# AN EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN DAILY NEWSPAPER CONSUMER REPORTING AND OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE COLLEGIATE CONSUMER REPORTING SERVICE

by

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## ABSTRACT

Along with the growth of the modern consumer movement in the 1960's came the "consumer reporter" to American journalism. This thesis examines both the historical roots of today's newspaper consumer reporting and its problems, and the success of the Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service, a project at the University of Arizona designed to help college newspapers cover consumer matters.

The in-depth literature review found newspaper consumer reporting dating back to the middle 19th Century. With a few exceptions, however, consumer reporting was not a regular part of most dailies until the early 1970's. The quantity of this reporting may have increased over the years, but the review also found that the development of today's consumer journalism was more profit-induced than anything else.

Three statistical studies examined the CCRS. These found that (1) CCRS materials made inroads into their target market, and (2) collegiate editors wanted to learn consumer reporting techniques.

But both the statistical analyses and the historical review also found most editors unwilling to give the financial and moral support to hard-hitting consumer journalism that some reporters want to supply. This lack of commitment by newspaper managements, this thesis concluded, may soon result in a limiting of First Amendment freedoms.

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

> The public's right to know of events of public importance and interest is the overriding mission of the mass media.
> --Code of Ethics
> Society of Professional Journalists

American newspaper reporters, editors, and publishers have pointed to the public's right to know to defeat actions -- mostly court decision -- which they believe would limit the First Admendment right to a free press. Most widely known are those battles where the right to know has come up against a defendent's right to a fair trial or an individual's right to privacy.

## The Right to Consumer Information

A new "right," however, is now being referred to in connection with the right to know. It is a "right" first given national attention in a special 1962 message to the U.S. Congress by President John F. Kennedy -- the consumer's right to be informed: ". . . to be protected against fradulent, deceitful, or grossly misleading information, advertising, labeling, or other practices, and to be given the facts he needs to make an informed choice" (Kennedy 1962, p. 4168).

Most of the debate concerning this right has centered on the responsibility of industry in providing more product information.

Within the last ten years, however, members of the public and the press have been examining the role of media in helping the consumer pursue his or her right to information. "The essential reason for a newspaper is education and information," a food editor said in defending his paper's hard-hitting consumer orientation. "What we're doing is what's expected of a fine newspaper -- we're not paid to get complimented" (Robinson 1974, p. 10).

At stake in this issue of consumer information are not only the public's right to know about products or media's responsibility to the public, but the existence of the free enterprise system itself. Wrote Consumers Union in 1954 ("Free Press" 1954, p. 494):

> . . . if we assume that our economy is based on the idea that free enterprise, founded on free competition, is good for the people as a whole, then it follows that the economy can be made to operate more effectively if the consuming public is informed concerning the comparative qualities, prices, and availability of goods.

This same feeling was echoed 15 years later when journalist Max Ways (1969, p. 110) asked: "Where were the journalists in the years when Ralph Nader was working on Unsafe at Any Speed?" He later said (1969, p. 110): ". . . if the consuming public doesn't know enough about what it's buying it cannot defend itself, governmentally or otherwise. The way to defend the market system is to be sure that information, an essential ingredient of any healthy market or any healthy democracy, is adequate."

As Ways indicates, the quality of media coverage of consumer issues has also been questioned. In examining the specialized sections of newspapers, such as women's and food pages, writers have felt that in the past newspapers have missed reporting consumer stories (Karp 1971, Tobin 1971, von Hoffman 1971, van Gelder 1974). Others, while also noting past inadequacies, have been more optimistic about present and possible future efforts by media to improve their reporting of consumer matters (Pollock 1971, Cook 1978).

## Hypotheses

This thesis will study the performance of consumer reporting and investigate a program designed to improve consumer reporting. The history of consumer reporting by American newspapers will be traced, concentrating specifically on two null hypotheses:

1. The interest by newspapers editors and/or owners in reporting consumer matters has remained constant over the history of newspaper publishing in America.
2. The reasons for the interest by newspaper editors and/or owners in reporting consumer matters have remained unchanged over the history of newspaper publishing in America.

This thesis will also examine the performance of the Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service, a program designed to assist a specific segment of the newspaper industry: the collegiate press. The following null hypotheses will be tested:

1. Over a period of time, participant total printing of consumer news items and government news items will be unchanged.

2. Over a period of time, participant printing of consumer news items will be the same as that of government news items.
3. Over a period of time, participant total printing of consumer news items produced by outside news services and government news items produced by outside news services will be unchanged.
4. Over a period of time, participant printing of consumer news items produced by outside news services will be the same as those government news items similarly produced.
5. Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service materials will have no effect on participants' total printing of consumer news items and their printing of consumer news items produced by similar outside news services.
6. Participant's publication frequency, circulation, or geographic location will not influence their printing of consumer matters. The presence at the college or university of a program offering a major in journalism also will have no influence.
7. Participant's publication frequency, circulation, or geographic location will not influence the attitudes of editors toward the Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service. The presence at the college or university of a program offering a major in journalism will have no influence.
8. Usage by participants will not differ among the various columns distributed by the service.

## Definitions

How "consumer news" is defined for this thesis is very important. Pollock simply stated in 1977 (p.37): "Consumer reporting, at its very best, is critical reporting about the quality, safety, and cost of consumer goods and services." Simple as the definition may sound, implicit in it is the reporting of various consumer rights:

> Safety: to be protected against the marketing of goods which are hazards to health or life (Kennedy 1962, p. 4168).
>
> Choice: to be assured, wherever possible, access to competitive prices; and in those industries in which competition is not workable and government regulation is substituted, assurance of satisfactory quality and service at a fair price (Kennedy 1962, p. 4168).
>
> Hearing: to be assured that consumer interests will receive full and sympathetic consideration in the formation of government policy, and fair expeditious treatment in the administrative tribunals (Kennedy 1962, p. 4168).
>
> Information: to be protected against fradulent, deceitful, or grossly misleading information, advertising, labeling, or other practices, and to be given the facts he needs to make an informed choice (Kennedy 1962, p. 4168).
>
> Redress: of complaints and grievances (Porter 1975, p. 992).
>
> Fair Price: to pay a fair price for goods and services you buy and to get "full value" for what you buy (Porter 1975, p. 992).

A "consumer news item," therefore, will be defined for this thesis as any article, illustration, or photograph which addresses the principles advocated in the above seven consumer rights, either through the reporting or analysis of a news event or through educational stories.

# CHAPTER II

# METHODOLOGY

Four examinations were used to test the five null hypotheses. First, a review of literature explored the history of consumer reporting. Second, a measurement study looked longitudinally at the use by a selected sample of Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service (CCRS) participants of project materials and their own preparation of consumer reportage. Third, a tabulation was made of each CCRS column's use by those participants supplying the service staff with a subscription. Finally, a telephone survey explored the attitudes of a selected sample of participant editors toward CCRS materials and consumer news in general.

## Literature Review

Both popular literature -- books and periodicals -- and scholastic literature available at the University of Arizona library were reviewed. Because the term for the subject explored -- consumer reporting -- was not widely used until the last decade, historical information on the reporting of business, economics, finance, and other fields was also examined for its relationship to the development of today's consumer reporting.

## Longitudinal Study

The purpose of this study was two-fold: (1) to measure participant use of CCRS materials over six months, and (2) to measure and compare participant overall printing of consumer news with their printing of governmental news before and after receiving CCRS materials. Governmental news was used as a barometer against which to compare a participant's printing of consumer news because, like their professional counterparts, most collegiate journalists see one of their roles as that of a "watchdog" of government. It was expected, therefore, that all student newspapers would print news about governments to some extent. Whether a newspaper limited itself to only campus government or expanded coverage to the local, state, or national levels depended, of course, on the resources and desires of the publication. By examining not only participant use of CCRS materials and other consumer items but also comparing that use to their printing of governmental news it was believed that both the extent of consumer reporting in collegiate newspapers and the effect, if any, of CCRS on that reporting might be determined.

Since collegiate participants began receiving CCRS materials during the last week of October 1978, issues examined from that month were considered "Before" issues. November and December 1978 issues were also examined for the "After" effects of CCRS materials. To gauge the longer-lasting effects, some February, March, and April 1979 issues -- the "Spring" issues -- were also examined. As explained in Appendices A through D, a CCRS participant's publication frequency determined the specific number of issues within those months to be examined. More issues were required from each newspaper for the Before and After periods than the Spring since the first two periods were more important in determining the immediate effect of CCRS materials on participant newspapers.

Enough issues to be a part of the longitudinal study were available to the CCRS staff from 19 participant newspapers. Conflicting participant publication schedules, mailing difficulties, and uncooperative participants who did not continuously supply the CCRS staff with a required subscription kept 235 of the 254 participants who at various times received service materials, from being included in the longitudinal study.

From available issues from the aforementioned periods, all articles and illustrations were examined. Those fitting the definition of a "consumer news item" mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis were coded as such. An article or illustration dealing with the elected or appointed officials of the student, local, state, or national governmental bodies was coded as a "governmental news item." Those items which could be either coded as a "consumer news item" or a "governmental news item," such as a story on a politician's speech on consumer protection, were coded as the former.

Only column inches of both types of items were measured and compared. Locations of items were not noted for two reasons. First, items in the two categories were found not only in news sections of participant newspapers, but also in feature, entertainment, editorial, sports, and magazine sections. Second, each publication's news judgement and the news itself greatly differed from one college campus to the next. It was felt, therefore, that a more realistic indication of a newspaper's interest in consumer and governmental news would only be found by a measure of total column inches.

The following steps were taken in the making the measurements:

1. The total column inches were measured.
2. The average ratio of print space to advertising space (obtained from each newspaper's editor) was applied to the total column inches to determine the average space available to consumer and governmental items.
3. Both consumer and governmental items were separated into two categories: those which were (a) supplied by news services, and those (b) supplied by the newspaper's own staff.
4. Consumer news service items were further separated into those which were (a) supplied by CCRS, and those (b) supplied by other, non-CCRS, services.
5. Numerous statistics obtained from the above steps were then used to examine participants' (a) use of CCRS materials,

and (b) their general printing of consumer news as compared to their general printing of governmental news. Participants' use patterns of news service items dealing with consumer and governmental news were also examined.

## Column Use Study

The use of each of the 21 columns distributed was tallied. Location of the columns was not noted (for reasons previously mentioned). Instead, only the total number of newspapers that used each column was tallied.

As previously mentioned, only 19 of 254 participants had supplied the project staff with enough issues to be included in the longitudinal study. Although some newspapers lacked only one issue of the required number, they were not included in the study to insure internal validity. This validity was important for the study to achieve its goal of determining participants' long-range use of CCRS materials and their general printing of consumer news as compared to their printing of governmental news. For the column-use study, however, the same sampling procedure was not followed. Unlike the longitudinal study, the goal of the column-use study was not to determine the overall success of CCRS, but instead to gauge which types of columns were used more, i.e., which were more popular with participants. CCRS columns were of three types. First, articles explained to students how to better spend their money. These "how to" stories looked at bicycles, calculators, moving services, and other products and services.

Second, articles looked at the general impact of business and economic happenings on student consumers. Checking services, California's Proposition 13, and graduate-testing practices were such "impact" articles. Finally, articles were written on subjects which were making news at the time. These "breaking" stories reported on such events as changes in food stamp distribution policies and Carter Administration treatment of the federal student loan programs. To get a general idea of which of these column types were more popular with participants, every issue of each newspaper received by the CCRS was examined for material use. Although totals obtained by this method cannot be used as a measure of overall project success, they can be used to compare the popularity of each column distributed. This information will enable any publication to better predict which types of stories will be more popular with collegiate editors.

## Collegiate Editors Survey

With collegiate editors making most of the final decisions on how a newspaper used CCRS materials, it was important to survey their opinions in two areas: (1) their views on CCRS materials and their willingness to pay for such items, and (2) their attitudes towards consumer news in general.

As originally designed, the survey was to have been made of only those editors of the newspapers used in the longitudinal study. At the time the fifteen-minute telephone interviews were begun, it was estimated that twenty-seven newspapers would be in the longitudinal study. It was discovered after the surveys had begun, however, that eight of those newspapers did not meet the aforementioned criteria to be included in the longitudinal study. But it was decided that they should still be included in the editors' survey because it was felt that the gauging of as many editors' feelings and attitudes as possible was more important than being able to use the survey results in direct statistical conjunction with the longitudinal study. Consequently, all twenty-seven newspapers remained a part of the survey. In total, thirty-one people were interviewed. Four more people than expected were interviewed since some publications changed editors during the year. All interviews were conducted in May and June of 1979.

# CHAPTER III

## LITERATURE REVIEW: A HISTORY OF CONSUMER JOURNALISM IN THE AMERICAN DAILY NEWSPAPER

The New York Times has called Sidney Margolius "the dean of consumer writers" (Margolius 1973a, p. 11). In examining his profession, he used the following story to illustrate the increased respect consumer reporting has attained in journalism (1973a, p. 11):

> An executive of a large news service said to me recently that he believes there is no turning back for consumer journalism; that consumer news is here to stay as a permanent feature of the American press; that readers themselves want competent information to help them with the problems of living in a complicated economy and an increasingly perplexing and even threatening social and physical environment.

### Consumer Journalism Today

Called by Margolius himself "the most sensitive and controversial area of journalism (1973b, p. 22), the reporting of consumer news has found an audience demanding it and a growing number of American newspapers supplying it.

#### Readers Demand

Demand for consumer news has been documented, along with reader feelings that newspapers are still lacking in the supplying of such information. A 1974 study (Himes) found that while respondents rated newspapers better than television in exploring consumer problems, a majority felt newspapers were failing them by not meeting their reader obligations. Readers felt that (1) "Newspapers have not shown much concern for their own subscribers as consumers," and (2) "Newspapers should give stronger editorial support to the consumer" (Himes 1974, p. 11). A major national survey of the current state of the consumer movement (Harris and Associates 1977) also found that the public felt media paid too little attention to consumer affairs and consumer information.

## Press Supplies

At the time of these studies, however, some newspapers were beginning to respond to this demand by employing specialized staff and buying syndicated materials dealing in consumer news. In terms of staff, the variance in how newspaper managements used consumer reporters -- in full-time or part-time positions -- makes it difficult to estimate the number of consumer reporters working at a specific time. Despite this problem, it can be said that the number has increased since 1970 when the first estimate of fifty consumer reporters was made (Pollock 1971). During that decade, the number reported by writers (Pollock 1971, Consumer Concepts 1977, Cook 1978) varied from one hundred fifty to five hundred, with the first figure being the most recent estimate in 1978.

The growth in the 1970's is also shown in the types of newspapers that hired consumer reporters. Newspapers such as the New

York Times, Washington Post, Chicago American, Philadelphia Bulletin, and Miami Herald were acknowledged to have done consumer reporting on a regular basis in the late-1960's (Rowse 1967, Karp 1971, Pollock 1971). Smaller papers such as the New Brunswick Home News (N.J.) and the Ferris Michigan State College student paper joined the larger ones in the first half of the 1970's (Hart 1974, Cook 1978). Additionally, a persual of the thirty-three monthly issues of Media and Consumer magazine -- published between 1972 and 1975 and specializing in consumer journalism -- found over fifty newspapers of all types doing consumer stories.

