

— Anthony R. Fellow —

# AMERICAN MEDIA HISTORY



# American Media History

**ANTHONY R. FELLOW**

California State University, Fullerton

**WITH JOHN TEBBEL**



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*This book is dedicated to my grandparents, Lucy and Joseph Anziano, who arrived at Ellis Island from Italy during the great immigration wave. They came with nothing but a dream. They built a business and reared a family during an era of depression and poverty. Grandmother Lucy became my hero. She taught us to be the best, achieve the most, and never give up.*

*Rose and Anthony Fellow, first-generation Italians who settled in Connecticut, set an example of service to one another and mankind. Grandfather Fellow was a beloved community leader. Grandmother Rose, who reared eight children following the early death of her husband, showed the stuff of which heroes are made. She taught us the meaning of love.*

*They truly were grand people, the type of people that made America great.*



## About the Authors

**ANTHONY R. FELLOW, Ph.D.**, professor of communications and coordinator of the journalism program at California State University, Fullerton, was a daily newspaper reporter and editor for ten years before obtaining his doctorate at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California, where he also has served as an adjunct professor of journalism. He is author with Thomas N. Clanin of the *Copy Editors Handbook for Newspapers*.

**JOHN TEBBEL**, professor emeritus of journalism at New York University, has had a long and distinguished career both as a journalist and as an educator. Among his many works are *A History of Book Publishing in the United States* (in four volumes), *The Compact History of the American Newspaper*, *The Media in America*, and *The Press and the Presidency: From George Washington to Ronald Reagan*.



## Preface

**A***merican Media History* is the story of a nation. It is the story of events in the long battle to disseminate information, opinion, and entertainment in a democratic society. It is the story of the men and women whose inventions, ideas, and struggles helped shape the nation and its media system and fought to keep both free.

The story includes an impressive array of characters, including James Franklin, one of the first rebel printers in the New World; Samuel Adams, whose powerful pen fomented dissent in the colonies; James Gordon Bennett, who advanced communications for the masses; and Ida Tarbell and the muckrakers who exposed the wrongs of the nation.

Some of the players in the nation's story set standards for aspiring media professionals to emulate. Edward R. Murrow, Eric Sevareid, Margaret Bourke-White, Ernie Pyle, and Walter Cronkite still inspire many to pursue careers in journalism and photography.

Other characters in America's media playbill provided information that many didn't want to read or hear about. Their revelations tarnished the image of the world's greatest democracy, but those stories also showed that democracy works. They included Carl Bernstein and Robert Woodward's Watergate coverage; Morley Safer's "The Burning of Cam Ne"; and Matt Drudge's account of the sexual trysts of a president.

Still other stories, such as those telling of the congressional investigations into Communists in the motion picture business and government, the struggles in the civil rights movement, and the lies of Iran-Contra, darkened America's door. Only a free press could provide accounts of those stories to further inform the people whose lives were affected.

The idea for *American Media History* came about from my own teaching need. I have assigned almost every available textbook for my course. While there was much valuable content in each of these books, none told the stories in a way that would get my students excited about how these stories affect the profession they

are preparing for. My goal was to write a book that brought the stories to life for the students by focusing on individuals and their contributions, and to place these stories within a broader social and cultural context.

Five years ago, I began to collect the best pieces written on media history, and I compiled them into a book of readings. Most of the chapters came from John Tebbel's *The Media in America*. He came the closest to writing media history as a colorful and interesting story. I contacted Tebbel, a professor emeritus at New York University and distinguished author of some forty books, to see if he would be willing to begin a new project. He agreed. Thus, the bulk of some of the early chapters appeared in his popular *Media in America*.

The chapters attempt to cover the development of a medium. Of course, some media appear from chapter to chapter. I tried to fit the developments into a chronological framework to show their development over time. However, the development of several media took place during the early 1920s. The advertising chapter is placed near the end to show the progression from the Kennedy years to the Nixon era and beyond. Advertising became an important tool to sell presidential candidates during that time.

My goal was to write a readable story of a fascinating nation and of the development of its complex and fascinating media system. I hope I have succeeded.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Thanks are due to many friends, colleagues, and family members who helped bring this book to publication. John Tebbel, esteemed media historian, allowed me to use some material from one of his previously published books. Professor Robert E. Blackmon was the first to spark my interest in the subject when I was enrolled in his undergraduate media history course. His love of books, journalism, and media history continues to inspire me. He also hired me for my first university teaching position and allowed me to teach media history.

