or Lady Gaga appear in the media, they resonate with cultural and historical themes greatly separated from mere fame.

Celebrities can also reinforce cultural stereotypes that marginalize certain groups. Television and magazines from the mid-20th century often portrayed women in a submissive, domestic role, both reflecting and reinforcing the cultural limitations imposed on women at the time. Advertising icons developed during the early 20th century, such as Aunt Jemima and the Cream of Wheat chef, similarly reflected and reinforced a submissive, domestic servant role for African Americans. Other famous stereotypes—such as the Lone Ranger's Native American sidekick, Tonto, or Mickey Rooney's Mr. Yunioshi role in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*—also reinforced American preconceptions about ethnic predispositions and capabilities.



Figure 2.4 Tonto from *The Lone Ranger* reinforced cultural stereotypes about Native Americans. Do you think this type of characterization would be acceptable in modern television? Source: Used with permission from Getty Images.

Whether actual or fictional, celebrities and their assumed roles send a number of different messages about cultural values. They can promote courageous truth telling, hide and prolong social problems, or provide a concrete example of an abstract cultural value.

New Media and Society

New media—the Internet and other digital forms of communication—have had large effects on society. This communication and information revolution has created a great deal of anguish about digital literacy and other issues that inevitably accompany such a social change. In his book on technology and communication, *A Better Pencil*, Dennis Baron discusses this issue:

For Plato, only speech, not writing, can produce the kind of back-and-forth—the dialogue—that’s needed to get at the truth ... the text, orphaned by its author once it’s on the page, cannot defend itself against misreading.... These are strong arguments, but even in Plato’s day they had been rendered moot by the success of the written word. Although the literacy rate in classical Greece was well below 10 percent, writing had become an important feature of the culture. People had learned to trust and use certain kinds of writing—legal texts, public inscriptions, business documents, personal letters, and even literature—and as they did so, they realized that writing, on closer examination, turned out to be neither more nor less reliable or ambiguous than the spoken word, and it was just as real. Dennis Baron, *A Better Pencil: Readers, Writers, and the Digital Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.

Baron makes the point that all communication revolutions have created upheavals and have changed the standards of literacy and communication. This historical perspective gives a positive interpretation to some otherwise ominous developments in communication and culture.

Information

The Internet has made an incredible amount of new information available to the general public. Both this wealth of information and the ways people process it are having an enormous effect on culture. New perceptions of information have emerged as access to it grows. Older-media consumption habits required in-depth processing of information through a particular form of media. For example, consumers read, watched, or viewed a news report in its entirety, typically within the context of a news publication or program. Fiction appeared in book or magazine form.

Today, information is easier to access, thus more likely to traverse several forms of media. An individual may read an article on a news website and then forward part of it to a friend. That person in turn describes it to a coworker without having seen the original context. The ready availability of information through search engines may explain how a clearly satirical *Onion* article on the Harry Potter phenomenon came to be taken as fact. Increasingly, media outlets cater to this habit of searching for specific bits of information devoid of context. Information that will attract the most attention is often featured at the expense of more important stories. At one point on March 11, 2010, for example, *The Washington Post* website’s most popular story was “Maintaining a Sex Life.” Michiko Kakutani, “Texts Without Context,” *New York Times*, March 17, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/21/books/21mash.html>.

Another important development in the media’s approach to information is its increasing subjectivity. Some analysts have used the term cyberbalkanization to describe the way media consumers filter information. Balkanization is an allusion to the political fragmentation of Eastern Europe’s Balkan states following World War I, when the Ottoman Empire disintegrated into a number of ethnic and political fragments. Customized news feeds allow individuals to receive only the kinds of news and information they want and thus block out sources that report unwanted stories or perspectives. Many cultural critics have pointed to this kind of information filtering as the source of increasing political division and resulting loss of civic discourse. When media consumers hear only the information they want to, the common ground of public discourse that stems from general agreement on certain principles inevitably grows smaller. Michiko Kakutani, “Texts Without Context,” *New York Times*, March 17, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/21/books/21mash.html>.

Literacy

On one hand, the growth of the Internet as the primary information source exposes the public to increased levels of text, thereby increasing overall literacy. Indeed, written text is essential to the Internet: Web content is overwhelmingly text-based, and successful participation in Internet culture through the use of blogs, forums, or a personal website requires a degree of textual literacy that is not necessary for engagement in television, music, or movies.

Critics of Internet literacy, however, describe the majority of forum and blog posts as subliterate and argue that the Internet has replaced the printed newspapers and books that actually raised the standards of literacy. One nuanced look at the Internet’s effect on

the way a culture processes and perceives information states that literacy will not simply increase or decrease but will change qualitatively. Suzanne Choney, “Internet Making Our Brains Different, Not Dumb,” *MSNBC*, Feb. 19, 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35464896/ns/technology_and_science-tech_and_gadgets/. Perhaps the standards for literacy will shift to an emphasis on simplicity and directness, for example, rather than on elaborate uses of language.

News






Figure 2.5 President Barack Obama fired General Stanley McChrystal after a controversial *Rolling Stone* story in which McChrystal spoke poorly of the Obama administration was leaked on the Internet.

Certainly, the Internet has affected the way that cultures consume news. The public expects to receive information quickly, and news outlets respond rapidly to breaking stories. On Monday, June 21, 2010, for example, a spokesperson for *Rolling Stone* magazine first released quotes from a story featuring General Stanley McChrystal publicly criticizing members of the Obama administration on matters of foreign policy. By that evening, the story had become national news despite the fact *Rolling Stone* didn't even post it to its website until Tuesday morning—some time after several news outlets had already posted the entire story on their own sites. Later that same day, McChrystal issued a public apology, and on Wednesday flew to Washington where President Barack Obama fired him. The printed *Rolling Stone* issue featuring the article hit newsstands Friday, two days after McChrystal had been replaced. Jim Timpane, “New Media Too Speedy to Outflank,” *Philly.com*, June 24, 2010, http://www.philly.com/philly/entertainment/20100624_New_media_too_speedy_to_outflank.html.

Convergence Culture

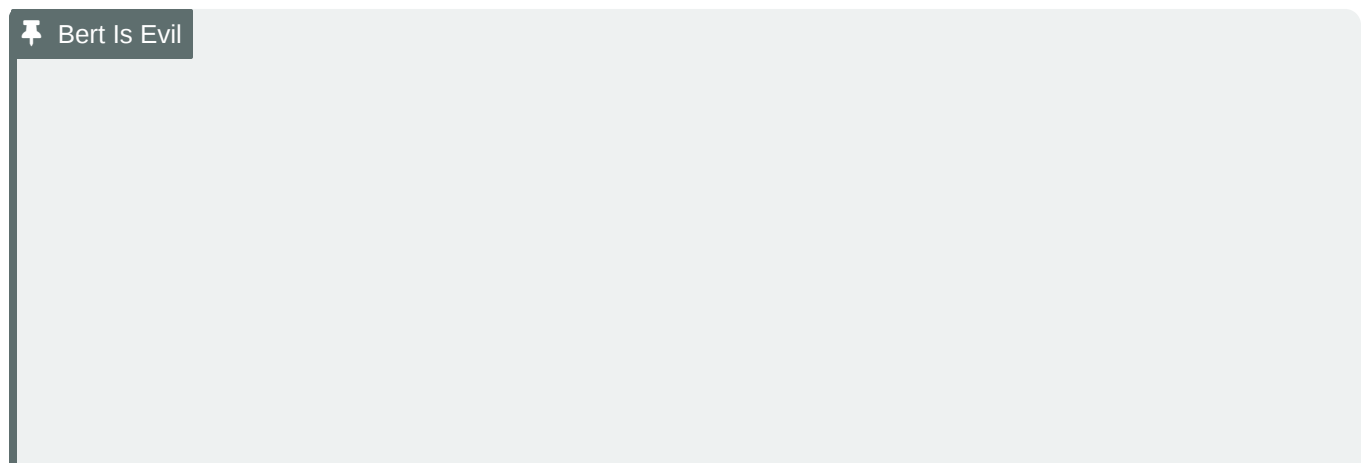
As we have seen, the term *convergence* can hold several different meanings. In *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, Henry Jenkins offers a useful definition of convergence as it applies to new media:

“By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want.” Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 2.

A self-produced video on the YouTube website that gains enormous popularity and thus receives the attention of a news outlet is a good example of this migration of both content and audiences. Consider this flow: The video appears and gains notoriety, so a news outlet broadcasts a story about the video, which in turn increases its popularity on YouTube. This migration works in a number of ways. Humorous or poignant excerpts from television or radio broadcasts are often posted on social media sites and blogs, where they gain popularity and are seen by more people than had seen the original broadcast.

Thanks to new media, consumers now view all types of media as participatory. For example, the massively popular talent show *American Idol* combines an older-media format—television—with modern media consumption patterns by allowing the home audience to vote for a favorite contestant. However, *American Idol* segments regularly appear on YouTube and other websites, where people who may never have seen the show comment on and dissect them. Phone companies report a regular increase in phone traffic following the show, presumably caused by viewers calling in to cast their votes or simply to discuss the program with friends and family. As a result, more people are exposed to the themes, principles, and culture of *American Idol* than the number of people who actually watch the show. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 83.

New media have encouraged greater personal participation in media as a whole. Although the long-term cultural consequences of this shift cannot yet be assessed, the development is undeniably a novel one. As audiences become more adept at navigating media, this trend will undoubtedly increase.



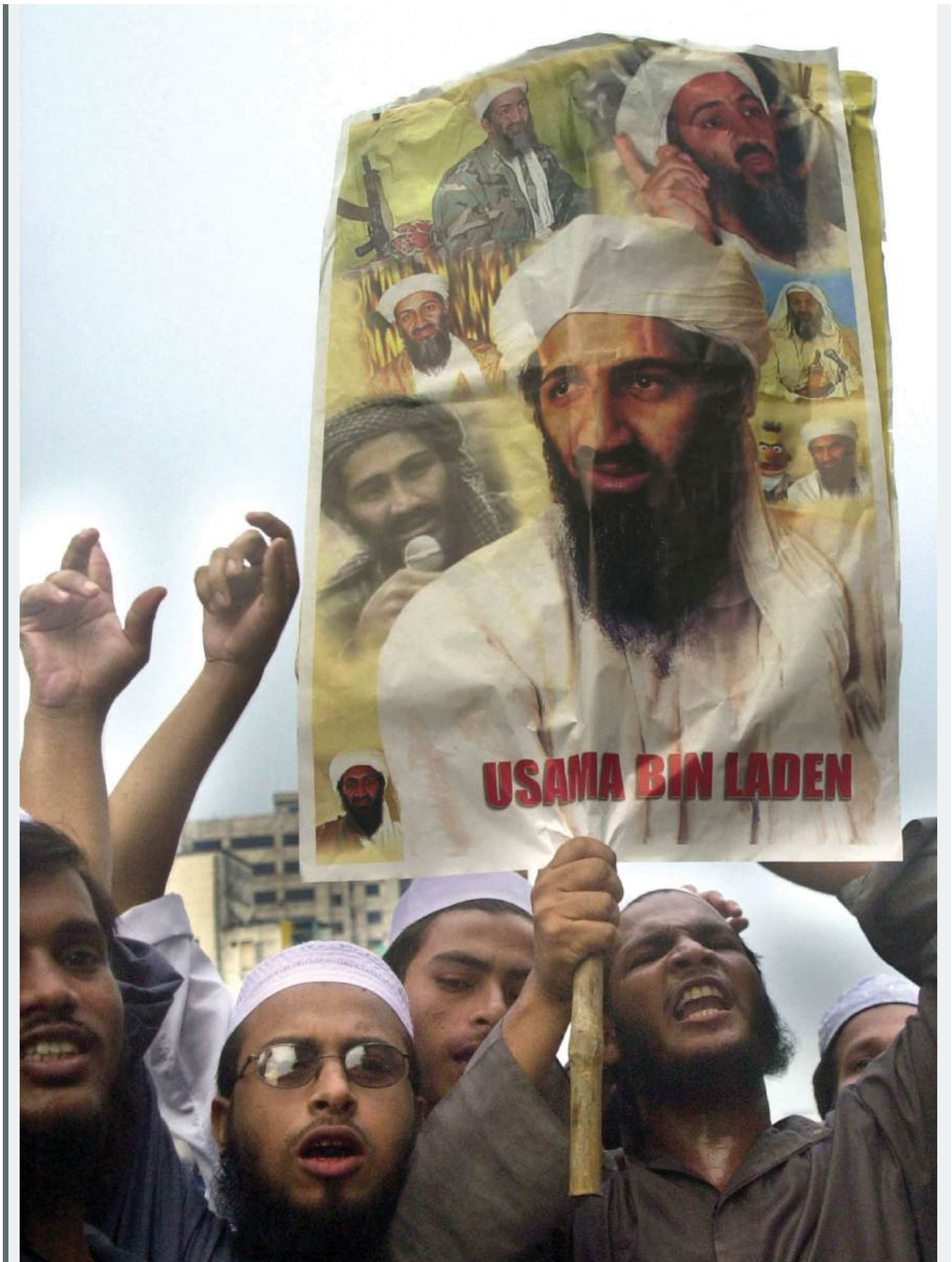


Figure 2.6

In 2001, high school student Dino Ignacio created a collage of *Sesame Street* character Bert with terrorist Osama bin Laden as part of a series for his website. Called “Bert Is Evil,” the series featured the puppet engaged in a variety of illicit activities. A Bangladesh-based publisher looking for images of bin Laden found the collage on the Internet and used it in an anti-American protest poster, presumably without knowledge of who Bert was. This ended up in a CNN report on anti-American protests, and public outrage over the use of Bert made Ignacio’s original site a much-imitated cult phenomenon.

The voyage of this collage from a high school student’s website to an anti-American protest poster in the Middle East to a cable television news network and finally back to the Internet provides a good illustration of the ways in which content migrates across media platforms in the modern era. As the collage crossed geographic and cultural boundaries, it grew on both corporate and grassroots media. While this is not the norm for media content, the fact that such a phenomenon is possible illustrates the new directions in which media is headed. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 1–2.

Key Takeaways

- Propaganda and persuasion have long been a part of the interactions between media and culture.
- Most studies on media and behavior do not establish direct links between the two but do reveal important correlations among media, violence, and sexual behavior.
- Through the media, celebrities have come to signify important cultural values and tendencies, and they transmit specific cultural messages.
- New digital forms of media have revolutionized the way people access and consume media content. Rather than simply replacing old media, however, new forms of media encourage participatory media consumption and content migration.

? Exercise 2.1.1

1. Celebrities can represent cultural values and principles when they are portrayed in the media. The same celebrity can represent very different things depending on the form of media and its portrayal of that person. Find a celebrity magazine, such as *People* or *Us Weekly*, either online or in print, and choose one of the celebrities mentioned. Then, answer the following questions:
 - How is this celebrity portrayed in the magazine?
 - What kind of roles does the celebrity take in other forms of media, such as television or film?
 - How do these portrayals associate with specific cultural values?
2. Explain how the media has affected culture. Be sure to discuss the following topics and to provide examples of each.
 - Propaganda and persuasion
 - Behavior
 - Cultural messages
3. How has new media affected literacy and information consumption? How is this different from older forms of media?

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2.2: Media Effects Theories

Learning Objectives

- Identify the basic theories of media effects.
- Explain the uses of various media effects theories.

Early media studies focused on the use of mass media in propaganda and persuasion. However, journalists and researchers soon looked to behavioral sciences to help figure out the possible effect of mass media and communications on society. Scholars have developed many different approaches and theories to figure this out. Other scholars challenge whether research can ever untangle the relationship of media and effects. You can refer to these theories as you consider for yourself the media's effect on individuals and culture.

In one of the earliest formulations of media effects, widespread fear that mass-media messages could outweigh other stabilizing cultural influences, such as family and community, led to what is known as the direct effects model of media studies. This model, prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s, assumed that audiences passively accepted media messages and would exhibit predictable reactions in response to those messages. For example, following the radio broadcast of *War of the Worlds* in 1938 (which was a fictional news report of an alien invasion), some people panicked and believed the story to be true.

Challenges to the Direct Effects Theory

The results of the *People's Choice Study* challenged this model. Conducted in 1940, the study attempted to gauge the effects of political campaigns on voter choice. Researchers found that voters who consumed the most media had generally already decided for which candidate to vote, while undecided voters generally turned to family and community members to help them decide. The study thus discredited the direct effects model and influenced a host of other media theories. Ralph Hanson, *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009), 80–81. These theories do not necessarily give an all-encompassing picture of media effects but rather work to illuminate a particular aspect of media influence.

Marshall McLuhan's Influence on Media Studies

As noted in Chapter 1, during the early 1960s, English professor Marshall McLuhan wrote two books that had an enormous effect on the history of media studies. Published in 1962 and 1964, respectively, the *Gutenberg Galaxy* and *Understanding Media* both traced the history of media technology and illustrated the ways these innovations had changed both individual behavior and the wider culture. *Understanding Media* introduced the phrase that McLuhan has become known for: “The medium is the message.” This notion represented a novel take on attitudes toward media—that the media themselves are instrumental in shaping human and cultural experience.

His bold statements about media gained McLuhan a great deal of attention as both his supporters and critics responded to his utopian views about the ways media could transform 20th-century life. McLuhan spoke of a media-inspired “global village” at a time when Cold War paranoia was at its peak and the Vietnam War was a hotly debated subject. Although 1960s-era utopians received these statements positively, social realists found them cause for scorn. Despite—or perhaps because of—these controversies, McLuhan became a pop culture icon, mentioned frequently in the television sketch-comedy program *Laugh-In* and appearing as himself in Woody Allen's film *Annie Hall*.

The Internet and its accompanying cultural revolution have made McLuhan's bold utopian visions seem like prophecies. Indeed, his work has received a great deal of attention in recent years. Analysis of McLuhan's work has, interestingly, not changed very much since his works were published. His supporters point to the hopes and achievements of digital technology and the utopian state that such innovations promise. The current critique of McLuhan, however, is a bit more revealing of the state of modern media studies. Media scholars are much more numerous now than they were during the 1960s, and many of these scholars criticize McLuhan's lack of methodology and theoretical framework.

Despite his lack of scholarly diligence, McLuhan had a great deal of influence on media studies. Professors at Fordham University have formed an association of McLuhan-influenced scholars. McLuhan's other great achievement is the popularization of the concept of media studies. His work, perhaps ironically, brought the idea of media effects into the public arena and created a new way for the public to consider the influence of media on culture. Alexander Stille, “Marshall McLuhan Is Back From the Dustbin of History; With the Internet, His Ideas Again Seem Ahead of Their Time,” *New York Times*,

Agenda-Setting Theory

In contrast to the extreme views of the direct effects model, the agenda-setting theory of media stated that mass media determine the issues that concern the public rather than the public's views. Under this theory, the issues that receive the most attention from media become the issues that the public discusses, debates, and demands action on. This means that the media are determining what issues and stories the public thinks about. Therefore, when the media fail to address a particular issue, it becomes marginalized in the minds of the public. Ralph Hanson, *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009), 92.

When critics claim that a particular media outlet has an agenda, they are drawing on this theory. Agendas can range from a perceived liberal bias in the news media to the propagation of cutthroat capitalist ethics in films. For example, the agenda-setting theory explains such phenomena as the rise of public opinion against smoking. Before the mass media began taking an antismoking stance, smoking was considered a personal health issue. By promoting antismoking sentiments through advertisements, public relations campaigns, and a variety of media outlets, the mass media moved smoking into the public arena, making it a public health issue rather than a personal health issue. James Dearing and Everett Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), 4. More recently, coverage of natural disasters has been prominent in the news. However, as news coverage wanes, so does the general public's interest.



Figure 2.7 Through a variety of antismoking campaigns, the health risks of smoking became a public agenda.

Media scholars who specialize in agenda-setting research study the salience, or relative importance, of an issue and then attempt to understand what causes it to be important. The relative salience of an issue determines its place within the public agenda, which in turn influences public policy creation. Agenda-setting research traces public policy from its roots as an agenda through its promotion in the mass media and finally to its final form as a law or policy. James Dearing and Everett Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), 8.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Practitioners of the uses and gratifications theory study the ways the public consumes media. This theory states that consumers use the media to satisfy specific needs or desires. For example, you may enjoy watching a show like *Dancing With the Stars* while simultaneously tweeting about it on Twitter with your friends. Many people use the Internet to seek out entertainment, to find information, to communicate with like-minded individuals, or to pursue self-expression. Each of these uses gratifies a particular need, and the needs determine the way in which media are used. By examining factors of different groups' media choices, researchers can determine the motivations behind media use. Zizi Papacharissi, "Uses and Gratifications," in *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*, ed. Don Stacks and Michael Salwen (New York: Routledge, 2009), 137.

A typical uses and gratifications study explores the motives for media consumption and the consequences associated with use of that media. By studying how and why people watch *Dancing With the Stars* while using Twitter, scholars suggest people are using the Internet as way to be entertained and to connect with friends. Researchers have identified a number of common motives for media consumption. These include relaxation, social interaction, entertainment, arousal, escape, and a host of interpersonal and social needs. By examining the motives behind the consumption of a particular form of media, researchers can better understand both the reasons for that medium's popularity and the roles that the medium fills in society. A study of the motives behind a given user's interaction with Facebook, for example, could explain the role Facebook takes in society and the reasons for its appeal.

Uses and gratifications theories of media are often applied to contemporary media issues. The analysis of the relationship between media and violence that you read about in preceding sections exemplifies this. Researchers employed the uses and gratifications theory in this case to reveal a nuanced set of circumstances surrounding violent media consumption, as individuals with aggressive tendencies were drawn to violent media. Zizi Papacharissi, "Uses and Gratifications," in *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*, ed. Don Stacks and Michael Salwen (New York: Routledge, 2009), 140–143.

Symbolic Interactionism

Another commonly used media theory, symbolic interactionism, states that the self is derived from and develops through human interaction. This means the way you act toward someone or something is based on the meaning you have for a person or thing. To effectively communicate, people use symbols with shared cultural meanings. Symbols can be constructed from just about anything, including material goods, education, or even the way people talk. Consequentially, these symbols are instrumental in the development of the self.

This theory helps media researchers better understand the field because of the important role the media plays in creating and propagating shared symbols. Because of the media's power, it can construct symbols on its own. By using symbolic interactionist theory, researchers can look at the ways media affects a society's shared symbols and, in turn, the influence of those symbols on the individual. Cathrine Jansson-Boyd, *Consumer Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 59–62.

One of the ways the media creates and uses cultural symbols to affect an individual's sense of self is advertising. Advertisers work to give certain products a shared cultural meaning to make them desirable. For example, when you see someone driving a BMW, what do you think about that person? You may assume the person is successful or powerful because of the car he or she is driving. Ownership of luxury automobiles signifies membership in a certain socioeconomic class. Equally, technology company Apple has used advertising and public relations to attempt to become a symbol of innovation and nonconformity. Use of an Apple product, therefore, may have a symbolic meaning and may send a particular message about the product's owner.

Media also propagate other noncommercial symbols. National and state flags, religious images, and celebrities gain shared symbolic meanings through their representation in the media.

Spiral of Silence

The spiral of silence theory, which states that those who hold a minority opinion silence themselves to prevent social isolation, explains the role of mass media in the formation and maintenance of dominant opinions. As minority opinions are silenced, the illusion of consensus grows, and so does social pressure to adopt the dominant position. This creates a self-propagating loop in which minority voices are reduced to a minimum and perceived popular opinion sides wholly with the majority opinion. For example, prior to and during World War II, many Germans opposed Adolf Hitler and his policies; however, they kept their opposition silent out of fear of isolation and stigma.

Because the media is one of the most important gauges of public opinion, this theory is often used to explain the interaction between media and public opinion. According to the spiral of silence theory, if the media propagate a particular opinion, then that opinion will effectively silence opposing opinions through an illusion of consensus. This theory relates especially to public polling and its use in the media. Zizi Papacharissi, "Uses and Gratifications," in *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*, ed. Don Stacks and Michael Salwen (New York: Routledge, 2009), 153–154.

Media Logic

The media logic theory states that common media formats and styles serve as a means of perceiving the world. Today, the deep rooting of media in the cultural consciousness means that media consumers need engage for only a few moments with a particular television program to understand that it is a news show, a comedy, or a reality show. The pervasiveness of these formats means that our culture uses the style and content of these shows as ways to interpret reality. For example, think about a TV news program that

frequently shows heated debates between opposing sides on public policy issues. This style of debate has become a template for handling disagreement to those who consistently watch this type of program.

Media logic affects institutions as well as individuals. The modern televangelist has evolved from the adoption of television-style promotion by religious figures, while the utilization of television in political campaigns has led candidates to consider their physical image as an important part of a campaign. David Altheide and Robert Snow, *Media Worlds in the Postjournalism Era* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 9–11.

Cultivation Analysis

The cultivation analysis theory states that heavy exposure to media causes individuals to develop—or cultivate—an illusory perception of reality based on the most repetitive and consistent messages of a particular medium. This theory most commonly applies to analyses of television because of that medium's uniquely pervasive nature. Under this theory, someone who watches a great deal of television may form a picture of reality that does not correspond to actual life. Televised violent acts, whether those reported on news programs or portrayed on television dramas, for example, greatly outnumber violent acts that most people encounter in their daily lives. Thus, an individual who watches a great deal of television may come to view the world as more violent and dangerous than it actually is.

Cultivation analysis projects involve a number of different areas for research, such as the differences in perception between heavy and light users of media. To apply this theory, the media content that an individual normally watches must be analyzed for various types of messages. Then, researchers must consider the given media consumer's cultural background of individuals to correctly determine other factors that are involved in his or her perception of reality. For example, the socially stabilizing influences of family and peer groups influence children's television viewing and the way they process media messages. If an individual's family or social life plays a major part in her life, the social messages that she receives from these groups may compete with the messages she receives from television.

Key Takeaways

- The now largely discredited direct effects model of media studies assumes that media audiences passively accept media messages and exhibit predictable reactions in response to those messages.
- Credible media theories generally do not give as much power to the media, such as the agenda-setting theory, or give a more active role to the media consumer, such as the uses and gratifications theory.
- Other theories focus on specific aspects of media influence, such as the spiral of silence theory's focus on the power of the majority opinion or the symbolic interactionism theory's exploration of shared cultural symbolism.
- Media logic and cultivation analysis theories deal with how media consumers' perceptions of reality can be influenced by media messages.

? Exercise 2.2.1

1. Media theories have a variety of uses and applications. Research one of the following topics and its effect on culture.

Examine the topic using at least two of the approaches discussed in this section. Then, write a one-page essay about the topic you've selected.

- Media bias
- Internet habits
- Television's effect on attention span
- Advertising and self-image
- Racial stereotyping in film

2. Many of the theories discussed in this section were developed decades ago. Identify how each of these theories can be used today. Do you think these theories are still relevant for modern mass media? Why?

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2.3: Methods of Researching Media Effects

Learning Objectives

- Identify the prominent media research methods.
- Explain the uses of media research methods in a research project.

Media theories provide the framework for approaching questions about media effects ranging from as simple as how 10-year-old boys react to cereal advertisements to as broad as how Internet use affects literacy. Once researchers visualize a project and determine a theoretical framework, they must choose actual research methods. Contemporary research methods are greatly varied and can range from analyzing old newspapers to performing controlled experiments.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research technique that involves analyzing the content of various forms of media. Through content analysis, researchers hope to understand both the people who created the content and the people who consumed it. A typical content analysis project does not require elaborate experiments. Instead, it simply requires access to the appropriate media to analyze, making this type of research an easier and inexpensive alternative to other forms of research involving complex surveys or human subjects.

Content analysis studies require researchers to define what types of media to study. For example, researchers studying violence in the media would need to decide which types of media to analyze, such as television, and the types of formats to examine, such as children's cartoons. The researchers would then need to define the terms used in the study; media violence can be classified according to the characters involved in the violence (strangers, family members, or racial groups), the type of violence (self-inflicted, slapstick, or against others), or the context of the violence (revenge, random, or duty-related). These are just a few of the ways that media violence could be studied with content-analysis techniques. Arthur Asa Berger, *Media Research Techniques* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), 23–24.

Archival Research

Any study that analyzes older media must employ archival research, which is a type of research that focuses on reviewing historical documents such as old newspapers and past publications. Old local newspapers are often available on microfilm at local libraries or at the newspaper offices. University libraries generally provide access to archives of national publications such as *The New York Times* or *Time*; publications can also increasingly be found in online databases or on websites.

Older radio programs are available for free or by paid download through a number of online sources. Many television programs and films have also been made available for free download, or for rent or sale through online distributors. Performing an online search for a particular title will reveal the options available.

Resources such as the Internet Archive (www.archive.org) work to archive a number of media sources. One important role of the Internet Archive is website archiving. Internet archives are invaluable for a study of online media because they store websites that have been deleted or changed. These archives have made it possible for Internet content analyses that would have otherwise been impossible.

Surveys

Surveys are ubiquitous in modern life. Questionnaires record data on anything from political preferences to personal hygiene habits. Media surveys generally take one of the following two forms.

A descriptive survey aims to find the current state of things, such as public opinion or consumer preferences. In media, descriptive surveys establish television and radio ratings by finding the number of people who watch or listen to particular programs. An analytical survey, however, does more than simply document a current situation. Instead, it attempts to find out why a particular situation exists. Researchers pose questions or hypotheses about media and then conduct analytical surveys to answer these questions. Analytical surveys can determine the relationship between different forms of media consumption and the lifestyles and habits of media consumers.

Surveys can employ either open-ended or closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions require the participant to generate answers in their own words, while closed-ended questions force the participant to select an answer from a list. Although open-

ended questions allow for a greater variety of answers, the results of closed-ended questions are easier to tabulate. Although surveys are useful in media studies, effective use requires keeping their limitations in mind.

Social Role Analysis

As part of child rearing, parents teach their children about social roles. When parents prepare children to attend school for example, they explain the basics of school rules and what is expected of a student to help the youngsters understand the role of students. Like the role of a character in a play, this role carries specific expectations that differentiate school from home. Adults often play a number of different roles as they navigate between their responsibilities as parents, employees, friends, and citizens. Any individual may play a number of roles depending on his or her specific life choices.

Social role analysis of the media involves examining various individuals in the media and analyzing the type of role that each plays. Role analysis research can consider the roles of men, women, children, members of a racial minority, or members any other social group in specific types of media. For example, if the role children play in cartoons is consistently different from the role they play in sitcoms, then certain conclusions might be drawn about both of these formats. Analyzing roles used in media allows researchers to gain a better understanding of the messages that the mass media sends. Arthur Asa Berger, *Media Research Techniques* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), 45–48.

Depth Interviews

The depth interview is an anthropological research tool that is also useful in media studies. Depth interviews take surveys one step further by allowing researchers to directly ask a study participant specific questions to gain a fuller understanding of the participant's perceptions and experiences. Depth interviews have been used in research projects that follow newspaper reporters to find out their reasons for reporting certain stories and in projects that attempt to understand the motivations for reading romance novels. Depth interviews can provide a deeper understanding of the media consumption habits of particular groups of people. Susanna Hornig Priest, *Doing Media Research: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010), 16–22.

Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetorical analysis involves examining the “styles” used in media and attempting to understand the kinds of messages those styles convey. Media styles refer to form, presentation, composition, use of metaphors, and reasoning structure. Rhetorical analysis reveals the messages not apparent in a strict reading of content. Studies involving rhetorical analysis have focused on media such as advertising to better understand the roles of style and rhetorical devices in media messages. Barrie Gunter, *Media Research Methods: Measuring Audiences, Reactions and Impact* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 89.

Focus Groups

Like depth interviews, focus groups allow researchers to better understand public responses to media. Unlike a depth interview, however, a focus group allows the participants to establish a group dynamic that more closely resembles that of normal media consumption. In media studies, researchers can employ focus groups to judge the reactions of a group to specific media styles and to content. This can be a valuable means of understanding the reasons for consuming specific types of media.



Figure 2.8. Focus groups are effective ways to obtain a group opinion on media.

Experiments

Media research studies also sometimes use controlled experiments that expose a test group to an experience involving media and measure the effects of that experience. Researchers then compare these measurements to those of a control group that had key elements of the experience removed. For example, researchers may show one group of children a program with three incidents of cartoon violence and another control group of similar children the same program without the violent incidents. Researchers then ask the children from both groups the same sets of questions, and the results are compared.

Participant Observation

In participant observation, researchers try to become part of the group they are studying. Although this technique is typically associated with anthropological studies in which a researcher lives with members of a particular culture to gain a deeper understanding of their values and lives, it is also used in media research.

Media consumption often takes place in groups. Families or friends gather to watch favorite programs, children may watch Saturday morning cartoons with a group of their peers, and adults may host viewing parties for televised sporting events or awards shows. These groups reveal insights into the role of media in the lives of the public. A researcher might join a group that watches football together and stay with the group for an entire season. By becoming a part of the group, the researcher becomes part of the experiment and can reveal important influences of media on culture. Susanna Hornig Priest, *Doing Media Research: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010), 96–98.

Researchers have studied online role-playing games, such as *World of Warcraft*, in this manner. These games reveal an interesting aspect of group dynamics: Although participants are not in physical proximity, they function as a group within the game. Researchers are able to study these games by playing them. In the book *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, a group of researchers discussed the results of their participant observation studies. The studies reveal the surprising depth of culture and unwritten rules that exist in the World of Warcraft universe and give important interpretations of why players pursue the game with such dedication. Hilde Corneliussen and Jill Walker Rettberg, “Introduction: ‘Orc ProfessorLFG,’ or Researching in

Azeroth,” in *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, ed. Hilde Corneliussen and Jill Walker Rettberg (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2008), 6–7.

- Media research methods are the practical procedures for carrying out a research project. These methods include content analysis, surveys, focus groups, experiments, and participant observation.
- Research methods generally involve either test subjects or analysis of media. Methods involving test subjects include surveys, depth interviews, focus groups, and experiments. Analysis of media can include content, style, format, social roles, and archival analysis.

? Exercise 2.3.1

Media research methods offer a variety of procedures for performing a media study. Each of these methods varies in cost; thus, a project with a lower budget would be prohibited from using some of the more costly methods. Consider a project on teen violence and video game use. Then answer the following short-response questions. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Which methods would a research organization with a low budget favor for this project? Why?
2. How might the results of the project differ from those of one with a higher budget?

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2.4: Media Studies Controversies

Learning Objectives

- Explain some of the major objections to specific media theories.
- Identify ways media studies are used to support political opinions.
- Differentiate between proper and improper use of media studies.

Important debates over media theory have questioned the foundations and hence the results of media research. Within academia, theories and research can represent an individual's lifework and livelihood. As a result, issues of tenure and position, rather than issues of truth and objectivity, can sometimes fuel discussion over theories and research.

Problems with Methodology and Theory

Although the use of advanced methodologies can resolve many of the questions raised about various theories, the fact remains that the use of these theories in public debate generally follows a broader understanding. For example, if a hypothetical study found that convicted violent offenders had aggressive feelings after playing the video game *Mortal Kombat*, many would take this as proof that video games cause violent acts without considering other possible explanations. Often, the nuances of these studies are lost when they enter the public arena.

Active versus Passive Audience

A significant division among media studies theorists is the belief that audiences are passive or active. A passive audience, in the most extreme statement of this position, passively accepts the messages that media send it. An active audience, on the other hand, is fully aware of media messages and makes informed decisions about how to process and interact with media. Newer trends in media studies have attempted to develop a more complex view of media audiences than the active versus passive debate affords, but in the public sphere, this opposition frames many of the debates about media influence. Robert Heath and Jennings Bryant, *Human Communication Theory and Research: Concepts, Contexts, and Challenges* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), 385–386.

Arguments against Agenda-Setting Theory

A number of criticisms have dogged agenda-setting theory. Chief among these is that agenda-setting studies are unable to prove cause and effect; essentially, no one has truly shown that the media agenda sets the public agenda and not the other way around. An agenda-setting study could connect the prevalence of a topic in the media with later changes in public policy and may conclude that the media set this agenda. However, policy makers and lobbyists often conduct public relations efforts to encourage the creation of certain policies. In addition, public concern over issues generates media coverage as well, making it difficult to tell if the media are responding to public desire for coverage of an issue or if they are pushing an issue on their own agenda. Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo, "Prospects for Agenda-Setting Research in the 21st Century," in *Topical Issues in Communications and Media Research*, ed. Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2005), 40–41.

Arguments against Uses and Gratifications Theory

The general presuppositions of the uses and gratifications theory have drawn criticism. By assuming that media fulfill a functional purpose in an individual's life, the uses and gratifications theory implicitly justifies and reaffirms the functional place of media in the public sphere; critics say that people do not always use media to fulfill a function. They ask whether unconscious motivations or social rituals might be at play. Furthermore, because it focuses on personal, psychological aspects of media, the theory cannot question whether media are artificially imposed on an individual. Studies involving the uses and gratifications theory are often sound methodologically, but the overall assumptions of the studies are left unquestioned. Lawrence Grossberg and others, *Mediamaking: Mass Media in a Popular Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 266–267.

Arguments against Spiral of Silence Theory

Although many regard the spiral of silence theory as useful when applying its broadest principles, it is weak when dealing with specifics. For example, the phenomenon of the spiral of silence is most visible in individuals who are fearful of social isolation.

Those who are less fearful are less likely to be silent if public opinion turns against them. Nonconformists contradict the claims of the spiral of silence theory.

Critics have also pointed out that the spiral of silence theory relies heavily on the values of various cultural groups. A public opinion trend in favor of gun control may not silence the consensus within National Rifle Association meetings. Every individual is a part of a larger social group with specific values. Although these values may differ from widespread public opinion, individuals need not fear social isolation within their particular social group. John Gastil, *Political Communication and Deliberation* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 61–62.

Arguments against Cultivation Analysis Theory

Critics have faulted cultivation analysis theory for relying too heavily on a broad definition of violence. Detractors argue that because violence means different things to different subgroups and individuals, any claim that a clear message of violence could be understood in the same way by an entire culture is false. This critique would necessarily extend to other studies involving cultivation analysis. Different people understand media messages in varying ways, so broad claims can be problematic. Cultivation analysis is still an important part of media studies, but critics have questioned its unqualified validity as a theory. James Shanahan and Michael Morgan, *Television and its Viewers: Cultivation Theory and Research* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 59–60.

Politics and Media Studies

Media theories and studies afford a variety of perspectives. When proponents of a particular view employ those theories and studies, however, they are often oversimplified and can result in contradictory claims. In fact, when politicians and others employ media studies to validate a political perspective, this is a common result.

Media Bias

A good example of the ways that media can bolster political opinion is through coverage, which leads to the debate over media bias. One 1985 study found that journalists were more likely to hold liberal views than were members of the public. Over the years, many have cited this study to support the opinion that the media holds a liberal bias. However, another study found that between the years of 1948 and 1990, 78 percent of newspaper presidential endorsements were for Republicans. Ralph Hanson, *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009), 101–102.

Media favoritism again became a source of contention during the 2008 presidential race. A random sampling of campaign coverage in the run-up to the election found that 82 percent of stories featured Barack Obama, while only 52 percent discussed John McCain. Chuck Raasch, “Media Bias Aside, Obama’s Trip an Important Test,” *USA Today*, July 24, 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/columnist/raasch/2008-07-24-newpolitics_N.htm. Allegations that the media favored Obama seemed to bolster the idea of a liberal bias. But other studies belied this belief. Research conducted during the election showed that favorable media coverage of Obama occurred only after his poll numbers rose, hinting that the media were reacting to public opinion rather than attempting to influence it. Reuters, “Despite Republican Complaints, Media Bias Largely Missing From US Campaign: Study,” *Canada.com*, November 6, 2008, http://www.canada.com/vancouver_sun/n...5-57a0e0c3a38f.



Figure 2.9 Allegations of media bias are a recurring theme in political debates.

Media Decency

Decency standards in media have long been an issue, and they continue to change in ways that are not necessarily predictable. Once banned in the United States for obscenity, James Joyce's *Ulysses* is now considered a classic of modern literature, while many schools have banned children's classic *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* for its use of ethnic slurs. Because of the regulatory powers that government possesses over the media, decency is also an inherently political issue. As media studies have progressed, they have increasingly appeared in the debates over decency standards. Although media studies cannot prove a word or image is indecent, they can help discern the impact of that word or image and, thus, greatly influence the debate.

Organizations or figures with stated goals often use media studies to support those aims. For example, the Parents Television Council reported on a study that compared the ratio of comments about nonmarital sex to comments about marital sex during the hours of 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. The study employed content analysis to come up with specific figures; however, the Parents Television Council then used those findings to make broad statements, such as "the institution of marriage is regularly mocked and denigrated." Melissa Rayworth, "TV Decency Standards Challenge Parents," *Cape Cod Times*, August 10, 2008, www.capecodonline.com/apps/pb...LIFE/808100317. Because content analysis does not analyze the effect on audiences or analyze how material is presented, it does not offer a scientific way to judge whether a comment is mocking and denigrating marriage, so such interpretations are arguably unsupported by the research. For example, researchers performing a content analysis by documenting the amount of sex or violence on television are not analyzing how this content is interpreted by the audience. They are simply noting the number of instances. Equally, partisan groups can use a number of different linguistic turns to make media studies fit their agenda.

Media studies involving violence, pornography, and profanity are inherently politically charged, and politicians have also conducted their own media studies. In 2001, for example, a Senate bill aimed at Internet decency that had little support in Congress came to the floor. One of the sponsoring senators attempted to increase interest by bringing to the Senate floor a file full of some of the most egregious pornographic images he could find on the Internet. The bill passed 84 to 16. Philip Elmer-Dewitt, "On a Screen Near You," *Time*, June 24, 2001, www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101950703-134361,00.html.

📌 Jack Thompson versus Violent Video Games

One of the most outspoken critics of violent video games is the now-disbarred lawyer Jack Thompson. Despite questionable use of media research, Thompson has made many claims referencing research. In an interview with *CBS News*, Thompson stated that "hundreds of studies" existed that proved the link between violent video games and real violence. Later in the interview, he listed increasing school murder statistics as proof of the effects of violent video games. William Vitka, "Gamespeak: Jack Thompson," *GameCore*, *CBS News*, February 25, 2005, www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/02/24/tech/gamecore/main676446.shtml. In light of the media effects theories elucidated in this chapter, Thompson was obviously not being honest about the findings of video game–violence research and was making claims that no media effects scholar could confidently make.

Thompson initiated several lawsuits against *Grand Theft Auto* video game developer Take 2 Interactive, claiming that the company should be held liable for encouraging violent actions by minors. His lawsuits were thrown out of court, and he eventually came to a settlement with Take 2 Interactive—who had countersued—to drop all litigation. K. C. Jones, "Grand Theft Auto Company Settles With Jack Thompson," *InformationWeek*, April 20, 2007, www.informationweek.com/news/global-cio/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=199200271. Thompson's frivolous use of the legal system caused the state of Alabama to revoke his license to practice law in 2005, and, in 2008, the Florida Supreme Court disbarred him for life. Mark Hefflinger, "Controversial Game Lawsuit Attorney Jack Thompson Disbarred," *Digital Media Wire*, September 26, 2008, www.dmwmedia.com/news/2008/09...pson-disbarred.

Jack Thompson's actions may seem extreme, but he represents a common pattern of media study misrepresentation. Pundits, social reformers, and politicians frequently use the results of media studies to support their agenda without regard for accuracy. The use of media research to lend credence to a political opinion is widespread even as the public struggles to understand the effects of new media on culture.

Media Consolidation

Although media consolidation will be discussed in more depth in later chapters, the topic's intersection with media studies results deserves a place here. Media consolidation occurs when large media companies buy up smaller media outlets to create giant

conglomerates. Some scholars predict that a handful of companies will soon control most of the world's media. Although government regulation has historically stymied this trend in the United States by prohibiting ownership of a large number of media outlets, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has loosened many of the restrictions on large media companies in recent years.

Media studies often prove vital to decisions regarding media consolidation. These studies measure the impact that consolidation has had on the media's public role and on the content of local media outlets to compare it with that of conglomerate-owned outlets. The findings often vary depending on the group conducting the test. Sometimes tests are ignored entirely.

In 2003, the FCC loosened restrictions on owning multiple media outlets in the same city, citing studies that the agency had developed to weigh the influence of particular media outlets such as newspapers and television stations. Frank Ahrens, "FCC Eases Media Ownership Rules," *Washington Post*, June 3, 2003, www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&contentId=A5555-2003Jun2. In 2006, however, reports surfaced that a key study had been discarded during the 2003 decision. The study showed an increase in time allocated for news when TV stations were owned locally, thus raising questions about whether media consolidation was a good thing for local news. Associated Press, "Powell Denies Seeing Media Ownership Study," *MSNBC*, September 15, 2006, <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/14850729/>.

- Audience interpretation is vital to media studies. Media theories generally fall between the active and passive audience interpretations. Agenda-setting theory favors the passive audience interpretation, and consequently must prove that the public is affected by media agendas. The uses and gratifications theory favors the active audience, and consequently justifies the place of media in the public sphere.
- In politics, media studies are often used to support various opinions. Among the more prominent media studies employed are those that deal with media bias, violence in the media, and indecency.
- The use of media studies in public debate has led to subjective studies that have a predetermined outcome. Many studies conducted by special interest groups use definitions that favor their perspectives. Politicians often copy the style, rather than the substance, of a media study in an attempt to give authority to their points of view.

? Exercise 2.4.1

Media studies are often used to support specific opinions, regardless of whether their results justify such a use. Studies are also conducted with predetermined outcomes that support a specific view. With this in mind, answer the following short-response questions. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. How are media studies used to support political opinions? Give two examples.
2. What kind of guidelines should be used to ensure clear and objective use of media studies?
3. Identify weaknesses of popular media theories discussed in this section.

? End-of-Chapter Assessments

Review Questions

1. Questions for Section 2.1
 1. List three historical events that have relied on propaganda.
 2. Provide three examples of cultural messages that the media send.
 3. How have new media affected older forms of media?
2. Questions for Section 2.2
 1. How does agenda-setting theory differ from direct effects theory?
 2. Use the spiral of silence to explain an actual lapse in media coverage.
 3. Why would uses and gratifications theory be an appropriate theory for a study of Internet purchasing habits?
3. Questions for Section 2.3
 1. Name the different types of media analysis techniques and explain their uses.
 2. Explain the differences among a survey, a depth interview, and a focus group.
 3. What resources would be important for a project analyzing the historical representation of women in advertising?

4. Questions for Section 2.4

1. Explain the opposition between theories of passive and active media audiences.
2. How are media studies commonly misused to support political opinions?
3. How might media studies be used in a study on indecency?

? Critical Thinking Questions

1. The media have become an ever-increasing part of modern life. How do you think the media and their messages have affected you personally?
2. Media studies attempt to understand the role that the media play in culture and in individual lives. Given the criticisms of particular media theories, what do you think the limitations of media studies are? Consider the media theories discussed in this chapter. Which ones do you find the most convincing and why? Which ones do you find least convincing?
3. Among the methods used to analyze audiences, which do you think would guarantee the most accurate results? How does this affect your opinion of studies that use other results?

📌 Career Connection

Media studies are used in a variety of professions and capacities. These range from university researchers to small-time music groups that want to assess their online presence. A number of online research tools exist that can help organizations and individuals learn more about the effect of media on important issues and topics.

List two or three prospective careers and think of one way that media studies could be beneficial in each. Search for online media research tools that would assist you in a media research project involving your chosen careers. Answer the following questions:

- What kind of project would be beneficial to you in this field?
- How would you set up the project to ensure usable and accurate results?
- How would you present the results of your studies to clients, employees, and investors?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Books

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3.1: Introduction

A Lost Generation of Readers?



Figure 3.1

In 2004, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) released a report that it said represented “a national crisis.” What was under such dire peril that it threatened to “impoverish both cultural and civic life,” as NEA Chairman Dana Gioia put it? Reading—or, more aptly put, not reading. According to the report, *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*, less than half the population engaged in any literary reading in 2002, a record low since the survey’s beginnings in 1982. National Endowment for the Arts, *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America* (New York: Author, 2004).

The report, which asked respondents whether they had read any literary fiction (novels, short stories, plays, or poetry) over the past year showed especially stark numbers among the youngest adults. Those aged 18–24 saw a rate of decline 55 percent greater than the total adult population. (Books read for school or work weren’t counted in the survey, which was examining Americans’ leisure reading habits.) According to the NEA, the overall 10 percent drop in literary readers represented a loss of 20 million potential readers, most of them young. In 1982, young adults (people aged 18–34) were most likely to engage in literary reading; by 2002, they were the least likely group. Based on this, the report asks, “Are we losing a generation of readers?” National Endowment for the Arts, *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America* (New York: Author, 2004).

Despite these facts, the publishing industry’s releasing more books than ever before. In 2003, just 1 year after the NEA issued its gloomy warning about the state of reading, 175,000 new titles were published in the United States—a 19 percent jump from the year before. Bowker, “U.S. Book Production Soars to 175,000 New Titles in 2003; Trade Up, University Presses Down,” news release, May 27, 2004, www.bowker.com/press/bowker/2...527_bowker.htm. Since the early part of the 21st century, the United States publishing industry has had an average annual monetary growth rate of 1.1 percent; however, net sales have dropped from \$26 billion to \$23 billion in the past year. Association of American Publishers, “Industry Statistics 2009: AAP Reports Book Sales Estimated at \$23.9 Billion in 2009,” www.publishers.org/main/Indus...ndStats_02.htm. Meanwhile, as the NEA report notes, 24 percent of Americans’ recreational spending went to electronics, while books accounted for only 5.6 percent in 2002. Perhaps

unsurprisingly, the households that watched television more read less. The report warned that “at the current rate of loss, literary reading as a leisure activity will virtually disappear in half a century.”National Endowment for the Arts, *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America* (New York: Author, 2004).

As a response to the alarming statistics, in 2006 the NEA launched its Big Read program, essentially a city-wide book club in which community members are encouraged to read the same book at the same time. The NEA provided publicity, funding for kickoff parties, and readers’ guides. The residents of Tampa, Florida, read *The Joy Luck Club* and were accorded a visit by author Amy Tan, and the residents of Washington, DC, chose Ernest J. Gaines’s *A Lesson Before Dying* with hopes that it would spur conversations about race, justice, and violence. The Big Read’s DC program director said that he hoped the book got young people talking, noting that the book raises all sorts of relevant questions, such as “Do we offer second chances for people after making mistakes, especially youth in DC? What about youth in the justice system? So many people who have been through the juvenile justice system will testify a book set them free,” he claimed. DeNeen Brown, “Ernest J. Gaines’s ‘Lesson’ Prompts Teens to Grapple With Stark Realities,” *Washington Post*, May 10, 2010, Arts section.

When the NEA’s 2008 numbers were released, many people were again surprised. The statistics showed that the decline in reading had reversed, the first such increase in 26 years. Once again, the change was most significant among young adults, who had a 21 percent increase from 2002. Motoko Rich, “Fiction Reading Increases for Adults,” *New York Times*, January 11, 2009, Arts section. The NEA credited the “millions of parents, teachers, librarians, and civic leaders [who] took action... [to ensure that] reading became a higher priority in families, schools, and communities.” Motoko Rich, “Fiction Reading Increases for Adults,” *New York Times*, January 11, 2009, Arts section. Another factor may have been in play, however; the 2008 study was the first to include online reading. To understand what books mean in the present world of e-readers and digital libraries, it helps to examine how they functioned in the past and to consider how they might change in the future.

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3.2: History of Books

Learning Objectives

- Identify the material and cultural origins of the book in ancient and medieval times.
- Indicate the influence of mechanical movable type on modern society.
- Explain the evolution of contemporary copyright law and of the contemporary publishing industry.

Ancient Books

Most historians trace the origins of the book back to the ancient Egyptians, whose papyrus scrolls looked very different from the books we're accustomed to today. From the time they first developed a written script, around 3000 BCE (Before Common Era), Egyptians wrote on many different surfaces, including metal, leather, clay, stone, and bone. Most prominent, though, was the practice of using reed pens to write on papyrus scrolls. In many ways, papyrus was an ideal material for the Egyptians. It was made using the tall reeds that grew plentifully in the Nile Valley. Individual sheets of papyrus were glued or sewn together to make scrolls. A standard scroll was around 30 feet long and 7 to 10 inches wide, while the longest Egyptian scroll ever found stretched over 133 feet, making it almost as long as the Statue of Liberty when it was rolled all the way out. Harry Ransom Center, "The Gutenberg Bible at the Ransom Center," University of Texas at Austin, www.hrc.utexas.edu/educator/modules/gutenberg/books/early/.

By the 6th century BCE, papyrus was the most common writing surface throughout the Mediterranean and was used by the Greeks and Romans. Because papyrus grew in Egypt, the Egyptians had a virtual monopoly over the papyrus trade. Many ancient civilizations housed their scrolls in large libraries, which acted as both repositories of knowledge and displays of political and economic power. The Royal Library of Alexandria boasted around half a million scrolls in its collection; some scholars claim that this was between 30 and 70 percent of all books in existence at the time. Kevin Kelly, "Scan This Book!" *New York Times Magazine*, May 14, 2006. But other powerful entities in the ancient world were growing tired of the Egyptians' monopoly over the papyrus trade.

Parchment was made from treated animal skins that were scraped thin to create a flexible, even surface. Parchment had several advantages over papyrus: It was more durable, both sides could be written on, and its trade wasn't monopolized by the Egyptians. Its spread coincided with another crucial development in the history of the book. Between the 2nd and 4th centuries, the Romans began sewing folded sheets of papyrus or parchment together, and binding them between wooden covers. This form, called the codex, has essentially the same structure as today's books. The codex was much more user-friendly than was the papyrus scroll: more portable, easier to store and handle, and less expensive to produce. It also allowed readers to quickly flip between sections. While reading a scroll was a two-handed activity, a codex could be propped open in front of a reader, allowing for note taking. Traditions changed slowly in the ancient world, however, and the scroll remained the dominant form for secular works for several centuries. The codex was the preferred form for early Christian texts, and the spread of Christianity eventually brought about the dominance of the codex; by the 6th century CE, it had almost entirely replaced the scroll.



Figure 3.2 The earliest known printed books were created using woodblock printing.

The next major innovation in the history of books, the use of block printing on paper, began in Tang Dynasty China around 700 CE, though it wouldn't arrive in Europe for nearly 800 years. The first known examples of text printed on paper are tiny, 2.5-inch-wide scrolls of Buddhist prayers commissioned by Japan's Empress Shōtoku in 764 CE. The earliest example of a dated, printed book is a Buddhist text called the *Diamond Sutra* (868 CE). Woodblock printing was a meticulous process that involved carving an entire page of text onto a wooden block, then inking and pressing the block to print a page.

In medieval Europe, however, scribes were still laboriously copying texts by hand. Book culture in the Middle Ages was dominated by monasteries, which became centers of intellectual life. The largest monasteries had rooms called scriptoria where monks copied, decorated, and preserved both religious and secular volumes. Many of the classical texts we have today owe their preservation to diligent medieval monks, who thought of scholarship, even the study of secular and pre-Christian writers, as a way to become closer to God. The hand-copied books produced in the Middle Ages were much more ornate than the mass-produced books of today. These were illuminated manuscripts that included painted embellishments that were added on to the handwritten books. The word *illuminate* comes from the Latin *illuminare*, which means to *light up*, and some medieval books were literally made to shine through applications of gold or silver decorations. Other ornate additions included illustrations, decorative capital letters, and intricately drawn borders. The degree of embellishment depended on the book's intended use and the wealth of its owner. Medieval manuscripts were so highly valued that some scribes placed so-called book curses at the front of their manuscripts, warning that anyone who stole or defaced the copy would be cursed. Written in a copy of the Vulgate Bible, for example, is this warning: "Whoever steals this book let him die the death; let be him be frizzled in a pan; may the falling sickness rage within him; may he be broken on the wheel and be hanged." Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries, "Book Curses," www.library.vcu.edu/preservation/curse.html.

Though illuminated books were highly prized, they were also expensive and labor-intensive to create. By the end of the Middle Ages, the papal library in Avignon, France, held only a few thousand manuscripts compared to the nearly half-million texts found at the Library of Alexandria in ancient times. Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of Reading* (New York: Reaktion Books, 2004). Bookmaking in the Western world became somewhat less expensive when paper emerged as the primary writing surface. Making paper from rags and other fibers, a technique that originated in 2nd-century China, reached the Islamic world in the 8th century and led to a flowering of book culture there. By the 12th century, Marrakesh, in modern-day Morocco, was said to have had a street lined with a hundred booksellers. But it wasn't until the 14th century that paper manufacturing began in earnest in Europe.

Gutenberg's Industry-Changing Invention

Papermaking coincided with another crucial step forward in the history of books: Johannes Gutenberg's invention of mechanical movable type in 1448. Though the simple act of crafting small, movable letters may seem mundane in the contemporary world of digital devices and microchips, it is difficult to overstate the importance of Gutenberg's invention and the effect it had on the world. The Biography Channel and A&E both named Gutenberg as the single most influential person of the second millennium, ahead of

Shakespeare, Galileo, and Columbus, and *Time* magazine cited movable type as the single most important invention of the past 1,000 years. Through his invention, Gutenberg indisputably changed the world.

Much of Gutenberg's life is shrouded in mystery. It is known that he was a German goldsmith and book printer and that he spent the 1440s collecting investors for a mysterious project. That invention turned out to be the printing press, which combined existing technologies—such as the screw press, which was already used for papermaking—with his own innovation—individual metal letters and punctuation marks that could be independently rearranged—to revolutionize how books were made. Though Gutenberg probably printed other, earlier materials, it was the Bible he printed in 1455 that brought him renown. In his small print shop in his hometown of Mainz, Germany, Gutenberg used his movable type press to print 180 copies of the Bible, 135 on paper and 45 on vellum. Harry Ransom Center, “The Gutenberg Bible at the Ransom Center,” University of Texas at Austin, www.hrc.utexas.edu/educator/modules/gutenberg/books/early/. This book, commonly called the Gutenberg Bible, ushered in Europe's so-called Gutenberg Revolution and paved the way for the commercial mass printing of books. In 1978, the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin purchased a complete copy of the Gutenberg Bible for \$2.4 million.

Over the next few centuries, the printing press changed nearly everything about how books were made, distributed, and read. Printing books was a vastly swifter system than handwriting books was, and paper was much less expensive to produce than parchment. Before the printing press, books were generally commissioned and then copied. The printing press meant that multiple identical editions of the same book could be printed in a relatively short time, while it probably would've taken a scribe at least a year to handwrite the Bible. As Gutenberg's invention led to more and more printing shops springing up all over Europe, the very idea of what a book looked like began to change. In medieval times, books were the valuable, rare product of hundreds (if not thousands) of hours of work, and no two were the same. After Gutenberg, books could be standardized, plentiful, and relatively cheap to produce and disseminate. Early printed books were made to look like illuminated manuscripts, complete with hand-drawn decorations. However, printers soon realized the economic potential of producing multiple identical copies of one text, and book printing soon became a speculative business, with printers trying to guess how many copies a particular book could sell. By the end of the 15th century, 50 years after Gutenberg's invention of movable type, printing shops had sprung up throughout Europe, with an estimated 300 in Germany alone. Gutenberg's invention was a resounding success, and the printing and selling of books boomed. The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center estimates that before the invention of the printing press, the total number of books in all of Europe was around 30,000. By 1500 CE, the book was thriving as an industrial object, and the number of books in Europe had grown to as many as 10 to 12 million. Bruce Jones, “Manuscripts, Books, and Maps: The Printing Press and a Changing World,” September 5, 2000, communication.ucsd.edu/bjones/Books/booktext.html.

Effects of the Mass Production of Books

The post-Gutenberg world was revolutionized by the advent of the printed book. One thing that did not substantially change, however, was the form of the book itself. Despite minor tweaks and alterations, the ancient form of the codex remained relatively intact. What did rapidly evolve was the way books were produced and distributed and the way information circulated through the world.

Simply put, the mechanical reproduction of books meant that there were more books available at a lower cost, and the growth of international trade allowed these books to have a wider reach. The desire for knowledge among the growing middle class and the new availability of classical texts from ancient Greece and Rome helped fuel the Renaissance, a period of celebration of the individual and of a turn toward humanism. For the first time, texts could be widely dispersed, allowing political, intellectual, religious, and cultural ideas to spread widely. Also for the first time, many people could read the same books and be exposed to the same ideas at the same time, giving rise to mass media and mass culture. Science was revolutionized as well. For example, standardized, widely dispersed texts meant that scientists in Italy were exposed to the theories and discoveries of scientists in England. Because of improved communication, technological and intellectual ideas spread more quickly, enabling scientists from disparate areas to more easily build on the breakthroughs and successes of others.

As the Renaissance progressed, the size of the middle class grew, as did literacy rates. Rather than a few hundred precious volumes housed in monastery or university libraries, books were available to people outside monastic or university settings, which meant that more books were available to women. In effect, the mass production of books helped knowledge become democratized. However, this spread of information didn't proceed without resistance. Thanks in part to the spread of dissenting ideas, the Roman Catholic Church, the dominant institution of medieval Europe, found its control slipping. In 1487, only a few decades after Gutenberg first printed his Bible, Pope Innocent VIII insisted that all books be prescreened by church authorities before they were allowed to be printed. Jonathon Green and Nicholas J. Karolides, *The Encyclopedia of Censorship* (Facts on File, 2005), 111. One

book the church banned was the Bible printed in any language other than Latin—a language that few people outside of clerical or scholarly circles understood. In 1517, Martin Luther instigated the Protestant Reformation. He challenged the church’s authority by insisting that people had the right to read the Bible in their own language. The church rightly feared the spread of vernacular Bibles; the more people who had access to the text, the less control the church was able to exert over how it was interpreted. Since the church’s interpretation of the Bible dictated in no small part the way many people lived their lives, the church’s sway over the hearts and minds of the faithful was severely undermined by accessible printed Bibles and the wave of Protestantism they encouraged. The Catholic Church’s attempt to control the printing industry proved impossible to maintain, and over the next few centuries, the church would see its power decline significantly, as it was no longer the sole keeper of religious knowledge as it had been throughout the Middle Ages.

The Bible wasn’t the only text that was beginning to be published in languages other than Latin. The Renaissance saw a growing interest in texts published in the vernacular, the speech of the “common people.” As books became more available to the middle class, people wanted to read books written in their native tongue. Early well-known works in the vernacular included Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (first printed in Italian in 1472) and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (published in Middle English in the 15th century). Genres with popular appeal, such as plays and poetry, became increasingly widespread. In the 16th and 17th centuries, inexpensive chapbooks (the name derives, appropriately enough, from *cheap books*) became popular. Chapbooks were small and cheaply printed, and they often included popular ballads, humorous stories, or religious tracts. The proliferation of chapbooks showed just how much the Gutenberg Revolution had transformed the written word. In just a few hundred years, many people had access to reading material, and books would no longer be considered sacred objects.

Because of the high value placed on human knowledge during the Renaissance, libraries flourished during this time period. As they had been in ancient Egypt, libraries were once again a way of displaying national power and wealth. The German State Library in Berlin was founded in 1661, and other European centers soon followed, such as the National Library of Spain in Madrid in 1711 and the British Library (the world’s largest) in London in 1759. Libraries were also associated with universities, clubs, and museums; however, these were often only for subscribers. The United Kingdom’s Public Libraries Act of 1850 fostered the development of free, public lending libraries. After the American Civil War, public libraries flourished in the newly reunified United States, helped by fundraising and lobbying by women’s clubs. Philanthropist Andrew Carnegie helped bring the Renaissance ideals of artistic patronage and democratized knowledge into the 20th century when he helped found more than 1,700 public libraries between 1881 and 1919. Barbara Krasner-Khait, “Survivor: The History of the Library,” *History Magazine*, October/November 2001.

History of Document Control

While Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press ushered in an age of democratized knowledge and incipient mass culture, it also transformed the act of authorship, making writing a potentially profitable enterprise. Before the mass production of books, authorship had few financial rewards (unless a generous patron got involved). As a consequence, pre-Renaissance texts were often collaborative, and many books didn’t even list an author. The earliest concept of the copyright, from the time of the scriptoria, was who had the right to copy a book by hand. The printed book, however, was a speculative commercial enterprise, in that large numbers of identical copies could be sold. The explosive growth of the European printing industry meant that authors could potentially profit from the books they made and then wrote if their legal rights were recognized. In contemporary terms, copyright allows a person the right to exclude others from copying, distributing, and selling a work. This is a right usually given to the creator, although that right can be sold or otherwise transferred. Works not covered by copyright or for which the copyright has expired are part of the public domain, which means that they are essentially public property and can be used freely by anyone without permission or royalty payments.

The origins of contemporary copyright law are usually traced back to the Statute of Queen Anne. This law, enacted in England in 1710, was the first to recognize the legal rights of authors, though in an incomplete manner. It granted a book’s publisher 14 years of exclusive rights and legal protection, renewable for another 14-year term if the author was still living. Anyone who infringed on a copyrighted work paid a fine, half of which went to the author and half to the government. Early copyright was intended to limit monopoly and censorship, to provide a sense of stability to authors, and to promote learning by ensuring that documents would be widely accessible.

The United States established its first copyright law not long after the Declaration of Independence. The U.S. Constitution granted Congress the power “to promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries” in Article I, Section 8, Clause 8. The first federal copyright law, the

Copyright Law of 1790, was modeled on the Statute of Queen Anne and it similarly granted exclusive rights for 14 years, renewable for 14 more if the author was living at the end of the first term.

The “limited times” mentioned in the Constitution have steadily lengthened since the 18th century. The Copyright Act of 1909 allowed for an initial 28-year term of copyright, which was renewable for one additional 28-year term. The Copyright Act of 1976, which preempted the 1909 act, extended copyright protection to “a term consisting of the life of the author and 50 years after the author’s death,” was substantially longer than the original law’s potential 56-year term. In 1998, copyright was extended even further, to 70 years after the author’s death. The 1998 law, called the Copyright Term Extension Act, also added a 20-year extension to all currently copyrighted works. This automatic extension meant that no new works would enter the public domain until 2019 at the earliest. Critics of the Copyright Term Extension Act called it the Mickey Mouse Protection Act because the Walt Disney Company lobbied for the law. Louise Krasniewicz, *Walt Disney: A Biography* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2010), 43. Because of the 20-year copyright extension, Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters remained out of the public domain, which meant that they were still the exclusive property of Disney.

The 1976 law also codified the terms of fair use for the first time. Fair-use law specifies the ways in which a work (or parts of a work) under copyright could legally be used by someone other than the copyright holder for “purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright.” That is, a book review quoting snippets of a book, or a researcher citing someone else’s work is not infringing on copyright. Given an Internet culture that thrives on remixes, linking, and other creative uses of source material, the boundaries of the legal definition of fair use have met with many challenges in recent years.

History of the Book-Publishing Industry

With the exception of self-published works, the author isn’t the person in charge of producing the book or sending it out into the world. These days, the tasks of editing, designing, printing, promoting, and distributing a book generally fall to the book’s publisher. Although authors are usually the ones with their names prominently displayed on the spine, a published book is actually the product of many different kinds of labor by many different people.

Early book printers acted as publishers, because they produced pages and sold them commercially. In England, the Stationer’s Company, which was essentially a printer’s guild, had a monopoly over the printing industry and was also allowed to censor texts. The Statute of Queen Anne, the 1710 copyright law, came about partially as a result of some of these early publishers overstepping their bounds.

In the 19th-century United States, publishers fulfilled many roles, and it was not uncommon for one company to print, wholesale, and even retail their own books. Although bookstores and printers existed in the United States, the Northeast emerged as the nation’s publishing epicenter, with hotspots in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. During the 1800s, the U.S. book industry swiftly expanded. In 1820, the books manufactured and sold in the United States totaled about \$2.5 million; by 1850, even though the price of books had dropped substantially, sales figures had quintupled. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Technological advances in the 19th century, including machine-made paper and the Linotype typesetting machine, made book publishing simpler and more profitable. Many of today’s large publishing companies were created in the 19th century; for example, Houghton Mifflin originated in 1832; Little, Brown and Company formed in 1837; and Macmillan was founded in Scotland in 1843 and opened its U.S. branch in 1869. By the turn of the century, New York was the center of publishing in the United States.

The rapid growth of the publishing industry and evolving intellectual property laws meant that authors could make money from their writing during this period. Perhaps it’s no surprise, then, to learn that the first literary agents also emerged in the late 19th century. Literary agents act as intermediaries between the author and the publisher, negotiating contracts and parsing difficult legal language. The world’s first literary agent, A.P. Watt, worked in London in 1881 and essentially defined the role of the contemporary literary agent—he got paid to negotiate on behalf of the author. A former advertising agent, Watt decided to charge based on commission, meaning that he would take in a set percentage of his clients’ earnings. Watt set the fee as 10 percent, which is still considered standard today.

The biggest change to hit publishing in the first half of the 20th century was the increasing popularity of the paperback book. Books covered in less expensive, less durable paper existed since Renaissance chapbooks were invented, but they were usually crudely printed works that were meant only as passing entertainment. In 1935, the publishing industry was changed forever when Penguin Books Ltd., a paperback publisher, launched in England, ushered in the so-called paperback revolution. Instead of being crude and cheaply made, Penguin titles were simple but well designed. Though Penguin sold paperbacks for only 25 cents, it

concentrated on providing works of literary merit, thus fundamentally changing the idea of what quality books should look like. Some early Penguin titles included Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* and Dashiell Hammett’s *The Thin Man*. In the decades that followed, more and more paperback publishing companies were launched by people hoping to capitalize on Penguin’s success. The first U.S.-based paperback company was Pocket Books, founded in 1939. By 1960, paperbacks were outselling hardbacks in the United States. Matthew Ogle, “The Paperback Revolution,” CRC Studio, 2003, www.crcstudio.org/paperbacks/revolution.php.

The second half of the 20th century was marked by the consolidation of the U.S. book-publishing industry and by a larger trend toward media consolidation. Between 1960 and 1989, about 578 mergers and acquisitions occurred in the U.S. book industry; between 1990 and 1995, 300 occurred; and between 1996 and 2000, nearly 380 occurred. Albert N. Greco, *The Book Publishing Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2005). This was just a part of the larger international trend toward mass media consolidation, where large international media empires acquired smaller companies in many different industries. For example, the German media company Bertelsmann AG had acquired Bantam Books, Doubleday, and Random House; London-based Pearson owned Viking, Penguin, Putnam, and the Dutton Group; and AOL Time Warner owned Little, Brown and Company and Warner Books. Because publicly traded companies have obligations to their shareholders, the publishing industry found itself pressured to turn increasingly high profits. By 2010, roughly 60 percent of all books sold in the United States were published by six large publishing houses, often referred to as the Big Six (see Figure 3.3). Michael Hyatt, “Top Ten U.S. Book Publishers for 2009,” January 15, 2010, <http://michaelhyatt.com/2010/01/top-ten-u-s-book-publishers-for-2009.html>. In the first years of the third millennium, book publishing was an increasingly centralized, profit-driven industry.

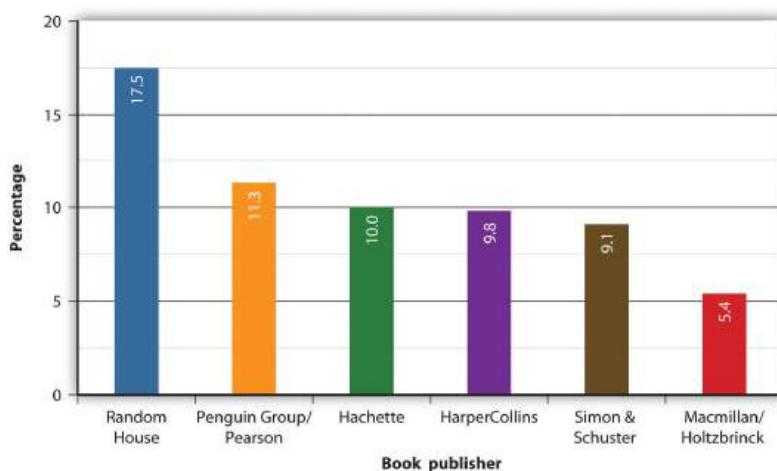


Figure 3.3 The Big Six control more than 60 percent of the book market. Michael Hyatt, “Top Ten U.S. Book Publishers for 2009,” January 15, 2010, <http://michaelhyatt.com/2010/01/top-ten-u-s-book-publishers-for-2009.html>.

Key Takeaways

- Papyrus scrolls were the earliest forms of books, superseded in the 6th century by the codex. The codex was more portable, sturdier, and easier to store, which made it a more popular format. During the Middle Ages, books were handwritten on parchment and then painstakingly decorated. At this time, monasteries were the centers of intellectual life, and most book copying happened in their scriptoria. Until the invention of mechanical movable type, books were expensive and not widely available.
- The Gutenberg Revolution changed how information circulated around the globe. The invention of mechanical movable type made books much cheaper and quicker to produce, which led to the swifter spread of ideas. Access to classical texts spurred the European Renaissance and led to higher literacy rates among women. With millions of books circulating in the world, popular literature soon emerged, sometimes in the form of inexpensive chapbooks.
- Copyright law was originally meant to protect authors from censorship and to allow them to profit from their work. The first copyright law was England’s Statute of Queen Anne in 1710. In the 20th century, American copyright law steadily increased the terms of protection for works under copyright.
- The publishing industry arose to help authors produce and distribute copies of their work. Early printers acted as wholesale booksellers. In the 20th century, paperback books revived the publishing industry by making high literature available in an inexpensive, portable format. By the turn of the century, book publishing was dominated by six publishing companies, themselves part of large media conglomerations.

? Exercise 3.2.1

Questions about the exact extent of fair use of copyrighted materials have been especially relevant in recent years because of the popularity of using and manipulating copyrighted materials on the Internet. Go on a website with user-uploaded content (such as YouTube or Wikipedia) and find examples of works that use copyrighted content in a way that you think is justified under fair use. Then, find examples of works that you think do not use copyrighted content in a way permitted by fair use. Answer the following questions when you have completed your research:

- What is the difference between the two examples you found?
- What criteria did you use to make your decision?
- What objections might be made by someone who could classify the works differently than you did?
- How does current fair-use law differ from ancient, medieval, and modern copyright laws?

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3.3: Books and the Development of U.S. Popular Culture

Learning Objectives

- Identify the change in women's roles after the American Revolution and how it impacted early U.S. literature.
- Name some distinctive aspects of American style used by 19th-century writers.
- Identify popular works of 20th-century fiction.

At the turn of the 18th century, the American colonies could only claim about 250 published books. Nina Baym, introduction to *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007) A:1–14. In 2010 alone, more than 288,000 new titles were published. As the United States has grown and developed, books have grown and developed along with it. Sometimes books have amplified differences within the nation, sometimes their authors have worked to proclaim a distinctive American style; sometimes the author has tried to expose hypocrisies in government and society, and sometimes the author has celebrated America's multifaceted population. Throughout the history of the United States, books have influenced American popular culture and have been influenced by it as well.

COMMON SENSE;

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS

O F

A M E R I C A,

On the following interesting

S U B J E C T S.

- I. Of the Origin and Design of Government in general, with concise Remarks on the English Constitution.
- II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession.
- III. Thoughts on the present State of American Affairs.
- IV. Of the present Ability of America, with some miscellaneous Reflections.

Man knows no Matter save creating HEAVEN,
Or those whom choice and common good ordain.

THOMSON.

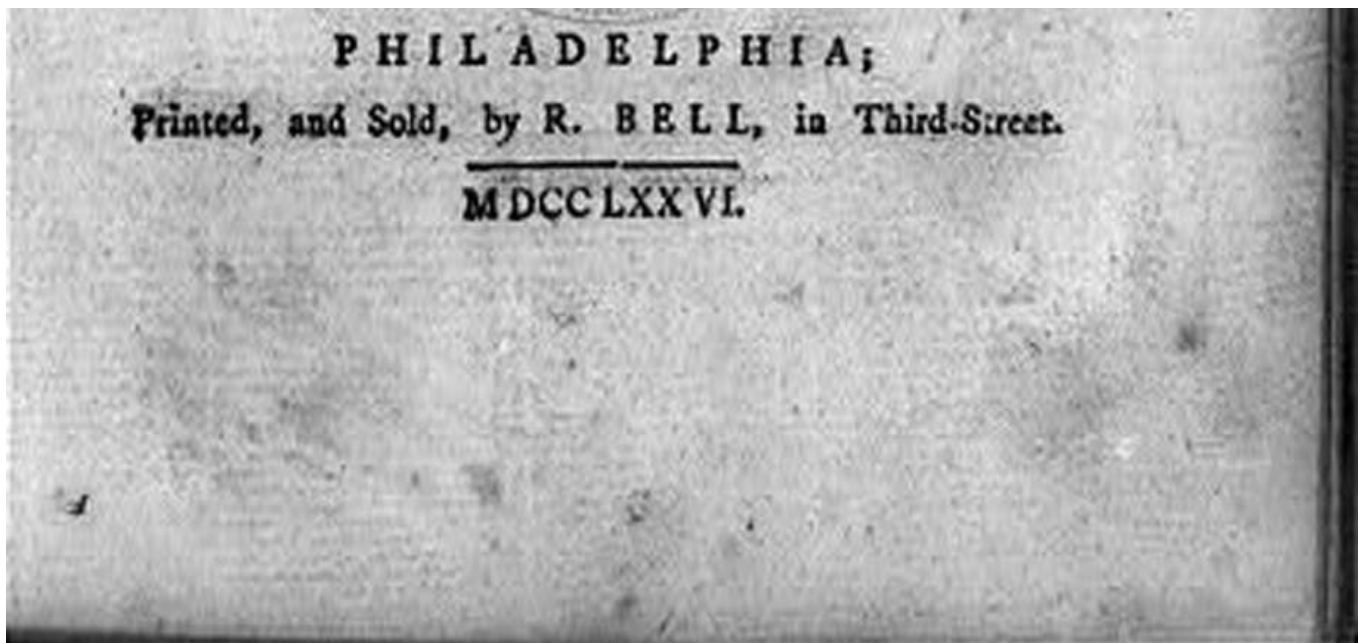


Figure 3.4 *Common Sense*, a pamphlet published anonymously in 1776, argued for the American colonies' independence from Britain.