Bush (1969, p. 24-33) reported that the number of newspapers of seventeen sampled who had reported on "consumer interests" had only increased from eight in 1952 to nine in 1967. A chart in the study, however, showed the number of newspapers carrying syndicated materials on consumer topics -- legal, do-it-yourself, auto, home, insurance, etc. -- had tripled over the same period. Columns dealing specifically with consumer interests have also been syndicated, such as those offered by former Washington Post reporter and presidential consultant Arthur E. Rowse (1967) and Sidney Margolius (1973b).

Action Lines and Other Services. Along with syndicated materials, consumer-oriented newspapers offered readers a variety of services. The most common one, the Action Line, helps readers "locate missing persons and documents, investigate consumer fraud, unsnarl red tape, straighten out social security and medicare payments" ("Not Just Words" 1967, p.58).

Houston Chronicle editor Bill Stevens had been credited with starting the concept in 1961, but Beal (1973, p. v) found them dating back to 1921. "Telephone recorders, rising consumer awareness, widely publicized reports of the columns' successes and editors' increasing expectations for the columns," he wrote, "were among the factors causing the sudden spread of the Action Lines in the mid-1960's, from the large dailies to small papers. . ." Over two hundred such columns existed in 1979 (Editor and Publisher 1979, pp. I373-74). Time reported ("Not Just Words" 1967, p. 58) that some newspapers have found Action Lines to strength local reporting and to be the most popular column in the paper. "It establishes a rapport with readers who have drifted away from newspapers over the past year," Miami Herald Executive Editor John McMullan was quoted as saying. A 1969 survey (Bush, pp. 75-7) found great enthusiasm for the column by over a third of fifty-six Action Line reporters questioned. Fifty of those reporters said they expected their columns to last at least another year, with twenty expecting it to carry on for at least five years. Twenty-six of the reporters also saud the Action Line definitely increased circulation; only seven said it definitely did not.

But as the Time story pointed out, "Not all the kinks have been worked out of the action columns" ("Not Just Words" 1967, p. 58). Beal (1973) reported that fourteen papers ended their columns from 1966 to 1971 for various reasons, including repetitious or trivial content and little response by readers.

Price charts: In addition to Action Lines, consumer-oriented newspapers have conducted regular product-price surveys, policed advertising, and tested product qualtiy. Media and Consumer presented a primer on product-price surveys, which are "guides to individual or prevailing prices for foods and other items purchased in supermarkets or other food stores. They are much like the financial sections of newspapers" ("Food Price Charts" 1973, p. 10). The magazine reported that like stock-market charts, price charts had their problems in the early 1970's. But those problems experienced by consumer groups and government agencies did not stifle the publication's enthusiasm ("Food Price Charts" 1973, p. 10):

> . . . we feel the major thrust of efforts to deal with information about food prices must be borne by the news media. That may be a rather foolish notion considering the media's enormous dependence on supermarket and food advertising, but there are signs everywhere that journalism is willing to put itself on the line more and more when it comes to the consumer interest.

Ad policing: The Louisville Courier-Journal and Louisville Times support of the consumer interest extended beyond their consumer reporting. Jaffe (1973, p. 11) reported that under the leadership of the same editor and publisher, Barry Bingham, the papers not only had letters from the editor "explaining how and why things are done" and a column for corrections, but they also policed their own advertisers. With the help of "advisor sources" at times, Advertising Acceptability Director Jim Marchal developed guidelines for his papers' clients for advertising such products as air conditioners, hair and scalp products, and health insurance. "Political ads . . . are routinely referred to a lawyer," Jaffe reported (1973, p. 11). "New medical products go to a physician on retainer who determines the truth of their claims."

Product evaluation: At least one paper was "gingerly getting into product evaluations" in 1971, Pollock reported (1971, p. 42). In the first few months of the year, the New York Times looked at the quality of Chevrolet's Vega, Ford's Pinto, and waterbeds. "There should be many more such stories," wrote Pollock (1971, p. 42), a consumer journalist himself and director of the Federal Trade Commission's Office of Public Information from 1978-1979.

Reporting Quality. Not only has the quantity of consumer reporters and newspapers increased over the history of American newspapers, but so has the quality. For example, journalists themselves have taken consumer news more seriously. They have attended conferences solely to discuss the problems in reporting consumer topics (Lasky 1973). A 1977 study (Consumer Concepts) also found that consumer reporters were tackling subjects such as energy, government regulation, money management, conservation and the environment, and credit problems. Without the press delving into those and other consumer topics, Margolius (1973a, p. 11) felt "we probably would not have achieved the useful advances of the past twelve years. . . ." He cited "Truth-in-Lending," product safety, auto safety, packaging, and drug quality as some areas press reports have helped reform. "What consumer journalism has accomplished, however, is just a beginning to what needs to be done," he then wrote, "including the massive task of finding ways to curb present galloping or at least trotting inflation" (Margolius 1973a, p. 11).

Like Margolius's, articles written relating to today's consumer journalism may praise what is being done by newspapers and other media, but they also quickly point out, as Pollock (1971, p. 43) did, that media "have a vast distance to go before they can really boast of serving the consumer." These writers, in books and articles published between 1963 and 1978, have critized the profession as a whole (Pollock 1971; Seldes 1974; Mintz 1976, p. 334; Cook 1978) and specific elements, such as specialty sections (Bart 1963, Karp 1971, Tobin 1971, von Hoffman 1971, Mahoney 1973, Robinson 1974, van Gelder 1974, Guenin 1975), management (Bowler 1971, Jaffe 1973, Lasky 1973, Margolius 1973a, Brown 1974), and editors' news judgement (Pollock 1971). The best summation of these criticisms was Rowse's (1967), He pointed to four basic reasons why newspapers and other media failed overall in consumer reporting: (1) the traditional male-dominated news judgement dating back to the 19th Century, (2) the "subtle prostitution" of the special sections -- such as women's, food, travel, etc. -- that are advertising-oriented, (3) the fear by newspaper management of advertiser retaliation for hard-hitting consumer news, and (4) the mechanical problems faced by reporters covering consumer topics.

## Historical Review of Problems In Consumer Reporting

Because the literature review found that most articles relating to consumer news discussed one or more of the above problems, this thesis will trace the historical development of today's consumer reporting by newspapers in relationship to these problems. The first three problems will be examined together since the traditional attitudes by newspaper management and its concern for advertising relate closely to the development of the special sections. The mechanical problems will be discussed separately.

### 'The Advertising Influence'

The early colonial predecessors of today's editors and publishers were printers specializing in business and legal forms (Kobre 1969, p. 9). But it only took them twenty years from the Revolution and the coming of the 18th Century to discover that they could pay their bills "by serving as a public bulletin board carrier. . ." (Rutland 1973, p. 13). In that "bulletin board" capacity, colonial newspapers -- despite temporary set-backs -- grew along with the country's businesses in terms of increased circulation and advertising, reported Kobre (1969, p. 55, 150, 151). The value of this advertising quickly became apparent to American newspaper publishers when, in the 1870's, daily newspapers sprang up to serve the advertising interest of merchants and shippers. By going daily, these newspapers were cheaper to produce for the printers -- their presses could keep busy at all times -- and they were cheaper for the reader who previously had to buy many weekly newspapers to get the same amount of current news. Mott (1962, p. 181) added that the prosperous newspapers were those mercantile "advertisers" which devoted "nearly all" their space to advertising.

Newspapers continued to change with the country. Just as Andrew Jackson had obtained the key to the White House by appealing to the "common man" in the early 19th Century, so too did newspaper editors and publishers in obtaining a new profitable market. "The object of this paper," wrote Benjamin H. Day in his first inexpensive one-cent New York Sun, "is to lay before the public, at a price within the means of everyone, all the news of the day, and at the same time offer an advantageous medium for advertisements" (Payne 1920, p. 244). Actually, Mott reported (1962, p. 222), the true object of the newspaper was to serve Day's printing business as a profitable adjunct.

Profitable it was, for New York became the "penny press" capital, with thirty-four such papers starting from 1833 to 1837, although nineteen failed to survive their first year (Mott 1962, p. 228). These papers, which published the first classified advertisements, provided a wide outlet for goods to city workers who, since the turn of the century, were buying more items instead of making them themselves (Kobre 1969, pp. 155, 264). The popularity and profitability of the penny press brought one of Day's main competitors, James Gordon Bennett, to write: "A newspaper can send more souls to Heaven, and save more from Hell, than all the churches in New York -- besides making money at the same time"(Rutland 1973, p. 143).

Although news from the Civil War ended advertising's front-page dominance (Kobre 1969, p. 334), its overall financial importance to newspapers had just begun. Figure 1 supports Karp's claim (1971) that general readership newspapers began turning more to advertising than subscriptions for their revenues. Tebbel explained (1974, p. 298) how this growth continued in the 20th Century:

> Population growth stimulated business growth, which created a need for better merchandising which stimulated the rise of advertising, which became increasingly important to the life of newspapers, which were able to meet the advertising need of business because their circulations were growing with the population and they were reaching the people the advertisers wanted to reach. This is such a common-place fact of life that it scarcely seems possible its real development began less than a hundred years ago.

Special Sections Identify Markets. It was in trying to attract advertisers that newspapers laid the foundation for today's consumer news. Most of today's special consumer sections are located in what used to be called the "women's pages." These pages were developed, along with other special sections covering food and business, to attract the readers editors and publishers thought would then draw the mass advertisers. Because of its significance to the development of today's consumer reporting, the history of these three special sections will be examined.

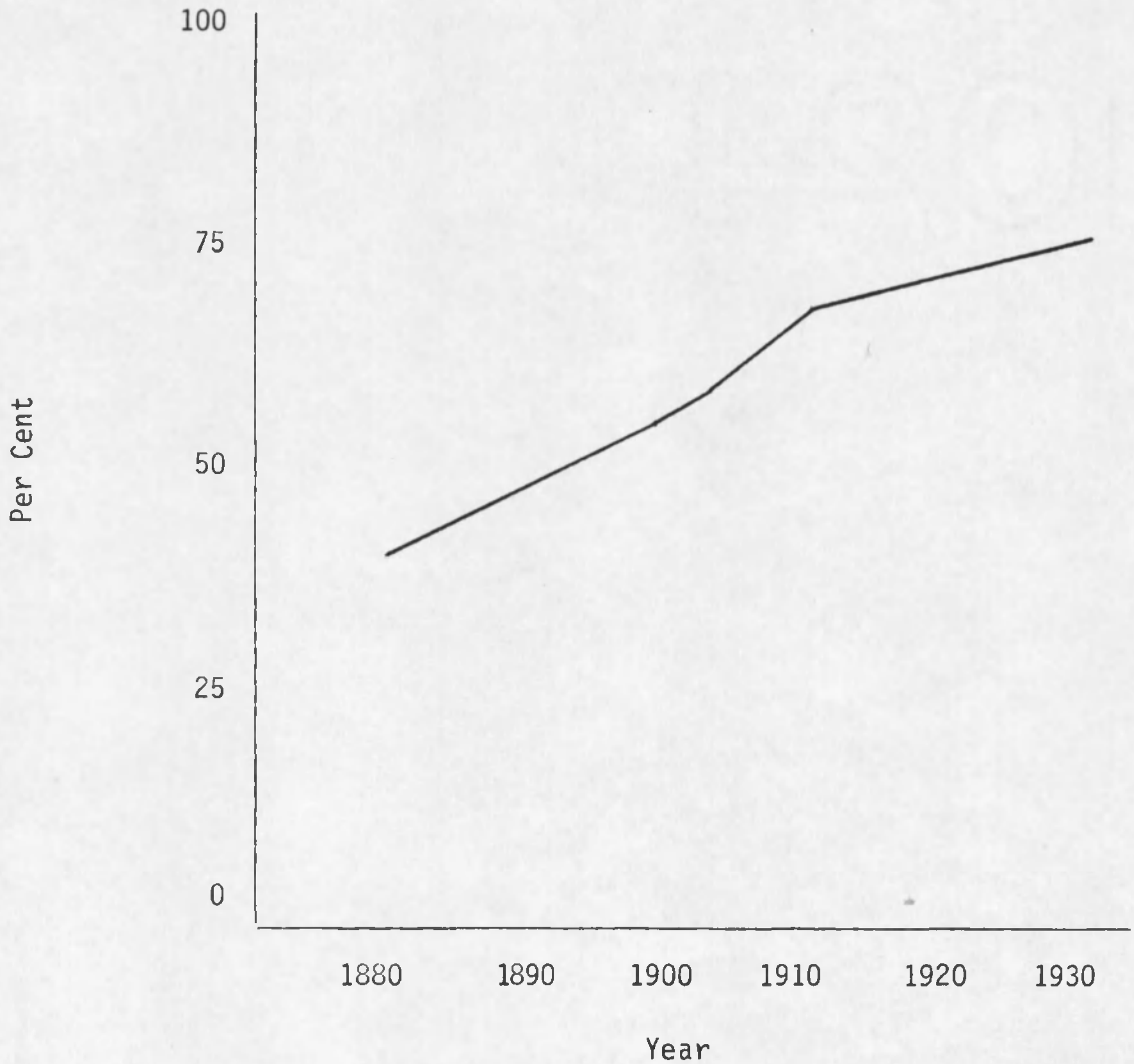


Figure 1: Percentage of Newspaper Revenues Resulting from Advertising

Estimates came from Mott 1962, p. 714; Kobre 1969, pp. 351, 518.

Women and food: Kobre reported that James Gordon Bennett's penny paper, the New York Herald was the first to print fashion and society news to attract women readers in the 1840's (Kobre 1969, p. 236). But the first separate section for women debuted with Charles A. Dana's New York Sunday Sun in the 1860's, wrote Kobre (1969, p. 369). The importance of a women's section in attracting advertising grew with its audience's employment and educational opportunities of the late 19th Century (Mott 1962, p. 599; Kobre 1969, pp. 357-8). By 1930, Mott reported (1962, p. 690), feature syndicates included society, fashion, homemaking, cooking, and child care columns with their offering to newspapers, and specialty food sections debuted in papers a decade later (Robinson 1974).

Home economics-journalism curriculum -- Also in the 1930's colleges and universities noticed this link between journalism and women's pages. At least at one institution, Kansas State University, "faculty of the department of journalism have exhorted girls majoring in journalism to get at least a fifteen-hour block of credits in home economics," wrote Helen Hostetter (1949, p. 311), who taught journalism at Kansas State. "And home economics professors have pointed out to their majors the value of courses in journalism. . . ." But it was not until 1945 that Kansas State, Iowa State College, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, and the University of Wisconsin actually had accredited home economics-journalism curricula.

Hostetter was well aware not only of the value of a women's page but also the value of a consumer-oriented one (1949, p. 113):

> The women's page has value so far as it is family-oriented. It loses the confidence of readers if its objective is discovered to be the promotion of sales for advertisers. Yet the smart women's page editor wishes to maintain cordial relations with retailers. Only when family welfare and retailer welfare conflict and when something important is at stake, will she hew the line, letting the chips fall where they may.
>
> Here is one example. Since Kansas is one of the five states with no law for control of small loan companies, one student wrote an article on loan sharks and the $5,900,000 estimated to be taken annually from Kansas through usurious charges. Our city had two small loan companies, one of which promptly canceled its advertising contract with the newspaper. The publisher, however, had approved the article and stood with us, knowing that it had been carefully checked for accuracy and that families needed the warning.