My love of the subject got another boost when I became a faculty member at California State University, Fullerton. I am indebted to my former colleagues Ted C. Smythe, professor emeritus, and Terry Hynes, now dean of the College of Communications at the University of Florida, Gainesville, who welcomed me and allowed me to teach the course History and Philosophy of American Mass Communications. Our many luncheons were spent talking about media history as well as sharing teaching techniques. One couldn't ask for better colleagues.

My present colleagues are just as wonderful and wrote some of the media profiles in this book. Thomas N. Clanin wrote about Nellie Bly and Robert Abbott;

Beth Evans wrote about Helen Thomas and Barbara Walters; Carolyn Johnson wrote about Jane Grey Swisshelm and Margaret Bourke-White; Gail Love wrote about Mary Wells Lawrence; and Andi Stein wrote about P. T. Barnum. Fred Glienna, my former university classmate, who also was enrolled in Professor Blackmon's media history course, wrote the profile of I. F. Stone. Thanks also go to Barbara Reed, a friend and former colleague who is now a professor at Rutgers. She continues to encourage me to accept greater challenges.

Special thanks go to Judy Furtig, a former *Christian Science Monitor* reporter, who was my graduate assistant. She wrote most of Chapter 3.

I also appreciate the encouraging words of two of America's greatest historians when I mentioned this project to them. Thank you to Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of numerous books, including *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II*, and David McCullough, author of *John Adams*, *Truman*, and other distinguished works.

Thanks also go to publisher Holly Allen, at Thomson Wadsworth, and Jon Fuller who, as a consultant for Thomson Wadsworth, liked the idea for this book and made it happen. The production team was adept in moving things forward at a quick and efficient pace; thanks to Jane Brundage, at Wadsworth, and Kristen Bettcher and the rest of Stratford Publishing Services.

Special thanks go to my wife, Clara Potes-Fellow, whose encouragement and suggestions are much appreciated.

Finally, a big thank you to the thousands of students I have taught in media history. Many of their suggestions improved the book. They and future students are the reason this book was published. I hope they find it an interesting story about the greatest media system in the greatest nation on the earth.

Anthony R. Fellow, Ph.D.



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# Introduction

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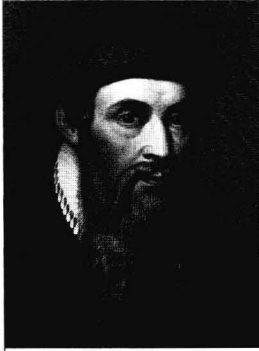


## Before the American Experience

**G**erman printer Johannes Gutenberg topped many lists as “the person of the millennium.” It was a fitting tribute to the fifteenth-century inventor of movable type. His invention revolutionized the spreading of information that changed political and social structures. Until Gutenberg’s invention in 1450, European cultures were primarily oral or scribal cultures. Town criers, ministers from the pulpit, and bartenders disseminated information or news. Town criers, for example, broadcast royal edicts, police regulations, and important community events, such as births, marriages of princes, war news, and treaties of peace or alliance.

These correspondents were important in ancient Rome, where news traveled by foot. For example, William Shakespeare’s accounts of ancient Rome in the days of Coriolanus (a Roman military and political leader) and Julius Caesar are filled with tales of messengers delivering written intelligence.<sup>1</sup> The Roman elite who resided in the provinces sent their personal correspondents to Rome to obtain information, especially commercial and political news. Correspondents culled information from the *acta diurna*, a hand-lettered prototype of today’s newspaper that was posted on walls of the Roman Forum between 59 BC and AD 222.

Oral communications also played a major role in the American colonies after 1750, though some colonists were reading colonial newspapers in the early 1700s.



## AMERICAN MEDIA PROFILE

### Johannes Gutenberg 1400–1467

It has been said that Johannes Gutenberg's story is one of a genius that almost went awry. Many parts of his inventions had been around for years. As early as the eighth century, China, Japan, and Korea carved blocks of whole pages made of wood or stone to print books. By the eleventh century, letters were carved in wet clay and then baked. This did not prove workable, but the principle was used by the Koreans to make movable metal type.

Gutenberg introduced an invention and a technique. He fashioned a hand mold that created multiple letters in metal types. He then created a technique, the gathering of type together in a frame to make up a page of metal type. His machine allowed small blocks of letters to be moved so written material could be printed and mass-produced.

His invention has been called the "third revolution," after the invention of writing and the invention of the alphabet. The world knows much about his invention, but he was not famous during his lifetime. Thus, the world knows little about the man who ignited one of the greatest revolutions in the history of mankind.