In the years leading up to the American Revolution, newspapers and pamphlets were the publication method of choice because they could be quickly printed and were ideal for circulating short political and news items at a moment of rapid change. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, first published anonymously in 1776, could be considered America's first bestseller. As literacy rates soared in post-independence America and the nation became more stable, the market for longer books increased. William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy: or, The Triumph of Nature*, published in 1789, is considered the first American novel. Brown's epistolary novel, which is a novel made up of letters of correspondence, warned about the dangers of seduction. Brown's novel shares some features with a novel published 2 years later, *Charlotte Temple* by Susannah Rowson, another cautionary tale about a woman falling prey to seduction.

Though women were often the subjects of popular novels, they were increasingly the audience as well. Eighteenth-century Americans were influenced by Enlightenment values, which maintained that a strong nation needed an educated, moral population. Although the public realm of education, employment, and politics was dominated by men, women had control over the domestic sphere and the education of the next generation. The 18th-century idea that American women should educate their children for the good of the emerging nation, sometimes called republican motherhood, helped to legitimize, expand, and improve women's education. Women's literacy rates rose sharply during this period, and more and more books were tailored to women's interests, as women tended to have more leisure time for reading. Authors such as Frances Burney and Mary Wollstonecraft wrote about issues facing women of the period and openly criticized the fixed role of females in society.

However, in these early years of the American novel, some people found the form potentially dangerous and subversive because it was too entertaining and it appealed to people's, especially women's, imaginations. A character in *The Boarding School* by Hannah Webster Foster, a popular writer of the time period, espouses this particular viewpoint:

Novels, are the favorite and the most dangerous kind of reading, now adopted by the generality of young ladies.... Their romantic pictures of love, beauty, and magnificence, fill the imagination with ideas which lead to impure desires, a vanity of exterior charms, and a fondness for show and dissipation, by no means consistent with that simplicity, modesty, and chastity, which should be the constant inmates of the female breast. Hannah Webster Foster, *The Boarding School; or, Lessons of a Preceptress to Her Pupils* (1829; repr., Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010).

Part of the perceived threat of novels was their widespread popularity with many different kinds of people. An early biography of Susannah Rowson characterized the wide readership of her novel:

It has stolen its way alike into the study of the divine and into the workshop of the mechanic, into the parlor of the accomplished lady and the bed-chamber of her waiting maid, into the log-hut on the extreme border of modern civilization and into the fore-castle of the whale ship on the lonely ocean. It has been read by the grey bearded professor after his 'divine Plato'; by the beardless clerk after balancing his accounts at night, by the traveler waiting for the next conveyance at the village inn; by the school girl

stealthfully in her seat at school. Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996).

These popular 18th-century novels were preoccupied with providing moral guidance and cautionary tales to the citizens of the newly formed United States. Questions of freedom and responsibility were paramount as the emerging nation attempted to establish a uniquely American literature.

Books in the 1800s—How *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Helped Start a War

Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* became the most popular book in the 1800s until *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published. Michael Winship, "Two Early American Bestsellers," *Common-place* 9, no. 3 (2009), www.common-place.org/vol-09/no-03/winship/. Written by abolitionist and preacher Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1852—9 years before the beginning of the Civil War—*Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a smash hit by any definition. An impassioned critique of slavery that tugged on readers' emotions, the novel sold 300,000 copies in its first year and became the century's second-best-selling book after the Bible. Africans in America Resource Bank, "Slave Narratives and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1845–1862," PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2958.html>. Stowe's novel has been credited with heightening tensions between the North and the South. The novel was not only popular domestically. The first London edition sold 200,000 copies in a year, and the book was the first American novel to be translated into Chinese. Africans in America Resource Bank, "Slave Narratives and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1845–1862," PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2958.html>. The absence of international copyright law meant that Stowe was not compensated for most of these translations. Many unauthorized stage versions of the play were produced as well, causing historians to theorize that more people saw theatrical adaptations of the play than read the book. As with today's stage and film adaptations of books, some of these versions of Stowe's story were faithful to the novel, while others changed the story's ending or even twisted the story to make it pro-slavery. In the early 1900s, 9 silent film versions of the novel were released, making *Uncle Tom's Cabin* the most-filmed story of the silent film era. With her book, Stowe helped establish the political novel as an important touchstone of American literature.

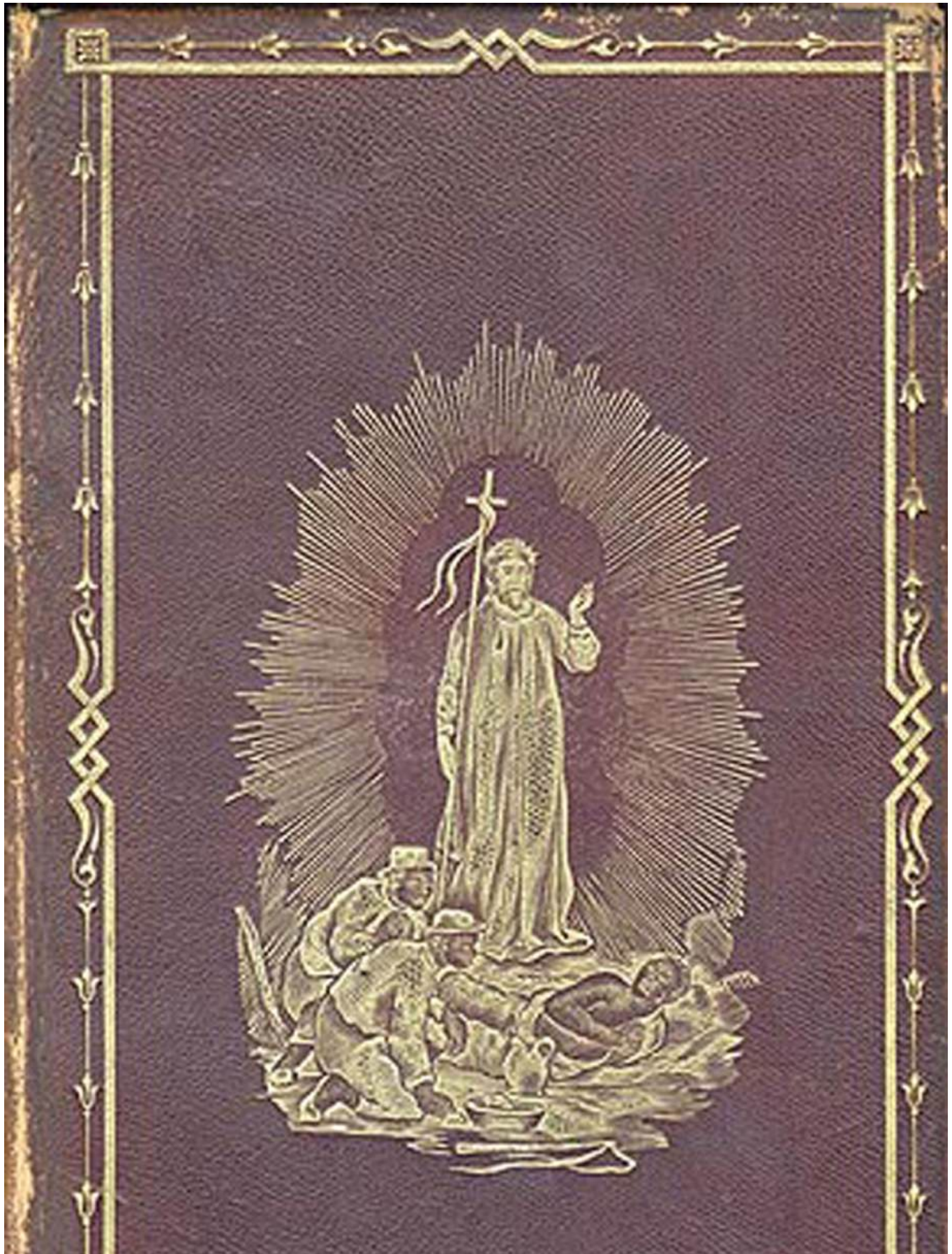




Figure 3.5 Before strict copyright law, many different versions of Stowe's novel cropped up.

Other 19th-century writers in the United States concentrated on developing a uniquely American style, a mode of self-expression distinct from European models. James Fenimore Cooper, author of *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), wrote adventure stories that celebrated the American frontier, championing a theme that would intrigue U.S. writers for centuries to come. Poet Walt Whitman wrote *Leaves of Grass* (1855), a collection of poems that shocked readers with its frank sexuality and fresh use of language. In contrast to most other English-language poets at the time, Whitman wrote in free verse, mimicking the rhythms of actual speech in his poems. He was purposefully informal; he valued everyday speech; he spoke openly about sexual themes; and he was an important figure in establishing an American idiom that was open, informal, and focused on the experiences of common people. Washington Irving, author of the now-iconic short stories “Rip Van Winkle” (1819) and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1820), helped establish satire and wit as important aspects of the emerging American style.

Mark Twain famously used humor in his many works of journalism, travel writing, and fiction. Twain's characters' voices are funny, irreverent, and full of off-the-wall idioms and odd regional coinages. This passage, from the first chapter of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), shows Twain's use of distinctively American speech patterns: “The Widow Douglas she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer I lit out.” Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885; repr., New York: Harper & Brothers, 1912). Twain was also one of the first writers to use a then-newfangled invention—the typewriter.

Edgar Allan Poe is best known for writing macabre stories and poems like “The Raven” (1845), “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846), and “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843). A master of the Gothic genre, Poe is also credited with writing the first detective story, 1841's “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” (Some people also credit Poe with the invention of the horror story and the science fiction story.) In this and other stories, Poe established many of the classic features of detective stories, including Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes tales: a brilliant, crime-solving detective who works outside the standard police system; the detective's assistant or friend, who serves as narrator; and an emphasis on analysis and solving a crime through reason. Poe had such a strong effect on the mystery genre that the Mystery Writers of America annually give out the Edgar Awards, named in honor of Poe.

At the end of the 1800s, American literature could be broadly categorized as reflecting an interest in the natural landscape, preoccupation with questions of identity (both of the individual and the nation), an interest in humor or satire, a pride in common speech, and an interest in politics. An emerging interest in what we now call genre fiction was increasing and would become a fully fledged movement as the 20th century progressed.

Twentieth Century and Beyond

The production of books in the 1900s was cheaper than ever because of improved technology. The 20th century saw a multiplicity of genres that began to better reflect the diversity of experiences and interests in the United States. Furthermore, the paperback revolution eroded the distinction between high and low art. By the end of the century, however, books were facing competition for attention with films, television, video games, and the Internet.

In 1900, L. Frank Baum published *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a novel set in the fantastical world of Oz. It became the best-selling children's book for the next 2 years and went on to spawn 13 sequels. Baum's book is considered part of the so-called golden age of children's literature, which is considered to have begun with Lewis Carroll's *Adventures of Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and ended with A. A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh books (1924–1928). Along with children's literature, other kinds of genre fiction saw their birth or growth in the 20th century. Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) and Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) established the Western as a uniquely American genre that would influence the popular Wild West films of the 1920s and beyond. Other genres including science fiction, horror, mystery, and romance sprung up out of the late-19th and early-20th

dime novels, named for their cheap cost and known for their sensational, quickly written stories. The dime novel gave way to the even-cheaper pulp magazines and books, inexpensive publications named for the cheap pulp paper they were printed on. Pulp stories were generally sensational and featured sordid tales of murder, prostitution, and gangster violence; others told fantastical stories of aliens or monsters. The pulps were gleefully low culture and were quite popular with readers. Conan the Barbarian, Tarzan, Zorro, and The Shadow all made their first appearances as characters in early pulps. The paperback revolution of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s gave genre stories a wider reach in a more durable format.

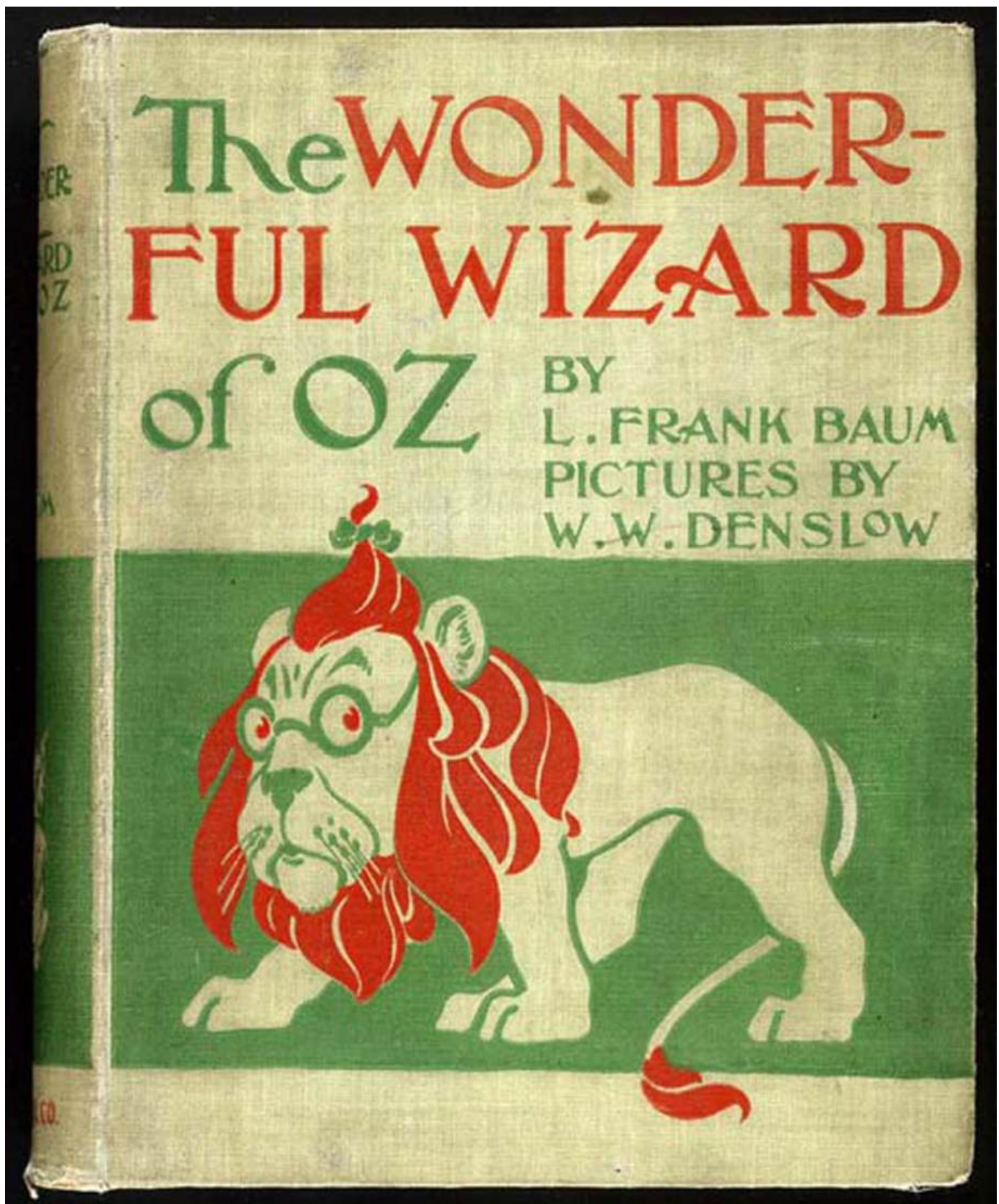


Figure 3.6 L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was the basis for the famous 1939 movie *The Wizard of Oz*.

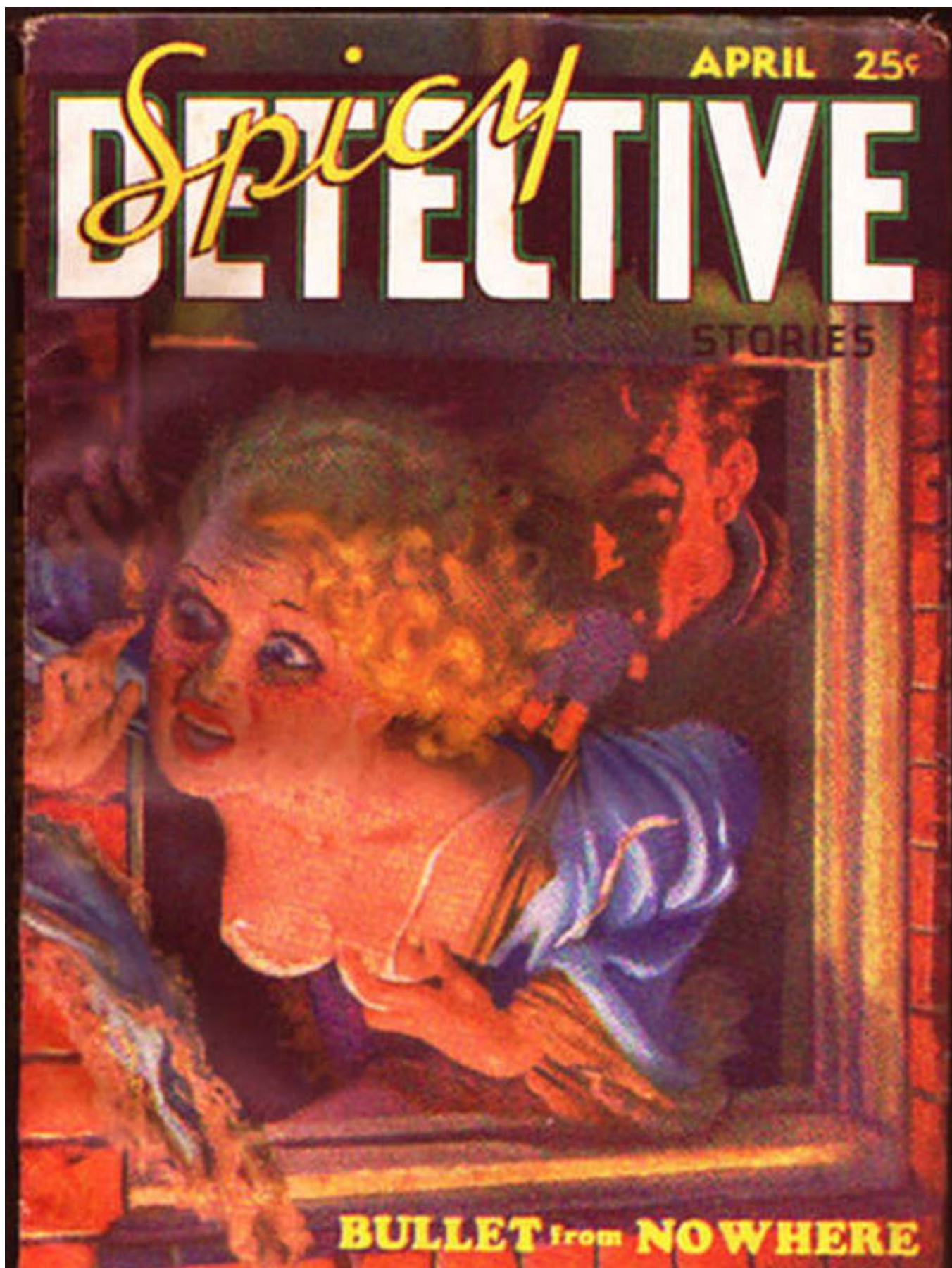




Figure 3.7 Pulp publications captured readers with their lurid, colorful covers.

While many 19th-century U.S. writers worked to create a distinctive American style, some 20th-century writers aimed to debunk American myths. After World War II, the United States emerged as a dominant world power. Some writers became preoccupied with critiquing American society and government. Dissatisfied with the widespread 1950s ideals of conformity and homogeneity, Beat Generation authors wrote in a freewheeling, informal style and proudly described their drug use and sexual exploits. Touchstone works of the Beat Generation include Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl and Other Poems* (1956), Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957), and William S. Burroughs’s *Naked Lunch* (1959). These books celebrated road trips, drug trips, spiritual yearning, distrust of the mass media, and gleeful obscenity, and they helped pave the way for the hippie movement of the 1960s.

After the end of the Cold War in 1991, American literature saw an upswing in books that expressed the diversity of voices and experiences of late-20th-century America. Jhumpa Lahiri and Amy Tan wrote about the immigrant experience; Sherman Alexie and Louise Erdrich penned acclaimed novels about Native American life; and Toni Morrison explored the political and historical dimensions of slavery and race in the United States. Sometimes called multicultural literature, these and other books were celebrated as a way to promote cross-cultural understanding by examining the different value systems, histories, traditions, and speech patterns of people in America.

The 21st-century market has so far been dominated by several massively popular novel franchises—such as *Left Behind*, *Harry Potter*, *The Twilight Saga*, and *The Da Vinci Code*—that have collectively sold hundreds of millions of copies. These haven’t only been popular as books; they’ve also spawned equally lucrative films and merchandise tie-ins. Consumers who are so inclined can purchase *Twilight Saga* wall decals, *Harry Potter* earrings, or *Da Vinci Code* board games. In some ways, such novel franchises harken back to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the 19th century, which was a multiplatform success popular on the page, stage, and screen.

📌 Defining Obscenity: “Howl” Goes on Trial



THE POCKET POETS SERIES

HOWL

AND OTHER POEMS

ALLEN GINSBERG

Introduction by

William Carlos Williams

NUMBER FOUR

Figure 3.8 “Howl” marked a turning point in United States obscenity laws.

Allen Ginsberg’s poem “Howl” met with strong reactions, both positive and negative, when it was released by City Lights Books in 1956. Ginsberg’s poem was instantly notorious for its descriptions of sexual acts, both heterosexual and homosexual,

drug use, mental hospitals, and antiestablishment conspiracies. Many readers were shocked by Ginsberg's words; however, that was precisely his intent. He once described "Howl" as "an emotional time bomb that would continue exploding in U.S. consciousness in case our military-industrial-nationalist complex solidified." Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*, ed. Miles Barry, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995). In 1957, U.S. customs officials seized a shipment of copies of the book on the grounds of obscenity, but soon after dropped their charges. However, the poem's legal struggles weren't over; that same year, the California police sent plainclothes officers to City Lights Bookstore to buy a copy and then promptly arrested the salesclerk and the store owner on charges of obscenity.

The "Howl" trial came in the same year as several other landmark Supreme Court cases that liberalized the legal definition of obscenity in the United States. Before 1957, a more strict definition held that any material with a possible immoral influence was obscene. This stance led to a ban on works by authors such as James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence. Under the new law, a work would be judged by "community standards" and could only be judged obscene if its "dominant theme taken as a whole appeals to the prurient interest." In other words, books could no longer be deemed obscene on the basis of a single four-letter word. It also meant that the poem's obscenity would have to be judged against the relatively liberal standards of San Francisco, where the police sting operation had taken place.

The ACLU leapt to City Lights' defense, and the presiding judge overturned the obscenity charge, citing the poem's "redeeming social importance." In hindsight, the judge seems undoubtedly correct about the poem's social importance. "Howl" and the obscenity rulings of 1957 marked a crucial bridge between the post-World War II years of enthusiastic patriotism and social conformity and the 1960s ethos of free love and antigovernment sentiment. By the time of Ginsberg's death in 1997, *Howl and Other Poems* had sold more than 800,000 copies. Johan Raskin, *American Scream: Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" and the Making of the Beat Generation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

- After the Revolutionary War, the United States was preoccupied with questions of self-determination. Many popular books reflected similar concerns about freedom through stories that explored the dangers of seduction for women. During this time, the ideals of republican motherhood also boosted literacy rates for women, although reading novels was still seen by some as a potentially subversive activity.
- During the 19th century, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a national sensation that heightened divisions between the North and South and that may have hastened the outbreak of the Civil War. The book was also popular as a stage play and, later, as a silent film. Other American writers of this period tried to establish a distinctive American voice, whether through political engagement, satire, interest in the natural world, or use of regional dialects and idioms.
- In the 20th century, genre fiction came to prominence through popular, sensational pulp novels. Genres such as children's literature, science fiction, mystery, and romance were given a boost beginning in the 1930s by the spread of the paperback book. The second half of the 20th century was marked by writers who challenged conformist ideas of the United States. The Beat Generation risked jail time for obscenity, while multicultural literature celebrated a multiplicity of voices and viewpoints.
- The 21st century has so far been dominated by a number of novel franchises with massive sales and multiple marketing tie-ins.

? Exercise 3.3.1

Consider a novel or book from any era in U.S. history that has made an impression on you. Research this book on the Internet to discover how it played a part in shaping U.S. popular culture, how culture shaped the book in question, or both. Then, answer the following questions:

- What was the social or cultural climate at the time of its publication?
- What was the initial critical reception? Did opinions of the book change over time?
- At what point was the book most popular?
- Does the book belong to a larger movement? Was it a reaction against a political moment or literary movement that came before?

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3.4: Major Book Formats

Learning Objectives

- Determine the role of hardcover books in the publishing industry.
- Identify the differences in the two major formats of paperback books.
- Recognize the changes that e-books bring to the publishing industry.

From ancient Egyptian papyrus scrolls to scrollable 21st-century e-books, a book can come in many different formats. However, in some ways, it seems like the more things change, the more they stay the same. In the same way that early printed books were painstakingly illuminated to look more like medieval books, today's e-books use e-paper technology to mimic the look of a printed page. Even the hardcover books we're familiar with today are direct descendants of the ancient codex.

Hardcover

While the first codices enclosed bound papers between wooden covers (the word *codex* means *block of wood* in Latin), contemporary hardcover book covers are usually made of cardboard sheathed in cloth, paper, or leather. The printed pages of the book are either sewn or glued to the cover. Until the early 1800s, most books were sold unbound. A buyer would purchase a sheath of printed papers that would be bound either by the bookseller or by a commissioned bindery. British publisher William Pickering is considered the first publisher to issue books in uniform cloth bindings in 1820. About a decade later, dust jackets, the detachable outer covers that sheathe most hardback books today, arrived on the scene. Dust jackets were initially meant only as a protective covering for the binding, but soon they became a place where designers could create a colorful and distinctive cover for a book.

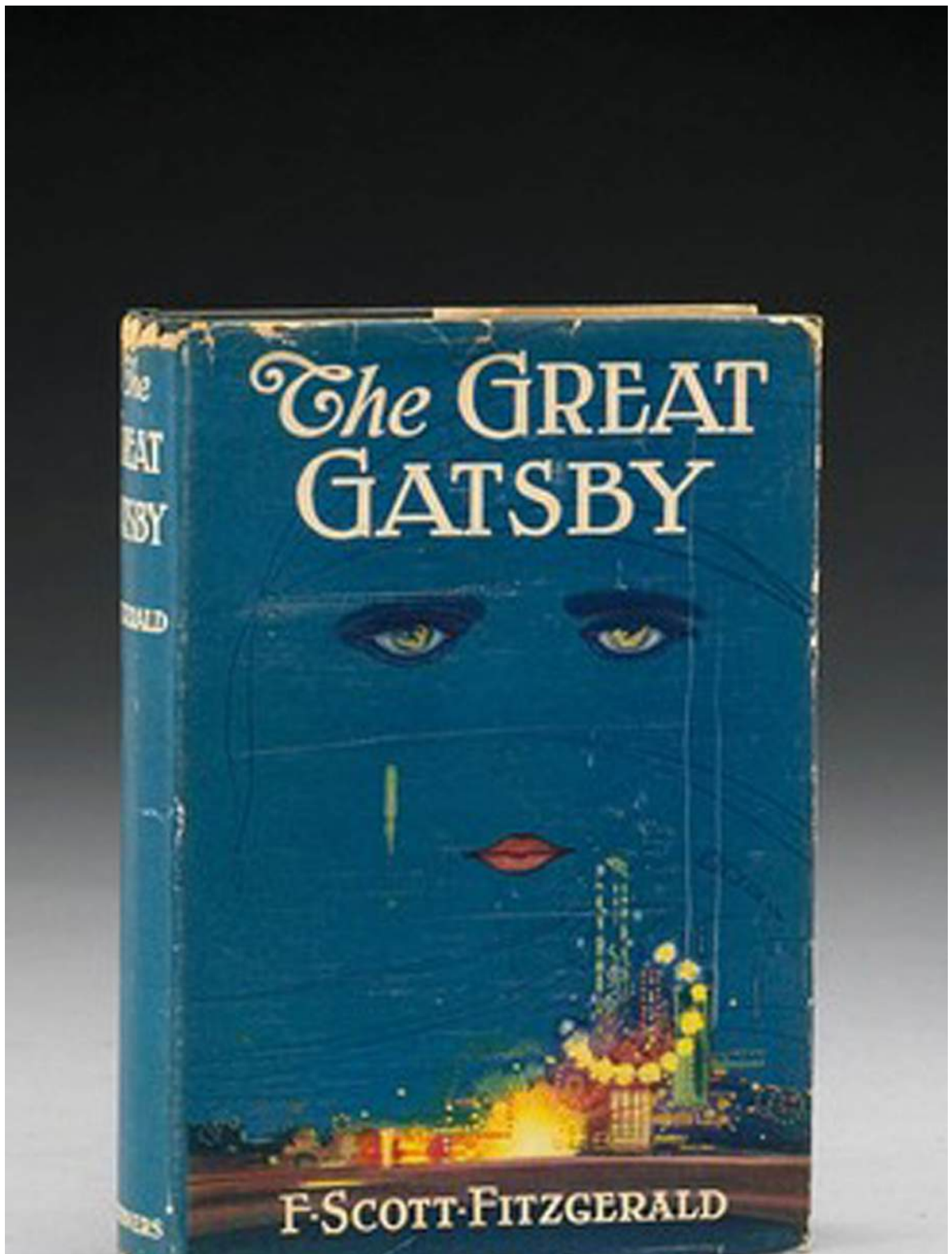




Figure 3.9 Original dust jackets are especially important for book collectors—a first edition of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* without the dust jacket sells for around \$3000; with the dust jacket intact, it can go for more than \$30,000.

The durability of hardcover books makes them attractive to both authors and book purchasers. However, the competitive economics of today's publishing industry means that some books are never issued in hardcover. Because hardcover books are more expensive to produce and almost always cost more than their paperback equivalents, publishers tend to reserve the format for books that they expect will sell well.

Based on projected sales, publishers must decide how big of a print run to order for a new hardcover book. A book's print run refers to all the copies made in one setup of the printing apparatus. A failed book may only have one, while a successful book may have 50 or more printings. Figuring out how many copies of a book to print is an inexact science, as publishers must essentially guess how well a book will sell. There is no standard size for a print run. The U.K. edition of the first *Harry Potter* book had an initial print run of only 500 copies; the U.S. print run of the seventh and final book in the series was a record-breaking 12 million. When an initial print run is sold out, the book is either reprinted (these copies are considered a second printing) or is considered out of print. The contemporary publishing industry will often issue a first-run hardcover printing, followed by subsequent paperback editions.

Paperback

Inexpensive paper-bound books have been around for centuries in formats like the chapbook, the British penny dreadful, and the American dime novel. However, the hardcover book, whether as an ancient codex or its contemporary equivalent, was the dominant format in the book world for thousands of years. The introduction of a new format in the 1930s, the paperback, was considered revolutionary. The so-called paperback revolution began during the Great Depression, when paperbacks were marketed as inexpensive alternatives to hardcover editions. Penguin Books, Ltd., the first majorly successful paperback publishing company, kept prices low by ordering large print runs and selling books in nontraditional retailers, such as Woolworth's drugstores. Penguin also broke the traditional paperback mold by avoiding pulp fiction entertainment novels and instead printing books that were both cheap and intellectually stimulating. Donald Porter Geddes, the editor of Pocket Books, the first paperback publishing house in the United States, spelled out this new approach to bookselling in 1944: "The best books apparently have the greatest appeal to the greatest number of people ... the larger American public need no longer suffer from the delusion that it is intellectually inferior, or, from a literary point of view, lacking in any aspect in good taste, judgment, and appetite." Matthew Ogle, "The Paperback Revolution," CRC Studio, 2003, www.crcstudio.org/paperbacks/revolution.php. By 1960, when paperback books first outsold hardcovers, these early paperback innovators were proved right.

While paperback publishing first issued only reprints of books that had already been issued in hardcover, paperback originals, books that had their initial print run as a paperback edition, emerged in the 1950s. Paperback originals were another step in helping to remove the stigma from the paperback book. In 1999, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies* was the first paperback original to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Today's books published in paperback are traditionally divided into two broad categories: mass-market paperbacks and trade paperbacks. Mass-market paperbacks are small, inexpensive editions that are sometimes issued after a hardcover edition, although many genre novels are printed only in mass-market paperback editions. Trade paperbacks are larger and generally of better quality. They're often printed on higher-quality paper (sometimes acid-free paper). If the trade paperback follows a hardcover release, the paperback will be the same size as the hardcover and will have the same pagination and page layout as the hardcover edition.

Traditionally, hardcover books have been seen as more prestigious than paperbacks, though that stereotype may be beginning to change. In recent years, some publishers of literary fiction were seeing 50 to 75 percent of the hardcover books they shipped to bookstores returned to them unsold. As a response, certain publishers opted to release books with uncertain sales potential as trade paperbacks, bypassing the hardcover format entirely. "Getting somebody to spend \$22 on a book by an author who they've never heard of is hard, but getting them to spend \$13.95 on a paperback is much easier," Random House's Jane von Mehren told *The New York Times* in 2006. Edward Wyatt, "Literary Novels Going Straight to Paperback," *New York Times*, March 22, 2006, Books

section. Some publishers are concerned that book reviewers don't take trade paperback editions as seriously, but that too may be slowly changing. Another publishing strategy is to release hardcover and trade paperback editions simultaneously rather than delaying the paperback edition for several months (or even years, in the case of exceptionally popular books). Such a technique is intended to drive up sales, taking advantage of initial publicity to capture readers who may be unwilling to pay the full hardcover price for a book.

Whatever the concerns that publishers may have about issuing paperbacks, the format is still dominant in the U.S. publishing industry. According to the American Association of Publishers, 35 percent of the books sold in 2009 were trade paperbacks; 35 percent hardcovers; 21 percent mass market paperbacks; 2 percent audio books; 2 percent e-books; and 5 percent "other." "Some Facts About the Book Publishing Industry," Eco-Libris, <http://www.ecolibris.net/bookpublish.asp>.

E-Books

The hardcover book's expensive, durable binding seemed to say that it was an object intended for posterity. If paperback books disrupted the traditional concept of books by making them cheaper and more portable, then the e-book is poised to cause an even greater change in how readers interact with a text. E-books, also known as electronic or digital books, are the digital media equivalent of printed books. That is, they are books read on the screen of an electronic device, whether a cell phone, personal computer, or dedicated e-book reader.

E-books differ from their print equivalents in many significant ways. For one, there's no physical production cost, which means that e-books are generally less expensive than traditional books. There's also no cost to store or transport e-books. Because an e-book's publisher doesn't need to order a set print run, a text issued as an e-book doesn't ever have to go out of print. E-books also appeal to readers who want instant gratification. Instead of having to travel to a brick-and-mortar bookstore or wait for a delivery, a reader can download an e-book in a matter of minutes.

Early e-books were mostly technical manuals or digitized versions of works in the public domain. As the Internet took off and as electronic devices became increasingly mobile, book publishers began to issue digital editions of their works. In the first decade of the 21st century, various companies began issuing software and hardware platforms for electronic books, each competing for dominance in this emerging market.

Although e-books make up only a small percentage of total book sales, that number is growing. Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol*, the follow-up to his massively popular novel *The Da Vinci Code*, sold more copies as a Kindle e-book than as a hardcover in the first few days after its September 2009 release. However, e-book successes have led to a threat that faces many kinds of digital content: online piracy. Only a few days after its initial release, Brown's novel had been illegally downloaded more than 100,000 times. Some authors and publishers are concerned that Internet users expect free content and will find a way around spending money on e-books. American novelist Sherman Alexie recently voiced some of these anxieties, "With the open-source culture on the Internet, the idea of ownership—of artistic ownership—goes away." Matt Frisch, "Digital Piracy Hits the E-book Industry," *CNN*, January 1, 2010, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/TECH/01/01/ebook.piracy/index.html>. Other prominent authors have reacted to the e-book in various ways. In 2000, Stephen King published his novella *Riding the Bullet* as a digital file that could only be read on a computer; in contrast, J. K. Rowling has stated that the Harry Potter novels won't ever be released as e-books. John B. McHugh, "J.K. Rowling Refuses E-books for Potter," *USA Today*, June 14, 2005, http://www.usatoday.com/life/books/news/2005-06-14-rowling-refuses-ebooks_x.htm. However, piracy has struck Rowling's novels as well. Every Harry Potter novel is available in pirated form, either as a scanned copy or one that was manually typed out by fans.

Another concern with e-books is the possibility of digital decay. All an e-book is, after all, is a collection of data saved to a disk. It turns out that digital formats tend to decay much faster than their physical counterparts. Kurt D. Bollacker, "Avoiding a Digital Dark Age," *American Scientist* 98, no. 3 (2010): 106. The swift turnover of digital devices is another concern; the possibility exists that a book bought on a Kindle device in 2010 will be not be compatible with an equivalent device in 2035 or even 2015.

E-book sales still make up a small part of the overall book market, 3 to 5 percent by most estimates, but their sales increased by 177 percent in 2009. *The New Yorker* cites a projection that e-books will someday account for between 25 and 50 percent of all book sales. Ken Auletta, "Publish or Perish," *Annals of Communication*, *New Yorker*, April 26, 2010. And with newer models of e-book readers, such as the iPad, boasting full-color screens and the ability to embed web links and video in a book's text, e-books may fundamentally reshape how people read in the future.

- Hardcover books are a direct descendant of the ancient codex. Because they are more durable and more expensive, they are considered more prestigious than paperback books. Traditionally, publishers order an initial print run in hardcover, followed by a paperback release.
- Paperback books are popular because they are more portable and less expensive than their hardcover equivalents are. Books issued in paperback can be either mass market paperbacks or trade paperbacks, which are pricier and higher quality. To stay competitive and to attract customers, publishers are releasing some novels simultaneously in hardcover and paperback; other books skip hardcover and are released as paperback originals.
- Although they make up only 3 to 5 percent of current sales, e-books have the potential to transform the book market. Gaining currency with customers only in recent years, the e-book has the advantage of being cheaper and more portable than even most paperbacks. Some concerns with e-books include the prevalence of piracy and the potential for digital decay.

? Exercise 3.4.1

Create a list of the three book formats mentioned in this section, and then answer the following questions:

- What are the features, advantages, and drawbacks of each format?
- How do they differ? How are they the same?
- What type of person might each format appeal to?
- Which format do you prefer the most, and why?

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3.5: Current Publishing Trends

Learning Objectives

- Indicate the effect of blockbuster syndrome on the publishing industry.
- Recognize how book superstores have changed the business of bookselling.
- Identify the causes and results of price wars in the book industry.

The last few decades have seen a sharp rise in electronic entertainment. In 2009, the average American spent 56 percent of his or her free time watching television, and less than 7 percent of his or her free time reading. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *American Time Use Survey*, Table 11, “Time spent in leisure and sports activities for the civilian population by selected characteristics, 2009 annual averages,” June 22, 2010, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.t11.htm>. Video game sales rose 19 percent in 2008 alone and has continued to climb. Associated Press, “Video Game Sales Top \$21 Billion in 2008,” *Games on msnbc.com*, January 15, 2009, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28682836/ns/technology_and_science-games/t/video-game-sales-top-billion/. In a world full of diverting entertainments, each clamoring for people’s time, the publishing industry is endeavoring to do everything it can to capture readers’ attention.

Blockbuster Syndrome

Imagine this scenario: A young author has spent the last few years slaving over his novel, rewriting and revising until the whole thing is polished, exciting, and fresh. He sends out his manuscript and is lucky enough to find a literary agent eager to support his work. The agent sells the book to a publisher, netting the author a decent advance; the book goes on to get great reviews, win some awards, and sell 20,000 copies. To most people, this situation sounds like a dream come true. But in an increasingly commercialized publishing industry, with a focus on finding the next blockbuster, this burgeoning author could be at risk of not getting his contract renewed.

In an industry increasingly dominated by large media corporations with obligations to stockholders, publishers feel pressured to turn a profit. As a result, they tend to bank on sure-fire best sellers, books that are expected to sell millions (or tens of millions) of copies, regardless of literary merit. The industry’s growing focus on a few best-selling authors, called blockbuster syndrome, often means less support and less money for the vast majority of writers who don’t sell millions of copies.

An advance is a sum of money paid to the author in expectation of future royalties. Royalties are a percentage of the book’s sale price. So if a publisher gives an author a \$10,000 advance, the author has immediate access to that money, but the first \$10,000 worth of royalties goes to the publisher. After that, the author accumulates royalties for every book sold. In this way, an advance is a cross between a loan and a gamble. If the book doesn’t sell well, the author doesn’t have to pay back the advance; however, he or she won’t earn any additional money from royalties. However, as many as three-quarters of books don’t earn back their advances, meaning that their authors aren’t making any money from sales at all.

Publishers and writers are notoriously hush-hush about the actual sums of advances. A recent *New York Times* article estimated an average advance to be around \$30,000, though actual figures vary widely. Keeping in mind that a book may take years to write, it’s clear that many authors are barely eking out a living from their books.

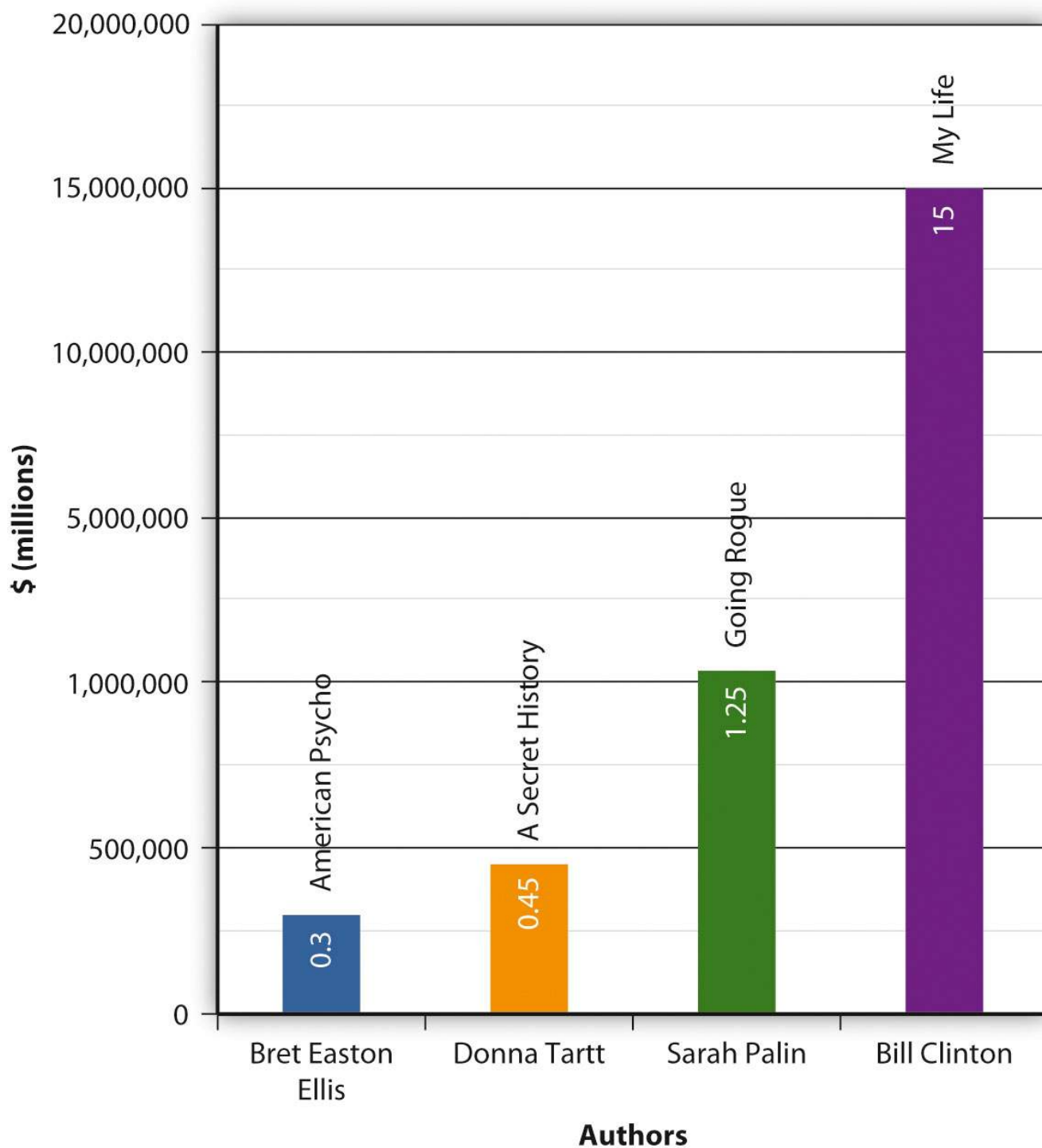


Figure 3.10 All Advances Aren't Equal

Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho*: \$300,000
 Giselle Benatar, "American Psychodrama," *Entertainment Weekly*, November 30, 1990, www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,318714,00.html.

Donna Tartt, *A Secret History*: \$450,000
 Brooke Allen, "Panpipes and Preppies," review of *The Secret History*, by Donna Tartt, *New Criterion*, October 1992, Books, www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Panpipes—preppies-4619.

Sarah Palin, *Going Rogue*: \$1.25 million
 Yereth Rosen, "Palin's Financial Disclosure: \$1.25 mln advance for 'Going Rouge'," *Reuters*, October 27, 2009, blogs.reuters.com/frontrow/20...r-going-rogue/.

Bill Clinton, *My Life*: \$15 million Mike McIntire, “ Clintons Made \$109 Million in Last 8 Years,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/05/us/politics/05clintons.html?_r=2.

These days, though, most of the media attention is focused on the few books each year that earn their authors huge advances and go on to sell massive numbers of copies—the blockbusters. But the focus on blockbusters can have a damaging effect on emerging writers. Because publishing is a gamble, advances to new or unproven writers are generally low. Additionally, because a publishing house wants to recoup its initial investment, a book that earned an author a big advance will probably get a big publicity budget. Unfortunately, the flip side is also true; a small advance equals a small publicity budget, which can trap many authors in a vicious circle. In most cases, a book without much promotion won’t have the chance to become a hit. If the book isn’t a hit, the publisher can justify an even lower advance for the next book and a lower budget for promotion. The result is that many books by emerging authors get lost in the shuffle. “It used to be that the first book earned a modest advance, then you would build an audience over time and break even on the third or fourth book,” Morgan Entrekin, the publisher of Grove/Atlantic, told *The New York Times*. “Now the first book is expected to land a huge advance and huge sales.... Now we see a novelist selling 9,000 hardcovers and 15,000 paperbacks, and they see themselves as a failure.” U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *American Time Use Survey*, Table 11.

Potential blockbusters come at a high price for the publisher as well. They threaten to eat up publicity budgets and dominate publishers’ attention. An extremely large advance will only pay off if a massive number of copies sell, which makes the publishing houses less likely to take a gamble on unconventional books. This can also lead to a glut of similar books being pushed by publishers. After Dan Brown’s huge success with *The Da Vinci Code* in 2003, publishers rushed to capitalize on its success by releasing similar art history–conspiracy–mystery thrillers, few of which interested readers.

To a certain extent, focusing on blockbusters has worked for the publishing industry. Today’s best sellers sell more copies than best sellers did 10 years ago and make up a larger share of the market. However, overall book sales have remained relatively flat over the past 8 years. Association of American Publishers, “AAP Publishers Report Strong Growth in Year-to-Year, Year-End Book Sales,” press release, February 16, 2011. In other words, it’s not that more books are being sold; it’s just that more of the sales are taken up by a few heavily promoted blockbusters. However, the blockbuster syndrome threatens to damage the industry in other ways. In a bestseller-driven system, literature becomes a commodity, with little value placed on a book’s artistic merit. Instead, the primary concern is whether or not it will sell.

Authors Say “No” to Blockbuster Syndrome

Discontented with the industry’s focus on blockbusters at the expense of other books, some authors are taking control of publishing their materials. John Edgar Wideman, a celebrated author who has been a finalist for the National Book Award and is the only writer to have twice won the International PEN/Faulkner Award, had published more than 20 books through the traditional publishing system. But by the time he was looking for a home for his new collection of short stories, *Briefs: Stories for the Palm of the Mind*, he was ready for something new. “The blockbuster syndrome is a feature of our social landscape that has gotten out of hand,” Wideman said. “Unless you become a blockbuster, your book disappears quickly. It becomes not only publish or perish, but sell or perish.” Calvin Reid, “John Edgar Wideman to Self-Publish New Book Via Lulu.com,” *Publishers Weekly*, March 5, 2010. Wideman eventually decided to team up with self-publishing service Lulu, which meant that he gave up a traditional contract and advance payment in favor of greater control and a higher percentage of royalties. Other authors are turning away from the Big Six publishers and seeking out independent publishing houses, which often offer a different model. McSweeney’s offers low advances and splits all profits with the author evenly. Vanguard offers no advances, but gives authors high royalties and guarantees a high marketing budget. These nontraditional systems allow authors more flexibility at a time when the publishing industry is facing rapid change. As Wideman puts it, “I like the idea of being in charge. I have more control over what happens to my book. And I have more control over whom I reach.” Calvin Reid, “John Edgar Wideman to Self-Publish New Book Via Lulu.com,” *Publishers Weekly*, March 5, 2010.

Rise (and Fall?) of Book Superstores





Figure 3.11 Small independent bookstores find it hard to compete with multibillion-dollar corporations.

In the late 20th century, a new group of colossal bookstores reshaped the retail sale of books in the United States. Two of the most well-known and prevalent book retailers, Barnes & Noble and Borders (the largest and second-largest book retailers in the United States, respectively) expanded extensively by building book superstores in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These large retail outlets were different from traditional, smaller bookstores in several ways. They often sold many products other than books, including calendars, paper goods, and gifts. Many also housed in-store cafes, allowing patrons to browse books and sip lattes under the same roof. They were also physically bigger, and such megastores drew customers because of their wide selection and their ability to offer books at deeply discounted prices.

Many independent bookstores couldn't compete with the large chains' discounts, wide selection, and upscale atmosphere. According to *Publishers Weekly*, independent booksellers' share of the book market fell from 58 percent in 1972 to 15.2 percent in 1999. The American Booksellers Association (ABA), a trade association of bookstores, notes that its membership peaked at 5,200 in 1991; by 2005, that number had declined by 65 percent to 1,791. The decline of the independent bookstore coincided with the consolidation of the publishing industry, and some supporters of independent bookstores see a link between the two. Richard Howorth—owner of Square Books—an independent bookstore in Oxford, Mississippi, told *Mother Jones* magazine that “when the independent bookselling market was thriving in the '70s and '80s, more books were being published, more people were reading books, the sales of books were higher, and publishers' profit margins were much greater. With the rise of the corporate retailing powers and the consolidation in publishing, all of those things have declined.” Rob Gurwitt, “Light in Oxford,” *Mother Jones*, May/June 2000. Book superstores emphasized high turnover and high-volume sales, placing a higher emphasis on best sellers and returning some mass market paperbacks to publishers after only 6 weeks on the shelves.

In more recent years, the book superstores have been under threat themselves. In 2009, large retailers like Target, Wal-Mart, and Costco sold more books than both independent and chain bookstores combined: nearly 45 percent of the market. Ken Auletta,

“Publish or Perish,” *Annals of Communication*, *New Yorker*, April 26, 2010. These stores didn’t specialize in books and tended to offer only a few heavily promoted blockbuster titles. Large discount stores were able to negotiate favorable deals with publishers, allowing them to discount books even further than the book superstores in some cases. In more recent years, book superstores have also faced a threat from the increasing number of books purchased online. By 2010, Amazon, the largest online bookseller, accounted for around 15 to 20 percent of book sales in the United States.

The shift away from independent bookstores and toward bigger retailers, such as book superstores or nonspecialized retailers like Wal-Mart, has benefited the industry in some ways, most notably by making books cheaper and more widely available. Mega best sellers, such as the Harry Potter and Twilight series, were able to set sales records at least in part because the books were available for purchase in malls, convenience stores, supermarkets, and other nontraditional venues. However, overall book sales have not risen. And though consumers may be paying less for the books they’re buying through these retailers, something may be lost as well. Jonathan Burnham, a publisher from HarperCollins, discussed the value of independent bookstores with *The New Yorker*, noting how they are similar to community centers: “There’s a serendipitous element involved in browsing.... We walk in and know the people who work there and like to hear their reading recommendations.”

Price Wars

Part of the reason book superstores were able to crowd out smaller, independent retailers was their ability to offer significant discounts on a book’s cover price. Because the big chains sell more books, they can negotiate better deals with publishers and then pass the discounts to their customers. Not surprisingly, deep discounts appeal to customers, which is one reason the book superstores gained such a large share of the market in the 1990s. The superstores are able to sell books at such a sharp discount, sometimes even half of the listed price, because their higher sales numbers gives them bargaining power with the publishers. Independent bookstores buying the books at a normal wholesale rate (usually half the list price) are at a disadvantage; they can’t offer deep discounts and, as a result, they must charge higher prices than the superstores. This deep discount policy is one reason bestseller sales have risen over the past decade (book superstores usually slash the prices of best sellers and new releases only). However, large discounts encourage high-volume selling, and emphasizing on high-volume selling encourages safe publishing choices. That is, the bookstores are able to make up for the big discounts only by selling tons of copies, and the books most likely to sell this well are blockbuster works by known-quantity authors. The threat of deep discounting to independent bookstores and its effect on the publishing industry has led some European countries to regulate prices. For example, bookstores in France are prohibited from discounting more than 5 percent, and in Germany, price slashing can only happen 9 months after a book’s release.

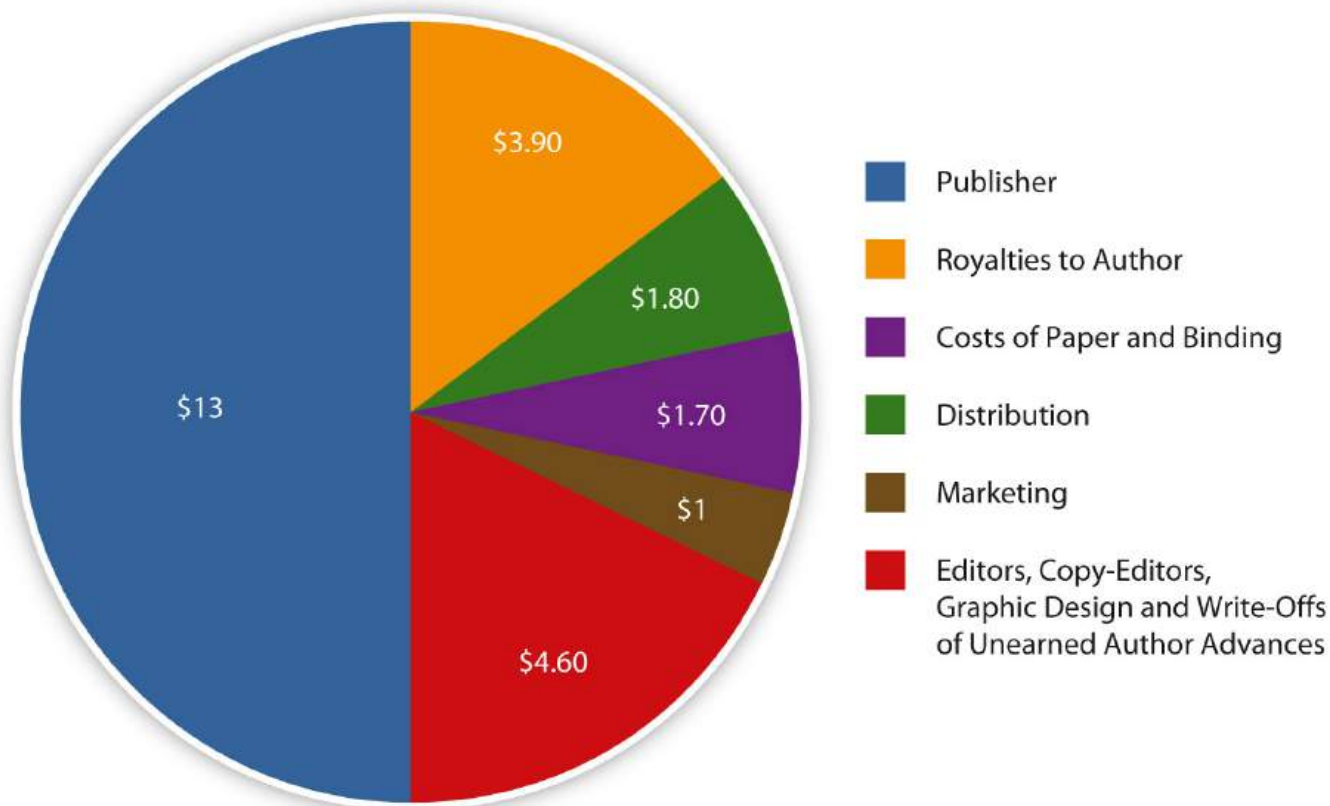


Figure 3.12 Why do books cost so much?

The brick-and-mortar bookstores aren't the only book discounters in the mix. Wal-Mart and other discount retailers sell more copies of the few books they offer at their stores, so they can negotiate even more favorable terms with publishers. Amazon, which dominates online book sales, routinely discounts books 20 percent or more.

Recently, other online retailers have been battling with Amazon for online bookselling profits. In October 2009, as retailers were preparing for the holiday season, Amazon and Wal-Mart were preparing to compete for sales. When Wal-Mart announced that it would lower preorder prices for 10 highly anticipated hardcover books to only \$10, Amazon responded by matching that price the next day. Wal-Mart then lowered its price to \$9, and Amazon followed. Unwilling to give up the fight, Wal-Mart lowered its prices by a penny, listing the 10 books at \$8.99. Then another online retailer, Target, joined the fray, matching Wal-Mart's price. Wal-Mart dropped its list prices again by a penny, listing the books at \$8.98. Sean Gregory, "Walmart, Target, Amazon: Book Price War Heats Up," *Time*, October 27, 2009, www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1932426,00.html.

While there's something almost comical about major retailers duking it out over pennies, it's also a situation that looked quite sobering to book retailers, from the independents to the large chains. The startling thing about the price wars among Amazon, Target, and Wal-Mart was that no one involved expected to make any money from these deeply discounted books. At \$9 or less, these books were almost certainly selling at below retail value, perhaps by quite a lot.

If a book's list price is \$35, its wholesale price is usually around half of that, in this case \$17. If that book is priced at \$9, that means an \$8 loss to the retailer per copy. Although at first this seems like blatantly bad business, it works because all of these retailers are in the business of selling much more than just books. Large online retailers use the deep discounts to lure customers to their websites in hopes that these customers will purchase other items. These book sales are valuable as a way to drive traffic to the retailer's website. However, booksellers whose main business is still selling books, such as local independent bookstores, don't have this luxury.

E-books have also entered into the retail struggle. Because there are no printing costs, e-books are relatively cheap to make, and consumers expect to see the savings on their end. However, book publishers still sell the books to distributors at wholesale prices—about half of the retail value of the hardcover version. To tempt buyers, companies such as Amazon charge only \$9.99 for the average e-title, once again taking a loss. Brad Stone and Motoko Rich, "Sony to Cut E-Book Prices and Offer New Readers," *New*

York Times, August 4, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/05/technology/personaltech/05sony.html>. Many hope to make up for it with device sales—consumers are more likely to spend hundreds of dollars on an inexpensive reader to access cheaper books. While major retailers may eventually profit from this method of sales, many wonder how long it will last. Author David Baldacci argues that a book industry based solely on profit isn't sustainable. In the end, he argues, "there won't be anyone selling [books] anymore because you just can't make any money." Motoko Rich, "Steal This Book (for \$9.99)," *New York Times*, May 16, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/17/weekinreview/17rich.html>.

The inclination to focus only on net profits is indicative of a larger trend in the book industry. Retailers are getting larger, consumer prices are getting lower, and popular books are receiving the majority of attention. While this has positive short-term results for consumers and large retailers, the effects are devastating for most authors and smaller bookstores. Although, in the end, the introduction of e-books may be no more harmful to the industry than the explosion of paperbacks was in the early 1900s, the larger emphasis on quantity over quality threatens the literary value and sustainability of books.

Key Takeaways

- Blockbuster syndrome refers to the publishing industry's focus on books with best-seller potential at the expense of works that may not sell as well. Fueled by high advances that depend on high publicity budgets for high sales, less-popular authors often get lost in the shuffle. Such a system evaluates books on the basis of their commercial potential instead of their literary merit. Fed up with what they see as the industry's exclusive focus on blockbusters, some authors are turning away from the Big Six publishers and are opting for different publishing models.
- Book superstores rose to prominence in the 1990s because their low prices, large selection, and upscale atmosphere made them popular with book buyers. As a result, large numbers of independent bookstores closed. In recent years, the book superstores have been losing market share to large retailers such as Wal-Mart and Costco. These stores don't focus on selling books, and so they only have the shelf space for a few best sellers, thus helping to fuel the blockbuster syndrome. Additionally, brick-and-mortar stores are coming under threat from Amazon and other online retailers.
- Stores that sell a large volume of books are able to negotiate favorable terms with book publishers and they are then able to pass along deep discounts to their customers. Smaller independent bookstores are not able to do this, and so are less economically competitive. Recent price wars have erupted among online retailers like Amazon, Wal-Mart, and Target, who competed to sell books and e-books at prices so low they amounted to a net loss per sale. Retailers used these sales to drive business to their websites and to encourage customers to buy other products.

Exercise 3.5.1

Examine a recent list of best sellers (some lists to consider include those by *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Book Sense*, or *The Washington Post*). Complete a web search for the top-10 authors to see if they have published books previously and if their previous books were also on bestseller lists. Some questions to consider: Are the books part of a series or novel franchise? Do the books have film tie-ins? What conclusions can you draw from your research?

Write down two books, one a current or recent bestseller and the other a book that was published at least 5 years ago. Look up the books' prices on Amazon and note both the list price and Amazon's sale price. Then find the price of the same book at a local chain bookstore and an independent bookseller. What factors might account for any differences in pricing? How might these prices have changed in recent years?

This page titled [3.5: Current Publishing Trends](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

3.6: The Influence of New Technology

Learning Objectives

- Determine the benefits and drawbacks of digital libraries.
- Define *print-on-demand* and *self-publishing*.

The book industry has changed enormously since its creation. From the invention of the papyrus scroll to the introduction of the e-book, new technologies continuously affect how people view and experience literature. With the advent of digital media, old-media industries, such as the book industry, must find ways to adapt. Some fear that this new technology will destroy the industry, while others maintain that it works to the industry's advantage. However, one thing is clear—digital technology promises to reshape the publishing industry as we know it.

E-Books

The first e-book readers were related to the personal digital assistant (PDA) devices, pocket-sized electronics that could store and display large amounts of text, that became popular in the 1990s. However, early e-book readers lingered on the market, popular in certain techy niches but unable to gain traction with the wider population. Early e-readers had minimal battery life and text that was difficult to read. Through the 2000s, technological advances allowed for smaller and sleeker models, the Apple iPhone and the iPad helped make readers more comfortable with reading on a small screen. The second half of the decade saw the release of many e-readers. The technology got a boost when Oprah Winfrey praised the Kindle on her show in October 2008. By that holiday season, e-book reader sales were booming, and it wasn't just the technologically savvy individuals who were interested anymore. Despite being criticized by some as providing an inferior reading experience to dedicated e-readers, the Apple iPad has been a powerful driving force behind e-book sales—more than 1.5 million books were downloaded on the Apple iPad during its first month of release in 2010. Marion Maneker, "Parsing the iPad's Book Sale Numbers," *The Big Money*, May 4, 2010, <http://www.thebigmoney.com/blogs/goodnight-gutenberg/2010/05/04/ibooks-vs-app-books-ipad>.

E-books make up less than 5 percent of the current book market, but that number is growing. At the beginning of 2010, Amazon had about 400,000 titles available for the Kindle device. Some devices offer wireless accessibility, meaning that an e-reader doesn't have to be connected to a computer to access titles; an open Wi-Fi connection is all it needs. With access to a dazzling array of books available with just a few clicks, it's no wonder the contemporary consumer seems enamored with the e-book. An e-book reader has the space to store thousands of titles in an object smaller and lighter than the average hardcover novel. And though the devices themselves can be expensive, e-books are usually cheaper than their hardcopy equivalents; sometimes they're even free. Thanks to efforts like the Gutenberg Project and Google Books (see Section 3.5.2 "Digitizing Libraries"), more than a million public domain titles are available as free e-books.

Anything that gets people excited about books and reading should be good for the publishing industry, right? Unfortunately for U.S. publishers, it's not that simple. Some publishers worry that e-book sales may actually end up hurting their bottom lines. During the Kindle's first year, Amazon essentially set the standard price for bestselling or new release e-books at \$9.99. Since Amazon was acting as a wholesaler and buying these books for half the publisher's list price—generally around \$25 for a new hardcover—the company was selling these titles at a loss. However, for Amazon, a short-term loss might have had long-term payoffs. At the start of 2010, the company controlled a 90 percent share of the e-book market. Faced with e-books that cost less than \$10, traditional publishers worried that consumers would avoid purchasing a new hardcover priced at \$25 (or even a \$13 trade paperback).

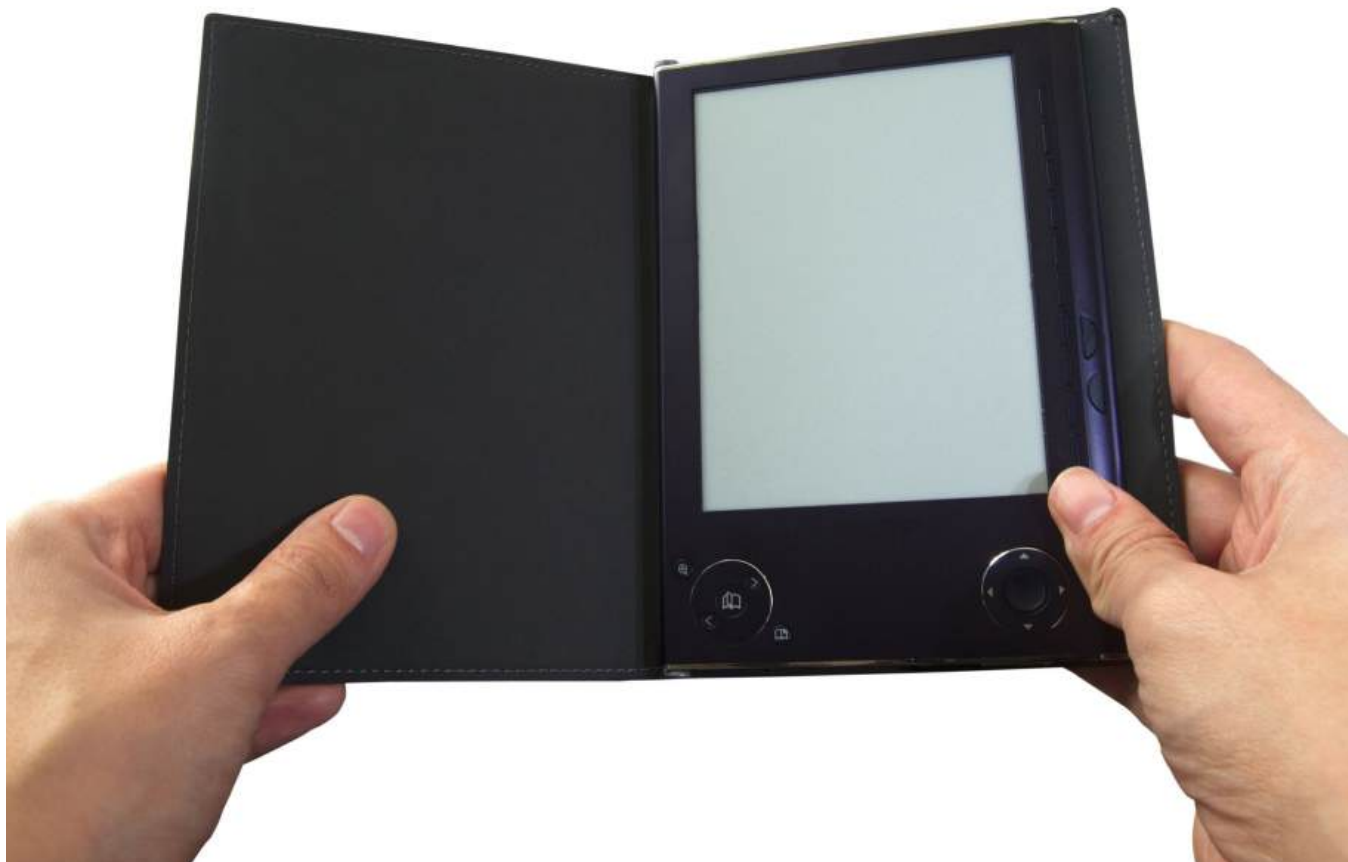


Figure 3.13 Most e-readers are the size and shape of one hardcover book.

In January 2010, the conflict between Amazon and the publishing establishment came to a head. Macmillan, one of the six major publishing companies in the United States, suggested a new business model to Amazon, one that resembled the deal that the Big Six publishers had worked out with Apple for e-book sales on the Apple iPad. Essentially, Amazon had been able to buy books from publishers at wholesale rates—half the hardcover list price—and then set whatever retail price it wanted. This allowed Amazon to choose to sell books at a loss in the hope of convincing more people to buy Kindles. Macmillan proposed a system in which Amazon would act more as a commission-earning agent than a wholesaler. In Macmillan’s proposed model, the publisher would set the retail price and take 70 percent of each sale, leaving 30 percent for the retailer. Macmillan couldn’t force Amazon to agree to this deal, but the publisher could strike a hard bargain: If Amazon refused Macmillan’s offer, it could still sell Macmillan titles under the wholesale model, but the publisher would delay e-book editions for 7 months after hardcover releases. What followed was a standoff. Amazon didn’t just reject Macmillan’s proposal; it removed the “buy” button from all Macmillan books listed on its website (including print books), essentially refusing to sell Macmillan titles. However, after a few days, Amazon capitulated and agreed to Macmillan’s terms, but not before issuing a strongly worded press release claiming that they agreed to sell Macmillan’s titles “at prices we believe are needlessly high for e-books,” because “Macmillan has a monopoly over their own titles.” Motoko Rich and Brad Stone, “Publisher Wins Fight With Amazon Over E-books,” *New York Times*, January 31, 2010, Technology section. Still, Macmillan and the other publishers seem to have won this battle: Amazon agreed that e-books for most new fiction and nonfiction books for adults will be priced at \$12.99 to \$14.99, though best sellers will still be \$9.99. Motoko Rich and Brad Stone, “Publisher Wins Fight With Amazon Over E-books,” *New York Times*, January 31, 2010, Technology section.

But the \$10 book may be the least of the publishing industry’s worries. At the start of 2010, more than half of the bestselling titles on Kindle were free. Some of these were public domain novels such as *Pride and Prejudice*, but many others were books by living authors being promoted by publishers by giving away the book. The industry hasn’t yet come to a consensus about the utility of free e-books. Some publishers consider it a practice that devalues books in the eyes of customers. “At a time when we are resisting the \$9.99 price of e-books,” David Young of the Hachette Book Group told *The New York Times*, “it is illogical to give books away

for free.”Motoko Rich, “With Kindle, the Best Sellers Don’t Need to Sell,” *New York Times*, January 23, 2010, Books section. Other publishers consider free e-books a promotional tool to build word-of-mouth and to introduce readers to new authors.

Other e-books emerge from outside the traditional publishing system. Four of the five bestselling novels in Japan in 2007 were cell phone novels, books that were both written and intended to be read on cell phones. Cell-phone novels are traditionally written by amateurs who post them on free websites. Readers can download copies at no cost, which means no one is making much of a profit from this new genre. Although the phenomenon has not caught on in the United States yet, the cell phone novel is feared by some publishers as a further sign of the devaluation of books in a world where browsers expect content to be free.

With e-book sales expected to triple by 2015, it’s hard to say what such a quickly growing industry will look like in the future. James L. McQuivvy, “eBook Buying Is About to Spiral Upward,” Forrester Research: Making Leaders Successful Every Day, 2010, www.forrester.com/rb/Research/ebook_buying_is_about_to_spiral_upward/q/id/57664/t/2. Some people have theorized that e-readers will lead to an increasing popularity of the short story, which can be bought and read in short increments. Others have claimed that they’ll destroy the book industry as we know it. Whatever the future of books looks like, everything—from the way books are produced to the way we read them—continues to change rapidly because of new technologies.

Digitizing Libraries

The idea of a digitized library has been around since the early years of the Internet. A digital library stores its materials in a digital format, accessible by computers. Some digital libraries can be accessed locally; others can be accessed remotely through a computer network. Michael Hart founded Project Gutenberg, the oldest digital library, in 1971, 3 years before the Internet went live. Hart’s initial goal was to make 10,000 of the most-consulted books publicly available and free by the end of the century. The forward-thinking Hart named his project after the inventor of the movable type printing press, perhaps realizing that book digitization had the potential to revolutionize the way humans produce and read books as much as Gutenberg’s invention had centuries earlier. At first, the process was slow for Hart and his fellow book-digitizing volunteers because they were forced to copy text manually until 1989. In the early 1990s, scanners and text-recognition software allowed them to somewhat automate the process.

Fast-forward to 2010. Project Gutenberg’s free online library boasts more than 30,000 public domain works available for free download. Stanford University uses a robotic page-turning scanner machine to digitize 1,000 book pages an hour. Stanford’s partner in digital library production is Google Books, which has scanned over 10 million books since it began Google Books in 2004. A Chinese company claims to have digitized more than half of all books that have been published in Chinese since 1949. In 2006, *The New York Times* estimated that humans have published at least 32 million books throughout history; the huge push for book digitization makes it seem entirely possible that nearly all known books could be digitized within 50 years. Kevin Kelly, “Scan This Book!” *New York Times Magazine*, May 14, 2006.

Some liken the prospect of these widely accessible, easily searchable, free libraries to the proliferation of free libraries in the 19th century, which led to a surge in literacy rates. One of Project Gutenberg’s stated goals is “to break down the bars of ignorance and illiteracy” through its library of digitized books. Michael S. Hart and Gregory B. Newby, “Project Gutenberg Principle of Minimal Regulation,” Project Gutenberg, 2004, www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Gutenberg:Project_Gutenberg_Principle_of_Minimal_Regulation/_Administration_by_Michael_Hart_and_Greg_Newby. Digital libraries make a huge selection of texts available to people with Internet access, giving them the amazing potential to democratize knowledge. As Bill McCoy, the general manager of Adobe’s e-publishing business, told *The New York Times* in 2006, “[s]ome of us have thousands of books at home, can walk to wonderful big-box bookstores and well-stocked libraries and can get Amazon.com to deliver next day. The most dramatic effect of digital libraries will be not on us, the well-booked, but on the billions of people worldwide who are underserved by ordinary paper books.” Michael S. Hart and Gregory B. Newby, “Project Gutenberg Principle of Minimal Regulation,” Project Gutenberg, 2004, www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Gutenberg:Project_Gutenberg_Principle_of_Minimal_Regulation/_Administration_by_Michael_Hart_and_Greg_Newby. Digitized libraries can make fragile materials available to browsers without damaging originals; academic libraries are also able to share important texts without shipping books across the country.

Google Books, the largest online library, is not run by an academic institution, though it does claim several as partners. The bulk of free digital books available from Google Books or elsewhere come from the public domain, which constitutes approximately 15 percent of all books. Google Books has made over a million of these titles fully and freely searchable and downloadable. Other works in the Google Books digital library include in-print texts whose publishers have worked out a deal with Google. Some of

these titles have their full text available online; others allow only a limited number of page previews. As part of its partnership with publishers, a Google Books search result will often provide links to the publisher's website and to booksellers.

Google Books ran into trouble, however, when it began to digitize the millions of books with unclear legal status, such as out-of-print works that weren't yet in the public domain. Many of these are considered orphan works, meaning that no one is exactly sure who owns their copyright. In 2004, the site announced plans to scan these texts and to make them searchable, but it would only show sentence-long snippets to searchers. Copyright holders could ask Google to remove these snippets at any time. Google claimed that this digitization plan would benefit authors, whose books would no longer linger in out-of-print limbo; it would also help researchers and readers, who would be able to locate (and perhaps purchase) previously unavailable works.

Publishers and authors did not agree with Google. Many objected to Google's plan to scan first and look into copyright ownership later; others saw Google's profiting from works still under copyright as a clear violation of intellectual property law. In 2005, the Authors Guild of America and the American Association of Publishers (AAP) sued Google for "massive copyright infringement." Google argued that it was essentially creating a massive online card catalog; the Authors Guild and AAP alleged that Google was attempting to monopolize information and profit from it. In 2008, Google agreed to a \$125 million settlement with the publishers and the Authors Guild. Some of that money would go directly to copyright holders; some would pay for legal fees; and some would go to found the Book Rights Registry, an independent nonprofit association that would ensure content users (like Google) are paying copyright owners. Copyright owners would get money from Google and from potential book sales; Google would get money from advertisers, book sales, and institutional subscriptions by libraries.

Still, not everyone agreed with the decision. The Open Book Alliance was formed by a diverse partnership of organizations, including Amazon, Internet Archive, and the National Writers Union, who fear that Google's proprietary control of so much copyrighted material was an antitrust violation. As the group states on its website:

We will assert that any mass book digitization and publishing effort be open and competitive. The process of achieving this promise must be undertaken in the open, grounded in sound public policy and mindful of the need to promote long-term benefits for consumers rather than isolated commercial interests. The Open Book Alliance will counter Google, the Association of American Publishers and the Authors' [sic] Guild's scheme to monopolize the access, distribution and pricing of the largest digital database of books in the world.

Another concern, which was mentioned earlier, in the digital library world is digital decay. One librarian at Harvard University told *The New York Times* that "[w]e don't really have any methodology [to preserve digital material] as of yet.... We just store the disks in our climate-controlled stacks, and we're hoping for some kind of universal Harvard guidelines." Patricia Cohen, "Fending Off Digital Decay, Bit by Bit," *New York Times*, March 15, 2010, Arts section.

Print-on-Demand and Self-Publishing

Part of what made Gutenberg's printing press so revolutionary was that it allowed books to be mass produced. In medieval times, readers often commissioned a scribe to copy a text by hand, a process that could take months or even years. But despite their many conveniences, printed books carry their own risks for authors and publishers. Producing books in bulk means that publishers are taking a gamble, attempting to publish enough books to satisfy demand, but not so many that unwanted copies linger in warehouses. When a book doesn't sell as much as expected, the publisher may end up taking a loss if the costs of publishing the book exceed the revenue from its sale. Interestingly, modern technology has made it feasible for some authors and publishers to turn to an updated version of the medieval model of producing books on demand for specific customers, allowing them to avoid the risk of carrying a large inventory of books that may or may not sell. Print-on-demand, a system in which a book is printed only after an order is received, and the increasing trend of self-publishing may reshape the industry in the 21st century.