'Serving the advertiser' -- Hostetter's consumer-oriented philosophy, however, was not a part of the vast majority of women's and food sections, according to most articles mentioning them (Voss 1958, Hazelton 1966, "Pages" 1967, Karp 1971, Tobin 1971, von Hoffman 1971, Chester 1972, Brown 1974, Robinson 1974, van Gelder 1974, Guenin 1975). Although the writers examined different aspects of the two sections, an overall criticism emerged: the traditional dominance of industry interests was making for sections which were not meeting the increased demand for consumer news. Examples:

-- "As the payola scandals revealed, more giving and taking goes on in this country than the Bible would approve of," wrote journalist Niki Hazelton (1966, p. 1164). She continued:

> An editor with a healthy circulation is besieged by public relations firms to go to Peru to inaugurate a new flight, look at olives in Spain, tour the Champagne country and eat and drink at the most expensive restaurants. A good deal of this wooing is low-pressure and legitimate. Nevertheless, the system is insidious enough. Few people are so callous as to ignore or chastise somebody who's just given them a lovely outing to a sauce manufacturing island, or a splendid booze bash.

-- Journalistic professionalism was almost discouraged in the sections, wrote Washington Post columnist Nicholas von Hoffman in 1971. As an illustration, he mentioned that a regular news reporter would be fired "on any good paper" for relying on a press release without double checking and filling out its story. "Yet that same paper will encourage the people in the women's section to do exactly that [rely only on press releases]," he claimed (1971, p. 52). Later that same year, journalist Richard Karp (1971, p. 39) suggested that "On the average, more than ninety percent of the recipes and stories that appear in newspapers are releases supplied to food editors by vast corporate manufactures, PR agencies, and trade associations." Newspapers like to tout their ethics, wrote von Hoffman (1971, p. 52); "Newspapers do have it, but not in the women's section."

-- Repeating another point of von Hoffman's, Saturday Review writer Richard Tobin wrote a couple of months later (1971, p. 57) that "Ralph Nader and the exciting consumer movement have thrived and taken hold of the American public because the specialized sections of American newspapers didn't dig up these stories, refused at first to cover them at all, and have reluctantly done so with shocking tardiness."

-- In July 1970, newspapers "grown keenly sensitive to consumer issues" ran front-page stories and editorials on a Senate sub-committee findings that nutritional claims on cereal advertising were grossly misleading (Karp 1971, p. 36). But for a "tiny handful of exceptions," the story didn't hit the food pages until September when a paid consultant for the Cereal Institute repeated the industry's defense at the annual Newspaper Food Editors Conference, "an industry-sponsored promotional event for the women journalists," reported Karp (1971, p. 36). "Thus these food editors' main journalistic contribution," he claimed, "was to broadcast the industry's salving message to their millions of readers" (Karp 1971, p.38).

-- Some food editors were reportedly also on the payroll of the advertising department. Karp (1971, p. 40) quoted Los Angeles Examiner food editor Selma Andrews as saying that mentioning brand names in stories, "is part of our advertising policy," adding: "only those brands that are advertised in our paper."

Karp's interview with Andrews not only told a "what" that was happening with some women's sections but also the more important "why." "I don't tell readers that we only mention brands that are advertised because they are supposed to have the sense to know," Andrews was quoted (Karp 1971, p. 40), illustrating the belief by critics that part of the problem with women's sections stems from the attitudes of their reporters and editors. Karp found food editors to have "expressed an extreme distaste for covering food controversies. Few seem the least bit interested in taking the responsibility to query the industry or probe sources"(1971, p. 38). Dorothy Crandall of the Boston Globe, for example, was chastized by her readers in 1970 for doing a favorable story on California lettuce growers. She told Karp they were angry "because I wrote about lettuce growers who don't use unionized pickers." She told those readers: "I don't criticize food products" (Karp 1971, p. 38).

Not only did some of these writers avoid controversy, said Karp, they helped industry defend itself. "The news section gives the argument of the critics," he quoted Jeanne Thwaite of the Atlanta Constitution, "and we carry the industry side of the story (Karp 1971, p. 39).

Another illustration of the attitude of some food writers was mentioned in Hazelton's article (1966) on their acceptance of industry-paid junkets in the late 1960's. In addition to participating in the "freebies," some writers took their husbands, wives, and boy friends on such outings.

But critics for the most part agreed more with the title of Dorothy Brown's article (1974): "If Food Sections Fail Consumers, Blame It On the Men Who Run the Newspapers." Karp was correct in citing the sections' problems, but he laid the blame on the wrong party. "If . . . food sections are stuffed with recipes, and little else, it's because the sections are understaffed and under-budgeted," the former Philadelphia Evening Bulletin food editor wrote (1974, p. 11). "And if they appear to flirt with advertisers, it's because management wants it that way." While food advertising made up about ten per cent of the nearly four billion dollars spent for newspaper advertising in 1972, Robinson claimed that "little of the revenue was returned to the food sections, for most of them are expected to operate at little or no strain to the newspapers budget" (1974, p. 11). This is shown, in part, by the way food editors were paid. Brown reported (1974, p. 12) that one survey of forty-five papers "found that only one-third paid their food editors salaries comparable to other specialists or senior reporters." She also quoted a food editor who was "furious" that she was making "about fifty dollars a week less" than others in the women's sections. "But what should I do?" she said, asking to remain anonymous. "I like my job" (Brown 1974, p. 12).

Business and finance: Although not discussed in the literature quite so much, the development of the specialized business/finance section had a similar history. Not only is its history important to today's consumer reporting because of its similarity to women's and food sections in its design to attract an advertising market, but also because business reports have been some of the best sources of news to today's consumer reporters (Rowse 1967).

Just as he was the first publisher of an American general daily newspaper to cater to women's interests, James Gordon Bennett was also the first to regularly report on business and finance (Tebbel 1974, p. 168). But merchants and shippers had long been keeping up with such news since the Revolution by way of specialty publications. Kobre reported (1969, p. 93) that magazines had carried reports on produce prices and economic issues in the middle 18th Century. But the forerunners of specialty business publications did not come to America until 1774, wrote Tebbel (1974, p. 104). These "price currents" were first published in England and Holland in the 17th Century. The first daily business newspaper, he claimed, started in 1815, with real specialization coming a decade later.

The dark spots -- Since the early 1800's when financial and business news appeared in general newspapers, its development had paralleled that of the women's and food sections. It has come from a spotty past to a more respectable present. For example, Peter Bart's article on financial and business reporters (1963, p. 31-2) opened with an illustration of how writers, editors, and publishers have used the section to enhance their own investments, adding: "By tradition, financial and business news has been a journalistic afterthought -- something editors stuffed into their back pages." A growing interest in these subjects forced many papers to eventually add this section, "but for a reporter the financial section remained an assignment without honor,"wrote Bart (1963, p. 32). "In fact, it stigmatized him among fellow newsmen as a has-been-or never was. Financial news departments became a catch-all for the drunks and drifters -- and there was always plenty of those on the big-city dailies."

The shortcomings of the sections were discussed as early as 1947. Wolff reported (1947) complaints that the majority of business writers (1) were failing to relate financial news to its implications, (2) were unknowledgeable and relied too heavily on business public relations handouts, and (3) were, along with some editors and publishers, adding their biases to news stories.

One example of these early shortcomings, cited in 1973, was the general newspaper treatment of the 1929 stock-market collapse. Rutland claimed (1973, pp. 325-330) that although newspapers gave prominence to the market's fluctuation, they actually covered up Wall Street's real problems:

> Readers wanted to know how this collapse had come about, and the news media tried to explain in ways that never carried much satisfaction but helped consume time. . . . Editorial writers still labored to explain and recommend, but it was clear that long, unsigned editorials were no longer read by most readers. Research surveys confirmed this truth, which editors had resisted when the devotees of Editor and Publisher were loath to admit that readers wanted in on jobs and security rather than political advice.

Other, more concrete examples of business reporting problems, were documented in a 1963 United States Security and Exchange Commission report, wrote Bart (1963). The report confirmed what had been widely known by Wall Street insiders: that reporters and editors had held stock in or received gifts or favors from companies about which they had written.

Reports of problems with newspaper financial sections also came from their editors themselves. Analyzing the results of a national survey of 162 financial editors, researcher Timothy Hubbard found that seventy-six per cent "felt that their efforts to step up both the quality and the quantity of business coverage were severely hampered by circumstances outside their control" (1966, p. 704). These editors complained of (1) a lack of co-operation from business; (2) a lack of news space, time and funds from management; (3) management ignorance of management principles and business-news value; (4) business pressure to distort the news; and (5) their own over-cautiousness and lack of "business savvy."

In discussing these complaints, Hubbard included several interesting facts and anonymous quotes from these editors. One Pennsylvania editor said, for example, "An effective business page convinces the bigger advertisers at any rate, that the paper is in competent hands and thus a good platform on which to display his wares" (Hubbard 1966, p. 706). Hubbard later then reported (1966, pp. 706-7):

Indeed, 22.6 per cent of those replying indicated that as a matter of routine they were compelled to puff up or alter and downgrade business stories at the request of the advertisers. Such pressure is most effective when it is brought to bear through the publication's own advertising department.

An Oklahoma editor even offered that "there are only about ten or twelve papers in the country that have 'clean' business pages" (Hubbard 1966, p. 707).

The bright spots -- But some bright spots can be found in the history of daily newspaper business and financial reporting where writers and editors had their readers' (i.e., consumers') interests at heart:

-- Remembered mainly for when his New York Herald was the target of a boycott to force an end to its sensational news in 1832, Bennett took an active role on Wall Street by exposing swindling stockbrokers (Kobre 1969, p. 235).

-- Two years after he took over the New York Times in 1895, Adolph Ochs added a weekly financial section. Originally scoffed at by its competitors as something which would make the paper duller, the Time's financial section is now highly regarded (Bart 1963).

-- Perhaps because of the Depression and the resulting reader interest in financial and money matters, there were 10,000 writers reporting on these topics in the U.S. by 1942, two hundred of which were in New York alone (Sher 1947). Most financial writing was full of Wall Street jargon. But the New York Post's nationally-syndicated columnist Sylvia Porter approached the subject differently. For example, in 1935 as a 21-year-old, Porter branded the U.S. Treasury secretary, as "obstinate, stupid, ill-advised" (Sher 1947, p. 50). "Finance and economics aren't dry. It's just that writers make them that way," she told Sher (1947, p. 50), adding eleven years later: "I figure if I'm interested in a subject, other people will be too" ("Housewife's" 1958, p. 62).

Her drive to explain to people "What does it all mean?" led her to become "the most widely quoted financial writer in the U.S." by 1958 ("Housewife's" 1958, p. 61). Her column, wrote Time, had begun to be "studied by Wall Street brokers, Washington economists, Chicago bankers and budget-conscious families from coast to coast" ("Housewife's" 1958, p. 61). Her syndication nearly doubled to 220 during the 1957-58 recession. She told Time that she gets most of her ideas from businessmen and from her own troubles as a consumer. And although people from investment bankers to housewives look to her for financial guidance, she told Sher that she has never used her inside information for personal speculation.

-- Just as Porter's booming success in 1957-58 shows an increased interest in business and financial news by general newspapers, so does a 1967 study (Bush 1969) of the content of daily newspapers. It found that from 1952 to 1967, business and financial coverage increased by seventy per cent. And articles written as recently as 1978 and 1979 give evidence that such coverage is continuing to blossom. "The reader interest is enormous," the then-editor of Esquire magazine, Clay Felker, told McClintick (1978, p. 1). "People have discovered that business is an area of high drama, basic emotion and elemental conflict." Isadore Barmash, assistant financial editor of the New York Times agreed, telling college students, "The public is becoming more aware of the whole spectrum of business and finance, and is demanding more business news" (Cotton 1979, p. 7). Idaszak (1978) joined McClintick in reporting that publications are expanding their business and financial sections to meet this new demand.

The Muckraker and the Advertiser. The development of specialized sections by editors and publishers is not the only historical influence on today's consumer reporting. So are the social and political reform periods of Agrarian Populism (1890-1900) and the Progressive Movement (1900-1914). The first movement, Agrarian Populism, led to America's strongest consumer-oriented reporting until that time, "muckraking," which itself then became a part of the Progressive Movement (Weinberg 1861, p. xviii). But being part of the reform did not save muckraking from advertiser pressures, claim some writers.

The Weinbergs defined these early consumer reporters and their work in this manner (1961, p. xviii):

> What was new and makes the muckraking era unqiue . . . is that for the first time there was a group of writers and a concentration of magazines hammering away at the ills they found in society. Neither before nor since had there been in periodical literature anything which can compare to the relentless drive to expose.
>
> . . . The average muckraking article did not offer curative proposals. It was factual, though critical. It was primarily directed at the social conscience of the nation. Its aim was to expose, not to solve.

The magazine muckrakers gave national exposure to political and economic inequities and corruption. Such expose writing, however, did not truly begin with these writers. The threads of muckraking, as it was to be known in the early 20th Century, go back to newspaper work of almost fifty years earlier.

Early newspaper muckraking: The specialization and organization of labor, the concentration of wealth, and the growth of the professions combined with tremendous European immigration to strain "the fabric of American pluralistic culture . . . and to place considerable stress upon traditional political institutions" during the last half of the 19th Century (Wilson 1970, p. v-vi ). Corruption was found by magazines and newspapers on all levels of government -- from the Grant Administration in Washington to the city governments of Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Concinnati, St. Louis, and Kansas City. Crusades against such activities made the New York Times, New York Herald, St. Louis Dispatch, and Kansas City Star famous during the last three decades of the 19th Century (Kobre 1969, pp. 375-6; Rutland 1973, p. 250; Tebbel 1974, p. 260).

"The cycle was familiar," wrote Kobre (1969, p. 362) of the 1865-1900 newspaper era. "Social conditions produced certain news interests; the newspapers responded with more emphasis and attention to this kind of news."

Pulitzer -- Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly magazine "foreshadowed the later muckraking era" in trying to compete with crusading New York City dailies in the late 1850's by taking on such issues as "swill milk" (Tebbel 1974, pp. 211, 236). But Kobre strongly credited Joseph Pulitzer with starting newspaper muckraking (1969, pp. 375-6, 381). A German immigrant, Pulitzer first started muckraking when, as a reporter for the German-language newspaper Westliche Post , he exposed government corruption in St. Louis in the late 1860's. He continued his work when he bought the St. Louis Dispatch in 1878 -- "pounding away at corruption in gas company franchises and other wrong doing in St. Louis which left the city with a legacy of progressivism" -- and refined it after he bought the New York World in 1883 (Rutland 1973, pp. 244-5). A ten-point platform, introduced to his readers his first year with the World, found Pulitzer advocating the taxing of luxuries, inheritances, large incomes, and monopolies, along with abolishing corporate privilages (Tebbel 1974, p. 264). His campaigns against monopolies and government-business corruption involving Standard Oil and telegraph and railroad interests (Mott 1962, p. 437) in part "laid the basis for attacks by magazine

muckrakers after the turn of the century" (Kobre 1973, p. 381).
Hearst -- Like he did with Pulitzer's tactics on sex and morality, William Randolph Hearst also muckraked with his New York Journal to compete with Pulitzer at the turn of the century. But unlike Pulitzer, considered by Kobre as the Horace Greeley of the late 19th Century New York City newspaper scene for his social conscious (1969, p. 378), "Hearst's mind was on making money" (Tebbel 1974, p. 265). His New York Journal may have uncovered a public-utility swindle and bad meat-packing practices (Rutland 1973, p. 266; Tebbel 1974, p. 268), but Tebbel still contended that his newspaper was attacking "criminal coporations in a manner that would have given Hearst readers convulsions at a later date" (1974, p. 268).

