

Democracy in a time of un-truth

How has the relationship
between journalism and truth
been imagined?

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“...And that’s the way it is.”

CBS News 1962-1981

“Most trusted man in America”

UP WWII correspondent & then Bureau chief

1950s: *You Are There*

How has the relationship between journalism and truth been imagined? An alternate vision:

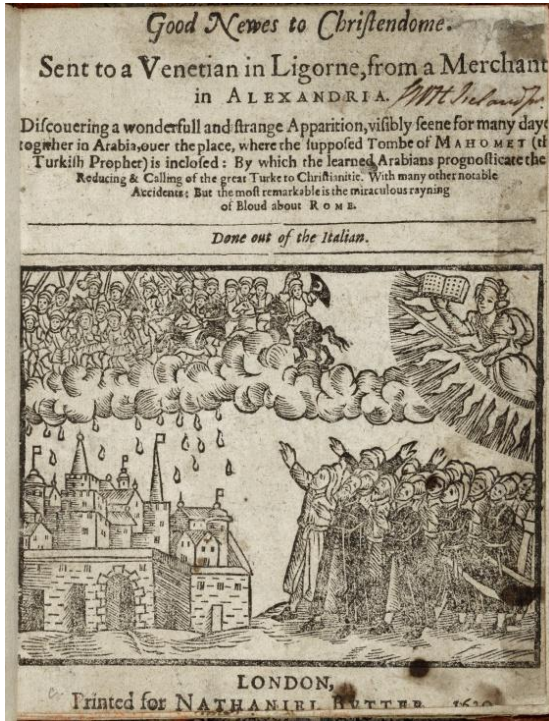
“You furnish the pictures and I’ll
furnish the war.”

- William Randolph Hearst, credited with playing a significant role in the start of the Spanish American war of 1898 that justified U.S. expansionism



USS Maine exploding in Havana Harbor, 1898

Journalism in Europe & the U.S.: News & Tales



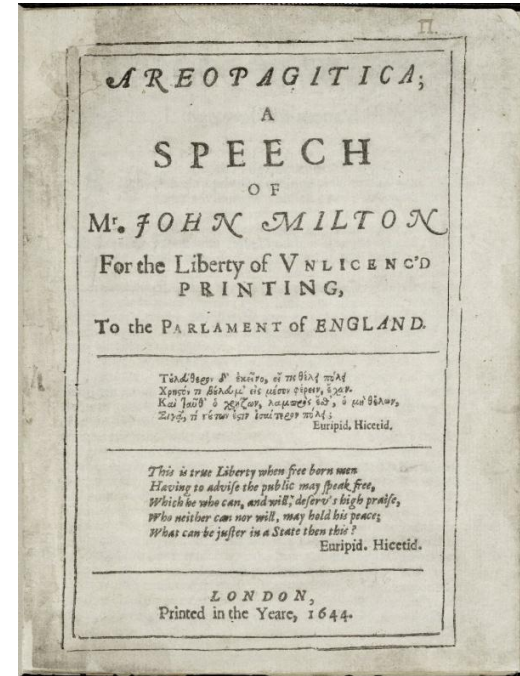
Renaissance news of vision over Mohammed's tomb, 1620

17th century: word of mouth, pulpit, travellers, letters, ballads

Earliest newsheets: 1602 - 1640s: Strassburg, Amsterdam, throughout central Europe; popularized with news of British civil wars (1642-51)

1640s: press licensing under Charles I; Milton speaks out against press censorship

Tabloid tales, lies, satires of news



Milton's Areopagitica, 1644

Struggle over truth: The Partisan Press, 1780s-1830s



Federalist; supportive of Washington administration & supported by Alexander Hamilton

Anti-Federalist: paper of Thomas Jefferson & James Madison critical of Washington

News as a fast-paced business, 1830s-1900s: The Penny Press



Making use of the pony express, telegraph, and intercepts of European ships to gather & distribute news rapidly