Self-publishing—a system that involves an author, not a third-party company, being in charge of producing and publishing a work—is not a new concept. Many authors self-published works in their lifetimes, including Virginia Woolf and Oscar Wilde. More recently, popular books like *The Joy of Cooking* and the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series had their origins in self-publishing. Many authors also self-publish when they're unable to get support from the traditional publishing world. Daniel Suarez's techno-thriller *Daemon* was rejected by 48 agents before he opted for self-publishing. After creating interest on blogs, Suarez eventually got a two-book deal with Dutton, an imprint of Random House. Josh McHugh, "How the Self-Published Debut *Daemon* Earned Serious Geek Cred," *Wired*, April 21, 2008. Additionally, self-publishing can be an attractive option for authors who want control over their own content. Instead of leaving decisions up to the publisher, authors can control their own editing, designing, and marketing.

One major challenge for authors who choose to strike out on their own is the stigma that's sometimes attached to self-published books. Until recent years, most self-published authors went through the so-called vanity presses, which charge writers a premium

for published copies of their books. As the name implies, these types of self-publishing ventures were often seen as preying on writers' need to see their own work in print. To justify the cost of printing, a minimum order of a thousand copies was standard, and unless authors were able to find an audience, they had little hope of selling them all. Because there was no quality control and vanity presses would usually publish anyone with money, some readers were skeptical of self-published books. Major retailers and distributors generally refused to carry them, meaning that authors had to rely on their own marketing efforts to sell the books. Before the advent of the Internet, this usually meant either selling copies in person or relying on mail-order catalogs, neither of which is a very reliable way to sell enough copies to recoup costs.

However, beginning in the early 2000s, self-publishing has changed dramatically. Advances made in publishing technology have made it easier for self-published books to more closely resemble traditionally published ones. Free professional typesetting software has allowed writers to format their text for the page; Adobe Photoshop and similar programs have made image editing and graphic design feasible for amateurs and professionals. The Internet has revolutionized marketing and distribution, allowing authors of books about niche subjects to reach a worldwide audience. As a result, many new Internet-based self-publishing companies have sprung up, offering a variety of services. Some companies, such as Lulu Enterprises and CreateSpace, feature a low-cost service without many bells and whistles; others offer a package of services that may include professional editing, cover design, and marketing. The process has become streamlined as well. For example, to publish a book with Lulu, an author just has to upload a PDF of a properly formatted text file; decide what size, paper, and binding options to use; and make a cover using a premade template. Self-published books are generally quicker to produce and allow an author a higher share of the royalties, though it usually costs more on a per-book basis. As a result, self-published books often have a higher list price.

Whereas vanity publishers were stigmatized for charging authors sometimes thousands of dollars to publish their books, creating a book using the services of Lulu or CreateSpace doesn't cost the author anything. That's because users who upload their content aren't creating an actual, physical copy of a book; instead, they're essentially making a potential volume. With print-on-demand technology, books aren't printed until an order is placed, which significantly lowers the financial risk for self-publishers. Print-on-demand is especially useful for books with a limited or niche audience. Print-on-demand isn't only being used by self-publishers; both small presses and academic publishers are using the technology for older books without much of an audience. With print-on-demand, books that may only sell a few dozen copies a year can stay in print without the publisher having to worry about printing a full run of copies and being stuck with unsold inventory.

Although some self-published authors manage to find a huge audience, most don't. Bob Young, the founder of Lulu, told the *London Times* that his goal is to publish 1 million books that each sell 100 copies, rather than 100 books that sell 1 million copies each. Damian Whitworth, "Publish and Be Downloaded," *Times* (London), March 8, 2006, Life and Style section. Lulu and other enterprising self-publishers disrupt the traditional notion of the publishing house, which acted as a sort of gatekeeper for the book industry—ushering a few talented, lucky writers in and keeping others out. In the world of self-publishing, there are no barriers—anyone with a book in a PDF file can whip up a nice-looking paperback in under 1 hour. This has democratized the industry, allowing writers who had been rejected by the traditional publishers to find their own audience. But it has also meant that a lot of writing with little literary merit has been published as well. Additionally, if a bestseller in the Lulu world is a book that sells 500 copies, as Bob Young told the *London Times*, then few authors are going to be able to make a living through self-publishing. Indeed, most of the self-publishing success stories involve writers whose self-published efforts sold well enough to get them a book deal with one of the traditional publishing houses, a sign that for better or for worse, the traditional publishing model still has the social cachet and sales to dominate the industry.

- E-books have been increasing in popularity with customers since the 1990s. However, the publishing industry is worried that setting the price for e-books at \$9.99, as Amazon initially did for most titles, would turn consumers away from buying more expensive physical books. Amazon lost money on every \$9.99 e-book but hoped that the low prices would act as an incentive to buy its e-book reader, the Kindle device. In 2010, Macmillan and other publishers forced Amazon to change its pricing model to give publishers more control over e-book prices.
- Digital libraries began with Project Gutenberg in 1971. Digitized books allow anyone with an Internet connection access to millions of volumes, and some advocates hope that digital libraries will lead to a rise in global literacy rates. Millions of books in the public domain are available for free download. Google Books, the largest digital library, has run into trouble with its plan to digitize as many books as possible, even books under current copyright. The Open Book Alliance accuses Google of monopolizing copyrighted content to make a profit.

- Self-publishing used to carry a social stigma as well as a high cost. Thanks to print-on-demand services, self-publishing is an increasingly popular option for amateur and professional writers. It appeals to authors who may have a niche audience or who want more control over their work. Print-on-demand makes it possible for books to never go out of print.

? Exercise 3.6.1

Go to the website of a company that specializes in print-on-demand or self-publishing services and examine some of the books featured there. Then, answer the following questions:

- How do these books look similar in form and content to books you'd expect to find in your local bookstore? How do they look different?
- How do prices differ from some of the major retail chains? Are the prices more similar to e-book, paperback, or hardcover prices?
- Would you be willing to purchase a book on one of these sites? Why or why not?

? End-of-Chapter Assessment

Review Questions

1. Questions for Section 3.1

1. What ancient book form did the codex replace, and why was the codex an improvement on that form?
2. What is mechanical movable type, and how did it lead to the Gutenberg Revolution?
3. What is copyright, and how has its legal interpretation changed over time?
4. How has the publishing industry evolved since the invention of the printing press?

2. Questions for Section 3.2

1. How was 18th-century literature affected by the changing role of women during this period?
2. What are some of the ways that authors tried to create a distinctive American style in the 19th century?
3. What changes in American society were reflected by 20th-century literature?

3. Questions for Section 3.3

1. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of hardcover books?
2. What are the two kinds of paperback books, and how do they differ?
3. What is an e-book, and how is it different from hardcopy books?

4. Questions for Section 3.4

1. What is blockbuster syndrome, and how does it affect the publishing industry?
2. What factors led to the rise and decline of book superstores?
3. How do price wars affect the publishing industry?

5. Questions for Section 3.5

1. What are some ways that e-books are changing the publishing industry?
2. What are the benefits and drawbacks of digital libraries?
3. What is print-on-demand, and how does it influence the book industry?

? Critical Thinking Questions

1. One of the initial intentions of copyright law was to protect artists while also allowing a free market of ideas. Is copyright a good way to protect authors and their control over their work? Do you think copyright law means the same now as it did in the past? What are some concerns that are changing the meaning of copyright protection?
2. If the Gutenberg Revolution was a time when advances in technology led to rapid changes in culture and society, will e-books and digital libraries lead to a similarly revolutionary change in the way we live our lives? Why or why not?
3. The publishing industry is facing a time of rapid change. What are some factors threatening the traditional publishing mode, and what are some ways the industry could respond to these potential dangers?
4. What impact do blockbuster books have on the book industry? And on readers?

5. Some people argue that e-books will destroy the publishing industry, while others think that they'll be its savior. How have e-books begun to transform the publishing industry, and what impact do you think they will have in the future?

Career Connection

Publishing a book is no longer a simple thing. Authors have to contend with questions about copyright, movie rights, e-books, and blog publicity. In confusing times, literary agents act as writers' sidekicks. They discover new writers and then help those writers negotiate an increasingly complex market.

Read the article "A Book in You" from *The New Yorker* (http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/05/31/040531ta_talk_radosh), which discusses a literary agent who specializes in signing book deals with bloggers. Now, explore literary agent Betsy Lerner's blog at <http://betsylerner.wordpress.com>. After exploring for a bit, read the "About Me" section (the link is at the top). These two sites will help you answer the following questions:

1. Why does Kate Lee think that blogs are a good place to look for new authors to represent?
2. What can you tell about Betsy Lerner's attitude about the publishing industry from her blog? What about her attitude toward the writers she works with? What does she appear to find rewarding about her job?
3. Based on Betsy Lerner's blog, identify the daily work required to be an agent. What aspects of the job appear challenging and engaging? What seems to take up the most time?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Newspapers

4.1: Introduction

4.2: History of Newspapers

4.3: Different Styles and Models of Journalism

4.4: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture

4.5: Current Popular Trends in the Newspaper Industry

4.6: Online Journalism Redefines News

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4.1: Introduction

Newspaper Wars



Figure 4.1 The two major newspapers, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, battle for their place in the print world.

On April 26, 2010, *Wired* magazine proclaimed that a “clash of the titans” between two major newspapers, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, was about to take place in the midst of an unprecedented downward spiral for the print medium. Eliot Van

Burskirk, “Print War Between NYT and WSJ Is Really About Digital,” *Wired*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2010/04/print-war-between-nyt-and-wsj-is-really-about-digital>. Rupert Murdoch, owner of *The Wall Street Journal*, had announced that his paper was launching a new section, one covering local stories north of Wall Street, something that had been part of *The New York Times*’ focus since it first began over a century before. *New York Times* Chairman Arthur Sultzberger Jr. and CEO Janet Robinson pertly responded to the move, welcoming the new section and acknowledging the difficulties a startup can face when competing with the well-established *New York Times*. Eliot Van Burskirk, “Print War Between NYT and WSJ Is Really About Digital,” *Wired*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2010/04/print-war-between-nyt-and-wsj-is-really-about-digital>.

Despite *The New York Times*’ droll response, Murdoch’s decision to cover local news indeed presented a threat to the newspaper, particularly as the two publications continue their respective moves from the print to the online market. In fact, some believe that *The Wall Street Journal*’s decision to launch the new section has very little to do with local coverage and everything to do with the Internet. Newspapers are in a perilous position: Traditional readership is declining even as papers are struggling to create a profitable online business model. Both *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* are striving to remain relevant as competition is increasing and the print medium is becoming unprofitable.

In light of the challenges facing the newspaper industry, *The Wall Street Journal*’s new section may have a potentially catastrophic effect on *The New York Times*. *Wired* magazine described the decision, calling it “two-pronged” to “starve the enemy and capture territory.” Eliot Van Burskirk, “Print War Between NYT and WSJ Is Really About Digital,” *Wired*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2010/04/print-war-between-nyt-and-wsj-is-really-about-digital>. By offering advertising space at a discount in the new Metro section, *The Journal* would make money while partially cutting *The Times* off from some of its primary support. *Wired* magazine also noted that the additional material would be available to subscribers through the Internet, on smartphones, and on the iPad. Eliot Van Burskirk, “Print War Between NYT and WSJ Is Really About Digital,” *Wired*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2010/04/print-war-between-nyt-and-wsj-is-really-about-digital>.

Attracting advertising revenue from *The New York Times* may give *The Wall Street Journal* the financial edge it needs to lead in the online news industry. As newspapers move away from print publications to online publications, a strong online presence may secure more readers and, in turn, more advertisers—and thus more revenue—in a challenging economic climate.

This emerging front in the ongoing battle between two of the country’s largest newspapers reveals a problem the newspaper industry has been facing for sometime. New York has long been a battleground for other newspapers, but before Murdoch’s decision, these two papers coexisted peacefully for over 100 years, serving divergent readers by focusing on different stories. However, since the invention of radio, newspapers have worried about their future. Even though readership has been declining since the 1950s, the explosion of the Internet and the resulting accessibility of online news has led to an unprecedented drop in subscriptions since the beginning of the 21st century. Also hit hard by the struggling economy’s reluctant advertisers, most newspapers have had to cut costs. Some have reinvented their style to appeal to new audiences. Some, however, have simply closed. As this struggle for profit continues, it’s no surprise that *The Wall Street Journal* is trying to outperform *The New York Times*. But how did newspapers get to this point? This chapter provides historical context of the newspaper medium and offers an in-depth examination of journalistic styles and trends to illuminate the mounting challenges for today’s industry.

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4.2: History of Newspapers

Learning Objectives

- Describe the historical roots of the modern newspaper industry.
- Explain the effect of the penny press on modern journalism.
- Define sensationalism and yellow journalism as they relate to the newspaper industry.

Over the course of its long and complex history, the newspaper has undergone many transformations. Examining newspapers' historical roots can help shed some light on how and why the newspaper has evolved into the multifaceted medium that it is today. Scholars commonly credit the ancient Romans with publishing the first newspaper, *Acta Diurna*, or *daily doings*, in 59 BCE. Although no copies of this paper have survived, it is widely believed to have published chronicles of events, assemblies, births, deaths, and daily gossip.

In 1566, another ancestor of the modern newspaper appeared in Venice, Italy. These *avisi*, or gazettes, were handwritten and focused on politics and the military conflicts. However, the absence of printing-press technology greatly limited the circulation for both the *Acta Diurna* and the Venetian papers.

The Birth of the Printing Press



INVENTION OF PRINTING. GUTENBERG TAKING THE FIRST PROOF.

Figure 4.2 Johannes Gutenberg's printing press exponentially increased the rate at which printed materials could be reproduced.

Johannes Gutenberg's printing press drastically changed the face of publishing. In 1440, Gutenberg invented a movable-type press that permitted the high-quality reproduction of printed materials at a rate of nearly 4,000 pages per day, or 1,000 times more than could be done by a scribe by hand. This innovation drove down the price of printed materials and, for the first time, made them accessible to a mass market. Overnight, the new printing press transformed the scope and reach of the newspaper, paving the way for modern-day journalism.

European Roots

The first weekly newspapers to employ Gutenberg's press emerged in 1609. Although the papers—*Relations: Aller Furnemmen*, printed by Johann Carolus, and *Aviso Relations over Zeitung*, printed by Lucas Schulte—did not name the cities in which they were printed to avoid government persecution, their approximate location can be identified because of their use of the German language. Despite these concerns over persecution, the papers were a success, and newspapers quickly spread throughout Central Europe. Over the next 5 years, weeklies popped up in Basel, Frankfurt, Vienna, Hamburg, Berlin, and Amsterdam. In 1621, England printed its first paper under the title *Corante, or weekly newes from Italy, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Bohemia, France and the Low Countreys*. By 1641, a newspaper was printed in almost every country in Europe as publication spread to France, Italy, and Spain.

Avifa

I.

Relation oder Zeitung.

**Was sich begeben vnd
zugetragen hat / in Deutsch: vnd Welsch:
land/Spannten/Niederlande/ Engellande/ Franck-
reich/ Ungern / Osterreich / Schweden / Polen/
vnd in allen Provinzen/ in Ost: vnd
West Indien etc.**

So alhie den 15. Januarij angelange.





Figure 4.3 Newspapers are the descendants of the Dutch *corantos* and the German pamphlets of the 1600s.

These early newspapers followed one of two major formats. The first was the Dutch-style *corantos*, a densely packed two- to four-page paper, while the second was the German-style pamphlet, a more expansive 8- to 24-page paper. Many publishers began printing in the Dutch format, but as their popularity grew, they changed to the larger German style.

Government Control and Freedom of the Press

Because many of these early publications were regulated by the government, they did not report on local news or events. However, when civil war broke out in England in 1641, as Oliver Cromwell and Parliament threatened and eventually overthrew King Charles I, citizens turned to local papers for coverage of these major events. In November 1641, a weekly paper titled *The Heads of Severall Proceedings in This Present Parliament* began focusing on domestic news. Moira Goff, “Early History of the English Newspaper,” *17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers*, Gale, 2007, http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/topicguide/bbcn_03.htm. The paper fueled a discussion about the freedom of the press that was later articulated in 1644 by John Milton in his famous treatise *Areopagitica*.

AREOPAGITICA;
 A
 SPEECH
 OF
 M^r. JOHN MILTON
 For the Liberty of VNLICENC'D
 PRINTING,
 To the PARLAMENT of ENGLAND.

Τὴν ἀλήθειαν δ' ἐκείνη, ἢ περὶ τῆς πόλεως
 Χρησὶν ἢ βέλους, εἰς μίσην εἶρην, ἔχου.
 Καὶ ταῦθ' ὁ χρῆζων, λαμπρῆς εἶδος, ὁ μὲθ' ἄλλου,
 Σιγῆ, ἢ γένηται ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι πόλις;
 Euripid. Hicetid.

*This is true Liberty when free born men
 Having to advise the public may speak free,
 Which he who can, and will, deserv' s high praise,
 Who neither can nor will, may hold his peace;
 What can be juster in a State then this?*
 Euripid. Hicetid.

LONDON,
 Printed in the Yeare, 1644. *Printed 8*

Jan. 26. 1644

Figure 4.4 John Milton's 1644 *Areopagitica*, which criticized the British Parliament's role in regulating texts and helped pave the way for the freedom of the press.

Although the *Areopagitica* focused primarily on Parliament's ban on certain books, it also addressed newspapers. Milton criticized the tight regulations on their content by stating, "[w]ho kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye." John Milton, *Areopagitica*, 1644, http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=275. Despite Milton's emphasis on texts rather than on newspapers, the treatise had a major effect on printing regulations. In England, newspapers were freed from government control, and people began to understand the power of free press.

Papers took advantage of this newfound freedom and began publishing more frequently. With biweekly publications, papers had additional space to run advertisements and market reports. This changed the role of journalists from simple observers to active players in commerce, as business owners and investors grew to rely on the papers to market their products and to help them predict business developments. Once publishers noticed the growing popularity and profit potential of newspapers, they founded daily publications. In 1650, a German publisher began printing the world's oldest surviving daily paper, *Einkommende Zeitung*, and an English publisher followed suit in 1702 with London's *Daily Courant*. Such daily publications, which employed the relatively new format of headlines and the embellishment of illustrations, turned papers into vital fixtures in the everyday lives of citizens.

Colonial American Newspapers

Newspapers did not come to the American colonies until September 25, 1690, when Benjamin Harris printed *Public Occurrences, Both FOREIGN and DOMESTICK*. Before fleeing to America for publishing an article about a purported Catholic plot against England, Harris had been a newspaper editor in England. The first article printed in his new colonial paper stated, "[t]he Christianized Indians in some parts of Plimouth, have newly appointed a day of thanksgiving to God for his Mercy." Benjamin Harris, *Public Occurrences, Both FOREIGN and DOMESTICK*, September 25, 1690. The other articles in *Public Occurrences*, however, were in line with Harris's previously more controversial style, and the publication folded after just one issue.

Fourteen years passed before the next American newspaper, *The Boston News-Letter*, launched. Fifteen years after that, *The Boston Gazette* began publication, followed immediately by the *American Weekly Mercury* in Philadelphia. Trying to avoid following in Harris's footsteps, these early papers carefully eschewed political discussion to avoid offending colonial authorities. After a lengthy absence, politics reentered American papers in 1721, when James Franklin published a criticism of smallpox inoculations in the *New England Courant*. The following year, the paper accused the colonial government of failing to protect its citizens from pirates, which landed Franklin in jail.

After Franklin offended authorities once again for mocking religion, a court dictated that he was forbidden "to print or publish *The New England Courant*, or any other Pamphlet or Paper of the like Nature, except it be first Supervised by the Secretary of this Province." Massachusetts Historical Society, "Silence DoGood: Benjamin Franklin in the New England Courant," http://www.masshist.org/online/silence_dogood/essay.php?entry_id=204. Immediately following this order, Franklin turned over the paper to his younger brother, Benjamin. Benjamin Franklin, who went on to become a famous statesman and who played a major role in the American Revolution, also had a substantial impact on the printing industry as publisher of *The Pennsylvania Gazette* and the conceiver of subscription libraries.

The Trial of John Peter Zenger



"By no means," exclaimed Hamilton, in his clear, thrilling, silvery voice. "It is not the bar, printing and publishing of a paper that will make it a libel: the words themselves must be libelous, that is, false, scandalous, and seditious, else my client is not guilty." Page 568

Figure 4.5 *The New York Weekly Journal* founder John Peter Zenger brought controversial political discussion to the New York press.

Boston was not the only city in which a newspaper discussed politics. In 1733, John Peter Zenger founded *The New York Weekly Journal*. Zenger's paper soon began criticizing the newly appointed colonial governor, William Cosby, who had replaced members of the New York Supreme Court when he could not control them. In late 1734, Cosby had Zenger arrested, claiming that his paper contained "divers scandalous, virulent, false and seditious reflections." Archiving Early America, "Peter Zenger and Freedom of the Press," <http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/bookmarks/zenger/>. Eight months later, prominent Philadelphia lawyer Andrew Hamilton defended Zenger in an important trial. Hamilton compelled the jury to consider the truth and whether or not what was printed was a fact. Ignoring the wishes of the judge, who disapproved of Zenger and his actions, the jury returned a not guilty verdict to the courtroom after only a short deliberation. Zenger's trial resulted in two significant movements in the march toward freedom of the press. First, the trial demonstrated to the papers that they could potentially print honest criticism of the government without fear of retribution. Second, the British became afraid that an American jury would never convict an American journalist.

With Zenger's verdict providing more freedom to the press and as some began to call for emancipation from England, newspapers became a conduit for political discussion. More conflicts between the British and the colonists forced papers to pick a side to support. While a majority of American papers challenged governmental authorities, a small number of Loyalist papers, such as James Rivington's *New York Gazetteer*, gave voice to the pro-British side. Throughout the war, newspapers continued to publish information representing opposing viewpoints, and the partisan press was born. After the revolution, two opposing political parties—the Federalists and the Republicans—emerged, giving rise to partisan newspapers for each side.

Freedom of the Press in the Early United States

In 1791, the nascent United States of America adopted the First Amendment as part of the Bill of Rights. This act states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." Cornell University Law School, "Bill of Rights," <http://topics.law.cornell.edu/constitution/billofrights>. In this one sentence, U.S. law formally guaranteed freedom of press.

However, as a reaction to harsh partisan writing, in 1798, Congress passed the Sedition Act, which declared that any “writing, printing, uttering, or publishing any false, scandalous and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States” was punishable by fine and imprisonment. Constitution Society, “Sedition Act, (July 14, 1798),” http://www.constitution.org/rf/sedition_1798.htm. When Thomas Jefferson was elected president in 1800, he allowed the Sedition Act to lapse, claiming that he was lending himself to “a great experiment ... to demonstrate the falsehood of the pretext that freedom of the press is incompatible with orderly government.” University of Virginia, “Thomas Jefferson on Politics & Government,” <http://etext.virginia.edu/jefferson/quotations/jeff1600.htm>. This free-press experiment has continued to modern times.

Newspapers as a Form of Mass Media

As late as the early 1800s, newspapers were still quite expensive to print. Although daily papers had become more common and gave merchants up-to-date, vital trading information, most were priced at about 6 cents a copy—well above what artisans and other working-class citizens could afford. As such, newspaper readership was limited to the elite.

The Penny Press

All that changed in September 1833 when Benjamin Day created *The Sun*. Printed on small, letter-sized pages, *The Sun* sold for just a penny. With the Industrial Revolution in full swing, Day employed the new steam-driven, two-cylinder press to print *The Sun*. While the old printing press was capable of printing approximately 125 papers per hour, this technologically improved version printed approximately 18,000 copies per hour. As he reached out to new readers, Day knew that he wanted to alter the way news was presented. He printed the paper’s motto at the top of every front page of *The Sun*: “The object of this paper is to lay before the public, at a price within the means of every one, all the news of the day, and at the same time offer an advantageous medium for advertisements.” Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 131.

The Sun sought out stories that would appeal to the new mainstream consumer. As such, the paper primarily published human-interest stories and police reports. Additionally, Day left ample room for advertisements. Day’s adoption of this new format and industrialized method of printing was a huge success. *The Sun* became the first paper to be printed by what became known as the penny press. Prior to the emergence of the penny press, the most popular paper, New York City’s *Courier and Enquirer*, had sold 4,500 copies per day. By 1835, *The Sun* sold 15,000 copies per day.



The Latest News

By Telegraph to the N. Y. Sun.

THE OSEQUES.

Services at the White House.
THE FUNERAL SERMON.
Solemn March to the Capital.
ORDER OF PROCESSION.
Scenes Along the Route.
THE CEREMONIES ELSEWHERE.
A Wailing Country.
More About the Amputation.
BOTH RECOGNIZED IN PENNSYLVANIA.
A Special Train Sent After Him.
&c., &c., &c.

THE LAST SAD HOURS.

Washington, April 19.—Early to day the streets were crowded with some thousands of them that... The President's health had been such that he could not have been... The funeral services were held at the White House... The procession started at 11 o'clock and proceeded to the Capital... The funeral was a solemn and impressive one... The nation was in mourning for the loss of its great leader.

It is worthy to note that the funeral... The procession was accompanied by... The funeral was a grand and impressive one... The nation was in mourning for the loss of its great leader.

THE FUNERAL SERMON.
The funeral sermon was delivered by... It was a powerful and moving address... The preacher emphasized the President's great service to the nation... The congregation was deeply affected by the words.

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THE FUNERAL SERMON.
The funeral sermon was delivered by... It was a powerful and moving address... The preacher emphasized the President's great service to the nation... The congregation was deeply affected by the words.

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS.
The President is now in the city... The funeral services were held at the White House... The procession started at 11 o'clock and proceeded to the Capital...

THE FUNERAL SERMON.
The funeral sermon was delivered by... It was a powerful and moving address... The preacher emphasized the President's great service to the nation... The congregation was deeply affected by the words.

It is worthy to note that the funeral... The procession was accompanied by... The funeral was a grand and impressive one... The nation was in mourning for the loss of its great leader.

THE FUNERAL SERMON.
The funeral sermon was delivered by... It was a powerful and moving address... The preacher emphasized the President's great service to the nation... The congregation was deeply affected by the words.

THE FUNERAL SERMON.
The funeral sermon was delivered by... It was a powerful and moving address... The preacher emphasized the President's great service to the nation... The congregation was deeply affected by the words.

LOCAL NEWS.
The day of mourning.
The funeral services were held at the White House... The procession started at 11 o'clock and proceeded to the Capital...

THE FUNERAL SERMON.
The funeral sermon was delivered by... It was a powerful and moving address... The preacher emphasized the President's great service to the nation... The congregation was deeply affected by the words.

It is worthy to note that the funeral... The procession was accompanied by... The funeral was a grand and impressive one... The nation was in mourning for the loss of its great leader.

THE FUNERAL SERMON.
The funeral sermon was delivered by... It was a powerful and moving address... The preacher emphasized the President's great service to the nation... The congregation was deeply affected by the words.

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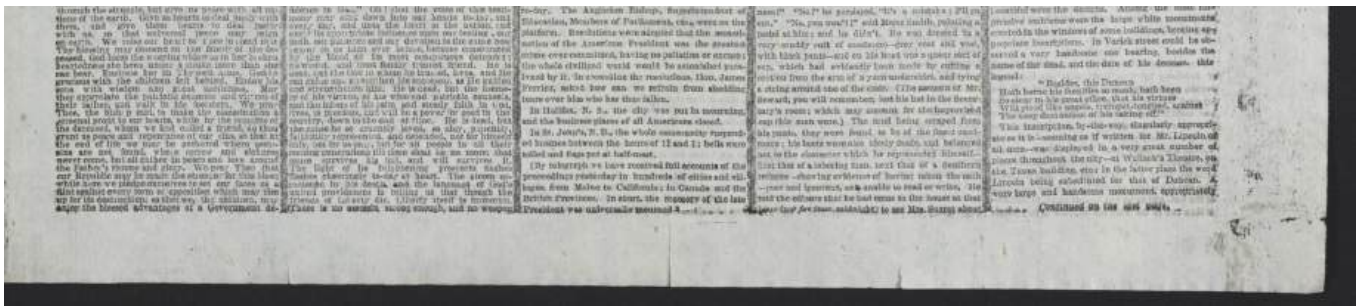


Figure 4.6 Benjamin Day's *Sun*, the first penny paper. The emergence of the penny press helped turn newspapers into a truly mass medium.

Another early successful penny paper was James Gordon Bennett's *New York Morning Herald*, which was first published in 1835. Bennett made his mark on the publishing industry by offering nonpartisan political reporting. He also introduced more aggressive methods for gathering news, hiring both interviewers and foreign correspondents. His paper was the first to send a reporter to a crime scene to witness an investigation. In the 1860s, Bennett hired 63 war reporters to cover the U.S. Civil War. Although the *Herald* initially emphasized sensational news, it later became one of the country's most respected papers for its accurate reporting.

Growth of Wire Services

Another major historical technological breakthrough for newspapers came when Samuel Morse invented the telegraph. Newspapers turned to emerging telegraph companies to receive up-to-date news briefs from cities across the globe. The significant expense of this service led to the formation of the Associated Press (AP) in 1846 as a cooperative arrangement of five major New York papers: the *New York Sun*, the *Journal of Commerce*, the *Courier and Enquirer*, the *New York Herald*, and the *Express*. The success of the Associated Press led to the development of wire services between major cities. According to the AP, this meant that editors were able to “actively collect news as it [broke], rather than gather already published news.” Associated Press, “AP History,” www.ap.org/pages/about/histor...ory_first.html. This collaboration between papers allowed for more reliable reporting, and the increased breadth of subject matter lent subscribing newspapers mass appeal for not only upper- but also middle- and working-class readers.

Yellow Journalism

In the late 1800s, *New York World* publisher Joseph Pulitzer developed a new journalistic style that relied on an intensified use of sensationalism—stories focused on crime, violence, emotion, and sex. Although he made major strides in the newspaper industry by creating an expanded section focusing on women and by pioneering the use of advertisements as news, Pulitzer relied largely on violence and sex in his headlines to sell more copies. Ironically, journalism's most prestigious award is named for him. His *New York World* became famous for such headlines as “Baptized in Blood” and “Little Lotta's Lovers.” Irving E. Fang, *A History of Mass Communication: Six Information Revolutions* (Boston: Focal PressUSA, 1997), 103. This sensationalist style served as the forerunner for today's tabloids. Editors relied on shocking headlines to sell their papers, and although investigative journalism was predominant, editors often took liberties with how the story was told. Newspapers often printed an editor's interpretation of the story without maintaining objectivity.

At the same time Pulitzer was establishing the *New York World*, William Randolph Hearst—an admirer and principal competitor of Pulitzer—took over the *New York Journal*. Hearst's life partially inspired the 1941 classic film *Citizen Kane*. The battle between these two major New York newspapers escalated as Pulitzer and Hearst attempted to outsell one another. The papers slashed their prices back down to a penny, stole editors and reporters from each other, and filled their papers with outrageous, sensationalist headlines. One conflict that inspired particularly sensationalized headlines was the Spanish-American War. Both Hearst and Pulitzer filled their papers with huge front-page headlines and gave bloody—if sometimes inaccurate—accounts of the war. As historian Richard K. Hines writes, “The American Press, especially ‘yellow presses’ such as William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* [and] Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* ... sensationalized the brutality of the reconcentrado and the threat to American business interests. Journalists frequently embellished Spanish atrocities and invented others.” Richard K. Hines, “‘First to Respond to Their Country's Call': The First Montana Infantry and the Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection, 1898–1899,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 52, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 46.

Comics and Stunt Journalism

As the publishers vied for readership, an entertaining new element was introduced to newspapers: the comic strip. In 1896, Hearst's *New York Journal* published R. F. Outcault's the *Yellow Kid* in an attempt to "attract immigrant readers who otherwise might not have bought an English-language paper." Lisa Yaszek, "'Them Damn Pictures': Americanization and the Comic Strip in the Progressive Era," *Journal of American Studies* 28, no. 1 (1994): 24. Readers rushed to buy papers featuring the successful yellow-nightshirt-wearing character. The cartoon "provoked a wave of 'gentle hysteria,' and was soon appearing on buttons, cracker tins, cigarette packs, and ladies' fans—and even as a character in a Broadway play." Lisa Yaszek, "'Them Damn Pictures': Americanization and the Comic Strip in the Progressive Era," *Journal of American Studies* 28, no. 1 (1994): 30. Another effect of the cartoon's popularity was the creation of the term *yellow journalism* to describe the types of papers in which it appeared.

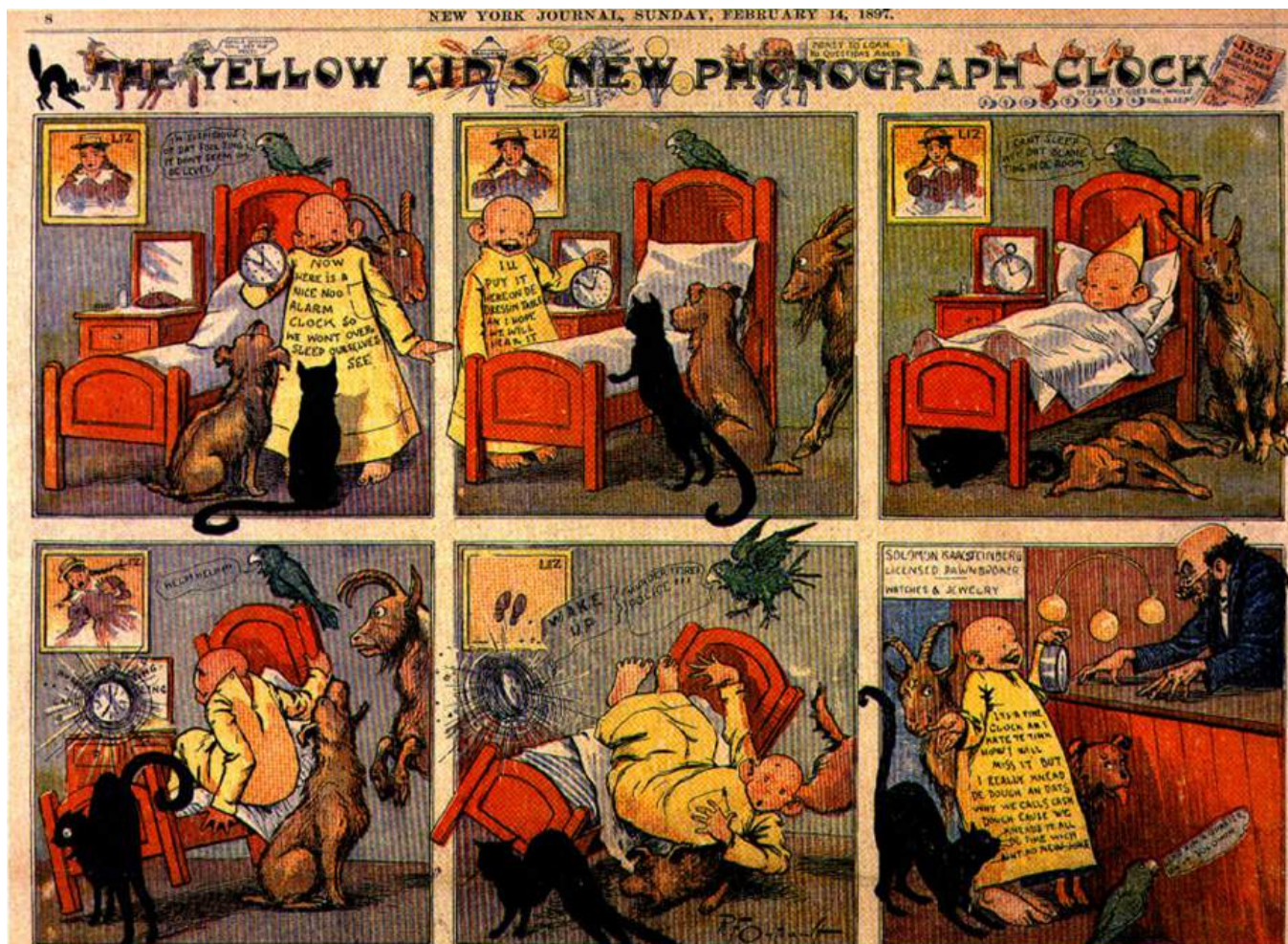


Figure 4.7 R. F. Outcault's the *Yellow Kid*, first published in William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* in 1896.

Pulitzer responded to the success of the *Yellow Kid* by introducing stunt journalism. The publisher hired journalist Elizabeth Cochrane, who wrote under the name Nellie Bly, to report on aspects of life that had previously been ignored by the publishing industry. Her first article focused on the New York City Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell Island. Bly feigned insanity and had herself committed to the infamous asylum. She recounted her experience in her first article, "Ten Days in a Madhouse." "It was a brilliant move. Her madhouse performance inaugurated the performative tactic that would become her trademark reporting style." Jean Marie Lutes, "Into the Madhouse with Nellie Bly: Girl Stunt Reporting in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2002): 217. Such articles brought Bly much notoriety and fame, and she became known as the first stunt journalist. Although stunts such as these were considered lowbrow entertainment and female stunt reporters were often criticized by more traditional journalists, Pulitzer's decision to hire Bly was a huge step for women in the newspaper business. Bly and her fellow stunt reporters "were the first newspaperwomen to move, as a group, from the women's pages to the front page, from society news into political and criminal news." Jean Marie Lutes, "Into the Madhouse with Nellie Bly: Girl Stunt Reporting in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2002): 220.

Despite the sometimes questionable tactics of both Hearst and Pulitzer, each man made significant contributions to the growing journalism industry. By 1922, Hearst, a ruthless publisher, had created the country's largest media-holding company. At that time, he owned 20 daily papers, 11 Sunday papers, 2 wire services, 6 magazines, and a newsreel company. Likewise, toward the end of his life, Pulitzer turned his focus to establishing a school of journalism. In 1912, a year after his death and 10 years after Pulitzer had begun his educational campaign, classes opened at the Columbia University School of Journalism. At the time of its opening, the school had approximately 100 students from 21 countries. Additionally, in 1917, the first Pulitzer Prize was awarded for excellence in journalism.

- Although newspapers have existed in some form since ancient Roman times, the modern newspaper primarily stems from German papers printed in the early 1600s with Gutenberg's printing press. Early European papers were based on two distinct models: the small, dense Dutch *corantos* and the larger, more expansive German weeklies. As papers began growing in popularity, many publishers started following the German style.
- *The Sun*, first published by Benjamin Day in 1833, was the first penny paper. Day minimized paper size, used a new two-cylinder steam-engine printing press, and slashed the price of the paper to a penny so more citizens could afford a newspaper. By targeting his paper to a larger, more mainstream audience, Day transformed the newspaper industry and its readers.
- Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst were major competitors in the U.S. newspaper industry in the late 1800s. To compete with one another, the two employed sensationalism—the use of crime, sex, and scandal—to attract readers. This type of journalism became known as yellow journalism. Yellow journalism is known for misleading stories, inaccurate information, and exaggerated detail.

? Exercise 4.2.1

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Examine one copy of a major daily newspaper and one copy of a popular tabloid. Carefully examine each publication's writing style. In what ways do the journals employ similar techniques, and in what ways do they differ?
2. Do you see any links back to the early newspaper trends that were discussed in this section? Describe them.
3. How do the publications use their styles to reach out to their respective audiences?

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4.3: Different Styles and Models of Journalism

Learning Objectives

- Explain how objective journalism differs from story-driven journalism.
- Describe the effect of objectivity on modern journalism.
- Describe the unique nature of literary journalism.

Location, readership, political climate, and competition all contribute to rapid transformations in journalistic models and writing styles. Over time, however, certain styles—such as sensationalism—have faded or become linked with less serious publications, like tabloids, while others have developed to become prevalent in modern-day reporting. This section explores the nuanced differences among the most commonly used models of journalism.

Objective versus Story-Driven Journalism

In the late 1800s, a majority of publishers believed that they would sell more papers by reaching out to specific groups. As such, most major newspapers employed a partisan approach to writing, churning out political stories and using news to sway popular opinion. This all changed in 1896 when a then-failing paper, *The New York Times*, took a radical new approach to reporting: employing objectivity, or impartiality, to satisfy a wide range of readers.

The Rise of Objective Journalism

At the end of the 19th century, *The New York Times* found itself competing with the papers of Pulitzer and Hearst. The paper's publishers discovered that it was nearly impossible to stay afloat without using the sensationalist headlines popularized by its competitors. Although *The New York Times* publishers raised prices to pay the bills, the higher charge led to declining readership, and soon the paper went bankrupt. Adolph Ochs, owner of the once-failing *Chattanooga Times*, took a gamble and bought *The New York Times* in 1896. On August 18 of that year, Ochs made a bold move and announced that the paper would no longer follow the sensationalist style that made Pulitzer and Hearst famous, but instead would be “clean, dignified, trustworthy and impartial.” “Adolph S. Ochs Dead at 77; Publisher of Times Since 1896,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1935, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0312.html>.

This drastic change proved to be a success. *The New York Times* became the first of many papers to demonstrate that the press could be “economically as well as ethically successful.” “Adolph S. Ochs Dead at 77; Publisher of Times Since 1896,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1935, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0312.html>. With the help of managing editor Carr Van Anda, the new motto “All the News That’s Fit to Print,” and lowered prices, *The New York Times* quickly turned into one of the most profitable impartial papers of all time. Since the newspaper’s successful turnaround, publications around the world have followed *The New York Times*’ objective journalistic style, demanding that reporters maintain a neutral voice in their writing.

The Inverted Pyramid Style

One commonly employed technique in modern journalism is the inverted pyramid style. This style requires objectivity and involves structuring a story so that the most important details are listed first for ease of reading. In the inverted pyramid format, the most fundamental facts of a story—typically the who, what, when, where, and why—appear at the top in the lead paragraph, with nonessential information in subsequent paragraphs. The style arose as a product of the telegraph. The inverted pyramid proved useful when telegraph connections failed in the middle of transmission; the editor still had the most important information at the beginning. Similarly, editors could quickly delete content from the bottom up to meet time and space requirements. Chip Scanlan, “Writing from the Top Down: Pros and Cons of the Inverted Pyramid,” Poynter, June 20, 2003, www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsg...erted-pyramid/.

The reason for such writing is threefold. First, the style is helpful for writers, as this type of reporting is somewhat easier to complete in the short deadlines imposed on journalists, particularly in today’s fast-paced news business. Second, the style benefits editors who can, if necessary, quickly cut the story from the bottom without losing vital information. Finally, the style keeps in mind traditional readers, most of who skim articles or only read a few paragraphs, but they can still learn most of the important information from this quick read.

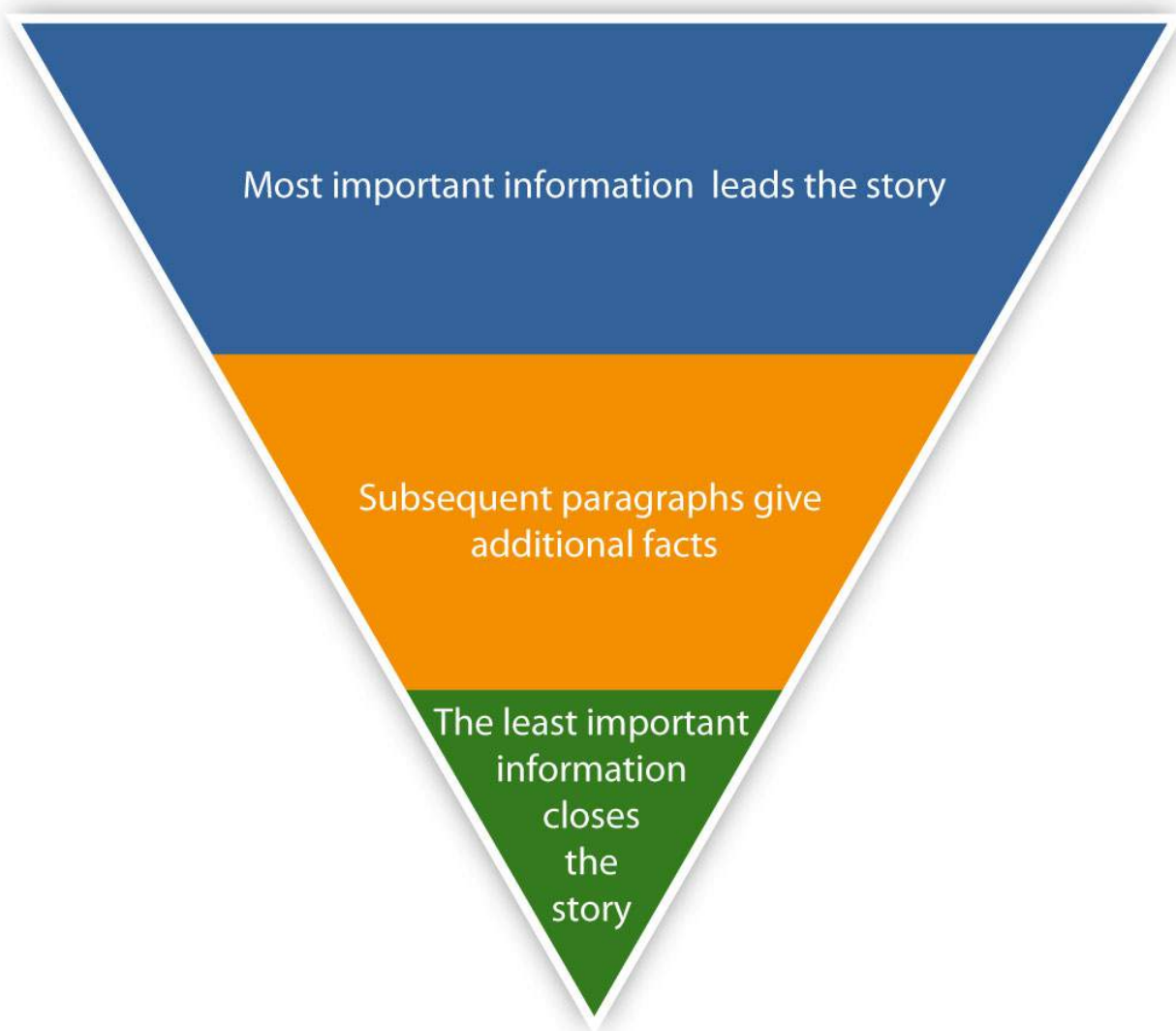


Figure 4.8

Interpretive Journalism

During the 1920s, objective journalism fell under critique as the world became more complex. Even though *The New York Times* continued to thrive, readers craved more than dry, objective stories. In 1923, *Time* magazine launched as the first major publication to step away from simple objectivity to try to provide readers with a more analytical interpretation of the news. As *Time* grew, people at some other publications took notice, and slowly editors began rethinking how they might reach out to readers in an increasingly interrelated world.

During the 1930s, two major events increased the desire for a new style of journalism: the Great Depression and the Nazi threat to global stability. Readers were no longer content with the who, what, where, when, and why of objective journalism. Instead, they craved analysis and a deeper explanation of the chaos surrounding them. Many papers responded with a new type of reporting that became known as interpretive journalism.

Interpretive journalism, following *Time*'s example, has grown in popularity since its inception in the 1920s and 1930s, and journalists use it to explain issues and to provide readers with a broader context for the stories that they encounter. According to Brant Houston, the executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors Inc., an interpretive journalist "goes beyond the basic facts of an event or topic to provide context, analysis, and possible consequences." Brant Houston, "Interpretive Journalism," *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, 2008, www.blackwellreference.com/pu...3199514_ss82-1. When this new style was first used, readers responded with great interest to the new editorial perspectives that newspapers were offering on events. But

interpretive journalism posed a new problem for editors: the need to separate straight objective news from opinions and analysis. In response, many papers in the 1930s and 1940s “introduced weekend interpretations of the past week’s events ... and interpretive columnists with bylines.” Stephen J. A. Ward, “Journalism Ethics,” in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, ed. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (New York: Routledge, 2008): 298. As explained by Stephen J. A. Ward in his article, “Journalism Ethics,” the goal of these weekend features was to “supplement objective reporting with an informed interpretation of world events.” Stephen J. A. Ward, “Journalism Ethics,” in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, ed. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (New York: Routledge, 2008): 298.

Competition From Broadcasting

The 1930s also saw the rise of broadcasting as radios became common in most U.S. households and as sound–picture recordings for newsreels became increasingly common. This broadcasting revolution introduced new dimensions to journalism. Scholar Michael Schudson has noted that broadcast news “reflect[ed] ... a new journalistic reality. The journalist, no longer merely the relayer of documents and messages, ha[d] become the interpreter of the news.” Michael Schudson, “The Politics of Narrative Form: The Emergence of News Conventions in Print and Television,” in “Print Culture and Video Culture,” *Daedalus* 111, no. 4 (1982): 104. However, just as radio furthered the interpretive journalistic style, it also created a new problem for print journalism, particularly newspapers.

Suddenly, free news from the radio offered competition to the pay news of newspapers. Scholar Robert W. McChesney has observed that, in the 1930s, “many elements of the newspaper industry opposed commercial broadcasting, often out of fear of losing ad revenues and circulation to the broadcasters.” Robert W. McChesney, “Media and Democracy: The Emergence of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States, 1927–1935,” in “Communication in History: The Key to Understanding” *OAH Magazine of History* 6, no. 4 (1992): 37. This fear led to a media war as papers claimed that radio was stealing their print stories. Radio outlets, however, believed they had equal right to news stories. According to Robert W. McChesney, “commercial broadcasters located their industry next to the newspaper industry as an icon of American freedom and culture.” Robert W. McChesney, “Media and Democracy: The Emergence of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States, 1927–1935,” in “Communication in History: The Key to Understanding” *OAH Magazine of History* 6, no. 4 (1992): 38. The debate had a major effect on interpretive journalism as radio and newspapers had to make decisions about whether to use an objective or interpretive format to remain competitive with each other.

The emergence of television during the 1950s created even more competition for newspapers. In response, paper publishers increased opinion-based articles, and many added what became known as op-ed pages. An op-ed page—short for *opposite the editorial page*—features opinion-based columns typically produced by a writer or writers unaffiliated with the paper’s editorial board. As op-ed pages grew, so did interpretive journalism. Distinct from news stories, editors and columnists presented opinions on a regularly basis. By the 1960s, the interpretive style of reporting had begun to replace the older descriptive style. Thomas Patterson, “Why Is News So Negative These Days?” *History News Network*, 2002, <http://hnn.us/articles/1134.html>.

Literary Journalism

Stemming from the development of interpretive journalism, literary journalism began to emerge during the 1960s. This style, made popular by journalists Tom Wolfe (formerly a strictly nonfiction writer) and Truman Capote, is often referred to as *New Journalism* and combines factual reporting with sometimes fictional narration. Literary journalism follows neither the formulaic style of reporting of objective journalism nor the opinion-based analytical style of interpretive journalism. Instead, this art form—as it is often termed—brings voice and character to historical events, focusing on the construction of the scene rather than on the retelling of the facts.

Important Literary Journalists



Figure 4.9

The works of Tom Wolfe are some of the best examples of literary journalism of the 1960s.

Tom Wolfe was the first reporter to write in the literary journalistic style. In 1963, while his newspaper, New York's *Herald Tribune*, was on strike, *Esquire* magazine hired Wolfe to write an article on customized cars. Wolfe gathered the facts but struggled to turn his collected information into a written piece. His managing editor, Byron Dobell, suggested that he type up his notes so that *Esquire* could hire another writer to complete the article. Wolfe typed up a 49-page document that described his research and what he wanted to include in the story and sent it to Dobell. Dobell was so impressed by this piece that he simply deleted the "Dear Byron" at the top of the letter and published the rest of Wolfe's letter in its entirety under the headline "There Goes (Varoom! Varoom!) That Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby." The article was a great success, and Wolfe, in time, became known as the father of new journalism. When he later returned to work at the *Herald Tribune*, Wolfe brought with him this new style, "fusing the stylistic features of fiction and the reportorial obligations of journalism." Richard A. Kallan, "Tom Wolfe," in *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*, ed. Thomas B. Connery (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 1992).

Truman Capote responded to Wolfe's new style by writing *In Cold Blood*, which Capote termed a "nonfiction novel," in 1966. George Plimpton, "The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel," *New York Times*, January 16, 1966, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/12/28/home/capote-interview.html>. The tale of an actual murder that had taken place on a Kansas farm some years earlier, the novel was based on numerous interviews and painstaking research. Capote claimed that he wrote the book because he wanted to exchange his "self-creative world ... for the everyday objective world we all inhabit." George Plimpton, "The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel," *New York Times*, January 16, 1966, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/12/28/home/capote-interview.html>. The book was praised for its straightforward, journalistic style. *New York Times* writer George Plimpton claimed that the book "is remarkable for its objectivity—nowhere, despite his involvement, does the author intrude." George Plimpton, "The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel," *New York Times*, January 16,

1966, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/12/28/home/capote-interview.html>. After *In Cold Blood* was finished, Capote criticized Wolfe's style in an interview, commenting that Wolfe "[has] nothing to do with creative journalism," by claiming that Wolfe did not have the appropriate fiction-writing expertise. George Plimpton, "The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel," *New York Times*, January 16, 1966, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/12/28/home/capote-interview.html>. Despite the tension between these two writers, today they are remembered for giving rise to a similar style in varying genres.

The Effects of Literary Journalism

Although literary journalism certainly affected newspaper reporting styles, it had a much greater impact on the magazine industry. Because they were bound by fewer restrictions on length and deadlines, magazines were more likely to publish this new writing style than were newspapers. Indeed, during the 1960s and 1970s, authors simulating the styles of both Wolfe and Capote flooded magazines such as *Esquire* and *The New Yorker* with articles.

Literary journalism also significantly influenced objective journalism. Many literary journalists believed that objectivity limited their ability to critique a story or a writer. Some claimed that objectivity in writing is impossible, as all journalists are somehow swayed by their own personal histories. Still others, including Wolfe, argued that objective journalism conveyed a "limited conception of the 'facts,'" which "often effected an inaccurate, incomplete story that precluded readers from exercising informed judgment." Richard A. Kallan, "Tom Wolfe," in *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*, ed. Thomas B. Connery (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 1992).

Advocacy Journalism and Precision Journalism

The reactions of literary journalists to objective journalism encouraged the growth of two more types of journalism: advocacy journalism and precision journalism. Advocacy journalists promote a particular cause and intentionally adopt a biased, nonobjective viewpoint to do so effectively. However, serious advocate journalists adhere to strict guidelines, as "an advocate journalist is not the same as being an activist" according to journalist Sue Careless. Sue Careless, "Advocacy Journalism," *Interim*, May 2000, www.theinterim.com/2000/may/10advocacy.html. In an article discussing advocacy journalism, Careless contrasted the role of an advocate journalist with the role of an activist. She encourages future advocate journalists by saying the following:

A journalist writing for the advocacy press should practice the same skills as any journalist. You don't fabricate or falsify. If you do you will destroy the credibility of both yourself as a working journalist and the cause you care so much about. News should never be propaganda. You don't fudge or suppress vital facts or present half-truths. Sue Careless, "Advocacy Journalism," *Interim*, May 2000, www.theinterim.com/2000/may/10advocacy.html.

Despite the challenges and potential pitfalls inherent to advocacy journalism, this type of journalism has increased in popularity over the past several years. In 2007, *USA Today* reporter Peter Johnson stated, "[i]ncreasingly, journalists and talk-show hosts want to 'own' a niche issue or problem, find ways to solve it, and be associated with making this world a better place." Peter Johnson, "More Reporters Embrace an Advocacy Role," *USA Today*, March 5, 2007, http://www.usatoday.com/life/television/news/2007-03-05-social-journalism_N.htm. In this manner, journalists across the world are employing the advocacy style to highlight issues they care about.

Oprah Winfrey: Advocacy Journalist

Television talk-show host and owner of production company Harpo Inc., Oprah Winfrey is one of the most successful, recognizable entrepreneurs of the late-20th and early-21st centuries. Winfrey has long been a news reporter, beginning in the late 1970s as a coanchor of an evening television program. She began hosting her own show in 1984, and as of 2010, the *Oprah Winfrey Show* is one of the most popular television programs on the air. Winfrey has long used her show as a platform for issues and concerns, making her one of today's most famous advocacy journalists. While many praise Winfrey for using her celebrity to draw attention to causes she cares about, others criticize her techniques, claiming that she uses the advocacy style for self-promotion. As one critic writes, "I'm not sure how Oprah's endless self-promotion of how she spent millions on a school in South Africa suddenly makes her 'own' the 'education niche.' She does own the trumpet-my-own-horn niche. But that's not 'journalism.'" Debbie Schlusel, "USA Today Heralds 'Oprah Journalism,'" *Debbie Schlusel* (blog), March 6, 2007, <http://www.debbieschlusel.com/497/usa-today-heralds-oprah-journalism/>.

Yet despite this somewhat harsh critique, many view Winfrey as the leading example of positive advocacy journalism. Sara Grumbles claims in her blog "Breaking and Fitting the Mold": "Oprah Winfrey obviously practices advocacy journalism.... Winfrey does not fit the mold of a 'typical' journalist by today's standards. She has an agenda and she voices her opinions. She

has her own op-ed page in the form of a million dollar television studio. Objectivity is not her strong point. Still, in my opinion she is a journalist.” Sara Grumbles, “Breaking and Fitting the Mold,” *Media Chatter* (blog), October 3, 2007, www.commajor.com/?p=1244.

Regardless of the arguments about the value and reasoning underlying her technique, Winfrey unquestionably practices a form of advocacy journalism. In fact, thanks to her vast popularity, she may be the most compelling example of an advocacy journalist working today.

Precision journalism emerged in the 1970s. In this form, journalists turn to polls and studies to strengthen the accuracy of their articles. Philip Meyer, commonly acknowledged as the father of precision journalism, says that his intent is to “encourage my colleagues in journalism to apply the principles of scientific method to their tasks of gathering and presenting the news.” Philip Meyer, *Precision Journalism: A Reporter’s Introduction to Social Science Methods*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), vii. This type of journalism adds a new layer to objectivity in reporting, as articles no longer need to rely solely on anecdotal evidence; journalists can employ hard facts and figures to support their assertions. An example of precision journalism would be an article on voting patterns in a presidential election that cites data from exit polls. Precision journalism has become more popular as computers have become more prevalent. Many journalists currently use this type of writing.

Consensus versus Conflict Newspapers

Another important distinction within the field of journalism must be made between consensus journalism and conflict journalism. Consensus journalism typically takes place in smaller communities, where local newspapers generally serve as a forum for many different voices. Newspapers that use consensus-style journalism provide community calendars and meeting notices and run articles on local schools, events, government, property crimes, and zoning. These newspapers can help build civic awareness and a sense of shared experience and responsibility among readers in a community. Often, business or political leaders in the community own consensus papers.

Conversely, conflict journalism, like that which is presented in national and international news articles in *The New York Times*, typically occurs in national or metropolitan dailies. Conflict journalists define news in terms of societal discord, covering events and issues that contravene perceived social norms. In this style of journalism, reporters act as watchdogs who monitor the government and its activities. Conflict journalists often present both sides of a story and pit ideas against one another to generate conflict and, therefore, attract a larger readership. Both conflict and consensus papers are widespread. However, because they serve different purposes and reach out to differing audiences, they largely do not compete with each other.

Niche Newspapers

Niche newspapers represent one more model of newspapers. These publications, which reach out to a specific target group, are rising in popularity in the era of Internet. As Robert Courtemanche, a certified journalism educator, writes, “[i]n the past, newspapers tried to be everything to every reader to gain circulation. That outdated concept does not work on the Internet where readers expect expert, niche content.” Robert Courtemanche, “Newspapers Must Find Their Niche to Survive,” Suite101.com, December 20, 2008, http://newspaperindustry.suite101.com...che_to_survive. Ethnic and minority papers are some of the most common forms of niche newspapers. In the United States—particularly in large cities such as New York—niche papers for numerous ethnic communities flourish. Some common types of U.S. niche papers are papers that cater to a specific ethnic or cultural group or to a group that speaks a particular language. Papers that cover issues affecting lesbians, gay men, and bisexual individuals—like the *Advocate*—and religion-oriented publications—like *The Christian Science Monitor*—are also niche papers.

The Underground Press

Some niche papers are part of the underground press. Popularized in the 1960s and 1970s as individuals sought to publish articles documenting their perception of social tensions and inequalities, the underground press typically caters to alternative and countercultural groups. Most of these papers are published on small budgets. Perhaps the most famous underground paper is New York’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Village Voice*. This newspaper was founded in 1955 and declares its role in the publishing industry by saying:

The *Village Voice* introduced free-form, high-spirited and passionate journalism into the public discourse. As the nation’s first and largest alternative newsweekly, the Voice maintains the same tradition of no-holds-barred reporting and criticism it first embraced when it began publishing fifty years ago. *Village Voice*, “About Us,” www.villagevoice.com/about/index.

Despite their at-times shoestring budgets, underground papers serve an important role in the media. By offering an alternative perspective to stories and by reaching out to niche groups through their writing, underground-press newspapers fill a unique need within the larger media marketplace. As journalism has evolved over the years, newspapers have adapted to serve the changing demands of readers.

- Objective journalism began as a response to sensationalism and has continued in some form to this day. However, some media observers have argued that it is nearly impossible to remain entirely objective while reporting a story. One argument against objectivity is that journalists are human and are, therefore, biased to some degree. Many newspapers that promote objectivity put in place systems to help their journalists remain as objective as possible.
- Literary journalism combines the research and reporting of typical newspaper journalism with the writing style of fiction. While most newspaper journalists focus on facts, literary journalists tend to focus on the scene by evoking voices and characters inhabiting historical events. Famous early literary journalists include Tom Wolfe and Truman Capote.
- Other journalistic styles allow reporters and publications to narrow their editorial voice. Advocacy journalists encourage readers to support a particular cause. Consensus journalism encourages social and economic harmony, while conflict journalists present information in a way that focuses on views outside of the social norm.
- Niche newspapers—such as members of the underground press and those serving specific ethnic groups, racial groups, or speakers of a specific language—serve as important media outlets for distinct voices. The rise of the Internet and online journalism has brought niche newspapers more into the mainstream.

? Exercise 4.3.1

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Find an objective newspaper article that includes several factual details. Rewrite the story in a literary journalistic style. How does the story differ from one genre to the other?
2. Was it difficult to transform an objective story into a piece of literary journalism? Explain.
3. Do you prefer reading an objective journalism piece or a literary journalism piece? Explain.

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4.4: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture

Learning Objectives

- Describe two ways that newspapers control stories.
- Define watchdog journalism.
- Describe how television has impacted journalistic styles.

Since 1896, *The New York Times* has printed the phrase “All the News That’s Fit to Print” as its masthead motto. The phrase itself seems innocent enough, and it has been published for such a long time now that many probably skim over it without giving it a second thought. Yet, the phrase represents an interesting phenomenon in the newspaper industry: control. Papers have long been criticized for the way stories are presented, yet newspapers continue to print—and readers continue to buy them.

“All the News That’s Fit to Print”

In 1997, *The New York Times* publicly claimed that it was “an independent newspaper, entirely fearless, free of ulterior influence and unselfishly devoted to the public welfare.” Edward S. Herman, “All the News Fit to Print: Structure and Background of the New York Times,” *Z Magazine*, April 1998, www.thirdworldtraveler.com/He...it_Herman.html. Despite this public proclamation of objectivity, the paper’s publishers have been criticized for choosing which articles to print based on personal financial gain. In reaction to that statement, scholar Edward S. Herman wrote that the issue is that *The New York Times* “defin[es] public welfare in a manner acceptable to their elite audience and advertisers.” Edward S. Herman, “All the News Fit to Print: Structure and Background of the New York Times,” *Z Magazine*, April 1998, www.thirdworldtraveler.com/He...it_Herman.html. *The New York Times* has continually been accused of determining what stories are told. For example, during the 1993 debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), *The New York Times* clearly supported the agreement. In doing so, the newspaper exercised editorial control over its publication and the information that went out to readers.

However, *The New York Times* is not the only newspaper to face accusations of controlling which stories are told. In his review of *Read All About It: The Corporate Takeover of America’s Newspapers*, Steve Hoenisch, editor of *Criticism.com*, offers these harsh words about what drives the stories printed in today’s newspaper:

I’ve always thought of daily newspapers as the guardians of our—meaning the public’s—right to know. The guardians of truth, justice, and public welfare and all that. But who am I fooling? America’s daily newspapers don’t belong to us. Nor, for that matter, do they even seek to serve us any longer. They have more important concerns now: appeasing advertisers and enriching stockholders. Steven Hoenisch, “Corporate Journalism,” review of *Read All About It: The Corporate Takeover of America’s Newspapers*, by James D. Squires, <http://www.criticism.com/md/crit1.html#section-Read-All-About-It>.

More and more, as readership declines, newspapers must answer to advertisers and shareholders as they choose which stories to report on.

However, editorial control does not end there. Journalists determine not only what stories are told but also how those stories are presented. This issue is perhaps even more delicate than that of selection. Most newspaper readers still expect news to be reported objectively and demand that journalists present their stories in this manner. However, careful public scrutiny can burden journalists, while accusations of controlling information affect their affiliated newspapers. However, this scrutiny takes on importance as the public turns to journalists and newspapers to learn about the world.

Journalists are also expected to hold themselves to high standards of truth and originality. Fabrication and plagiarism are prohibited. If a journalist is caught using these tactics, then his or her career is likely to end for betraying the public’s trust and for damaging the publication’s reputation. For example, *The New York Times* reporter Jayson Blair lost his job in 2003 when his plagiarism and fabrication were discovered, and *The New Republic* journalist Stephen Glass was fired in 1998 for inventing stories, quotes, and sources.

Despite the critiques of the newspaper industry and its control over information, the majority of newspapers and journalists take their roles seriously. Editors work with journalists to verify sources and to double-check facts so readers are provided accurate information. In this way, the control that journalists and newspapers exert serves to benefit their readers, who can then be assured that articles printed are correct.

The New York Times Revisits Old Stories

Despite the criticism of *The New York Times*, the famous newspaper has been known to revisit their old stories to provide a new, more balanced view. One such example occurred in 2004 when, in response to criticism on their handling of the Iraq War, *The New York Times* offered a statement of apology. The apology read as follows:

We have found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been. In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged. Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged—or failed to emerge. Editorial, “The Times and Iraq,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE_NOTE.html.

Although the apology was risky—it essentially admitted guilt in controlling a controversial story—*The New York Times* demonstrated a commitment to ethical journalism.

Watchdog Journalism

One way that journalists control stories for the benefit of the public is by engaging in watchdog journalism. This form of journalism provides the public with information about government officials or business owners while holding those officials to high standards of operation. Watchdog journalism is defined as “(1) independent scrutiny by the press of the activities of government, business and other public institutions, with an aim toward (2) documenting, questioning, and investigating those activities, to (3) provide publics and officials with timely information on issues of public concern.” W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, “The Watchdog Role,” in *The Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, ed. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 169.

One of the most famous examples of watchdog journalism is the role that Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of *The Washington Post* played in uncovering information about the Watergate break-in and scandal that ultimately resulted in President Richard Nixon’s resignation. Newspapers and journalists often laud watchdog journalism, one of the most important functions of newspapers, yet it is difficult to practice because it requires rigorous investigation, which in turn demands more time. Many journalists often try to keep up with news as it breaks, so journalists are not afforded the time to research the information—nor to hone the skills—required to write a watchdog story. “Surviving in the newsroom—doing watchdog stories—takes a great deal of personal and political skill. Reporters must have a sense of guerilla warfare tactics to do well in the newsroom.” W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, “The Watchdog Role,” in *The Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, ed. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 182.

To be successful, watchdog journalists must investigate stories, ask tough questions, and face the possibility of unpopularity to alert the public to corruption or mismanagement while elevating the public’s expectations of the government. At the same time, readers can support newspapers that employ this style of journalism to encourage the press to engage in the challenging watchdog form of journalism. As scholars have observed, “not surprisingly, watchdog journalism functions best when reporters understand it and news organizations and their audiences support it.” W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, “The Watchdog Role,” in *The Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, ed. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 185.

Impact of Television and the Internet on Print

Newspapers have control over which stories are told and how those stories are presented. Just as the newspaper industry has changed dramatically over the years, journalistic writing styles have been transformed. Many times, such changes mirrored a trend shift in readership; since the 1950s, however, newspapers have had to compete with television journalism and, more recently, the Internet. Both television and the Internet have profoundly affected newspaper audiences and journalistic styles.

Case Study: *USA Today*

USA Today, founded in 1982 and known for its easy-to-read stories, is but one example of a paper that has altered its style to remain competitive with television and the Internet. In the past, newspapers placed their primary focus on the written word. Although some newspapers still maintain the use of written narration, many papers have shifted their techniques to attract a more television-savvy audience. In the case of *USA Today*, the emphasis lies on the second track—the visual story—dominated by large

images accompanied by short written stories. This emphasis mimics the television presentation format, allowing the paper to cater to readers with short attention spans.

A perhaps unexpected shift in journalistic writing styles that derives from television is the more frequent use of present tense, rather than past tense, in articles. This shift likely comes from television journalism's tendency to allow a story to develop as it is being told. This subtle but noticeable shift from past to present tense in narration sometimes brings a more dramatic element to news articles, which may attract readers who otherwise turn to television news programs for information.

Like many papers, *USA Today* has redesigned its image and style to keep up with the sharp immediacy of the Internet and with the entertainment value of television. In fact, the paper's management was so serious about their desire to compete with television that from 1988 to 1990 they mounted a syndicated television series titled *USA Today: The Television Show* (later retitled *USA Today on TV*). "U.S.A Today: The Television Series," Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0094572/>. Despite its short run, the show demonstrated the paper's focus on reaching out to a visual audience, a core value that it has maintained to this day. Today, *USA Today* has established itself as a credible and reliable news source, despite its unorthodox approach to journalism.

- Newspapers control which stories are told by selecting which articles make it to print. They also control how stories are told by determining the way in which information is presented to their readers.
- Watchdog journalism is an investigative approach to reporting that aims to inform citizens of occurrences in government and businesses.
- Television has not only contributed to the decline of readership for newspapers but has also impacted visual and journalistic styles. Newspapers, such as *USA Today*, have been profoundly affected by the television industry. *USA Today* caters to television watchers by incorporating large images and short stories, while primarily employing the present tense to make it seem as though the story is unfolding before the reader.

✓ Example 4.4.1

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Compare the journalistic styles of *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Examine differences in the visual nature of the newspapers as well as in the journalistic style.
2. How has television affected these particular newspapers?
3. What noticeable differences do you observe? Can you find any similarities?
4. How did each newspaper cover events differently? How did each newspaper's coverage change the focus and information told? Did you find any watchdog stories, and, if so, what were they?

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4.5: Current Popular Trends in the Newspaper Industry

Learning Objectives

- Identify newspapers with high circulations.
- Describe the decline of the newspaper industry.

Popular media such as television and the Internet have forever changed the newspaper industry. To fully understand the impact that current technology is having on the newspaper industry, it is necessary to first examine the current state of the industry.

Major Publications in the U.S. Newspaper Industry

Although numerous papers exist in the United States, a few major publications dominate circulation and, thus, exert great influence on the newspaper industry. Each of these newspapers has its own unique journalistic and editorial style, relying on different topics and techniques to appeal to its readership.

USA Today

USA Today currently tops the popularity chart with a daily circulation of 2,281,831. “Top 10 US Newspapers by Circulation,” Newspapers.com, www.newspapers.com/top10.html. This national paper’s easy-to-read content and visually focused layout contribute to its high readership numbers. Although the paper does not formally publish on weekends, it does have a partner paper titled *USA Weekend*. *USA Today* consists of four sections: news, money, sports, and life; for the ease of its readers, the newspaper color-codes each section. Owned by the Gannett Company, the paper caters to its audience by opting for ease of comprehension over complexity.

The Wall Street Journal

Established in the late 1800s, *The Wall Street Journal* closely trails *USA Today*, with a circulation of 2,070,498. “Top 10 US Newspapers by Circulation,” Newspapers.com, www.newspapers.com/top10.html. In fact, *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal* have competed for the top circulation spot for many years. An international paper that focuses on business and financial news, *The Wall Street Journal* primarily uses written narration with few images. Recent changes to its layout, such as adding advertising on the front page and minimizing the size of the paper slightly to save on printing costs, have not dramatically shifted this long-standing focus. The paper runs between 50 and 96 pages per issue and gives its readers up-to-date information on the economy, business, and national and international financial news.

The New York Times

The *New York Times* is another major publication, with circulation at 1,121,623. “Top 10 US Newspapers by Circulation,” Newspapers.com, www.newspapers.com/top10.html. Founded in 1851, the New York City–based paper is owned by the New York Times Company, which also publishes several smaller regional papers. The flagship paper contains three sections: news, opinion, and features. Although its articles tend to be narrative-driven, the paper does include images for many of its articles, creating a balance between the wordier layout of *The Wall Street Journal* and the highly visual *USA Today*. *The New York Times* publishes international stories along with more local stories in sections such as Arts, Theater, and Metro. The paper has also successfully established itself on the Internet, becoming one of the most popular online papers today.

Los Angeles Times

The *Los Angeles Times*—currently the only West Coast paper to crack the top 10 circulation list—has also contributed much to the newspaper industry. First published in 1881, the California-based paper has a distribution of 907,977. “Top 10 US Newspapers by Circulation,” Newspapers.com, www.newspapers.com/top10.html. Perhaps the most unique feature of the paper is its Column One, which focuses on sometimes-bizarre stories meant to engage readers. Known for its investigative journalistic approach, the *Los Angeles Times* demands that its journalists “provide a rich, nuanced account” of the issues they cover. *Los Angeles Times*, “L.A. Times Ethics Guidelines,” *Readers’ Representative Journal* (blog), <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/readers/2007/07/los-angeles-tim.html>. By 2010, the paper had won 39 Pulitzer Prizes, including 5 gold medals for public service. *Los Angeles Times*, “Times’ Pulitzer Prizes,” <http://www.latimes.com/about/mediagroup/latimes/la-mediagroup-pulitzers,0,1929905.htmlstory>.

The Washington Post

First published in 1877, *The Washington Post* is Washington, DC's oldest and largest paper, with a daily circulation of 709,997. "Top 10 US Newspapers by Circulation," Newspapers.com, www.newspapers.com/top10.html. According to its editors, the paper aims to be "fair and free and wholesome in its outlook on public affairs and public men." *Washington Post*, "General Information: Post Principles," nie.washpost.com/gen_info/pr...es/index.shtml In this vein, *The Washington Post* has developed a strong investigative journalism style, perhaps most exemplified by its prominent investigation of the Watergate Scandal.

The paper also holds the principle of printing articles fit "for the young as well as the old." *Washington Post*, "General Information: Post Principles," nie.washpost.com/gen_info/pr...es/index.shtml In 2003, *The Washington Post* launched a new section called the *Sunday Source* which targets the 18- to 34-year-old age group in an attempt to increase readership among younger audiences. This weekend supplement section focused on entertainment and lifestyle issues, like style, food, and fashion. Although it ceased publication in 2008, some of its regular features migrated to the regular paper. Like the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post* holds numerous Pulitzer Prizes for journalism.

Chicago Tribune

One other major publication with a significant impact on the newspaper industry is the *Chicago Tribune*, wielding a circulation of 643,086. "Top 10 US Newspapers by Circulation," Newspapers.com, www.newspapers.com/top10.html. First established in 1847, the paper is often remembered for famously miscalling the 1948 presidential election with the headline of "Dewey Defeats Truman."



Figure 4.10 The *Chicago Tribune's* inaccurate declaration of the results of the tight 1948 presidential election has become one of the most famous headlines of all time.

Despite this error, the *Chicago Tribune* has become known for its watchdog journalism, including a specific watchdog section for issues facing Chicago, like pollution, politics, and more. It proudly proclaims its commitment "to standing up for your interests and serving as your watchdog in the corridors of power." *Chicago Tribune*, "On Guard for Chicago," <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-on-guard-for-chicago,0,3834517.htmlpage>.

Declining Readership and Decreasing Revenues

Despite major newspapers' large circulations, newspapers as a whole are experiencing a dramatic decline in both subscribers and overall readership. For example, on February 27, 2009, Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* published its final issue after nearly 150 years in print. The front-page article "Goodbye, Colorado" reflected on the paper's long-standing history with the Denver community, observing that "It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to you today. Our time chronicling the life of Denver and Colorado, the nation and the world, is over." *Rocky Mountain News*, "Goodbye, Colorado," February 7, 2009, <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/new...dbye-colorado/>.

Readership Decline

The story of *Rocky Mountain News* is neither unique nor entirely unexpected. For nearly a half-century, predictions of the disappearance of print newspapers have been an ongoing refrain. The fear of losing print media began in the 1940s with the arrival

of the radio and television. Indeed, the number of daily papers has steadily decreased since the 1940s; in 1990, the number of U.S. dailies was just 1,611. By 2008, that number had further shrunk to 1,408. Newspaper Association of American, “Total Paid Circulation,” www.naa.org/TrendsandNumbers/...rculation.aspx. But the numbers are not as clear-cut as they appear. As one report observed, “The root problems go back to the late 1940s, when the percentage of Americans reading newspapers began to drop. But for years the U.S. population was growing so much that circulation kept rising and then, after 1970s, remained stable.” Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Newspapers: Audience” in *The State of the News Media 2004*, www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2004/...?cat=3&media=2. During the 1970s when circulation stopped rising, more women were entering the workforce. By the 1990s when “circulation began to decline in absolute numbers,” the number of women in the workforce was higher than had ever been previously experienced. Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Newspapers: Audience” in *The State of the News Media 2004*, www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2004/...?cat=3&media=2. With women at work, there were fewer people at home with leisure time for reading daily papers for their news. This, combined with television journalism’s rising popularity and the emergence of the Internet, meant a significant decrease in newspaper circulation. With newer, more immediate ways to get news, the disconnect between newspapers and consumers deepened.

Compounding the problem is newspapers’ continuing struggle to attract younger readers. Many of these young readers simply did not grow up in households that subscribed to daily papers and so they do not turn to newspapers for information. However, the problem seems to be more complex “than fewer people developing the newspaper habit. People who used to read every day now read less often. Some people who used to read a newspaper have stopped altogether.” Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Newspapers: Audience” in *The State of the News Media 2004*, www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2004/...?cat=3&media=2.