Pulitzer and Hearst were not the only early newspaper practitiners of muckraking. Not only did liberally-oriented newspapers like the New York Tribune and Joseph Daniel's Raleigh State Chronicle take on corruption, so did "community service" newspapers of the midwest such as Joseph Medill's Chicago Tribune. Those midwestern newspapers performed their "community service" by mainly fighting crime and government corruption (Tebbel 1974, p. 212). The more liberal newspapers, however, were attacking lottery frauds, quack doctors, trusts, monopolies, and farm and labor problems in addition to government corruption (Kobre 1969, pp. 435-6; Rutland 1973, p. 250).

Reporter or advocate? One newspaper muckraking achievement worthy of special attention was Jacob Riis's 12-years reporting for the New York Tribune and New York Sun of the city poor's housing and working situations. His efforts culminated in 1890 with the book, How the Other Half Lives (Rutland 1973, p. 247-8). Riis was, as Rutland point out, an example of the "new breed" of journalist who came from this period -- journalists who moved from a reporter's viewpoint to that of an advocate of social change. Wrote Rutland (1973, p. 272):

> The social concern Riis showed in his series on slums and George W. Cable's expose of the convict least system left a residue on the conscience of the younger reporters who saw that the tenements were not disappearing, that sweat-shops were still crammed with coughing young women, and that reform movements in city hall had a way of turning into cynical machines with only a new set of rascals in office.

As with their muckraking predecessors, today's reporters are also addressing the reporter vs. advocate question. Some claim that strict objectivity does not serve the public, and that, with the broadcast media doing good factual reporting, newspapers should become a "social participant, not a mere observer" (Deitch 1969). But there is that traditional role journalists have seen themselves in, that of the reporter of events. The reporter vs. advocate problem of a consumer reporter was best summed by reporter Winifred Imhof Cook (1978, p. 2): "My instincts say, 'Be a reporter.' But I remember that James Bryant Conant once said, 'Behold the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.'"

It was interesting to find that the reporter vs. advocate question of today dates back at least to the turn of the 20th Century muckraker. "Precisely when this new breed of reporter forced his way into metropolitan journalism cannot be fixed in time," wrote Rutland (1973, p. 272), "but the avenue was the magazine other than the newspaper, and one periodical over all others: McClure's Magazine."

Magazine Muckraking: Both McClure's founder and other magazine publishers freely admitted that their muckraking mainly came as a result of journalistic evolutionary change in search of profits (Hofstadter 1955, p. 191; Weinberg 1969, p. xx; Kobre 1969, p. 528; Rutland 1973, p. 274). Until the muckraking period, most American magazines were literary and scholarly. The first successful magazines sprang up in the third quarter of the 18th Century, wrote Kobre (1969, pp. 94, 186). A decrease in postal rates in 1794 enhanced their popularity, and while there were only five magazines in that year, there were a dozen by 1800 and a hundred by 1825. Mostly literary, some magazines also dealt with social and political questions of the day. But even during the 1870 to 1900 period, most of the influencial magazines looked at those social issues reported by newspapers as just "interesting phenomena" (Tebbel 1974, p. 211).

The U.S. political and industrial situation of those last years of the 19th Century, however, changed magazines. Politically, the issues raised by newspaper muckrakers moved from the local level to the national level by 1895. Populist William Jennings Bryan in his unsuccessful presidential campaign in 1896 espoused principles attacking those problems raised by newspaper muckrakers. Such ideals then gained enough popular support to elect "Trust Buster" Theodore Roosevelt president in 1900. Industrially, the decreases in magazine production and distribution costs led to great magazine growth (Weinberg 1961, p. xiv; Wilson 1970, p. 28). These two factors, therefore, began moving America's only national news medium, the magazine, in the muckraking direction, and publisher S.S. McClure led that move.

McClure's discovery -- McClure's mass-audience magazine started in 1893 and was the first to post a selling price of less than half of what most magazines were asking. His and four other magazines -- Munsey's, Cosmopolitan, Peterson's, and Godey's -- were the leaders (Tebbel 1974, p. 279). During its early years, McClure's ran socially-oriented and politically-oriented fiction and articles (Wilson 1970, pp. 119-23). But it was the January 1903 issue that made McClure recognize editorially that his magazine and its writers had stumbled onto a new form of expose writing that would later be called "muckraking." This issue contained three articles which "were landmarks in the turbulent history of muckraking"(Tebbel 1974, p. 284), and whose background show that the magazine's move to muckraking was unplanned (Hofstadter 1955, pp. 191-3; Wilson 1970, pp. 45, 136-8; Rutland 1973, p. 244). Ida Tarbell's "History of the Standard Oil Company" was only to be a chronicle of a great American business achievement; McClure's interest in trusts had shown up even in his feature news service and in his magazine earlier. Lincoln Steffens found the political corruption for his "Shame of Minneapolis" while touring the country on orders from McClure before taking up an editorship. Finally, Ray Stannard Baker, whose "Right to Work" investigated questionable labor practices, had been a fiction writer who had written positive articles on big business and trusts.

That single issue set a definite trend for both McClure's and other ten-cent magazines. Within the first decade of the new century, more than a dozen magazines entered the muckraking frey (Weinberg 1961, p. 3). Using sarcasm, innocence, graphics, and emotional descriptions (Francke 1978), those magazines took on religion's financial status, racism, government corruption, child labor practices, railroads, the insurance industry, organized finance, and patent medicines (Tebbel 1974, p. 286-7). "The muckrakers had a missionary zeal and a belief that an informed public would become an aroused citizenry, demanding clean factories, honest officials, fair prices, decent wages, and social justice," wrote Rutland (1973, p. 276). These writers for the most part relentlessly pursued facts, and were highly educated Progressives (Wilson 1970, p. 319-20; Rutland 1973, p. 273). Wilson added that "their writings accurately reflected the growing public interest in literary realism, pragmatic philosophy, institutional economics, the cult of efficiency, sociological jurisprudence, and experimental psychology" (1970, p. v).

Upton Sinclair: The best known of these muckrakers was Upton Sinclair. Primarily a novelist, Sinclair's 1906 book, The Jungle, exposed the unfair labor practices and unhealthy production techniques of the meat-packing industry. This single man and his book has long been credited with the passage of the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act. But many believe Sinclair's contribution was much greater. Biographer Leon Harris, for example, called him "the most important writer in the history of the United States. . ." (Harris 1975, p. 2).

While most muckrakers concentrated on only a few issues at the turn of the century, Sinclair questioned the merit of virtually every American institution. In his ninety years, Sinclair wrote eighty-seven novels and essays which attacked industrialists, capitalists, bankers, politicians, religious leaders, educators, and even journalists. "Other of his contempory muckrakers played a greater role than he in effecting particular social change," wrote Harris (1975, p. 2). "But not one of them approached his total influence in regard to all the ideas he advocated."

Late newspaper efforts: Although magazines are mostly known for their muckraking during this time, newspapers continued theirs of earlier decades. They reported scandals in the Southern Pacific Railroad, the U.S. Postal Service, and the insurance industry (Rutland 1973, p. 276; Tebbel 1974, p. 286, 314-6).

Muckraking's impact: literary or political? Muckraking's impact on American life is unquestioned. But the depth of that impact is. "The muckrakers had a more decisive impact on the thinking of the country than they did on its laws or morals," wrote Hofstadter (1955, p. 196-7), mentioning Cowles' contention (1939) that their success may have been more literary than political. Biographer Leon Harris agreed: "The chief effect of the muckraking magazines . . . had not been the passage of laws but the changing of Americans' thinking. Never again would business and businessmen and their practices be accepted absolutely and unquestioningly as proper and inevitable" (Harris 1975, p. 168).

But Tebbel listed "some famous victories as the result of public pressure generated by muckraking" (1974, p. 288). These included the 1902 Federal Reclamation Act, the 1904 Supreme Court decision dissolving the Northern Securities Company, the election that same year of the prosecuting attorney of corruption-ridden St. Louis as governor, the 1905 indictment of the Beef Trust Leaders, the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act, the 1911 break up of the Standard Oil Company, and the inception of various railroad and insurance regulations.

Even with these accomplishments, Rutland estimated that "it is probable that half the nation continued to read its weekly newspapers. . . . In the smaller communities it was the stable news that filled columns with items that chronicled daily life in pre-1917 America" (1973, p. 278). Rejection of muckraking by conservative elements seemed to Tebbel to come to a head in 1910 when some struck back violently at the publications (1974, pp. 285, 287-88). Twenty-one persons were killed in the bombing of the Los Angeles Times, the first major accident involving explosives in the 20th Century (World Almanac 1977, p. 749), and the Baltimore Sun's David Graham Phillips was assassinated in New York City in January 1911. "There was, by this time," Tebbel wrote (1974, p. 287), "a general movement to end muckraking. There was a great deal more muck to be raked, but the public was unable to face any more bad news and wanted to hear good news again." Some of the magazines, he explained, "were being transformed into innocuous formats. . ." (1974, p. 288).

Causes of muckraking's decline: The writers cite several explanations for the decline of muckraking (Hofstadter 1955, p. 194; Weinberg 1961, p. xxii; Seldes 1968, p. 15; Kobre 1969, p. 719; Wilson 1970, pp. 167, 198, 320; Tebbel 1974, p. 288): (1) governments were taking action against the problems, (2) problems at McClure's and desires for personal change caused its staff to break up in 1906, and (3) badly researched articles led to a decline in the public's confidence. But the most widely-mentioned theory was that muckraking was forced off magazine pages by advertiser boycotts and by banks tightening credit. Wilson's well-researched study of McClure's found that only two companies dropped advertising because of muckraking. But Tebbel (1974, p. 288) felt: "Sadly, at the end, muckrakers retreated in the face of organized counteracts by business. Advertising was becoming too important for the magazines to continue their activist role."

The patent medicine industry was cited by the Weinbergs (1961, p. 176) as a leader of business's counter-attack. This industry grew phenominally in the late 19th Century, and its products' harmful effects led to the Ladies' Home Journal in 1892 to stop accepting their advertising, and to attack them in stories beginning in 1904. Collier's magazine also exposed the problems of patent medicines at that time (Mott 1962, p. 595). Taking on such a heavy advertiser may have ended magazine muckraking. Although not totally convinced of the boycott theory, Hofstadter wrote that at least one magazine, Pearson's, continued muckraking after 1912, "and its vitality, sustained down to the time of the first World War, has been cited as evidence that muckraking sentiment did not die a spontaneous death, but was choked off at its sources by those who were most affected by its exposure" (1955, p.194).

But while the role of the patent medicine industry in the decline of the consumer-oriented muckraking of magazines may not be fully documented, its role in limiting newspaper coverage is.

Newspapers and patent medicines: 'the contract of silence': Newspaper editors in as early as 1800 knew of the problems of advertised quack health remedies: often they were victimized along with their readers (Rutland 1973, p. 98). But in 1837, the _Boston Daily Times_, with a _caveat emptor_ attitude, supported the right of patent medicine advertisers, and the _New York Herald_, previously mentioned for James Gordon Bennett's anti-fraud business writing, was notorious for its misleading patent medicine advertisements. Wrote Bennett of a complaint lodged against advertisers for Dr. Brandreth's pills (Mott 1962, p. 301): "Send us more advertisements than Dr. Brandreth does -- give us higher prices -- we'll cut Dr. Brandreth dead -- or at least curtail his space. Business is business -- money is money. . . . We premit no blockhead to interfere with our business." Within fifteen years, however, Mott reported that some newspapers such as the _New York Times_, _New York Post_, and _Boston Daily Advertiser_ were refusing these advertisements. And as previously mentioned, some newspapers and magazines muckraked the industry itself.

But the muckraking enthusiasm of newspaper editors and publishers seems to have been limited mostly to magazines and a few large papers. Thousands of other newspapers of all sizes were documented by magazine muckraker Mark Sullivan to have been either victims of or willing participants in a conspiracy with the patent medicine industry to not print articles on legislative developments detremental to that industry. Sullivan's story in the November 4, 1905, Collier's, wrote fellow muckraker George Seldes seventy years later "in effect disclosed that owners, editors, and publishers -- like many streetwalkers and inmates of bordellos -- actually preferred prostitution (and big money) to the honorable ways of making a living" (Seldes 1974, p. 7).

Emotionally strong as it may sound, Seldes's statement is supported by Sullivan's story (reprinted in Weinstein 1961, pp. 179-94). Kobre reported (1969, p. 518) that newspapers made $145 million from advertising in 1904. Sullivan's estimate in 1905 that $40 million was spent by the patent medicine men in newspaper advertising indicates that at least twenty-five cents of every dollar received by newspapers from advertising came from that single industry, a highly organized group, Sullivan reported.

In his anonymously printed story, "The Patent Medicine Conspiracy Against Freedom of the Press," Sullivan let the Proprietary Association of America itself describe its tactics of 1904. "We have had a good deal of difficulty in the last few years with the different legislatures of the different States . . . . ," said the group's president, F.J. Cheney (Weinstein 1961, p. 185).

"I believe I have a plan whereby we will have no difficulty whatever with these people. I have used it in my business for two years, and I know it is a practical thing. . . ." He continued (Weinstein 1961, pp. 185-6):

> I, inside of the last two years, have made contracts with between fifteen and sixteen thousand newspapers, and never had but one man refuse to sign the contract, and by saying to him that I could not sign a contract without this clause in it he readily signed it.
>
> My point is merely to shift the responsibility. We today have the responsibility of the whole matter upon our shoulders. As you all know, there is hardly a year but we have had a lobbyist in the different State legislatures -- one year in New York, one year in New Jersey, and so on. There has been constant fear that something would come up so I had this clause in my contract added.
>
> This is what I have in every contract I make: "It is hereby agreed that should your State, or the United States Government, pass any law that would interfer with or restrict the sale of proprietary medicines, this contract shall become void...."
>
> In the State of Illinois a few years ago they wanted to assess me three hundred dollars. I though I had a better plan than this, so I wrote to about forty papers and merely said: "Please look at your contract with me and take note that if this law passes you and I must stop doing business and my contracts cease." The next week every one of them had an article....
>
> I have carried this through and know it is a success. I know the papers will accept it. Here is a thing that costs us nothing. We are guaranteed against the $75,000 loss for nothing. It throws the responsibility on the newspapers. . . .
>
> I have my contracts printed and I have this printed in red type, right square across the contract, so there can be absolutely no mistake, and the newspaper men cannot say to me, "I did not see it." He did see it and knows what he is doing. It seems to me it is a point worth every man's attention. . . . I think this pretty near a sure thing.

So did the association's membership, reported Sullivan. In fact, the group developed a national network to make such a plan more efficient. Sullivan described it this way (Weinstein 1961, p. 189):

> In every State capital in the United States it [the association] maintains an agent whose business it is to watch during the session of the Legislature each day's batch of new bills, and whenever a bill affecting patent medicine shows its head to telegraph the bill, verbatim, to headquarters. There some scores of printed copies of the bill are made and a copy sent to every member of the Association. . . . Thereupon each manufacturer looks up the list of papers in the threatened State with which he had the contracts described above. And to each newspaper he sends a preemptory telegram calling the publishers attention to the obligations of his contract, and commanding him to go to work to defeat the anti-patent medicine bill.

