

Sources of news in the media



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The evolution of the news media has presented an interesting tale to be told over the last several hundred years, and the changes have become more abundant over the last two decades with the advent of new technology and ways of reporting. Getting news and special interest stories to the American public has always been the top priority of the news media, but over the last several years, the way of doing so has evolved tremendously.

There are several ways of getting the news to the public, among them television, radio, internet, satellite radio, newspapers, magazines, and even cell phones. The news world is far different today than it was a century ago, and things are on their way to changing even more.

People have interacted with the news since the beginning of news media. The printed word was the first incarnation of news media. Newspapers and different forms of propaganda were widespread ever since the written word came into existence.

However, with the invention of the printing press (Kreis, 2000), the printed word became more and more commonplace. Before long, learning to read and write became a priority for the learning processes of children all over the world and education became a major part of a child's life. Once the printing press was commonplace, the act of publishing newspapers became an everyday occurrence.

At first, reading newspapers and books was something reserved for the economically and social elite. However, with advances in education and more and more people in the states becoming literate, people began to read newspapers. With the freedom of the press instilled into the United States

Bill of Rights, the press began covering subjects that was at one time off limits, such as religion, government, politics, and other sensitive material. Editorial pages began appearing and people began writing letters to the papers, voicing their opinions and trying to be heard.

In the early 1900's, the invention of the radio became a major player in the world of news and the press. News reporters began covering stories and events, and for the first time, people were able to hear major history making news stories within 24 hours of the events actually happening, and sometimes even live in real time. One particular impact of radio was noticed in the audio recording provided by reporter Herbert Morrison at the scene of the Hindenburg disaster on May 6, 1937 (Widner, 2008).

The day after the disaster in New Jersey, the recording of Mr. Morrison covering the explosion of the giant zeppelin was broadcast on NBC and several other major news networks. In those days, most of the large radio stations never broadcast recorded material and preferred to be all live, all the time when broadcasting the news. This was one of the few exceptions of that rule. Morrison's broadcast went down in history as one of the most famous ever recorded and has been referred to millions of times since.

In the 1940's and 1950's, a new invention called television opened up the possibilities of better news coverage. The evening news became a staple in homes across America, especially once the country made it's way into the 1960's, when most households in America had finally purchased a television set.

People around America had a visual news source, and in addition to radio, newspapers, and such newspapers as Time and Life, America now had several great ways to keep up with news both locally and abroad.

Aside from television going to colour, the news and the way people engaged it maintained its status quo for several years. The next big change came in 1980, when Atlanta businessman Ted Turner founded the Cable News Network (CNN), the first ever twenty four hour cable news station.

This dramatically changed the landscape of broadcast journalism, and forced the evening news programs to step up their efforts to keep viewers, especially since the American public no longer had to wait until six o' clock at night to catch the latest news. This also hurt newspapers to a small extent, who had to look for other ways to entertain, as well as inform in the growing competitiveness of the news market.

In the 1990's, the broadcast journalism market grew by leaps and bounds. Along with several new cable news channels such as MSNBC, Fox News Channel, and business networks such as CNBC, the American public was also introduced to a new medium: the internet. The internet made it's major impact on journalism with a story involving President Bill Clinton. On January 17, 1998, internet writer Matt Drudge obtained the information that Newsweek was on the verge of reporting that the President Bill Clinton had had an extramarital affair with a White House intern but had scrapped the story (Whitworth, 2008).

He posted it on the internet, and the next day supplied the woman's name. That woman was Monica Lewinsky, and the story grew into quite possibly the

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biggest bombshell in Presidential history. This story also started a major trend of breaking news hitting the internet first before any other source and made way for internet journalism.

After the Lewinsky scandal broke, it became commonplace for the internet to be the grounds on which to break sensational stories without risking the consequences of being wrong on national television. Over the next decade and up to present day, national news networks, newspapers, and several other news outlets used the internet more and more extensively in their research and work.

The internet was also a place free of censorship, and reporters could get away with a lot more on their own personal web pages as opposed to working for a big corporate news outlet. Over the last several years, more and more people are getting into the journalism business, often putting their amateur skills to work on their own and not relying on an employer. In ways, this has both helped and hurt the media, but the final impact of this trend will not be seen for some time.

News media has come a long way since the first newspapers were printed on the press over two hundred years ago. Now, nearly any American can access any news they want with a few mouse clicks and the push of a button. The radio, television, and the internet all now offer 24 hour, around the clock live news coverage and have made all media accessible to anyone.

The convenience is there, but with so many sources, it now becomes an issue of credibility. How does one know that their source is correct and who to believe? Only through hard work, research, and a keen eye and ear can

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today's journalists and readers alike engage the news and get the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. That is the price of today's journalism environment.

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