Yet the most significant challenge to newspapers is certainly the Internet. As print readership declines, online readership has grown; fast, free access to breaking information contributes to the growing appeal of online news. Despite the increase in online news readers, that growth has not offset the drop in print readership. In 2008, the Pew Research Center conducted a news media consumption survey in which only

39 percent of participants claimed to having read a newspaper (either print or online) the day before, showing a drop from 43 percent in 2006. Meanwhile, readership of print newspapers fell from 34 percent to 25 percent in that time period. Emily Dilling, “Study: Newspaper Readership Down, Despite Online Increase,” *Shaping the Future of the Newspaper* (blog), March 3, 2009, www.sfnblog.com/circulation_and_readership/2009/03/study_newspaper_readership_down_despite.php.

The study also observed that younger generations are primarily responsible for this shift to online reading. “The changes in reader habits seem to be similar amongst both Generation X and Y demographics, where marked increases in consulting online news sources were observed.” Emily Dilling, “Study: Newspaper Readership Down, Despite Online Increase,” *Shaping the Future of the Newspaper* (blog), March 3, 2009, www.sfnblog.com/circulation_and_readership/2009/03/study_newspaper_readership_down_despite.php. Baby boomers and older generations do, for the most part, still rely on printed newspapers for information. Perhaps this distinction between generations is not surprising. Younger readers grew up with the Internet and have developed different expectations about the speed, nature, and cost of information than have older generations. However, this trend suggests that online readership along with the general decline of news readers may make printed newspapers all but obsolete in the near future.

Joint Operating Agreements

As readership began to decline in the 1970s and newspapers began experiencing greater competition within individual cities, Congress issued the Newspaper Preservation Act authorizing the structure of joint operating agreements (JOAs). The implementation of JOAs means that two newspapers could “share the cost of business, advertising, and circulation operations,” which helped newspapers stay afloat in the face of an ever-shrinking readership. David Milstead, “Newspaper Joint Operating Agreements Are Fading,” *Rocky Mountain News*, January 22, 2009, <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/new...r-joas-fading/>. The Newspaper Preservation Act also ensured that two competing papers could keep their distinct news divisions but merge their business divisions.

At its peak, 28 newspaper JOAs existed across the United States, but as the industry declines at an increasingly rapid rate, JOAs are beginning to fail. With today’s shrinking pool of readers, two newspapers simply cannot effectively function in one community. In 2009, only nine JOAs continued operations, largely because JOAs “don’t eliminate the basic problem of one newspaper gaining the upper hand in circulation and, hence, advertising revenue.” David Milstead, “Newspaper Joint Operating Agreements Are Fading,” *Rocky Mountain News*, January 22, 2009, <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/new...r-joas-fading/>. With advertising playing a key role in newspapers’ financial survival, revenue loss is a critical blow. Additionally, “in recent years, of course, the Internet has

thrown an even more dramatic wrench into the equation. Classified advertising has migrated to Internet sites like craigslist.org while traditional retail advertisers ... can advertise via their own websites.”David Milstead, “Newspaper Joint Operating Agreements Are Fading,” *Rocky Mountain News*, January 22, 2009, <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/new...r-joas-fading/>. As more advertisers move away from the newspaper industry, more JOAs will likely crumble. The destruction of JOAs will, in turn, result in the loss of more newspapers.

Newspaper Chains

As newspapers diminish in number and as newspaper owners find themselves in financial trouble, a dramatic increase in the consolidation of newspaper ownership has taken place. Today, many large companies own several papers across the country, buying independently owned papers to help them stay afloat. The change has been occurring for some time; in fact, “since 1975, more than two-thirds of independently owned newspapers ... have disappeared.”Free Press, “Media Consolidation,” www.freepress.net/policy/owne.../consolidation. However, since 2000, newspaper consolidation has increased markedly as more papers are turning over control to larger companies.

In 2002, the 22 largest newspaper chains owned 39 percent of all the newspapers in the country (562 papers). Yet those papers represent 70 percent of daily circulation and 73 percent of Sunday. And their influence appears to be growing. These circulation percentages are a full percentage point higher than 2001. Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Newspapers: Ownership” in *The State of the News Media 2004*, www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2004/...?cat=5&media=2.

Among the 22 companies that own the largest percentage of the papers, four chains stand out: Gannett, the Tribune Company, the New York Times Company, and the McClatchy Company. Not only do these companies each own several papers across the country, but they also enjoy a higher-than-normal profit margin relative to smaller chains.

Recent Ownership Trends

In addition to consolidation, the decline of print newspapers has brought about several changes in ownership as companies attempt to increase their revenue. In 2007, media mogul Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation purchased *The Wall Street Journal* with an unsolicited \$5 billion bid, promising to “pour money into the *Journal* and its website and use his satellite television networks in Europe and Asia to spread *Journal* content the world over.”Frank Ahrens, “Murdoch Seizes Wall St. Journal in \$5 Billion Coup,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 2007, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/31/AR2007073100896.html. Murdoch has used the buyout to move the paper into the technological world, asking readers and newspapers to embrace change. In 2009, he published an article in *The Wall Street Journal* assuring his readers that “the future of journalism is more promising than ever—limited only by editors and producers unwilling to fight for their readers and viewers, or government using its heavy hand either to overregulate or subsidize us.”Rupert Murdoch, “Journalism and Freedom,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 8, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704107104574570191223415268.html>. Murdoch believes that the hope of journalism lies in embracing the changing world and how its inhabitants receive news. Time will tell if he is correct.

Despite changes in power, the consolidation trend is leveling off. Even large chains must cut costs to avoid shuttering papers entirely. In January 2009, the newspaper industry experienced 2,252 layoffs; in total, the U.S. newspaper industry lost 15,114 jobs that year. Rupert Murdoch, “Journalism and Freedom,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 8, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704107104574570191223415268.html>. With the dual challenges of layoffs and decreasing readership, some in the journalism industry are beginning to explore other options for ownership, such as nonprofit ownership. As one article in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* puts it, “[i]t may be time for a more radical reinvention of the daily newspaper. The answer for some newspapers may be to adopt a nonprofit ownership structure that will enable them to seek philanthropic contributions and benefit from tax exemptions.”Vince Stehle, “It’s Time for Newspapers to Become Nonprofit Organizations,” *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, March 12, 2009, gfem.org/node/492.

It is clear that the newspaper industry is on the brink of major change. Over the next several years, the industry will likely continue to experience a complete upheaval brought on by dwindling readership and major shifts in how individuals consume news. As newspapers scramble to find their footing in an ever-changing business, readers adapt and seek out trustworthy information in new ways.

Key Takeaways

- Some key players in the U.S. newspaper market include the *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Chicago Tribune*.
- Although readership has been declining since the invention of the radio, the Internet has had the most profound effect on the newspaper industry as readers turn to free online sources of information.
- Financial challenges have led to the rise of ever-growing newspaper chains and the creation of JOAs. Nevertheless, newspapers continue to fold and lay off staff.

Exercise 4.5.1

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Pick a major national event that interests you. Then, select two papers of the six discussed in this section and explore the differences in how those newspapers reported on the story. How does the newspaper's audience affect the way in which a story is presented?
2. Spend some time exploring websites of several major newspapers. How have these papers been responding to growing online readership?

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4.6: Online Journalism Redefines News

Learning Objectives

- Describe two ways in which online reporting may outperform traditional print reporting.
- Explain the greatest challenges newspapers face as they transition to online journalism.

The proliferation of online communication has had a profound effect on the newspaper industry. As individuals turn to the Internet to receive news for free, traditional newspapers struggle to remain competitive and hold onto their traditional readers. However, the Internet's appeal goes beyond free content. This section delves further into the Internet and its influence on the print industry. The Internet and its role in media are explored in greater detail in Chapter 11 of this textbook.

Competition From Blogs

Web logs, or blogs, have offered a new take on the traditional world of journalism. Blogs feature news and commentary entries from one or more authors. However, journalists differ on whether the act of writing a blog, commonly known as blogging, is, in fact, a form of journalism.

Indeed, many old-school reporters do not believe blogging ranks as formal journalism. Unlike journalists, bloggers are not required to support their work with credible sources. This means that stories published on blogs are often neither verified nor verifiable. As Jay Rosen, New York University journalism professor, writes, “Bloggers are speakers and writers of their own invention, at large in the public square. They’re *participating* in the great game of influence called public opinion.” Jay Rosen, “Brain Food for BloggerCon,” *PressThink* (blog), April 16, 2004, journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/we...n_prelude.html. Despite the blurry lines of what constitutes “true” journalism—and despite the fact that bloggers are not held to the same standards as journalists—many people still seek out blogs to learn about news. Thus, blogs have affected the news journalism industry. According to longtime print journalist and blogger Gina Chen, “blogging has changed journalism, but it is not journalism.” Gina Chen, “Is Blogging Journalism?” *Save the Media*, March 28, 2009, savethemedia.com/2009/03/28/i...ng-journalism/.

Advantages Over Print Media

Beyond the lack of accountability in blogging, blogs are free from the constraints of journalism in other ways that make them increasingly competitive with traditional print publications. Significantly, Internet publication allows writers to break news as soon as it occurs. Unlike a paper that publishes only once a day, the Internet is constantly accessible, and information is ready at the click of a mouse.

In 1998, the Internet flexed its rising journalistic muscle by breaking a story before any major print publication: the Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal. The *Drudge Report*, an online news website that primarily consists of links to stories, first made the story public, claiming to have learned of the scandal only after *Newsweek* magazine failed to publish it. On January 18, 1998, the story broke online with the title “*Newsweek* Kills Story on White House Intern. Blockbuster Report: 23-year-old, Former White House Intern, Sex Relationship with President.” The report gave some details on the scandal, concluding the article with the phrase “The White House was busy checking the *Drudge Report* for details.” “Original Drudge Reports of Monica Lewinsky Scandal (January 17, 1998),” *AustralianPolitics.com*, australianpolitics.com/usa/cl...t/drudge.shtml. This act revealed the power of the Internet because of its superiority in timeliness, threatening the relevancy of slower newspapers and news magazines.

Print media also continuously struggle with space constraints, another limit that the Internet is spared. As newspapers contemplate making the transition from print to online editions, several editors see the positive effect of this particular issue. N. Ram, editor-in-chief of *The Hindu*, claims, “One clear benefit online editions can provide is the scope this gives for accommodating more and longer articles.... There need be no space constraints, as in the print edition.” S. Viswanathan, “Internet Media: Sky’s the Limit,” *Hindu*, March 28, 2010, <http://beta.thehindu.com/opinion/Readers-Editor/article318231.ece>. With the endless writing space of the Internet, online writers have the freedom to explore topics more fully, to provide more detail, and to print interviews or other texts in their entirety—opportunities that many print journalists have longed for since newspapers first began publishing.

Online writing also provides a forum for amateurs to enter the professional realm of writing. With cost-cutting forcing newspapers to lay off writers, more and more would-be journalists are turning to the Internet to find ways to enter the field. Interestingly, the blogosphere has launched the careers of journalists who otherwise may never have pursued a career in journalism. For example, blogger Molly Wizenberg founded the blog *Orangette* because she didn’t know what to do with herself: “The only thing I knew

was that, whatever I did, it had to involve food and writing.” Nick Wyke, “Meet the Food Bloggers: Orangette,” *Times* (London), May 26, 2009, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/food_and_drink/real_food/article6364590.ece. After *Orangette* became a successful food blog, Wizenberg transitioned into writing for a traditional media outlet: food magazine *Bon Appetit*.

Online Newspapers

With declining readership and increasing competition from blogs, most newspapers have embraced the culture shift and have moved to online journalism. For many papers, this has meant creating an online version of their printed paper that readers will have access to from any location, at all times of the day. By 2010, over 10,000 newspapers had gone online. But some smaller papers—particularly those in two-paper communities—have not only started websites but have also ceased publication of their printed papers entirely.

One such example is Seattle’s *Post-Intelligencer*. In 2009, the newspaper stopped printing, “leaving the rival *Seattle Times* as the only big daily in town.” David Folkenflik, “Newspapers Wade Into an Online-Only Future,” NPR, March 20, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=102162128>. As Steve Swartz, president of Hearst Newspapers and owner of the *Post-Intelligencer*, commented about the move to online-only printing, “Being the second newspaper in Seattle didn’t work. We are very enthusiastic, however, about this experiment to create a digital-only business in Seattle with a robust community website at its core.” David Folkenflik, “Newspapers Wade Into an Online-Only Future,” NPR, March 20, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=102162128>. For the *Post-Intelligencer*, the move meant a dramatic decrease in its number of staff journalists. The printed version of the paper employed 135 journalists, but the online version, *Seattlepi.com*, employs only 2 dozen. For *Seattlepi.com*, this shift has been doubly unusual because the online-only newspaper is not really like a traditional newspaper at all. As Swartz articulated, “Very few people come to our website and try to re-create the experience of reading a newspaper—in other words, spending a half-hour to 45 minutes and really reading most of the articles. We don’t find people do that on the Web.” David Folkenflik, “Newspapers Wade Into an Online-Only Future,” NPR, March 20, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=102162128>. The online newspaper is, in reality, still trying to figure out what it is. Indeed, this is an uncomfortable position familiar to many online-only papers: trapped between the printed news world and the online world of blogs and unofficial websites.

During this transitional time for newspapers, many professional journalists are taking the opportunity to enter the blogosphere, the realm of bloggers on the Internet. Journalist bloggers, also known as beatbloggers, have begun to utilize blogs as “tool[s] to engage their readers, interact with them, use them as sources, crowdsource their ideas and invite them to contribute to the reporting process,” says beatblogger Alana Taylor. Alana Taylor, “What It Takes to Be a Beatblogger,” *Beat Blogging.org* (blog), March 5, 2009, beatblogging.org/2009/03/05/w...a-beatblogger/. As beatblogging grows, online newspapers are harnessing the popularity of this new phenomenon and taking advantage of the resources provided by the vast Internet audience through crowdsourcing (outsourcing problem solving to a large group of people, usually volunteers). Blogs are becoming an increasingly prominent feature on news websites, and nearly every major newspaper website displays a link to the paper’s official blogs on its homepage. This subtle addition to the web pages reflects the print industry’s desire to remain relevant in an increasingly online world.

Even as print newspapers are making the transformation to the digital world with greater or less success, Internet news sites that were never print papers have begun to make waves. Sites such as *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Beast*, and the *Drudge Report* are growing in popularity. For example, *The Huffington Post* displays the phrase “The Internet Newspaper: News, Blogs, Video, Community” as its masthead, reiterating its role and focus in today’s media-savvy world. *Huffington Post*, www.huffingtonpost.com/. In 2008, former *Vanity Fair* editor Tina Brown cofounded and began serving as editor-in-chief of *The Daily Beast*. On *The Daily Beast*’s website, Brown has noted its success: “I revel in the immediacy, the responsiveness, the real-time-ness. I used to be the impatient type. Now I’m the serene type. Because how can you be impatient when everything happens right now, instantly?” Tina Brown, “The Daily Beast Turns One,” *Daily Beast*, October 5, 2009, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-a...urns-one/full/>.

Some newspapers are also making even more dramatic transformations to keep up with the changing online world. In 2006, large newspaper conglomerate GateHouse Media began publishing under a Creative Commons license, giving noncommercial users access to content according to the license’s specifications. The company made the change to draw in additional online viewers and, eventually, revenue for the newspapers. Writer at the Center for Citizen Media, Lisa Williams, explains in her article published by *PressThink.org*:

GateHouse’s decision to CC license its content may be a response to the cut-and-paste world of weblogs, which frequently quote and point to newspaper stories. Making it easier—and legal—for bloggers to quote stories at length means that bloggers are

pointing their audience at that newspaper. Getting a boost in traffic from weblogs may have an impact on online advertising revenue, and links from weblogs also have an impact on how high a site's pages appear in search results from search engines such as Google. Higher traffic, and higher search engine rankings build a site's ability to make money on online ads. Lisa Williams, "Newspaper Chain Goes Creative Commons: GateHouse Media Rolls CC Over 96 Newspaper Sites," *PressThink* (blog), December 15, 2006, journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/we...per_chain.html.

GateHouse Media's decision to alter its newspapers' licensing agreement to boost advertising online reflects the biggest challenge facing the modern online newspaper industry: profit. Despite shrinking print-newspaper readership and rising online readership, print revenue remains much greater than digital revenue because the online industry is still determining how to make online newspapers profitable. One article notes the following:

The positive news is that good newspapers like *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* now provide better, richer, and more diverse content in their Internet editions.... The bad news is that the print media are yet to find a viable, let alone profitable, revenue model for their Internet journalism. S. Viswanathan, "Internet Media: Sky's the Limit," *Hindu*, March 28, 2010, <http://beta.thehindu.com/opinion/Readers-Editor/article318231.ece>.

The issue is not only that information on the Internet is free but also that advertising is far less expensive online. As National Public Radio (NPR) reports, "The online-only plan for newspapers remains an unproven financial model; there are great savings by scrapping printing and delivery costs, but even greater lost revenues, since advertisers pay far more money for print ads than online ads." David Folkenflik, "Newspapers Wade Into an Online-Only Future," NPR, March 20, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=102162128>.

Source of Newspaper Revenue

Print

Newsstand Sales, Subscriptions
and Advertising

Online

Advertising

Figure 4.11 Sources of Newspaper Revenue

Despite these challenges, newspapers both in print and online continue to seek new ways to provide the public with accurate, timely information. Newspapers have long been adapting to cultural paradigm shifts, and in the face of losing print newspapers altogether, the newspaper industry continues to reinvent itself to keep up with the digital world.

- Print newspapers face increasing challenges from online media, particularly amateur blogs and professional online news operations.
- Internet reporting outperforms traditional print journalism both with its ability to break news as it happens and through its lack of space limitations. Still, nonprofessional Internet news is not subject to checks for credibility, so some readers and journalists remain skeptical.

- As newspapers move to online journalism, they must determine how to make that model profitable. Most online newspapers do not require subscriptions, and advertising is significantly less expensive online than it is in print.

? Exercise 4.6.1

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Choose a topic on which to conduct research. Locate a blog, a print newspaper, and an online-only newspaper that have information about the topic.
2. What differences do you notice in style and in formatting?
3. Does one appeal to you over the others? Explain.
4. What advantages does each source have over the others? What disadvantages?
5. Consider the changes the print newspaper would need to make to become an online-only paper. What challenges would the print newspaper face in transitioning to an online medium?

? End-of-Chapter Assessment

Review Questions

1. Questions for Section 4.1
 1. Which European technological advancement of the 1400s forever changed the print industry?
 2. Which country's "weeklies" provided a stylistic format that many other papers followed?
 3. In what ways did the penny paper transform the newspaper industry?
 4. What is sensationalism and how did it become a prominent style in the journalism industry?
2. Questions for Section 4.2
 1. What are some challenges of objective journalism?
 2. What are the unique features of the inverted pyramid style of journalistic writing?
 3. How does literary journalism differ from traditional journalism?
 4. What are the differences between consensus journalism and conflict journalism?
3. Questions for Section 4.3
 1. In what two ways do newspapers control information?
 2. What are some of the defining features of watchdog journalism?
 3. Using *USA Today* as a model, in what tangible ways has television affected the newspaper industry and styles of journalism?
4. Questions for Section 4.4
 1. What are a few of the country's most prominent newspapers, and what distinguishes them from one another?
 2. Name and briefly describe three technological advances that have affected newspaper readership.
5. Questions for Section 4.5
 1. In what ways might online reporting benefit readers' access to information?
 2. Why are print newspapers struggling as they transition to the online market?

? Critical Thinking Questions

1. Have sensationalism or yellow journalism retained any role in modern journalism? How might these styles impact current trends in reporting?
2. Do a majority of today's newspapers use objective journalism or interpretive journalism? Why might papers tend to favor one style of journalism over another?
3. In what ways has watchdog journalism transformed the newspaper industry? What are the potential benefits and pitfalls of watchdog journalism?
4. Explore the challenges that have arisen due to the growing number of newspaper chains in the United States.
5. How has the Internet altered the way in which newspapers present news? How are print newspapers responding to the decline of subscribers and the rise of online readers?

Career Connection

Although modern print newspapers increasingly face economic challenges and have reduced the number of journalists they have on staff, career opportunities still exist in newspaper journalism. Those desiring to enter the field may need to explore new ways of approaching journalism in a transforming industry.

Read the articles “Every Newspaper Journalist Should Start a Blog,” written by Scott Karp, found at <http://publishing2.com/2007/05/22/every-newspaper-journalist-should-start-a-blog/>, and “Writing the Freelance Newspaper Article,” by Cliff Hightower, at <http://www.fmwriters.com/Visionback/Issue32/Writefreenewspaper.htm>.

Think about these two articles as you answer the following questions.

1. What does Scott Karp mean when he says that a blog entails “embracing the power and accepting the responsibility of *being* a publisher”? What should you do on your blog to do just that?
2. According to Karp, what is “the fundamental law of the web”?
3. Karp lists two journalists who have shown opposition to his article. What are the criticisms or caveats to Karp’s main article that are discussed?
4. Describe the three suggestions that Cliff Hightower provides when thinking about a career as a freelance writer. How might you be able to begin incorporating those suggestions into your own writing?
5. What two texts does Hightower recommend as you embark on a career as a freelance writer?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Magazines

5.1: Introduction

5.2: History of Magazine Publishing

5.3: The Role of Magazines in the Development of American Popular Culture

5.4: Major Publications in the Magazine Industry

5.5: How Magazines Control the Public's Access to Information

5.6: Specialization of Magazines

5.7: Influence of the Internet on the Magazine Industry

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5.1: Introduction

Changing Times, Changing Tastes



Figure 5.1

On October 5, 2009, publisher Condé Nast announced that the November 2009 issue of respected food magazine *Gourmet* would be its last. The decision came as a shock to many readers who, since 1941, had believed that “*Gourmet* was to food what *Vogue* is to fashion, a magazine with a rich history and a perch high in the publishing firmament.” Stephanie Clifford, “Condé Nast Closes *Gourmet* and 3 Other Magazines,” *New York Times*, October 6, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/06/business/media/06gourmet.html>. Although Condé Nast folded three other publications—parenting magazine *Cookie* and bridal magazines *Elegant Bride* and *Modern Bride*—the elimination of *Gourmet* received the most attention because of the publication’s long history and popularity. Although some readers were angry about the sudden print halt, some understood that the closure was simply a reflection of a changing market.

Magazine publishers have been struggling with competition for advertising dollars for years. The magazine industry took a dramatic hit from the financial crisis that began in the fall of 2007, with many publications folding altogether, several moving to online-only models, and nearly all implementing mass layoffs to cut costs. Vocus Research, *State of the Media Report 2011: Adapting, Surviving, and Reviving*, <http://www.vocus.com/resources/state-of-media/2011-report-adapting-surviving-reviving.pdf>. The crisis forced the high-end retailers that support Condé Nast magazines to slash their advertising budgets, and the subsequent decline in advertising revenue put the Condé Nast publications in jeopardy. Daniel Gross, “Don’t Make Me Eat My Words,” *Newsweek*, October 7, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/2009/10/06/don-t-make-me-eat-my-words.html>.

Although this appears to be grim news for an industry that has survived since the 17th century, magazines may not be truly obsolete. Many analysts are hopeful that the magazine industry, with its long, complex past, is simply in a slump. According to the Magazine Publishers of America, some 7,383 magazines appeared in publication in 2008. Association of Magazine Media, “Clearing up Misperceptions about Magazine Closings,” white paper, August 2009, www.magazine.org/ASSETS/ACC5A...ngs-082009.pdf. The following year, media private-equity firm Veronis Suhler Stevenson predicted that magazine ad revenues would

stabilize in 2013. Stephanie Clifford, “A Look Ahead at the Money in the Communications Industry,” *New York Times*, August 3, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/04/business/media/04adco.html>. Former *Newsweek* financial writer Daniel Gross—though admittedly biased—believes that the industry will strengthen. He describes the panic of some who refer to the demise of print media as symptoms of an “irrational depression surrounding print.” Daniel Gross, “Don’t Make Me Eat My Words,” *Newsweek*, October 7, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/2009/10/06/don-t-make-me-eat-my-words.html>. Yet even he admits that he may be mistaken in his belief that the current downward trend is just a bump in the road. As Gross stated, “[i]f I’m wrong, I may have to eat my words. And I’ll be doubly sad because I won’t have *Gourmet* to tell me what wine goes best with them.” Daniel Gross, “Don’t Make Me Eat My Words,” *Newsweek*, October 7, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/2009/10/06/don-t-make-me-eat-my-words.html>. So, many have begun to wonder, what will the future of the magazine business hold?

If *Gourmet*’s closure is any indication, the magazines of the future will be a product of cross-media integration, particularly between print and television. “Advertising support for luxurious magazines like *Gourmet* has dwindled, while grocery store advertisers have continued to buy pages at more accessible, celebrity-driven magazines like *Every Day with Rachel Ray*, which specializes in 30-minute meals, and *Food Network Magazine*.” Stephanie Clifford, “Condé Nast Closes *Gourmet* and 3 Other Magazines,” *New York Times*, October 6, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/06/business/media/06gourmet.html>. This trend suggests that the best—and perhaps only—way for magazines to remain viable is to gain an audience via another medium and then use that celebrity-driven status to sell the print product.

The magazine industry may change drastically over the next several years. This evolution may be affected by a number of variables, such as the Internet, a new generation of readers, the fluctuation of advertising costs, and the recovery from the 2008 recession. What remains to be seen is whether the magazine industry can continue to be a dominant force in American culture in the midst of these changes.

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5.2: History of Magazine Publishing

Learning Objectives

- Describe the European roots of the modern magazine.
- Identify the changes that took place in magazine printing in the 1830s United States.
- Describe the trends in journalism that arose during the 20th century.

Like the newspaper, the magazine has a complex history shaped by the cultures in which it developed. Examining the industry's roots and its transformation over time can contribute to a better understanding of the modern industry.

Early Magazines

After the printing press became prevalent in Europe, early publishers began to conceptualize the magazine. Forerunners of the familiar modern magazine first appeared during the 17th century in the form of brochures, pamphlets, and almanacs. Soon, publishers realized that irregular publication schedules required too much time and energy. A gradual shift then occurred as publishers sought regular readers with specific interests. But the early magazine was unlike any other previous publication. It was not enough of a news source to be a newspaper, but it could not be considered pleasure reading either. Instead, early magazines occupied the middle ground between the two. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "History of Publishing," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/publishing/28679/Magazine-publishing>.

Germany, France, and the Netherlands Lead the Way

German theologian and poet Johann Rist published the first true magazine between 1663 and 1668. Titled *Erbauliche Monats-Unterredungen*, or *Edifying Monthly Discussions*, Rist's publication inspired a number of others to begin printing literary journals across Europe: Denis de Sallo's French *Journal des Sçavans* (1665), the Royal Society's English *Philosophical Transactions* (1665), and Francesco Nazzari's Italian *Giomale de'letterati* (1668). In 1684, exiled Frenchman Pierre Bayle published *Novelles de la République des Lettres* in the Netherlands to escape French censorship. Profoundly affected by a general revival of learning during the 1600s, the publications inspired enthusiasm for education.

Another Frenchman, Jean Donneau de Vizé, published the first "periodical of amusement," *Le Mercure Galant* (later renamed *Mercure de France*), in 1672, which contained news, short stories, and poetry. This combination of news and pleasurable reading became incredibly popular, causing other publications to imitate the magazine. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "History of Publishing," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/publishing/28679/Magazine-publishing>. This lighter magazine catered to a different reader than did the other, more intellectual publications of the day, offering articles for entertainment and enjoyment rather than for education.

With the arrival of the 18th century came an increase in literacy. Women, who enjoyed a considerable rise in literacy rates, began reading in record numbers. This growth affected the literary world as a whole, inspiring a large number of female writers to publish novels for female readers. Abby Wolf, "Introduction," 19th Century Women Writers, PBS, www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/...ers/intro.html. This influx of female readers also helped magazines flourish as more women sought out the publications as a source of knowledge and entertainment. In fact, many magazines jumped at the chance to reach out to women. The *Athenian Mercury*, the first magazine written specifically for women, appeared in 1693.

British Magazines Appear

Much as in newspaper publication, Great Britain closely followed Continental Europe's lead in producing magazines. During the early 18th century, three major influential magazines published regularly in Great Britain: *Robinson Crusoe* author Daniel Defoe's the *Review*, Sir Richard Steele's the *Tatler*, and Joseph Addison and Steele's the *Spectator*.



Figure 5.2 Great Britain's first magazines emerged during the early 18th century, shortly after publishers had popularized the format in Europe.

All three of these publications were published either daily or several times a week. While they were supplied as frequently as newspapers, their content was closer to that of magazines. The *Review* focused primarily on domestic and foreign affairs and featured opinion-based political articles. The *Spectator* replaced the *Tatler*, which published from 1709 to 1711. Both *Tatler* and *Spectator* emphasized living and culture and frequently used humor to promote virtuous behavior. Abby Wolf, "Introduction," 19th Century Women Writers, PBS, www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/...ers/intro.html. *Tatler* and *Spectator*, in particular, drew a large number of female readers, and both magazines eventually added female-targeted publications: *Female Tatler* in 1709 and *Female Spectator* in 1744.

American Magazines

The first American magazines debuted in 1741, when Andrew Bradford's *American Magazine* and Benjamin Franklin's *General Magazine* began publication in Philadelphia a mere 3 days apart from each other. Neither magazine lasted long, however; *American Magazine* folded after only 3 months and *General Magazine* after 6. The short-lived nature of the publications likely had less to do with the outlets themselves and more to do with the fact that they were "limited by too few readers with leisure time to read, high costs of publishing, and expensive distribution systems." Joseph Straubhaar, Robert Larose, and Lucinda Davenport, *Media Now: Understanding Media, Culture, and Technology* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2009). Regardless of this early setback, magazines began to

flourish during the latter half of the 18th century, and by the end of the 1700s, more than 100 magazines had appeared in the nascent United States. Despite this large publication figure, typical colonial magazines still recorded low circulation figures and were considered highbrow.

Mass-Appeal Magazines

All this changed during the 1830s when publishers began taking advantage of a general decline in the cost of printing and mailing publications and started producing less-expensive magazines with a wider audience in mind. Magazine style also transformed. While early magazines focused on improvement and reason, later versions focused on amusement. No longer were magazines focused on the elite class. Publishers took advantage of their freshly expanded audience and began offering family magazines, children's magazines, and women's magazines. Women's publications again proved to be a highly lucrative market. One of the earliest American women's magazines was *Godey's Lady's Book*, a Philadelphia-based monthly that printed between 1830 and 1898. This particular magazine reached out to female readers by employing nearly 150 women.

The Saturday Evening Post

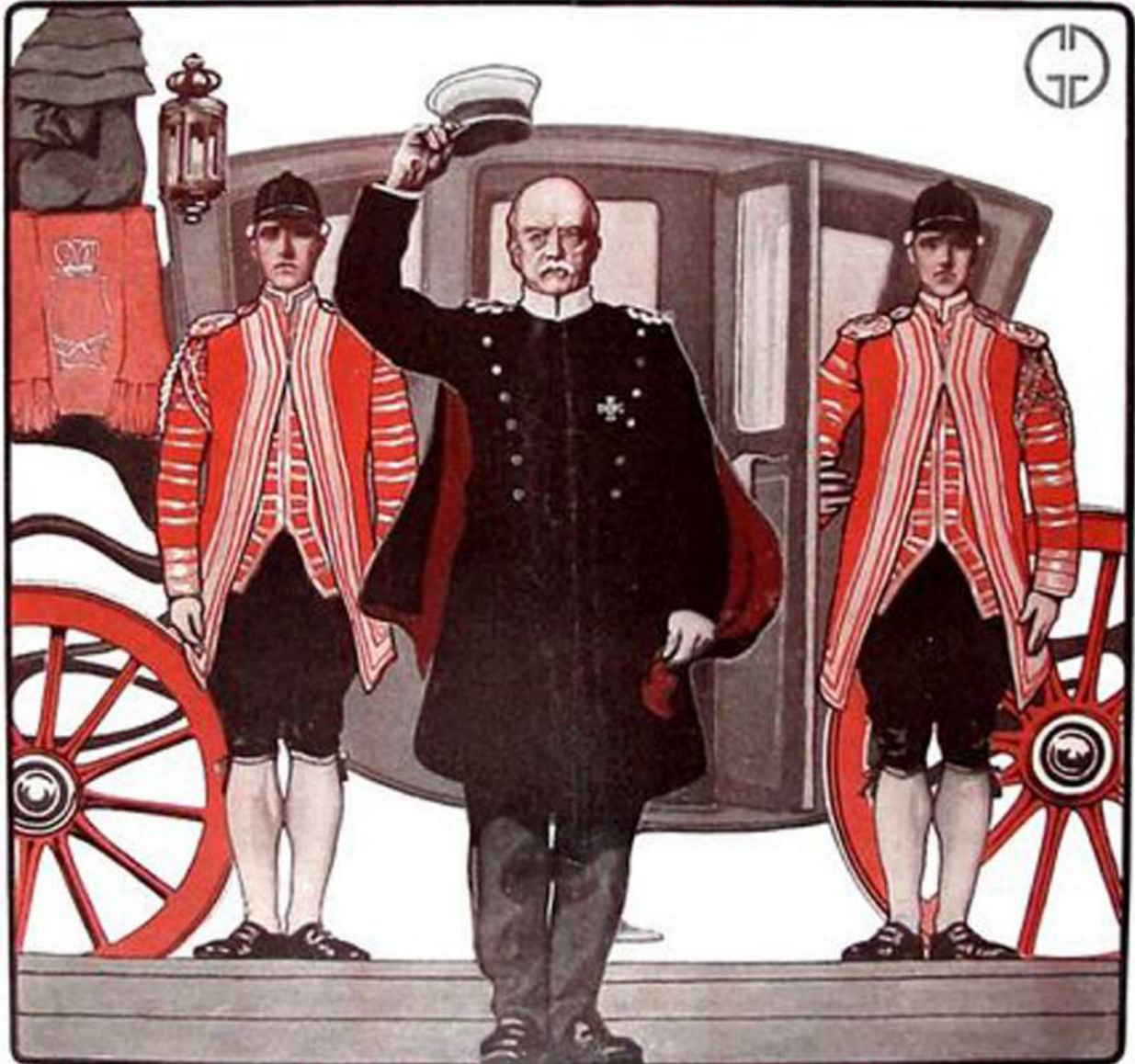
The first truly successful mass circulation magazine in the United States was *The Saturday Evening Post*. This weekly magazine first began printing in 1821 and remained in regular print production until 1969, when it briefly ceased circulation. However, in 1971 a new owner remodeled the magazine to focus on health and medical breakthroughs. From the time of its first publication in the early 1800s, *The Saturday Evening Post* quickly grew in popularity; by 1855, it had a circulation of 90,000 copies per year. *Saturday Evening Post*, "About," <http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/about>. Widely recognized for transforming the look of the magazine, the publication was the first to put artwork on its cover, a decision that *The Saturday Evening Post* has said "connected readers intimately with the magazine as a whole." *Saturday Evening Post*, "About," <http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/about>. Certainly, *The Saturday Evening Post* took advantage of the format by featuring the work of famous artists such as Norman Rockwell. Using such recognizable artists boosted circulation as "Americans everywhere recognized the art of the *Post* and eagerly awaited the next issue because of it." *Saturday Evening Post*, "About," <http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/about>.

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

An Illustrated Weekly Magazine
Founded A. D. 1728 by Benj. Franklin

NOVEMBER 28, 1903

FIVE CENTS THE COPY



THE STOLEN INTERVIEW
THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA

Figure 5.3 *The Saturday Evening Post* popularized the use of artwork of its cover, setting a standard for other publications to follow.

But *The Saturday Evening Post* did not only feature famous artists; it also published works by famous authors including F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, and Ring Lardner. The popularity of these writers contributed to the continuing success of the magazine.

Youth's Companion

Another early U.S. mass magazine was *Youth's Companion*, which published between 1827 and 1929 when it merged with *The American Boy*. Based in Boston, Massachusetts, this periodical featured fairly religious content and developed a reputation as a wholesome magazine that encouraged young readers to be virtuous and pious. Eventually, the magazine sought to reach a larger, adult audience by including tame entertainment pieces. Nevertheless, the magazine in time began featuring the work of prominent writers for both children and adults and became “a literary force to be reckoned with.” “Youth's Companion,” *Nineteenth-Century American Children and What They Read: Some of Their Magazines*, <http://www.merrycoz.org/MAGS2.HTM>.

Price Decreases Attract Larger Audiences

While magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Youth's Companion* were fairly popular, the industry still struggled to achieve widespread circulation. Most publications cost the then-hefty sum of 25 or 35 cents per issue, limiting readership to the relative few who could afford them. This all changed in 1893 when Samuel Sidney McClure began selling *McClure's Magazine*, originally a literary and political magazine, at the bargain price of only 15 cents per issue. The trend caught on. Soon, *Cosmopolitan* (founded 1886) began selling for 12.5 cents, while *Munsey Magazine* (1886–1929) sold for only 10 cents. All three of these periodicals were widely successful. Frank A. Munsey, owner of *Munsey Magazine*, estimated that between 1893 and 1899 “the ten-cent magazine increased the magazine-buying public from 250,000 to 750,000 persons.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “History of Publishing,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/publishing/28679/Magazine-publishing>. For the first time, magazines could be sold for less than they cost to produce. Because of greater circulation, publications could charge more for advertising space and decrease the cost to the customer.

By 1900, advertising had become a crucial component of the magazine business. In the early days of the industry, many publications attempted to keep advertisements out of their issues because of publishers' natural fondness toward literature and writing. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “History of Publishing,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/publishing/28679/Magazine-publishing>. However, once circulation increased, advertisers sought out space in magazines to reach the larger audience. Magazines responded by raising advertising rates, ultimately increasing their profitability. By the turn of the 20th century, advertising became the norm in magazines, particularly in some women's magazine, where advertisements accounted for nearly half of all content.

Early 20th-Century Developments

The arrival of the 20th century brought with it new types of magazines, including news, business, and picture magazines. In time, these types of publications came to dominate the industry and attract vast readerships.

Newsmagazines

As publishers became interested in succinctly presenting the fresh increase of worldwide information that technology made available during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they designed the newsmagazine. In 1923, *Time* became the first newsmagazine that focused on world news. *Time* first began publication with the proposition that “people are uninformed because no publication has adapted itself to the time which busy men are able to spend simply keeping informed.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “History of Publishing,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/publishing/28679/Magazine-publishing>. Although the periodical struggled during its early years, *Time* hit its stride in 1928 and its readership grew. The magazine's signature style of well-researched news presented in a succinct manner contributed greatly to its eventual success.

Several other newsmagazines came onto the market during this era as well. *Business Week* was founded in 1929 with a focus on the global market. *Forbes*, currently one of the most popular financial magazines, began printing in 1917 as a biweekly publication. In 1933, a former *Time* foreign editor founded *Newsweek*, which now has a circulation of nearly 4 million readers. Today, *Newsweek* and *Time* continue to compete with each other, furthering a trend that began in the early years of *Newsweek*.

Picture Magazines

Photojournalism, or the telling of stories through photography, also became popular during the early 20th century. Although magazines had been running illustrations since the 19th century, as photography grew in popularity so did picture magazines. The most influential picture magazine was Henry Luce's *Life*, which regularly published between 1936 and 1972. Within weeks of its

initial publication, *Life* had a circulation of 1 million. In Luce's words, the publication aimed "to see life; to see the world; to witness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "History of Publishing," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/publishing/28679/Magazine-publishing>. It did not disappoint. Widely credited with establishing photojournalism, *Life* captured the attention of many on first read. With 96 large-format glossy pages, even the inaugural issue sold out. The opening photograph depicted an obstetrician holding a newborn baby with the caption "Life begins".

While *Life* was the most influential picture magazine, it was certainly not the only photo-centric publication. Popular biweekly picture magazine *Look* printed between 1937 and 1971, claiming to compete with *Life* by reaching out to a larger audience. Although *Look* offered *Life* stiff competition during their almost identical print runs, the latter magazine is widely considered to have a greater legacy. Several other photo magazines—including *Focus*, *Peek*, *Foto*, *Pic*, and *Click*—also took their inspiration from *Life*.

Into the 21st Century

During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the advent of online technology began to greatly affect both the magazine industry and the print media as a whole. Much like newspaper publishers, magazine publishers have had to rethink their structure to reach out to an increasingly online market. The specifics of the changes made to the magazine industry will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

- The first magazine was published in Germany during the 17th century. The success of this publication led to the introduction of magazines across Europe. During the 17th and 18th centuries, publishers founded several different types of periodicals aimed at diverse audiences, including the elite and women.
- The 1830s triggered the arrival of mass circulation magazines in the United States. Magazines began offering less expensive magazines to a wider audience, promoting greater consumption of the print media.
- The introduction of newsmagazines and picture magazines dramatically changed the U.S. magazine industry during the early 20th century. Today, newsmagazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* continue to dominate the magazine industry.

? Exercise 5.2.1

Select a magazine that you enjoy reading and research its history. Then, answer the following writing prompts.

1. When was it founded, and by whom? Is the magazine similar to the early European and U.S. magazines? Why or why not?
2. How have its articles, photographs, and advertisements changed over the years? What changes in printing technologies in the 1830s had a direct influence on the way the magazine looks now?
3. Based on the way the magazine has adapted to trends in journalism during the 20th century, how do you predict the magazine will evolve in the future?

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5.3: The Role of Magazines in the Development of American Popular Culture

Learning Objectives

- Identify the change in regional and widespread advertising that occurred in the early 1900s.
- Describe the backlash against pulp magazines in the 1930s.

Although magazines' great contributions to the development of culture and popular trends are today widely acknowledged, the industry has not always been influential. Because of the significant costs associated with printing and mailing publications, magazines originally reached out only to regional audiences. Not until these expenses declined and advertising revenues increased were magazines able to justify the cost of mass circulation.

Advertising for a National Market

The late 19th century brought with it an increase in mass circulation for the U.S. magazine industry. This meant that magazines that had once targeted only a small part of the country suddenly began reaching a nationwide audience. In addition to the obvious benefit of increased magazine revenue, this shift to broad circulation caused an interesting phenomenon: the introduction of national trends. For the first time in U.S. history, mass circulation allowed news, stories, consumer goods, and fashions to be diffused and advertised to widespread, rather than regional, audiences. Mass circulation of magazines united the country as geographically diverse consumers read the same stories and saw the same advertisements.

Due to this growth in readership, advertisements became increasingly vital to the magazine industry. Advertisers sought to reach a large audience, and magazines willingly afforded them that opportunity, selling advertising space at higher rates. One business manager of *Scribner's Monthly*, an early popular magazine, solicited advertisements by discussing the readership boom:

The publishers of *Scribner's Monthly* will insert in each number of the magazine certain pages devoted to advertisements of a character likely to interest magazine readers. These will not increase the postage, while they will add materially to the ability of the publishers to render their magazines readable and attractive. The press of advertisements upon our first number shows how quickly the claims of the new monthly upon the business public are recognized. Our edition will be very large, and it will have a national circulation. It is now well understood that a first-class popular magazine furnishes to all men who seek a national market the very best medium for advertising that exists. Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), 26.

That national market was an entirely new one for publishers and advertisers. By the 1930s, market research had become the norm for periodicals as magazines—and advertisers—worked to better understand what readers wanted in their publications. However, market research has its limits; many publishers instead embraced the potential of magazines to simply tell people what they want or need, thus solidifying the role of the magazine as a driver of popular culture. As one editor of *Vogue* articulated, “If we find out what people want, it’s already too late.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “History of Publishing,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/publishing/28679/Magazine-publishing>.

Popular Literature in Magazines

Magazines offered a place not only for advertisers but also for authors and poets to reach a large audience. Several publications regularly hired both new and established authors to write stories. As circulation increased, so did the desire for these authors to publish their work.

Literary magazines enjoyed a boom during the 19th century, publishing some of the period’s most important fiction. At one point or another, nearly every important American writer contributed to literary magazines; for example, Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, and Ernest Hemingway all published in periodicals throughout their careers. Even writers working outside the country such as Ezra Pound and James Joyce sought out U.S. magazines to publish works that had been banned elsewhere.

Just as magazines offered authors a chance to display their writing to a large audience, they also allowed readers a taste of available literature. Even today, magazines print portions of books, which give readers a preview of the complete text. Portions of literary classics including *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Walden*, *Moby-Dick*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and *Ulysses* all made their debuts in magazines. Some novels—such as Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes*, John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, and Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*—even appeared in magazines in full before being published in book form. The opportunity to publish in magazines has been invaluable for authors, but literary publications have also proved essential for the development of American

culture. In publishing literary texts, journals have promoted now-classic stories, like the previously mentioned examples, that have defined American literary history and have shaped the U.S. story.

Pulp Magazines

During the late 1800s, a new type of magazine was established: the pulp magazine, an all-fiction publication named for its rough wood-pulp paper. At the time, dime novels did not qualify for the same inexpensive postal rates that magazines did—but the pulps did. Suddenly, individuals had the opportunity to read popular genre fiction in these cheap magazines, like *Adventure*, *Horror Stories*, *Startling Stories*, and *Weird Tales*.

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY



No. 536

NEW YORK, APRIL 6, 1907

Price, Five Cents



Nick uttered a short, sharp cry, and instantly he fell to the ground. The thing which had rendered him so powerless was an electric shock from a wire concealed in the hand of the queen.

Figure 5.4 Although pulp magazines first began publishing in 1896, they truly gained popularity during the early 20th century.

Source: Used with permission from Getty Images.

Commonly acknowledged to be the invention of Frank Munsey, the pulps got their start as adventure magazines, but they eventually diverged into several categories such as love, detective, and western. The fiction stories did remarkably well until the mid-1930s, when newspaper comics first offered competition by printing collections on the same pulp paper. In 1937, however, the two genres collided with *Detective Comics* (where Batman made his first appearance), and the industry experienced a major boom. Although intended for children, the violent, horror-soaked comics drew a large adult audience. However, the graphic content of the pulp strips caused a stir, with the public divided on the nature of this new media. Defenders of the comics called them harmless, while critics thought they would provoke people to mimic the violent subject matter. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "History of Publishing," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/publishing/28679/Magazine-publishing>. Just as legislators struggle today with debates over censorship of television, music, and the Internet, they did so with pulp comics as well. Negative backlash against pulp comics was encouraged through several articles published by child psychologist Fredric Wertham, who alleged that comics were leading children into lives of crime. Jamie Coville, "The Comic Book Villain, Dr. Fredric Wertham, M.D.," *Seduction of the Innocents and the Attack on Comic Books*, www.psu.edu/dept/inart10_110/.../cmbk4cca.html. In response to the controversy, an industry group known as the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers established a Publishers Code in 1948 with the aim of regulating the content of pulp comics. The Publishers Code was not well enforced, however; many publishers choose to ignore the code, and thus the controversy continued to rage. When Senate hearings raised the threat of government regulation in 1954, the pulp comics industry opted for self-censorship, and as a result the much stricter Comics Code Authority was established to control what material reached consumers.

In spite of the controversy surrounding the magazines, the industry flourished, and eventually new forms of pulp magazines emerged. *Amazing Stories* offered science fiction, and hand-drawn pinups filled so-called Girlie Pulps, which found an audience despite experiencing a setback in 1934 when police seized 10,000 copies and burned them. Even though both new genres attracted outcry from the public for their indecency, the pulps continued to grow in popularity. Many have argued that the difficulties of the Great Depression and the uncertainty of a looming world war made 1930s audiences ripe for the entertainment offered by fictional heroes, giving the pulp genre a ready audience.

Entertainment Magazines

The success of the pulps encouraged another major transformation in mainstream journalism: the rise of entertaining fan magazines. Typically focused on television, film, and music, fan magazines emerged as national entertainment during the early 20th century. During the early years of motion pictures, magazines such as *Photoplay*, *Picture Play*, *Movie Mirror*, and *Movieland* began publication, offering subscribers behind-the-scenes glimpses of well-known films. These periodicals were so successful that, as radio and television became popular, similar magazines came into existence to cover these new media. Television- and radio-focused magazines also provided weekly timetables of programs for their viewers and listeners. Although the emphasis of the fan magazine has changed over the years, even today much of the magazine industry is dominated by entertainment publications, like *Entertainment Weekly*, *Rolling Stone*, and *TV Guide*. In addition to providing entertainment news to readers, these publications are also useful to celebrities and media producers as a platform to market their new products.

Teen Magazines

During the 1940s, many publishers began pursuing teenagers, a previously ignored demographic. *Seventeen* magazine hit shelves in 1944, setting the stage for later publications such as *Tiger Beat* and *Teen People*. These magazines targeted young women, offering stories on fashion, makeup, celebrity news, and lifestyles. Since their beginnings, teen magazines have kept their articles relatively brief, instead reaching their target audiences with bright and bold photos. *Tiger Beat*, for example, is known for its collaged covers featuring a popular teen celebrity of the moment. Teen magazines influence popular culture not only through their reporting on celebrities, but also through their articles on celebrity fashion, which readers use to adopt fashion trends worn by celebrities. Like entertainment magazines, teen magazines are also useful marketing tools for celebrities and other media producers.

During their early years, most teen magazines sought out readers in their late teens, even offering articles on colleges. Today, however, to reach a wider audience, these same magazines intentionally target the preteen market by featuring younger actors and including more teenage celebrity gossip. In doing so, the magazine industry continues to influence younger and younger audiences, thus making a greater impact on American popular culture.

JUSTIN'S BIG LOVE CONFESSION!

A LAUFER MAGAZINE

TIGER beat

WIN JUSTIN'S SIGNED PHONE!

Forget the rumors! JUSTIN'S SINGLE
Is it YOUR chance?

Taylor's SECRET DOUBLE LIFE!

Who is Selena missing? SHE TELLS US INSIDE!

OMG! Is Taylor getting married?

CAUGHT! ROB & KRISTEN'S SECRET DATE!

STERLING'S CRUSH SURPRISE!

DEMI'S BREAKUP MAKEOVER

ON SET WITH ROB! CUTE NEW PIX!

DID MILEY DISS LIAM?

BIG TIME RUSH ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

SIZZLING HOT POSTERS

tigerbeat.com
OCTOBER 2010
US \$3.99

0 71896 47360 5 1 0 >

Figure 5.5 First popularized during the 1940s, teen magazines today target both tween and teenage audiences, bringing popular culture to the young.

Do Magazine Images Negatively Influence Teenage Girls?

In 2006, the Madrid fashion show made headlines by banning overly thin models to project an image of beauty and health. According to fashion show organizers, “models had to be within a healthy weight range. That means a 5-foot-9 woman would need to be at least 125 pounds.” Nanci Hellmich, “Do Thin Models Warp Girls’ Body Image?” *USA Today*, September 26, 2006, http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2006-09-25-thin-models_x.htm. The debate over thin models has been around since the 1960s when model Twiggy entered the field. Since then, extremely thin models have ruled the runway despite claims to the contrary: Most American runway models measure within an inch or two of 6 feet tall, but weigh between just 120 and 124 pounds. With images of these models everywhere, many are growing concerned about their effect on American youths, especially teen girls.

Studies have shown that images of ultra-thin models distort women’s views of health and beauty, leading to depression, extreme dieting, and eating disorders. In one study, 69 percent of girls said that fashion models influence their idea of the perfect body shape, despite the fact that most models weigh 23 percent less than the average female. *Healthy Place*, “Eating Disorders: Body Image and Advertising,” December 11, 2008, www.healthyplace.com/eating-d...ng/menu-id-58/. Another study showed that 68 percent of Stanford University undergraduate and graduate students felt worse about themselves after looking through a women’s magazine. *Healthy Place*, “Eating Disorders: Body Image and Advertising,” December 11, 2008, www.healthyplace.com/eating-d...ng/menu-id-58/. Even more worrisome is the fact that young girls are being negatively affected by magazine images. “The number one wish for girls 11 to 17 is to be thinner, and girls as young as 5 have expressed fears of getting fat. Eighty percent of 10-year-old girls have dieted.” *Healthy Place*, “Eating Disorders: Body Image and Advertising,” December 11, 2008, www.healthyplace.com/eating-d...ng/menu-id-58/.

Some companies are fighting the trend of using super-thin models in their advertising. In 2004, Dove launched its Dove Campaign for Real Beauty; the company claims the goal of the ad campaign is to “help free ourselves and the next generation from beauty stereotypes.” Dove, “Campaign for Real Beauty,” http://www.dove.us/#/cfrb/about_cfrb.aspx. Dove’s ads feature women of many shapes, sizes, and ethnicities in little more than their undergarments. Dove has stated that it plans to continue using “real women” in marketing campaigns. Sophia Morrell, “Is the Use of Eating-Disorder Sufferers in Dove’s Ad Campaign an Act of Desperation?” *Marketing Week*, August 16, 2007, <http://www.marketingweek.co.uk/analysis/is-the-use-of-eating-disorder-sufferers-in-doves-ad-campaign-an-act-of-desperation/?2057515.article>.

Celebrity Magazines

Celebrity gossip is not just reserved for teen audiences. A stroll through a supermarket checkout lane reveals the vast assortment of celebrity magazines—also known as gossip magazines—that target adults. First popularized during the 1970s, these celebrity magazines offer readers an inside perspective on the lives of the famous. Many magazines publish gossip stories that humanize celebrities by featuring them in a negative light. Despite the best efforts of celebrities and their agents, placement in these magazines can make or break celebrities’ reputations and foster much drama within the celebrity community. Because of intense competition for stories, celebrity magazines may pay large sums of money to celebrities or other sources for exclusive stories and photos. Celebrity magazines will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

- When magazines began distributing nationwide, advertising underwent significant changes. Advertisers took advantage of the widespread audience and started marketing national trends. Advertising costs skyrocketed, as individuals across the country would now see and be influenced by the ads in magazines.
- During the 20th century, new types of magazines—such as literary magazines, pulp magazines, fan magazines, teen magazines, and celebrity magazines—all contributed to shared pop culture.

? Exercise 5.3.1

Look through a teen magazine like *Seventeen* or *CosmoGIRL!* and examine the models present in them. Then, answer the following writing prompts.

1. Do you see any images that might negatively affect young readers? Do you see any images that promote a healthy body image? How might magazines alter their advertisements and articles to more positively affect young audiences?

2. How does this magazine differ from the magazines in the early 1900s? What advertising differences do you see?
3. How might the backlash against pulp magazines in the 1930s have contributed to the rise of teen magazines?

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5.4: Major Publications in the Magazine Industry

Learning Objectives

- List the top three highest circulation journals.
- Discuss the controversial transformation of *Cosmopolitan* magazine.

Magazines have evolved significantly since their inception. Magazines have affected the world by bringing news, entertainment, literature, and photography to their readers. Additionally, the magazine industry has profoundly affected U.S. popular culture. As magazines have developed over time, individual publications have targeted specific groups and have found particular niches. This section explores a number of popular periodicals and their effect on their target audiences.

High-Circulation Magazines

The top-10 highest circulating magazines in the United States differ greatly in style and audience. From *AARP* to *Better Homes and Gardens*, from *National Geographic* to *Family Circle*, the list demonstrates the wide pool of readers and interests attracted to the medium. This section will explore the top three publications: *AARP The Magazine*, *AARP Bulletin*, and *Reader's Digest*.

AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin

Some may be surprised to learn that the two magazines with the highest circulation in the United States are not ones readily available to buy at a newsstand or grocery store: *AARP The Magazine* and *AARP Bulletin*. Published by the nonprofit organization AARP (formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons), both are automatically sent to the organization's more than 40 million members.

A bimonthly publication that is "geared exclusively towards 50+ Americans seeking to enhance their quality of life as they age," AARP, "AARP The Magazine," aarpmedia.org/atm. *AARP The Magazine* publishes lifestyle articles and includes sections dedicated to health, money, work, relationships, and travel, among others. Its mission statement reads as follows:

AARP The Magazine provides three editorial versions targeted to different life stages (50–59, 60–69, 70+) to empower readers with editorial written just for them. Annual editorial packages, strong service journalism, and celebrity profiles will be presented in a warm, vibrant and inviting format to encourage readers to reflect, engage and enjoy. AARP, "AARP The Magazine," aarpmedia.org/atm.

AARP also publishes *AARP Bulletin*, which is "a monthly news publication that reaches influential consumers and policymakers." AARP, "AARP Bulletin," aarpmedia.org/bulletin. Rather than presenting lifestyle stories, this publication focuses on news stories of interest to its target audience.

AARP Bulletin chronicles and interprets important social issues that affect 50+ Americans. News, balanced analysis and concise stories, in an accessible format, motivates these influential readers to engage in public policy on health care, financial well-being and consumer protection. AARP, "AARP Bulletin," aarpmedia.org/bulletin.

Reader's Digest

Reader's Digest boasts the third-highest circulation among U.S. magazines. First published in 1922 as a "digest of condensed articles of topical interest and entertainment value taken from other periodicals," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Reader's Digest," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/492829/Readers-Digest>. This famous pocket-sized journal was first produced on a low budget by a husband and wife team who believed the magazine would sell despite numerous rejections from magazine publishers. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Reader's Digest," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/492829/Readers-Digest>. They were right. *Reader's Digest* was an almost immediate success and now regularly outsells competitors. The monthly magazine has subscribers around the globe and seeks to "create products that inform, enrich, entertain and inspire people of all ages and cultures around the world." *Reader's Digest*, "Customer Care," <http://www.rd.com/customer-care/>.

News Magazines

As discussed in Section 5.1, newsmagazines became popular during the 1920s. Today, newsmagazines make up a large portion of magazine sales, with multiple news periodicals ranking in the top 30 for circulation. Over time, a number of newsmagazines have established themselves in the industry, including *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*.

Newsweek

Newsweek's initial February 1933 issue was called *News-Week* and featured seven different photographs from the week's news on its cover. The weekly publication currently “offers comprehensive coverage of world events with a global network of correspondents, reporters and editors covering national and international affairs, business, science and technology, society and the arts and entertainment.”*Newsweek*, “History of *Newsweek*,” <http://www.newsweek.com/2007/10/10/history-of-newsweek.html>. Relying on a wide array of reporters, *Newsweek* also uniquely publishes a reader-penned section titled “My Turn.” The magazine has been hugely successful over the years and holds more prestigious National Magazine Awards than any other newsweekly.

The magazine has not been without its trials, however. In November of 2009 *Newsweek* published an article discussing Sarah Palin's book, *Going Rogue: An American Life*. The cover of that issue featured a photo of Palin that had been used in an issue of *Runner's World* with Palin in running attire. The words “How Do You Solve a Problem Like Sarah?” were splayed across the photograph.





Figure 5.6 Sarah Palin was the subject of a controversial cover of *Newsweek*, published in November 2009, that earned the magazine much criticism.

Source: Used with permission from Getty Images.

The cover caused a popular backlash, with readers calling it sexist and unfair. One reader suggested that *Newsweek* would never print a photograph of Barack Obama in such attire. In response, *Newsweek* published a photo of President Obama in his swim trunks in its following issue, although this photo was smaller and on an inside page rather than on the cover.

Time

Time has remained an influential publication during the decades since its inception. Today, the publication prides itself on its “rare convergence of incisive reporting, lively writing and world-renowned photography,” which combined have earned it the praise of being “journalism at its best.” *Time*, “National Editorial,” 205.188.238.181/time/mediakit...zine/national/. The magazine is divided into four main sections: Briefing, The Well, Life, and Arts. Briefing includes concise stories on major news events in the United States and other countries. The Well section features longer articles, including the cover story and articles on world and business. Life contains stories on health, science, technology, and the environment. Finally, Arts consists of reviews of theater, film, literature, music, exhibits, and architecture. Like *Newsweek*, *Time* has won numerous awards and prides itself on being “the guide through chaos” in an era of information overload. *Time*, “National Editorial,” 205.188.238.181/time/mediakit...zine/national/.

U.S. News & World Report

Created through the merger of a newspaper and a magazine, *U.S. News & World Report* has gained great prestige over the years. In 1933—the same year that *Newsweek* debuted—journalist David Lawrence began publishing a weekly newspaper called the *United States News*. Six years later, he founded a weekly magazine titled *World Report*. In 1948, the two weeklies merged to create the new *U.S. News & World Report*. The magazine’s focus is similar to those of *Time* and *Newsweek*, but *U.S. News & World Report* concentrates more on political, economic, health, and education stories, perhaps in part because it is based in Washington, DC. Although for most of its long history the magazine published weekly, in 2008 it announced its transition to a monthly printing schedule, vowing to concentrate on its website.

The magazine is perhaps best known for its annual ranking of U.S. colleges. This ranking began in 1983 and has since evolved to include newsstand books of *America’s Best Colleges* and *America’s Best Graduate Schools*. Since the ranking system began, students turn to the publication for information about the strengths and weaknesses of institutions of higher learning.

Women’s Magazines

Female readers have been important to the magazine industry since the early 19th century, initially because women were not traditionally part of the workforce and were believed to have more leisure time to read. This lucrative market has only grown over time. In an increasingly online era, many magazines have sought ways to expand their scope to reach a larger audience. Yet others, such as *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*, have maintained their original scope and have still managed to turn profits. These three periodicals are part of the “Seven Sisters,” a group of magazines traditionally targeted at women.

Ladies’ Home Journal

Ladies’ Home Journal began in 1879 as a column for women published in the *Tribune and Farmer* newspaper. The wife of the publisher was not entirely impressed with her husband’s column and so began writing it herself. Cliff Aliperti, “The Ladies’ Home Journal: Development under Louisa Knapp Curtis and Edward W. Bok,” <http://www.things-and-other-stuff.com/magazines/ladies-home-journal.html>. The column grew in popularity so rapidly that, by 1883, Louisa Knapp Curtis had published her first major supplement called the *Ladies Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper*. Today, the publishers of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* state that it is “a unique lifestyle magazine dedicated to the millions of American women who want to look good, do good and feel great.” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, “Mission Statement,” www.meredith.com/mediakit/lhj/print/index.htm. Ranked twelfth in circulation, the magazine presently has a readership of nearly 4 million. Echo Media, “Ladies’ Home Journal,” [!\[\]\(b792654f2cef9719eabeb6c5be00811e_img.jpg\)](http://www.echo-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

media.com/mediaDetail.php?ID=4162. *Ladies' Home Journal* focuses on style, health, relationships, and food. Perhaps its most recognizable feature is a column titled “Can This Marriage Be Saved?,” which made its debut in 1953. The regular column features stories of real-life couples struggling in their marriages, offers advice from marriage and family therapists, and projects the outcomes.

Good Housekeeping

In May of 1885, *Good Housekeeping* began publishing with the intention of providing “information about running a home, a broad range of literary offerings, and opportunities for reader input.” Library of Congress, “Today in History: *Good Housekeeping*,” American Memory Project, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/may02.html>. Fifteen years later, the magazine founded the Good Housekeeping Research Institute. The research institute includes a product-evaluation laboratory where a staff of scientists, engineers, nutritionists, and researchers evaluate a wide variety of products. The magazine then reports their findings to its readers to “improve the lives of consumers and their families through education and product evaluation.” *Good Housekeeping*, “About the Good Housekeeping Research Institute,” <http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/product-testing/history/about-good-housekeeping-research-institute>. The magazine describes itself as follows:

Devoted to contemporary women. Monthly articles focus on food, fitness, beauty, and childcare using the resources of the Good Housekeeping Institute. From human interest stories and social issues to money management and travel, the magazine will encourage positive living for today’s woman. “*Good Housekeeping Magazine*,” worldmags.net/women/2022-good...r-2010-us.html.

With over 4.6 million readers, *Good Housekeeping* currently ranks ninth highest in U.S. circulation. Echo Media, “*Good Housekeeping*,” <http://www.echo-media.com/mediaDetail.php?ID=4155&filterUsed=FALSE>; Audit Bureau of Circulations, <http://www.accessabc.com/>.

Better Homes and Gardens

Making its print debut in 1922, *Better Homes and Gardens* entered the industry later than its counterparts. Currently, the magazine is ranked fifth in circulation in the United States with a readership of more than 7.6 million. Echo Media, “*Better Homes and Gardens*,” <http://www.echo-media.com/mediaDetail.php?ID=4227&filterUsed=FALSE>; Audit Bureau of Circulations, <http://www.accessabc.com/>. Since its inception, the publication has focused on home and gardening style and decorations. Its positioning statement reads as follows:

For the woman who reads *Better Homes and Gardens*, home is where she creates her life story. It’s her haven, where she raises her family, entertains friends, and celebrates life’s big—and small—accomplishments. It’s where she indulges her dreams and builds a world of her own. Home is her emotional center—it’s where life happens. *Better Homes and Gardens* recognizes this and inspires her with infinite possibilities for creativity and self-expression. Each issue delivers smart, approachable editorial on design and individual style, decorating and gardening, food and entertaining, and personal and family well-being. *Better Homes and Gardens* helps her bridge the gap between dreaming and doing. *Better Homes and Gardens*, “Positioning Statement,” www.meredith.com/mediakit/bhg/index.html.

The monthly magazine is divided into six sections: Food and Nutrition, Home, Health, Family, Gardening, and Lifestyle.

Cosmopolitan

First published in 1886, the female-targeted *Cosmopolitan* has changed dramatically over time from its original intent of being a “first-class family magazine.” Frank Luthor Mott, *A History of American Magazines: 1885–1905* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 480. In the first issue, the editor told readers that “there will be a department devoted exclusively to the interests of women, with articles on fashions, on household decoration, on cooking, and the care and management of children, etc., also a department for the younger members of the family.” Frank Luthor Mott, *A History of American Magazines: 1885–1905* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 480. Just 2 years later, however, the original publishing company went out of business, and after several publisher changes *Cosmopolitan* was eventually purchased by newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst in 1905.

The magazine became more successful during the 1960s when Helen Gurley Brown “transformed an antiquated general-interest mag called *Cosmopolitan* into the must-read for young, sexy single chicks.” Jennifer Benjamin, “How Cosmo Changed the World,” *Cosmopolitan*, http://www.cosmopolitan.com/about/about-us_how-cosmo-changed-the-world. Brown transformed the magazine from the family-focused publication it was to the somewhat controversial read with an emphasis on sex, work, and fashion that it is today. The magazine describes the transformation saying the following:

Over the years, *Cosmo* has not only become the number-one-selling monthly magazine on the newsstand, but it has also served as an agent for social change, encouraging women everywhere to go after what they want (whether it be in the boardroom or the bedroom). Jennifer Benjamin, “How *Cosmo* Changed the World,” *Cosmopolitan*, http://www.cosmopolitan.com/about/about-us_how-cosmo-changed-the-world.

In 1965, *Cosmopolitan* revamped its journal with Brown’s vision in mind. The first retooled issue had an article about birth-control pills, then a relatively new and controversial innovation. The magazine’s provocative articles attracted a large readership, but many found it offensive. Conservatives believed that the content was too racy, while some feminists thought it was too focused on beauty and pleasing men. Jennifer Benjamin, “How *Cosmo* Changed the World,” *Cosmopolitan*, http://www.cosmopolitan.com/about/about-us_how-cosmo-changed-the-world. Yet the publishers of *Cosmopolitan* believed that they were introducing a new form of feminism. Jennifer Benjamin, “How *Cosmo* Changed the World,” *Cosmopolitan*, http://www.cosmopolitan.com/about/about-us_how-cosmo-changed-the-world. Brown argued that “*Cosmo* is feminist in that we believe women are just as smart and capable as men are and can achieve anything men can. But it also acknowledges that while work is important, men are too. The *Cosmo* girl absolutely loves men!” Jennifer Benjamin, “How *Cosmo* Changed the World,” *Cosmopolitan*, http://www.cosmopolitan.com/about/about-us_how-cosmo-changed-the-world.

Today, *Cosmopolitan* continues to attract readers by maintaining the same ideals that Brown put forth in the 1960s. Nearly 30 percent of every issue is dedicated to relationships, sex especially. The rest provides articles on beauty, fashion, entertainment, health and fitness, and self-improvement.

Men’s Magazines

Just as women’s magazines have existed for much of the history of the medium, over the years many magazines have been devoted to male readers. One of the most enduring and popular of those magazines is *Sports Illustrated*.

Sports Illustrated

When *Time* cocreator Henry Luce launched *Sports Illustrated* in 1954, his staff was doubtful about its chances. Spectator sports had not yet reached the level of popularity they have today, and the new magazine failed to make a profit for its first 12 years of publication. As television brought spectator sports to the growing suburbs, however, their popularity quickly rose, and *Sports Illustrated* became a success. Managing editor Andre Laguerre assembled a staff of talented, loyal writers and instituted the extensive use of color photographs, developing the basis for the format the magazine still uses.

In 1964, Laguerre initiated the *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition as a way of increasing sales during the winter months when there are fewer developments in sports. Putting model Babette March on the cover in a bikini helped the magazine sell, and the swimsuit edition became an annual tradition. Filled with pictures of models in revealing swimwear, the issue generates its share of controversy but is consistently the best-selling issue of the magazine each year.

Celebrity Magazines

Despite being criticized at times for their less-than-sophisticated approach to journalism, celebrity magazines bring in enormous profits and help shape U.S. pop culture, fueling the obsession some Americans have with the mundane day-to-day details of the lives of celebrities. Three of the most prominent celebrity magazines currently publishing are *People*, *OK!*, and *Us Weekly*.

People

Since it first began publishing as a spin-off of *Time* magazine’s “People” section in 1974, *People* has been a leading celebrity magazine. The publication sets itself apart from other celebrity gossip magazines by publishing human-interest stories alongside photos and articles about celebrities. The publishers of *People* state that they avoid pure Hollywood gossip articles and they refuse to publish stories without some sort of verification. Alyssa Moni, “An Inside Look at *People* Magazine,” March 31, 2011, <http://www.hercampus.com/school/bu/inside-look-people-magazine>. This editorial slant is unique among celebrity magazines, and, as such, the publication frequently receives exclusive interviews and photo shoots with celebrities. The somewhat more respectful relationship between the publishers and some celebrities has helped *People* become the most popular celebrity magazine in circulation, ranking thirteenth overall with a verified readership of over 3.6 million in 2010. Alyssa Moni, “An Inside Look at *People* Magazine,” March 31, 2011, <http://www.hercampus.com/school/bu/inside-look-people-magazine>.

OK!

A British-run magazine that began publishing in 1993, *OK!* claims to “bring you the truth and the inside scoop about celebrities.” *OK!*, “About,” www.okmagazine.com/about/. Known for its exclusive interviews that often lead to public announcements on pregnancies and engagements, *OK!* initially had a policy to print only positive celebrity profiles. “*OK!*” www.search.com/reference/OK! That policy changed in 2007 thanks to an erratic interview with pop singer Britney Spears, which was so surprising that the magazine decided to break with tradition and publish it anyway. “*OK!*” www.search.com/reference/OK! In 2008, Spears agreed to a second interview with the publication in which she discussed her previous behavior, leading to a more positive profile of the singer. The widely successful magazine has readers around the world along with several branch publications.

Us Weekly

Founded in 1977, *Us Weekly* followed the format of a bimonthly entertainment news and review magazine until 2000, when it switched formats to become a weekly leader in celebrity news and style. The publication “delivers a mass audience of young, educated, and affluent adults who are compelled by breaking celebrity news, Hollywood style and the best in entertainment.” *Us Weekly*, “*Us Weekly* Media Kit,” www.srds.com/mediakits/us_weekly/index.html. *Us Weekly* has become known for its fashion sections such as “Who Wore It Best?,” a reader poll comparing two celebrities wearing the same outfit, and “Fashion Police,” in which comedians comment on celebrity fashion mishaps and successes. With a circulation of nearly 2 million in December 2010, *Us Weekly* prides itself on being a leader in the celebrity magazine industry. *Us Weekly*, “*Us Weekly* Circulation Strength,” srds.com/mediakits/UsWeekly-p...rculation.html.

- *AARP The Magazine*, *AARP Bulletin*, and *Reader’s Digest* boast the three highest U.S. circulations among contemporary magazines.
- Women’s magazines, such as *Cosmopolitan*, make up a large portion of the medium.

? Exercise 5.4.1

Study the top-10 highest circulating magazines, which were outlined in this section: www.magazine.org/CONSUMER_MAR...TOTALrank.aspx. Then, answer the following writing prompts.

1. Why might these magazines rank higher in circulation than others? What themes, audiences, and differences set these apart?
2. Is any controversy surrounding them comparable to the controversy surrounding the modern *Cosmopolitan*?

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5.5: How Magazines Control the Public's Access to Information

Learning Objectives

- Describe how the formats of newspapers and magazines differ.
- Explain the impact of advertisements on story.

Magazines control the public's access to information in a variety of ways. Like the newspaper industry, the magazine industry dictates not only which stories get told but also how those stories are presented. Although significant similarities between the newspaper and magazine industries' control over information exist, some notable differences within the industries themselves deserve exploration.

Format

In general, the format of most magazines allows for a more in-depth discussion of a topic than is possible in the relatively constrained space available in newspapers. Most large newspapers, such as *The Washington Post* or the *Los Angeles Times*, generally cap even their longest articles at 1,000 words. Project for Excellence in Journalism, "Newspapers" in *The State of the News Media 2004*, www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2004/...?cat=2&media=2. Magazines, however, frequently allow for double that word count when publishing articles of great interest. Project for Excellence in Journalism, "Magazines" in *The State of the News Media 2004*, www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2004/...?cat=2&media=7. Length, however, varies from magazine to magazine and story to story. Coverage of the war in Iraq offers a good example of this variance. Researchers studied magazine coverage of Iraq over a period of 4 weeks in 2003 by examining the difference in reporting among *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*.

In these four issues, the war in Iraq accounted for more than a fifth (22 percent) of all stories and roughly a third (32 percent) of all the space. These stories were also more likely than others to be long and in depth.... There were also differences in the way that the three magazines covered the situation. *Time* devoted the most space to the war, 37 percent, compared to the 34 percent for *Newsweek* and 24 percent for *U.S. News*. And again, *Time* had more long stories (seven stories in the four issues studied were more than 2,000 words). *Newsweek* ran six long stories in the four issues studied and *U.S. News* ran two long stories. Project for Excellence in Journalism, "Magazines" in *The State of the News Media 2004*, www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2004/...?cat=2&media=7.

Although these differences might not appear that great, the results reflect editorial choice and, therefore, the power the magazine industry has over information control.

Choice to Publish

Just as newspapers do, magazines control which stories reach the public by deciding which articles to include in their publications. As might be expected, the choice of stories depends on the political climate and on global events.

Leading newsmagazines *Time* and *Newsweek* both underwent major transitions in their content during the late 20th century. Between the 1970s and 1990s, both greatly increased science articles, entertainment articles, and stories on personal health. Interestingly, despite both publications' stated commitment to news, a dramatic decrease took place in articles on domestic- and foreign-government affairs. Whether these changes reflected a change in reader interest or an alteration in the editors' perspectives remains unclear; however, these shifts demonstrate that what is published is entirely up to the magazine and its editorial staff, as they are the ones who have the final word.

Advertisers' Influence

Magazines derive approximately half of their income from advertisers. "Magazines: Economics and Careers," March 20, 2010, <http://www.cybercollege.com/frtv/mag3.htm>. With such a large stake in the magazine industry, advertisers can play a major role in deciding which stories are printed. Because magazines are so dependent on advertisers for their revenue, they are cautious about the content they place in their pages.

Magazines tend to shy away from controversial content that can turn off advertisers. Recently, a large American auto manufacturer sent a memo to about 50 magazines asking that their ad agency be notified if future issues of the magazine contained articles that addressed political, sexual, or social issues that might be seen as provocative, controversial, or offensive. "Magazines: Economics and Careers," March 20, 2010, <http://www.cybercollege.com/frtv/mag3.htm>.

The balance that magazines must maintain to keep advertisers happy is a delicate one. With ad prices driving the magazine industry, many publications are forced to satisfy advertisers by avoiding potentially controversial stories.

Another anecdote about advertisers controlling stories illustrates how some publishers must conform to advertiser demands.

In an even more blatant attempt to influence magazine content, another large corporation informed a number of magazine publishers that the content of their magazines would be carefully monitored for several months and that a large advertising contract would be awarded to the publication that portrayed their industry in the most favorable light. “Magazines: Economics and Careers,” March 20, 2010, <http://www.cybercollege.com/frtv/mag3.htm>.

With stories such as these, it may seem easy to paint the advertising industry as an evil, controlling entity that seeks to keep stories from the public. While advertisers may exhibit some control over stories, they also have a lot at stake.

As online media grows, today many advertisers are pulling their expensive print ads in favor of cheaper, web-based advertisements. David Knarr, “Magazine Advertising – Trade Secrets,” www.studio1productions.com/Articles/MagAds.htm. Advertising revenue has decreased steadily since the 1990s, mirroring the rise in online readership. “Periodicals: Publishing, or Publishing and Printing” business.highbeam.com/industry-reports/wood/periodicals-publishing-publishing-printing. This drop in advertising may, in fact, force magazines to give advertisers more control over their content to avoid losing further funding. While it may be difficult to precisely pin down the level of influence advertisers exert over magazine content, evidence suggests they do exert some control.

Editorial Leanings

Each magazine has its own editorial slant, which helps determine which stories get published and how those stories are presented. A 2003 study examining leading newsmagazines *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* verified these differences by demonstrating variations in how the publications presented their articles to the reading public.

U.S. News & World Report ... is the most information-laden, the most likely to publish highly traditional hard news topics and the most likely to report in a neutral manner—a more straightforward accounting of the facts of events with less of a writer’s “take” or opinion on what those events mean. *Newsweek* is lighter, more oriented toward lifestyle and celebrity coverage, and more likely to publish stories that contain an emotional component. *Time* magazine is something of a hybrid between the two. Its content is more like *U.S. News*’—neutral and information driven. Its covers, on the other hand, look a good deal more like *Newsweek*’s—highlighting lifestyle and entertainment. Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Magazines” in *The State of the News Media 2004*.

These distinctions among the three publications may seem slight, but they have an effect on the information contained between their covers. However, these editorial leanings do not make one magazine more prestigious or valid than the others; *U.S. News & World Report* may offer facts and figures about a particular event, while *Newsweek* may provide the human side of the story. Readers should understand, though, that several variables affect the articles that they see in each publication.