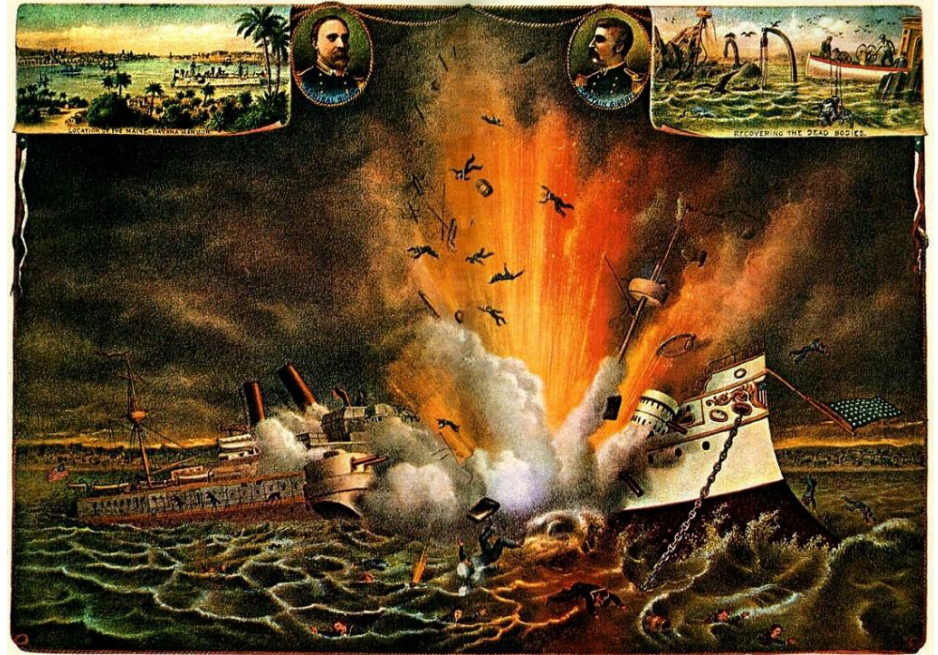
Most popular & profitable daily newspaper in the U.S.

1861. Today, The New York Times International Edition

Business influences truth: The Penny Press era

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USS Maine exploding in Havana Harbor, 1898

20th century: “Objective” news becomes profitable

Objectivity:

Commercialization of journalism: more profitable to develop content appealing across an ideological spectrum

Rapid distribution: telegraph intro'd abbreviated form of ‘facts first’ that became standardized

Professionalization: special skills required to produce

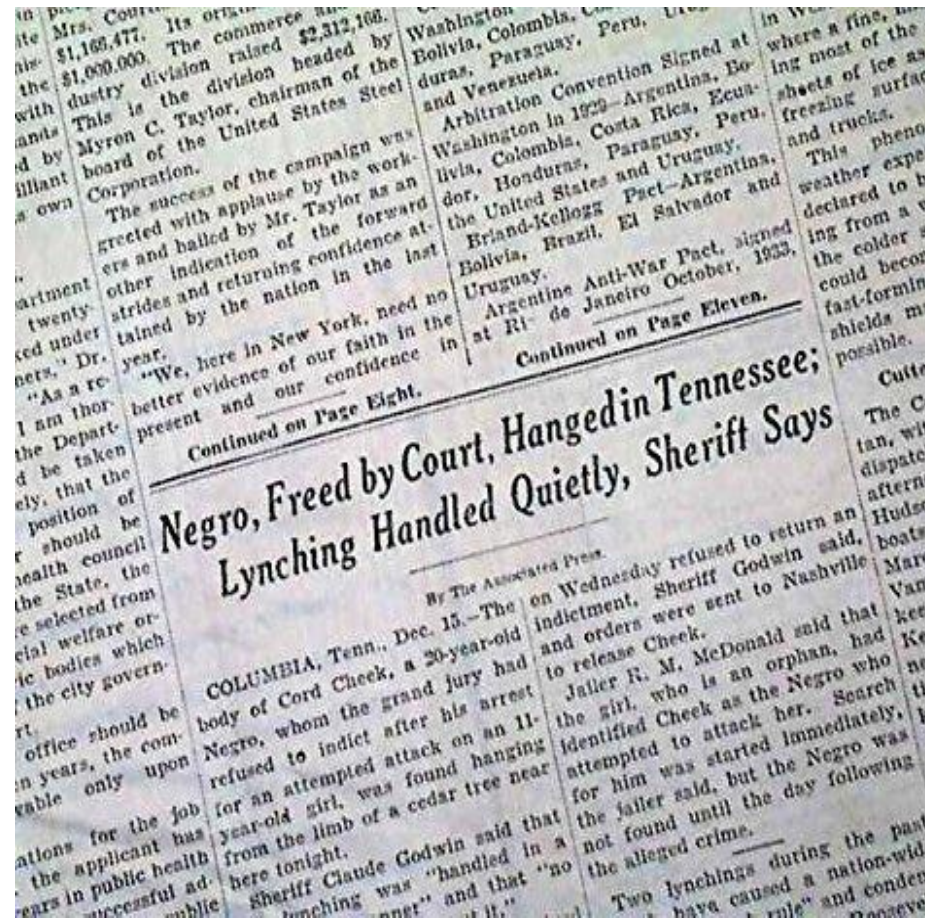


Critiques of objective news

Objectivity favors positions of government & large corporations
(Edward S. Herman & Noam Chomsky)