Sullivan claimed this plan defeated public health legislature introduced in "over a score of States every year." Specifically, he said the industry's hold over newspapers downed bills in more than fifteen states in 1904 including Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Utah. In other parts of the article he named Cleveland, New York State, and rural Illinois as other areas whose newspapers were influenced to support the industry's fight against legislation.

Although never offering a solution to the problem, Sullivan ended his article by describing the association's unsuccessful attempt to kill a labeling bill in North Dakota. He credited the small size of the state's newspapers for their ability to withstand the group's threats. "The press of the state, therefore, consists of very small papers, weeklies, in which the ownership and active management all lie with one man. . . ," Sullivan wrote (Weinstein 1961, p. 194). "With them the patent medicines scheme was not so successful as with the more elaborately organized newspapers of older and more populous states."

But the patent medicine men were unable to hold back the tide of legislation for another year. The Pure Food and Drug Act was passed in 1906 prohibiting mislabeling of food, liquor, and medicine products (Porter 1975, p. 99).

The industry's strong-armed hold over some newspapers may have been short, but Seldes (1974) offers that the conspiracy's very existence proves why magazines, and not newspapers, were responsible for the best muckraking at the turn of the century. Before 1900, he wrote ( 1974, p. 7), newspapers could be "libelous, unfair, outrageous, and sometimes even criminal, virtually because of political influence." But the strength of commercial interests that developed after 1900 forced the good muckrakers to magazines and books because they "could get hardly a line published in the newspapers that reached the millions," claimed Seldes (1974, p. 7).

Tebbel, however, disagreed that newspapers, more than magazines were strongly influenced by advertisers at that time, calling the advertisers' censorship of newspapers during the early 20th century a "popular myth." But Sullivan's article documented that the strength of advertising's influence was at times more than a "popular myth."

Recent Claims of Influence. Patent medicine has not been the only industry whose large advertising volume has influenced the coverage of health issues by American newspapers, claimed Seldes. He wrote that the fear by newspaper editors and publishers of losing cigarette advertising kept them -- "with the usual exception of about one percent" -- for thirty years from reporting the mounting medical evidence linking smoking to health problems (1968, p. 61-75). In 1933 with his fortnightly newsletter, In Fact, Seldes claimed to have been the first journalist to report on medical studies concerning the dangers of smoking. He supported his claim with examples of where he reported medical research on the subject during the ten years of his newsletter that even the major papers would not touch. It wasn't until 1949 that the Associated Press and some papers reported the link between smoking and cancer, he said.

Seldes also reported that during the ten years of In Fact only the New York Times printed any of what he estimated as the 400 orders brought by the Federal Trade Commission against companies each year. But even the few reports published by the Times were short and buried in the financial pages (1968, p. 30; 1974). Again, Seldes contended that the papers did not print the FTC reports for fear of advertisers. This same problem and its potential cause were echoed in 1967 by Rowse. He claimed that FTC complaints involving local advertisers were not being reported at that time by their local newspapers.

Seldes and Margolius further support the claim of an advertiser-influenced anti-consumer bias in the press by pointing to Consumers Union's difficulty in placing advertising in its early years. Started in 1936, Consumers Union was refused space in that decade by a liberal magazine which was itself in the midst of an advertisers' boycott because of reports that Seldes and other writers were contributing articles unfavorable to American business concerns (Seldes 1968, p. 18). Margolius (1973b) wrote that newspapers also had refused Consumers Union advertising.

Liberal consumer writers are not alone in their feeling that there is a pro-business bias in most American newspapers. A 1977 study showed this concern is also held by the general public. In their study for Sentry Insurance called "Consumerism at the Crossroads," Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., and Harvard's Marketing Science Institute found that a quarter of the polled public felt that newspaper, magazine, and television reports on consumer affairs are biased in favor of business. While nearly half (forty-seven per cent) felt the reports are unbiased, only eight per cent felt they are biased against business.

Along with those cited by Seldes and Margolius, there are other examples of the advertiser vs.consumer news conflict within the press before the inception of the consumer reporter in the 1970's:

-- 1954: General Motors withdrew advertising from the _Wall Street Journal_ when the paper printed an illustration of a 1955 model car before its official release. GM shortly reneged and resumed advertising ("Free Press" 1954).

-- 1956: The _Boston Globe_ misled its readers on the severity of a blizzard's effect on downtown traffic conditions so that they would go ahead with their Easter shopping plans. Rowse (1967) contended that the blatant fear by Boston papers of their advertisers continued even in 1967.

-- 1961: When twenty-one companies pleaded quilty or no contest in a federal price-fixing case, only four of twenty-two major newspapers reviewed ran the story on the front page. Four others failed to print it at all ("When the Story" 1961).

-- Two articles, written in 1963 and 1964, described "two-hatters": those reporters who not only cover an industry but who also solicit advertising from that very industry. _Time_ listed ("Two-Hatters" 1964) these twelve of twenty-four papers having "two-hatters" in automative coverage: _New York Post_, _New York Journal-American_, _Boston Herald_, _Boston Traveler_, _Boston Globe_, _Boston Record American_, _San Francisco Chronicle_, _San Francisco Examiner_, _San Francisco News-Call Bulletin_, _Los Angeles Herald-Examiner_, _Cincinnati Post and Times-Star_, and _Cincinnati Enquirer_. Wrote Bart (1963, p. 35) "Such dual functions are an open invitation to every major advertiser to throw his weight around. And the invitation is readily accepted."

-- 1966: Not one of seven hundred newspapers solicited would print a serialization of Ralph Nader's Unsafe at Any Speed, the book that launched his career as a consumer advocate. Six hundred papers, however, ran Drew Pearson's column, which covered tough consumer issues at times (Rowse 1967).

With newspapers adding consumer reporters, beats, and special sections in the 1970's, the evidence is split as to the current extent of the advertiser influence. A 1971 study (Tobin) found that advertising by retailers was not removed when a local paper printed price comparisons. A year later, only four of thirty consumer writers informally questioned said that advertisers had influenced their work (Lasky 1973). But another informal survey that year of fifty editors and publishers had different results ("Shop-Once" 1972). Asked if they would allow their newspaper to print the basic shopping tip, "Shop once a week to take advantage of advertised specials," nineteen of the editors and twenty-three of the publishers said they would refuse. While one editor responded, "I would publish the line because it's good advice for shoppers," a publisher replied, "Why don't the goddamned trouble-makers go to work for the Pravda?" In addition, a 1977 study (Hammitt) listed twelve examples that left the author "little doubt that advertisers have exerted influence over the editorial content of the print media, and that this influence can take a number of forms"(p. 11).

The Mechanics of Consumer Reporting

The influence of advertisers (whether real or imagined by newspaper management) is not the only reason for the lack of more hard-hitting consumer reporting of Pollock's definition. There is the mechanical problems for journalists in covering "consumer affairs."

The difficulty in reporting on consumer topics stems mainly from the complexity, specialization, and national-orientation of most consumer problems, claims Rowse (1967) and others (Lasky 1973; "Consumer Reporting" 1973; Margolius 1973a, 1973b). Cook (1978, p. 1) illustrated this problem when she wrote that the consumer movement "is going beyond what the economists might call 'micro-consumerism' and entering an area of 'macro-consumerism.' Its concerns encompass the entire fields of state, national, and international politices, and stretch into areas that include inflation, energy, architecture, and the most basic force in the free enterprise system -- open competition." Writers say this problem not only makes it difficult for a reporter to decide on what to cover and how to cover it, but also on whom to turn to for information; sources are difficult to find, facts hard to vertify, and some local businesses uncooperative (Margolius 1973b, Lasky 1973).

## Dealing With the Problems

Journalists have not only discussed possible solutions to the advertising influence and mechanical problems of consumer reporting, but they have also attempted to deal with them in the field.

'The Advertising Influence'

Newspaper executives may no longer sign contracts with advertisers limiting coverage of consumer issues (as they did with patent medicines), but other previous examples indicate that some still fear the possibility of an advertising boycott because of articles they may run. Some papers, however, have tried with limited success to decrease either the real threat of boycott or their own fear of boycott. The approaches can be grouped into two categories. First, there are "hard" approaches such as not accepting advertising at all or accepting it and then heavily publicizing attempts by advertisers to influence new reporting. Second, there is the "soft" approach of accepting advertising and limiting consumer news to basic money-management articles and shopping guides, intentionally ignoring brand names and retailer names.

There is, however, a third means. Found quite by accident, the rising trend of competing local newspapers to merge completely or in part has made it virtually impossible for an advertiser to premanently boycott one newspaper.

'Adless' PM. The first "hard" approach -- refusing advertising altogether -- has only been attempted once by an entire daily newspaper, although a special no-advertising consumer supplement is currently being tried. PM, for Picture Magazine, was a tabloid started in 1940 in New York City by liberal millionaire Marshall Field III of department store fame, and former general manager of Time, Inc., and managing editor of New

Yorker magazine Ralph Ingersoll (Mott 1962, pp. 688, 771; Mahoney 1973). Because Field kept himself out of the publication's editorial matters (Mott 1962, p. 772), PM had been known in journalistic history primarily for its idealistic attempt to be a newspaper run by newspaper people rather than by publishers and business executives (Lasch 1948). It was a highly opinionated publication with reporters allowed to express their feelings in regular news copy.

Just as Ingersoll's influence led PM's general news coverage in directions most daily newspapers dared not go, so did Sidney Margolius's influence make PM's daily coverage of consumer matters unmatched then, or perhaps even since. In looking back at his efforts of three decades earlier, Margolius wrote in 1973 that PM's consumer news was one of the paper's main drawing cards "when we had few other distinctions to offer in a highly competitive field" (1973b, p. 21).

To help meet Ingersoll's goal -- "We are against people who push other people around" -- Margolius's large "News for Living" staff (with twelve reporters at its peak) trained New York City consumers in comparison shopping, and documented consumer abuses while offering solutions, wrote Mahoney in his detailed account of PM (1973, p. 18). specifically, during their eight-year existence, Margolius and PM's consumer reporters:

-- Helped institute a rent freeze.

-- Examined charge accounts, installment buying, lending practices, and credit reporting practices with the city.

-- Exposed the inadequacies of the City's Health Department and the role of food retailers in the selling of decomposed poultry to consumers.

-- Explained to veterans the benefits of their government life insurance policies.

-- Closely monitored milk prices, watching in particular those of Sheffield Farms and Borden's, which with four other firms and thirty-three officers and employees were later indicted for price fixing.

-- Ran almost daily price surveys on clothing, furnishings, kitchen appliances, and other goods. At times these led to price wars among merchants, usually Macy's and Gimble's.

-- Led a mail campaign against the state's proposed fair trade law, which the governor later vetoed.

In looking at PM, historian Mott wrote (1962, p. 772) that the paper "made an important contribution to the journalism of the decade. . . . A brilliant staff, of leftist tendency, worked for the paper, and gave it often an amateurish flavor -- like the staff of a college paper having a wonderful time without much feeling of responsibility." Seldes (1974, p. 7) gave it much higher praise, saying PM was one of the brief exceptions where a newspaper was "soley devoted to the welfare of its readers."

Probably just as important to journalistic history as its reporting techniques and philosophy was, as Seldes mentioned, its short existance. The paper never had the circulation to hold its own as a no-advertising daily, surviving mostly on the financial support of Field (Mott 1962, pp. 771-2). While other New York City evening dailies were reaching between 380,000 and 690,000 readers (World Almanac 1949, p. 403) in 1946, PM reached only 164,000 (Mahoney 1973). It was after that seventy-sixth month of publication that inflationary losses forced Field to begin taking advertising, causing Ingersoll to quit. A twenty-three per cent drop in PM's circulation to 125,000 over the next twenty months resulted, and Field sold it in April 1948.

That year, Lasch tried to examine why the paper never obtained the circulation necessary for solvency. Acknowledging that PM had some "admirable points," though never specifically mentioning its extensive consumer coverage, he placed most of the blame for the paper's low circulation on fierce public relations fighting by other City papers, PM's own arrogant approach, and Ingersoll's overwhelming editorial presence. He also anonymously quoted two former PM staffers as citing poor mechanical facilities, inexperienced journalist, overly opinionated news copy, and intense office politicking by staff "Communists" as reasons for the failure.

Another possible reason was offered nearly two decades before the first issue of PM even hit the stands. For seven months in 1911, muckraker Will Irwin examined for Collier's "The American Newspaper: A Study of Journalism in its Relationship to the Public." In the ninth of the fifteen-part series, Irwin contended that "the advertising influence" either helped some businesses gain exposure in some papers or kept harmful stories from appearing in other papers (Irwin 1911a). He later suggested in his final article that one solution to "the advertising influence" was an "adless" newspaper, such as those tried in Europe (Irwin 1911b). He warned that such an experiment would, however, fail in America: "When the public becomes sufficiently well educated concerning journalism, learns what its real failures are, such an experiment may succeed to a limited degree in this county" (Irwin 1911b, p. 15). Because an "adless" paper could not afford to buy expensive features and special articles, "its chief commodity would by unclouded truth, seen through the eyes of a free editor," Irwin wrote (1911b, p. 15), "and the public, in its present state of education concerning newspapers, it not quite ready to pay good coin for truth alone."

A current newspaper experiment is, however, again testing the "adless" concept. The Louisville Courier-Journal, an aggressively consumer-oriented newspaper, began in September of 1979 offering its readers the non-advertising Consumer Extra ("Tailored" 1978). A tabloid, it is bought by subscribers separately from the regular newspaper. Since the 1978 article on its introduction, the publication's success or failure has been unreported.

Collier's Publicizes Advertiser Conflict. If, as PM's experience and Irwin's feelings suggest, daily general newspapers must take advertising to survive, Pollock (1971) suggested that one way to fight advertising boycott's or the fear of them would be to well-publicize such actions or intentions. Two months before Irwin's piece on "the advertising influence," Collier's magazine did just that.

In a two-page unsigned cover story, the magazine explained its receipt of two letters from the advertising agent of the American Woolen Company, "the organization commonly referred to as the "Wool Trust" ("Can the Wool Trust" 1911, p. 11). The letters, printed in their entirety, explained company President William M. Wood's objection to the printing of his advertisement across from a muckraking report on the Wool Trust's congressional influence. Although never explicity threatening advertising withdrawal, the agent wrote: "But Mr. William Wood does not feel that he should give his money to publications who try to take from his very mouth the bread and butter on which he must live. Can you blame him?" ("Can the Wool Trust" 1911, p. 11). Subsequent issues of the magazine had nothing further, in either its own copy or letters from readers, on the incident.

Margolius agreed with Pollock that today's newspapers should follow Collier's example. He wrote (1973b) that the growing public awareness of and demand for consumer news would make it difficult for an advertiser to successfully pressure a newspaper running a good, hard-hitting consumer news.

Avoiding Controversy: Bland Consumerism. The easiest way, however, for daily newspapers to print consumer-oriented copy and at the same time avoiding any complications with local advertisers is to limit consumer articles to basic money-management stories, and "how to" shopping guides. By intentionally ignoring brand names, retailers names, and qualitative judgements, this kind of consumer reporting does not meet Pollock's definition of "consumer reporting, at its best, is critical reporting about the quality, safety, and cost of consumer goods and services" (1977, p. 37).