Online News Sources

The Internet has significantly changed the way that the public receives information. The advent of online news sources has somewhat lessened the control that magazines have over information. Today, several online-only magazines provide, for little to no cost, news and coverage that would have previously been available only through print publications. Online-only magazines include *Slate*, which offers a daily digest of information from newspapers around the globe, and *Salon*, which provides readers many stories for free and more in-depth coverage for a subscription cost. Like their print counterparts, online magazines rely on revenue from advertisers, but because that advertising is less costly, advertisers may have less of a stake in online content. All these factors contribute to changing perspectives on the way that information is being controlled in the journalism industry.

- In general, magazine formats offer more space for coverage than newspapers. This increased space permits greater coverage and can give readers more in-depth information about events.
- Advertisers, which provide approximately half of all magazine revenue, maintain some control over the magazine industry by threatening to pull ads from magazines that print stories that are considered too racy, too political, or not consistent with their beliefs.

? Exercise 5.5.1

Select a current major news event that interests you. Read an article from a major newspaper and an article from a magazine on the event. Then, answer the following writing prompts.

1. How do the articles differ? How are they similar?
2. What advertisements surround the article? How might they affect the story or reveal who the target audience is?
3. Do you think that this audience has an effect on the way the story is covered? Why or why not?

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5.6: Specialization of Magazines

Learning Objectives

- Identify different types of specialized magazines.
- Recognize ways that advertisers benefit from the specialization of magazines.

Over the last century, magazines have slowly moved into more specialized, fragmented groupings. This transformation from general-interest to niche publications began with the popularization of television. To survive the threat posed by the success of broadcast media, print publications worked to stand out from their competitors by developing market niches. During this transition, magazine editors found that by specializing they were also appealing to advertisers hoping to reach specific audiences. No longer were ads just going out to the general public. Instead, advertisers could target groups by gender, age, race, class, and social and cultural interests. Richard Campbell, Christopher R Martin, Bettina Fabos, “Magazines in the Age of Specialization: Chapter Nine,” pp. 255–284, *Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, <http://www.profbob.com/MCOM%2072/Media%20Culture%20TEXT/Media%20Culture%20PPTs/Chapter%209.ppt>.

From the medical field to the auto industry, specialization has become necessary to compete in an ever-growing market. Yet the trend is perhaps most obvious in mass media and in the publishing industry in particular. “In 2006, the Magazine Publishers of America trade organization listed more than 40 special categories of consumer magazines.” Richard Campbell, Christopher R Martin, Bettina Fabos, “Magazines in the Age of Specialization: Chapter Nine,” pp. 255–284, *Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, <http://www.profbob.com/MCOM%2072/Media%20Culture%20TEXT/Media%20Culture%20PPTs/Chapter%209.ppt>. This wide variety of niche publications reflects the increasing specificity of markets and audiences. “In publishing, demand for specialized magazines and books can be evidenced by looking at the magazine rack. [There are] magazines focusing on photography to cars, to economics and foreign affairs and more.” Jennifer Hess, “Specialization Trends in Business,” Helium.com, October 5, 2007, www.helium.com/items/664459-s...ds-in-business. Specialization is likely to increase, rather than decrease. “Market fragmentation has and probably will continue to proliferate. Customization and individualization will probably be the continuing trend.” Jennifer Hess, “Specialization Trends in Business,” Helium.com, October 5, 2007, www.helium.com/items/664459-s...ds-in-business.

Professional Trade Publications

Nearly every trade group produces some sort of professional publication for its members. Many trade organizations even have their own libraries that house publications solely dedicated to their specific groups. For example, if a person wishes to find information on agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting organizations, the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland, near Washington, DC, might offer a starting point. This library is one of four national libraries of the United States and has one of the world’s largest agricultural information collections and links a nationwide network of state land-grant and U.S. Department of Agriculture field libraries. Career Resource Library, CareerOneStop, <http://www.acinet.org/crl/library.as...=744&PostVal=9>. This is but one example of the array of trade-group publications available. Resources such as the Career Resource Library are also available to those who wish to browse publications by trade groups.

Scholarly Publications

Academic journals have, in some form, been around since the early years of magazine publication. During the 17th century, the *Universal Historical Bibliothèque* became the first journal to invite scholarly contributions. Today, hundreds of scholarly journals exist, such as the *American Economic Review* and *The Journal of Marriage and Families*, and every academic field has its own array of journals to which scholars can contribute. Most university libraries allow students and faculty access to these journals via library databases.

In every academic field, journals are ranked based on the types of articles they publish and on their selectiveness. Most academic journals use a peer-reviewing process to determine which articles are printed. During this process, a panel of readers reviews an anonymous article and then decides whether to accept the paper, accept with changes, or reject it altogether. Scholarly publication is essential for graduate students and university faculty members alike as they seek to disseminate their ideas and progress in their careers.

Religious Groups

With faith at the center of many individuals' lives, it is hardly surprising that there are hundreds of magazines dedicated to religious groups. From *Christianity Today* to *Catholic Digest*, Christian publications make up the largest group of religious magazines. But Christianity is not the only faith represented in periodicals. *Kashrus Magazine* targets the Jewish community, and *Shambhala Sun* is affiliated with the Buddhist faith. Additionally, certain magazines, such as *CrossCurrents*, are designed for people of all faiths. The magazine's publishers state that *CrossCurrents* serves as "a global network for people of faith and intelligence who are committed to connecting the wisdom of the heart and the life of the mind." *CrossCurrents*, <http://www.aril.org/>.

Political Groups

Political groups also have capitalized on the magazine industry. Whether liberal or conservative, most people can find a publication that reflects their political opinions. Two such magazines are *The American Prospect* and *The American Conservative*. *The American Prospect* targets Democrats with "thoughtful views of America's progressive liberal Democratic issues, ideas, politics and policy." "Top 10 Political Magazines," AllYouCanRead.com, <http://www.allyoucanread.com/top-10-political-magazines/>. Conversely, *the American Conservative* is aimed at right-leaning individuals. Edited by well-known conservatives Pat Buchanan and Taki Theodoracopulos, this biweekly "is dedicated to reigniting the conservative conversation, engaging the neo-conservative agenda through its espousal of traditional conservative themes." "Top 10 Political Magazines," AllYouCanRead.com, <http://www.allyoucanread.com/top-10-political-magazines/>.

Pulp and Genre Fiction Magazines

Although today not as many pulp magazines publish as did at the style's height of popularity, during the 1930s, this unique niche still plays an important role in the magazine industry. One such example is *Asimov's Science Fiction*, a science fiction magazine founded in 1977 and still popular today. Founded because "one of science fiction's most influential and prolific writers, Isaac Asimov wanted to provide a home for new SF (science fiction) writers—a new magazine that young writers could break into. *Asimov's Science Fiction* remains that home, as well as the publisher of some of the field's best known authors." *Asimov's Science Fiction*, www.asimovs.com/201007/index.shtml. True to its original intention, the magazine publishes stories of varying lengths for the avid science fiction fan.

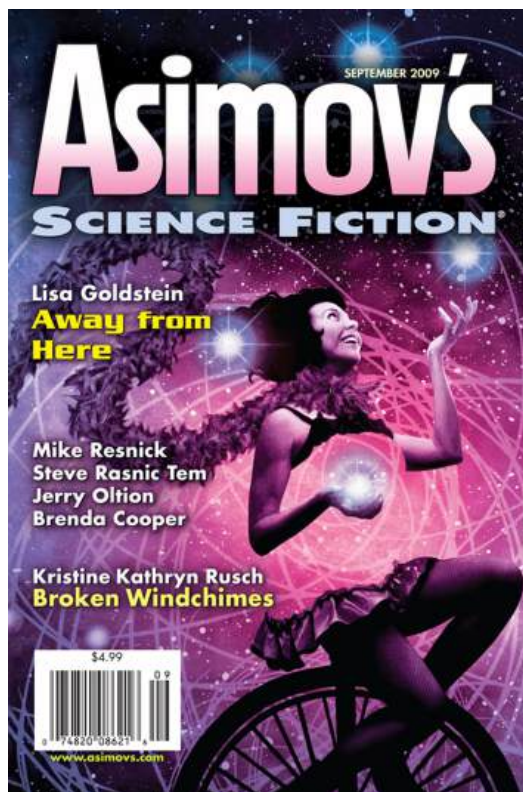


Figure 5.7 *Asimov's Science Fiction* is a modern pulp magazine reaching out to sci-fi readers around the globe.

Another modern example of a genre magazine is *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. First launched in 1941 to “raise the sights of mystery writers generally to a genuine literary form,” to “encourage good writing among our colleagues by offering a practical market not otherwise available,” and to “develop new writers seeking expression in the genre,” “About *EQMM*: A Brief History of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*,” The Mystery Place, <http://www.themysteryplace.com/eqmm/about/history.aspx>. the journal has published a large number of now famous writers including Rudyard Kipling, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer, and Alice Walker. Today, the publication prides itself on being “on the cutting edge of crime and mystery fiction, offering readers the very best stories being written in the genre anywhere in the world.” “About *EQMM*: A Brief History of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*,” The Mystery Place, <http://www.themysteryplace.com/eqmm/about/history.aspx>. Though pulp and genre fiction magazines tend to have a fairly low circulation—*Asimov's* circulation in 2009 was about 17,000—the caliber of the authors they often attract gives these publications a great degree of influence within their respective niches. Charlie Jane Anders, “Has The Print Magazine Circulation Crash Started To Level Off?” *io9*, June 25, 2009, <http://io9.com/5302638/has-the-print-magazine-circulation-crash-started-to-level-off>.

Hobby and Interest Magazines

Perhaps the most populated classification is that of hobby and special-interest magazines, a reflection of the wide array of hobbies and interests that different individuals enjoy. Within this classification of journals, one can find magazines on such topics as sports (*Sports Illustrated*), wellness (*Health*), cooking (*Bon Appétit*), home decoration and renovation (*This Old House*), and travel and geography (*National Geographic*).

Readers interested in specific hobbies can generally find a magazine that caters to them. Photographers, for example, can subscribe to the *British Journal of Photography*, the world's longest-running photography magazine, in publication since 1854. This journal prints “profiles of emerging talent alongside star names, a picture-led Portfolio section, business analysis and detailed technology reviews.” *British Journal of Photography*, “About Us,” www.bjp-online.com/static/about-us. Music enthusiasts can choose from an array of publications ranging from more general ones such as *Spin* and the *International Early Music Review* to highly specific such as the *Journal of the International Double Reed Society* and *Just Jazz Guitar*. There are also magazines entirely devoted to crafting, such as *Creating Keepsakes* for scrapbook enthusiasts, and for pet ownership, such as the appropriately named *Pet*.

Fashion has provided a highly lucrative and visible interest magazine market. Founded in 1892, the most famous fashion magazine is *Vogue*. “*Vogue* has been America's cultural barometer, putting fashion in the context of the larger world we live in—how we dress, live, socialize; what we eat, listen to, watch; who leads and inspires us.” *Vogue*, “Mission Statement,” <http://www.condenastmediakit.com/vog/index.cfm>. The magazine has a huge following, with a circulation topping 1.2 million readers. *Vogue's* mission statement declares an intent to lead the way in the fashion magazine industry:

Vogue's story is the story of women, of culture, of what is worth knowing and seeing, of individuality and grace, and of the steady power of earned influence. For millions of women each month, *Vogue* is the eye of the culture, inspiring and challenging them to see things differently, in both themselves and the world. *Vogue*, “Mission Statement,” <http://www.condenastmediakit.com/vog/index.cfm>.

Despite *Vogue's* high circulation, most special-interest magazines have a smaller readership. This can be worrisome for editors charged with adding more subscriptions to make a larger profit. However, the appeal of such specific audiences generates more revenue from advertisers, who can purchase magazine space knowing that their ads are reaching a targeted audience.

Vogue Crosses Media Lines

In recent years, *Vogue* has served as inspiration for two major films: *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) and *The September Issue* (2009). Based on Lauren Weisberger's novel of the same name, *The Devil Wears Prada* is a feature film about a young woman living in New York dreaming of becoming a magazine writer. She lands a job as the assistant to the city's most ruthless magazine editor, Miranda Priestly—played by Meryl Streep—who runs *Runway* magazine, a fictionalized version of *Vogue*. This coming-of-age story highlights the work that goes into producing a magazine of such prestige. Streep was nominated for an Oscar award for her performance and, appropriately for a film about fashion, the costume designer was also nominated for Best Achievement in Costume Design.

The September Issue is a documentary chronicling *Vogue* Editor-in-Chief Anna Wintour's preparation for the 2007 fall fashion issue. Wintour, the editor upon whom Streep's character in *The Devil Wears Prada* was loosely based, Steven Zeitchik, “Meryl Streep and her ‘Devil Wears Prada’ Director Jump Into New Springs,” *24 Frames* (blog), *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 2011, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/movies/2011/02/meryl-streep-david-frankel-hope-springs-prada.html>. is well known for being

a powerful influence on the fashion industry and a demanding editor. The film, however, humanizes her, while still demonstrating her obsession with fashion and with perfection in her magazine.

The success of both films reveals a fascination with the fashion and publishing industries. The fact that these two films would be released as the magazine industry is in decline is surprising but perhaps reflects an interest in journalism from a younger audience. The use of publishing as a topic in the film medium shows how magazines, though struggling, remain relevant and how special-interest magazines, like those in fashion, can transcend the medium and cross over into other mass media.

Key Takeaways

- Niche publications include magazines that cater to hobbyists in such diverse fields as sports, crafts, music, and even pets. Some modern niche publications hearken back to the pulp magazines of the 1930s.
- Although niche markets for magazines mean fewer readers, advertisers often prefer to publish ads in these more specialized publications because their ads will reach a more targeted demographic, thus ensuring that nearly everyone reading the journal will have an interest in their product.

Exercise 5.6.1

Consider the specialized magazines discussed in this section, as well as others you are familiar with, and identify whether or not you are among the target audience for each. Then, read a copy of a magazine targeting a specialized group or demographic you are not a part of. For example, if you're a man, examine a copy of *Cosmopolitan*, or if you have no interest in fashion, look through an issue of *Vogue*. Then, answer the following writing prompts.

1. What do you learn about the subject from one edition of one magazine?
2. How do the articles reach out to the target demographic?
3. How are the advertisements doing the same?

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5.7: Influence of the Internet on the Magazine Industry

Learning Objectives

- Describe how print magazines have adapted to an online market.
- Indicate a unique benefit of print magazines archiving back issues on their websites.

In March of 2010, *Consumerist* published a story titled “Print edition of *TV Guide* tells me to go online to read most of cover story.” According to the article, *TV Guide* printed a story listing “TV’s Top 50 Families,” but shocked readers by including only the top 20 families in its print version. To discover the rest of the list, readers needed to go online. Phil Villarreal, “Print Edition of *TV Guide* Tells Me to Go Online to Read Most of Cover Story,” *Consumerist* (blog), March 30, 2010, <http://consumerist.com/2010/03/print...ver-story.html>. As dismayed as some readers were, this story reflects an ongoing trend in magazine journalism: the move toward online reporting.

Just like their newspaper cousins, magazines have been greatly affected by the influence of the Internet. With so much information available online, advertisers and readers are accessing content on the Internet, causing declines in both revenue and readership. These changes are forcing magazines to adapt to an increasingly online market.

Online-Only Magazines

In 1995, *Salon* launched the first major online-only magazine at <http://www.salon.com>. “Salon, the award-winning online news and entertainment website, combines original investigative stories, breaking news, provocative personal essays and highly respected criticism along with popular staff-written blogs about politics, technology and culture.” *Salon*, “Salon Fact Sheet,” www.salon.com/press/fact/. Like many print magazines, the site divides content into sections including entertainment, books, comics, life, news and politics, and technology and business. With an average of 5.8 million monthly unique visitors, this online magazine demonstrates the potential successes of Internet-based publications. *Salon*, “Salon Fact Sheet,” www.salon.com/press/fact/.

Other online-only magazines include *Slate* and *PC Magazine*. All three magazines, like most online publications, support themselves in part through ads that appear alongside articles and other content. Founded in 1996, *Slate* is a “general interest publication offering analysis and commentary about politics, news, and culture.” *Slate*, “About Us: Everything you need to know about *Slate*,” <http://www.slate.com/id/2147070/>. Considering itself “a daily magazine on the Web,” *Slate* offers its readers information on news and politics, arts, life, business, technology, and science via online articles, podcasts, and blogs. *Slate*, “About Us: Everything you need to know about *Slate*,” <http://www.slate.com/id/2147070/>. The successful magazine has been recognized with numerous awards for its contributions to journalism.

PC Magazine differs somewhat from *Slate* or *Salon* in that it was originally a print publication. First published in 1982, the computer magazine published hard-copy issues for over 15 years before announcing in 2008 that its January 2009 issue would be its last printed edition. In an open letter to its readers, *PC Magazine* discussed the transition:

Starting in February 2009, *PC Magazine* will become a 100-percent digital publication. So, in addition to our popular network of Websites ... we’ll offer *PC Magazine Digital Edition* to all of our print subscribers. The *PC Magazine Digital Edition* has actually been available since 2002. So for thousands of you, the benefits of this unique medium are already clear. And those benefits will continue to multiply in the coming months, as we work hard to enhance your digital experience. Lance Ulanoff, “*PC Magazine* Goes 100% Digital,” (2008), *PC Magazine*, <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2335009,00.asp>.

While it is perhaps fitting that this computer-focused publication is one of the first print magazines to move to an entirely online form, its reasons for the transition were financial rather than creative. In describing the decision, Jason Young, chief executive of Ziff Davis Media, said, “[t]he viability for us to continue to publish in print just isn’t there anymore.” Stephanie Clifford, “*PC Magazine*, a Flagship for Ziff Davis, Will Cease Printing a Paper Version,” *New York Times*, November 19, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/20/business/media/20mag.html>. Unfortunately for the magazine industry, Young’s sentiment reflects a trend that has been building for some time. Several other publications have followed in *PC Magazine*’s footsteps, making the move from print to online-only. Journals such as *Elle Girl* and *Teen People* that were once available in print can now be viewed only via the Internet. As printing costs rise and advertising and subscription revenues decrease, more magazines will likely be making similar shifts.

Magazine-Like Websites

In recent years, websites that function much as magazines once did without officially being publications themselves have become an increasingly popular online model. For example, Pitchfork Media is an Internet publication on the music industry. Established in 1995, the site offers readers criticism and commentary on contemporary music and has many of the same features as a traditional music magazine: reviews, news, articles, and interviews. Whether the site is capitalizing on the success of print magazines by following their format or if it is simply responding to its readers by providing them with an accessible online experience is a debatable point. Of course, the website also has many features that would not be available in print, such as a streaming playlist of music and music videos. This hybrid of magazine-like content with new-media content offers a possible vision of the digital future of print publications.

Print Magazines with Online Presences

Indeed, most print magazines have created websites. Nearly every major print publication has a site available either for free or through subscription. Yet there are intrinsic differences between the print and online media. Bernadette Geyer, author of a poetry chapbook, *What Remains*, discusses the practical contrasts between online and print journals:

I will read a print journal cover to cover because I can bookmark where I left off.... Simply taking all the of the content of what would have been a print issue and putting it online with links from a Table of Contents is all well and good in theory, but I have to ask, how many people actually sit and read all of the contents of an online journal that publishes several authors/genres per issue? Bernadette Geyer, “Online vs. Print Journal Models,” *Bernadette Geyer: Livin’ the Literary Life in the Exiles of Suburbia* (blog), March 9, 2010, bernadettegeyer.blogspot.com/...al-models.html.

Her question is a good one, and one which most magazines have already asked themselves. In light of this dilemma, magazines with online editions have sought ways to attract readers who may not, in fact, read much. Most websites also include online-only content such as blogs, podcasts, and daily news updates that, naturally, are not available in print form. The additional features on magazines’ websites likely stem from a need to attract audiences with shorter attention spans and less time to devote to reading entire articles.

Another way that magazines court online readers is by offering back-issue content. Readers can browse old articles without having to remember in which issue the content first appeared. The cost for this varies from publication to publication. For example, CooksIllustrated.com reprints recipes from previous issues as part of a paid online membership service, while CookingLight.com offers back issues for free. Some magazines have online archive collections, though those collections generally do not print entire articles or complete issues. *Time*, for example, offers “hand-picked covers and excerpts from the best articles on a wide variety of subjects.” *Time*, “*Time Magazine Archives*,” www.time.com/time/archive/. *Time* suggests that one should “use them as chronological guides to *Time*’s past coverage of a person, event, or topic.” *Time*, “*Time Magazine Archives*,” www.time.com/time/archive/. Still, even without the entire collection online, there is a distinct benefit of being able to search back for articles from 1923 from a computer.

Is Print Dead?

The question *Is print dead?* has dominated the magazine and newspaper industries for several years. In 2008, *The New York Times* printed an article titled “Mourning Old Media’s Decline,” in which author David Carr describes multiple announcements of job loss in the print industry. Thousands of individuals working at magazines and newspapers faced layoffs because of reduced subscriber and advertiser demand. “Clearly the sky is falling,” he writes, “The question now is how many people will be left to cover it.” David Carr, “Mourning Old Media’s Decline,” *New York Times*, October 28, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/29/business/media/29carr.html>. At the same time, Carr articulates the shift in readership from print to web, saying, “The paradox of all these announcements is that newspapers and magazines do not have an audience problem—newspaper websites are a vital source of news, and growing—but they do have a consumer problem.” David Carr, “Mourning Old Media’s Decline,” *New York Times*, October 28, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/29/business/media/29carr.html>. With a majority of magazines and newspapers now available for free online, one has to wonder how the industry will stay afloat. Although advertisements pay for a portion of the cost of running a magazine, it may not be enough.

The debate over whether print is still viable is a heated one that is infiltrating the magazine industry. At a 2006 magazine editorial meeting, *Glamour*’s editor in chief, Cindi Leive, claimed that she “loves this question.... Is print dead? Discuss!” Dorian Benkoil and Dylan Stableford, “Is Print Dead? Discuss!” *Mediabistro.com*, November 17, 2006, <http://www.mediabistro.com/articles/cache/a9077.asp>. The editor in chief of *More* magazine responded to the statement saying,

“[i]t’s what we talk about all day long.”Dorian Benkoil and Dylan Stableford, “Is Print Dead? Discuss!” Mediabistro.com, November 17, 2006, <http://www.mediabistro.com/articles/cache/a9077.asp>. But for as many people who are fighting for the print industry to remain profitable, there is an equally vocal group arguing for the elimination of the print medium altogether. In a 2005 published debate on the topic, former print editor-turned-blogger Jeff Jarvis squared off against John Griffin, president of the National Geographic Society’s magazine group. Jarvis claimed, “Print is not dead. Print is where words go to die.” But Griffin countered, “Actually print is where words go to live—we’re still reading the ancient Greeks.”Jeff Jarvis and John Griffin, “Is Print Doomed?” *Fast Company*, December 1, 2005, www.fastcompany.com/magazine/...ate-extra.html.

Regardless of your position, the fact that the print industry is facing hardships is unquestionable. Magazines are rethinking their marketing strategies to remain viable in an increasingly online world. But many are hopeful that journals will find a way to publish both in print and on the Internet. After all, “[t]here’s something special and unique, even luxurious about reading a big, glossy magazine.... Or, in the words of *Marie Claire* editor Joanna Coles, ‘As long as people take baths, there will always be a monthly magazine.’”Dorian Benkoil and Dylan Stableford, “Is Print Dead? Discuss!” Mediabistro.com, November 17, 2006, <http://www.mediabistro.com/articles/cache/a9077.asp>.

Key Takeaways

- Print journals are adapting to an increasingly online market by offering web-only features such as blogs, podcasts, and daily news updates. Regularly updating websites may help publications remain relevant as more readers turn to the Internet to receive information.
- As more magazines archive back issues on their websites, readers benefit by being able to search for old articles and, sometimes, entire editions. Many back issues are offered for free, but some publications require a subscription fee for this perk.

Exercise 5.7.1

Explore the website of one of your favorite magazines. Consider how the site maintains the look and feel of its print edition, and how the site distinguishes itself from its original print version. Then, answer the following writing prompts.

1. Has it successfully adapted to the online market? Why or why not?
2. Does the website offer an archive of back issues? If so, describe the archive’s features and identify its pros and cons.

End-of-Chapter Assessment

Review Questions

1. Questions for Section 5.1
 1. What medium “came to occupy the large middle groups ... between the book and the newspaper”*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “History of Publishing,” [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/publishing/28679/Magazine-publishing.?](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/publishing/28679/Magazine-publishing.)
 2. How did magazines first evolve and diffuse?
 3. How and why did early magazines target women?
 4. What was the first truly successful U.S. mass magazine?
 5. Name one early successful newsmagazine and one successful picture magazine.
2. Questions for Section 5.2
 1. How did the advent of nationwide magazine circulation affect American culture?
 2. Describe the controversy surrounding early pulp magazines.
3. Questions for Section 5.3
 1. What are the three highest circulating magazines in the United States today?
 2. What are some long-running, influential women’s magazines?
 3. Why did feminists speak out against the 1960s transformation of *Cosmopolitan* magazine?
4. Questions for Section 5.4
 1. How does format play a role in the way stories are presented?

2. Why do advertisers attempt to control which stories are published and how they are presented?

5. Questions for Section 5.5

1. List four specializations in the magazine industry.
2. How do advertisers benefit from specialization?

6. Questions for Section 5.6

1. Explain *PC Magazine*'s move to an online-only market.
2. How do print magazines remain relevant in an increasingly online world?
3. What role do advertisers play in the way the Internet is affecting the magazine industry?

? Critical Thinking Questions

1. What major contributions did *The Saturday Evening Post* offer to the magazine industry?
2. How did pulp magazines move the U.S. journalism industry forward? Are there any modern examples of publications that are doing the same?
3. Describe the differences among current celebrity magazines. How might so many journals of similar style and repute remain competitive in today's declining market?
4. What is an editorial slant and how does it play a role in industry control?
5. Describe what brought about the need for niche magazines and discuss how niche magazines stay afloat despite smaller audiences.
6. Discuss the debate over the question *Is print dead?* Explain both sides of the argument.

📌 Career Connection

Specialization in the magazine industry has provided magazines and advertisers the ability to seek out target audiences, bettering a publication's chances of remaining competitive in a declining market. Choose a specialization that interests you. Select two magazines where you might like to work within that specialization. Look through the website for each magazine, looking specifically at job opportunities and staff positions. Use the information you find to answer the following questions.

1. What entry-level positions are available at each magazine?
2. How might one move up within the company?
3. What is the company's mission statement and how might you use that information to better prepare yourself for a job in the industry?
4. What tools might you need to acquire before applying for a position?
5. What surprised you in your research?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Music

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[6.2: The Evolution of Popular Music](#)

[6.3: The Reciprocal Nature of Music and Culture](#)

[6.4: Current Popular Trends in the Music Industry](#)

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6.1: Introduction

From Social Networking to Stardom

In 2006, Californian vocalist Colbie Caillat was an aspiring singer-songwriter. Although her audio engineer father, Ken Caillat, coproduced one of the biggest selling albums of all time, Fleetwood Mac’s *Rumours*, Colbie had never considered booking a studio, much less campaigning for a record deal. She considered her music to be a hobby rather than a career choice. “Colbie Caillat Turns Hobby into Billboard Success, Will Perform at Baylor’s Diadeloso,” *Waco Tribune-Herald*, April 15, 2010, www.wacotrib.com/accesswaco/arts/Colbie-Caillat-turns-hobby-into-Billboard-success-will-perform-at-Baylors-Diadeloso.html. Fast-forward a year later and Caillat’s debut album, *Coco*, was at No. 5 on the *Billboard 200* album chart, on its way to achieving platinum status. How did an unknown artist from Malibu, California, become a best-selling star in so little time? Caillat’s success can be attributed, in part, to the social networking website MySpace.



Figure 6.1

Hugely popular among teens and young adults in the mid-2000s, MySpace enables people to set up a personal profile on which they can post original music for the public to listen to and comment on. One of Caillat’s friends thought that her music merited a wider audience and set up a page on which Caillat could post her tunes. Six months later, Caillat was the MySpace website’s top unsigned artist. “Colbie Caillat,” *ColbieCaillat.com*, www.colbiecaillat.com/colbie. The site enables people to “friend” artists or performers whose music they enjoy. As Caillat’s friend count climbed to 100,000, music labels began to notice. In 2007, she signed with Universal Records and released her debut album, *Coco*. Boosted by the online success of the single “Bubbly,” *Coco* reached No. 5 on the Billboard chart and established Caillat as a bona fide pop star. She has since won a Grammy award for “Lucky,” her duet with Jason Mraz, toured with artists such as the Goo Goo Dolls and John Mayer, and in 2009, released a second successful album, *Breakthrough*. The combined sales of Caillat’s first two albums are upward of 4 million copies worldwide.

Caillat’s story highlights one area in which the Internet is changing the face of the music industry. Aspiring artists no longer need to rely on expensive publicists, recording studios, or contacts within the industry; they can connect directly with fans to sell their music. Social networking sites, like MySpace, and virtual worlds, like Second Life, make it easier for fans to search for new music and easier for artists to communicate with fans. In fact, MySpace has been so influential that it teamed with several major labels to create the MySpace music website. Generating a buzz on social networking sites is sometimes enough to achieve fame and stardom. Of course, for every Colbie Caillat, there are thousands of unknown singers and bands trying to promote their music online with little or no success. Despite this, it’s clear that social networking sites have taken some control away from record labels and placed it in the hands of the artists themselves.

Artists are also using social networking sites to develop a more intimate relationship with fans. In the past couple of years, the Twitter social networking website has become hugely popular among musicians and fans alike. The microblogging service enables users to send a tweet message—a short post of 140 characters or less that is displayed on the author’s profile page and delivered to

his or her subscribers. Musicians such as John Mayer, Alicia Keys, Britney Spears, and Lily Allen regularly post on Twitter, providing their fans with real-time updates about their daily lives and promoting their musical endeavors.

Social networking sites are just the latest technological development in the music business. An in-depth look at the history and evolution of popular music throughout the last century will help explain some of the current processes and trends in the industry.

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6.2: The Evolution of Popular Music

Learning Objectives

- Assess the impact of three technologies that changed the face of the music industry.
- Determine the influences and characteristics of each genre of popular music.
- Describe the evolution of pop music throughout the last century.

The first stirrings of popular or pop music—any genre of music that appeals to a wide audience or subculture—began in the late 19th century, with discoveries by Thomas Edison and Emile Berliner. In 1877, Edison discovered that sound could be reproduced using a strip of tinfoil wrapped around a rotating metal cylinder. Edison’s phonograph provided ideas and inspiration for Berliner’s gramophone, which used flat discs to record sound. The flat discs were cheaper and easier to produce than were the cylinders they replaced, enabling the mass production of sound recordings. This would have a huge impact on the popular music industry, enabling members of the middle class to purchase technology that was previously available only to an elite few. Berliner founded the Berliner Gramophone Company to manufacture his discs, and he encouraged popular operatic singers such as Enrico Caruso and Dame Nellie Melba to record their music using his system. Opera singers were the stars of the 19th century, and their music generated most of the sheet music sales in the United States. Although the gramophone was an exciting new development, it would take 20 years for disc recordings to rival sheet music in commercial importance. John Shepherd, *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 483.

In the late 19th century, the lax copyright laws that existed in the United States at the beginning of the century were strengthened, providing an opportunity for composers, singers, and publishers to work together to earn money by producing as much music as possible. Numerous publishers began to emerge in an area of New York that became known as Tin Pan Alley. Allegedly named because the cacophony of many pianos being played in the publishers’ demo rooms sounded like people pounding on tin pans, Tin Pan Alley soon became a prolific source of popular music, with its publishers mass-producing sheet music to satisfy the demands of a growing middle class. Whereas classical artists were exalted for their individuality and expected to differ stylistically from other classical artists, popular artists were praised for conforming to the tastes of their intended audience. Popular genres expanded from opera to include vaudeville—a form of variety entertainment containing short acts featuring singers, dancers, magicians, and comedians that opened new doors for publishers to sell songs popularized by the live shows—and ragtime, a style of piano music characterized by a syncopated melody.





Figure 6.2 For most of the 20th century, gramophone records were the primary medium used for commercial music reproduction.

The Tin Pan Alley tradition of song publishing continued throughout the first half of the 20th century with the show tunes and soothing ballads of Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, and George Gershwin, and songwriting teams of the early 1950s, such as Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. By hiring songwriters to compose music based on public demand and mainstream tastes, the Tin Pan Alley publishers introduced the concept of popular music as we know it.

The Roaring 1920s: Radio versus Records

In the 1920s, Tin Pan Alley's dominance of the popular music industry was threatened by two technological developments: the advent of electrical recording and the rapid growth of radio.

During the early days of its development, the gramophone was viewed as a scientific novelty that posed little threat to sheet music because of its poor sound quality. However, as inventors improved various aspects of the device, the sales of gramophone records began to affect sheet music sales. The Copyright Act of 1911 had imposed a royalty on all records of copyrighted musical works to compensate for the loss in revenue to composers and authors. This loss became even more prominent during the mid-1920s, when improvements in electrical recording drastically increased sales of gramophones and gramophone records. The greater range and sensitivity of the electrical broadcasting microphone revolutionized gramophone recording to such an extent that sheet music sales plummeted. From the very beginning, the record industry faced challenges from new technology.

Composers and publishers could deal with the losses caused by an increase in gramophone sales because of the provisions made in the Copyright Act. However, when radio broadcasting emerged in the early 1920s, both gramophone sales and sheet-music sales began to suffer. Radio was an affordable medium that enabled listeners to experience events as they took place. Better yet, it offered a wide range of free music that required none of the musical skills, expensive instruments, or sheet music necessary for creating one's own music in the home, nor the expense of purchasing records to play on the gramophone. This development was a threat to the entire recording industry, which began to campaign for, and was ultimately granted, the right to collect license fees from broadcasters. With the license fees in place, the recording industry eventually began to profit from the new technology.

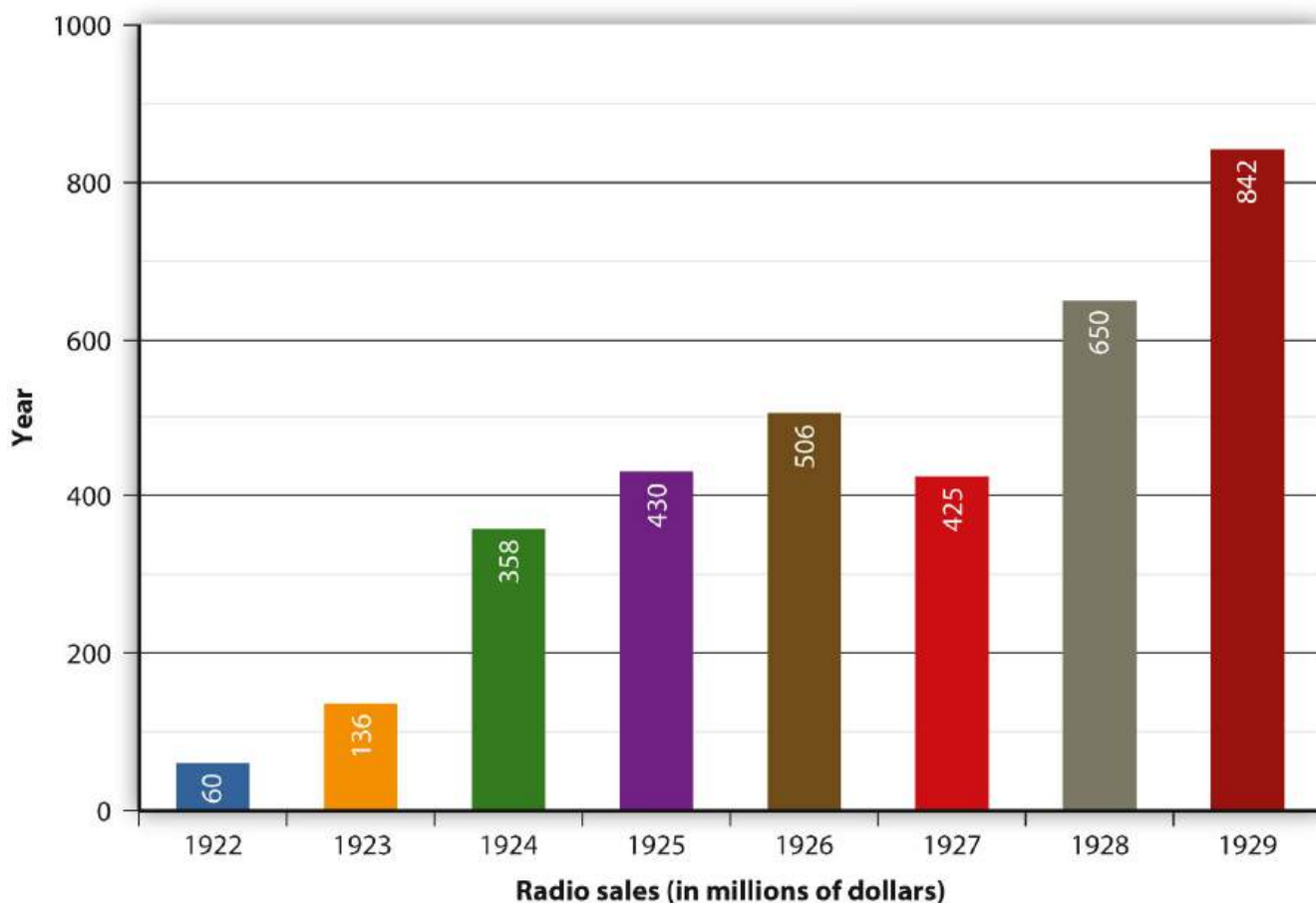


Figure 6.3 Radio sales dramatically increased throughout the 1920s because radios were an affordable way to listen to free music and live events.

The 1930s: The Rise of Jazz and Blues

The ascendance of Tin Pan Alley coincided with the emergence of jazz in New Orleans. An improvisational form of music that was primarily instrumental, jazz incorporated a variety of styles, including African rhythms, gospel, and blues. Established by New Orleans musicians such as King Oliver and his protégé, Louis Armstrong, who is considered by many to be one of the greatest jazz soloists in history, jazz spread along the Mississippi River by the bands that traveled up and down the river playing on steamboats. During the Prohibition era in the 1920s and early 1930s, some jazz bands played in illegal speakeasies, which helped generate the genre's reputation for being immoral and for threatening the country's cultural values. However, jazz became a legitimate form of entertainment during the 1930s, when white orchestras began to incorporate jazz style into their music. During this time, jazz music began to take on a big band style, combining elements of ragtime, black spirituals, blues, and European music. Key figures in developing the big jazz band included bandleaders Duke Ellington, Coleman Hawkins, and Glenn Miller. These big band orchestras used an arranger to limit improvisation by assigning parts of a piece of music to various band members. Although improvisation was allowed during solo performances, the format became more structured, resulting in the swing style of jazz that became popular in the 1930s. As the decade progressed, social attitudes toward racial segregation relaxed and big bands became more racially integrated.

At the heart of jazz, the blues was a creation of former black slaves who adapted their African musical heritage to the American environment. Dealing with themes of personal adversity, overcoming hard luck, and other emotional turmoil, the blues is a 12-bar musical form with a call-and-response format between the singer and his guitar. Originating in the Mississippi Delta, just upriver from New Orleans, blues music was exemplified in the work of W. C. Handy, Ma Rainey, Robert Johnson, and Lead Belly, among others. Unlike jazz, the blues did not spread significantly to the Northern states until the late 1930s and 1940s. Once Southern migrants introduced the blues to urban Northern cities, the music developed into distinctive regional styles, ranging from the jazz-oriented Kansas City blues to the swing-based West Coast blues. Chicago blues musicians such as Muddy Waters were the first to electrify the blues through the use of electric guitars and to blend urban style with classic Southern blues. The electric guitar, first

produced by Adolph Rickenbacker in 1931, changed music by intensifying the sound and creating a louder volume that could cut through noise in bars and nightclubs. “Early Years: The Earliest Days of the Electric Guitar,” Rickenbacker International Corporation, June 22, 2010, http://www.rickenbacker.com/history_early.asp; Mary Bellis, “The History of Guitar and Electric Guitar,” [About.com](http://inventors.about.com/od/gstartinventions/a/guitar_2.htm) Guide, http://inventors.about.com/od/gstartinventions/a/guitar_2.htm. By focusing less on shouting, singers could focus on conveying more emotion and intimacy in their performances. This electrified form of blues provided the foundations of rock and roll.



Figure 6.4 The Chicago blues, characterized by the use of electric guitar and harmonica, provided the foundations of rock and roll. Muddy Waters was one of the most famous Chicago blues musicians.

The 1920s through the 1950s is considered the golden age of radio. During this time, the number of licensed radio stations in the United States exploded from 5 in 1921 to over 600 by 1925. Ed Salamon, *Pittsburgh's Golden Age of Radio* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2010), 8. The introduction of radio broadcasting provided a valuable link between urban city centers and small, rural towns. Able to transmit music nationwide, rural radio stations broadcast local music genres that soon gained popularity across the country.

The 1940s: Technology Progresses

Technological advances during the 1940s made it even easier for people to listen to their favorite music and for artists to record it. The introduction of the reel-to-reel tape recorder paved the way for several innovations that would transform the music industry. The first commercially available tape recorders were monophonic, meaning that they only had one track on which to record sound onto magnetic tape. This may seem limiting today, but at the time it allowed for exciting innovations. During the 1940s and 1950s, some musicians—most notably guitarist Les Paul, with his song “Lover (When You’re Near Me)”—began to experiment with overdubbing, in which they played back a previously recorded tape through a mixer, blended it with a live performance, and recorded the composite signal onto a second tape recorder. By the time four-track and eight-track recorders became readily available in the 1960s, musicians no longer had to play together in the same room; they could record each of their individual parts and combine them into a finished recording.



Figure 6.5 Reel-to-reel tape recorders and magnetic tape not only helped artists experiment with overdubbing, but they also were a compact method for reproducing and preserving audio.

While the reel-to-reel recorders were in the early stages of development, families listened to records on their gramophones. The 78 revolutions per minute (rpm) disc had been the accepted recording medium for many years despite the necessity of changing the

disc every 5 minutes. In 1948, Columbia Records perfected the 12-inch 33 rpm long-playing (LP) disc, which could play up to 25 minutes per side and had a lower level of surface noise than the earlier (and highly breakable) shellac discs. Alan Lomax, Alan Lomax: Selected Writings 1934–1997, ed. Ronald D. Cohen (New York: Routledge, 2003), 102. The 33 rpm discs became the standard form for full albums and would dominate the recorded music industry until the advent of the compact disc (CD).

During the 1940s, a mutually beneficial alliance between sound recording and radio existed. Artists such as Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald profited from radio exposure. Until this time, music had primarily been recorded for adults, but the popularity of Sinatra and his contemporaries revealed an entirely untapped market: teenagers. The postwar boom of the 1930s and early 1940s provided many teenagers spending money for records. Radio airplay helped to promote and sell records and the recording artists themselves, which in turn stabilized the recording industry. The near riots caused by the appearance of New Jersey crooner Frank Sinatra in concert paved the way for mass hysteria among Elvis Presley and Beatles fans during the rock and roll era.

The 1950s: The Advent of Rock and Roll

New technology continued to develop in the 1950s with the introduction of television. The new medium spread rapidly, primarily because of cheaper mass-production costs and war-related improvements in technology. In 1948, only 1 percent of America's households owned a television; by 1953 this figure had risen to nearly 50 percent, and by 1978 nearly every home in the United States owned a television. Tom Genova, "Number of TV Households in America," Television History – The First 75 Years, http://www.tvhistory.tv/Annual_TV_Households_50-78.JPG. The introduction of television into people's homes threatened the existence of the radio industry. The radio industry adapted by focusing on music, joining forces with the recording industry to survive. In an effort to do so, it became somewhat of a promotional tool. Stations became more dependent on recorded music to fill airtime, and in 1955 the Top 40 format was born. Playlists for radio stations were based on popularity (usually the *Billboard* Top 40 singles chart), and a popular song might be played as many as 30 or 40 times a day. Radio stations began to influence record sales, which resulted in increased competition for spots on the playlist. This ultimately resulted in payola—the illegal practice of receiving payment from a record company for broadcasting a particular song on the radio. The payola scandal came to a head in the 1960s, when Cleveland, Ohio, DJ Alan Freed and 8 other disc jockeys were accused of taking money for airplay. Following Freed's trial, an antipayola statute was passed, making payola a misdemeanor crime.

Technology wasn't the only revolution that took place during the 1950s. The urban Chicago blues typified by artists such as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and B. B. King surged in popularity among white and black teenagers alike. Marketed under the name rhythm and blues, or **R&B**, the sexually suggestive lyrics in songs such as "Sexy Ways" and "Sixty Minute Man" and the electrified guitar and wailing harmonica sounds appealed to young listeners. At the time, R&B records were classified as "race music" and their sales were segregated from the white music records tracked on the pop charts. David Szatmary, *Rockin' in Time: A Social History of Rock and Roll* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 16. Nonetheless, there was a considerable amount of crossover among audiences. In 1952, the Dolphin's of Hollywood record store in Los Angeles, which specialized in R&B music, noted that 40 percent of its sales were to white individuals. David Szatmary, *Rockin' in Time: A Social History of Rock and Roll* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 16.

Although banned from some stations, others embraced the popular new music. In 1951, Freed started a late-night R&B show called *The Moondog Rock & Roll House Party* and began referring to the music he played as rock and roll. "Alan Freed" History-of-rock.com, <http://www.history-of-rock.com/freed.htm>. Taking its name from a blues slang term for sex, the music obtained instant notoriety, gaining widespread support among teenage music fans and widespread dislike among the older generation. "Alan Freed" History-of-rock.com, <http://www.history-of-rock.com/freed.htm>. Frenetic showmen Little Richard and Chuck Berry were early pioneers of rock and roll, and their wild stage performances became characteristic of the genre. As the integration of white and black individuals progressed in the 1950s with the repeal of segregation laws and the initiation of the civil rights movement, aspects of black cultures, including music, became more widely accepted by many white individuals. However, it was the introduction of a white man who sang songs written by black musicians that helped rock and roll really spread across state and racial lines. Elvis Presley, a singer and guitarist, the "King of Rock and Roll," further helped make music written by black individuals acceptable to mainstream white audiences and also helped popularize rockabilly—a blend of rock and country music—with black audiences during the mid-1950s. Heavily influenced by his rural Southern roots, Presley combined the R&B music of bluesmen B. B. King, John Lee Hooker, and Howlin' Wolf with the country-western tradition of Roy Acuff, Ernest Tubb, and Jimmie Rodgers, and added a touch of gospel. "Biography," Elvis Presley: Official Site of the King of Rock 'n' Roll, www.elvis.com/about-the-king/biography.aspx. The reaction Presley inspired among hordes of adolescent girls—screaming, crying, rioting—solidified his reputation as the first true rock and roll icon.

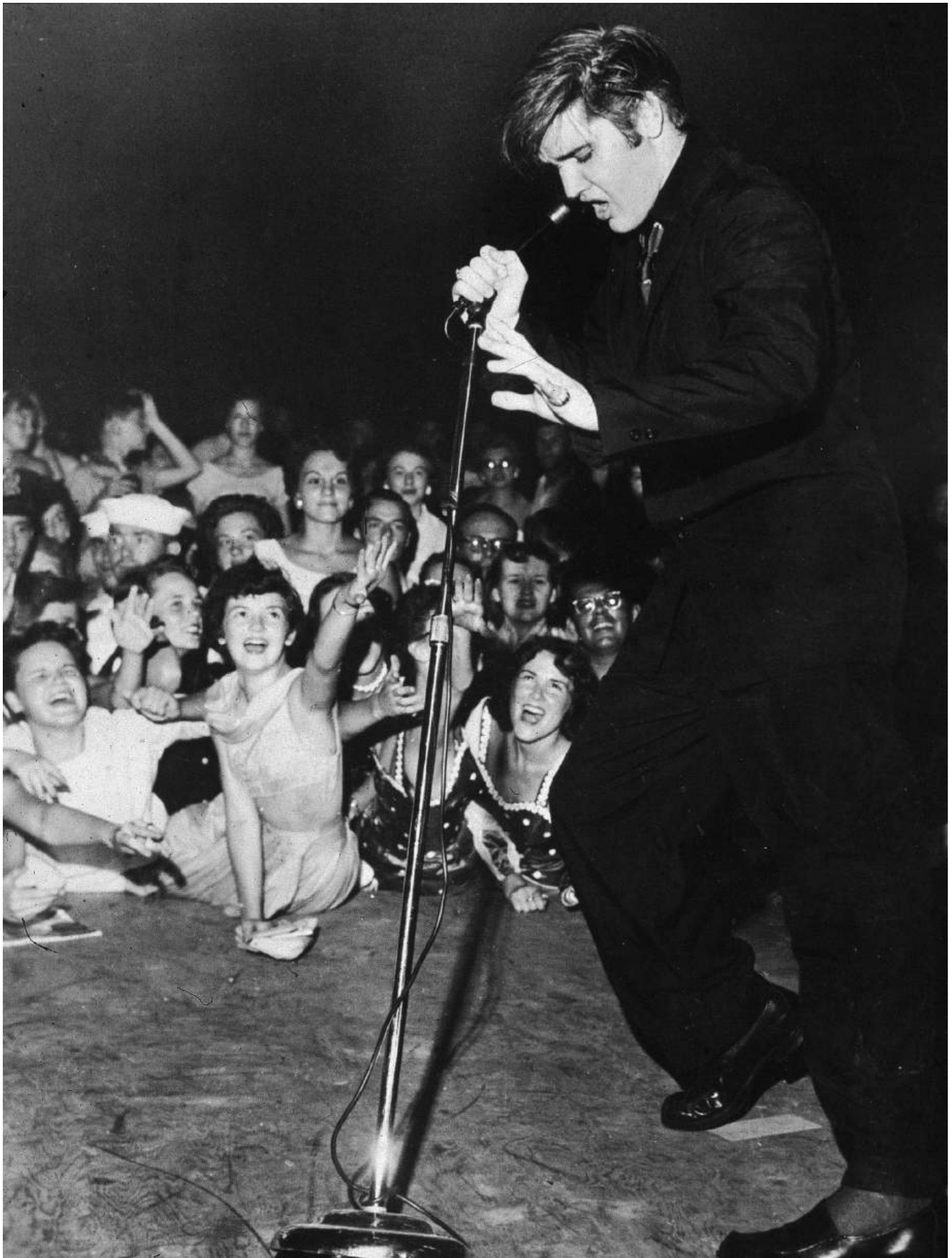




Figure 6.6 Elvis Presley brought the style of R&B bluesmen to mainstream audiences in the 1950s.

The 1960s: Rock and Roll Branches Out From R&B

Prior to 1964, rock and roll was primarily an American export. Although U.S. artists frequently reached the top of the charts overseas, few European artists achieved success on this side of the Atlantic. This situation changed almost overnight, with the arrival of British pop phenomenon the Beatles. Combining elements of skiffle—a type of music played on rudimentary instruments, such as banjos, guitars, or homemade instruments—doo-wop, and soul, the four mop-haired musicians from Liverpool, England, created a genre of music known as Merseybeat, named after the River Mersey. The Beatles' genial personalities and catchy pop tunes made them an instant success in the United States, and their popularity was heightened by several appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. When the Beatles arrived in New York in 1964, they were met by hundreds of reporters and police officers and thousands of fans. Their appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* a few days later was the largest audience for an American television program, with approximately one in three Americans (74 million) tuning in. Jonathan Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America* (New York: Harmony Books, 2007), 3–4. *Beatlemania*—the term coined to describe fans' wildly enthusiastic reaction to the band—extended to other British bands, and by the mid-1960s, the Kinks, the Zombies, the Animals, Herman's Hermits, and the Rolling Stones were all making appearances on the U.S. charts. The Rolling Stones's urban rock sound steered away from pop music and remained more true to the bluesy, R&B roots of rock and roll. During their first appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, the Stones were lewd and vulgar, prompting host Ed Sullivan to denounce their behavior (although he privately acknowledged that the band had received the most enthusiastic applause he had ever seen). "The Rolling Stones," The Official Ed Sullivan Site, www.edsullivan.com/artists/the-rolling-stones. The British Invasion transformed rock and roll into the all-encompassing genre of rock, sending future performers in two different directions: the melodic, poppy sounds of the Beatles, on the one hand, and the gritty, high-volume power rock of the Stones on the other.



Figure 6.7 After the Rolling Stones' first appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, host Ed Sullivan apologized to the viewing audience for the band's lewd behavior.

The branching out of rock and roll continued in several other directions throughout the 1960s. Surf music, embodied by artists such as the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, and Dick Dale, celebrated the aspects of youth culture in California. With their twanging electric guitars and glossy harmonies, the surf groups sang of girls, beaches, and convertible cars cruising along the West Coast. In Detroit, some black performers were developing a sound that would have crossover appeal with both black and white audiences. Combining R&B, pop, gospel, and blues into a genre known as soul, vocalists such as James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, and Wilson Pickett sang about the lives of black Americans. Producer and songwriter Berry Gordy Jr. developed soul music through the creation of his Motown label, which would become one of the most successful businesses owned by a black individual in American history. "Berry Gordy Jr. Biography," *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Gi-He/Gordy-Jr-Berry.html>. Capitalizing on the 1960s girl-group craze, Gordy produced hits by the Marvelettes, Martha and the Vandellas, and, most successfully, Diana Ross and the Supremes. For his bands, he created a slick, polished image designed to appeal to the American mainstream.

In the late 1960s, supporters of the civil rights movement—along with feminists, environmentalists, and Vietnam War protesters—were gravitating toward folk music, which would become the sound of social activism. Broadly referring to music that is passed down orally through the generations, folk music retained an unpolished, amateur quality that inspired participation and social awareness. Carrying on the legacy of the 1930s labor activist Woody Guthrie, singer-songwriters such as Joan Baez; Peter, Paul, and Mary; and Bob Dylan sang social protest songs about civil rights, discrimination against black Americans, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Having earned himself a reputation as a political spokesperson, Dylan was lambasted by traditional folk fans for playing an electric guitar at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. However, his attempt to reach a broader crowd inspired the folk rock genre, pioneered by the Los Angeles band the Byrds "Bob Dylan," PBS.org: American Roots Music: The Songs & the Artists,

http://www.pbs.org/americanrootsmusic/pbs_arm_saa_bobdylan.html.. Even though many fans questioned his decision to go electric, Dylan's poetic and politically charged lyrics were still influential, inspiring groups like the Beatles and the Animals. Protest music in the 1960s was closely aligned with the hippie culture, in which some viewed taking drugs as a form of personal expression and free speech. Artists such as Jimi Hendrix, Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and the Doors believed that the listening experience could be enhanced using mind-altering drugs. Dwight Rounds, *The Year the Music Died: 1964–1972: A Commentary on the Best Era of Pop Music, and an Irreverent Look at the Musicians and Social Movements of the Time* (Austin: Bridgeway Books, 2007), 292. This spirit of freedom and protest culminated in the infamous Woodstock festival in the summer of 1969, although the subsequent deaths of many of its stars from drug overdoses cast a shadow over the psychedelic culture.

The 1970s: From Glam Rock to Punk

After the Vietnam War ended, college students began to settle down and focus on careers and families. For some selfish views took the place of concern with social issues and political activism, causing writer Tom Wolfe to label the 1970s the “me” decade. Tom Wolfe, “The ‘Me’ Decade and the Third Great Awakening,” *New York Magazine*, August 23, 1976, <http://nymag.com/news/features/45938/>. Musically, this ideological shift resulted in the creation of glam rock, an extravagant, self-indulgent form of rock that incorporated flamboyant costumes, heavy makeup, and elements of hard rock and pop. A primarily British phenomenon, glam rock was popularized by acts such as Slade, David Bowie, the Sweet, Elton John, and Gary Glitter. It proved to be a precursor for the punk movement in the late 1970s. Equally flamboyant, but rising out of a more electronic sound, disco also emerged in the 1970s. Popular disco artists included KC and the Sunshine Band, Gloria Gaynor, the Bee Gees, and Donna Summer, who helped to pioneer its electronic sound. Boosted by the success of 1977 film *Saturday Night Fever*, disco's popularity spread across the country. Records were created especially for discos, and record companies churned out tunes that became huge hits on the dance floor.

Reacting against the commercialism of disco and corporate rock, punk artists created a minimalist, angry form of rock that returned to rock and roll basics: simple chord structures, catchy tunes, and politically motivated lyrics. Like the skiffle bands of the 1950s, the appeal of punk rock was that anyone with basic musical skills could participate. The punk rock movement emerged out of CBGB, a small bar in New York City that featured bands such as Television, Blondie, and the Ramones. Never a huge commercial success in the United States, punk rock exploded in the United Kingdom, where high unemployment rates and class divisions had created angry, disenfranchised youths. “Making ends meet in the 70s,” *BBC News Magazine*, June 7, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/6729847.stm. The Sex Pistols, fronted by Johnny Rotten, developed an aggressive, pumping sound that appealed to a rebellious generation of listeners, although the band was disparaged by many critics at the time. In 1976, British music paper *Melody Maker* complained that “the Sex Pistols do as much for music as World War II did for the cause of peace.” Marcus Gray, *The Clash: Return of the Last Gang in Town* (London: Helter Skelter, 2001), 147. Punk bands began to abandon their sound in the late 1970s, when the punk style became assimilated into the rock mainstream.

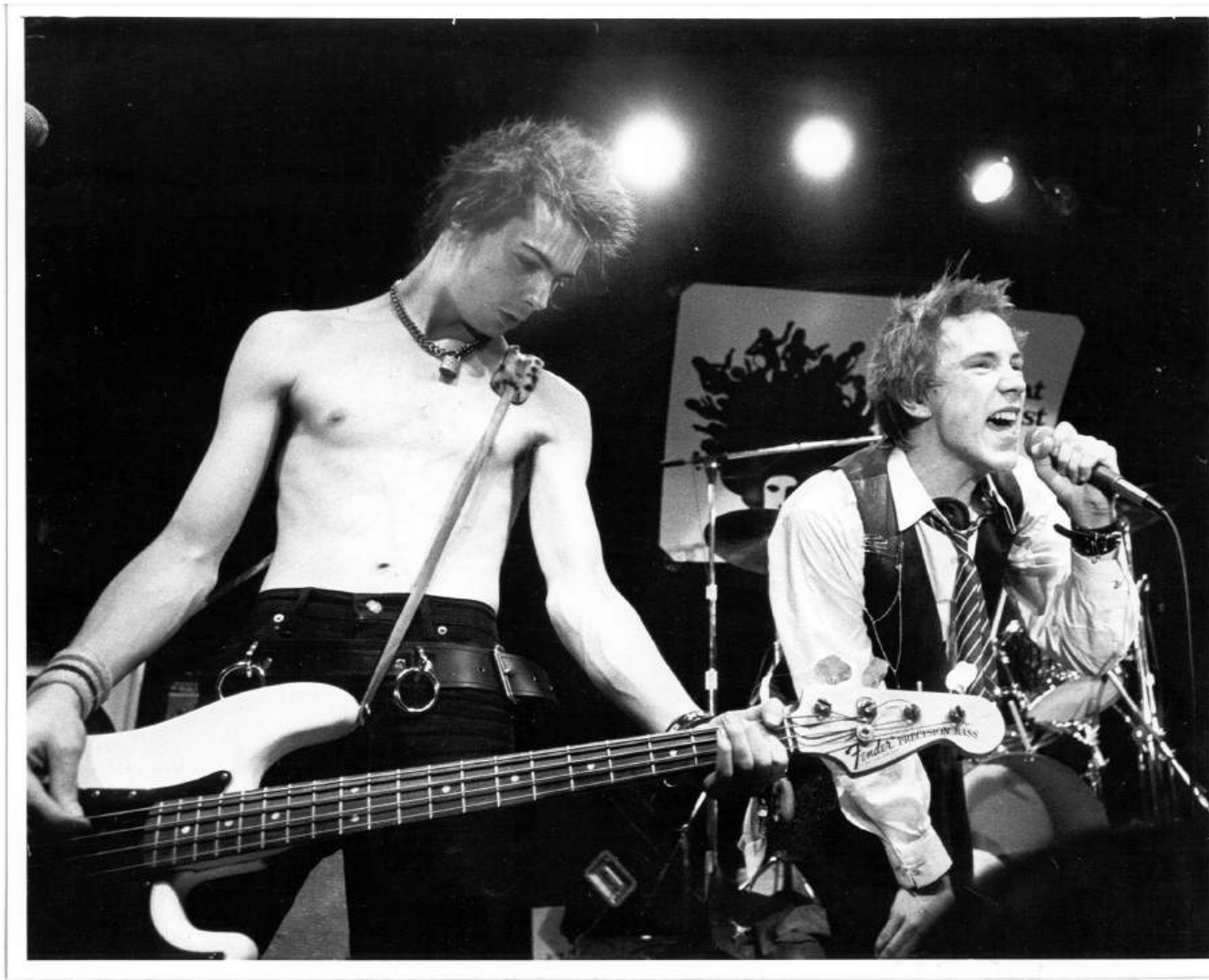


Figure 6.8 Even though the Sex Pistols were severely criticized in the 1970s, their music went on to inspire countless acts and helped develop the underground music scene in England and the United States.

The 1980s: The Hip-Hop Generation

Whereas many British youths expressed their displeasure through punk music, many disenfranchised black American youths in the 1980s turned to hip-hop—a term for the urban culture that includes break dancing, graffiti art, and the musical techniques of rapping, sampling, and scratching records. Reacting against the extravagance of disco, many poor urban rappers developed their new street culture by adopting a casual image consisting of T-shirts and sportswear, developing a language that reflected the everyday concerns of the people in low-income, urban areas, and by embracing the low-budget visual art form of graffiti. They described their new culture as hip-hop, after a common phrase chanted at dance parties in New York’s Bronx borough.

The hip-hop genre first became popular among black youths in the late 1970s, when record spinners in the Bronx and Harlem started to play short fragments of songs rather than the entire track (known as sampling). Joanna Demers, “Sampling the 1970s in Hip-Hop,” *Popular Music* 21 (2003): 41–56. Early hip-hop artists sampled all types of music, like funk, soul, and jazz, later adding special effects to the samples and experimenting with techniques such as rotating or scratching records back and forth to create a rhythmic pattern. For example, Kool Moe Dee’s track “How Ya Like Me Now” includes samples from James Brown’s classic funk song “Papa’s Got a Brand New Bag.” The DJs would often add short raps to their music to let audiences know who was playing the records, a trend that grew more elaborate over time to include entire spoken verses. Artists such as Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five added political and social commentary on the realities of life in low-income, high-crime areas—a trend that would continue with later rappers such as Public Enemy and Ice-T.



Figure 6.9 Early hip-hop artists, like Run-D.M.C., opposed the clean-cut, polished world of soul and pop by embracing political lyrics that were inspired by everyday life.

In the early 1980s, a second wave of rap artists brought inner-city rap to American youths by mixing it with hard guitar rock. Pioneered by groups such as Run-D.M.C. and the Beastie Boys, the new music appealed to black and white audiences alike. Another subgenre that emerged was gangsta rap, a controversial brand of hip-hop epitomized by West Coast rappers such as Ice Cube and Tupac Shakur. Highlighting violence and gang warfare, gangsta rappers faced accusations that they created violence in inner cities—an argument that gained momentum with the East Coast–West Coast rivalry of the 1990s.

The 1990s: New Developments in Hip-Hop, Rock, and Pop

Hip-hop and gangsta rap maintained their popularity in the early 1990s with artists such as Tupac Shakur, the Notorious B.I.G., Dr. Dre, Eazy-E, Ice Cube, and Snoop Dogg at the top of the charts. West Coast rappers such as Tupac Shakur and Snoop Dogg favored gangsta rap, while East Coast rappers, like the Notorious B.I.G. and Sean Combs, stuck to a traditional hip-hop style. The rivalry culminated with the murders of Shakur in 1996 and B.I.G. in 1997.



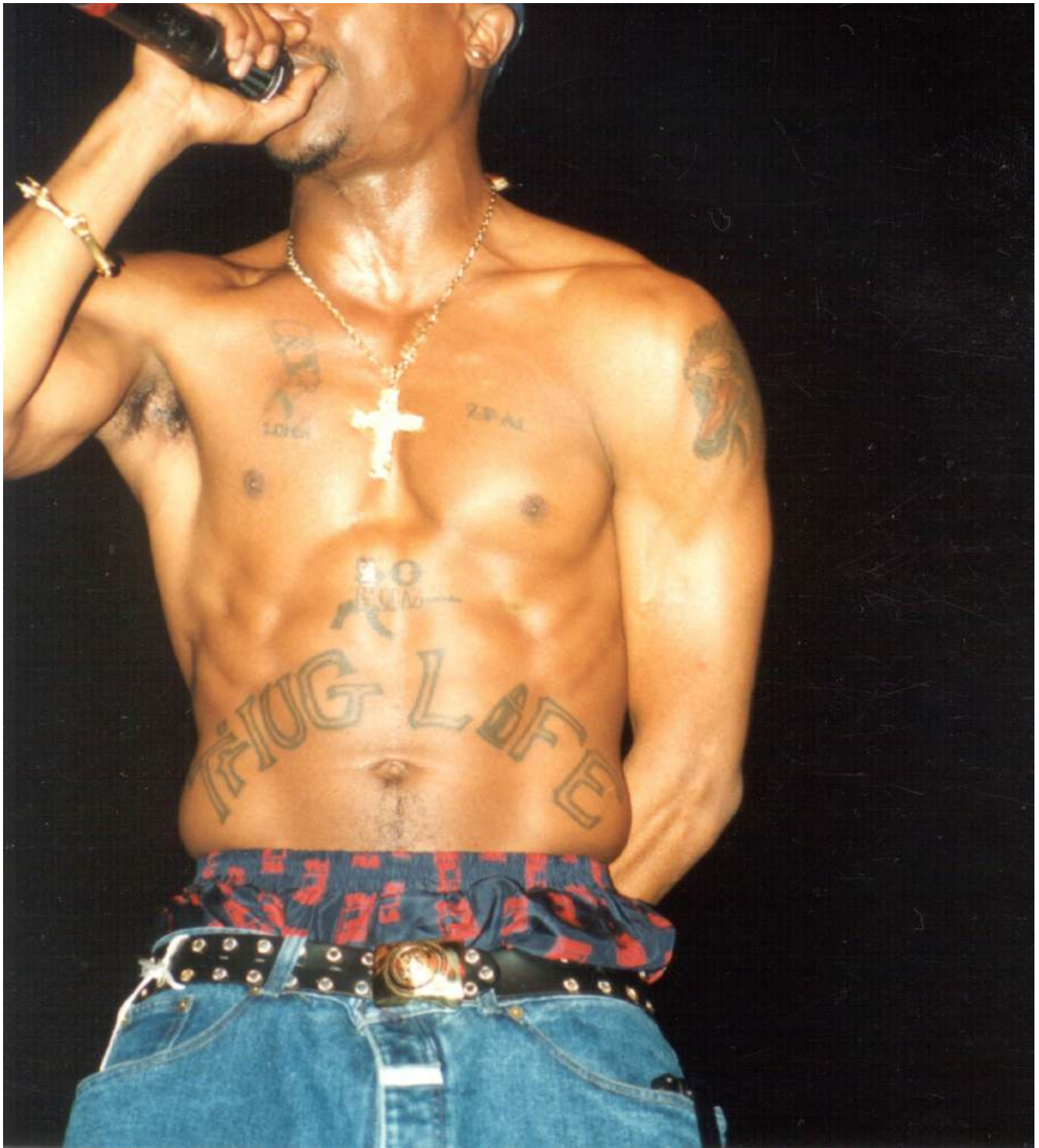




Figure 6.10 The shooting deaths of gangsta rappers Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G. caused a shift in the hip-hop industry toward less violent music.

Along with hip-hop and gangsta rap, alternative rock came to the forefront in the 1990s with grunge. The grunge scene emerged in the mid-1980s in the Seattle area of Washington State. Inspired by hardcore punk and heavy metal, this subgenre of rock was so-

called because of its messy, sludgy, distorted guitar sound, the disheveled appearance of its pioneers, and the disaffected nature of the artists. Initially achieving limited success with Seattle band Soundgarden, Seattle independent label Sub Pop became more prominent when it signed another local band, Nirvana. Fronted by vocalist and guitarist Kurt Cobain, Nirvana came to be identified with Generation X—the post–baby boom generation, many of whom came from broken families and experienced violence both on television and in real life. Nirvana’s angst-filled lyrics spoke to many members of Generation X, launching the band into the mainstream. Ironically, Cobain was uncomfortable and miserable, and he would eventually commit suicide in 1994. Nirvana’s success paved the way for other alternative rock bands, including Green Day, Pearl Jam, and Nine Inch Nails. More recently, alternative rock has fragmented into even more specific subgenres.

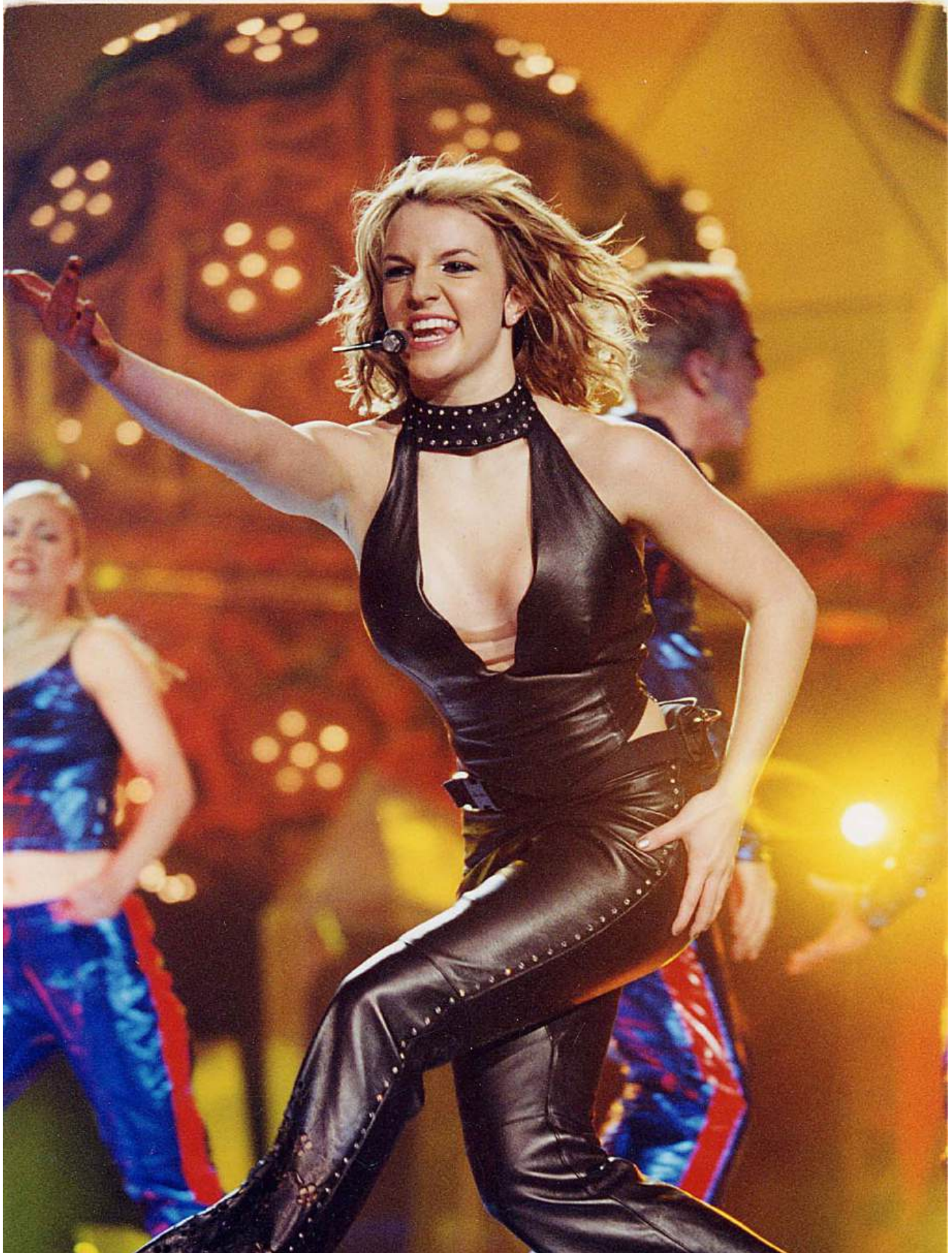




Figure 6.11 Britney Spears was one of the driving forces behind the teen-pop phenomena of the late 1990s, paving the way for pop stars Christina Aguilera and Pink.

By the end of the 1990s, mainstream tastes leaned toward pop music. A plethora of boy bands, girl bands, and pop starlets emerged, sometimes evolving from gospel choir groups, but more often than not created by talent scouts. The groups were aggressively marketed to teen audiences. Popular bands included the Backstreet Boys, 'N Sync, and the Spice Girls. Meanwhile, individual pop acts from the MTV generation such as Madonna, Michael Jackson, and Prince continued to generate hits.

The 2000s: Pop Stays Strong as Hip-Hop Overtakes Rock in Popularity

The 2000s began right where the 1990s left off, with young singers such as Christina Aguilera and Destiny's Child ruling the pop charts. Pop music stayed strong throughout the decade with Gwen Stefani, Mariah Carey, Beyoncé, Katy Perry, and Lady Gaga achieving mainstream success. By the end of the decade, country artists, like Carrie Underwood and Taylor Swift, transitioned from country stars to bona fide pop stars. While rock music started the decade strong, by the end of the 2000s, rock's presence in mainstream music had waned, with a few exceptions such as Nickelback, Linkin Park, and Green Day.



Figure 6.12 Taylor Swift's 2008 album *Fearless* went multiplatinum, and hits like "You Belong to Me" and "Love Story" helped her go from country star to mainstream pop star.

Key Takeaways

- Popular music as we know it originated out of the Tin Pan Alley tradition that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century in which composers, singers, and publishers worked together to create hit songs. The primary difference between popular music and classical music is that, whereas classical artists were exalted for their individuality and expected to differ stylistically from other classical composers, popular artists were praised for conforming to the tastes of their intended audience.
- Technological developments played a vital role in bringing popular music to people's homes. The invention of the phonograph and gramophone in the late 19th century enabled the reproduction and mass distribution of sound recordings for the first time. The invention of the reel-to-reel tape recorder and the development of vinyl records in the 1940s drastically improved this process. The postwar prevalence of radio hugely impacted popular music, with radio airplay of popular songs promoting record sales.
- Throughout the last century, tastes in popular music have evolved to encompass a wide variety of styles. People who enjoyed opera at the turn of the 20th century saw the rise of vaudeville and ragtime in the Tin Pan Alley era. Jazz and blues emerged from New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta during the 1930s, and musical styles adapted as people migrated to Northern urban areas. Rhythm and blues laid the groundwork for rock and roll that shook up popular music in the 1950s. Popular music diversified in the 1960s to encompass surf, folk, and soul music. In the 1970s, glam rock and disco became popular, and punk rockers revolted against the excesses of these styles. Hip-hop dominated the 1980s, and its popularity continued into the 1990s and 2000s. Pop was also successful in the 1990s and 2000s, while mainstream interest in alternative rock waned at the end of the 2000s.

Exercise 6.2.1

Choose a decade between 1900 and 2010. Research a technological development that took place during this time that influenced pop music—for example, the development of the electric guitar and its influence on rock and roll. Consider how this development influenced trends within the industry.

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6.3: The Reciprocal Nature of Music and Culture

Learning Objectives

- Identify ways in which culture and music have influenced each other.

The tightknit relationship between music and culture is almost impossible to overstate. For example, policies on immigration, war, and the legal system can influence artists and the type of music they create and distribute. Music may then influence cultural perceptions about race, morality, and gender that can, in turn, influence the way people feel about those policies.

Cultural Influences on Music

The evolution of popular music in the United States in the 20th century was shaped by a myriad of cultural influences. Rapidly shifting demographics brought previously independent cultures into contact and also created new cultures and subcultures, and music evolved to reflect these changes. Among the most important cultural influences on music are migration, the evolution of youth culture, and racial integration.

Migration

One of the major cultural influences on the popular music industry over the past century is migration. In 1910, 89 percent of black Americans still lived in the South, most of them in rural farming areas. Richard Weingroff, “Highway History: The Road to Civil Rights: The Black Migration,” U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, April 7, 2011, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/highwayhistory/road/s10.cfm>. Three years later, a series of disastrous events devastated the cotton industry. World cotton prices plummeted, a boll weevil beetle infestation destroyed large areas of crops, and in 1915, flooding destroyed many of the houses and crops of farmers along the Mississippi River. Already suffering from the restrictive “Jim Crow” laws that segregated schools, restaurants, hotels, and hospitals, black sharecroppers began to look to the North for a more prosperous lifestyle. Northern states were enjoying an economic boom as a result of an increased demand for industrial goods because of the war in Europe. They were also in need of labor because the war had slowed the rate of foreign immigration to Northern cities. Between 1915 and 1920, as many as 1 million black individuals moved to Northern cities in search of jobs, closely followed by another million throughout the following decade. “Racial Tensions in Omaha: African American Migration” Nebraskastudies.org, June 25, 2010, www.nebraskastudies.org/0700/stories/0701_0131.html. The mass exodus of black farmers from the South became known as the Great Migration, and by 1960, 75 percent of all Black Americans lived in cities. “The Great Migration,” Emerging Minds, January 31, 2005, emergingminds.org/The-Great-Migration.html. The Great Migration had a huge impact on political, economic, and cultural life in the North, and popular music reflected this cultural change.