Gutenberg was born in Mainz, Germany, sometime around 1400 to Friele Gansfleisch and Else Wyrich, or so the world's printers have traditionally said for centuries. The Gutenberg name was taken from the home of his father and his paternal ancestors: "zu Laden zu Gutenberg." Family names were rare at this time. If an upper-crust nonaristocrat was known by anything than a Christian name, it was almost always by the name of his house or estate.

He likely spent little time in Mainz. His family migrated to Strasbourg. There he joined the gold-

Colonial churches, were hubs of information in early British America. While ministers delivered their sermons from the pulpit, colonists seeking goods and services gathered in the back of the church to conduct their business.

## THE IMPACT OF THE PRINTING PRESS

Though China appeared to have movable type in the eleventh century, printing remained undeveloped for centuries; in the West, it followed quickly on the heels of Gutenberg's press four centuries later. Before Gutenberg, the ability to read and write was confined to the great merchants and to the first two estates—the nobility and clergy.<sup>2</sup>

Gutenberg's invention shattered the medieval world and gave rise to modernism. It ripped apart the social and structural fabric of life in Western Europe and reconnected it in new ways that gave shape to modern patterns. His invention provided the soil from which sprang modern history, science, popular literature, the emergence of the nation-state—so much of everything by which we define modernity.<sup>3</sup> It was the engine behind societal, cultural, familial, and industrial changes that culminated in the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the scientific revolution.

smiths' guild. Gutenberg wanted to make money—lots of money. In the city of Aachen, he and three other partners had an opportunity to do just that. In 1165 Charlemagne, founder of the empire, was declared a saint by the church. By Gutenberg's time, pilgrimages of tens of thousands of people visited the city hoping for a miracle or some life-changing experience. They bought little metal badges decorated with the image of a saint or two as evidence of their visit.

The holy relics were said to have powerful charms, and that a mirror, if held in a certain way, could absorb the healing power of the relic. Everyone wanted one of these. Gutenberg had a plan to mass produce 32,000 mirrors, but he needed some kind of press to do it. Thus, some type of press was on Gutenberg's mind long before the printing press. However, a plague hit the area, bringing a halt to the pilgrimages and Gutenberg's business.

At the time, his partners heard rumors that Gutenberg had another type of press in mind. Around 1444 almost every European city had in place the elements for Gutenberg's invention. Procopius Waldvogel in Avignon had two alphabets and various metal forms, and he was offering to teach "the art of artificial writing" to a schoolteacher. However, he vanished without a trace. A second threat to Gutenberg's invention arose in Holland, where a maker of block books named Laurens, whose surname was Coster, lived. For years rumors circulated in Haarlem that Coster made the invention which Gutenberg stole. A nineteenth-century statue of Coster looks out on the Market Square there. However, most in the town like the story but give the nod to Gutenberg as the inventor of the printing press.

Loans and a partnership with the wealthy Johann Fust helped Gutenberg finance his idea, which he kept secret for years. For their first project they printed the Bible, completed in the years 1453–1455. However, the partnership soured, and Fust sued his partner to recover money, plus interest, he lent the inventor. Gutenberg's machinery and type became the property of Fust.

Little is known of Gutenberg after this. He likely spent his declining years in the court of Archbishop Adolf of Nassau. His appointment to the court, on January 18, 1465, saved him from homelessness. He was given an allowance for clothing and other necessities. It is likely he died at Mainz toward the end of 1467 or the beginning of 1468. He was buried in a Franciscan church, which no longer stands.

The printing press brought about a number of changes. It allowed the production of cheap literature and the reproduction of documents without error. It also enabled information to be preserved, affected social relationships, and inspired new forms of writing.

Scribes witnessed the first impact of the printing press. Then they disappeared. An Italian businessman, Vespignano da Bisticci, employed forty-five scribes to produce 200 books for Cosimo de Medici's library in the 1460s and pretended to despise the new invention. By 1478 he was out of business. The scribes copied printed typefaces to hold back the flood, to no avail. The scribes were gone, and so were the illuminators, as their work of decorating capitals and margins went by the wayside.<sup>4</sup>

Printed materials were now cheap enough to reach the masses. This had tremendous ramifications. Knowledge was no longer the exclusive property of the privileged classes. For example, gifted students no longer needed to sit at the feet of a gifted master in order to learn a language or academic skill.<sup>5</sup>

The ability to reproduce scientific, technical, and religious documents and manuscripts in their exact form meant that errors which persisted through generations could be corrected. Printing allowed wide dissemination of accurate knowledge from the sources of Western thought, both classical and Christian. It also allowed people to form an accurate picture of their past. In medieval scribal culture accuracy of manuscripts could not be checked without visiting every