In setting forth this definition, Pollock took to task a newly-established advertising supplement for newspapers called Common Cents. By subscribing to this monthly service, newspapers received articles, based mainly on previously-written stories and/or government and industry pamphlets, which could then be printed by the newspapers as "consumer news." Brand names were never mentioned, and little original reporting was done. The service claimed to both satisfy the reader's need for consumer news and the publisher's need for a good advertising-selling environment. Pollock branded this type of reporting as "bland consumerism," and feared that it further blurred the line for readers between editorial and advertising copy. But founder Howard Cohen defended his service, saying, "This is the real world. No one wants to advertise in something that says this and this are bad" (Pollock 1977, p. 38).

One-Newspaper Town Limits Pressure. But at least one consumer writer feels all the concern for advertiser pressure is now unnecessary. Rowse (1967) contended that there were few cases where advertisers had premanently withdrawn their business. "In a country where ninety-six per cent of the cities have only one newspaper company," he wrote, "advertisers need the local newspaper more than the newspaper needs any one advertiser" (Rowse 1967, p. 30).

A story of Troy (Ohio) Daily News Editor and Associate Publisher Tom Pew, Jr., as told by Pollock (1971, p. 43), is a case in point: "A few years back, when the paper was running a series about Ralph Nader's Unsafe at Any Speed, Pew says all local car dealers but one ('he had a contract with us') pulled their advertising. They came back within a few weeks. 'You can't sell autos unless you advertise,' says Pew with a chuckle."

## The Mechanics of Consumer Reporting

Writings relating to consumer reporting plentifully carry suggestions on what newspapers and their employees should do to improve consumer coverage. Four such suggestions are (1) that management put more money and effort into it (Mahoney 1973), (2) that sources and writers cooperate more honestly and openly (Boles 1951), (3) that editors and consumer writers become "systems thinkers" ("Consumer Reporting" 1973), and (4) that the reporters also begin to rely less on Washington, D.C. sources for stories (Margolius 1973b).

Seldom, however, do the writings actually list concrete suggestions in implementing those points. Where should management put more money and effort? Staff? Research? How can a journalist operate to solicit better cooperation from a businessman? What exactly is "systems thinking," and who will teach the editors and reporters? Finally, what and who are the local sources for consumer stories?

The two traditional institutions from which today's reporters learn their craft -- the news room and the college classroom -- will not, based on this literature review, soon supply the answers to these and other questions on the mechanics of consumer reporting. Consumer reporting itself did not widely reach news rooms as a beat until the middle 1970's, and a review of journalism offerings at fourteen major universities showed that only five have a course specifically on the techniques of consumer, business, and economic reporting.[1]

Journalists Supply Own Answers. The greatest initiatives in resolving the mechanical problems have come from consumer journalists themselves. Since 1972, some have either officially gathered at organized consumer journalism conferences (Lasky 1973) or met as part of other consumer-oriented functions (Cook 1978) to discuss their problems.

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1. Catalogues examined were from Northwestern University, Columbia University (New York) University of Southern California, Michigan State University, George Washington University and the Universities of Arizona, California (Berkeley), Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, North Carolina, Southern Illinois, Texas (Austin), and Wisconsin.

To resolve some of the problems with women's and food pages, reporters have turned to the courts or to organizing. Nina Vollertsen, food editor of the Atlanta Journal, sued her employer for sex discrimination in wages (Brown 1974). Also that year, ninety-five journalists chartered the Newspaper Food Editors and Writers Association to try to "bring food pages up to the same professional standards as the reporting on politics and general news," wrote Robinson (1974, p. 8). According to von Hoffman, such an organization is what the food and women's sections needed. Only ten per cent of these sections "operate on somewhat more elevated principles," he said (von Hoffman 1971, p. 53). He and others put the Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, St. Petersburg Times, and Milwaukee Journal in the ten per cent. With the "muscle" of a national organization, he wrote (1971, p. 54), these sections "will be able to make what we call the women's section. . . the most exciting, the most useful, and even the most important part of the emerging modern American newspaper."

Media and Consumer: The most aggressive attempt at helping consumer journalists was taken by Francis Pollock and his Media and Consumer magazine from 1972 to 1975. Published by a non-profit group, Media and Consumer had a simple "bias," wrote Pollock in its first regular issue: "In any consumer matter they handle, we think the news media have a professional obligation to make the risks as well known as the benefits" (Pollock 1971, p. 20).

Pollock's magazine put this philosophy to practical use in three ways. First, it reprinted numerous consumer stories done by various newspapers. Other writers could then obtain ideas and information for use in their own publications. Secondly, it organized national efforts by individual news organizations, one being a survey of hamburger purity by five newspapers and two television stations ("The National Meat Test" 1973). Finally, it carried a journalism review which examined the performance of media and printed opinions on their role in consumer affairs.

Started with a $50,000 grant from the Consumers Union, the publication carried no advertising and hoped to survive on funding from foundations and subscriptions. Although circulation reached 15,000 in two years, Media and Consumer ceased publication in 1975 after thirty-three issues.

# CHAPTER IV

# STATISTICAL ANALYSES

Three statistical analyses were conducted. First, a measurement study looked longitudinally at the use by a selected sample of Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service (CCRS) participants of project materials and at their own preparation of consumer news. Second, a tabulation was made of each CCRS column's use by those participants supplying the service staff with subscriptions. Finally, a telephone survey explored the attitudes of a selected sample of participant editors toward CCRS materials and consumer news in general.

## Longitudinal Study

As explained in the Methodology Chapter, nineteen participant newspapers were examined for their use of CCRS materials and for their coverage of consumer and government news, including that produced by news services and by their own staffs, during three periods. The first period, the "Before" period, was defined as October 1978, since participants began receiving CCRS materials during the last week of that month. November and December 1978 were designated the "After" period, and February, March, and April 1979 were part of the "Spring" period. Enough issues to fulfill the requirements of these three periods were available to the CCRS staff from the nineteen participant newspapers studied.

In examining the nineteen participants, Figure 2 shows that the amount of consumer news stayed at a fairly constant level over the three periods studied. In the Before period, 6.8 per cent of the estimated non-advertising space went to consumer items. This number dropped to 5.9 per cent for the After period and then rose to 7.0 per cent in the Spring period.

Measurements showed that papers carried a slightly greater amount of government news, and that the amount varied more. One-tenth (10.4 per cent) of the estimated non-advertising space went to government items in the Before period. The amount dropped to 7.3 per cent in the After period and increased to 8.4 per cent in the Spring. Newspapers' pre-election coverage in October may have been the reason for the high Before measurement, although this was not specifically tested.

Different parametric, distribution-free, and correlation tests were performed to discover if any of five variables bore on the papers' amounts of consumer news as percentages of total non-advertising space. The variables examined were (1) the papers' publication frequencies, (2) their circulation totals, (3) their geographic location, (4) their published amounts of government news as a percentage of non-advertising space, and (5) the existance at their colleges of degree programs in journalism. None of the parametric tests (analyses of variance and t-tests) or distribution-free tests (Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis) yielded a result high

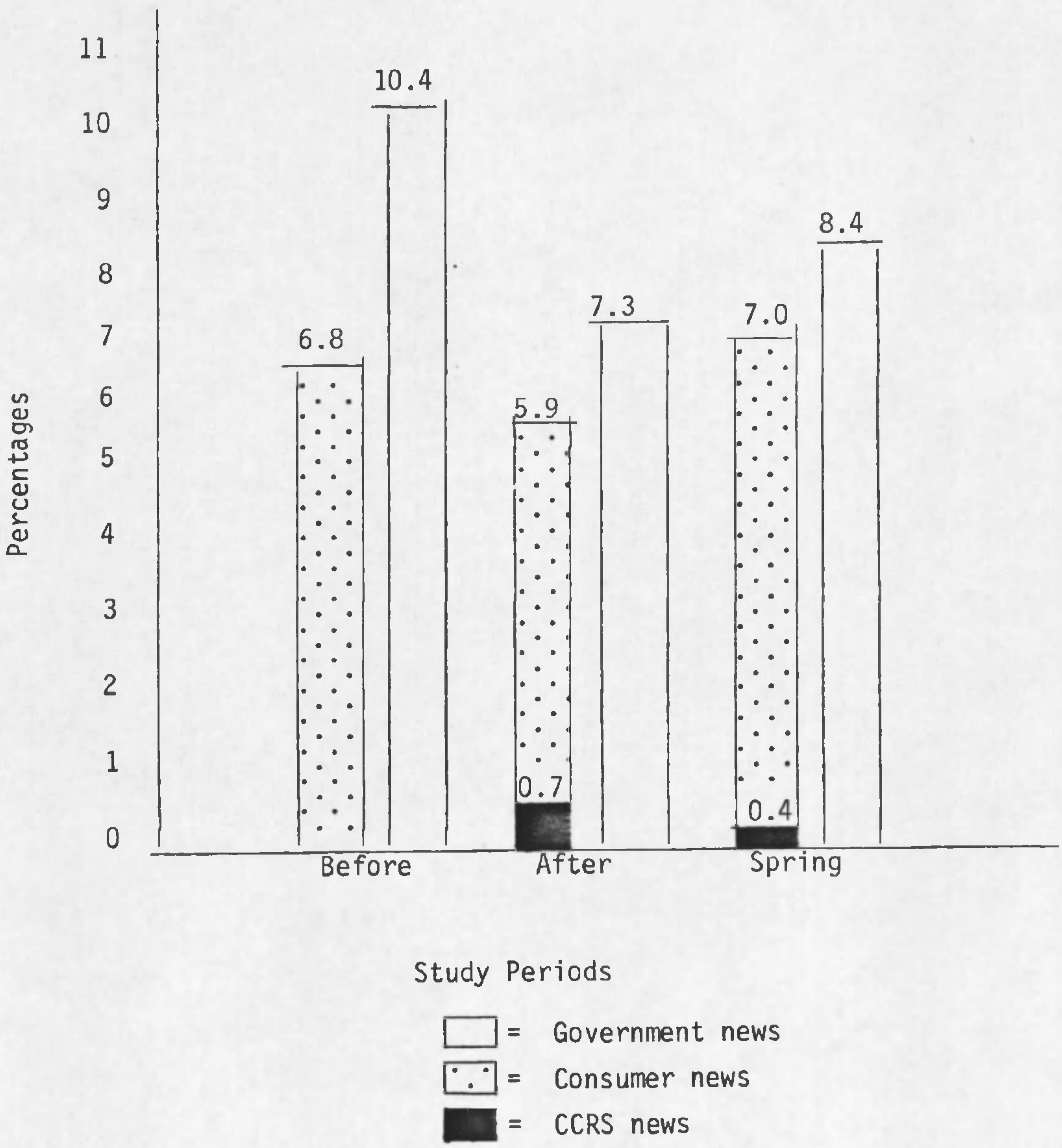


Figure 2: Total Consumer, CCRS, and Government News Inches as Percentages of Non-Advertising Space in the Before, After, and Spring Periods of the Longitudinal Study

enough to reject the null hypotheses at an alpha level of 0.01. Of the correlation tests (Pearson and Point-Biserial), the highest figure (.40) was found in examining the relationship between circulation totals and consumer-news percentages during the Spring period. Correlations of .37 and .24 were found during the Before and After periods, respectively, for the same variables. No other correlations were greater than .30.

In terms of who produced these consumer and government inches, Figure 3 shows that between 70 and 81 per cent were prepared by the papers' staffs themselves. The highest percentage of staff-produced consumer news (79.9) was found during the Before period. This figure dropped to 70.3 per cent in the After period and increased to 76.6 per cent in the Spring period. Staff-produced government news was fairly constant during the Before and After periods, reaching 70.0 per cent and 67.8 per cent respectively. The amount then increased to 81.1 per cent in the Spring period, possibly because of the increased coverage of campus political campaigns.

Examination of the other side of these statistics -- the percentage of consumer and government news prepared by news services -- showed in Figure 4 that CCRS both helped increase overall consumer coverage in the After period and also broke well into its target market. Before receiving CCRS, 20.1 per cent of all consumer news was taken from news services. This amount increased to 29.7 per cent in the After period. CCRS materials made up 34.1 per cent of After news

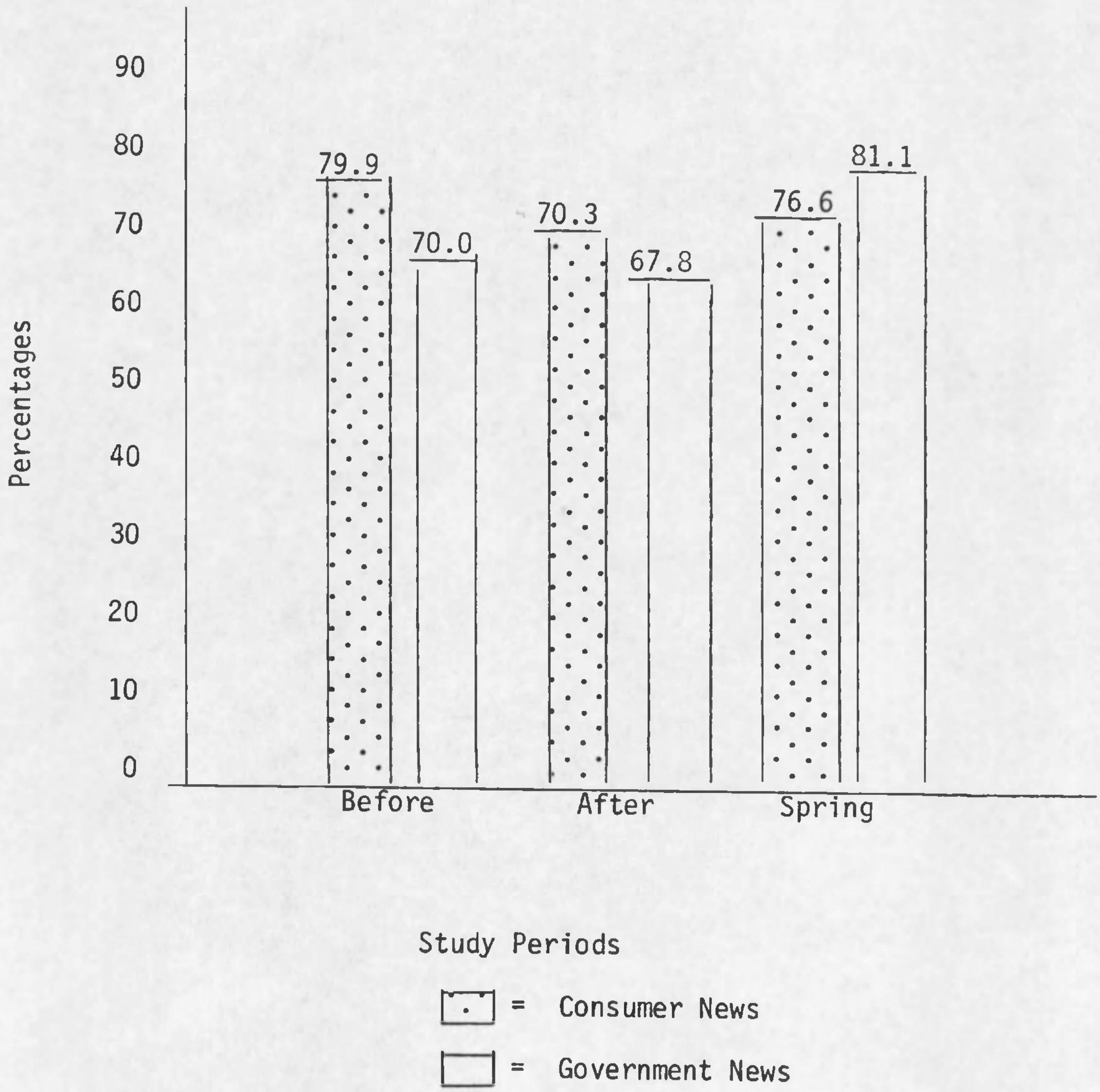


Figure 3: Total Staff-Produced News Inches as Percentages of Total Consumer and Government Inches in the Before, After, and Spring Periods of the Longitudinal Study