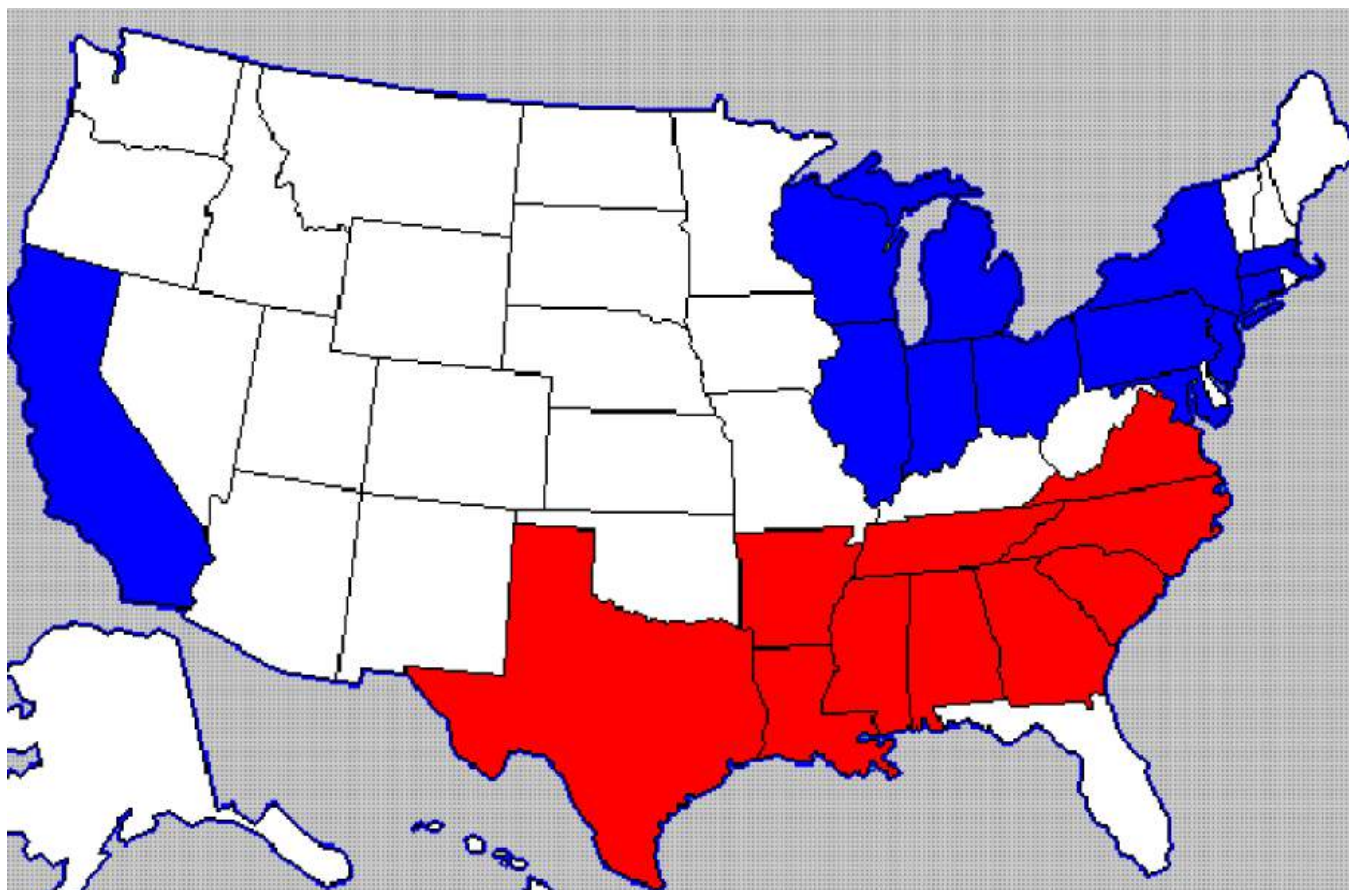


Figure 6.13 During the Great Migration, the 12 states in blue had the largest population growth of black individuals, while the states in red had the 10 largest net losses. Elizabeth Anne Martin, “Detroit and the Great Migration, 1916–1929,” Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, bentley.umich.edu/research/publications/migration/ch1.php.

Some of the black individuals who moved to Northern cities came from the Mississippi Delta, home of the blues. The most popular destination was Chicago. Delta-born pianist Eddie Boyd later told *Living Blues* magazine, “I thought of coming to Chicago where I could get away from some of that racism and where I would have an opportunity to, well, do something with my talent.... It wasn’t peaches and cream, man, but it was a hell of a lot better than down there where I was born.” David Szatmary, *Rockin’ in Time: A Social History of Rock and Roll* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 4. At first, the migrants brought their style of country blues to the city. Characterized by the guitar and the harmonica, the Delta blues was identified by its rhythmic structure and strong vocals. Migrant musicians were heavily influenced by Delta blues musicians such as Charley Patton and legendary guitarist Robert Johnson. However, as the urban setting began to influence the migrants’ style, they started to record a hybrid of blues, vaudeville, and swing, including the boogie-woogie and rolling-bass piano. Mississippi-born guitarist Muddy Waters, who moved to Chicago in the early 1940s, revolutionized the blues by combining his Delta roots with an electric guitar and amplifier. He did so partly out of necessity, since he could barely make himself heard in crowded Chicago clubs with an acoustic guitar. “Chicago Blues Guitar Story,” ChicagoBluesGuitar.com, www.chicagobluesguitar.com. Waters’s style was peppier and more buoyant than the sullen country blues. His plugged-in electric blues became the hallmark of the Chicago blues style, influencing countless other musicians and creating the underpinnings of rock and roll. Other migrant bluesmen helped to create regional variations of the blues all around the country, including John Lee Hooker in Detroit, Michigan, and T-Bone Walker in Los Angeles, California.

Youth Culture

Prior to 1945, most music was created with adults in mind, and teenage musical tastes were barely a consideration. Young adults had few freedoms—most males were expected to join the military or get a job to support their fledgling families, while most females were expected to marry young and have children. Few young adults attended college, and personal freedom was limited. Following World War II, this situation changed drastically. A booming economy helped create an American middle class, which created an opening for a youth consumer culture. Unsavory memories of the war discouraged some parents from forcing their children into the military, and many emphasized enjoying life and having a good time. As a result, teenagers found they had a lot

more freedom. This new liberalized culture allowed teenagers to make decisions for themselves, and, for the first time, many had the financial means to do so. Whereas many adults enjoyed the traditional sounds of Tin Pan Alley, teens were beginning to listen to rhythm and blues songs played by radio disc jockeys such as Alan Freed. Increased racial integration within the younger generation made them more accepting of black musicians and their music, which was considered “cool,” and provided a welcome escape from the daunting political and social tension caused by Cold War anxieties. The wide availability of radios, juke boxes, and 45 rpm records exposed this new style of rock and roll music to a broad teenage audience.



Figure 6.14 The popularity of *American Bandstand* made host Dick Clark an influential tastemaker in pop music.

Once teenagers had the buying power to influence record sales, record companies began to notice. Between 1950 and 1959, record sales in the United States skyrocketed from \$189 million to nearly \$600 million. David Szatmary, *Rockin' in Time: A Social History of Rock and Roll* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 57. The 45 rpm vinyl records that were introduced in the late 1940s were an affordable option for teens with allowances. Dick Clark, a radio presenter in Philadelphia, soon tuned in to the new teenage tastes. Sensing an opportunity to tap in to a potentially lucrative market, he acquired enough advertising support to turn local hit music telecast *Bandstand* into a national television phenomenon.

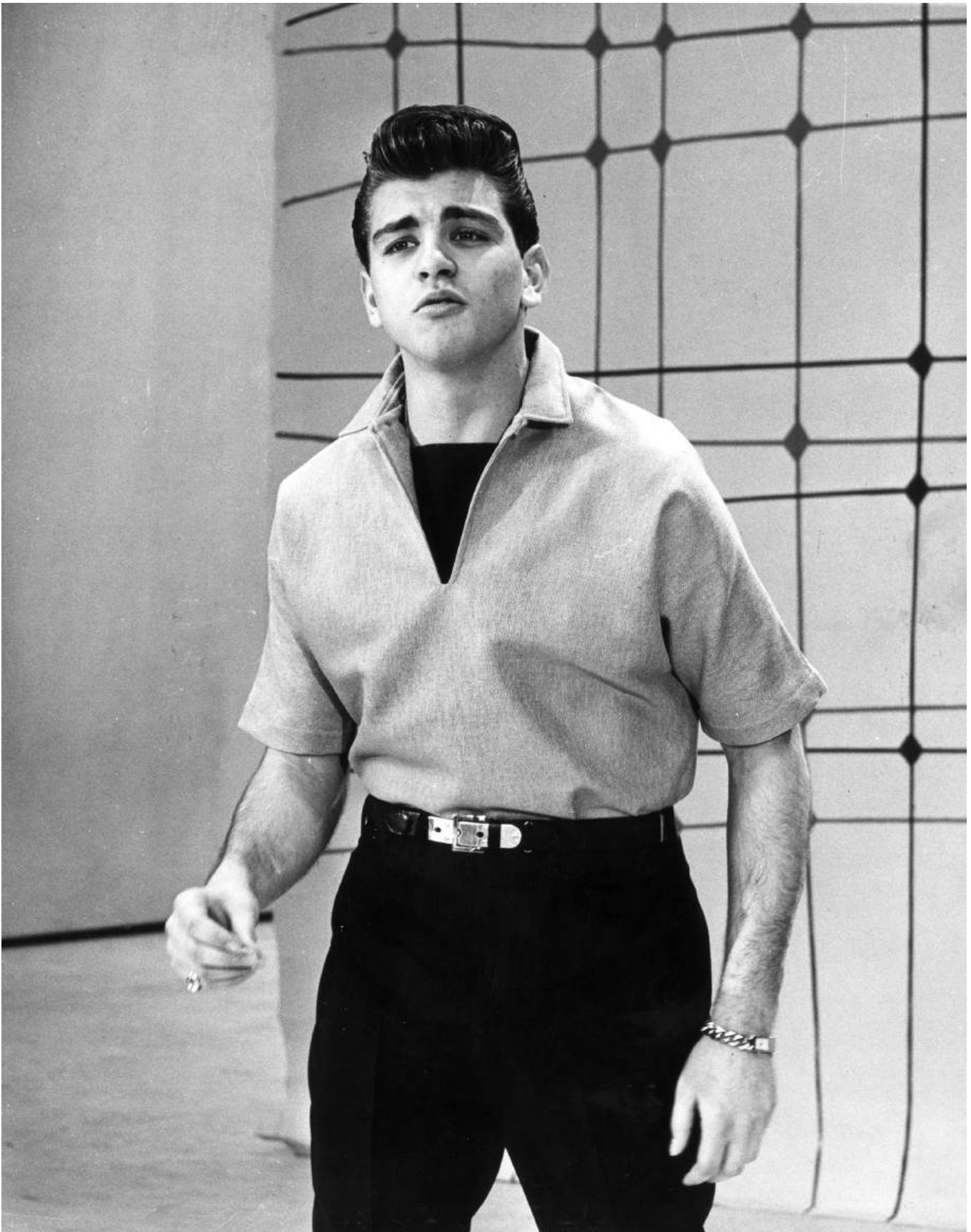


Figure 6.15 Teen heartthrob Fabian was molded to fit teenage musical tastes in order to maximize record sales.

The result was the launch of *American Bandstand* in 1957, a music television show that featured a group of teenagers dancing to current hit records. The show's popularity prompted record producers to create a legion of rock and roll acts specifically designed to appeal to a teenage audience, including Fabian and Frankie Avalon. William Grimes, "Bob Marcucci, 81, Backer of Fabian and Frankie Avalon," *New York Times*, March 18, 2011, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A01EEDA1E3EF93BA25750C0A9679D8B63>. During its almost 40-year run, *American Bandstand* was a prominent influence on teenage fashions and musical tastes and, in turn, reflected the contemporary youth culture.

Racial Integration

Following the Great Migration, racial tensions increased in Northern cities. Whereas many Northerners had previously been unconcerned with the issue of race relations in the South, they found themselves confronted with the very real issue of having to compete for jobs with black migrant workers. Black workers found themselves pushed into undesirable neighborhoods, often living in crowded, unsanitary slums where they were charged exorbitant rates by unscrupulous landlords. During the 1940s, racial tensions boiled over into race riots, most notably in Detroit. The city's 1943 riot caused the deaths of 34 people, 25 of whom were black. Brenda J. Gilcrest, "Detroit's 1943 Race Riot, 50 Years Ago Today, Still Seems Too Near," *Detroit Free Press*, June 20, 1993.

Frustrated with inequalities in the legal system that distinguished black and white individuals, members of the civil rights movement pushed for racial equality. In 1948, an executive order granted by President Harry Truman integrated the military. The move toward equality gained further momentum in 1954, with the U.S. Supreme Court decision to end segregation in public schools in the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*. The civil rights movement escalated throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, aided by highly publicized events such as Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. In 1964, Congress passed the most sweeping civil rights legislation since the Civil War, forbidding discrimination in public places and authorizing financial aid to enable school desegregation.

Although racist attitudes did not change overnight, the cultural changes brought on by the civil rights movement laid the groundwork for the creation of an integrated society. The Motown sound developed by Berry Gordy Jr. in the 1960s both reflected and furthered this change. Gordy believed that by coaching talented but unpolished black artists, he could make them acceptable to mainstream culture. He hired a professional to head an in-house finishing school, teaching his acts how to move gracefully, speak politely, and use proper posture. "Berry Gordy Jr.," *Michigan Rock and Roll Legends*, www.michiganrockandrolllegends.com/Default.aspx?name=BERRYGORDY. Gordy's commercial success with gospel-based pop acts such as the Supremes, the Temptations, the Four Tops, and Martha and the Vandellas reflected the extent of racial integration in the mainstream music industry. Gordy's most successful act, the Supremes, achieved 12 No. 1 singles on the *Billboard Hot 100* chart.



Figure 6.16 The commercial success of Motown girl group the Supremes reflected changing attitudes toward race in the United States.

Musical Influences on Culture

Even though pop music is frequently characterized as a negative influence on society, particularly with respect to youth culture, it also has positive effects on culture. Many artists in the 1950s and 1960s pushed the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior with sexually charged movements and androgynous appearances. Without these precedents, acts like the Rolling Stones or David Bowie may have never made the transition into mainstream success.

On the other hand, over the past 50 years, critics have blamed rock and roll for juvenile delinquency, heavy metal for increased teenage aggression, and gangsta rap for a rise in gang warfare among young urban males. One recent study claimed that youths who listen to music with sexually explicit lyrics were more likely to have sex at an early age, stating that exposure to lots of sexually degrading music gives teens “a specific message about sex.” Associated Press, “Dirty Song Lyrics Can Prompt Early Teen Sex,” *MSNBC*, August 7, 2006, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14227775/>. In addition to its effects on youth culture, popular music has contributed to shifting cultural values regarding race, morality, and gender.

Race

As the music of Chuck Berry and Little Richard gained popularity among white teens in the United States during the 1950s, most of the new rock acts were signed to independent labels, and larger companies such as RCA were losing their share of the market.

To capitalize on the public’s enthusiasm for rock and roll and to prevent the loss of further potential profits, big record companies signed white artists to cover the songs of black artists. The songs were often censored for the mainstream market by the removal of any lyrics that referenced sex, alcohol, or drugs. Pat Boone was the most successful cover artist of the era, releasing songs originally sung by artists such as Fats Domino, the El Dorados, Little Richard, and Big Joe Turner. Releasing a cover of a black performer’s song by a white performer was known as hijacking a hit, and this practice usually left black artists signed to independent labels broke. Because large companies such as RCA could widely promote and distribute their records—six of Boone’s recordings reached the No. 1 spot on the Billboard chart—their records frequently outsold the original versions. Many white artists and producers would also take writing credit for the songs they covered and would buy the rights to songs from black writers without giving them royalties or songwriting credit. This practice fueled racism within the music industry. Independent record producer Danny Kessler of Okeh Records said, “The odds for a black record to crack through were slim. If the black record began to happen, the chances were that a white artist would cover—and the big stations would play the white records.... There was a color line, and it wasn’t easy to cross.” David Szatmary, *Rockin’ in Time: A Social History of Rock and Roll* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 26.

Although cover artists profited from the work of black R&B singers, occasionally they also helped to promote the original recordings. Many teenagers who heard covers on mainstream radio stations sought out the original artists’ versions, increasing sales and prompting Little Richard to refer to Pat Boone as “the man who made me a millionaire.” Dan Crane, “Cover Me: Introducing the Instant Tribute,” *New York Times*, March 27, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/27/arts/music/27cran.html>. Benefiting from covers also worked both ways. In 1962, soul singer Ray Charles covered Don Gibson’s hit “I Just Can’t Stop Loving You,” which became a hit on country and western charts and furthered mainstream acceptance of black musicians. Other black artists to cover hits by white performers included Otis Redding, who performed the Rolling Stones hit “Satisfaction,” and Jimi Hendrix, who covered Bob Dylan’s “All Along the Watchtower.”

Hijacking Hits

Releasing cover versions of hit songs was fairly standard practice before the 1950s because it was advantageous for songwriters and producers to have as many artists as possible sing their records to maximize royalties. Several versions of the same song often appeared in the music charts at the same time. However, the practice acquired racial connotations during the 1950s when larger music labels hijacked R&B hits, using their financial strength to promote the cover version at the expense of the original recording, which often exploited black talent. As a result, many 1950s R&B artists lost out on royalties.

Two contemporary black performers who were victims of this practice were R&B singer LaVern Baker and blues singer Arthur “Big Boy” Crudup. Baker, who was signed with then small-time label Atlantic Records, had been promoted as a pop singer. Because her songs appealed to mainstream audiences, they were ideal for covering, and industry giant Mercury Records took full advantage of this. When Baker released her 1955 hit “Tweedle Dee,” Mercury immediately put out its own version, a note-for-note cover sung by white pop singer Georgia Gibbs. Atlantic could not match Mercury’s marketing budget, and Gibbs’ version outsold Baker’s recording, causing her to lose an estimated \$15,000 in royalties. Jon Parales, “LaVern Baker is Dead at 67; A Rhythm-and-

Blues Veteran,” *New York Times*, March 12, 1997, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/03/12/arts/lavern-baker-is-dead-at-67-a-rhythm-and-blues-veteran.html>.

Around the same time, Arthur Crudup was producing hits such as “So Glad You’re Mine,” “Who’s Been Foolin’ You,” “That’s All Right Mama,” and “My Baby Left Me,” which were subsequently released by performers such as Elvis Presley, Creedence Clearwater Revival, and Rod Stewart for huge financial gain, Crudup’s songs made everybody rich—except him. This realization caused him to quit playing altogether in the late 1950s. A later attempt to collect back royalties was unsuccessful. Scott Stanton, *The Tombstone Tourist; Musicians* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 67. Baker filed a lawsuit in an attempt to revise the Copyright Act of 1909, making it illegal to copy an arrangement verbatim without permission. The lawsuit was unsuccessful, and Gibbs continued to cover Baker’s songs. Bill Dahl, “LaVern Baker,” allmusic, <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/lavern-baker-p3619/biography>.

Morality

When Elvis Presley burst onto the rock and roll scene in the mid-1950s, any conservative parents of teenagers all over the United States were horrified. With his gyrating hips and sexually suggestive body movements, Presley was viewed as a threat to the moral well-being of young women. Television critics denounced his performances as vulgar, and on a 1956 appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, cameras filmed him only from the waist up. One critic for the *New York Daily News* wrote that popular music “has reached its lowest depths in the ‘grunt and groin’ antics of one Elvis Presley.” Dan Collins, “How Big Was the King?” *CBS News*, August 7, 2002, www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/08/07/entertainment/main517851.shtml. Despite the critics’ opinions, Presley immediately gained a fan base among teenage audiences, particularly adolescent girls, who frequently broke into hysterics at his concerts. Rather than tone down his act, Presley defended his movements as manifestations of the music’s rhythm and beat and continued to gyrate on stage. Liberated from the constraints imposed by morality watchdogs, Presley set a precedent for future rock and roll performers and marked a major transition in popular culture.

In addition to decrying raunchy onstage performances by rock and roll artists, moralists in the conservative Eisenhower era objected to the sexually suggestive lyrics found in original rock and roll songs. Big Joe Turner’s version of “Shake, Rattle, and Roll” used sexual phrases and referred to the bedroom, while Little Richard’s original version of “Tutti Frutti” contained the phrase “tutti frutti, loose booty.” Dennis Hall and Susan G. Hall, *American Icons: An Encyclopedia of the People, Places, and Things That Have Shaped Our Culture Volume 1* (Greenwood, 2006), 134. Although many of these lyrics were sanitized for mainstream white audiences when they were rereleased as cover versions, the idea that rock and roll was a threat to morality had been firmly implanted in many people’s minds.

Ironically, many of the controversial key figures in the rock and roll era came from extremely religious backgrounds. Presley was a member of the evangelical First Assembly of God Church, where he acquired his love of gospel music. “Elvis Presley,” *History-of-rock.com*, www.history-of-rock.com/elvis_presley.htm. Similarly, Ray Charles soaked up gospel influences from his local Baptist church. “Ray Charles,” *Hollywood Walk of Fame*, <http://www.walkoffame.com/ray-charles>. Jerry Lee Lewis came from a strict Christian background and often struggled to reconcile his religious beliefs with the moral implications of the music he created. During a recording session in 1957, Lewis argued with manager Sam Phillips that the hit song “Great Balls of Fire” was too “sinful” for him to record. “Jerry Lee Lewis Records ‘Great Balls of Fire’ in Memphis, Tennessee,” *History.com: This Day in History*: October 8, 1957, www.history.com/this-day-in-history/jerry-lee-lewis-records-quotgreat-balls-of-firequot-in-memphis-tennessee. The religious backgrounds of the rock and roll pioneers both influenced and challenged moral norms. When Ray Charles recorded “I Got a Woman” in 1955, he reworded the gospel tune “Jesus Is All the World to Me,” drawing criticism that the song was sacrilegious. Despite the objections, Charles’s style caught on with other musicians, and his experimentation with merging gospel and R&B resulted in the birth of soul music.

Gender

While Presley was revolutionizing people’s notions of sexual freedom and expression, other performers were changing cultural norms regarding gender identity. Dressed in flamboyant clothing with a pompadour hairstyle and makeup, Little Richard was an exotic, androgynous performer who blurred traditional gender boundaries and shocked 1950s audiences with his blatant campiness. Between his wild onstage antics, bisexual tendencies, and love of post-concert orgies, the self-proclaimed “King and Queen of Rock and Roll” challenged many social conventions of the time. Peter Buckley, *The Rough Guide to Rock* (Rough Guides, 2003), 603–604. Little Richard’s flamboyant, gender-bending appearance was so outrageous that it was not taken seriously during the 1950s—he was considered an entertainer whose androgynous look bore no relevance to the real world. However, Richard paved the way for future entertainers to shift cultural perceptions of gender. Later musicians such as David Bowie, Prince, and Boy

George adopted his outrageous style, frequently appearing on stage wearing glittery costumes and heavy makeup. The popularity of these 1970s and 1980s pop idols, along with other gender-bending performers such as Annie Lennox and Michael Jackson, helped make androgyny more acceptable in mainstream society.



Figure 6.17 Little Richard. Gender-bending performers such as Little Richard, David Bowie, Boy George, and Prince helped to change social attitudes toward androgyny.





David Bowie



Boy George



Prince

Key Takeaways

- The relationship between music and culture is reciprocal. Cultural influences on music include factors such as migration, youth culture, and racial integration. Musical influences on culture include factors such as racism within the music industry, content of particular genres of music that push conventional ideas of morality, and the physical appearance of individual performers.
- The mass migration of Southern black individuals to urban areas during the early 20th century brought the blues to the North. Influenced by their new urban setting, migrant musicians incorporated new styles, including vaudeville and swing, into their music. Muddy Waters began playing electric guitar to make himself heard in the Chicago clubs and inadvertently created a new style known as Chicago blues.
- Young people in the 1950s had increased financial and personal freedom, giving them the power to influence record sales. Record companies began marketing rock and roll records specifically to teens, and the popularity of the new genre was enhanced by radio airplay and TV shows such as *American Bandstand*.
- The civil rights movement helped bring about desegregation in the 1950s. Although racial tensions persisted and race riots occurred in several Northern cities, racial integration gradually took place. The move toward integration was furthered and reflected by the Motown sound created by Berry Gordy Jr. Motown had crossover appeal among black and white audiences, illustrated by the mainstream success of groups such as the Supremes.
- Large record companies fueled racism in the music industry by hijacking the hits of black performers and releasing censored cover versions by white artists. The practice cost black artists royalties. Although many performers were angered by the trend, some believed it helped popularize their original recordings.
- Rock and roll music was denounced for its negative impact on morality. Elvis Presley's "vulgar" onstage gyrations outraged critics in the conservative Eisenhower era. Sexually suggestive song lyrics were also held responsible by many for a decline in moral values, although they were often censored cover versions.
- Gender-bending performers such as Little Richard, David Bowie, and Annie Lennox helped normalize androgyny in American culture.

Exercise 6.3.1

Choose a genre of popular music from the last century. Using the ideas in this section as a starting point, examine ways in which your chosen genre has influenced aspects of culture and ways in which cultural aspects have affected the genre's development.

- Which factors have played the biggest roles? Are they interrelated?

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6.4: Current Popular Trends in the Music Industry

Learning Objectives

- Assess the influence of the major record labels in the music industry.
- Describe the role played by independent labels in the music industry.

In Weezer's 2008 song "Pork and Beans," vocalist Rivers Cuomo sings, "Timbaland knows the way to reach the top of the charts/Maybe if I work with him I can perfect the art." "Weezer, '(If You're Wondering If I Want You To) I Want You' Sessions," AOL Music Sessions, music.aol.com/sessions/weezer-if-youre-wondering-if-i-want-you-to-i-want-you-sessions/. The lyrics, a reference to hip-hop producer Timbaland's multiple high-profile collaborations, are an angry reaction to a meeting between Cuomo and record executives at the band's Geffen label. During the meeting, the executives told the band members they needed to write more commercial material, prompting a defiant (though commercially successful) response. Bryan Reesman, "Weezer Goes into the Red on New CD," *Mix*, September 1, 2008, <http://mixonline.com/recording/tracking/music-weezer/>. The incident is a reflection of the balance between commercial success and artistic expression in the music industry. Record labels need artists that inspire the record-buying public, while artists need the financial backing and expertise of record labels and their marketing teams. In recent years, tensions between artists and their labels have been heightened by the cost-cutting measures that have taken place at many companies due to the impact of online file sharing on profits.

The Influence of Major Record Labels

During the 1990s, the record industry was booming. Music lovers were busy replacing their cassette tapes and vinyl records with CDs, and sales were high. In 1999, the total revenue from music sales and licensing peaked at \$14.6 billion. David Goldman, "Music's Lost Decade: Sales Cut in Half," *CNN*, February 3, 2010, http://money.cnn.com/2010/02/02/news/companies/napster_music_industry/index.htm. Ten years later, record label executives were not as successful. Revenue had plunged to \$6.3 billion, with the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) reporting declining revenue in 9 of the 10 previous years, with album sales dropping an average of 8 percent every year. David Goldman, "Music's Lost Decade: Sales Cut in Half," *CNN*, February 3, 2010, http://money.cnn.com/2010/02/02/news/companies/napster_music_industry/index.htm. Why the drastic decline? Experts agree that the primary culprit is the growing popularity of digital music, which initially began through peer-to-peer file sharing—the process of swapping media files over the Internet—such as the Napster service.

Despite a massive loss in profits over the past decade, the global music business still comprises a powerful oligopoly—a market condition in which a few firms dominate most of an industry's production and distribution. The global reach of these few companies means that they have the promotion and marketing muscle to determine which types of music reach listeners' ears and which become obsolete. Each of the major record labels has a strong infrastructure that oversees every aspect of the music business, from production, manufacture, and distribution to marketing and promotion.

Between 1950 and 1980, a large number of major record labels and numerous independent labels competed for a share of the musical pie. Gradually, the larger labels began buying up the independent labels, and then started trying to purchase each other. By the late 1990s, only six major labels remained: Warner, Universal, Sony, BMG, EMI, and Polygram. In 1998, Universal acquired Polygram, and 6 years later Sony and BMG merged. Sony later bought out BMG to obtain sole ownership of the company. Currently, the music industry is dominated by the so-called Big Four: Sony Music Entertainment, EMI, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group. The Big Four control over 85 percent of the U.S. recording music industry. "The Big Four Record Companies," Copyright Law, Treaties and Advice, www.copyright.org/Pages/The%20big%20four%20Record%20Companies.html. Figure 6.11 shows a graph of the current distribution of market share.

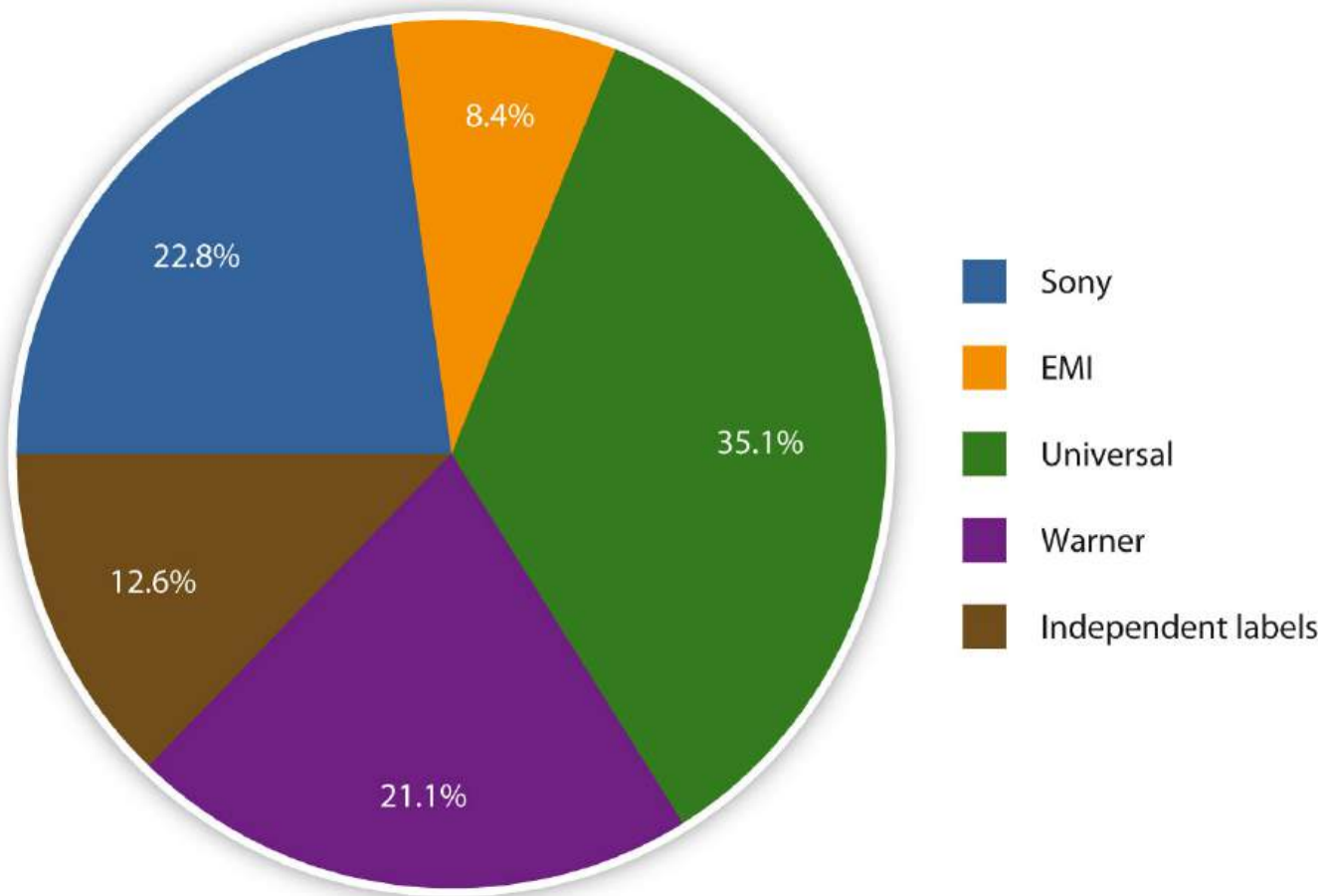


Figure 6.18

Four major music labels control over 85 percent of the U.S. recording music industry.

Sony Music Entertainment

In 2004, Japanese-owned Sony Music Entertainment (part of Sony) and German-owned BMG Entertainment (part of Bertelsmann) merged to create Sony BMG. The joint venture was a bid to overcome weak retail sales, online file sharing, and fierce competition from rival forms of media. Reuters, “Sony, BMG Agree on Music Merger,” *CNN World Business*, November 7, 2003, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/BUSINESS/11/06/sony.bmg.reut/>. Independent music companies opposed the merger in Europe, arguing that it created a market imbalance, but the European Commission upheld its decision to allow the consolidation. In 2008, Sony bought out BMG’s 50 percent stake for \$1.2 billion. David Kaplan, “Sony Buys Bertelsmann’s 50 Percent Stake In Sony BMG for \$1.2 Billion,” PaidContent.org: The Economics of Digital Content, <http://paidcontent.org/article/419-sony-buys-back-bertelsmanns-50-percent-stake-in-sony-bmg-company-rename/>. The company now has full ownership of the second-largest record label in the world. Subsidiary labels owned by Sony include Arista, Columbia, Epic, Jive, RCA, and Zomba, and the company represents numerous artists, including Alicia Keys, Ke\$ha, and Sade.

EMI Group

The EMI Group is a British company, most famous for introducing the Beatles to the world through its Parlophone subsidiary. Originally formed in 1931, through a merger of the UK Columbia Gramophone Company and the Gramophone Company, the money-losing company was taken over in 2007 by private equity firm Terra Firma Capital Partners Ltd. for \$6.5 billion. Anne-Sylvaine Chassany, “Terra Firma Sues Citi over EMI Takeover,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, December 18, 2009, http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/dec2009/gb20091218_584654.htm. In an attempt to return the company to profit following the deal, Terra Firma head Guy Hands began slashing costs, eliminating more than 1,000 jobs in the process. Julia Finch, Owen Gibson, and Alex Needham, “Radiohead Quit, Robbie Williams on Strike—and Now 1,000 Jobs Cut,” *Guardian* (London),

January 12, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/jan/12/robbiewilliams.emi>. Following the takeover, several high-profile artists quit the label, including Radiohead, who described the new management structure as “a confused bull in a china shop.” Julia Finch, Owen Gibson, and Alex Needham, “Radiohead Quit, Robbie Williams on Strike—and Now 1,000 Jobs Cut,” *Guardian* (London), January 12, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/jan/12/robbiewilliams.emi>. As of 2010, the struggling company, which represents artists such as Coldplay, Lily Allen, and Pink Floyd, faces being taken over by its bankers after failing to secure a deal to sell its North American distribution rights to one of the other major labels. Associated Press, “Music Group EMI Facing Bank Takeover After Talks Fall Apart,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, April 2, 2010, www.dailynews.com/business/ci_14805128.

Warner Music Group

Originally launched as Warner Bros. Records in 1958, the Warner Music Group gained momentum during the 1960s and 1970s with the purchase of several important new labels, including Elektra and Atlantic. Like the other major labels, the company began to suffer from declining sales due to the advent of free online music swapping. In 2004, Time Warner decided to abandon its record label and offloaded its music division to an investor group so that it could focus on more profitable areas, such as Time Warner Cable. The \$2.6 billion deal included more than 800 artists, including Linkin Park, Metallica, and Kid Rock, as well as the group’s publishing arm, Warner/Chapell Music, which owned more than a million copyrights. David Vise, “Time Warner Sells Music Unit to Bronfman for \$2.6B,” *Washington Post*, November 24, 2003, www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A9806-2003Nov24.

After a brief period of independence, Warner Music Group went public in 2005, making the company the only stand-alone music company to be publically traded in the United States. To prepare for its public offering, the company made around \$250 million in cuts through layoffs and consolidation. Jeff Leeds, “A Band Makes Its Case against Record Label,” *New York Times*, May 9, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/09/arts/music/09linkin.html>. The move caused concern among the label’s artists that investors’ interests would take priority over performers’ interests and prompted rock-rap group Linkin Park to demand an early release from its contract with Warner. Guitarist Brad Delson characterized the company as “bad news,” adding, “[w]e don’t want to be around to see what happens.” Jeff Leeds, “A Band Makes Its Case against Record Label,” *New York Times*, May 9, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/09/arts/music/09linkin.html>. The band eventually worked out a lucrative new deal with the company. As of 2010, Warner Music Group is considering the possibility of purchasing EMI should the struggling company fail to meet its debt repayments. Jonathan Sibun, “KKR and Warner Music Talk Over Break-Up Bid for EMI,” *Telegraph* (London), March 14, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/7443456/KKR-and-Warner-Music-talk-over-break-up-bid-for-EMI.html>.

Universal Music Group

The largest of the Big Four record labels, Universal Music Group established itself as an industry giant in 1998, with the merger of PolyGram and Universal. Both companies already owned numerous subsidiaries, and the merger of the two entertainment conglomerates created the largest music company in the world. Wholly owned by French international media firm Vivendi since 2006, the company has gone on to acquire BMG Music Publishing and Univision Music Group, among smaller labels. Its acquisition of U.K. labels Sanctuary Music Group and V2 in 2007 drew criticisms from the independent sector that the recording giant was heading toward a monopoly. Adam Sherwin, “Indies Accuse Universal of Gaining Monopoly” *Times* (London), October 1, 2007, http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/industry_sectors/media/article2563208.ece. The Association of Independent Music claimed that the deals would “further marginalize a vibrant independent sector, serving to stifle competition and narrow consumer choice.” Adam Sherwin, “Indies Accuse Universal of Gaining Monopoly” *Times* (London), October 1, 2007, http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/industry_sectors/media/article2563208.ece. Despite the objections, both deals went ahead.

Universal Music Group’s catalog of artists includes U2, Amy Winehouse, Lady Gaga, Taylor Swift, and the Black Eyed Peas. Despite its powerful status, the company has suffered from declining sales of physical products along with the rest of the music industry. As of 2010, UMG plans to lure customers back to purchasing physical CDs by lowering prices to under \$10 (the average price of a digitally purchased album). Anna Swindle, “Universal Music Group Plans to Lower CD Prices,” *Paste*, March 23, 2010, <http://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2010/03/post-69.html>.

Independent Record Labels: A Smaller Share of the Pie

In addition to the four major record labels, independent production companies, or indie record labels, operate without the financial assistance of one of the Big Four (although in recent years, the definition has shifted to incorporate indies that are partially owned

by one of the major labels). Ranging from small grassroots or garage labels to large, profitable businesses, indie labels typically produce music that is less commercially viable and more eclectic than the music produced by the larger mainstream companies.

Indie Origins

Independent labels have played a small but significant role in the music industry for as long as there has been a market. When patents held on sound recording technologies entered the public market in the 1920s, opportunities arose for small recording companies to enter the business. To avoid competing with larger firms such as RCA and Edison, the new independent companies focused on neglected areas of the music industry, such as folk, gospel, and rural blues. When the major labels decided during World War II to abandon then-unprofitable music recorded by black artists, the independent labels quickly rushed in to fill the void, enjoying a boom during the rock and roll era when R&B music soared in popularity. Between 1955 and 1959, the U.S. market share of the major companies had dropped from 78 percent to 44 percent, while the market share of independent companies rose from 22 percent to 56 percent. “Rock and Roll Timeline,” The History of Rock ’n’ Roll, October 15, 2009, www.history-of-rock.com/rock_and_roll_timeline.htm. Sun Records played a particularly important role in the development of both rock and roll and country music by releasing records by Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, and Roy Orbison.

During the 1970s punk era, indie labels profited from the antimainstream, anticorporate attitude of many punk rock bands, which disassociated themselves from the major labels. The indie-rock movement grew throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with labels such as Sub Pop, I.R.S., and Epitaph and epitomized by the music of the Smiths, the Stone Roses, R.E.M., and the Jesus and Mary Chain. This movement was known as “college rock,” which would later become alternative rock. However, as alternative rock grew in popularity, grunge bands such as Nirvana, Soundgarden, and Pearl Jam broke into the mainstream. This attracted the attention of major record labels, which began to look at the music with a commercially oriented approach. Many artists found themselves faced with a dilemma: stay true to their indie roots or “sell out” to a major record label in the hope of financial gain.

The Pressure to Sell Out: Nirvana

When Seattle grunge band Nirvana began to achieve success in the late 1980s, they were signed to independent label Sub Pop. Popular among college students, the band’s 1989 album *Bleach* sold well enough for the band to consider moving to a bigger label. Amid rumors that Sub Pop was planning on signing as a subsidiary of a major record company because of financial difficulties, the band decided to cut out the middleman and seek a new contract itself. Chris Norris, “Ghost of Saint Kurt,” *Spin*, April 2004, 57–63. Signing with DGC Records (an imprint of Geffen), Nirvana released *Nevermind* in 1991 and found itself thrust into the mainstream. Within 9 months of its release, the album had sold more than 4 million copies (compared to 30,000 copies of *Bleach*), knocked Michael Jackson’s *Dangerous* from the top of the *Billboard* chart, and placed Nirvana at the forefront of public attention.

For Sub Pop, Nirvana’s success was both a blessing and a curse. Under severe financial stress, the label had begun layoffs in the spring of 1991, reducing its staff of 25 to a core group of five employees. Sub Pop Records, “About Us,” April 2, 2008, <http://www.subpop.com/about>. With the royalties it received from *Nevermind*, along with the buyout from Nirvana’s contract, and potential royalties from any future albums, Sub Pop was pulled back from the brink of collapse. However, the carefully crafted niche that Sub Pop had found in the music industry vanished. Eager to discover the next big thing in grunge, major labels began scoping out Seattle bands, offering them large advances against which the smaller independent companies could not compete. Sub Pop chief Bruce Pavitt said of one band, “I was told by our head A&R agent that they would be happy with a \$5,000 advance. Two months later we were giving them a check for \$150,000.” Sub Pop Records, “About Us,” April 2, 2008, <http://www.subpop.com/about>. In 1995, the company sold 49 percent of its shares to Warner Bros in exchange for financial backing.

Nirvana had equally ambivalent feelings about the transition from a small independent label to a major record company. At a concert shortly after the band signed their deal with DGC, lead singer Kurt Cobain declared to the crowd, “Hello, we’re major-label corporate rock sellouts.” Benjamin Kunkel, “Stupid and Contagious,” *New York Times*, May 6, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/06/books/review/Kunkel.t.html>. Having spent several years among the anticommercial, do-it-yourself grunge crowd in Seattle, the band’s members were uncomfortable with their new position as wealthy rock stars.

Advantages of Indie Labels

Although they frequently lose their talent to industry heavyweights, indie labels hold several advantages over major record companies. They are generally smaller, enabling them to respond to changing popular musical tastes more quickly than large

companies with more cumbersome processes and procedures in place. This enables them to pick up on emerging trends and bring them to market quickly. Although unable to compete with the distribution and promotion power of the major labels, indie labels can focus on niche markets, tapping into regional trends. For example, hip-hop's initial commercial successes in the late 1970s and early 1980s came through small independent labels such as Tommy Boy and Sugar Hill. Realizing that record executives would find the raw street version of hip-hop unworkable, the labels came up with the idea of using house bands to play with emcees to improve the commercial viability of the genre. An early example of this process was Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight," which was a worldwide hit. Rhyme Anderson, "Hip to Hip-Hop," *Washington Post*, February 19, 2006, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/16/AR2006021602077.html.



Figure 6.19





Artists who have switched from an independent label to a major label midway through their careers include Green Day, Nirvana, and Death Cab for Cutie.

The nature of the independent production process may also prove advantageous. A shorter path from creation of the music to distribution and promotion makes it easier to maintain the artist's original vision. For this reason, many artists prefer to work with independent labels, believing the final product to be more authentic. This argument is also used by some fans of independent labels, who trust companies that only produce one brand of music to adhere to a consistent sound and musical style.

Vanity Labels

A popular trend among major record labels is to allow high-profile recording artists to front their own indie labels with the financial backing of the larger company. Frequently referred to as vanity labels, these are spin-offs of the parent company that enable artists to run "a label within a label" and release music by other performers that they admire. Examples include Madonna's Maverick, Trent Reznor's Nothing, and Michael Jackson's MJJ. Allowing an artist to create a vanity label benefits a major record label in several ways: It encourages artists to remain with the parent company for longer than they may have otherwise done, it reduces the amount of promotional effort required by the label because fans are likely to be attracted to new music based on the recommendation of favorite artists, and it increases the likelihood that bands in niche genres will become big moneymakers for the company.

However, vanity label projects often prove risky and unsuccessful because the label provides all of the money while the proven artist is responsible for developing new acts, and recent losses in the music industry have caused major labels to cut funding for artist-run ventures. For example, Mariah Carey's label, Crave, ended up dissolving less than a year after it opened. In 2004, Universal Records President Monte Lipman commented, "Back in the day, when the industry was a lot healthier, it was 'OK, here's \$2-\$3million. Go start your label and let us know when you're ready to start your first act.' Those days are absolutely over." Associated Press, "Record Cos. Wary of Vanity Label Deals," *Jacksonville (FL) First Coast News*, June 28, 2004, <http://www.firstcoastnews.com/news/strange/news-article.aspx?storyid=20660>.

Major Record Labels

Independent Record Labels

| Major Record Labels | Independent Record Labels |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Larger labels have money for wider promotion and distribution | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smaller labels can react quickly to emerging trends |

Key Takeaways

- The global music business constitutes a powerful oligopoly—a market condition in which a few firms dominate most of an industry’s production and distribution. Major record labels make up over 85 percent of the music industry. Currently, the four major record labels (known as the Big Four) are EMI, Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group.
- Indie record labels are smaller labels that operate without financial assistance from the Big Four and typically produce less commercially viable music. Although they do not have the marketing and promotional power of the major labels, indies have several advantages. They are smaller and more flexible than major labels, enabling them to respond more quickly to trends in the industry. Indies are also able to tap into niche markets, and their simple structure often means that the music stays closer to the artist’s original vision. Major labels often allow high-profile stars to set up their own indie labels, known as vanity labels because they reflect the personal musical tastes of the high-profile artist.

Exercise 6.4.1

Draw a T-chart. Label the left-hand column *Major Record Labels* and the right-hand column *Independent Record Labels*. Using the information in this chapter, your own knowledge, and further Internet research, list the advantages held by each type of label in the music industry. Consider the size and structure of each type of company, financial issues, artist preferences, and the impact of digital distribution.

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6.5: Influence of New Technology

Learning Objectives

- Determine the difference between illegal file sharing and legitimate digital downloads.
- Identify ways in which digital music sales have influenced the music industry.
- Identify ways in which the Internet has enabled artists to sell music directly to fans.

In the mid-1990s, CD sales were booming. Cassette tapes were all but obsolete, and record companies were reaping the benefits of sales to consumers who wanted their music collections in the latest technological format. This boom was a familiar step in the evolution of technology. In past decades, records seemed to have an ironclad lock on sales, but they were eventually passed by cassette sales. Cassettes, as previously mentioned, were then passed by CD sales. However, despite a few advantages in quality and convenience, there were several areas in which CDs were lacking. They were expensive for consumers to purchase, and consumers had to buy a full album even if they were only interested in listening to one or two songs on it because every album came as a complete package.

At the height of the CD revolution, new digital technology was being developed that would eliminate these disadvantages and revolutionize digital music storage. In 1989, German company Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft discovered how to compress digital audio to approximately one-tenth the size of the original audio with almost no discernable loss in quality to the average listener. Small enough to be transmitted over a modem, the so-called MP3 files (the *MP* stands for *Moving Pictures Experts Group*, which is the group that sets the standard for audio and video compression and transmission, and the 3 refers to the most popular layer or scheme with the standard) could be downloaded onto a website or FTP site in a relatively short amount of time. Initially done only by a tech-savvy elite, the process of downloading and sharing audio files was a painstaking process because MP3 files were not in one centralized location. Peer-to-peer file sharing—the process in which two or more computer systems are connected over the Internet for the purpose of sharing music or video files—became a worldwide phenomenon in 1999 with the development of centralized online file-sharing system Napster.

File Sharing: From Illegal Downloading to Digital Music Stores

In 1999, Northeastern University student Shawn Fanning dropped out of school to complete work on a software project that would simplify finding and downloading MP3 files on the Internet. T. C. Doyle, “Shawn Fanning, Founder, Napster,” *CRN*, November 10, 2000, www.crn.com/news/channel-programs/18834885/shawn-fanning-founder-napster.htm?jsessionid=nqMTTQpakxKozxhpf778kw**.ecappj01. The result was a free downloadable Napster program that transformed PCs into servers for exchanging music files over the Internet. The program also sported a chat-room feature that served a community of music fans eager to discuss their favorite bands. Originally an experiment between Fanning and his friends, the program’s popularity spread through word of mouth. By the end of the first week, 15,000 people had downloaded the program. Sarah Riedel, “A Brief History of Filesharing: From Napster to Legal Music Downloads,” Associated Content from Yahoo, February 24, 2006, www.associatedcontent.com/article/20644/a_brief_history_of_filesharing_from_pg2.html?cat=15.

Although music fans were thrilled by their newfound ability to download free songs (albeit illegally), the record industry was not happy. In December 1999, all four major record labels, together with the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), launched a series of lawsuits against Fanning and his site for copyright infringement. Citing the nonpayment of royalties and the loss of revenue through lost CD sales, the RIAA also claimed that artists would be unwilling to create new songs now that they could be obtained for free. In response, Napster argued that it merely provided the software for people to share music files and no copyrighted material appeared on the site itself. In addition, Fanning claimed that the site encouraged people to go out and buy CDs based on the exposure artists received from Napster. Sarah Riedel, “A Brief History of Filesharing: From Napster to Legal Music Downloads,” Associated Content from Yahoo, February 24, 2006, www.associatedcontent.com/article/20644/a_brief_history_of_filesharing_from_pg2.html?cat=15.

As the number of the Napster program users grew, the lawsuit began to garner publicity. Some Napster supporters, many of them college students, viewed the legal battle as a David versus Goliath situation and rooted for Fanning to beat the corporate music giants. Most recording artists sided with the record labels, with heavy metal rock group Metallica and rap artist Dr. Dre launching their own separate lawsuits against Napster in April 2000. However, some bands discovered a way to use the site to their advantage. Alternative rock group Radiohead promoted its album *Kid A* by secretly releasing the record to Napster 3 weeks before its street release date, creating a wave of publicity that launched the album to the No. 1 spot on the *Billboard 200* chart in October

2000. Richard Menta, "Did Napster Take Radiohead's New Album to Number 1?" *MP3newswire.net*, October 28, 2000, <http://www.mp3newswire.net/stories/2000/radiohead.html>. Reggae-rock band Dispatch poured free recordings onto the site, increasing its fan base to such an extent that it sold out multiple nights at Madison Square Garden in early 2007. Steve Knopper, "Napster Wounds the Giant," *Rocky Mountain News*, January 2, 2009, <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2009/jan/02/napster-wounds-the-giant/>. Dispatch bassist Pete Heimbold said, "[w]hat we found was it really didn't deter kids from coming to shows and buying CDs. In fact, I think it had the opposite effect—people heard songs off Napster and had a lot of merchandise and CDs." Steve Knopper, "Napster Wounds the Giant," *Rocky Mountain News*, January 2, 2009, <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2009/jan/02/napster-wounds-the-giant/>.

Despite the Napster program's many advantages, including a built-in user base of 26.4 million people, the major record labels were unable to reach a deal with the site to create any form of fee-based service. In 2007, former EMI Executive Ted Cohen said, "[t]he record labels had an opportunity to create a digital ecosystem and infrastructure to sell music online, but they kept looking at the small picture instead of the big one. They wouldn't let go of CDs." Seth Mnookin, "Universal's CEO Once Called iPod Users Thieves. Now He's Giving Songs Away," *Wired*, November 27, 2007, http://www.wired.com/entertainment/music/magazine/15-12/mf_morris?currentPage=2. A court injunction in 2000 ordered Napster to remove all copyrighted material from its servers, and within two days the website was effectively shut down. Following a bankruptcy liquidation, the Napster program was reinvented as a paid subscription service in 2003. Under its new terms, users pay a fee to access music.

The Post-Napster Universe: Gnutella and Kazaa

Napster's initial success resulted in a wave of similar sites emerging throughout 2000. The creators of these new services recognized that Napster's legal problems were the result of maintaining a central file server. By keeping a list of all the users on the network, Napster was able to control its users' activities by blocking illegal downloads. When the court ordered the service to halt illegal downloading, the absence of a central database destroyed the entire Napster network.

To avoid a similar fate, new peer-to-peer (P2P) systems adopted two different approaches. The Gnutella network, which serves clients such as LimeWire, BearShare, and WinMX, avoided maintaining a central database. Instead, it dispersed information about file locations across computer "nodes" around the world. Users were able to find each other, but the service could disclaim the ability to prevent copyright infringements. The lack of a centralized server and multiple client base meant that, unlike Napster, it would be impossible to shut down the entire Gnutella network through a simple court order. Courts would need to block all Gnutella network traffic at the Internet service provider (ISP) level of the Internet, a far trickier prospect than simply shutting down a central database.

In addition to a lack of a central database, some P2P providers set up in offshore locations to take advantage of less-restrictive copyright laws and weaker enforcement. Kazaa was initially based in the Pacific island nation of Vanuata and operated out of Australia. However, the company's offshore location did not protect it from copyright infringement laws. After a series of legal wrangles, Kazaa was ordered to modify its software in Australia in 2005 and agreed to pay \$100 million in damages to the record industry. In 2006, the site became a legal music download service. *BBC News*, "Kazaa Site Becomes Legal Service," July 27, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/5220406.stm>.

Not content with pursuing providers of illegal music downloads, the RIAA also took legal action against the users of sites such as LimeWire and Kazaa. In 2003, the recording industry sued 261 American music fans for illegally sharing songs on P2P networks. David Kravets, "File Sharing Lawsuits at a Crossroads, After 5 Years of RIAA Litigation," *Wired*, September 4, 2008, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2008/09/proving-file-sh/>. Although fines under U.S. copyright law can rise to up to \$150,000 per illegally downloaded track, most of the cases were settled for much less. As of 2008, the RIAA had sued or threatened to sue more than 30,000 individuals for copyright infringement. David Kravets, "File Sharing Lawsuits at a Crossroads, After 5 Years of RIAA Litigation," *Wired*, September 4, 2008, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2008/09/proving-file-sh/>.

Busted! Woman Fined \$1.92 Million

In an ongoing legal battle with the RIAA, Minnesota woman Jammie Thomas was found guilty of copyright infringement for a second time in 2009 and fined \$1.92 million for illegally downloading 24 songs on file-sharing Kazaa website. First fined \$222,000 for using the Kazaa service, the 30-year-old single mother of four refused to settle with the recording industry out of court. Thomas claimed her innocence, maintaining that she was not the Kazaa service user whose files had been detected by RIAA investigators. David Kravets, "File Sharing Lawsuits at a Crossroads, After 5 Years of RIAA Litigation," *Wired*, September 4, 2008, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2008/09/proving-file-sh/>.

The case became the first of its kind to go before a jury in 2007, and Thomas faced fines ranging from \$18,000 to \$3.6 million under the Copyright Act of 1976. After deliberating for 5 hours, a jury found her guilty of copyright infringement and awarded the RIAA \$222,000 in damages. The verdict was thrown out a year later when a federal judge declared a mistrial. However, jurors in Thomas's second trial found her guilty again, upping the fine to \$1.92 million. A federal judge later reduced the damages to \$50,000. In January 2010, the RIAA offered to close the case for \$25,000, but Thomas continued to refuse to pay. David Kravets, "Settlement Rejected in 'Shocking' RIAA File Sharing Verdict," *Wired*, January 27, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2010/01/settlement-rejected-in-shocking-riaa-file-sharing-verdict/>.

Thomas's case has provoked strong reactions on both sides of the debate. RIAA spokeswoman Cara Duckwork said, "[i]t is a shame that Ms. Thomas-Rasset continues to deny any responsibility for her actions rather than accept a reasonable settlement offer and put this case behind her." David Kravets, "Settlement Rejected in 'Shocking' RIAA File Sharing Verdict," *Wired*, January 27, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2010/01/settlement-rejected-in-shocking-riaa-file-sharing-verdict/>. Joe Sibley, one of Thomas's lawyers, argued, "They want to use this case as a bogeyman to scare people into doing what they want, to pay exorbitant damages." David Kravets, "Settlement Rejected in 'Shocking' RIAA File Sharing Verdict," *Wired*, January 27, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2010/01/settlement-rejected-in-shocking-riaa-file-sharing-verdict/>. The RIAA is currently winding down its 6-year campaign against illegal downloaders, approximately 30,000 lawsuits in all. Instead the RIAA is focusing on creating a program with Internet providers to discontinue service to users who continue to break online copyright laws. David Kravets, "Verizon Terminating Copyright Infringers' Internet Access," *Wired*, January 20, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2010/01/verizon-terminating-internet-accessinternet-access/>.

The Advent of Digital Music Stores

With the closure of the Napster program and the crackdown on illegal downloading, a void in the music distribution market opened and was almost immediately filled by fee-based online music providers. This void helped to resurrect one company many feared was declining. Apple launched the iTunes appliance program—a free application for the Mac computer that converted audio CDs into digital music files, organized digital music collections, and played Internet radio—and the iPod—a portable media player compatible with the iTunes appliance program software—in 2001, and both products have dominated the market ever since. In 2003, the company signed deals with all of the major record labels and launched the iTunes Store, a virtual store that enabled people to buy and download digital music on demand. Initially featuring 200,000 songs at a cost of \$0.99 each to download, the store quickly revolutionized the digital music industry. Within a week, iTunes Store customers purchased 1 million songs. Apple, "iPod + iTunes Timeline," Apple Press Info, <http://www.apple.com/pr/products/ipodhistory/>. Six months later, Apple convinced the record labels to expand the service to Microsoft Windows operating system users, and by the following year, the iTunes Store had gone international. Within 5 years of its launch, the iTunes Store was the top music seller in the United States, and in February 2010, Apple celebrated its 10 billionth download. Martyn Williams, "Timeline: iTunes Store at 10 Billion," *Computerworld*, February 24, 2010, http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9162018/Timeline_iTunes_Store_at_10_billion.

Several companies have attempted to cash in on the success of iTunes appliance program, with varying results. In 2007, Internet giant [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) launched the Amazon MP3 digital music download store that initially offered more than 2 million songs priced between \$0.89 and \$0.99. Adam Richardson, "Quick Take on Amazon's MP3 Download Store," *Matter/Anti-Matter* (blog), October 3, 2007, news.cnet.com/8301-13641_3-9790970-44.html. Amazon's major selling point was its lack of digital rights management (DRM) software, which enabled music downloads to be played on any hardware device. In contrast, songs downloaded through the iTunes appliance program could only be played on Apple products. Apple removed these restrictions in 2009 after negotiating an agreement with the major record labels. Despite its efforts to topple Apple from the top spot in the digital music arena, the Amazon MP3 service only commanded 8 percent of the digital music market in 2009, compared with Apple's 69 percent of the market. NPD Group, "Digital Music Increases Share of Overall Music Sales Volume in the U.S.," news release, August 18, 2009, http://www.npd.com/press/releases/press_090818.html. Napster has also stayed in the game by releasing a new design plan in 2009 after being purchased by Best Buy. The plan requires users to pay a fee to access all the music in its catalog. This plan has kept Napster in business; however, the company only had 1 percent to 2 percent of the market share at the beginning of 2010. Seth Weintraub, "Android Helps Amazon Triple Online Music Marketshare," *Fortune*, CNN Money, May 26, 2010, tech.fortune.cnn.com/2010/05/26/android-helps-amazon-triple-music-marketshare/. Other online music stores are operated by Walmart, Rhapsody, and Yahoo! Music.

The Impact of Digital Music Technology

Once digital music technology was introduced to the world, its domination of the music industry was almost instantaneous. MP3 players have several key advantages over CD players. They are smaller and more portable, eliminating the necessity of lugging around bulky CD carrying cases. Whereas CDs can only hold a relatively small amount of data, MP3 players are able to compress thousands of songs onto a single device (this lack of packaging and manufacturing has caused disputes between artists and labels over royalties, which will be discussed later on). The lack of moving parts means MP3 players can be taken jogging or cycling without the risk of a song skipping every time the user hits a bumpy patch of road. Users are also no longer obligated to buy entire albums; instead, they can pick and choose their favorite songs from a catalog of online music.

Of the many brands of MP3 player currently available on the market, Apple's iPod has been the dominant force in the digital music industry since its launch in 2001 (see Figure 6.15). Former Apple CEO Steve Jobs attributed the success of his product to its simple design. In a 2005 interview he said, "One of the biggest insights we have was that we decided not to try to manage your music library on the iPod, but to manage it in iTunes. Other companies tried to do everything on the device itself and made it so complicated that it was useless." Steven Levy, "Q&A: Jobs on iPod's Cultural Impact," *Newsweek*, October 15, 2006, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15262121/site/newsweek/print/1/displaymode/1098/>. The iPod has also reaped the benefits of a successful marketing campaign and constant reinvention of its original format. Customers now have the choice of several different iPod models according to their need for storage space and desire for additional services such as Internet access and video-playing capability.

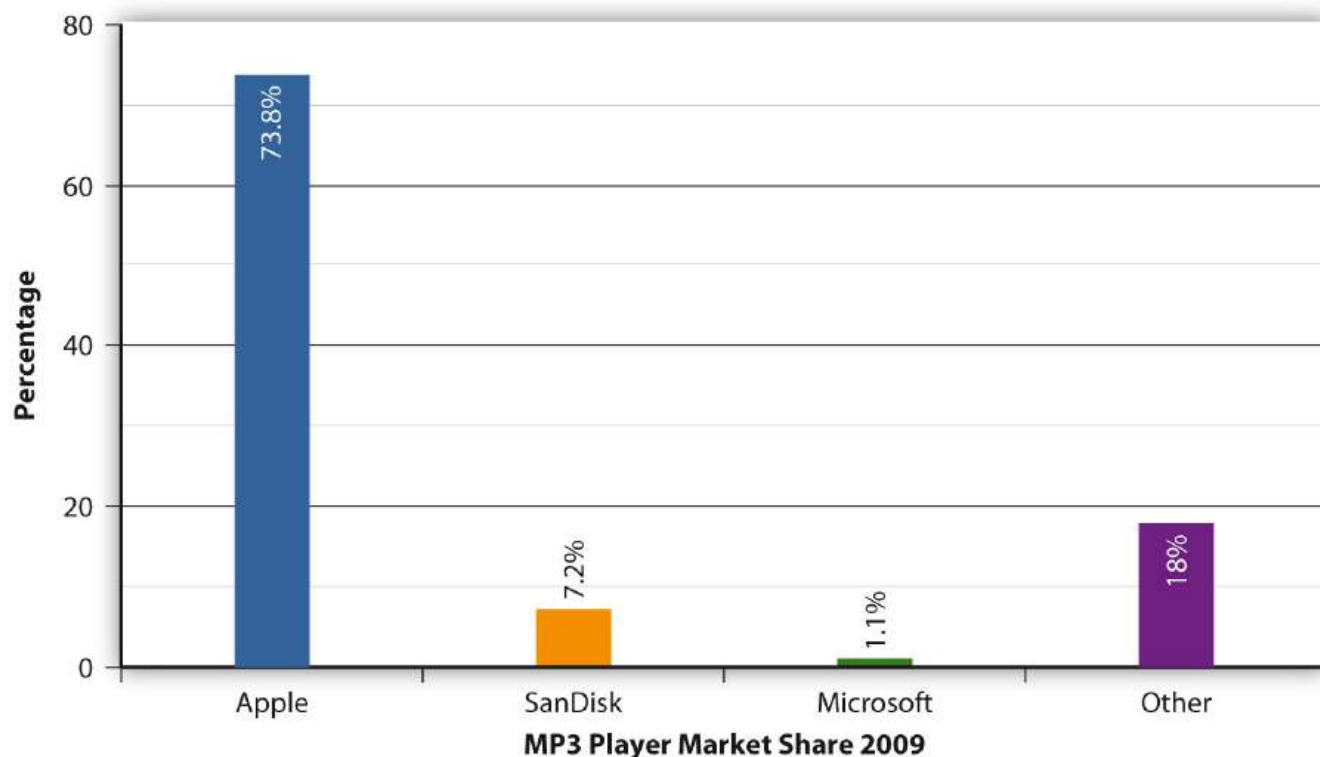


Figure 6.20

Since its launch in 2001, Apple's iPod has remained the biggest-selling brand of MP3 player. Andrew Nusca, "Apples Announces New iPod Touch, Nano, Shuffle, Classic; iTunes 9," *The Toy Box Blog*, ZDNet, September 9, 2009, <http://www.zdnet.com/blog/gadgetreviews/apple-announces-new-ipod-touch-nano-shuffle-classic-itunes-9/7240>.

Profit Division

One effect that Apple iTunes and other online retailers have had on the music industry is to shake up the way that profits are divided among artists and record labels. Because of the unanticipated boom in digital record sales, recording artists and their publishers were unprepared for the possibility that they might need to renegotiate their contracts to include digital downloads. Many artists discovered to their cost that their contracts predated the digital download era, leaving them open to exploitative royalty rates for digital downloads of songs and ringtones.

The very definition of digital royalties is still under negotiation—should a download be classified as licensed use of an artist’s music (which nets the artist approximately 50 percent of the download fee in royalties), or should it be classified as a retail sale (which nets the artist approximately 12 percent of the download fee in royalties)? Sean Michaels, “Eminem Sues Universal Over Digital Royalties,” *Guardian* (London), February 25, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/feb/25/eminem-universal-digital-royalties-lawsuit>. The answer depends on the contractual agreement between artists and record labels. In 2009, rapper Eminem’s publishing company FBT Productions sued Universal Music Group for \$1.6 million of unpaid royalties, arguing that the downloads should fall under the “licensing” agreements that cover physical releases such as CDs, rather than the “distribution” agreements put forth by Universal Music Group. Sean Michaels, “Eminem Sues Universal Over Digital Royalties,” *Guardian* (London), February 25, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/feb/25/eminem-universal-digital-royalties-lawsuit>. A jury agreed that a song sold online is no different from a song bought in a store and ruled in favor of the record label.

Because online retailers such as Apple are responsible for the marketing, management, and delivery of downloaded music, record labels’ overheads are much lower. This new industry trend has prompted many artists and publishers to demand a bigger share of labels’ profits. As of 2010, a \$0.99 download from the iTunes appliance program generates \$0.30 for Apple and \$0.70 for the record label, of which \$0.09 goes to the songwriter and publisher as a standard mechanical royalty. Chloe Albanesius, “Music-Download Royalty Rates Left Unchanged,” *PC Magazine*, October 2, 2008, <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2331598,00.asp>.

CD Sales

The burgeoning popularity of digital music has drastically reduced revenue brought in from CD sales since 2001. Although many people have switched from illegally downloading to purchasing music on digital stores, paid digital downloads have not yet begun to make up for the loss of revenue from CD sales, and illegal downloads remain a problem for the recording industry. According to online download tracker BigChampagne Media Measurement, unauthorized downloads still represent about 90 percent of the market. David Goldman, “Music’s Lost Decade: Sales Cut in Half,” *CNN*, February 3, 2010, http://money.cnn.com/2010/02/02/news/companies/napster_music_industry/index.htm. With album sales declining at a rate of 8 percent a year, music executives are trying to figure out how to stem the flow of money flooding out of the CD sales market. Former head of Yahoo! Music David Goldberg said, “The digital music business is a war of attrition that nobody seems to be winning. The CD is still disappearing, and nothing is replacing it in entirety as a revenue generator.” David Goldman, “Music’s Lost Decade: Sales Cut in Half,” *CNN*, February 3, 2010, http://money.cnn.com/2010/02/02/news/companies/napster_music_industry/index.htm. In 2009, digital revenue sales rose and were well on the way to equaling CD sales, which were on the decline.

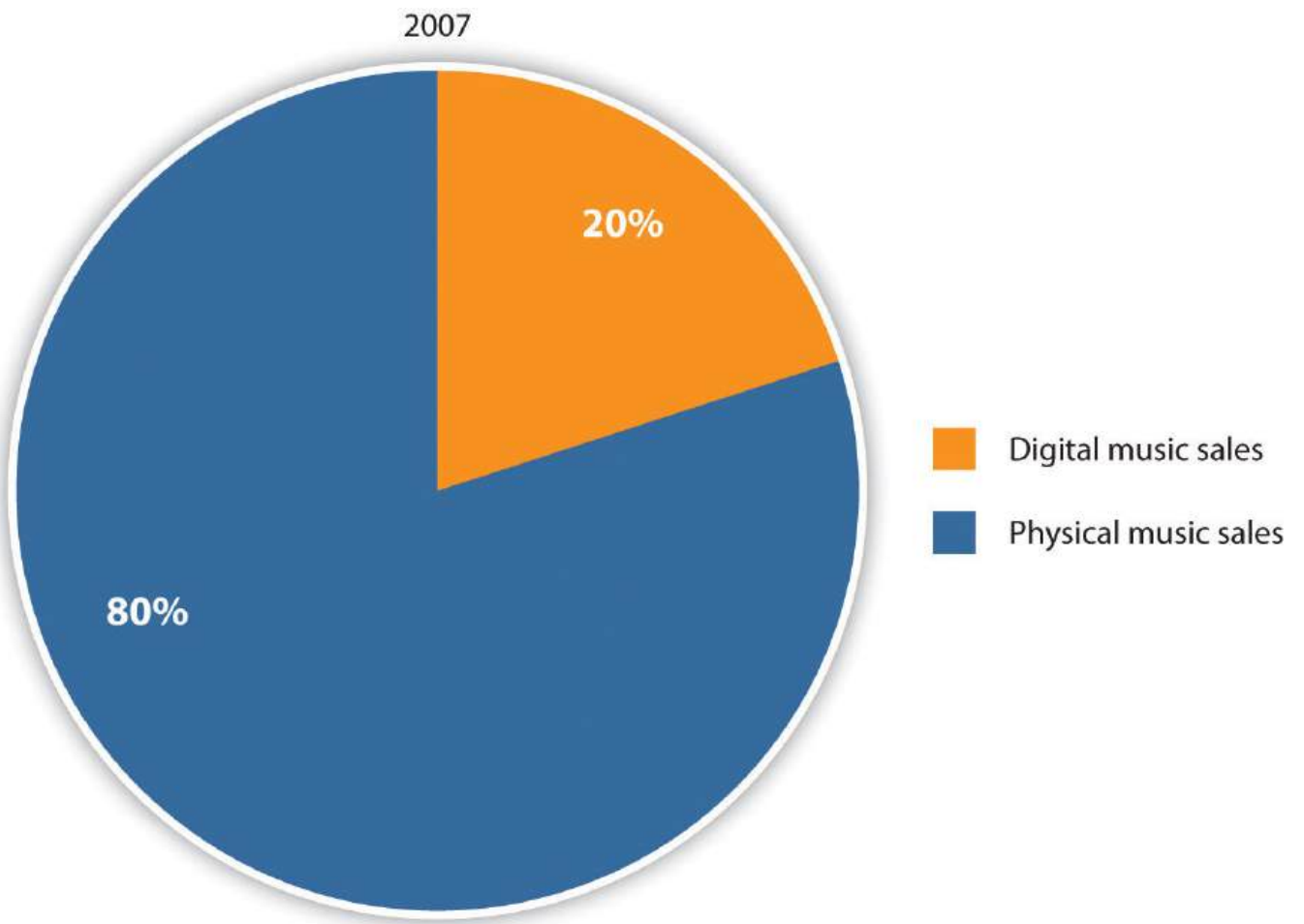
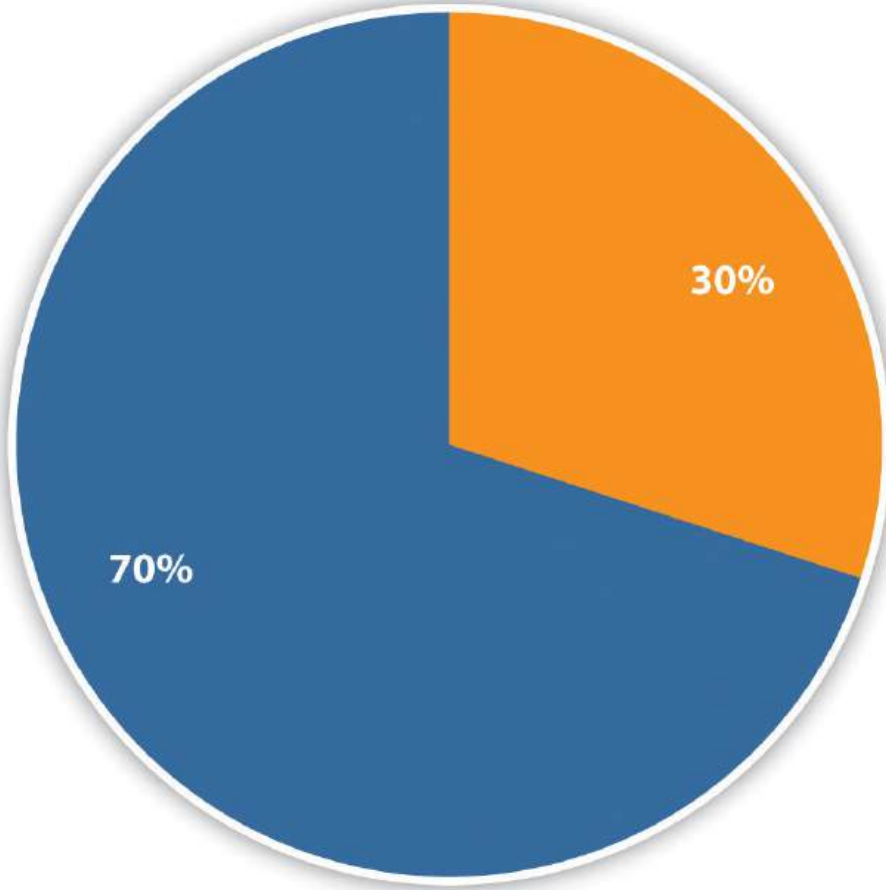




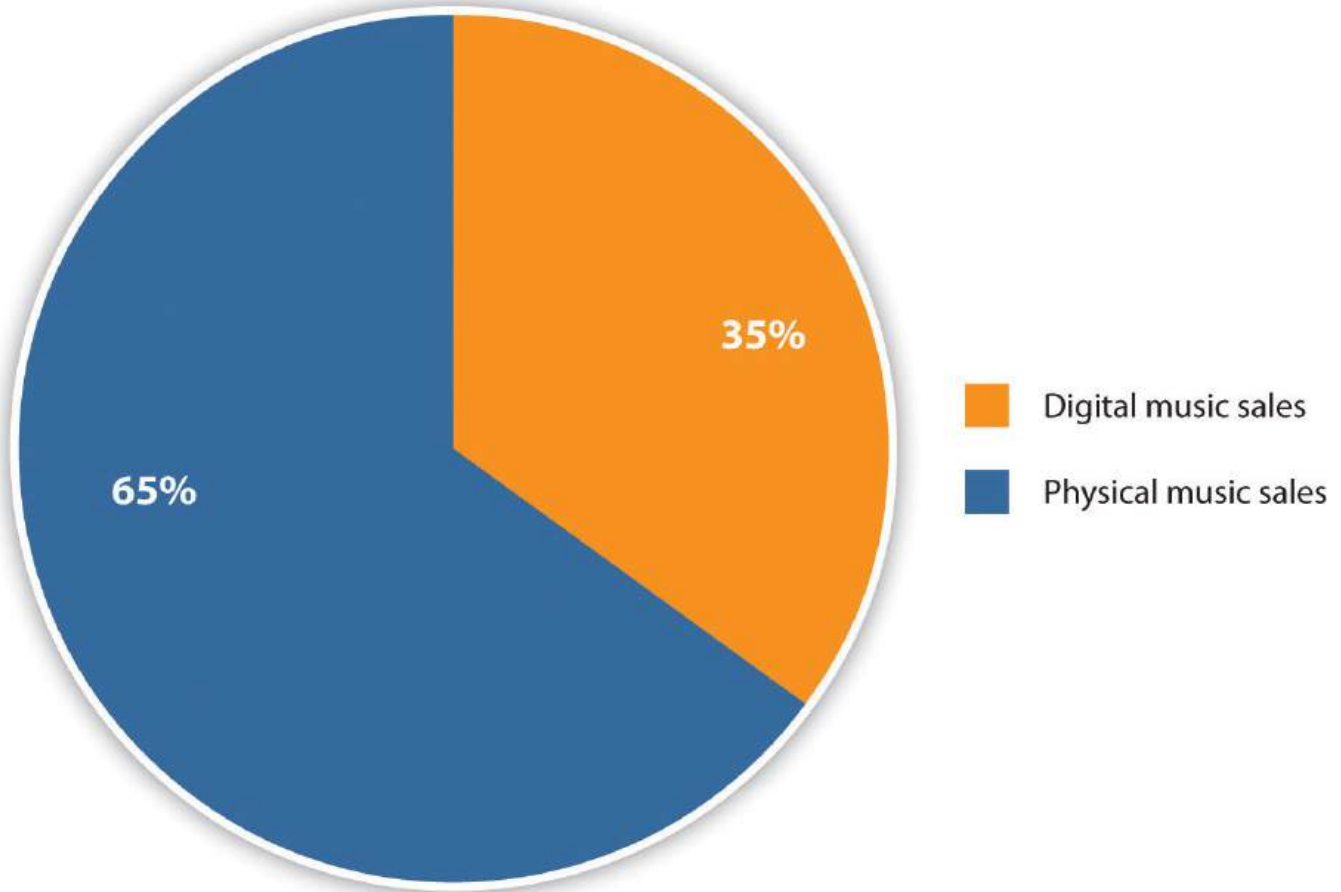
Figure 6.21

2008



-  Digital music sales
-  Physical music sales

2009 (first 6 months)



Digital Music Sales versus Physical Music Sales. Lee Graham, "Digital Music Increases Share of Overall Music Sales Volume in the U.S.," news release, NPD Group, August 18, 2009, http://www.npd.com/press/releases/press_090818.html.

To partially make up for lost sales, the music industry has been generating revenue through licensing fees, including fees for ringtones, music played on Internet radio stations such as MySpace Music and Pandora, and music videos on the YouTube video-sharing website that is owned by Google. In 2009, digital licensing revenue reached \$84 million and continues to grow. David Goldman, "Music's Lost Decade: Sales Cut in Half," *CNN*, February 3, 2010, http://money.cnn.com/2010/02/02/news/companies/napster_music_industry/index.htm. Meanwhile, recording artists are focusing their attention on live performances and merchandise, which have become their main source of revenue. Demand for concert tickets rose at least 7 percent in 2008 to \$4.2 billion, according to touring industry trade magazine *Pollstar*. Ben Sisario, "Music Sales Fell in 2008, but Climbed on the Web," *New York Times*, December 31, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/01/arts/music/01indu.html>.

Utilizing the Internet: A New Level of Indie





Figure 6.22



Artists such as Nine Inch Nails and Radiohead are abandoning the traditional music industry model in favor of marketing their songs directly to fans.

Over the past few years, the Internet has begun to level the proverbial playing field between major and independent record labels. Exemplifying how smaller indie labels are able to latch on to trends more quickly than the Big Four, indies have embraced new technology, including blogging, online video sites, and online social networking sites, as a means of promoting their music, while

the major labels have fallen behind the curve. With social networking sites enabling artists to communicate directly with their fans, the need for extensive financial backing or an industry middleman is all but eliminated. Now, artists can upload their music onto a social networking site for free and generate record sales purely through word of mouth.

Although a few indie artists have become household names entirely through the buzz generated on social networking sites, many others find that they need some guidance. The direct-to-fan business model has created opportunities for web-based companies such as Nimbit and ReverbNation, which provide software that enables independent artists and record labels to market their music online, keep track of sales, create demand for their music, and communicate with fans. The companies offer social networking applications that enable fans to purchase music directly from the artists rather than being redirected to a third-party website. Other advantages for bands include automatic updates to fans across a variety of networking sites, digital distribution through the iTunes appliance program and other stores, and real-time sales updates.

Many established artists have also embraced the direct-to-fan business model. In 2007, Nine Inch Nails frontman Trent Reznor announced that the band was splitting from its contractual obligations to Universal Music Group to distribute its next albums independently. Well known for his vocal distaste of major record labels and their profiteering, Reznor encouraged fans in Australia to steal his album *Year Zero* because he believed it was priced too highly there. “Trent Reznor Blasts Label,” *SPIN*, May 15, 2007, <http://www.spin.com/articles/trent-reznor-blasts-label>. Commenting on the state of the music industry in a 2007 interview he said, “I’ve got a battle where I’m trying to put out quality material that matters and I’ve got fans that feel it’s their right to steal it and I’ve got a company that’s so bureaucratic and clumsy and ignorant and behind the times they don’t know what to do, so they rip the people off.” Neala Johnson, “Q & A with Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails,” *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), May 17, 2007, <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/entertainment/music/q-a-with-trent-reznor-of-nine-inch-nails/story-e6frf9hf-1111113550202>.

Following the band’s split with Universal, they released studio album *The Slip* as a free digital download in 2008. Reznor stated, “[t]his one’s on me,” on his website, thanking fans for their loyalty. The album was downloaded 1.4 million times within the first 6 weeks of its release. F. Daniel Kent, “The Upward Spiral of Trent Reznor,” *Dishmag*, April 2011, <http://dishmag.com/issue120/music-film/13777/the-upward-spiral-of-trent-reznor/>. A similar technique used by tech-savvy alternative band Radiohead reaped even higher rewards in 2007, when its retail release of *In Rainbows* entered the album chart at No. 1 even though the digital version had been offered online at a price of the customer’s choosing several months earlier (see Chapter 11 for more information about Radiohead’s *In Rainbows* release). Lars Brandle, “‘In Rainbows’ Looms for U.K. No. 1,” *Billboard*, January 2, 2008, <http://www.billboard.com/news/in-rainbows-looms-for-u-k-no-1-1003690356.story#/news/in-rainbows-looms-for-u-k-no-1-1003690356.story>. The web-based direct release model allows bands such as Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails to obtain vital information about their fan bases—including email addresses—that they can use for future promotions. Whether or not the practice proves to be a passing fad, the traditional music industry model is shifting as new technology makes it easier for artists to communicate directly with their fans.

Key Takeaways

- The introduction of digital music technology and peer-to-peer file sharing in 1999 changed the nature of the music industry. Websites, such as the Napster service, which enabled users to share free music, negatively impacted CD sales. Although the RIAA successfully shut down Napster, other sites emerged throughout the early 2000s, such as the Gnutella network and the Kazaa service. Rather than figuring out a way to make money from digital music, the recording industry focused its efforts on bringing lawsuits against illegal downloaders. By the time iTunes and other fee-based music sites became available, irreversible damage had been done to the industry’s sales figures.
- Apple’s iTunes Store is the dominant digital music retailer in the United States, commanding almost 70 percent of the digital music market. The boom in digital music sales has affected the music industry in several ways: It has changed the way that profits are distributed among recording artists and labels, it has caused a massive decline in CD sales, and it has prompted industry executives to seek profits elsewhere (for example, through licensing fees).
- The Internet has proved advantageous for smaller indie labels that take advantage of blogging, social networking sites, and video websites as a means to promote their music. Companies such as Nimbit and ReverbNation are replacing some of the functions performed by major record labels, enabling artists to promote and distribute their own music directly to fans. Established bands such as Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails have separated from major labels and used the Internet to successfully distribute their music at little or no cost to fans. The ready availability and low cost of this new technology is changing the music industry, and the Big Four companies may need to adapt traditional business models to return to profit.

? Exercise 6.5.1

Visit the Apple website (<http://www.apple.com/>) and compare its digital music services and products with those of its nearest competitors. For music, look at Amazon (<http://www.amazon.com/>), Yahoo! Music (new.music.yahoo.com/), and Napster (<http://www.napster.com/>). How do the prices and experiences differ? For MP3 players, look at Sony (<http://www.sony.com/>), Philips (<http://www.usa.philips.com/>), and RCA (www.rca.com).

- How do the various MP3 players differ?
- After comparing Apple to its competitors, why do you think Apple commands a larger share of the digital music market?
- Conduct a survey among your peers to research consumer opinions. How have these sites been influenced by digital music sales?

? End-of-Chapter Assessment

Review Questions

1. Questions for Section 6.1

1. How did Tin Pan Alley influence the development of popular music, and how did the music that came out of Tin Pan Alley differ from classical music?
2. What are some of the technological developments that influenced the growth of popular music, and how did they assist its progress?
3. What genres of music developed throughout the 20th century? What musical elements characterize each genre?

2. Questions for Section 6.2

1. What cultural factors influenced the popular music industry in the 20th century?
2. How did music influence culture in the 20th century? How are music and culture interrelated?

3. Questions for Section 6.3

1. What are the Big Four record labels? In what ways do they influence the music industry?
2. What are the main differences between major labels and indie labels? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
3. What three steps are involved in the music production process? What factors are currently affecting the ways in which music is produced and distributed?

4. Questions for Section 6.4

1. How did peer-to-peer sharing networks affect the music business when they were first introduced? How did digital music progress from users downloading music illegally to purchasing from online music stores?
2. What are some of the impacts that digital music has had on the industry? How are industry executives responding to these impacts?
3. What is the direct-to-fan business model, and how has new technology enabled its progression?

? Critical Thinking Questions

1. Does music primarily reflect or influence cultural and social change?
2. How did the major record labels' reaction to peer-to-peer file sharing place them at a strategic disadvantage in the music industry?
3. What are the potential implications of the direct-to-fan business model for the future of the music industry?
4. Music critics frequently proclaim the "death of rock and roll." How might the corporate influence of the Big Four over the modern music industry be related to these claims?
5. How have social and political factors influenced musical tastes throughout the past century?

Career Connection

Although many traditional music industry careers are in decline as a result of poor CD sales and the impact of new technology, changes within the industry have created new opportunities. As artists turn away from recorded music and focus on live performances, demand for concert tickets continues to rise. One possible career path in the music industry is that of a concert promoter. Read about the demands and expectations of a concert promoter at <http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/concert-tour2.htm>. Once you have familiarized yourself with the material, read about the personal experiences of concert promoter David Werlin at <http://www.bankrate.com/brn/news/advice/19990701a.asp> and answer the following questions:

1. What advantages and disadvantages does Werlin give for working for a big promotion company versus working for a small organization?
2. How do both the HowStuffWorks website and Werlin's experiences emphasize the need for flexibility when working as a concert promoter?
3. As with many careers, working as a concert promoter usually involves starting at the bottom and working your way to the top. Think about how you might promote an event on your college campus or in your neighborhood. Use the tips from both websites to make a list of things you would need to consider to prepare for the event.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Radio

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7.1: Introduction

Terrestrial Radio Stumbles Into the Digital Age



Figure 7.1

In 1983, radio station WOXY's new owners bought the station and changed its format from Top 40 to the up-and-coming alternative rock format, kicking off with U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday." WOXY, "The History of WOXY," 2009, woxy.com/about/. Then located in the basement of a fast-food restaurant in Ohio, the station was a risk for its purchasers, a husband and wife team who took a chance by changing the format to a relatively new one. Their investment paid off with the success of their station. By 1990, WOXY had grown in prestige to become one of *Rolling Stone* magazine's top 15 radio stations in the country and had even been made famous by a reference in the 1988 film *Rain Man*. Lauren Bishop, "97X Farewell," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 10, 2004, http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2004/05/10/tem_tem1a.html. In 1998, the station launched a web cast and developed a national following, ranking 12th among Internet broadcasters for listenership in 2004. Lauren Bishop, "97X Farewell," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 10, 2004, http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2004/05/10/tem_tem1a.html.

When the station's owners decided to retire and sell the frequency allocation in 2004, they hoped to find investors to continue the online streaming version of the station. After several months of unsuccessful searching, however, the station went off the air entirely—only to find a last-minute investor willing to fund an Internet version of the station. WOXY, "The History of WOXY," 2009, woxy.com/about/.

The online version of the station struggled to make ends meet until it was purchased by the online music firm Lala. Jacqui Cheng, "Bad Luck, Funding Issues Shutter Indie Station WOXY.com," *Ars Technica* (blog), March 23, 2010, <http://arstechnica.com/media/news/2010/03/bad-luck-funding-issues-shutter-indie-station-woxycom.ars>. The now-defunct Lala sold WOXY to music company Future Sounds Inc., which moved the station and staff from Ohio to Austin, Texas. In March 2010, citing "current economic realities and the lack of ongoing funding," WOXY.com went off the air with only a day's notice. Jacqui Cheng, "Bad Luck, Funding Issues Shutter Indie Station WOXY.com," *Ars Technica* (blog), March 23, 2010, <http://arstechnica.com/media/news/2010/03/bad-luck-funding-issues-shutter-indie-station-woxycom.ars>.

Taken in the context of the modern Internet revolution and the subsequent faltering of institutions such as newspapers and book publishers, the rise and fall of WOXY may seem to bode ill for the general fate of radio. However, taken in the larger context of radio's history, this story of the Internet's effect on radio could prove to be merely another leap in a long line of radio revolutions. From the shutting down of all broadcasts during World War I to the eclipse of radio by television during the 1950s, many arbiters of culture and business have prophesied the demise of radio for decades. Yet this chapter will show how the inherent flexibility and intimacy of the medium has allowed it to adapt to new market trends and to continue to have relevance as a form of mass communication.

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7.2: Evolution of Radio Broadcasting

Learning Objectives

- Identify the major technological changes in radio as a medium since its inception.
- Explain the defining characteristics of radio's Golden Age.
- Describe the effects of networks and conglomerates on radio programming and culture.

At its most basic level, radio is communication through the use of radio waves. This includes radio used for person-to-person communication as well as radio used for mass communication. Both of these functions are still practiced today. Although most people associate the term *radio* with radio stations that broadcast to the general public, radio wave technology is used in everything from television to cell phones, making it a primary conduit for person-to-person communication.

The Invention of Radio

Guglielmo Marconi is often credited as the inventor of radio. As a young man living in Italy, Marconi read a biography of Hienrich Hertz, who had written and experimented with early forms of wireless transmission. Marconi then duplicated Hertz's experiments in his own home, successfully sending transmissions from one side of his attic to the other. "Guglielmo Marconi," *American Experience: People & Events*, www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rescue/peopleevents/pandeAMEX98.html. He saw the potential for the technology and approached the Italian government for support. When the government showed no interest in his ideas, Marconi moved to England and took out a patent on his device. Rather than inventing radio from scratch, however, Marconi essentially combined the ideas and experiments of other people to make them into a useful communications tool. Lewis Coe, *Wireless Radio: A Brief History* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 1996), 4–10.



Figure 7.2: Guglielmo Marconi developed an early version of the wireless radio.

In fact, long-distance electronic communication has existed since the middle of the 19th century. The telegraph communicated messages through a series of long and short clicks. Cables across the Atlantic Ocean connected even the far-distant United States and England using this technology. By the 1870s, telegraph technology had been used to develop the telephone, which could transmit an individual's voice over the same cables used by its predecessor.

When Marconi popularized wireless technology, contemporaries initially viewed it as a way to allow the telegraph to function in places that could not be connected by cables. Early radios acted as devices for naval ships to communicate with other ships and with land stations; the focus was on person-to-person communication. However, the potential for broadcasting—sending messages to a large group of potential listeners—wasn't realized until later in the development of the medium.

Broadcasting Arrives

The technology needed to build a radio transmitter and receiver was relatively simple, and the knowledge to build such devices soon reached the public. Amateur radio operators quickly crowded the airwaves, broadcasting messages to anyone within range and, by 1912, incurred government regulatory measures that required licenses and limited broadcast ranges for radio operation. Thomas White, “Pioneering Amateurs (1900–1917),” *United States Early Radio History*, earlyradiohistory.us/sec012.htm. This regulation also gave the president the power to shut down all stations, a power notably exercised in 1917 upon the United States’ entry into World War I to keep amateur radio operators from interfering with military use of radio waves for the duration of the war. Thomas White, “Pioneering Amateurs (1900–1917),” *United States Early Radio History*, earlyradiohistory.us/sec012.htm.

Wireless technology made radio as it is known today possible, but its modern, practical function as a mass communication medium had been the domain of other technologies for some time. As early as the 1880s, people relied on telephones to transmit news, music, church sermons, and weather reports. In Budapest, Hungary, for example, a subscription service allowed individuals to listen to news reports and fictional stories on their telephones. White, “News and Entertainment by Telephone (1876–1925),” *United States Early Radio History*, earlyradiohistory.us/sec003.htm. Around this time, telephones also transmitted opera performances from Paris to London. In 1909, this innovation emerged in the United States as a pay-per-play phonograph service in Wilmington, Delaware. White, “News and Entertainment by Telephone (1876–1925),” *United States Early Radio History*, earlyradiohistory.us/sec003.htm. This service allowed subscribers to listen to specific music recordings on their telephones. White, “News and Entertainment by Telephone (1876–1925),” *United States Early Radio History*, earlyradiohistory.us/sec003.htm.

In 1906, Massachusetts resident Reginald Fessenden initiated the first radio transmission of the human voice, but his efforts did not develop into a useful application. John Grant, *Experiments and Results in Wireless Telegraphy* (reprinted from *The American Telephone Journal*, 49–51, January 26, 1907), earlyradiohistory.us/1907fes.htm. Ten years later, Lee de Forest used radio in a more modern sense when he set up an experimental radio station, 2XG, in New York City. De Forest gave nightly broadcasts of music and news until World War I halted all transmissions for private citizens. White, “Pre-War Vacuum Tube Transmitter Development 1914–1917,” *United States Early Radio History*, earlyradiohistory.us/sec011.htm.

Radio’s Commercial Potential

After the World War I radio ban lifted with the close of the conflict in 1919, a number of small stations began operating using technologies that had developed during the war. Many of these stations developed regular programming that included religious sermons, sports, and news. White, “Broadcasting After World War I (1919–1921),” *United States Early Radio History*, earlyradiohistory.us/sec016.htm. As early as 1922, Schenectady, New York’s WGY broadcast over 40 original dramas, showing radio’s potential as a medium for drama. The WGY players created their own scripts and performed them live on air. This same groundbreaking group also made the first known attempt at television drama in 1928. Elizabeth McLeod, “The WGY Players and the Birth of Radio Drama,” 1998, www.midcoast.com/~lizmcl/wgy.html.

Businesses such as department stores, which often had their own stations, first put radio’s commercial applications to use. However, these stations did not advertise in a way that the modern radio listener would recognize. Early radio advertisements consisted only of a “genteel sales message broadcast during ‘business’ (daytime) hours, with no hard sell or mention of price.” Christopher Sterling and John Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 124. In fact, radio advertising was originally considered an unprecedented invasion of privacy, because—unlike newspapers, which were bought at a newsstand—radios were present in the home and spoke with a voice in the presence of the whole family. Christopher Sterling and John Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 124. However, the social impact of radio was such that within a few years advertising was readily accepted on radio programs. Advertising agencies even began producing their own radio programs named after their products. At first, ads ran only during the day, but as economic pressure mounted during the Great Depression in the 1930s, local stations began looking for new sources of revenue, and advertising became a normal part of the radio soundscape. Christopher Sterling and John Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 124.

The Rise of Radio Networks

Not long after radio’s broadcast debut, large businesses saw its potential profitability and formed networks. In 1926, RCA started the National Broadcasting Network (NBC). Groups of stations that carried syndicated network programs along with a variety of local shows soon formed its Red and Blue networks. Two years after the creation of NBC, the United Independent Broadcasters

became the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and began competing with the existing Red and Blue networks. Christopher Sterling and John Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 117–119.

Although early network programming focused mainly on music, it soon developed to include other programs. Among these early innovations was the variety show. This format generally featured several different performers introduced by a host who segued between acts. Variety shows included styles as diverse as jazz and early country music. At night, dramas and comedies such as *Amos 'n' Andy*, *The Lone Ranger*, and *Fibber McGee and Molly* filled the airwaves. News, educational programs, and other types of talk programs also rose to prominence during the 1930s. Christopher Sterling and John Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 128–138.

The Radio Act of 1927

In the mid-1920s, profit-seeking companies such as department stores and newspapers owned a majority of the nation's broadcast radio stations, which promoted their owners' businesses. "Radio's Emergence," *Oracle ThinkQuest: The 1920s*, library.thinkquest.org/27629/themes/media/md20s.html. Nonprofit groups such as churches and schools operated another third of the stations. As the number of radio stations outgrew the available frequencies, interference became problematic, and the government stepped into the fray.

The Radio Act of 1927 established the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) to oversee regulation of the airwaves. A year after its creation, the FRC reallocated station bandwidths to correct interference problems. The organization reserved 40 high-powered channels, setting aside 37 of these for network affiliates. The remaining 600 lower-powered bandwidths went to stations that had to share the frequencies; this meant that as one station went off the air at a designated time, another one began broadcasting in its place. The Radio Act of 1927 allowed major networks such as CBS and NBC to gain a 70 percent share of U.S. broadcasting by the early 1930s, earning them \$72 million in profits by 1934. Robert W. McChesney, "Media and Democracy: The Emergence of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States, 1927–1935," in "Communication in History: The Key to Understanding," *OAH Magazine of History* 6, no. 4 (1992). At the same time, nonprofit broadcasting fell to only 2 percent of the market. Robert W. McChesney, "Media and Democracy: The Emergence of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States, 1927–1935," in "Communication in History: The Key to Understanding," *OAH Magazine of History* 6, no. 4 (1992).

In protest of the favor that the 1927 Radio Act showed toward commercial broadcasting, struggling nonprofit radio broadcasters created the National Committee on Education by Radio to lobby for more outlets. Basing their argument on the notion that the airwaves—unlike newspapers—were a public resource, they asserted that groups working for the public good should take precedence over commercial interests. Nevertheless, the Communications Act of 1934 passed without addressing these issues, and radio continued as a mainly commercial enterprise. Robert W. McChesney, "Media and Democracy: The Emergence of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States, 1927–1935," in "Communication in History: The Key to Understanding," *OAH Magazine of History* 6, no. 4 (1992).

The Golden Age of Radio

The so-called Golden Age of Radio occurred between 1930 and the mid-1950s. Because many associate the 1930s with the struggles of the Great Depression, it may seem contradictory that such a fruitful cultural occurrence arose during this decade. However, radio lent itself to the era. After the initial purchase of a receiver, radio was free and so provided an inexpensive source of entertainment that replaced other, more costly pastimes, such as going to the movies.

Radio also presented an easily accessible form of media that existed on its own schedule. Unlike reading newspapers or books, tuning in to a favorite program at a certain time became a part of listeners' daily routine because it effectively forced them to plan their lives around the dial.

Daytime Radio Finds Its Market

During the Great Depression, radio became so successful that another network, the Mutual Broadcasting Network, began in 1934 to compete with NBC's Red and Blue networks and the CBS network, creating a total of four national networks. Sean Cashman, *America in the Twenties and Thirties: The Olympian Age of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 328. As the networks became more adept at generating profits, their broadcast selections began to take on a format that later evolved into modern television programming. Serial dramas and programs that focused on domestic work aired during the day when many women were at home. Advertisers targeted this demographic with commercials for domestic needs such as soap. "Soap Opera," *The Museum of Broadcast Communications*, www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=soapopera. Because they were

often sponsored by soap companies, daytime serial dramas soon became known as *soap operas*. Some modern televised soap operas, such as *Guiding Light*, which ended in 2009, actually began in the 1930s as radio serials. Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting 1922–1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 157.

The Origins of Prime Time

During the evening, many families listened to the radio together, much as modern families may gather for television's prime time. Popular evening comedy variety shows such as George Burns and Gracie Allen's *Burns and Allen*, the *Jack Benny Show*, and the *Bob Hope Show* all began during the 1930s. These shows featured a central host—for whom the show was often named—and a series of sketch comedies, interviews, and musical performances, not unlike contemporary programs such as *Saturday Night Live*. Performed live before a studio audience, the programs thrived on a certain flair and spontaneity. Later in the evening, so-called prestige dramas such as *Lux Radio Theater* and *Mercury Theatre on the Air* aired. These shows featured major Hollywood actors recreating movies or acting out adaptations of literature. Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting 1922–1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 183–185.



Figure 7.3: Many prime-time radio broadcasts featured film stars recreating famous films over the air.

Instant News

By the late 1930s, the popularity of radio news broadcasts had surpassed that of newspapers. Radio's ability to emotionally draw its audiences in close to events made for news that evoked stronger responses and, thus, greater interest than print news could. For example, the infant son of famed aviator Charles Lindbergh was kidnapped and murdered in 1932. Radio networks set up mobile stations that covered events as they unfolded, broadcasting nonstop for several days and keeping listeners updated on every detail while tying them emotionally to the outcome. Robert Brown, *Manipulating the Ether: The Power of Broadcast Radio in Thirties America* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 1998), 134–137.

As recording technology advanced, reporters gained the ability to record events in the field and bring them back to the studio to broadcast over the airwaves. One early example of this was Herb Morrison's recording of the *Hindenburg* disaster. In 1937, the *Hindenburg* blimp exploded into flames while attempting to land, killing 37 of its passengers. Morrison was already on the scene to record the descent, capturing the fateful crash. The entire event was later broadcast, including the sound of the exploding blimp, providing listeners with an unprecedented emotional connection to a national disaster. Morrison's exclamation "Oh, the humanity!" became a common phrase of despair after the event. Robert Brown, *Manipulating the Ether: The Power of Broadcast Radio in Thirties America* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 1998), 141–142.

Radio news became even more important during World War II, when programs such as Norman Corwin's *This Is War!* sought to bring more sober news stories to a radio dial dominated by entertainment. The program dealt with the realities of war in a somber manner; at the beginning of the program, the host declared, "No one is invited to sit down and take it easy. Later, later, there's a war on." Gerd Horten, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 48–52. In 1940, Edward R. Murrow, a journalist working in England at the time, broadcast firsthand accounts of the German bombing of London, giving Americans a sense of the trauma and terror that the English were experiencing at the outset of the war. Gerd Horten, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II* (Los Angeles:

University of California Press, 2002), 36. Radio news outlets were the first to broadcast the attack on Pearl Harbor that propelled the United States into World War II in 1941. By 1945, radio news had become so efficient and pervasive that when Roosevelt died, only his wife, his children, and Vice President Harry S. Truman were aware of it before the news was broadcast over the public airwaves. Robert Brown, *Manipulating the Ether: The Power of Broadcast Radio in Thirties America* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 1998), 123.

The Birth of the Federal Communications Commission

The Communications Act of 1934 created the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and ushered in a new era of government regulation. The organization quickly began enacting influential radio decisions. Among these was the 1938 decision to limit stations to 50,000 watts of broadcasting power, a ceiling that remains in effect today. Sean Cashman, *America in the Twenties and Thirties: The Olympian Age of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 327. As a result of FCC antimonopoly rulings, RCA was forced to sell its NBC Blue network; this spun-off division became the American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in 1943. Susan Brinson, *The Red Scare, Politics, and the Federal Communications Commission, 1941–1960* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 42.

Another significant regulation with long-lasting influence was the Fairness Doctrine. In 1949, the FCC established the Fairness Doctrine as a rule stating that if broadcasters editorialized in favor of a position on a particular issue, they had to give equal time to all other reasonable positions on that issue. Ray Browne and Glenn Browne, *Laws of Our Fathers: Popular Culture and the U.S. Constitution* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1986), 132. This tenet came from the long-held notion that the airwaves were a public resource and that they should thus serve the public in some way. Although the regulation remained in effect until 1987, the impact of its core concepts are still debated. This chapter will explore the Fairness Doctrine and its impact in greater detail in a later section.

Radio on the Margins

Despite the networks' hold on programming, educational stations persisted at universities and in some municipalities. They broadcast programs such as the *School of the Air* and *College of the Air* as well as roundtable and town hall forums. In 1940, the FCC reserved a set of frequencies in the lower range of the FM radio spectrum for public education purposes as part of its regulation of the new spectrum. The reservation of FM frequencies gave educational stations a boost, but FM proved initially unpopular due to a setback in 1945, when the FCC moved the FM bandwidth to a higher set of frequencies, ostensibly to avoid problems with interference. Lawrence D. Longley, "The FM Shift in 1945," *Journal of Broadcasting* 12, no. 4 (1968): 353–365. This change required the purchase of new equipment by both consumers and radio stations, thus greatly slowing the widespread adoption of FM radio.

One enduring anomaly in the field of educational stations has been the Pacifica Radio network. Begun in 1949 to counteract the effects of commercial radio by bringing educational programs and dialogue to the airwaves, Pacifica has grown from a single station—Berkeley, California's KPFA—to a network of five stations and more than 100 affiliates. "Pacifica Network Stations," *The Pacifica Foundation*, pacificanetwork.org/radio/content/section/7/42/. From the outset, Pacifica aired newer classical, jazz, and folk music along with lectures, discussions, and interviews with public artists and intellectuals. Among Pacifica's major innovations was its refusal to take money from commercial advertisers, relying instead on donations from listeners and grants from institutions such as the Ford Foundation and calling itself listener-supported. Jack Mitchell, *Listener Supported: The Culture and History of Public Radio* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 21–24.

Another important innovation on the fringes of the radio dial during this time was the growth of border stations. Located just across the Mexican border, these stations did not have to follow FCC or U.S. regulatory laws. Because the stations broadcast at 250,000 watts and higher, their listening range covered much of North America. Their content also diverged—at the time markedly—from that of U.S. stations. For example, Dr. John Brinkley started station XERF in Del Rio, Mexico, after being forced to shut down his station in Nebraska, and he used the border station in part to promote a dubious goat gland operation that supposedly cured sexual impotence. Mike Dash, "John Brinkley, the goat-gland quack," *The Telegraph*, April 18, 2008, www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non_fictionreviews/3671561/John-Brinkley-the-goat-gland-quack.html. Besides the goat gland promotion, the station and others like it often carried music, like country and western, that could not be heard on regular network radio. Later border station disc jockeys, such as Wolfman Jack, were instrumental in bringing rock and roll music to a wider audience. Anthony Rudel, *Hello, Everybody! The Dawn of American Radio* (Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008), 130–132.

Television Steals the Show

A great deal of radio's success as a medium during the 1920s and 1930s was due to the fact that no other medium could replicate it. This changed in the late 1940s and early 1950s as television became popular. A 1949 poll of people who had seen television found that almost half of them believed that radio was doomed. George Gallup, "One-Fourth in Poll Think Television Killing Radio," *Schenectady (NY) Gazette*, June 8, 1949, news.google.com/newspapers?id=d3YuAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=loEFAAAAIAIBAJ&pg=840,1029432&dq=radio-is-doomed&hl=en. Television sets had come on the market by the late 1940s, and by 1951, more Americans were watching television during prime time than ever. Becky Bradley, "American Cultural History: 1950–1959," *Lone Star College, Kingwood*, kclibrary.lonestar.edu/decade50.html. Famous radio programs such as *The Bob Hope Show* were made into television shows, further diminishing radio's unique offerings. Jim Cox, *American Radio Networks: A History* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 2009), 171–175.

Surprisingly, some of radio's most critically lauded dramas launched during this period. *Gunsmoke*, an adult-oriented Western show (that later become television's longest-running show) began in 1952; crime drama *Dragnet*, later made famous in both television and film, broadcast between 1949 and 1957; and *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* aired from 1949 to 1962, when CBS canceled its remaining radio dramas. However, these respected radio dramas were the last of their kind. Jim Cox, *Say Goodnight, Gracie: The Last Years of Network Radio* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 2002), 39–41. Although radio was far from doomed by television, its Golden Age was.

Transition to Top 40

As radio networks abandoned the dramas and variety shows that had previously sustained their formats, the soundscape was left to what radio could still do better than any other mass medium: play music. With advertising dollars down and the emergence of better recording formats, it made good business sense for radio to focus on shows that played prerecorded music. As strictly music stations began to rise, new innovations to increase their profitability appeared. One of the most notable and far-reaching of these innovations was the Top 40 station, a concept that supposedly came from watching jukebox patrons continually play the same songs. Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey*, (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 48. Robert Storz and Gordon McLendon began adapting existing radio stations to fit this new format with great success. In 1956, the creation of limited playlists further refined the format by providing about 50 songs that disc jockeys played repeatedly every day. By the early 1960s, many stations had developed limited playlists of only 30 songs. Jesse Walker, *Rebels on the Air: An Alternative History of Radio in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 56.

Another musically fruitful innovation came with the increase of black disc jockeys and programs created for black audiences. Because its advertisers had nowhere to go in a media market dominated by white performers, black radio became more common on the AM dial. As traditional programming left radio, disc jockeys began to develop as the medium's new personalities, talking more in between songs and developing followings. Early black disc jockeys even began improvising rhymes over top of the music, pioneering techniques that later became rap and hip-hop. This new personality-driven style helped bring early rock and roll to new audiences. Jesse Walker, *Rebels on the Air: An Alternative History of Radio in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 54–55.

FM: The High-Fidelity Counterculture

As music came to rule the airwaves, FM radio drew in new listeners because of its high-fidelity sound capabilities. When radio had primarily featured dramas and other talk-oriented formats, sound quality had simply not mattered to many people, and the purchase of an FM receiver did not compete with the purchase of a new television in terms of entertainment value. As FM receivers decreased in price and stereo recording technology became more popular, however, the high-fidelity trend created a market for FM stations. Mostly affluent consumers began purchasing component stereos with the goal of getting the highest sound quality possible out of their recordings. Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 266–268. Although this audience often preferred classical and jazz stations to Top 40 radio, they were tolerant of new music and ideas. Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 266–268.

Both the high-fidelity market and the growing youth counterculture of the 1960s had similar goals for the FM spectrum. Both groups eschewed AM radio because of the predictable programming, poor sound quality, and over-commercialization. Both groups wanted to treat music as an important experience rather than as just a trendy pastime or a means to make money. Many adherents to the youth counterculture of the 1960s came from affluent, middle-class families, and their tastes came to define a new era of

consumer culture. The goals and market potential of both the high-fidelity lovers and the youth counterculture created an atmosphere on the FM dial that had never before occurred. Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 276–277.

Between the years 1960 and 1966, the number of households capable of receiving FM transmissions grew from about 6.5 million to some 40 million. The FCC also aided FM by issuing its nonduplication ruling in 1964. Before this regulation, many AM stations had other stations on the FM spectrum that simply duplicated the AM programming. The nonduplication rule forced FM stations to create their own fresh programming, opening up the spectrum for established networks to develop new stations. Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 267.

The late 1960s saw new disc jockeys taking greater liberties with established practices; these liberties included playing several songs in a row before going to a commercial break or airing album tracks that exceeded 10 minutes in length. University stations and other nonprofit ventures to which the FCC had given frequencies during the late 1940s popularized this format, and, in time, commercial stations tried to duplicate their success by playing fewer commercials and by allowing their disc jockeys to have a say in their playlists. Although this made for popular listening formats, FM stations struggled to make the kinds of profits that the AM spectrum drew. Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 270.

In 1974, FM radio accounted for one-third of all radio listening but only 14 percent of radio profits. Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 270. Large network stations and advertisers began to market heavily to the FM audience in an attempt to correct this imbalance. Stations began tightening their playlists and narrowing their formats to please advertisers and to generate greater revenues. By the end of the 1970s, radio stations were beginning to play specific formats, and the progressive radio of the previous decade had become difficult to find. Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 275–278.

The Rise of Public Radio

After the Golden Age of Radio came to an end, most listeners tuned in to radio stations to hear music. The variety shows and talk-based programs that had sustained radio in early years could no longer draw enough listeners to make them a successful business proposition. One divergent path from this general trend, however, was the growth of public radio.

Groups such as the Ford Foundation had funded public media sources during the early 1960s. When the foundation decided to withdraw its funding in the middle of the decade, the federal government stepped in with the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. This act created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and charged it with generating funding for public television and radio outlets. The CPB in turn created National Public Radio (NPR) in 1970 to provide programming for already-operating stations. Until 1982, in fact, the CPB entirely and exclusively funded NPR. Public radio's first program was *All Things Considered*, an evening news program that focused on analysis and interpretive reporting rather than cutting-edge coverage. In the mid-1970s, NPR attracted Washington-based journalists such as Cokie Roberts and Linda Wertheimer to its ranks, giving the coverage a more professional, hard-reporting edge. Sue Schardt, "Public Radio—A Short History," Christian Science Monitor Publishing Company, 1996, www.wsvh.org/pubradiohist.htm.

However, in 1983, public radio was pushed to the brink of financial collapse. NPR survived in part by relying more on its member stations to hold fundraising drives, now a vital component of public radio's business model. In 2003, Joan Kroc, the widow of McDonald's CEO and philanthropist Ray Kroc, bequeathed a grant of over \$200 million to NPR that may keep it afloat for many years to come.



Figure 7.4: *A Prairie Home Companion*, hosted by Garrison Keillor (pictured here), is a long-standing public radio tradition that harkens back to the early days of radio variety shows.

Having weathered the financial storm intact, NPR continued its progression as a respected news provider. During the first Gulf War, NPR sent out correspondents for the first time to provide in-depth coverage of unfolding events. Public radio's extensive coverage of the 2001 terrorist bombings gained its member stations many new listeners, and it has since expanded. Nick Clift, "Viewpoint: Protect NPR, It Protects Us," *Michigan Daily*, February 15, 2011, www.michigandaily.com/content/viewpoint-npr. Although some have accused NPR of presenting the news with a liberal bias, its listenership in 2005 was 28 percent conservative, 32 percent liberal, and 29 percent moderate. Newt Gingrich, a conservative Republican and former speaker of the house, has stated that the network is "a lot less on the left" than some may believe. Scott Sherman, "Good, Gray NPR," *The Nation*, May 23, 2005, 34–38. With more than 26 million weekly listeners and 860 member stations in 2009, NPR has become a leading radio news source. Anya Kamenetz, "Will NPR Save the News?" *Fast Company*, April 1, 2009, www.fastcompany.com/magazine/134/finely-tuned.html.

Public radio distributors such as Public Radio International (PRI) and local public radio stations such as WBEZ in Chicago have also created a number of cultural and entertainment programs, including quiz shows, cooking shows, and a host of local public forum programs. Storytelling programs such as *This American Life* have created a new kind of free-form radio documentary genre, while shows such as PRI's variety show *A Prairie Home Companion* have revived older radio genres. This variety of popular public radio programming has shifted radio from a music-dominated medium to one that is again exploring its vast potential.

Conglomerates

During the early 1990s, many radio stations suffered the effects of an economic recession. Some stations initiated Local Marketing Agreements (LMAs) to share facilities and resources amid this economic decline. LMAs led to consolidation in the industry as radio stations bought other stations to create new hubs for the same programming. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 further increased consolidation by eliminating a duopoly rule prohibiting dual station ownership in the same market and by lifting the numerical limits on station ownership by a single entity.

As large corporations such as Clear Channel Communications bought up stations around the country, they reformatted stations that had once competed against one another so that each focused on a different format. This practice led to mainstream radio's present state, in which narrow formats target highly specific demographic audiences.

Ultimately, although the industry consolidation of the 1990s made radio profitable, it reduced local coverage and diversity of programming. Because stations around the country served as outlets for a single network, the radio landscape became more uniform and predictable. Michael Keith, *The Radio Station: Broadcast, Satellite and Internet* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2010), 17–24. Much as with chain restaurants and stores, some people enjoy this type of predictability, while others prefer a more localized, unique experience. Michael Keith, *The Radio Station: Broadcast, Satellite and Internet* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2010), 17–24.

Key Takeaways

- The Golden Age of Radio covered the period between 1930 and 1950. It was characterized by radio's overwhelming popularity and a wide range of programming, including variety, music, drama, and theater programs.
- Top 40 radio arose after most nonmusic programming moved to television. This format used short playlists of popular hits and gained a great deal of commercial success during the 1950s and 1960s.
- FM became popular during the late 1960s and 1970s as commercial stations adopted the practices of free-form stations to appeal to new audiences who desired higher fidelity and a less restrictive format.
- Empowered by the Telecommunications Act of 1996, media conglomerates have subsumed unprecedented numbers of radio stations by single companies. Radio station consolidation brings predictability and profits at the expense of unique programming.

Exercise 7.2.1

Please respond to the following short-answer writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Explain the advantages that radio had over traditional print media during the 1930s and 1940s.
2. Do you think that radio could experience another golden age? Explain your answer.
3. How has the consolidation of radio stations affected radio programming?
4. Characterize the overall effects of one significant technological or social shift described in Section 7.1 on radio as a medium.

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7.3: Radio Station Formats

Learning Objectives

- Describe the use of radio station formats in the development of modern stations.
- Analyze the effects of formats on radio programming.

Early radio network programming laid the groundwork for television's format, with many different programs that appealed to a variety of people broadcast at different times of the day. As television's popularity grew, however, radio could not compete and so it turned to fresh programming techniques. A new type of format-driven station became the norm. Propelled by the development of new types of music such as psychedelic rock and smooth jazz, the evolution of radio station formats took place. Since the beginning of this shift, different stations have tended to focus on the music that certain demographics preferred. For example, many people raised on Top 40 radio of the 1950s and 1960s did not necessarily want to hear modern pop hits, so stations playing older popular songs emerged to meet their needs.

Modern formats take into account aging generations, with certain stations specifically playing the pop hits of the 1950s and early 1960s, and others focusing on the pop hits of the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. These formats have developed to target narrow, defined audiences with predictable tastes and habits. Ratings services such as Arbitron can identify the 10-year age demographic, the education level, and even the political leanings of listeners who prefer a particular format. Because advertisers want their commercials to reach an audience likely to buy their products, this kind of audience targeting is crucial for advertising revenue.

Top Radio Formats

The following top radio formats and their respective statistics were determined by an Arbitron survey that was released in 2010. Arbitron Inc., *Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio*, 2010. The most popular formats and subformats cover a wide range of demographics, revealing radio's wide appeal.

Country

Country music as a format includes stations devoted both to older and newer country music. In 2010, the country music format stood as the most popular radio format, beating out even such prominent nonmusic formats as news and talk. The format commanded the greatest listener share and the second largest number of stations dedicated to the style. Favored in rural regions of the country, the country music format—featuring artists like Keith Urban, the Dixie Chicks, and Tim McGraw—appeals to both male and female listeners from a variety of income levels. Arbitron Inc., *Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio*, 2010, 15–18.

News/Talk/Information

The news/talk/information format includes AM talk radio, public radio stations with talk programming, network news radio, sports radio, and personality talk radio. This format reached nearly 59 million listeners in 2010, appealing particularly to those aged 65 and older; over 70 percent of its listeners had attended college. These listeners also ranked the highest among formats in levels of home ownership. Arbitron Inc., *Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio*, 2010, 19–22.

Adult Contemporary

Generally targeted toward individuals over 30, the adult contemporary (AC) format favors pop music from the last 15 to 20 years as opposed to current hits. Different subformats, such as hot AC and modern AC, target younger audiences by playing songs that are more current. In 2010, the majority of AC audience were affluent, married individuals divided roughly along the national average politically. Adult contemporary listeners ranked highest by format in at-work listening. Hot AC, a subformat of AC that plays more current hits, ranked seventh in the nation. Urban AC, a version of AC that focuses on older R&B hits, ranked eighth in the nation in 2010. Arbitron Inc., *Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio*, 2010, 23–26.

Pop Contemporary Hit Radio

Pop contemporary hit radio, or pop CHR, is a subformat of contemporary hit radio (CHR). Other subformats of CHR include dance CHR and rhythmic CHR. Branded in the 1980s, this format encompasses stations that have a Top 40 orientation but draw on a wide number of formats, such as country, rock, and urban. John Ford, "Contemporary Hit Radio," September 2, 2008, http://radioindustry.suite101.com/article.cfm/contemporary_hit_radio_history. In 2010, pop CHR ranked first among teenaged

listeners, with 65 percent of its overall listeners aged under 35. This music, ranging from popular artists like Taylor Swift and Kanye West to Shakira, was played in the car more than at home or work and saw its largest listening times in the evenings. Rhythmic CHR, a subformat focusing on a mix of rhythmic pop, R&B, dance, and hip-hop hits, also ranked high in 2010. Arbitron Inc., *Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio*, 2010. 27–30.

Classic Rock

Classic rock stations generally play rock singles from the 1970s and 1980s, like “Stairway to Heaven,” by Led Zeppelin, and “You Shook Me All Night Long,” by AC/DC. Another distinct but similar format is album-oriented rock (AOR). This format focuses on songs that were not necessarily released as singles, also known as album cuts. “Rock and Alternative Music Formats,” *Radio Station World*, 1996–2010, radiostationworld.com/directory/Radio_Formats/radio_formats_rock.asp. In 2010, classic rock stations ranked fifth in listener figures. These individuals were overwhelmingly men (70 percent) between the ages of 35 and 54 (54 percent). Classic rock was most often listened to in the car and at work, with only 26 percent of its listeners tuning in at home. Arbitron Inc., *Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio*, 2010. 32–34.

Urban Contemporary

The urban contemporary format plays modern hits from mainly black artists—such as Lil Wayne, John Legend, and Ludacris—featuring a mix of soul, hip-hop, and R&B. In 2010, the format ranked eleventh in the nation. Urban contemporary focuses on listeners in the 18–34 age range. Arbitron Inc., *Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio*, 2010, 55–58.

Mexican Regional

The Mexican regional format is devoted to Spanish-language music, particularly Mexican and South American genres. In 2010, it ranked thirteenth in the nation and held the top spot in Los Angeles, a reflection of the rise in immigration from Mexico, Central America, and South America. Mexican regional’s listener base was over 96 percent Hispanic, and the format was most popular in the Western and Southwestern regions of the country. However, it was less popular in the Eastern regions of the country; in New England, for example, the format held a zero percent share of listening. The rise of the Mexican regional format illustrates the ways in which radio can change rapidly to meet new demographic trends. Arbitron Inc., *Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio*, 2010, 63–66.

An increasingly Spanish language–speaking population in the United States has also resulted in a number of distinct Spanish-language radio formats. These include Spanish oldies, Spanish adult hits, Spanish religious, Spanish tropical, and Spanish talk among others. Tejano, a type of music developed in Hispanic Texan communities, has also gained enough of an audience to become a dedicated format. Arbitron Inc., *Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio*, 2010, 13.

Other Popular Formats

Radio formats have become so specialized that ratings group Arbitron includes more than 50 designations. What was once simply called rock music has been divided into such subformats as alternative and modern rock. Alternative rock began as a format played on college stations during the 1980s but developed as a mainstream format during the following decade, thanks in part to the popular grunge music of that era. As this music aged, stations began using the term modern rock to describe a format dedicated to new rock music. This format has also spawned the active rock format, which plays modern rock hits with older rock hits thrown in. “Rock and Alternative Music Formats,” *Radio Station World*, 1996–2010, radiostationworld.com/directory/Radio_Formats/radio_formats_rock.asp.

Nostalgia formats have split into a number of different formats as well. Oldies stations now generally focus on hits from the 1950s and 1960s, while the classic hits format chooses from hits of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Urban oldies, which focuses on R&B, soul, and other urban music hits from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, has also become a popular radio format. Formats such as adult hits mix older songs from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s with a small selection of popular music, while formats such as ’80s hits picks mainly from the 1980s. “Oldies, Adult Hits, and Nostalgia Radio Formats,” *Radio Station World*, 1996–2010, radiostationworld.com/directory/radio_formats/radio_formats_oldies.asp.

Radio station formats are an interesting way to look at popular culture in the United States. The evolution of nostalgia formats to include new decades nods to the size and tastes of the nation’s aging listeners. Hits of the 1980s are popular enough with their demographic to have entire stations dedicated to them, while other generations prefer stations with a mix of decades. The rise of the country format and the continued popularity of the classic rock format are potential indicators of cultural trends.

Key Takeaways

- Radio station formats target demographics that can generate advertising revenue.
- Contemporary hit radio was developed as a Top 40 format that expanded beyond strictly pop music to include country, rock, and urban formats.
- Spanish-language formats have grown in recent years, with Mexican regional moving into the top 10 formats in 2008.
- Nostalgia genres have developed to reflect the tastes of aging listeners, ranging from mixes of music from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s with current hits to formats that pick strictly from the 1980s.

Exercise 7.3.1

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. What is the purpose of radio station formats?
2. How have radio station formats affected the way that modern stations play music?
3. Pick a format, such as country or classic rock, and speculate on the reasons for its popularity.

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7.4: Radio's Impact on Culture

Learning Objectives

- Analyze radio as a form of mass media.
- Describe the effects of radio on the spread of different types of music.
- Analyze the effects of the Fairness Doctrine on political radio.
- Formulate opinions on controversial issues in radio.

Since its inception, radio's impact on American culture has been immense. Modern popular culture is unthinkable without the early influence of radio. Entire genres of music that are now taken for granted, such as country and rock, owe their popularity and even existence to early radio programs that publicized new forms.

A New Kind of Mass Media

Mass media such as newspapers had been around for years before the existence of radio. In fact, radio was initially considered a kind of disembodied newspaper. Although this idea gave early proponents a useful, familiar way to think about radio, it underestimated radio's power as a medium. Newspapers had the potential to reach a wide audience, but radio had the potential to reach almost everyone. Neither illiteracy nor even a busy schedule impeded radio's success—one could now perform an activity and listen to the radio at the same time. This unprecedented reach made radio an instrument of social cohesion as it brought together members of different classes and backgrounds to experience the world as a nation.

Radio programs reflected this nationwide cultural aspect of radio. *Vox Pop*, a show originally based on person-in-the-street interviews, was an early attempt to quantify the United States' growing mass culture. Beginning in 1935, the program billed itself as an unrehearsed "cross-section of what the average person really knows" by asking random people an assortment of questions. Many modern television shows still employ this format not only for viewers' amusement and information but also as an attempt to sum up national culture. Jason Loviglio, "Vox Pop: Network Radio and the Voice of the People" in *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, ed. Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio (New York: Routledge, 2002), 89–106. *Vox Pop* functioned on a cultural level as an acknowledgement of radio's entrance into people's private lives to make them public. Jason Loviglio, "Vox Pop: Network Radio and the Voice of the People" in *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, ed. Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio (New York: Routledge, 2002), 89–106.

Radio news was more than just a quick way to find out about events; it was a way for U.S. citizens to experience events with the same emotions. During the Ohio and Mississippi river floods of 1937, radio brought the voices of those who suffered as well as the voices of those who fought the rising tides. A West Virginia newspaper explained the strengths of radio in providing emotional voices during such crises: "Thanks to radio ... the nation as a whole has had its nerves, its heart, its soul exposed to the needs of its unfortunates ... We are a nation integrated and interdependent. We are 'our brother's keeper.'" Robert Brown, *Manipulating the Ether: The Power of Broadcast Radio in Thirties America* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 1998), 140.

Radio's presence in the home also heralded the evolution of consumer culture in the United States. In 1941, two-thirds of radio programs carried advertising. Radio allowed advertisers to sell products to a captive audience. This kind of mass marketing ushered in a new age of consumer culture. Sean Cashman, *America in the Twenties and Thirties: The Olympian Age of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 329.

War of the Worlds and the Power of Radio

During the 1930s, radio's impact and powerful social influence was perhaps most obvious in the aftermath of the Orson Welles's notorious *War of the Worlds* broadcast. On Halloween night in 1938, radio producer Orson Welles told listeners of the *Mercury Theatre on the Air* that they would be treated to an original adaptation of H. G. Wells's classic science fiction novel of alien invasion *War of the Worlds*. The adaptation started as if it were a normal music show that was interrupted by news reports of an alien invasion. Many listeners had tuned in late and did not hear the disclaimer, and so were caught up by the realism of the adaptation, believing it to be an actual news story.

FAKE RADIO 'WAR' STIRS TERROR THROUGH U.S.

Story on Page 2

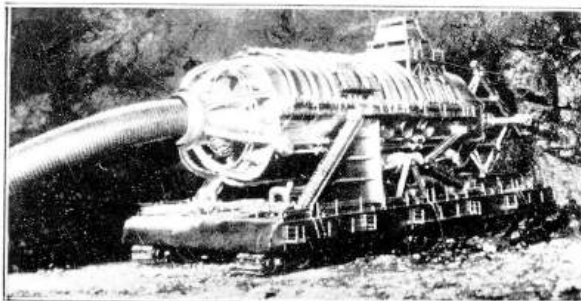


Figure 7.5 Orson Welles's *War of the Worlds* broadcast terrified listeners, many of whom actually believed a Martian invasion was actually occurring.

According to some, an estimated 6 million people listened to the show, with an incredible 1.7 million believing it to be true. Alex Lubertozzi and Brian Holmsten, *The War of the Worlds: Mars' Invasion of Earth, Inciting Panic and Inspiring Terror*

From *H.G. Wells to Orson Welles and Beyond* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2005), 7–9. Some listeners called loved ones to say goodbye or ran into the street armed with weapons to fight off the invading Martians of the radio play. Alex Lubertozzi and Brian Holmsten, *The War of the Worlds: Mars' Invasion of Earth, Inciting Panic and Inspiring Terror From H.G. Wells to Orson Welles and Beyond* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2005), 7–9. In Groves Mill, New Jersey—where the supposed invasion began—some listeners reported nonexistent fires and fired gunshots at a water tower thought to be a Martian landing craft. One listener drove through his own garage door in a rush to escape the area. Two Princeton University professors spent the night searching for the meteorite that had supposedly preceded the invasion. Alex Lubertozzi and Brian Holmsten, *The War of the Worlds: Mars' Invasion of Earth, Inciting Panic and Inspiring Terror From H.G. Wells to Orson Welles and Beyond* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2005), 7–9. As calls came in to local police stations, officers explained that they were equally concerned about the problem. Alex Lubertozzi and Brian Holmsten, *The War of the Worlds: Mars' Invasion of Earth, Inciting Panic and Inspiring Terror From H.G. Wells to Orson Welles and Beyond* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2005), 7–9.

Although the story of the *War of the Worlds* broadcast may be funny in retrospect, the event traumatized those who believed the story. Individuals from every education level and walk of life had been taken in by the program, despite the producers' warnings before, during the intermission, and after the program. Alex Lubertozzi and Brian Holmsten, *The War of the Worlds: Mars' Invasion of Earth, Inciting Panic and Inspiring Terror From H.G. Wells to Orson Welles and Beyond* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2005), 7–9. This event revealed the unquestioning faith that many Americans had in radio. Radio's intimate communication style was a powerful force during the 1930s and 1940s.

Radio and the Development of Popular Music

One of radio's most enduring legacies is its impact on music. Before radio, most popular songs were distributed through piano sheet music and word of mouth. This necessarily limited the types of music that could gain national prominence. Although recording technology had also emerged several decades before radio, music played live over the radio sounded better than it did on a record played in the home. Live music performances thus became a staple of early radio. Many performance venues had their own radio transmitters to broadcast live shows—for example, Harlem's Cotton Club broadcast performances that CBS picked up and broadcast nationwide.

Radio networks mainly played swing jazz, giving the bands and their leaders a widespread audience. Popular bandleaders including Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and Tommy Dorsey and their jazz bands became nationally famous through their radio performances, and a host of other jazz musicians flourished as radio made the genre nationally popular. Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 100–104. National networks also played classical music. Often presented in an educational context, this programming had a different tenor than did dance-band programming. NBC promoted the genre through shows such as the *Music Appreciation Hour*, which sought to educate both young people and the general public on the nuances of classical music. Sondra Wieland Howe, "The NBC Music Appreciation Hour: Radio Broadcasts of Walter Damrosch, 1928–1942," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2003). It created the NBC Symphony Orchestra, a 92-piece band under the direction of famed conductor Arturo Toscanini. The orchestra made its first performance in 1937 and was so popular that Toscanini stayed on as conductor for 17 years. Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of Its Rise and Fall* (New York: Norton, 2005), 399–404. The Metropolitan Opera was also popular; its broadcasts in the early 1930s had an audience of 9 million listeners. Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of Its Rise and Fall* (New York: Norton, 2005), 364.

Regional Sounds Take Hold

The promotional power of radio also gave regional music an immense boost. Local stations often carried their own programs featuring the popular music of the area. Stations such as Nashville, Tennessee's WSM played early country, blues, and folk artists. The history of this station illustrates the ways in which radio—and its wide range of broadcasting—created new perspectives on American culture. In 1927, WSM's program *Barn Dance*, which featured early country music and blues, followed an hour-long program of classical music. George Hay, the host of *Barn Dance*, used the juxtaposition of classical and country genres to spontaneously rename the show: "For the past hour we have been listening to music taken largely from Grand Opera, but from now on we will present 'The Grand Ole Opry.'" Louis Kyriakoudes, *The Social Origins of the Urban South: Race, Gender, and Migration in Nashville and Middle Tennessee, 1890–1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 7. NBC picked up the program for national syndication in 1939, and it is currently one of the longest-running radio programs of all time.



Figure 7.6 The *Grand Ole Opry* gave a national stage to country and early rock musicians.

Shreveport, Louisiana's KWKH aired an *Opry*-type show called *Louisiana Hayride*. This program propelled stars such as Hank Williams into the national spotlight. Country music, formerly a mix of folk, blues, and mountain music, was made into a genre that was accessible by the nation through this show. Without programs that featured these country and blues artists, Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash would not have become national stars, and country music may not have risen to become a popular genre. Nate DiMeo,

“New York Clashes with the Heartland,” Hearing America: A Century of Music on the Radio, *American Public Media*, 2010, <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/radio/b1.html>.

In the 1940s, other Southern stations also began playing rhythm and blues records recorded by black artists. Artists such as Wynonie Harris, famous for his rendition of Roy Brown’s “Good Rockin’ Tonight,” were often played by white disc jockeys who tried to imitate black Southerners. Tracey Laird, *Louisiana Hayride: Radio and Roots Music Along the Red River* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4–10. During the late 1940s, both Memphis, Tennessee’s WDIA and Atlanta, Georgia’s WERD were owned and operated by black individuals. These disc jockeys often provided a measure of community leadership at a time when few black individuals were in powerful positions. Jesse Walker, *Rebels on the Air: An Alternative History of Radio in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 53–54.

Radio’s Lasting Influences

Radio technology changed the way that dance and popular music was performed. Because of the use of microphones, vocalists could be heard better over the band, allowing singers to use a greater vocal range and create more expressive styles, an innovation that led singers to become an important part of popular music’s image. The use of microphones similarly allowed individual performers to be featured playing solos and lead parts, features that were less encouraged before radio. The exposure of radio also led to more rapid turnover in popular music. Before radio, jazz bands played the same arrangement for several years without it getting old, but as radio broadcasts reached wide audiences, new arrangements and songs had to be produced at a more rapid pace to keep up with changing tastes. Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock ‘n’ Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 95–96.

The spotlight of radio allowed the personalities of artists to come to the forefront of popular music, giving them newfound notoriety. Phil Harris, the bandleader from the *Jack Benny Show*, became the star of his own program. Other famous musicians used radio talent shows to gain fame. Popular programs such as *Major Bowes and His Original Amateur Hour* featured unknown entertainers trying to gain fame through exposure to the show’s large audience. Major Bowes used a gong to usher bad performers offstage, often contemptuously dismissing them, but not all the performers struck out; such successful singers as Frank Sinatra debuted on the program. Christopher Sterling and John Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 182.

Television, much like modern popular music, owes a significant debt to the Golden Age of Radio. Major radio networks such as NBC, ABC, and CBS became—and remain—major forces in television, and their programming decisions for radio formed the basis for television. Actors, writers, and directors who worked in radio simply transferred their talents into the world of early television, using the successes of radio as their models.

Radio and Politics

Over the years, radio has had a considerable influence on the political landscape of the United States. In the past, government leaders relied on radio to convey messages to the public, such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “fireside chats.” Radio was also used as a way to generate propaganda for World War II. The War Department established a Radio Division in its Bureau of Public Relations as early as 1941. Programs such as the *Treasury Hour* used radio drama to raise revenue through the sale of war bonds, but other government efforts took a decidedly political turn. Norman Corwin’s *This Is War!* was funded by the federal Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) to directly garner support for the war effort. It featured programs that prepared listeners to make personal sacrifices—including death—to win the war. The program was also directly political, popularizing the idea that the New Deal was a success and bolstering Roosevelt’s image through comparisons with Lincoln. Gerd Horten, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 45–47.

FDR’s Fireside Chats



Figure 7.7 During his presidency, Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered fireside chats, a series of radio broadcasts in which he spoke directly to the American people.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Depression-era radio talks, or “fireside chats,” remain one of the most famous uses of radio in politics. While governor of New York, Roosevelt had used radio as a political tool, so he quickly adopted it to explain the unprecedented actions that his administration was taking to deal with the economic fallout of the Great Depression. His first speech took place only 1 week after being inaugurated. Roosevelt had closed all of the banks in the country for 4 days while the government dealt with a national banking crisis, and he used the radio to explain his actions directly to the American people. John Grafton, ed., *Great Speeches—Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999), 34.

Roosevelt’s first radio address set a distinct tone as he employed informal speech in the hopes of inspiring confidence in the American people and of helping them stave off the kind of panic that could have destroyed the entire banking system. Roosevelt understood both the intimacy of radio and its powerful outreach. John Grafton, ed., *Great Speeches—Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999), 34. He was thus able to balance a personal tone with a message that was meant for millions of people. This relaxed approach inspired a CBS executive to name the series the “fireside chats.” John Grafton, ed., *Great Speeches—Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999), 34.

Roosevelt delivered a total of 27 of these 15- to 30-minute-long addresses to estimated audiences of 30 million to 40 million people, then a quarter of the U.S. population. John Grafton, ed., *Great Speeches—Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999), 34. Roosevelt’s use of radio was both a testament to his own skills and savvy as a politician and to the power and ubiquity of radio during this period. At the time, there was no other form of mass media that could have had the same effect.

Certainly, radio has been used by the government for its own purposes, but it has had an even greater impact on politics by serving as what has been called “the ultimate arena for free speech.” Richard Davis and Diana Owen, *New Media and American Politics*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 54. Such infamous radio firebrands as Father Charles Coughlin, a Roman Catholic priest whose radio program opposed the New Deal, criticized Jews, and supported Nazi policies, aptly demonstrated this capability early in radio's history. Christopher Sterling and John Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 199. In recent decades, radio has supported political careers, including those of U.S. Senator Al Franken of Minnesota, former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani, and presidential aspirant Fred Thompson. Talk show hosts such as Rush Limbaugh have gained great political influence, with some even viewing Limbaugh as the de facto leader of the Republican Party. Liz Halloran, "Steele-Limbaugh Spat: A Battle for GOP's Future?" *NPR*, March 2, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101430572>.

The Importance of Talk Radio

An important contemporary convergence of radio and politics can be readily heard on modern talk radio programs. Far from being simply chat shows, the talk radio that became popular in the 1980s features a host who takes callers and discusses a wide assortment of topics. Talk radio hosts gain and keep their listeners by sheer force of personality, and some say shocking or insulting things to get their message across. These hosts range from conservative radio hosts such as Rush Limbaugh to so-called shock jocks such as Howard Stern.

Repeal of the Fairness Doctrine

While talk radio first began during the 1920s, the emergence of the format as a contemporary cultural and political force took place during the mid- to late-1980s following the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine. Gilbert Cruz, "GOP Rallies Behind Talk Radio," *Time*, June 28, 2007, www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1638662,00.html. As you read earlier in this chapter, this doctrine, established in 1949, required any station broadcasting a political point of view over the air to allow equal time to all reasonable dissenting views. Despite its noble intentions of safeguarding public airwaves for diverse views, the doctrine had long attracted a level of dissent. Opponents of the Fairness Doctrine claimed that it had a chilling effect on political discourse as stations, rather than risk government intervention, avoided programs that were divisive or controversial. Gilbert Cruz, "GOP Rallies Behind Talk Radio," *Time*, June 28, 2007, www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1638662,00.html. In 1987, the FCC under the Reagan administration repealed the regulation, setting the stage for an AM talk radio boom; by 2004, the number of talk radio stations had increased by 17-fold. Brian Anderson, *South Park Conservatives: The Revolt against Liberal Media Bias* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2005), 35–36.

The end of the Fairness Doctrine allowed stations to broadcast programs without worrying about finding an opposing point of view to balance the stated opinions of its host. Radio hosts representing all points of the political spectrum could say anything that they wanted to—within FCC limits—without fear of rebuttal. Media bias and its ramifications will be explored at greater length in Chapter 14.

The Revitalization of AM

The migration of music stations to the FM spectrum during the 1960s and 1970s provided a great deal of space on the AM band for talk shows. With the Fairness Doctrine no longer a hindrance, these programs slowly gained notoriety during the late 1980 and early 1990s. In 1998, talk radio hosts railed against a proposed congressional pay increase, and their listeners became incensed; House Speaker Jim Wright received a deluge of faxes protesting it from irate talk radio listeners from stations all over the country. Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 287. Ultimately, Congress canceled the pay increase, and various print outlets acknowledged the influence of talk radio on the decision. Propelled by events such as these, talk radio stations rose from only 200 in the early 1980s to more than 850 in 1994. Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 286–287.

Coast to Coast AM

Although political programs unquestionably rule AM talk radio, that dial is also home to a kind of show that some radio listeners may have never experienced. Late at night on AM radio, a program airs during which listeners hear stories about ghosts, alien abductions, and fantastic creatures. It's not a fictional drama program, however, but instead a call-in talk show called *Coast to Coast AM*. In 2006, this unlikely success ranked among the top 10 AM talk radio programs in the nation—a stunning feat considering its 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. time slot and bizarre format. Delfin Vigil, "Conspiracy Theories Propel AM

Radio Show Into the Top Ten,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 12, 2006, http://articles.sfgate.com/2006-11-12/news/17318973_1_radio-show-coast-cold-war.

Originally started by host Art Bell in the 1980s, *Coast to Coast* focuses on topics that mainstream media outlets rarely treat seriously. Regular guests include ghost investigators, psychics, Bigfoot biographers, alien abductees, and deniers of the moon landing. The guests take calls from listeners who are allowed to ask questions or talk about their own paranormal experiences or theories.

Coast to Coast's current host, George Noory, has continued the show's format. In some areas, its ratings have even exceeded those of Rush Limbaugh's. Delfin Vigil, "Conspiracy Theories Propel AM Radio Show Into the Top Ten," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 12, 2006, http://articles.sfgate.com/2006-11-12/news/17318973_1_radio-show-coast-cold-war. For a late-night show, these kinds of high ratings are rare. The success of *Coast to Coast* is thus a continuing testament to the diversity and unexpected potential of radio. Delfin Vigil, "Conspiracy Theories Propel AM Radio Show Into the Top Ten," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 12, 2006, http://articles.sfgate.com/2006-11-12/news/17318973_1_radio-show-coast-cold-war.

On-Air Political Influence

As talk radio's popularity grew during the early 1990s, it quickly became an outlet for political ambitions. In 1992, nine talk show hosts ran for U.S. Congress. By the middle of the decade, it had become common for many former—or failed—politicians to attempt to use the format. Former California governor Jerry Brown and former New York mayor Ed Koch were among the mid-1990s politicians that had AM talk shows. Annenberg Public Policy Center, *Call-In Political Talk Radio: Background, Content, Audiences, Portrayal in Mainstream Media*, Annenberg Public Policy Center Report Series, August 7, 1996, www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/Downloads/Political_Communication/Political_Talk_Radio/1996_03_political_talk_radio_rpt.PDF. Both conservatives and liberals widely agree that conservative hosts dominate AM talk radio. Many talk show hosts, such as Limbaugh, who began his popular program 1 year after the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine, have made a profitable business out of their programs.



Figure 7.8 Talk radio shows increased dramatically in number and popularity in the wake of the 1987 repeal of the Fairness Doctrine.

During the 2000s, AM talk radio continued to build. Hosts such as Michael Savage, Sean Hannity, and Bill O'Reilly furthered the trend of popular conservative talk shows, but liberal hosts also became popular through the short-lived Air America network. The network closed abruptly in 2010 amid financial concerns. Brian Stelter, "Liberal Radio, Even Without Air America," *New York Times*, January 24, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/25/arts/25radio.html>. Although the network was unsuccessful, it provided a platform for such hosts as MSNBC TV news host Rachel Maddow and Minnesota Senator Al Franken. Other liberal hosts such as Bill Press and Ron Reagan, son of President Ronald Reagan, have also found success in the AM political talk radio field. Brian Stelter, "Liberal Radio, Even Without Air America," *New York Times*, January 24, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/25/arts/25radio.html>. Despite these successes, liberal talk radio is often viewed as unsustainable. Billy Hallowell, "Media Matters' Vapid Response to Air America's Crash," *Big Journalism*, January 26, 2010, <http://bigjournalism.com/bhallowell/2010/01/26/media-matters-vapid-response-to-air-americas-crash>. To some, the failure of Air America confirms conservatives' domination of AM radio. In response to the conservative dominance of talk radio, many prominent liberals, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, have advocated reinstating the Fairness Doctrine and forcing stations to

offer equal time to contrasting opinions. Bethany Stotts, “Pelosi Supports Return of Fairness Doctrine,” *Accuracy in Media Column*, June 26, 2008, <http://www.aim.org/aim-column/pelosi-support-return-of-fairness-doctrine>.

Freedom of Speech and Radio Controversies

While the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives radio personalities the freedom to say nearly anything they want on the air without fear of prosecution (except in cases of obscenity, slander, or incitement of violence, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 15), it does not protect them from being fired from their jobs when their controversial comments create a public outrage. Many talk radio hosts, such as Howard Stern, push the boundaries of acceptable speech to engage listeners and boost ratings, but sometimes radio hosts push too far, unleashing a storm of controversy.

Making (and Unmaking) a Career out of Controversy

Talk radio host Howard Stern has managed to build his career on creating controversy—despite being fined multiple times for indecency by the FCC, Stern remains one of highest-paid and most popular talk radio hosts in the United States. Stern’s radio broadcasts often feature scatological or sexual humor, creating an “anything goes” atmosphere. Because his on-air antics frequently generate controversy that can jeopardize advertising sponsorships and drive away offended listeners—in addition to risking fines from the FCC—Stern has a history of uneasy relationships with the radio stations that employ him. In an effort to free himself of conflicts with station owners and sponsors, in 2005 Stern signed a contract with Sirius Satellite Radio, which is exempt from FCC regulation, so that he can continue to broadcast his show without fear of censorship.

Stern’s massive popularity gives him a lot of clout, which has allowed him to weather controversy and continue to have a successful career. Other radio hosts who have gotten themselves in trouble with poorly considered on-air comments have not been so lucky. In April 2007, Don Imus, host of the long-running *Imus in the Morning*, was suspended for racist and sexist comments made about the Rutgers University women’s basketball team. *Imus in the Morning*, MSNBC, April 4, 2007. Though he publically apologized, the scandal continued to draw negative attention in the media, and CBS canceled his show to avoid further unfavorable publicity and the withdrawal of advertisers. Though he returned to the airwaves in December of that year with a different station, the episode was a major setback for Imus’s career and his public image. Similarly, syndicated conservative talk show host Dr. Laura Schelssinger ended her radio show in 2010 due to pressure from radio stations and sponsors after her repeated use of a racial epithet on a broadcast incited a public backlash. *Imus in the Morning*, MSNBC, April 4, 2007.

As the examples of these talk radio hosts show, the issue of freedom of speech on the airwaves is often complicated by the need for radio stations to be profitable. Outspoken or shocking radio hosts can draw in many listeners, attracting advertisers to sponsor their shows and bringing in money for their radio stations. Although some listeners may be offended by these hosts and may stop tuning in, as long as the hosts continue to attract advertising dollars, their employers are usually content to allow the hosts to speak freely on the air. However, if a host’s behavior ends up sparking a major controversy, causing advertisers to withdraw their sponsorship to avoid tarnishing their brands, the radio station will often fire the host and look to someone who can better sustain advertising partnerships. Radio hosts’ right to free speech does not compel their employer to give them the forum to exercise it. Popular hosts like Don Imus may find a home on the air again once the furor has died down, but for radio hosts concerned about the stability of their careers, the lesson is clear: there are practical limits on their freedom of speech.

Key Takeaways

- Radio was unique as a form of mass media because it had the potential to reach anyone, even the illiterate. Radio news in the 1930s and 1940s brought the emotional impact of traumatic events home to the listening public in a way that gave the nation a sense of unity.
- Radio encouraged the growth of national popular music stars and brought regional sounds to wider audiences. The effects of early radio programs can be felt both in modern popular music and in television programming.
- The Fairness Doctrine was created to ensure fair coverage of issues over the airwaves. It stated that radio stations must give equal time to contrasting points of view on an issue. An enormous rise in the popularity of AM talk radio occurred after the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987.
- The need for radio stations to generate revenue places practical limits on what radio personalities can say on the air. Shock jocks like Howard Stern and Don Imus test, and sometimes exceed, these limits and become controversial figures, highlighting the tension between freedom of speech and the need for businesses to be profitable.

? Exercise 7.4.1

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Describe the unique qualities that set radio apart from other forms of mass media, such as newspapers.
2. How did radio bring new music to places that had never heard it before?
3. Describe political talk radio before and after the Fairness Doctrine. What kind of effect did the Fairness Doctrine have?
4. Do you think that the Fairness Doctrine should be reinstated? Explain your answer.
5. Investigate the controversy surrounding Don Imus and the comments that led to his show's cancellation. What is your opinion of his comments and CBS's reaction to them?

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7.5: Radio's New Future

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish the differences between satellite radio, HD radio, Internet radio, and podcasting.
- Identify the development of new radio technologies.

Although the future of radio has been doubted many times throughout its history, it is still in existence. The inherent portability of the medium gives it an advantage over other types of media that require an individual's full attention, such as television or print. The simplicity of radio has lent itself to a variety of uses.

In recent years, new technologies have promised to expand the reach of radio and to expand the kinds of programming it offers. Satellite and HD radio have increased the amount and diversity of available programming by making more stations available. Internet radio has increased the accessibility of radio communication, and practically anyone who has access to a computer can create subscription podcasts to distribute around the world. These new technologies promise to make radio an enduring, innovative form of media.

Satellite Radio

In 1998, the FCC awarded licenses to two businesses interested in creating a radio version of cable television—without the cables. This act was the beginning of satellite radio, and the companies soon became XM and Sirius. These two networks sold special receivers that could pick up satellite transmissions broadcasting a wide range of formats on different channels to listeners who paid a monthly fee for the commercial-free programming.

Like cable television, satellite radio was not required to censor its disc jockeys or guests for profanity. This attracted somewhat controversial radio personalities known for their conflicts with the FCC, such as Howard Stern and Opie and Anthony. The networks also drew hosts such as NPR's Bob Edwards and Bruce Springsteen's guitarist "Little" Steven Van Zandt to create their own shows. Because listeners paid one price for access to all of the channels, disc jockeys experienced less pressure to adhere to the limited playlist style of programming that was the norm for terrestrial radio stations. Bill Breen, "Written in the Stars," *Fast Company*, February 1, 2005, http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/91/open_stars.html. In 2008, Sirius and XM merged to form Sirius XM. In 2010, the company recorded its first profits. Reuters, "Sirius XM Posts Profit, Its First Since Merger," *New York Times*, February 25, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/26/technology/26radio.html>.



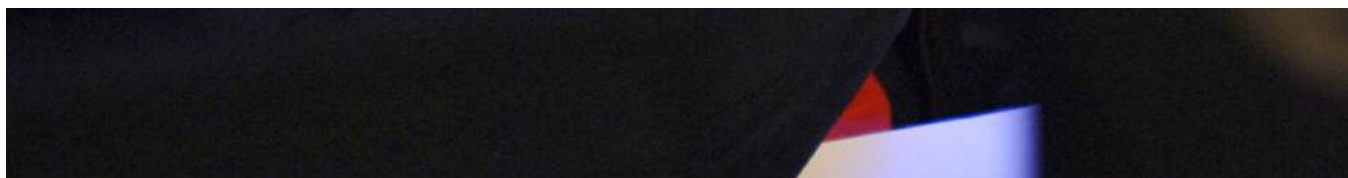


Figure 7.9 Talk show host Howard Stern moved his controversial program to satellite radio in 2006, removing himself from FCC censorship rules and helping to popularize the medium.

HD Radio

Developed around 2001 to help terrestrial radio stations compete with emerging satellite radio technology, HD radio is essentially a digital transmission of radio signals resulting in less static and better sound quality, even for AM stations. Upgraded quality is not the major benefit of HD radio, however; the technology allows signals to be compressed so that one station can air so-called shadow stations on the same frequency as its regular broadcast. Although listeners need an HD radio to receive these channels, they pay no subscription fee, as independent stations provide their own programming as they deem necessary. David Pogue, “HD Radio Crying Out to Be Heard,” *New York Times*, April 8, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/09/technology/personaltech/09pogue.html>.

Stations such as NPR’s WAMU in Washington, DC, broadcast different types of programming on their shadow channels. For example, the station’s 88.5-1 broadcasts the regular analog schedule of WAMU, while 88.5-2 broadcasts bluegrass and country music programming, and 88.5-3 broadcasts public radio programs not available on the analog version of 88.5.WAMU, “Schedules,” <http://wamu.org/programs/schedule/>.

HD radio allows current broadcasters to provide content that they would normally put aside in favor of more commercial programs. WAMU’s bluegrass and country shadow station plays content originally played over the airwaves but relegated to the Internet in favor of more marketable programs. The innovation of HD radio allowed the station to reintroduce the programs without risking its financial stability. With this financial freedom, HD radio offers a host of programming possibilities for traditional radio.

Internet Radio and Podcasting

Broadcasting is both a strength and limitation of broadcasting. Although technological advances of the past 50 years, such as audio recorders and microphones, have made creating a radio program simple, finding a way to broadcast that program presents difficulties for the average person. The expansion of the Internet, however, has changed this limitation into a manageable hurdle for both businesses and individuals alike.

Internet Radio

At its core, Internet radio is simply the streaming of audio programs through the medium of the Internet. As early as 1994, radio stations such as Chapel Hill, North Carolina’s WXYC were broadcasting their signal over the Internet, and so potentially gaining a worldwide audience. WXYC, “Simulcast,” <http://wxyz.org/about/simulcast>. Soon, online-only radio stations were created to broadcast programs. Services such as Live 365, founded in 1999, have acted as distributors for Internet radio programs, charging broadcasters fees to stream their programs to a large listening audience.

Another type of Internet radio service is Pandora radio. This radio website does not distribute existing programs but rather allows users to create their own custom music radio stations. A listener creates a Pandora account and types in a song, composer, or artist, and the service creates a station that plays songs that are similar to the user’s selection. This analysis of music attempts to collect as many details about a song as possible, from lyrics to instrumentation to harmony, and then categorizes songs according to these attributes, making it possible for listeners to customize their own stations based on one or more of the cataloged attributes. The listener can delete unwanted songs from the playlist and create new stations as well. Pandora currently relies on on-screen advertising and has implemented audio advertisements as well. Gabriel Beltrone, “Pandora’s Back,” *The Big Money*, July 23, 2009, <http://www.thebigmoney.com/articles/monetize/2009/07/23/pandora-s-back>. Other music services such as Yahoo! Music, AOL Radio, and Jango offer radio stations with multiple programmed genres.

Problems of Internet Broadcasting

Despite the rise of Internet radio over the past several years, its success has never been a sure thing. As the trend gained momentum, many inexperienced broadcasters confronted the issue of royalties, and many experienced broadcasters encountered new legal issues related to streaming. Stations that broadcast over the airwaves must pay publishing royalties to the musicians and

songwriters behind the recordings. Rather than pay an individual musician or songwriter each time a recording is played, however, broadcasters—including radio station, coffee shops, and restaurants—pay for a blanket license that allows them to play any song. As Internet broadcasting grew, musicians and record labels began demanding royalties from Internet stations and specifying new licensing restrictions. For instance, Pandora radio’s license specifies that users can buy a song, but they can’t replay a song without purchasing it, nor can they skip more than six songs per hour.

Other issues arose as terrestrial stations began streaming on the Internet. Since its inception, the medium has struggled with such concerns as whether advertisers should pay for commercials played over the Internet as well as over the air and what types of licenses should be used for Internet radio stations. In time, the federal government mediated an agreement between broadcasters and record companies with the Webcasters Settlement Act of 2009. This legislation designated Internet-only stations as pure-play stations, dividing them according to the types of coverage they offer. Each category pays royalties in different ways, ensuring both fair compensation for artists and the future viability of Internet radio. Chloe Albenesius, “Internet Radio Reaches Deal on Royalty Rates,” *PC Magazine*, July 7, 2009, <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2349813,00.asp>.

Podcasting

Unlike Internet radio, podcasting employs downloadable rather than streamed programs. The term *podcasting* itself stems from the use of MP3 players such as Apple’s iPod to use programs on demand. Many terrestrial stations have employed podcasting to supplement their traditional over-the-air broadcasting. Because these are single programs rather than continuous stations, podcasts are an easier medium to produce than is Internet radio.

Some podcast producers, such as Mignon Fogarty, have created programs that led to book deals and a steady income. Fogarty’s weekly *Grammar Girl: Quick and Dirty Tricks* podcast focuses on simple grammar rules. Within a year of its inception, this podcast racked up 1 million downloads and received national acclaim. John Faherty, “‘Grammar Girl’ Podcasts Rule Online,” *USA Today*, March 8, 2007, http://www.usatoday.com/tech/webguide/internetlife/2007-03-08-grammar-girl_N.htm. Nevertheless, podcasting does not fit neatly into the traditional concept of radio. Yet, there is no question that it is following in the footsteps of past radio programs, and that it provides a potential vision of the medium’s place in years to come. Just as radio evolved from a medium for soap operas and live music to talk shows and recorded music, podcasts are a window into what radio may evolve into in the future.