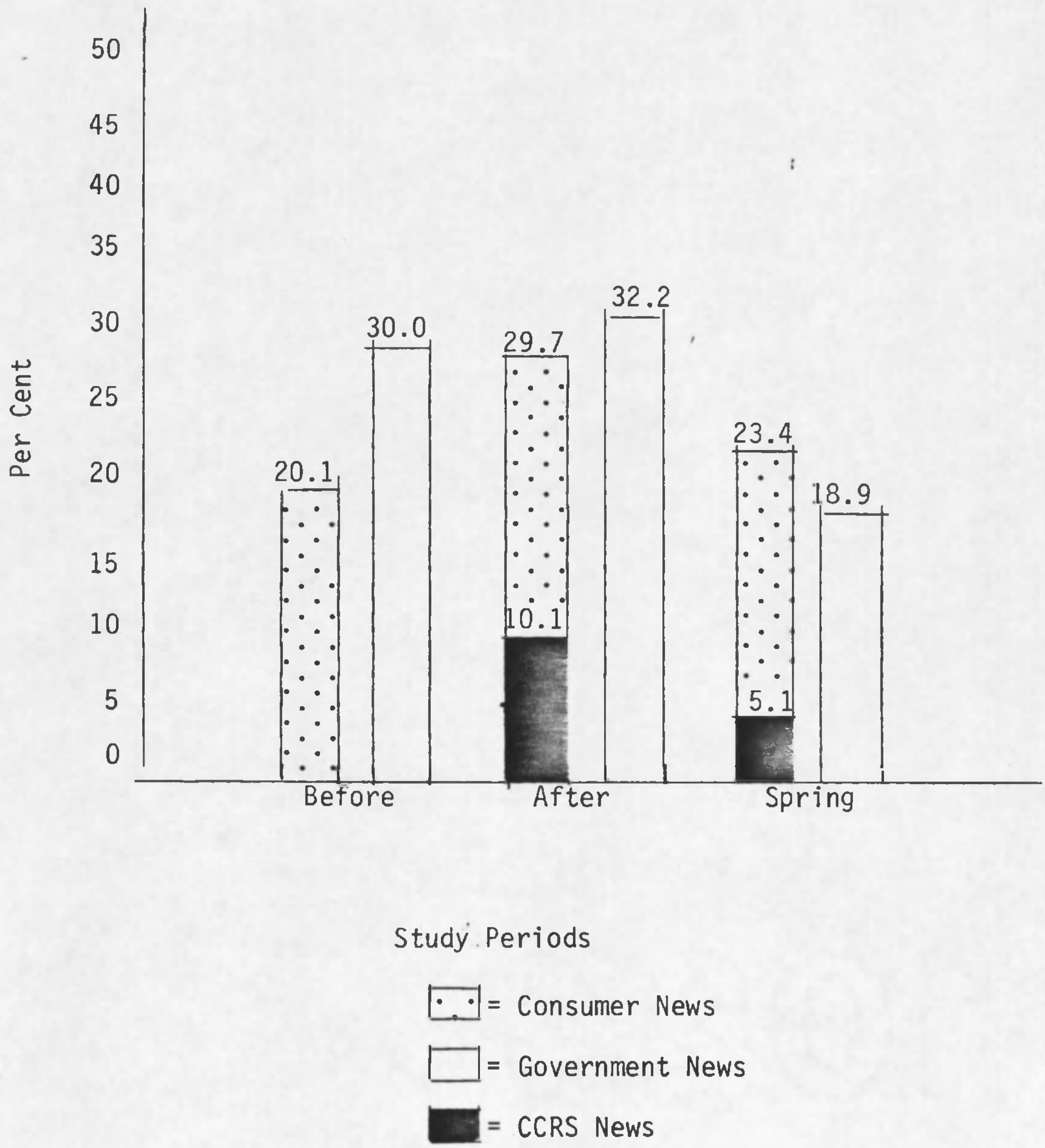


Figure 4: Total News Service (Including CCRS) Inches as Percentages of Total Consumer and Government Inches in the Before, After, and Spring Periods of the Longitudinal Study

service consumer inches, or 10.1 per cent of all printed consumer inches. During the Spring period, the overall percentage of news service consumer news fell to near the Before level with 23.4 per cent; 21.7 per cent of this amount was by CCRS, or 5.1 per cent of all printed consumer inches. It was during the Spring period that President Carter's anti-inflation program and labor negotiations made headlines, both of which were included as consumer news items. Participant use of non-CCRS news services reporting these events may explain the fall in CCRS's share of the news service consumer news market to 21.7 per cent from 34.1 per cent in the After period.

## Column Use Study

Since the CCRS column was the only item distributed on a weekly basis designed for use verbatim, its use was examined closely. Table 1 lists the twenty-one columns in the order they were distributed, along with the number of newspapers which printed each column, that number's corresponding $z$ score, and identification of which type of column it was.

Before analyzing this table, however, it must be emphasized that the CCRS staff obtained the use totals from perusing all incoming issues of participating newspapers. But not all newspapers supplied the staff with the required subscription at all times. As an example of this problem, seventy-six of the original 172 newspapers chosen as participants in the fall of 1978 were found in January 1979 not to have sent CCRS issues of their publication for the preceeding two

Table 1

Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service
Column Use

| Column | No. of newspapers ("play") | $z$ score |
|---|---|---|
| Campus consumer groups (b) | 17 | + 1.48 |
| Campus Nader groups (b) | 8 | - 0.30 |
| Landlord-tenant law (a) | 11 | + 0.29 |
| Writing complaint letters (a) | 7 | - 0.50 |
| Fighting bureaucracies (a) | 5 | - 0.90 |
| "Truth-in-Testing" (c) | 8 | - 0.30 |
| Student cooperatives (b) | 5 | - 0.90 |
| Student checking accounts (b) | 14 | + 0.89 |
| Buying a bicycle (a) | 15 | + 1.09 |
| Establishing credit (a) | 25 | + 3.07 |
| Women and credit (b) | 11 | + 0.29 |
| Students and food stamps (c) | 4 | - 1.09 |
| Traveling in Europe (a) | 13 | + 0.69 |
| Moving costs (a) | 8 | - 0.30 |
| Student aid legislation (c) | 4 | - 1.09 |
| Proposition 13 impact (b) | 6 | - 0.70 |
| Buying a calculator (a) | 11 | + 0.29 |
| Finding an auto mechanic (a) | 6 | - 0.70 |
| Buying a used car (a) | 7 | - 0.50 |
| Justice courts (b) | 6 | - 0.70 |
| Study-aid classes (b) | 6 | - 0.70 |

Mean: 9.52 Median: 8.0 Mode: 6.0 Range: 22 SD: 5.05
Skew: positive

(a): "How to" stories (b): "impact" stories (c): "breaking" stories two months. These seventy-six were then removed from the service and eighty-two other newspapers added. It is unknown how many of these 178 Spring participants continuously supplied the staff with the required subscription for the remainder of the year. These use totals, therefore, may in fact be lower than the number of newspapers that actually printed CCRS columns.

The examination of those issues received, however, showed (Table 1) that a mean average of 9.52 newspapers used each column, ranging from a low use of four to a high of twenty-five. A medium use of eight and a mode of six made for a positive skew, meaning fewer columns played above the mean than below it. Column $\underline{z}$ scores support this with only eight columns having positive scores and twelve having negative ones.

Grouping the columns by the three types included in Table 1 showed that, on the average, "how to" stories were used slightly more than "impact" stories, while "breaking" stories were used the least. The ten "how to" stories showed up in an average of 10.80 papers, while the eight "impact" stories were printed on an average of 9.13 times and the "breaking" stories 5.33 times. But the range of use of "how to" stories -- from five to twenty-five -- indicates that subject matter may be just as important in how many times a story is used as what kind of story it is.

## Collegiate Editors Survey

Four demographic factors were used in examining editors' views of CCRS materials received and of the field of consumer journalism in general. Table 2 shows that the average editor interviewed worked for a northern daily newspaper with a budget of under \$50,000 and a circulation of between 5,000 and 10,000. In addition, the average editor attended a college or university that offered a degree program in journalism or communications.

### Feelings on CCRS

Table 3 shows that four of every five editors interviewed said they used CCRS materials in some way; most said they had used them both verbatim and for story ideas while five said they had used them only for ideas. The use of CCRS materials, however, did not seem to influence the editors' opinions on the relevance of CCRS items to their readers. Three-quarters of the editors gave CCRS items a relevance rating in the upper range, including the five editors who had reported not using the service's work in any manner.

The overall support by this group of twenty-six editors for CCRS is shown where nearly nine of ten said they would pay for the service. Seventeen of those editors gave estimates of how much they would pay annually for CCRS. Of the five demographic factors previously mentioned, only a newspaper's budget seemed to have any bearing -- although still questionable -- on the amount an editor said

Table 2

Student Newspaper Demographics from Editors' Survey
n = 26

| | |
|---|---|
| **Publication frequency:** | |
| 13 | daily |
| 10 | weekly |
| 3 | twice-monthly |
| **Circulation:** | |
| 9 | under 5,000 |
| 10 | 5,001 to 10,000 |
| 7 | over 10,000 |
| **Geographic location:** | |
| 11 | north |
| 8 | south |
| 7 | west |
| **Annual budget:** | |
| 14 | under $50,000 |
| 2 | $50,000 to $100,000 |
| 2 | $100,000 to $200,000 |
| 6 | over $200,000 |
| 2 | unknown |
| **College journalism degree program:** | |
| 18 | Yes |
| 8 | No |

Table 3

Student Newspaper Editors' Feelings on CCRS Materials
n = 26

Used CCRS materials:

Yes - 21 No - 5

If yes, in what manner:

5 - ideas 16 - ideas and verbatim

Relevance of CCRS materials (1 = no relevance, 4 = very relevant)

| CCRS Use | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes (21) | 1 | 5 | 11 | 3 | 1 |
| No ( 5) | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Total editors (26) | 1 | 5 | 15 | 4 | 1 |

Willingness to pay for CCRS:

Yes - 23 No - 3

If yes, how much annually:

| | $0 - $100 | $101 - $200 | over $200 | no estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of editors | 7 | 6 | 4 | 6 |
| Range of newspaper budgets | $4,200 - $230,000 | $49,000 - $470,000 | $3,000 - $300,000 | N/A |
| Mean | $64,200 | $180,200 | $139,500 | N/A |

he or she would pay. The seven papers whose editors said they would pay no more than $100 a year had an average annual budget of $64,200, ranging from $4,200 to $230,000. Expectedly, the six papers whose editors said they would annually pay between $101 and $200 had both much higher budgets and ranges. But the trend breaks down with the four editors who said they would pay more than $200 annually for CCRS items. These editors were from papers with budgets ranging from only $3,000 to $300,000, averaging $139,500.

Feelings on Consumer Reporting

The survey found that at the time of questioning, consumer issues were on the minds of a significant number of student editors. In response to an open-ended question, Table 4 shows that nine of the twenty-six editors (35 per cent) said consumer/economic issues is one area their readers should be most interested in, second only to political subjects (eleven editors, or 42 per cent).

The editors' support for consumer reporting is further exemplified by the finding that eighteen of the twenty-six said their publication had printed what they would call consumer news. Interestingly, this finding, combined with an earlier result, also indicates that the definition of consumer news is very personal. While only eighteen said they had printed what <u>they</u> would call consumer news, twenty-one of those same twenty-six also reported having used CCRS materials -- defined as consumer news by the project staff. A possible

Table 4

Student Editors' Feelings on Consumer Journalism
n = 26

"As you see it, what subjects should your readers be most interested in?"

11 - political    9 - consumer/economic    8 - college administration

"Does you publication run what you would call 'consumer news' for your readers?"

Yes - 18    No - 8

If no, why not? (multiple answers accepted)

3 - no resources or qualified reporters    3 - subject irrelevant or low priority    3 - local newspapers have it

If yes,

Is it enough?

Yes - 1    No - 17

If no, why not? (multiple answers accepted)

| | |
|---|---|
| 7 - space limitation | 3 - editors don't want it |
| 4 - lack of reporters | 1 - readers don't want it |
| 4 - lack of knowledge | 1 - no local consumer news |

"Do you feel your reporters are trained well enough to cover consumer, business, and economic news?"

Yes - 2    No - 16

"Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: Covering consumer, business, and economic news is more difficult than covering political or government news."

SA - 1    A - 9    D - 7    SD - 1

"Would you be interested in materials which could help train your reporters in covering consumer, business, and economic matters?"

Yes - 24    Maybe - 2

explanation for this discrepancy is how those interviewed defined consumer news.

Seventeen of these eighteen editors reported that they had not printed as much consumer news as they would have liked, most frequently citing space and staff limitations as reasons. In answer to a specific question, sixteen of the editors said their reporters were not trained well enough to cover consumer, business, and economic news. Ten of the editors also agreed that "covering consumer, business, and economic news is more difficult than covering political or government news."

The eight editors who said they had not printed what they would call consumer news equally cited three reasons: (1) that they had no resources or qualified writers, (2) that consumer news was low on their editorial priority or irrelevant to their readers, and (3) that local commercial newspapers were already covering consumer issues.

Despite these differences in whether they felt they had printed consumer news and the reasons given for either not printing any or not printing enough, every editor was interested in receiving materials which could help train their reporters in covering consumer, business, and economic matters -- twenty-four giving an unqualified "yes," two others replying "maybe."

## CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTIONS, AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will first examine the eight statistical null hypotheses. The two hypotheses based on the literature review will then be examined, followed by suggestions for further research and by general discussion.

### Statistical Hypotheses

As outlined in Chapter One, the following null hypotheses were statistically tested:

1. Over a period of time, participant total printing of consumer news items and government news items will be unchanged.
2. Over a period of time, participant printing of consumer news items will be the same as that of government news items.
3. Over a period of time, participant printing of consumer news items produced by outside news services and government news items produced by outside news services will be unchanged.
4. Over a period of time, participant printing of consumer news items produced by outside news services will be the same as those government news items similarily produced.

5. Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service materials will have no effect on participants' total printing of consumer news items and their printing of consumer news items produced by similar outside news services.
6. Participants' publication frequency, circulation or geographic location will not influence their printing of consumer matters. The presence at the college or university of a program offering a major in journalism also will have no influence.
7. Participants' publication frequency, circulation, or geographic location will not influence the attitudes of editors toward the Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service. The presence at the college or university of a program offering a major in journalism also will have no influence.
8. Usage by participants will not differ among the various types of columns distributed by the service.

The first statistical null hypothesis was mostly retained. During the six-month longitudinal study, the amount of consumer news was basically unchanged. A difference of 1.1 per cent, as shown in Figure 2, cannot be termed a signficant difference. The total amount of government news, however, differed by 3.1 per cent between the Before and After periods. This difference is much more signficant than that of consumer news, and it was offered that the great amount of government news in the Before period may have occurred because of participant pre-election coverage in October, although this was not specifically tested.