Key Takeaways

- Radio’s flexibility as a medium has allowed it to adjust to the fluctuations of audience tastes and markets.
- Satellite radio is a subscription-based service, while HD radio is provided at no cost by current radio providers.
- Internet radio and podcasting have allowed many new programs and stations to be broadcast at low cost.

Exercise 7.5.1

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Define satellite radio, HD radio, Internet radio, and podcasting.
2. How have each of these mediums fared in terms of popularity?
3. Pick one of these mediums and predict its future success given its current popularity.

End-of-Chapter Assessment

Review Questions

1. Questions for Section 7.1
 1. Name three major changes that have affected the development of radio.
 2. What made the period from the 1930s to the 1950s radio’s golden age?
 3. How have large networks affected the development of radio?
 4. Has the corporate consolidation of radio over the past decades made radio better or worse in your opinion? Explain your answer.
2. Questions for Section 7.2
 1. How and why do modern radio stations employ radio formats?

2. What is your opinion about the effects of formats on the current state of radio?
 3. Describe your favorite radio format and explain how the advertising is marketed to you.
3. Questions for Section 7.3
1. What makes radio unique among forms of mass media?
 2. Explain the ways radio affected the development of your favorite genre of music.
 3. How do you think popular music would be heard and spread if there was no radio?
 4. What do you think political talk radio would presently be like if the Fairness Doctrine had not been repealed?
4. Questions for Section 7.4
1. How do you think new radio technologies will affect traditional radio broadcasting over the next 10 years?
 2. Of the four new radio technologies listed in Section 7.4, which do you think has the most potential to succeed? Explain your answer.

? Critical Thinking Questions

1. Taken as a whole, has government regulation been good or bad for radio? Explain your answer using specific examples.
2. Given the rise of tightly formatted radio stations, do you think it is still possible to have a truly popular music? Why or why not?
3. Do you think radio should be treated as a public resource or a private commodity? If your view was made law, how would it affect radio programming?
4. If radio is a public resource, how should issues of freedom of speech and censorship be handled?
5. Given the history of radio, do you think that new innovations in radio will make radio more democratic and accessible, or will regulatory and market forces control access?

📌 Career Connection

New technologies in radio have created new radio career possibilities. As podcasting, Internet radio, satellite radio, and HD radio have fueled demand for new content, opportunities have emerged for self-starters to create and host their own radio programs or become freelance radio journalists.

Consider some of the uses for podcasting and radio journalism. Some useful links for researching careers in these areas, among others you may find through your own research, are <http://transom.org/> and (<http://www.airmedia.org/>). Based on your research and ideas, identify a career field in online radio that you may wish to pursue. Think about ways that people in this career field have employed radio. Now answer the following questions:

1. How have people used radio in your chosen career?
2. How have new technologies, such as podcasting and Internet radio, allowed for new uses of radio in this career?
3. How could you use radio in your career even if you weren't necessarily a radio producer or journalist?
4. What kinds of projects or initiatives could you a business undertake that would involve radio?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Movies

[8.1: Introduction](#)

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8.1: Introduction

Are 3-D Effects Creating Two-Dimensional Films?



Figure 8.1

In 2009, many moviegoers were amazed by the three-dimensional (3-D) film *Avatar*. *Avatar* grossed over \$1.8 billion in theaters worldwide, \$1.35 billion from 3-D sales alone. Brandon Gray, “‘Avatar’ is New King of the World,” Box Office Mojo, January 26, 2010, <http://boxofficemojo.com/news/?id=2657>. Following in that vein, dozens of other movie studios released 3-D films, resulting in lesser box office successes such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Clash of the Titans*, and *Shrek Forever After*. Many film reviewers and audiences seemed adamant—3-D movies were the wave of the future.

However, could this eye-popping technology actually ruin our moviegoing experience? Brian Moylan, a critic for Gawker.com, argues that it already has. The problem with 3-D, he says, is that “It is so mind-numbingly amazing that narrative storytelling hasn’t caught up with the technology. The corporate screenwriting borgs are so busy trying to come up with plot devices to highlight all the newfangled whoosiwatsits—objects being hurled at the audience, flying sequences, falling leaves, glowing Venus Flytraps—that no one is really bothering to tell a tale.” Brian Moylan, “3D is Going to Ruin Movies for a Long Time to Come,” *Gawker*, <http://gawker.com/#!5484085/3d-is-going-to-ruin-movies-for-a-long-time-to-come>.

James Cameron, director of *Avatar*, agrees. “[Studios] think, ‘what was [sic] the takeaway lessons from *Avatar*? Oh you should make more money with 3-D.’ They ignore the fact that we natively authored the film in 3-D, and [they] decide that what we accomplished in several years of production could be done in an eight week (post-production 3-D) conversion [such as] with *Clash of the Titans*.” Edward Baig, “‘Avatar’ Director James Cameron: 3D Promising, but Caution Needed,” *USA Today*, March 11, 2010, <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/technologylive/post/2010/03/james-cameron/1>. Cameron makes the following point: While recent films such as *Avatar* (2009) and *Beowulf* (2007) were created exclusively for 3-D, many other filmmakers have converted their movies to 3-D after filming was already complete. *Clash of the Titans* is widely criticized because its 3-D effects were quickly added in postproduction. Edward Baig, “‘Avatar’ Director James Cameron: 3D Promising, but Caution Needed,” *USA Today*, March 11, 2010, <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/technologylive/post/2010/03/james-cameron/1>.

What effect does this have on audiences? Aside from the complaints of headaches and nausea (and the fact that some who wear glasses regularly can find it uncomfortable or even impossible to wear 3-D glasses on top of their own), many say that the new technology simply makes movies look worse. The film critic Roger Ebert has continuously denounced the technology, noting that movies such as *The Last Airbender* look like they're "filmed with a dirty sheet over the lens." Roger Ebert, review of *The Last Airbender*, directed by M. Night Shyamalan, *Chicago Sun Times*, June 30, 2010, rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100630/REVIEWS/100639999. 3-D technology can cause a movie to look fuzzier, darker, and generally less cinematically attractive. However, movie studios are finding 3-D films attractive for another reason.

Because seeing a movie in 3-D is considered a "premium" experience, consumers are expected to pay higher prices. And with the increasing popularity of IMAX 3D films, many moviegoers were amazed by the 3-D film *Avatar* 3-D, tickets may surpass \$20 per person. Andrew Stewart and Pamela McClintock, "Big Ticket Price Increase for 3D Pics," *Variety*, March 24, 2010, www.variety.com/article/VR1118016878.html?categoryid=13&cs=1. This gives 3-D films an advantage over 2-D ones as audiences are willing to pay more to do so.

The recent 3-D boom has often been compared to the rise of color film in the early 1950s. However, some maintain that it's just a fad. Will 3-D technology affect the future of filmmaking? With a host of new 3-D technologies for the home theater being released in 2010, many are banking on the fact that it will. Director James Cameron, however, is unsure of the technology's continuing popularity, arguing that "If people put bad 3-D in the marketplace they're going to hold back or even threaten the emerging of 3-D." Edward Baig, "'Avatar' Director James Cameron: 3D Promising, but Caution Needed," *USA Today*, March 11, 2010, <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/technologylive/post/2010/03/james-cameron/1>. What is important, he maintains, is the creative aspect of moviemaking—no technology can replace good filmmaking. In the end, audiences will determine the medium's popularity. Throughout the history of film, Technicolor dyes, enhanced sound systems, and computer-generated graphics have boasted huge box-office revenues; however, it's ultimately the viewers who determine what a good movie is and who set the standard for future films.

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8.2: The History of Movies

learning objectives

- Identify key points in the development of the motion picture industry.
- Identify key developments of the motion picture industry and technology.
- Identify influential films in movie history.

The movie industry as we know it today originated in the early 19th century through a series of technological developments: the creation of photography, the discovery of the illusion of motion by combining individual still images, and the study of human and animal locomotion. The history presented here begins at the culmination of these technological developments, where the idea of the motion picture as an entertainment industry first emerged. Since then, the industry has seen extraordinary transformations, some driven by the artistic visions of individual participants, some by commercial necessity, and still others by accident. The history of the cinema is complex, and for every important innovator and movement listed here, others have been left out. Nonetheless, after reading this section you will understand the broad arc of the development of a medium that has captured the imaginations of audiences worldwide for over a century.

The Beginnings: Motion Picture Technology of the Late 19th Century

While the experience of watching movies on smartphones may seem like a drastic departure from the communal nature of film viewing as we think of it today, in some ways the small-format, single-viewer display is a return to film's early roots. In 1891, the inventor Thomas Edison, together with William Dickson, a young laboratory assistant, came out with what they called the kinetoscope, a device that would become the predecessor to the motion picture projector. The kinetoscope was a cabinet with a window through which individual viewers could experience the illusion of a moving image. *Europe 1789–1914: Encyclopedia of the Age of Industry and Empire*, vol. 1, s.v. "Cinema," by Alan Williams, Gale Virtual Reference Library. "The Kinetoscope," British Movie Classics, www.britishmovieclassics.com/thekinetoscope.php. A perforated celluloid film strip with a sequence of images on it was rapidly spooled between a lightbulb and a lens, creating the illusion of motion. *Britannica Online*, s.v. "Kinetoscope," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/318211/Kinetoscope/318211main/Article>. The images viewers could see in the kinetoscope captured events and performances that had been staged at Edison's film studio in East Orange, New Jersey, especially for the Edison kinetograph (the camera that produced kinetoscope film sequences): circus performances, dancing women, cockfights, boxing matches, and even a tooth extraction by a dentist. David Robinson, *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 43–44.



Figure 8.2

The Edison kinetoscope.

As the kinetoscope gained popularity, the Edison Company began installing machines in hotel lobbies, amusement parks, and penny arcades, and soon kinetoscope parlors—where customers could pay around 25 cents for admission to a bank of machines—had opened around the country. However, when friends and collaborators suggested that Edison find a way to project his kinetoscope images for audience viewing, he apparently refused, claiming that such an invention would be a less profitable venture. *Britannica Online*. s.v. “History of the Motion Picture.” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion-picture>; Robinson, *From Peep Show to Palace*, 45, 53.

Because Edison hadn’t secured an international patent for his invention, variations of the kinetoscope were soon being copied and distributed throughout Europe. This new form of entertainment was an instant success, and a number of mechanics and inventors, seeing an opportunity, began toying with methods of projecting the moving images onto a larger screen. However, it was the invention of two brothers, Auguste and Louis Lumière—photographic goods manufacturers in Lyon, France—that saw the most commercial success. In 1895, the brothers patented the Cinématographe (from which we get the term *cinema*), a lightweight film projector that also functioned as a camera and printer. Unlike the Edison kinetograph, the Cinématographe was lightweight enough for easy outdoor filming, and over the years the brothers used the camera to take well over 1,000 short films, most of which depicted scenes from everyday life. In December 1895, in the basement lounge of the Grand Café, Rue des Capucines in Paris, the Lumières held the world’s first ever commercial film screening, a sequence of about 10 short scenes, including the brother’s first film, *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, a segment lasting less than a minute and depicting workers leaving the family’s photographic instrument factory at the end of the day, as shown in the still frame here in Figure 8.3. *Encyclopedia of the Age of Industry and Empire*, s.v. “Cinema.”

Believing that audiences would get bored watching scenes that they could just as easily observe on a casual walk around the city, Louis Lumière claimed that the cinema was “an invention without a future.” Louis Menand, “Gross Points,” *New Yorker*, February 7, 2005, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/02/07/050207crat_atlarge. but a demand for motion pictures grew at such a rapid rate that soon representatives of the Lumière company were traveling throughout Europe and the world, showing half-hour screenings of the company’s films. While cinema initially competed with other popular forms of entertainment—circuses, vaudeville acts, theater troupes, magic shows, and many others—eventually it would supplant these various entertainments as the main commercial attraction. Louis Menand, “Gross Points,” *New Yorker*, February 7, 2005, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/02/07/050207crat_atlarge. Within a year of the Lumières’ first commercial screening, competing film companies were offering moving-picture acts in music halls and vaudeville theaters across Great Britain. In the United States, the Edison Company, having purchased the rights to an improved projector that they called the Vitascope, held their first film screening in April 1896 at Koster and Bial’s Music Hall in Herald Square, New York City.



Figure 8.3

Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory: One of the first films viewed by an audience.

Film's profound impact on its earliest viewers is difficult to imagine today, inundated as many are by video images. However, the sheer volume of reports about the early audience's disbelief, delight, and even fear at what they were seeing suggests that viewing a film was an overwhelming experience for many. Spectators gasped at the realistic details in films such as Robert Paul's *Rough Sea at Dover*, and at times people panicked and tried to flee the theater during films in which trains or moving carriages sped toward the audience. David Robinson, *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 63. Even the public's perception of film as a medium was considerably different from the contemporary understanding; the moving image was an improvement upon the photograph—a medium with which viewers were already familiar—and this is perhaps why the earliest films documented events in brief segments but didn't tell stories. During this "novelty period" of cinema, audiences were more interested by the phenomenon of the film projector itself, so vaudeville halls advertised the kind of the projector they were using (for example, "The Vitascope—Edison's Latest Marvel!") Andrei Ionut Balcanasu, Sergey V. Smagin, and Stephanie K. Thrift, "Edison and the Lumiere Brothers," *Cartoons and Cinema of the 20th Century*, library.thinkquest.org/C0118600/index.phtml?menu=en%3B1%3Bci1001.html, rather than the names of the films. *Britannica Online*. s.v. "History of the Motion Picture." [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion picture](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion-picture)

By the close of the 19th century, as public excitement over the moving picture's novelty gradually wore off, filmmakers were also beginning to experiment with film's possibilities as a medium in itself (not simply, as it had been regarded up until then, as a tool for documentation, analogous to the camera or the phonograph). Technical innovations allowed filmmakers like Parisian cinema owner Georges Méliès to experiment with special effects that produced seemingly magical transformations on screen: flowers turned into women, people disappeared with puffs of smoke, a man appeared where a woman had just been standing, and other similar tricks. David Robinson, *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 74–75; *Encyclopedia of the Age of Industry and Empire*, s.v. "Cinema."

Not only did Méliès, a former magician, invent the “trick film,” which producers in England and the United States began to imitate, but he was also the one to transform cinema into the narrative medium it is today. Whereas before, filmmakers had only ever created single-shot films that lasted a minute or less, Méliès began joining these short films together to create stories. His 30-scene *Trip to the Moon* (1902), a film based on a Jules Verne novel, may have been the most widely seen production in cinema’s first decade. David Robinson, *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 441. However, Méliès never developed his technique beyond treating the narrative film as a staged theatrical performance; his camera, representing the vantage point of an audience facing a stage, never moved during the filming of a scene. In 1912, Méliès released his last commercially successful production, *The Conquest of the Pole*, and from then on, he lost audiences to filmmakers who were experimenting with more sophisticated techniques. *Encyclopedia of Communication and Information* (New York: MacMillan Reference USA, 2002), s.v. “Méliès, Georges,” by Ted C. Jones, Gale Virtual Reference Library.



Figure 8.4

Georges Méliès' *Trip to the Moon* was one of the first films to incorporate fantasy elements and to use “trick” filming techniques, both of which heavily influenced future filmmakers.

The Nickelodeon Craze (1904–1908)

One of these innovative filmmakers was Edwin S. Porter, a projectionist and engineer for the Edison Company. Porter's 12-minute film, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), broke with the stagelike compositions of Méliès-style films through its use of editing, camera pans, rear projections, and diagonally composed shots that produced a continuity of action. Not only did *The Great Train Robbery* establish the realistic narrative as a standard in cinema, it was also the first major box-office hit. Its success paved the way for the growth of the film industry, as investors, recognizing the motion picture's great moneymaking potential, began opening the first permanent film theaters around the country.

Known as nickelodeons because of their 5 cent admission charge, these early motion picture theaters, often housed in converted storefronts, were especially popular among the working class of the time, who couldn't afford live theater. Between 1904 and 1908, around 9,000 nickelodeons appeared in the United States. It was the nickelodeon's popularity that established film as a mass entertainment medium. *Dictionary of American History*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Nickelodeon,” by Ryan F. Holznapel, Gale Virtual Reference Library.

The “Biz”: The Motion Picture Industry Emerges

As the demand for motion pictures grew, production companies were created to meet it. At the peak of nickelodeon popularity in 1910, *Britannica Online*, s.v. “nickelodeon.” there were 20 or so major motion picture companies in the United States. However, heated disputes often broke out among these companies over patent rights and industry control, leading even the most powerful among them to fear fragmentation that would loosen their hold on the market. Raymond Fielding, *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television* (Berkeley: California Univ. Press, 1967) 21. Because of these concerns, the 10 leading companies—including Edison, Biograph, Vitagraph, and others—formed the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) in 1908. The MPPC was a trade group that pooled the most significant motion picture patents and established an exclusive contract between these companies and the Eastman Kodak Company as a supplier of film stock. Also known as *the Trust*, the MPPC's goal was to standardize the industry and shut out competition through monopolistic control. Under the Trust's licensing system, only certain licensed companies could participate in the exchange, distribution, and production of film at different levels of the industry—a shut-out tactic that eventually backfired, leading the excluded, independent distributors to organize in opposition to the Trust. Raymond Fielding, *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television* (Berkeley: California Univ. Press, 1967) 21; David Robinson, *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 101–102.

The Rise of the Feature

In these early years, theaters were still running single-reel films, which came at a standard length of 1,000 feet, allowing for about 16 minutes of playing time. However, companies began to import multiple-reel films from European producers around 1907, and the format gained popular acceptance in the United States in 1912 with Louis Mercanton's highly successful *Queen Elizabeth*, a three-and-a-half reel “feature,” starring the French actress Sarah Bernhardt. As exhibitors began to show more features—as the multiple-reel film came to be called—they discovered a number of advantages over the single-reel short. For one thing, audiences saw these longer films as special events and were willing to pay more for admission, and because of the popularity of the feature narratives, features generally experienced longer runs in theaters than their single-reel predecessors. “Pre World-War I US Cinema,” *Motion Pictures: The Silent Feature: 1910-27*, www.uv.es/EBRIT/macro/macro_5004_39_4.html#0009. Additionally, the feature film gained popularity among the middle classes, who saw its length as analogous to the more “respectable” entertainment of live theater. “Pre World-War I US Cinema,” *Motion Pictures: The Silent Feature: 1910-27*, www.uv.es/EBRIT/macro/macro_5004_39_4.html#0009. Following the example of the French *film d'art*, U.S. feature producers often took their material from sources that would appeal to a wealthier and better educated audience, such as histories, literature, and stage productions. David Robinson, *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 135, 144.

As it turns out, the feature film was one factor that brought about the eventual downfall of the MPPC. The inflexible structuring of the Trust's exhibition and distribution system made the organization resistant to change. When movie studio, and Trust member, Vitagraph began to release features like *A Tale of Two Cities* (1911) and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1910), the Trust forced it to exhibit the films serially in single-reel showings to keep with industry standards. The MPPC also underestimated the appeal of the star system, a trend that began when producers chose famous stage actors like Mary Pickford and James O'Neill to play the leading roles in

their productions and to grace their advertising posters. David Robinson, *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 140. Because of the MPPC's inflexibility, independent companies were the only ones able to capitalize on two important trends that were to become film's future: single-reel features and star power. Today, few people would recognize names like Vitagraph or Biograph, but the independents that outlasted them—Universal, Goldwyn (which would later merge with Metro and Mayer), Fox (later 20th Century Fox), and Paramount (the later version of the Lasky Corporation)—have become household names.

Hollywood

As moviegoing increased in popularity among the middle class, and as the feature films began keeping audiences in their seats for longer periods of time, exhibitors found a need to create more comfortable and richly decorated theater spaces to attract their audiences. These “dream palaces,” so called because of their often lavish embellishments of marble, brass, gilding, and cut glass, not only came to replace the nickelodeon theater, but also created the demand that would lead to the Hollywood studio system. Some producers realized that the growing demand for new work could only be met if the films were produced on a regular, year-round system. However, this was impractical with the current system that often relied on outdoor filming and was predominately based in Chicago and New York—two cities whose weather conditions prevented outdoor filming for a significant portion of the year. Different companies attempted filming in warmer locations such as Florida, Texas, and Cuba, but the place where producers eventually found the most success was a small, industrial suburb of Los Angeles called Hollywood.

Hollywood proved to be an ideal location for a number of reasons. Not only was the climate temperate and sunny year-round, but land was plentiful and cheap, and the location allowed close access to a number of diverse topographies: mountains, lakes, desert, coasts, and forests. By 1915, more than 60 percent of U.S. film production was centered in Hollywood. *Britannica Online*. s.v. “History of the Motion Picture.” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion-picture>

The Art of Silent Film

While the development of narrative film was largely driven by commercial factors, it is also important to acknowledge the role of individual artists who turned it into a medium of personal expression. The motion picture of the silent era was generally simplistic in nature; acted in overly animated movements to engage the eye; and accompanied by live music, played by musicians in the theater, and written titles to create a mood and to narrate a story. Within the confines of this medium, one filmmaker in particular emerged to transform the silent film into an art and to unlock its potential as a medium of serious expression and persuasion. D. W. Griffith, who entered the film industry as an actor in 1907, quickly moved to a directing role in which he worked closely with his camera crew to experiment with shots, angles, and editing techniques that could heighten the emotional intensity of his scenes. He found that by practicing parallel editing, in which a film alternates between two or more scenes of action, he could create an illusion of simultaneity. He could then heighten the tension of the film's drama by alternating between cuts more and more rapidly until the scenes of action converged. Griffith used this technique to great effect in his controversial film *The Birth of a Nation*, which will be discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter. Other techniques that Griffith employed to new effect included panning shots, through which he was able to establish a sense of scene and to engage his audience more fully in the experience of the film, and tracking shots, or shots that traveled with the movement of a scene. “Griffith,” *Motion Pictures*, www.uv.es/EBRIT/macro/macro_5004_39_6.html#0011. which allowed the audience—through the eye of the camera—to participate in the film's action.

MPAA: Combating Censorship

As film became an increasingly lucrative U.S. industry, prominent industry figures like D. W. Griffith, slapstick comedian/director Charlie Chaplin, and actors Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks grew extremely wealthy and influential. Public attitudes toward stars and toward some stars' extravagant lifestyles were divided, much as they are today: On the one hand, these celebrities were idolized and imitated in popular culture, yet at the same time, they were criticized for representing a threat, on and off screen, to traditional morals and social order. And much as it does today, the news media liked to sensationalize the lives of celebrities to sell stories. Comedian Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle, who worked alongside future icons Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, was at the center of one of the biggest scandals of the silent era. When Arbuckle hosted a marathon party over Labor Day weekend in 1921, one of his guests, model Virginia Rapp, was rushed to the hospital, where she later died. Reports of a drunken orgy, rape, and murder surfaced. Following World War I, the United States was in the middle of significant social reforms, such as Prohibition. Many feared that movies and their stars could threaten the moral order of the country. Because of the nature of the crime and the celebrity involved, these fears became inexplicably tied to the Arbuckle case. “Post World War I US Cinema,” *Motion Pictures*,

www.uv.es/EBRIT/macro/macro_5004_39_10.html#0015. Even though autopsy reports ruled that Rapp had died from causes for which Arbuckle could not be blamed, the comedian was tried (and acquitted) for manslaughter, and his career was ruined.

The Arbuckle affair and a series of other scandals only increased public fears about Hollywood's impact. In response to this perceived threat, state and local governments increasingly tried to censor the content of films that depicted crime, violence, and sexually explicit material. Deciding that they needed to protect themselves from government censorship and to foster a more favorable public image, the major Hollywood studios organized in 1922 to form an association they called the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (later renamed the Motion Picture Association of America, or MPAA). Among other things, the MPAA instituted a code of self-censorship for the motion picture industry. Today, the MPAA operates by a voluntary rating system, which means producers can voluntarily submit a film for review, which is designed to alert viewers to the age-appropriateness of a film, while still protecting the filmmakers' artistic freedom. Motion Picture Association of America, "History of the MPAA," <http://www.mpa.org/about/history>.

Silent Film's Demise

In 1925, Warner Bros. was just a small Hollywood studio looking for opportunities to expand. When representatives from Western Electric offered to sell the studio the rights to a new technology they called Vitaphone, a sound-on-disc system that had failed to capture the interest of any of the industry giants, Warner Bros. executives took a chance, predicting that the novelty of talking films might be a way to make a quick, short-term profit. Little did they anticipate that their gamble would not only establish them as a major Hollywood presence but also change the industry forever.

The pairing of sound with motion pictures was nothing new in itself. Edison, after all, had commissioned the kinetoscope to create a visual accompaniment to the phonograph, and many early theaters had orchestra pits to provide musical accompaniment to their films. Even the smaller picture houses with lower budgets almost always had an organ or piano. When Warner Bros. purchased Vitaphone technology, it planned to use it to provide prerecorded orchestral accompaniment for its films, thereby increasing their marketability to the smaller theaters that didn't have their own orchestra pits. Phil Gochenour, "Birth of the 'Talkies': The Development of Synchronized Sound for Motion Pictures," in *Science and Its Times*, vol. 6, 1900–1950, ed. Neil Schlager and Josh Lauer (Detroit: Gale, 2000), 577. In 1926, Warner debuted the system with the release of *Don Juan*, a costume drama accompanied by a recording of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra; the public responded enthusiastically. "Pre World War II Sound Era: Introduction of Sound," *Motion Pictures*, www.uv.es/EBRIT/macro/macro_5004_39_11.html#0017. By 1927, after a \$3 million campaign, Warner Bros. had wired more than 150 theaters in the United States, and it released its second sound film, *The Jazz Singer*, in which the actor Al Jolson improvised a few lines of synchronized dialogue and sang six songs. The film was a major breakthrough. Audiences, hearing an actor speak on screen for the first time, were enchanted. Phil Gochenour, "Birth of the 'Talkies': The Development of Synchronized Sound for Motion Pictures," in *Science and Its Times*, vol. 6, 1900–1950, ed. Neil Schlager and Josh Lauer (Detroit: Gale, 2000), 578. While radio, a new and popular entertainment, had been drawing audiences away from the picture houses for some time, with the birth of the "talkie," or talking film, audiences once again returned to the cinema in large numbers, lured by the promise of seeing and hearing their idols perform. Charles Higham. *The Art of the American Film: 1900–1971*. (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1973), 85. By 1929, three-fourths of Hollywood films had some form of sound accompaniment, and by 1930, the silent film was a thing of the past. Phil Gochenour, "Birth of the 'Talkies': The Development of Synchronized Sound for Motion Pictures," in *Science and Its Times*, vol. 6, 1900–1950, ed. Neil Schlager and Josh Lauer (Detroit: Gale, 2000), 578.

"I Don't Think We're in Kansas Anymore": Film Goes Technicolor

Although the techniques of tinting and hand painting had been available methods for adding color to films for some time (Georges Méliès, for instance, employed a crew to hand-paint many of his films), neither method ever caught on. The hand-painting technique became impractical with the advent of mass-produced film, and the tinting process, which filmmakers discovered would create an interference with the transmission of sound in films, was abandoned with the rise of the talkie. However, in 1922, Herbert Kalmus' Technicolor company introduced a dye-transfer technique that allowed it to produce a full-length film, *The Toll of the Sea*, in two primary colors. "Motion Pictures in Color," in *American Decades*, ed. Judith S. Baughman and others, vol. 3, Gale Virtual Reference Library. However, because only two colors were used, the appearance of *The Toll of the Sea* (1922), *The Ten Commandments* (1923), and other early Technicolor films was not very lifelike. By 1932, Technicolor had designed a three-color system with more realistic results, and for the next 25 years, all color films were produced with this improved system. Disney's *Three Little Pigs* (1933) and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1936) and films with live actors, like MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *Gone With the Wind* (1939), experienced early success using Technicolor's three-color method.

Despite the success of certain color films in the 1930s, Hollywood, like the rest of the United States, was feeling the impact of the Great Depression, and the expenses of special cameras, crews, and Technicolor lab processing made color films impractical for studios trying to cut costs. Therefore, it wasn't until the end of the 1940s that Technicolor would largely displace the black-and-white film. "Motion Pictures in Color," in *American Decades*, ed. Judith S. Baughman and others, vol. 3, Gale Virtual Reference Library.

Rise and Fall of the Hollywood Studio

The spike in theater attendance that followed the introduction of talking films changed the economic structure of the motion picture industry, bringing about some of the largest mergers in industry history. By 1930, eight studios produced 95 percent of all American films, and they continued to experience growth even during the Depression. The five most influential of these studios—Warner Bros., Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, RKO, 20th Century Fox, and Paramount—were vertically integrated; that is, they controlled every part of the system as it related to their films, from the production, to release, distribution, and even viewing. Because they owned theater chains worldwide, these studios controlled which movies exhibitors ran, and because they “owned” a stock of directors, actors, writers, and technical assistants by contract, each studio produced films of a particular character.

The late 1930s and early 1940s are sometimes known as the “Golden Age” of cinema, a time of unparalleled success for the movie industry; by 1939, film was the 11th-largest industry in the United States, and during World War II, when the U.S. economy was once again flourishing, two-thirds of Americans were attending the theater at least once a week. *Britannica Online*. s.v. “History of the Motion Picture.” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion-picture> Some of the most acclaimed movies in history were released during this period, including *Citizen Kane* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. However, postwar inflation, a temporary loss of key foreign markets, the advent of the television, and other factors combined to bring that rapid growth to an end. In 1948, the case of the *United States v. Paramount Pictures*—mandating competition and forcing the studios to relinquish control over theater chains—dealt the final devastating blow from which the studio system would never recover. Control of the major studios reverted to Wall Street, where the studios were eventually absorbed by multinational corporations, and the powerful studio heads lost the influence they had held for nearly 30 years. Michael Baers, “Studio System,” in *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture*, ed. Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast (Detroit: St. James Press, 2000), vol. 4, 565.

Percentage of the US Population that Went to the Cinema on Average Weekly

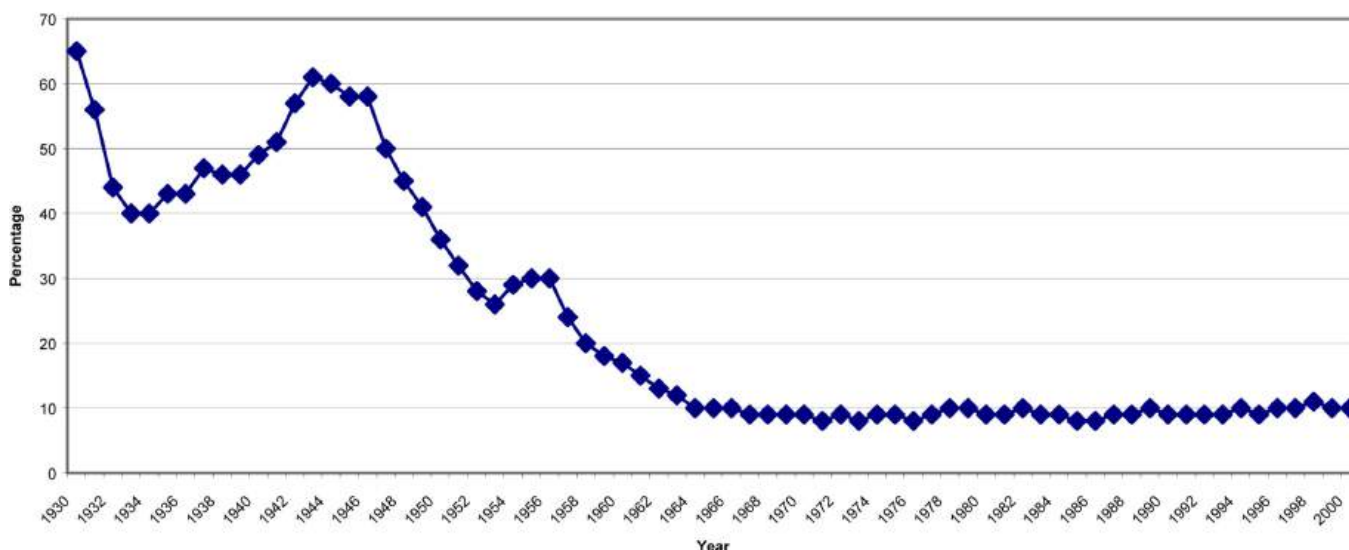


Figure 8.5

Rise and Decline of Movie Viewing During Hollywood’s “Golden Age”

Post–World War II: Television Presents a Threat

While economic factors and antitrust legislation played key roles in the decline of the studio system, perhaps the most important factor in that decline was the advent of the television. Given the opportunity to watch “movies” from the comfort of their own homes, the millions of Americans who owned a television by the early 1950s were attending the cinema far less regularly than they had only several years earlier. “The War Years and Post World War II Trends: Decline of the Hollywood Studios,” *Motion Pictures*,

www.uv.es/EBRIT/macro/macro_5004_39_24.html#0030. In an attempt to win back diminishing audiences, studios did their best to exploit the greatest advantages film held over television. For one thing, television broadcasting in the 1950s was all in black and white, whereas the film industry had the advantage of color. While producing a color film was still an expensive undertaking in the late 1940s, a couple of changes occurred in the industry in the early 1950s to make color not only more affordable but also more realistic in its appearance. In 1950, as the result of antitrust legislation, Technicolor lost its monopoly on the color film industry, allowing other providers to offer more competitive pricing on filming and processing services. At the same time, Kodak came out with a multilayer film stock that made it possible to use more affordable cameras and to produce a higher quality image. Kodak's Eastmancolor option was an integral component in converting the industry to color. In the late 1940s, only 12 percent of features were in color; however, by 1954 (after the release of Kodak Eastmancolor) more than 50 percent of movies were in color. *Britannica Online*. s.v. "History of the Motion Picture." <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion-picture>

Another clear advantage on which filmmakers tried to capitalize was the sheer size of the cinema experience. With the release of the epic biblical film *The Robe* in 1953, 20th Century Fox introduced the method that would soon be adopted by nearly every studio in Hollywood: a technology that allowed filmmakers to squeeze a wide-angle image onto conventional 35-mm film stock, thereby increasing the aspect ratio (the ratio of a screen's width to its height) of their images. This wide-screen format increased the immersive quality of the theater experience. Nonetheless, even with these advancements, movie attendance never again reached the record numbers it experienced in 1946, at the peak of the Golden Age of Hollywood. *Britannica Online*. s.v. "History of the Motion Picture." <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion-picture>; David Robinson, *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 45, 53.

Mass Entertainment, Mass Paranoia: HUAC and the Hollywood Blacklist

The Cold War with the Soviet Union began in 1947, and with it came the widespread fear of communism, not only from the outside, but equally from within. To undermine this perceived threat, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) commenced investigations to locate communist sympathizers in America, who were suspected of conducting espionage for the Soviet Union. In the highly conservative and paranoid atmosphere of the time, Hollywood, the source of a mass-cultural medium, came under fire in response to fears that subversive, communist messages were being embedded in films. In November 1947, more than 100 people in the movie business were called to testify before the HUAC about their and their colleagues' involvement with communist affairs. Of those investigated, 10 in particular refused to cooperate with the committee's questions. These 10, later known as the Hollywood Ten, were fired from their jobs and sentenced to serve up to a year in prison. The studios, already slipping in influence and profit, were eager to cooperate in order to save themselves, and a number of producers signed an agreement stating that no communists would work in Hollywood.

The hearings, which recommenced in 1951 with the rise of Senator Joseph McCarthy's influence, turned into a kind of witch hunt as witnesses were asked to testify against their associates, and a blacklist of suspected communists evolved. Over 324 individuals lost their jobs in the film industry as a result of blacklisting (the denial of work in a certain field or industry) and HUAC investigations. Dan Georgakas, "Hollywood Blacklist," in *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, ed. Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, 2004, <http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/blacklist.html>; Michael Mills, "Blacklist: A Different Look at the 1947 HUAC Hearings," *Modern Times*, 2007, www.moderntimes.com/blacklist/; Kathleen Dresler, Kari Lewis, Tiffany Schoser and Cathy Nordine, "The Hollywood Ten," Dalton Trumbo, 2005, www.mcpld.org/trumbo/WebPages/hollywoodten.htm.

Down with the Establishment: Youth Culture of the 1960s and 1970s

Movies of the late 1960s began attracting a younger demographic, as a growing number of young people were drawn in by films like Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969), Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), and Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969)—all revolutionary in their genres—that displayed a sentiment of unrest toward conventional social orders and included some of the earliest instances of realistic and brutal violence in film. These four films in particular grossed so much money at the box offices that producers began churning out low-budget copycats to draw in a new, profitable market. "Recent Trends in US Cinema," *Motion Pictures*, www.uv.es/EBRIT/macro/macro_5004_39_37.html#0045. While this led to a rise in youth-culture films, few of them saw great success. However, the new liberal attitudes toward depictions of sex and violence in these films represented a sea of change in the movie industry that manifested in many movies of the 1970s, including Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972), William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973), and Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975), all three of which saw great financial success. *Britannica Online*. s.v. "History of the Motion Picture."

[http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion picture](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion-picture); John Belton, *American Cinema/American Culture*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 284–290.

Blockbusters, Knockoffs, and Sequels

In the 1970s, with the rise of work by Coppola, Spielberg, George Lucas, Martin Scorsese, and others, a new breed of director emerged. These directors were young and film-school educated, and they contributed a sense of professionalism, sophistication, and technical mastery to their work, leading to a wave of blockbuster productions, including *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *Star Wars* (1977), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), and *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982). The computer-generated special effects that were available at this time also contributed to the success of a number of large-budget productions. In response to these and several earlier blockbusters, movie production and marketing techniques also began to shift, with studios investing more money in fewer films in the hopes of producing more big successes. For the first time, the hefty sums producers and distributors invested didn't go to production costs alone; distributors were discovering the benefits of TV and radio advertising and finding that doubling their advertising costs could increase profits as much as three or four times over. With the opening of *Jaws*, one of the five top-grossing films of the decade (and the highest grossing film of all time until the release of *Star Wars* in 1977), Hollywood embraced the wide-release method of movie distribution, abandoning the release methods of earlier decades, in which a film would debut in only a handful of select theaters in major cities before it became gradually available to mass audiences. *Jaws* was released in 600 theaters simultaneously, and the big-budget films that followed came out in anywhere from 800 to 2,000 theaters nationwide on their opening weekends. John Belton, *American Cinema/American Culture*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 305; Steve Hanson and Sandra Garcia-Myers, "Blockbusters," in *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture*, ed. Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast (Detroit: St. James Press, 2000), vol. 1, 282.

The major Hollywood studios of the late 1970s and early 1980s, now run by international corporations, tended to favor the conservative gamble of the tried and true, and as a result, the period saw an unprecedented number of high-budget sequels—as in the *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, and *Godfather* films—as well as imitations and adaptations of earlier successful material, such as the plethora of "slasher" films that followed the success of the 1979 thriller *Halloween*. Additionally, corporations sought revenue sources beyond the movie theater, looking to the video and cable releases of their films. Introduced in 1975, the VCR became nearly ubiquitous in American homes by 1998 with 88.9 million households owning the appliance. Karen Rosen and Alan Meier, "Power Measurements and National Energy Consumption of Televisions and Video Cassette Recorders in the USA," *Energy*, 25, no. 3 (2000), 220. Cable television's growth was slower, but ownership of VCRs gave people a new reason to subscribe, and cable subsequently expanded as well. Everett Rogers, "Video is Here to Stay," *Center for Media Literacy*, <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/video-here-stay>. And the newly introduced concept of film-based merchandise (toys, games, books, etc.) allowed companies to increase profits even more.

The 1990s and Beyond

The 1990s saw the rise of two divergent strands of cinema: the technically spectacular blockbuster with special, computer-generated effects and the independent, low-budget film. The capabilities of special effects were enhanced when studios began manipulating film digitally. Early examples of this technology can be seen in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) and *Jurassic Park* (1993). Films with an epic scope—*Independence Day* (1996), *Titanic* (1997), and *The Matrix* (1999)—also employed a range of computer-animation techniques and special effects to wow audiences and to draw more viewers to the big screen. *Toy Story* (1995), the first fully computer-animated film, and those that came after it, such as *Antz* (1998), *A Bug's Life* (1998), and *Toy Story 2* (1999), displayed the improved capabilities of computer-generated animation. David Sedman, "Film Industry, Technology of," in *Encyclopedia of Communication and Information*, ed. Jorge Reina Schement (New York: MacMillan Reference, 2000), vol. 1, 340. At the same time, independent directors and producers, such as the Coen brothers and Spike Jonze, experienced an increased popularity, often for lower-budget films that audiences were more likely to watch on video at home. *Britannica Online*. s.v. "History of the Motion Picture." [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion picture](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394161/history-of-the-motion-picture) A prime example of this is the 1996 Academy Awards program, when independent films dominated the Best Picture category. Only one movie from a big film studio was nominated—*Jerry Maguire*—and the rest were independent films. The growth of both independent movies and special-effects-laden blockbusters continues to the present day. You will read more about current issues and trends and the future of the movie industry later on in this chapter.

Key Takeaways

- The concept of the motion picture was first introduced to a mass audience through Thomas Edison’s kinetoscope in 1891. However, it wasn’t until the Lumière brothers released the Cinématographe in 1895 that motion pictures were projected for audience viewing. In the United States, film established itself as a popular form of entertainment with the nickelodeon theater in the 1910s.
- The release of *The Jazz Singer* in 1927 marked the birth of the talking film, and by 1930 silent film was a thing of the past. Technicolor emerged for film around the same time and found early success with movies like *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone With the Wind*. However, people would continue to make films in black and white until the late 1950s.
- By 1915 most of the major film studios had moved to Hollywood. During the Golden Age of Hollywood, these major studios controlled every aspect of the movie industry, and the films they produced drew crowds to theaters in numbers that have still not been surpassed. After World War II, the studio system declined as a result of antitrust legislation that took power away from studios and of the invention of the television.
- During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a rise in films—including *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Wild Bunch*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and *Easy Rider*—that celebrated the emerging youth culture and a rejection of the conservatism of the previous decades. This also led to looser attitudes toward depictions of sexuality and violence in film. The 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of the blockbuster, with films like *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *The Godfather*.
- The adoption of the VCR by most households in the 1980s reduced audiences at movie theaters but opened a new mass market of home movie viewers. Improvements in computer animation led to more special effects in film during the 1990s with movies like *The Matrix*, *Jurassic Park*, and the first fully computer-animated film, *Toy Story*.

Exercise 8.2.1

Identify four films that you would consider to be representative of major developments in the industry and in film as a medium that were outlined in this section. Imagine you are using these films to explain movie history to a friend. Provide a detailed explanation of why each of these films represents significant changes in attitudes, technology, or trends and situate each in the overall context of film’s development. Consider the following questions:

1. How did this movie influence the film industry?
2. What has been the lasting impact of this movie on the film industry?
3. How was the film industry and technology different before this film?

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8.3: Movies and Culture

Learning Objectives

- Recognize how movies reflect cultural attitudes, trends, and events.
- Indicate how movies influence culture.

Movies Mirror Culture

The relationship between movies and culture involves a complicated dynamic; while American movies certainly influence the mass culture that consumes them, they are also an integral part of that culture, a product of it, and therefore a reflection of prevailing concerns, attitudes, and beliefs. In considering the relationship between film and culture, it is important to keep in mind that, while certain ideologies may be prevalent in a given era, not only is American culture as diverse as the populations that form it, but it is also constantly changing from one period to the next. Mainstream films produced in the late 1940s and into the 1950s, for example, reflected the conservatism that dominated the sociopolitical arenas of the time. However, by the 1960s, a reactionary youth culture began to emerge in opposition to the dominant institutions, and these antiestablishment views soon found their way onto screen—a far cry from the attitudes most commonly represented only a few years earlier.

In one sense, movies could be characterized as America’s storytellers. Not only do Hollywood films reflect certain commonly held attitudes and beliefs about what it means to be American, but they also portray contemporary trends, issues, and events, serving as records of the eras in which they were produced. Consider, for example, films about the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks: *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *World Trade Center*, *United 93*, and others. These films grew out of a seminal event of the time, one that preoccupied the consciousness of Americans for years after it occurred.

Birth of a Nation

In 1915, director D. W. Griffith established his reputation with the highly successful film *The Birth of a Nation*, based on Thomas Dixon’s novel *The Clansman*, a pro-segregation narrative about the American South during and after the Civil War. At the time, *The Birth of a Nation* was the longest feature film ever made, at almost 3 hours, and contained huge battle scenes that amazed and delighted audiences. Griffith’s storytelling ability helped solidify the narrative style that would go on to dominate feature films. He also experimented with editing techniques such as close-ups, jump cuts, and parallel editing that helped make the film an artistic achievement.

Griffith’s film found success largely because it captured the social and cultural tensions of the era. As American studies specialist Lary May has argued, “[Griffith’s] films dramatized every major concern of the day.” Lary May, “Apocalyptic Cinema: D. W. Griffith and the Aesthetics of Reform,” in *Movies and Mass Culture*, ed. John Belton (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 26. In the early 20th century, fears about recent waves of immigrants had led to certain racist attitudes in mass culture, with “scientific” theories of the time purporting to link race with inborn traits like intelligence and other capabilities. Additionally, the dominant political climate, largely a reaction against populist labor movements, was one of conservative elitism, eager to attribute social inequalities to natural human differences. “Birth of a Nation,” *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 2nd ed., ed. William A. Darity, Jr., Gale Virtual Reference Library, 1:305–306. According to a report by the New York *Evening Post* after the film’s release, even some Northern audiences “clapped when the masked riders took vengeance on Negroes.” Charles Higham. *The Art of the American Film: 1900–1971*. (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1973), 13. However, the outrage many groups expressed about the film is a good reminder that American culture is not monolithic, that there are always strong contingents in opposition to dominant ideologies.

While critics praised the film for its narrative complexity and epic scope, many others were outraged and even started riots at several screenings because of its highly controversial, openly racist attitudes, which glorified the Ku Klux Klan and blamed Southern blacks for the destruction of the war. Charles Higham. *The Art of the American Film: 1900–1971*. (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1973), 10–11. Many Americans joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in denouncing the film, and the National Board of Review eventually cut a number of the film’s racist sections. Lary May, “Apocalyptic Cinema: D. W. Griffith and the Aesthetics of Reform,” in *Movies and Mass Culture*, ed. John Belton (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 46. However, it’s important to keep in mind the attitudes of the early 1900s. At the time the nation was divided, and Jim Crow laws and segregation were enforced. Nonetheless, *The Birth of a Nation* was the highest

grossing movie of its era. In 1992, the film was classified by the Library of Congress among the “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant films” in U.S. history.



Figure 8.6 *The Birth of a Nation* expressed racial tensions of the early 20th century.

“The American Way”

Until the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, American films after World War I generally reflected the neutral, isolationist stance that prevailed in politics and culture. However, after the United States was drawn into the war in Europe, the government enlisted Hollywood to help with the war effort, opening the federal Bureau of Motion Picture Affairs in Los Angeles. Bureau officials served in an advisory capacity on the production of war-related films, an effort with which the studios cooperated. As a result, films tended toward the patriotic and were produced to inspire feelings of pride and confidence in being American and to clearly establish that America and its allies were forced of good. For instance, critically acclaimed *Casablanca* paints a picture of the ill effects of fascism, illustrates the values that heroes like Victor Laszlo hold, and depicts America as a place for refugees to find democracy and freedom. Review of *Casablanca*, directed by Michael Curtiz, Digital History, www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/bureau_casablanca.cfm.

These early World War II films were sometimes overtly propagandist, intended to influence American attitudes rather than present a genuine reflection of American sentiments toward the war. Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* films, for example, the first of which was produced in 1942, were developed for the U.S. Army and were later shown to general audiences; they delivered a war message through narrative. Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Los Angeles: The Free Press, 1987), 122. As the war continued, however, filmmakers opted to forego patriotic themes for a more serious reflection of American sentiments, as exemplified by films like Alfred Hitchcock’s *Lifeboat*.

Youth versus Age: From Counterculture to Mass Culture

In Mike Nichols’s 1967 film *The Graduate*, Dustin Hoffman, as the film’s protagonist, enters into a romantic affair with the wife of his father’s business partner. However, Mrs. Robinson and the other adults in the film fail to understand the young, alienated hero, who eventually rebels against them. *The Graduate*, which brought in more than \$44 million at the box office, reflected the attitudes of many members of a young generation growing increasingly dissatisfied with what they perceived to be the repressive social codes established by their more conservative elders. Tim Dirks, review of *The Graduate*, directed by Mike Nichols, Filmsite, <http://www.filmsite.org/grad.html>.

This baby boomer generation came of age during the Korean and Vietnam wars. Not only did the youth culture express a cynicism toward the patriotic, prowar stance of their World War II–era elders, but they displayed a fierce resistance toward institutional authority in general, an antiestablishmentism epitomized in the 1967 hit film *Bonnie and Clyde*. In the film, a young, outlaw couple sets out on a cross-country bank-robbing spree until they’re killed in a violent police ambush at the film’s close. John Belton, *American Cinema/American Culture*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 286.



Figure 8.7 *Bonnie and Clyde* reflected the attitudes of a rising youth culture.

Bonnie and Clyde's violence provides one example of the ways films at the time were testing the limits of permissible on-screen material. The youth culture's liberal attitudes toward formally taboo subjects like sexuality and drugs began to emerge in film during the late 1960s. Like *Bonnie and Clyde*, Sam Peckinpah's 1969 Western *The Wild Bunch*, displays an early example of aestheticized violence in film. The wildly popular *Easy Rider* (1969)—containing drugs, sex, and violence—may owe a good deal of its initial success to liberalized audiences. And in the same year, *Midnight Cowboy*, one of the first Hollywood films to receive an X rating (in this case for its sexual content), won three Academy Award awards, including Best Picture. John Belton, *American Cinema/American Culture*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 288–89. As the release and subsequently successful reception of these films attest, what at the decade's outset had been countercultural had, by the decade's close, become mainstream.

The Hollywood Production Code

When the MPAA (originally MPPDA) first banded together in 1922 to combat government censorship and to promote artistic freedom, the association attempted a system of self-regulation. However, by 1930—in part because of the transition to talking pictures—renewed criticism and calls for censorship from conservative groups made it clear to the MPPDA that the loose system of self-regulation was not enough protection. As a result, the MPPDA instituted the Production Code, or Hays Code (after MPPDA director William H. Hays), which remained in place until 1967. The code, which according to motion picture producers concerned itself with ensuring that movies were “directly responsible for spiritual or moral progress, for higher types of social life, and for much correct thinking,” “Complete Nudity is Never Permitted: The Motion Picture Code of 1930,” <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5099/>. was strictly enforced starting in 1934, putting an end to most public complaints. However, many people in Hollywood resented its restrictiveness. After a series of Supreme Court cases in the 1950s regarding the code's restrictions to freedom of speech, the Production Code grew weaker until it was finally replaced in 1967 with the MPAA rating system. “The Production Code of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc.—1930–1934,” *American Decades Primary Sources*, ed. Cynthia Rose (Detroit: Gale, 2004), vol. 4, 12–15.

MPAA Ratings

As films like *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966) tested the limits on violence and language, it became clear that the Production Code was in need of replacement. In 1968, the MPAA adopted a ratings system to identify films in terms of potentially objectionable content. By providing officially designated categories for films that would not have passed Production Code standards of the past, the MPAA opened a way for films to deal openly with mature content. The ratings system originally included four categories: G (suitable for general audiences), M (equivalent to the PG rating of today), R (restricted to adults over age 16), and X (equivalent to today's NC-17).

The MPAA rating systems, with some modifications, is still in place today. Before release in theaters, films are submitted to the MPAA board for a screening, during which advisers decide on the most appropriate rating based on the film's content. However, studios are not required to have the MPAA screen releases ahead of time—some studios release films without the MPAA rating at all. Commercially, less restrictive ratings are generally more beneficial, particularly in the case of adult-themed films that have the potential to earn the most restrictive rating, the NC-17. Some movie theaters will not screen a movie that is rated NC-17. When filmmakers get a more restrictive rating than they were hoping for, they may resubmit the film for review after editing out objectionable scenes. Kirby Dick, interview by Terry Gross, *Fresh Air*, NPR, September 13, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6068009>.

The New War Film: Cynicism and Anxiety

Unlike the patriotic war films of the World War II era, many of the films about U.S. involvement in Vietnam reflected strong antiwar sentiment, criticizing American political policy and portraying war's damaging effects on those who survived it. Films like *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), *M*A*S*H* (1970), *The Deer Hunter* (1978), and *Apocalypse Now* (1979) portray the military establishment in a negative light and dissolve clear-cut distinctions, such as the “us versus them” mentality, of earlier war films. These, and the dozens of Vietnam War films that were produced in the 1970s and 1980s—Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989) and Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), for example—reflect the sense of defeat and lack of closure Americans felt after the Vietnam War and the emotional and psychological scars it left on the nation's psyche. Tim Dirks, “1980s Film History,” Filmsite, 2010, <http://www.filmsite.org>; Michael Anderegg, introduction to *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television*, ed. Michael Anderegg (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 6–8. A spate of military and politically themed films emerged during the 1980s as America recovered from defeat in Vietnam, while at the same time facing anxieties about the ongoing Cold War with the Soviet Union.

Fears about the possibility of nuclear war were very real during the 1980s, and some film critics argue that these anxieties were reflected not only in overtly political films of the time but also in the popularity of horror films, like *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, which feature a mysterious and unkillable monster, and in the popularity of the fantastic in films like *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *Star Wars*, which offer imaginative escapes. Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 168.

Movies Shape Culture

Just as movies reflect the anxieties, beliefs, and values of the cultures that produce them, they also help to shape and solidify a culture's beliefs. Sometimes the influence is trivial, as in the case of fashion trends or figures of speech. After the release of *Flashdance* in 1983, for instance, torn T-shirts and leg warmers became hallmarks of the fashion of the 1980s. Diana Pemberton-Sikes, “15 Movies That Inspired Fashion Trends,” *The Clothing Chronicles*, March 3, 2006, <http://www.theclothingchronicles.com/archives/217-03032006.htm>. However, sometimes the impact can be profound, leading to social or political reform, or the shaping of ideologies.

Film and the Rise of Mass Culture

During the 1890s and up until about 1920, American culture experienced a period of rapid industrialization. As people moved from farms to centers of industrial production, urban areas began to hold larger and larger concentrations of the population. At the same time, film and other methods of mass communication (advertising and radio) developed, whose messages concerning tastes, desires, customs, speech, and behavior spread from these population centers to outlying areas across the country. The effect of early mass-communication media was to wear away regional differences and create a more homogenized, standardized culture.

Film played a key role in this development, as viewers began to imitate the speech, dress, and behavior of their common heroes on the silver screen. Steven Mintz, “The Formation of Modern American Mass Culture,” *Digital History*, 2007, www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=455. In 1911, the Vitagraph company began publishing *The Motion Picture Magazine*, America's first fan magazine. Originally conceived as a marketing tool to keep audiences interested in Vitagraph's pictures and major actors, *The Motion Picture Magazine* helped create the concept of the film star in the American imagination. Fans became obsessed with the off-screen lives of their favorite celebrities, like Pearl White, Florence Lawrence, and Mary Pickford. Jack Doyle, “A Star is Born: 1910s,” *Pop History Dig*, 2008, <http://www.pophistorydig.com/?tag=film-stars-mass-culture>.

American Myths and Traditions

American identity in mass society is built around certain commonly held beliefs, or myths about shared experiences, and these American myths are often disseminated through or reinforced by film. One example of a popular American myth, one that dates back to the writings of Thomas Jefferson and other founders, is an emphasis on individualism—a celebration of the common man or woman as a hero or reformer. With the rise of mass culture, the myth of the individual became increasingly appealing because it provided people with a sense of autonomy and individuality in the face of an increasingly homogenized culture. The hero myth finds embodiment in the Western, a film genre that was popular from the silent era through the 1960s, in which the lone cowboy, a seminomadic wanderer makes his way in a lawless, and often dangerous, frontier. An example is 1952's *High Noon*. From 1926 until 1967, Westerns accounted for nearly a quarter of all films produced. In other films, like Frank Capra's 1946 movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, the individual triumphs by standing up to injustice, reinforcing the belief that one person can make a difference in the world. John Belton, introduction to *Movies and Mass Culture*, ed. John Belton, 12. And in more recent films, hero figures such as Indiana Jones, Luke Skywalker (*Star Wars*), and Neo (*The Matrix*) have continued to emphasize individualism.

Social Issues in Film

As D. W. Griffith recognized nearly a century ago, film has enormous power as a medium to influence public opinion. Ever since Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* sparked strong public reactions in 1915, filmmakers have been producing movies that address social issues, sometimes subtly, and sometimes very directly. More recently, films like *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), about the 1994 Rwandan genocide, or *The Kite Runner* (2007), a story that takes place in the midst of a war-torn Afghanistan, have captured audience imaginations by telling stories that raise social awareness about world events. And a number of documentary films directed at social issues have had a strong influence on cultural attitudes and have brought about significant change.

In the 2000s, documentaries, particularly those of an activist nature, were met with greater interest than ever before. Films like *Super Size Me* (2004), which documents the effects of excessive fast-food consumption and criticizes the fast-food industry for promoting unhealthy eating habits for profit, and *Food, Inc.* (2009), which examines corporate farming practices and points to the negative impact these practices can have on human health and the environment, have brought about important changes in American food culture. Kim Severson, "Eat, Drink, Think, Change," *New York Times*, June 3, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/07/movies/07seve.html>. Just 6 weeks after the release of *Super Size Me*, McDonald's took the supersize option off its menu and since 2004 has introduced a number of healthy food options in its restaurants. Suemedha Sood, "Weighing the Impact of 'Super Size Me,'" *Wiretap*, June 29, 2004. www.wiretapmag.org/stories/19059/. Other fast-food chains have made similar changes. Suemedha Sood, "Weighing the Impact of 'Super Size Me,'" *Wiretap*, June 29, 2004. www.wiretapmag.org/stories/19059/.

Other documentaries intended to influence cultural attitudes and inspire change include those made by director Michael Moore. Moore's films present a liberal stance on social and political issues such as health care, globalization, and gun control. His 2002 film *Bowling for Columbine*, for example, addressed the Columbine High School shootings of 1999, presenting a critical examination of American gun culture. While some critics have accused Moore of producing propagandistic material under the label of documentary because of his films' strong biases, his films have been popular with audiences, with four of his documentaries ranking among the highest grossing documentaries of all time. *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), which criticized the second Bush administration and its involvement in the Iraq War, earned \$119 million at the box office, making it the most successful documentary of all time. Tim Dirks, "Film History of the 2000s," *Filmsite*; *Washington Post*, "The 10 Highest-Grossing Documentaries," July 31, 2006, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/graphic/2006/07/31/GR2006073100027.html.

Key Takeaways

- As products of mass culture, movies reflect cultural attitudes, trends, and concerns:
 1. D. W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation*, presenting a racist perspective on the U.S. Civil War and its aftermath, reflected racist concerns of the era in which it was produced.
 2. During World War II, films reflected the patriotic, prowar sentiments of the time.
 3. In the 1960s and 1970s with the rise of an antiestablishment youth culture, movies adopted more liberal stances toward sexuality and violence and displayed a cynicism toward established social structures.
- After the failure of the Vietnam War, films reflected a more ambivalent attitude toward war.
- The MPAA rating system, established in 1968, gave filmmakers greater freedom in the content they were able to portray on screen.

- Movies shape cultural attitudes and customs, as audiences adopt the attitudes and styles of the characters they watch on screen. Filmmakers may use their movies to influence cultural attitudes toward certain social issues, as in *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *Super Size Me*.

? Exercise 8.3.1

1. Consider three films you have watched in the last year. In what ways have these films reflected current concerns, trends, or attitudes? Of these movies, which do you think have the most potential to shape cultural attitudes or bring about social change? How do you think these movies might bring about this change?
2. Locate a film that has been remade and watch the original and remade versions. Besides the obvious changes in fashion and technology, what other differences do you notice that reflect the cultural attitudes, trends, and events in which each film was produced?

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8.4: Issues and Trends in Film

Learning Objectives

- Recognize the role the major Hollywood studios have in shaping the movie industry today.
- Identify the major economic concerns involved in the production and distribution of films.
- Describe the effects of piracy on the movie industry.

Filmmaking is both a commercial and artistic venture. The current economic situation in the film industry, with increased production and marketing costs and lower audience turnouts in theaters, often sets the standard for the films big studios are willing to invest in. If you wonder why theaters have released so many remakes and sequels in recent years, this section may help you to understand the motivating factors behind those decisions.

The Influence of Hollywood

In the movie industry today, publicity and product are two sides of the same coin. Even films that get a lousy critical reception can do extremely well in ticket sales if their marketing campaigns manage to create enough hype. Similarly, two comparable films can produce very different results at the box office if they have been given different levels of publicity. This explains why the film *What Women Want*, starring Mel Gibson, brought in \$33.6 million in its opening weekend in 2000, while a few months later, *The Million Dollar Hotel*, also starring Gibson, only brought in \$29,483 during its opening weekend. Nash Information Services, “What Women Want,” *The Numbers: Box Office Data, Movie Stars, Idle Speculation*, www.the-numbers.com/2000/WWWNT.php; Nash Information Services, “The Million Dollar Hotel,” *The Numbers: Box Office Data, Movie Stars, Idle Speculation*, www.the-numbers.com/2001/BHOTL.php. Unlike in the days of the Hollywood studio system, no longer do the actors alone draw audiences to a movie. The owners of the nation’s major movie theater chains are keenly aware that a film’s success at the box office has everything to do with studio-generated marketing and publicity. *What Women Want* was produced by Paramount, one of the film industry’s six leading studios, and widely released (on 3,000 screens) after an extensive marketing effort, while *The Million Dollar Hotel* was produced by Lionsgate, an independent studio without the necessary marketing budget to fill enough seats for a wide release on opening weekend. Edward Jay Epstein, “Neither the Power nor the Glory: Why Hollywood Leaves Originality to the Indies,” *Slate*, October 17, 2005, <http://www.slate.com/id/2128200>.

The Hollywood “dream factory,” as Hortense Powdermaker labeled it in her 1950 book on the movie industry, Hortense Powdermaker, “Hollywood, the Dream Factory,” astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/powder/intro.html. manufactures an experience that is part art and part commercial product. Caryn James, “Critic’s Notebook: Romanticizing Hollywood’s Dream Factory,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/11/07/movies/critic-s-notebook-romanticizing-hollywood-s-dream-factory.html>. While the studios of today are less factory-like than they were in the vertically integrated studio system era, the coordinated efforts of a film’s production team can still be likened to a machine calibrated for mass production. The films the studios churn out are the result of a capitalist enterprise that ultimately looks to the “bottom line” to guide most major decisions. Hollywood is an industry, and as in any other industry in a mass market, its success relies on control of production resources and “raw materials” and on its access to mass distribution and marketing strategies to maximize the product’s reach and minimize competition. John Belton, *American Cinema/American Culture*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 61–62. In this way, Hollywood has an enormous influence on the films to which the public has access.

Ever since the rise of the studio system in the 1930s, the majority of films have originated with the leading Hollywood studios. Today, the six big studios control 95 percent of the film business. Kirby Dick, interview by Terry Gross, *Fresh Air*, NPR, September 13, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6068009>. In the early years, audiences were familiar with the major studios, their collections of actors and directors, and the types of films that each studio was likely to release. All of that changed with the decline of the studio system; screenwriters, directors, scripts, and cinematographers no longer worked exclusively with one studio, so these days, while moviegoers are likely to know the name of a film’s director and major actors, it’s unusual for them to identify a film with the studio that distributes it. However, studios are no less influential. The previews of coming attractions that play before a movie begins are controlled by the studios. Hillary Busis, “How Do Movie Theaters Decide Which Trailers to Show?” *Slate*, April 15, 2010, <http://www.slate.com/id/2246166/>. Online marketing, TV commercials, and advertising partnerships with other industries—the name of an upcoming film, for instance, appearing on some Coke cans—are available tools for the big-budget studios that have the resources to commit millions to prerelease advertising. Even though studios no longer own

the country's movie theater chains, the films produced by the big six studios are the ones the multiplexes invariably show. Unlike films by independents, it's a safe bet that big studio movies are the ones that will sell tickets.

The Blockbuster Standard

While it may seem like the major studios are making heavy profits, moviemaking today is a much riskier, less profitable enterprise than it was in the studio system era. The massive budgets required for the global marketing of a film are huge financial gambles. In fact, most movies cost the studios much more to market and produce—upward of \$100 million—than their box-office returns ever generate. With such high stakes, studios have come to rely on the handful of blockbuster films that keep them afloat, *New World Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Film Industry," www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hollywood. movies like *Titanic*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and *Avatar*. *New World Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Film Industry," www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hollywood. The blockbuster film becomes a touchstone, not only for production values and story lines, but also for moviegoers' expectations. Because studios know they can rely on certain predictable elements to draw audiences, they tend to invest the majority of their budgets on movies that fit the blockbuster mold. Remakes, movies with sequel setups, or films based on best-selling novels or comic books are safer bets than original screenplays or movies with experimental or edgy themes.

James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997), the second highest grossing movie of all time, saw such success largely because it was based on a well-known story, contained predictable plot elements, and was designed to appeal to the widest possible range of audience demographics with romance, action, expensive special effects, and an epic scope—meeting the blockbuster standard on several levels. The film's astronomical \$200 million production cost was a gamble indeed, requiring the backing of two studios, Paramount and 20th Century Fox. Steve Hanson and Sandra Garcia-Myers, "Blockbusters," in *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture*, ed. Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast (Detroit: St. James Press, 2000), vol. 1 However, the rash of high-budget, and high-grossing, films that have appeared since—*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and its sequels (2002–2011), *Avatar* (2009), *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), *The Lord of the Rings* films (2001–2003), *The Dark Knight* (2008), and others—are an indication that, for the time being, the blockbuster standard will drive Hollywood production.

The Role of Independent Films

While the blockbuster still drives the industry, the formulaic nature of most Hollywood films of the 1980s, 1990s, and into the 2000s has opened a door for independent films to make their mark on the industry. Audiences have welcomed movies like *Fight Club* (1999), *Lost in Translation* (2003), and *Juno* (2007) as a change from standard Hollywood blockbusters. Few independent films reached the mainstream audience during the 1980s, but a number of developments in that decade paved the way for their increased popularity in the coming years. The Sundance Film Festival (originally the U.S. Film Festival) began in Park City, Utah, in 1980 as a way for independent filmmakers to showcase their work. Since then, the festival has grown to garner more public attention, and now often represents an opportunity for independents to find market backing by larger studios. In 1989, Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape*, released by Miramax, was the first independent to break out of the art-house circuit and find its way into the multiplexes.

In the 1990s and 2000s, independent directors like the Coen brothers, Wes Anderson, Sofia Coppola, and Quentin Tarantino made significant contributions to contemporary cinema. Tarantino's 1994 film, *Pulp Fiction*, garnered attention for its experimental narrative structure, witty dialogue, and nonchalant approach to violence. It was the first independent film to break \$100 million at the box office, proving that there is still room in the market for movies produced outside of the big six studios. Ronald Bergan, *Film* (New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2006), 84.

The Role of Foreign Films

English-born Michael Apted, former president of the Director's Guild of America, once said, "Europeans gave me the inspiration to make movies ... but it was the Americans who showed me how to do it." Michael Apted, "Film's New Anxiety of Influence," *Newsweek*, December 28, 2007. <http://www.newsweek.com/2007/12/27/film-s-new-anxiety-of-influence.html>. Major Hollywood studio films have dominated the movie industry worldwide since Hollywood's golden age, yet American films have always been in a relationship of mutual influence with films from foreign markets. From the 1940s through the 1960s, for example, American filmmakers admired and were influenced by the work of overseas auteurs—directors like Ingmar Bergman (Sweden), Federico Fellini (Italy), François Truffaut (France), and Akira Kurosawa (Japan), whose personal, creative visions were reflected in their work. Richard Pells, "Is American Culture 'American'?" *eJournal USA*, February 1, 2006, <http://www.america.gov/st/econ-english/2008/June/20080608102136xjyrreP0.3622858.html>. The concept of the auteur was particularly important in France in the late 1950s and early 1960s when French filmmaking underwent a rebirth in the form of the New Wave movement. The French New

Wave was characterized by an independent production style that showcased the personal authorship of its young directors. Ronald Bergan, *Film* (New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2006), 60. The influence of the New Wave was, and continues to be, felt in the United States. The generation of young, film school-educated directors that became prominent in American cinema in the late 1960s and early 1970s owe a good deal of their stylistic techniques to the work of French New Wave directors.



Figure 8.8

The French New Wave movement of the 1950s and 1960s showed that films could be both artistically and commercially successful. Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* is well known for its improvisatory techniques and use of jump cuts.

In the current era of globalization, the influence of foreign films remains strong. The rapid growth of the entertainment industry in Asia, for instance, has led to an exchange of style and influence with U.S. cinema. Remakes of a number of popular Japanese horror films, including *The Ring* (2005), *Dark Water* (2005), and *The Grudge* (2004), have fared well in the United States, as have Chinese martial arts films like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), *Hero* (2002), and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004). At the same time, U.S. studios have recently tried to expand into the growing Asian market by purchasing the rights to films from South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong for remakes with Hollywood actors. Diana Lee, "Hollywood's Interest in Asian Films Leads to Globalization," *UniOrb.com*, December 1, 2005, uniorb.com/ATREND/movie.htm.

Cultural Imperialism or Globalization?

With the growth of Internet technology worldwide and the expansion of markets in rapidly developing countries, American films are increasingly finding their way into movie theaters and home DVD players around the world. In the eyes of many people, the problem is not the export of a U.S. product to outside markets, but the export of American culture that comes with that product. Just as films of the 1920s helped to shape a standardized, mass culture as moviegoers learned to imitate the dress and behavior of their favorite celebrities, contemporary film is now helping to form a mass culture on the global scale, as the youth of foreign nations acquire the American speech, tastes, and attitudes reflected in film. Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, "A European Considers the Influence of American Culture," *eJournal USA*, February 1, 2006, <http://www.america.gov/st/econenglish/2008/June/20080608094132xjyreP0.2717859.html>.

Staunch critics, feeling helpless to stop the erosion of their national cultures, accuse the United States of cultural imperialism through flashy Hollywood movies and commercialism—that is, deliberate conquest of one culture by another to spread capitalism. At the same time, others argue that the worldwide impact of Hollywood films is an inevitable part of globalization, a process that erodes national borders, opening the way for a free flow of ideas between cultures. Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, “A European Considers the Influence of American Culture,” *eJournal USA*, February 1, 2006, <http://www.america.gov/st/econenglish/2008/June/20080608094132xjyreP0.2717859.html>.

The Economics of Movies

With control of over 95 percent of U.S. film production, the big six Hollywood studios—Warner Bros., Paramount, 20th Century Fox, Universal, Columbia, and Disney—are at the forefront of the American film industry, setting the standards for distribution, release, marketing, and production values. However, the high costs of moviemaking today are such that even successful studios must find moneymaking potential in crossover media—computer games, network TV rights, spin-off TV series, DVD and releases on Blu-ray Disc format, toys and other merchandise, books, and other after-market products—to help recoup their losses. The drive for aftermarket marketability in turn dictates the kinds of films studios are willing to invest in. Steve Hanson and Sandra Garcia-Myers, “Blockbusters,” in *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture*, ed. Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast (Detroit: St. James Press, 2000), vol. 1, 283.

Rising Costs and Big Budget Movies

In the days of the vertically integrated studio system, filmmaking was a streamlined process, neither as risky nor as expensive as it is today. When producers, directors, screenwriters, art directors, actors, cinematographers, and other technical staff were all under contract with one studio, turnaround time for the casting and production of a film was often as little as 3 to 4 months. Beginning in the 1970s, after the decline of the studio system, the production costs for films increased dramatically, forcing the studios to invest more of their budgets in marketing efforts that could generate presales—that is, sales of distribution rights for a film in different sectors before the movie’s release. Steve Hanson and Sandra Garcia-Myers, “Blockbusters,” in *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture*, ed. Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast (Detroit: St. James Press, 2000), vol. 1, 282. This is still true of filmmaking today. With contracts that must be negotiated with actors, directors, and screenwriters, and with extended production times, costs are exponentially higher than they were in the 1930s—when a film could be made for around \$300,000. Eric Schaefer, “*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*”: *A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 50. By contrast, today’s average production budget, not including marketing expenses, is close to \$65 million today. Nash Information Services, “Glossary of Movie Business Terms,” *The Numbers*, <http://www.the-numbers.com/glossary.php>

Consider James Cameron’s *Avatar*, released in 2009, which cost close to \$340 million, making it one of the most expensive films of all time. Where does such an astronomical budget go? When weighing the total costs of producing and releasing a film, about half of the money goes to advertising. In the case of *Avatar*, the film cost \$190 million to make and around \$150 million to market. Mojgan Sherkat-Massoom, “10 Most Expensive Movies Ever Made,” *Access Hollywood*, 2010, http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/34368822/ns/entertainment-access_hollywood/?pg=2#ENT_AH_MostExpensiveMovies; Rebecca Keegan, “How Much Did Avatar Really Cost?” *Vanity Fair*, December 2009, www.vanityfair.com/online/oscars/2009/12/how-much-did-avatar-really-cost.html. Of that \$190 million production budget, part goes toward above-the-line costs, those that are negotiated before filming begins, and part to below-the-line costs, those that are generally fixed. Above-the-line costs include screenplay rights; salaries for the writer, producer, director, and leading actors; and salaries for directors’, actors’, and producers’ assistants. Below-the-line costs include the salaries for nonstarring cast members and technical crew, use of technical equipment, travel, locations, studio rental, and catering. Aldo-Vincenzo Tirelli, “Production Budget Breakdown: The Scoop on Film Financing,” *Helium*, www.helium.com/items/936661-production-budget-breakdown-the-scoop-on-film-financing. For *Avatar*, the reported \$190 million doesn’t include money for research and development of 3-D filming and computer-modeling technologies required to put the film together. If these costs are factored in, the total movie budget may be closer to \$500 million. Rebecca Keegan, “How Much Did Avatar Really Cost?” *Vanity Fair*, December 2009, www.vanityfair.com/online/oscars/2009/12/how-much-did-avatar-really-cost.html. Fortunately for 20th Century Fox, *Avatar* made a profit over these expenses in box-office sales alone, raking in \$750 million domestically (to make it the highest-grossing movie of all time) in the first 6 months after its release. Box Office Mojo, “Avatar,” May 31, 2010, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=avatar.htm>. However, one thing you should keep in mind is that *Avatar* was released in both 2-D and 3-D. Because 3-D ticket prices are more expensive than traditional 2-D theaters, the box-office returns are inflated.

The Big Budget Flop

However, for every expensive film that has made out well at the box office, there are a handful of others that have tanked. Back in 1980, when United Artists (UA) was a major Hollywood studio, its epic western *Heaven's Gate* cost nearly six times its original budget: \$44 million instead of the proposed \$7.6 million. The movie, which bombed at the box office, was the largest failure in film history at the time, losing at least \$40 million, and forcing the studio to be bought out by MGM. Sheldon Hall and Stephen Neale, "Super Blockbusters: 1976–1985," in *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 2010), 231. Since then, *Heaven's Gate* has become synonymous with commercial failure in the film industry. Tim Dirks, "1980s Film History," Filmsite, 2010, <http://www.filmsite.org>

More recently, the 2005 movie *Sahara* lost \$78 million, making it one of the biggest financial flops in film history. The film's initial production budget of \$80 million eventually doubled to \$160 million, due to complications with filming in Morocco and to numerous problems with the script. Glenn F. Bunting, "\$78 Million of Red Ink?" *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 2007, articles.latimes.com/2007/apr/15/business/fi-movie15/4.

Piracy

Movie piracy used to be perpetrated in two ways: Either someone snuck into a theater with a video camera, turning out blurred, wobbly, off-colored copies of the original film, or somebody close to the film leaked a private copy intended for reviewers. In the digital age, however, crystal-clear bootlegs of movies on DVD and the Internet are increasingly likely to appear illegally, posing a much greater threat to a film's profitability. Even safeguard techniques like digital watermarks are frequently sidestepped by tech-savvy pirates. Lisa Respers France, "In Digital Age, Can Movie Piracy Be Stopped?" *CNN*, May 2, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/05/01/wolverine.movie.piracy/>.

In 2009, an unfinished copy of 20th Century Fox's *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* appeared online 1 month before the movie's release date in theaters. Within a week, more than 1 million people had downloaded the pirated film. Similar situations have occurred in recent years with other major movies, including *The Hulk* (2003) and *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005). Lisa Respers France, "In Digital Age, Can Movie Piracy Be Stopped?" *CNN*, May 2, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/05/01/wolverine.movie.piracy/>. According to a 2006 study sponsored by the MPAA, Internet piracy and other methods of illegal copying cost major Hollywood studios \$6.1 billion in the previous year. Jesse Hiestand, "MPAA Study: '05 Piracy Cost \$6.1 Bil.," *Hollywood Reporter*, May 3, 2006. business.highbeam.com/2012/article-1G1-146544812/mpaa-study-05-piracy-cost-61-bil. The findings of this report have since been called into question, with investigators claiming that there was no clear methodology for how researchers estimated those figures. Greg Sandoval, "Feds Hampered by Incomplete MPAA Piracy Data," *CNET News*, April 19, 2010, news.cnet.com/8301-31001_3-20002837-261.html. Nonetheless, the ease of theft made possible by the digitization of film and improved file-sharing technologies like BitTorrent software, a peer-to-peer protocol for transferring large quantities of information between users, have put increased financial strain on the movie industry.

Key Takeaways

- A film's performance at the box office is often directly related to the studio marketing budget that backs it.
- Because of high marketing and production costs, the major studios have increasingly come to rely on blockbuster films to keep themselves profitable.
- Independent films found increased popularity in the 1990s and 2000s, in part because they represented a break from the predictable material often released by studios.
- With the rise of digital filming technology and online movies, movie piracy has become an increasing concern for Hollywood.

Exercise 8.4.1

In Section 8.3, you learned that blockbuster films rely on certain predictable elements to attract audiences. Think about recent blockbusters like *Alice in Wonderland*, *Avatar*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean* and consider the following:

1. What elements do these films have in common? Why do you think these elements help to sell movies?
2. How have the big Hollywood studios shaped these elements?
3. How do economic concerns, like box-office totals, promote predictable elements?
4. Have these movies been affected by piracy? If so, how? If not, why?

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