The second null hypothesis can be more clearly rejected. Although Figure 2 shows that the amount of total consumer and government news differed in any single measurement period from only 1.4 to 3.6 percentage points, the difference is always there: participants did print more government news than consumer news.

The third hypothesis is also rejected. Figure 4 shows that the amount of consumer news produced by outside news services increased significantly from 20.1 per cent of all consumer news inches in the Before period to 29.7 per cent in the After period. This number dropped to 23.4 per cent in the Spring period. Similarly, the amount of government news produced by outside news services decreased significantly from 32.3 per cent of all government news inches in the After period to 18.9 per cent in the Spring period.

Based on Figure 4, the fourth null hypothesis is also rejected. In the Before period, there was a clear difference in the amounts of consumer and government news produced by outside news services; 20.1 and 30.0 per cent, respectively. This difference was then greatly reduced in the After period, and government news actually fell behind consumer news in the Spring period. As was offered, the increased amount of participant use of news service items about President Carter's anti-inflation program, combined with a decrease in their use of news service government items to make room for their own campus election coverage, may account for the Spring news service totals. But whatever the reason, the amounts of outside news service consumer and economic news were not the same over the three periods.

The fifth hypothesis was partically retained. Figure 2 shows that the introduction of Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service material had no effect on participant total printing of consumer news items. This retains the first-half of the hypothesis. Figure 4, however, indicates that CCRS materials had some effect on participant printing of consumer news items produced by similar outside news services. News service consumer items increased from 20.1 per cent in the Before period to 29.7 per cent in the After period. The introduction of CCRS materials appears to have accounted for this increase. While the Spring total shows that the high percentage figure was not retained, it does indicate that CCRS made a signficant inroad. Based on this figure, CCRS in its first year took at least 20 per cent of its target market of non-advertising space devoted to news service consumer items.

The sixth hypothesis was retained. As the previous chapter explained, none of the parametric or distribution-free tests on the influence of four variables on a participant's printing of consumer matters yielded a result high enough to reject the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.01. A correlation of .40 was found in examing the relationship between participant circulation totals and consumer-news percentages during the Spring period. But the correlations during the Before and After periods of .37 and .24, respectively, are not high enough to say that a college newspaper's circulation does predictively influence its printing of consumer news.

In testing the seventh hypothesis, again, only one variable seemed to influence the attitudes of editors towards the Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service. It was felt that the ultimate test of an editor's feelings was to ask how much his or her publication would pay annually for CCRS materials. As the previous chapter explained, only a newspaper's budget seemed to have any bearing on the amount an editor said he or she would pay. And while the relationship between the two is not perfect, it is enough to reject this null hypothesis.

The final hypothesis is also rejected. The column use study showed that "how to" stories were printed in an average of 10.80 papers, while the "impact" stories were printed in an average of 9.13, and the "breaking" stories in an average of 5.33. Despite the problem the CCRS staff had in receiving all its participants' newspapers, the one-hundred-per cent difference between the "how to" and "breaking" stories use percentages shows there is enough of a difference to reject the null hypothesis.

## Literature Review Hypotheses

In tracing the history of consumer reporting by American newspapers, this thesis concentrated on the following two null hypotheses:

1. The interest by newspaper editors and/or owners in reporting consumer matters has remained constant over the history of newspaper publishing in America.

2. The reasons for the interest by newspaper editors and/or owners in reporting consumer matters have remained unchanged over the history of newspaper publishing in America.

The review of literature quite clearly rejects the first null hypothesis. The interest by newspaper executives in reporting consumer matters has increased significantly since the term "consumer reporting" first became widely used in the late 1960's. Not only have certain papers designated reporters to cover consumer matters on a full or part-time basis, but they also have established Action Lines, conducted regular price surveys, and tested products. Certain individual efforts in consumer reporting by some newspeople were found dating back to the middle of the 19th Century, but the review indicated that the amount of consumer information being printed in the American daily newspaper is steadily increasing.

But while their interest in consumer reporting may have increased, newspaper executives are doing so for basically the same reason James Gordon Bennett first printed women's news in the 1840's: to attract advertisers. Printing more consumer news since the late 1960's has really accomplished one thing. It has helped newspapers to meet the growing reader demand for such information. This maintained, and perhaps even helped increase, the circulation figures of some newspapers; figures which are used to justify advertising rates. A very few editors and publishers may extol the ideological virtues of consumer reporting in meeting a newspaper's obligation to its readers. But for the majority of executives, this ideology is only as correct as the paper's profit picture. Examples cited in the literature review show that profitability of any type of reporting supersedes any ideology. Hence, the second null hypothesis appears to be true.

## Suggestions for Further Research

As with all research, this thesis does not -- indeed cannot -- answer all questions concerning consumer journalism. Researchers in consumer journalism have two areas to investigate: first, there are the profession's historical roots; and second, there are its current accomplishments.

Historically, two major questions deserve investigation. What has been the role of broadcast media in consumer journalism? Much of the best and most aggressive consumer reporting has, over the last decade, been done by the three major television networks and some of their affiliates. With the average American getting most of his or her news from the broadcast media, their efforts must be investigated.

The second question relates more to the consumer journalists themselves. Why are they doing consumer reporting, and what little-known incidents in the history of consumer journalism remain unreported? With many of the modern originators of the field still active, such as Margolius, Pollock, Rowse, and Seldes, it would be a perfect opportunity for such historical research.

With media covering consumer matters now more than ever, the opportunities to measure current accomplishments are limitless. For example, while this thesis examined the attitudes of collegiate journalists toward consumer news, the attitudes of the readers themselves remained untouched. How do readers feel about the specific kinds of consumer news and services offered by local media? And how do readers who don't get this information and help react when they know that it does exist? Survey and comparative studies asking these questions can be performed in nearly every college setting, since some form of media is at its service.

## General Discussion

The review of literature showed that newspaper executives have well used the coverage of consumer issues to increase their advertising revenues. In fact, they went to special sections covering fashion, food, business, and other consumer matters mainly to help advertisers better target their markets. It was also shown that advertising now makes up over 75 per cent of the newspaper industry's profit picture. These two trends lead to the unescapable conclusion that "the advertising influence," as muckraker Will Irwin called it, is the dominant concern of the vast majority of America's newspaper executives. Newspapers may be covering consumer issues, say some reporters in the field, but they do so only to the extent that it does not interfere with that bottom line drawn by the advertising dollar.

These reporters call for newspaper executives to give them moral and financial support to allow them to more aggressively cover consumer matters. Most of the executives and high-level editors, however, feel that this is an ideal attitude, and that these reporters are ignoring the financial realities of the newspaper business.

But who really is ignoring what realities? Historically, the principle reason for the financial success of the American newspaper industry is the freedom guaranteed it by the U.S. Constitution. For a multi-billion-dollar industry, newspapers have been relatively free of the long reach of regulation. This is beginning to change, however. The ever-growing concern about the concentration of newspaper financial power has combined with recent court decisions to raise fears by reporters and their editors and publishers; fears that their freedom may soon be limited.

Unlike the past, however, they may not completely count on the support of law makers and the general public in blocking efforts attacking their freedom. More elected legislators are openly wondering whether news organizations should have limitations on their financial and/or editorial freedom, and public opinion polls show that newspeople are losing the respect of their readers. Consequently, news executives can no longer count on politicians or even their consumers to support efforts to combat the growing trend to limit press freedom. And although the review of literature showed that they have used their publications to appeal mainly to the interests of their advertisers, executives cannot even count on their aid. After all, the newspaper is not the only advertising medium. In actuality, the advertiser, more than the law maker and the reader, is the one entity from which news executives should expect to receive the least aid. And since law makers look to current public opinion for their stand on most issues, it is, therefore, the interests of the public -- the newspaper reader -- for which the news executives should have the most concern.

To regain that respect and support of the average reader, today's newspaper executives should concentrate solely on the news content of their product. They must emphasize to the consumer those things they are offering which cannot be found in any other medium. The should de-emphasize the extensive reporting of hard, breaking news -- such as fires, police actions, and other traditionally "good" stories. The broadcast media has usually informed a newspaper reader of these items long before their paper reaches their hands. Newspapers should, instead, concentrate on that single issue which is the major concern of today's reader; a concern not easily suitable to the broadcast media. Newspapers should be closely examining economics and the four entities which make up the economic system: business practices, government regulation, labor practices, and consumer demands. As the literature review showed, readers want this news, and, consequently, it is being covered today better than ever before. But with the exception of those prepared by the dozen or so top American newspapers, stories on economic issues lack the hard-hitting, investigative enthusiasm of political or crime reporting.

Perhaps the reason for the lack of hardcore economic reporting comes as much from those mechanical problems outlined in the literature review as from the fear of "the advertising influence." Projects like Media and Consumer magazine and the Collegiate Consumer Reporting Service were designed solely to help reporters more fully cover economic matters. And as a perusal of Media and Consumer and the results of this thesis' collegiate editors' survey show, reporters very much want to know how to report these matters. But the financial failure of Media and Consumer and the desire of collegiate editors for extremely low subscription rates for CCRS also show that these reporters and their editors and publishers are either unable to pay or do not even realize the price they must pay to improve their local coverage of these difficult matters.

Most of these newspaper people were, or are being, college educated, and, therefore, have committed thousands of dollars and hours to learning their craft. An additional annual commitment of a few hundred dollars to make up for the failure of their education in helping them report economic matters seems small in comparison. And until they come to this realization and make the necessary financial commitment, reporters, editors, and publishers may find their freedom whittled away and an apathetic readership unwilling to come to their aid.

## APPENDIX A

### DAILY COLLEGIATE NEWSPAPERS EXAMINED LONGITUDINALLY

For daily newspapers -- those publishing at least two issues a week -- the CCRS staff must have received over half the issues published during the weeks of October 9 through October 13, October 23 through October 27, November 13 through November 17, and November 27 through December 1 of 1978. At least twenty per cent of the issues published during the weeks of February 1 through February 7 and April 9 through April 13 of 1979 also had to have been available. Specifically, the following 154 issues published by six collegiate dailies were examined:

University of Kentucky Kernel, circulation 20,000
- "Before" issues:
  - October 10, 12, 13, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
- "After" issues:
  - November 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 27, 28, 29
  - December 1
- "Spring" issues:
  - February 1, 2, 5, 6, 7
  - April 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

University of Montana Kaimin, circulation 6,400
- "Before" issues:
  - October 11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27
- "After" issues:
  - November 14, 15, 16, 17, 28, 29, 30
  - December 1
- "Spring" issues:
  - February 1, 2, 6, 7
  - April 10, 11, 12, 13

University of North Carolina <u>Daily Tar Heel</u>, circulation 22,000

"Before" issues:

October 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 23, 24, 25, 26

"After" issues:

November 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 27, 28, 29, 30

December 1

"Spring" issues:

February 1, 2, 5, 6, 7

April 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

University of Washington <u>Daily</u>, circulation 22,000

"Before" issues:

October 10, 11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27

"After" issues:

November 14, 15, 16, 28, 29, 30

December 1

"Spring" issues:

February 1, 2, 6, 7

April 10, 11, 12, 13

University of Oregon <u>Daily Emerald</u>, circulation 10,000

"Before" issues:

October 9, 10, 12, 13, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27

"After" issues:

November 13, 15, 16, 17, 27, 28, 29

December 1

"Spring" issues:

February 2, 5,

April 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Texas A & M University <u>Battalion</u>, circulation 23,000

"Before" issues:

October 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 23, 24, 25, 26

"After" issues:

November 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 27, 28, 29, 30

"Spring" issues:

February 1, 2, 5, 6,7

April 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

## APPENDIX B

### WEEKLY COLLEGIATE NEWSPAPERS EXAMINED LONGITUDINALLY

For weekly newspapers, the CCRS staff must have received both issues published in the last two weeks of October and November of 1978. Three of four issues published during February 1 through February 14, and April 9 through April 20 of 1979 must also have been available. Specifically, fifty-three issues published by six collegiate weeklies were examined:

University of California at San Francisco Medical School
<u>Synapse</u>, circulation 3,500
- "Before" issues
  - October 19, 16
- "After" issues:
  - November 16, 30
- "Spring" issues:
  - February 1, 8
  - April 12

Georgia State University <u>Signal</u>, circulation 14,000
- "Before" issues:
  - October 16, 23
- "After" issues:
  - November 13, 20
- "Spring" issues:
  - February 5, 12
  - April 9

North Michigan University _North Wind_, circulation 7,000
"Before" issues:
October 19, 26
"After" issues:
November 16, 30
"Spring" issues
February 1, 8
April 12, 19

Hofstra University (New York) _Chronicle_, circulation 10,000
"Before" issues:
October 19, 26
"After" issues:
November 16, 30
"Spring" issues
February 1, 8
April 19

Austin Peay State University (Tennessee) _All State_, circulation 6,000
"Before" issues:
October 18, 25
"After" issues:
November 15, 29
"Spring" issues:
February 7, 14
April 18

McLennan Community College (Texas) _Highland Herald_, circulation 2,500
"Before" issues:
October 19, 26
"After" issues:
November 16, 30
"Spring" issues:
February 1, 8
April 19

## APPENDIX C

### TWICE-MONTHLY COLLEGIATE NEWSPAPERS EXAMINED LONGITUDINALLY

For twice-monthy newspapers, the CCRS staff must have received all October and November 1978 issues and at least three of four February and April 1979 issues. Specifically, the following thirty-eight issues published by five collegiate twice-monthlies were examined:

Point Loma College (California) Point, circulation 2,000
- "Before" issues:
  - October 6, 23
- "After" issues:
  - November 3, 17
- "Spring" issues:
  - February 1, 9, 23
  - April 9, 11, 20

Oakton Community College (Illinois) Occurence, circulation 3,000
- "Before" issues:
  - October 11, 23
- "After" issues:
  - November 6, 20
- "Spring" issues:
  - February 12, 26
  - April 23

Dickinson State College (North Dakota) Western Concept, circulation 1,800
- "Before" issues:
  - October 13, 26
- "After"issues:
  - November 9, 22
- "Spring" issues:
  - February 8, 22
  - April 12

South Dakota School of Mines and Technology <u>Tech</u>, circulation 1,800
- "Before" issues:
  - October 13, 26
- "After" issues:
  - November 9, 27
- "Spring" issues:
  - February 1, 15

University of Wisconsin at Fox Valley <u>Centerfold</u>, circulation 1,000
- "Before" issues:
  - October 3, 17, 31
- "After" issues:
  - November 14, 28
- "Spring" issues:
  - February 6, 20
  - April 10

# APPENDIX D

## MONTHLY COLLEGIATE NEWSPAPERS EXAMINED LONGITUDINALLY

For monthly newspapers, the CCRS staff must have received each October, November, and December 1978 issue and two of three February, March, and April 1979 issues. Specifically, the following twelve issues published by two collegiate monthly were examined:

Lenair Community College (North Carolina) _Javelin_, circulation 2,000
- "Before" issues:
  - October
- "After" issues:
  - November, December
- "Spring" issues:
  - February, March, April

College of Eastern Utah _Eagle_, circulation 1,000
- "Before" issues:
  - October 20
- "After" issues:
  - November 10, December 1
- "Spring" issues:
  - February 16
  - March 9
  - April 6

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