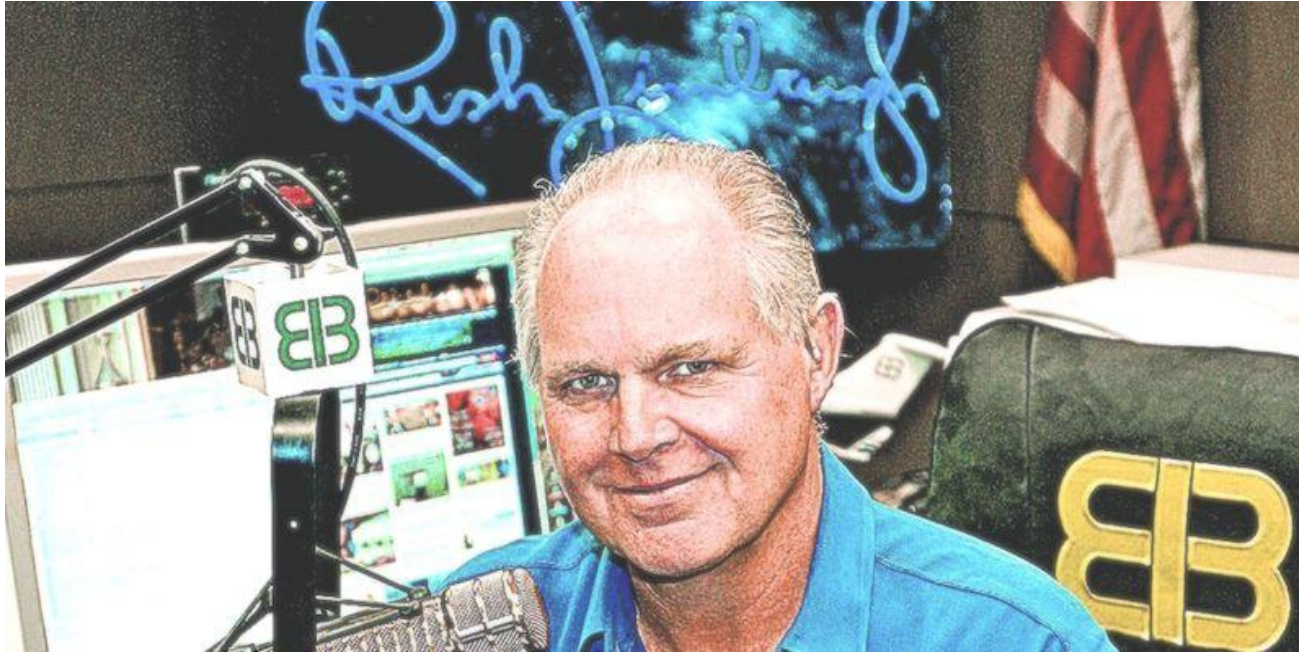
News writers have created a “false balance,” for instance in reports of lynchings (David Mindich)

Objective news in wartime can also “mean you are an accomplice to all sorts of evil” - Christiane Amanpour



The New York Times, December 16, 1933

With deregulation, the rise of talk radio & commentary...



Rush Limbaugh, in national syndication since 1988

1987: Reagan revokes the Fairness Doctrine, which had required holders of broadcast licenses to present controversial issues in a way that was honest, equitable & balanced

...and the rise of Fox News



Launched in 1996

By 2018, 90% of cable tv subscribers received Fox News; America's most watched cable network, with average of over 4.2 million viewers

In 2016, phased out "fair & balanced" in favor of "most watched, most trusted"

Devoted over 1K segments to Benghazi, w 280 alleging an Obama admin cover up
(10 official investigations - incl 6 Republican-controlled committees - found no evidence of wrongdoing)



Media Consolidation:

THESE SIX COMPANIES ARE:



COMCAST

3 NOTABLE PROPERTIES:

NBC

UNIVERSAL PICTURES

FOCUS FEATURES

NEWSCORP

3 NOTABLE PROPERTIES:

FOX

WALL STREET JOURNAL

NEW YORK POST

DISNEY

3 NOTABLE PROPERTIES:

ABC

ESPN

PIXAR

VIACOM

3 NOTABLE PROPERTIES:

MTV

NICKELODEON

PARAMOUNT PICTURE

TIME WARNER

3 NOTABLE PROPERTIES:

CNN

HBO

TIME

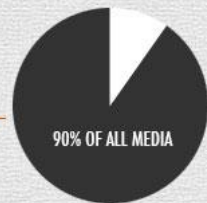
CBS

3 NOTABLE PROPERTIES:

CBS

SHOWTIME

SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL



2012

6 MEDIA GIANTS NOW CONTROL A STAGGERING 90% OF WHAT WE READ, WATCH, OR LISTEN TO.

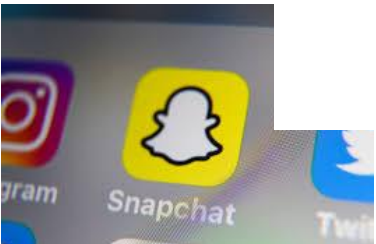


1983

In 1983, the same 90% of American media was owned by 50 companies

1996 Further deregulation: relaxing of ownership restrictions

2004 -2017: The emergence of social media platforms



World's Largest Companies by Market Cap

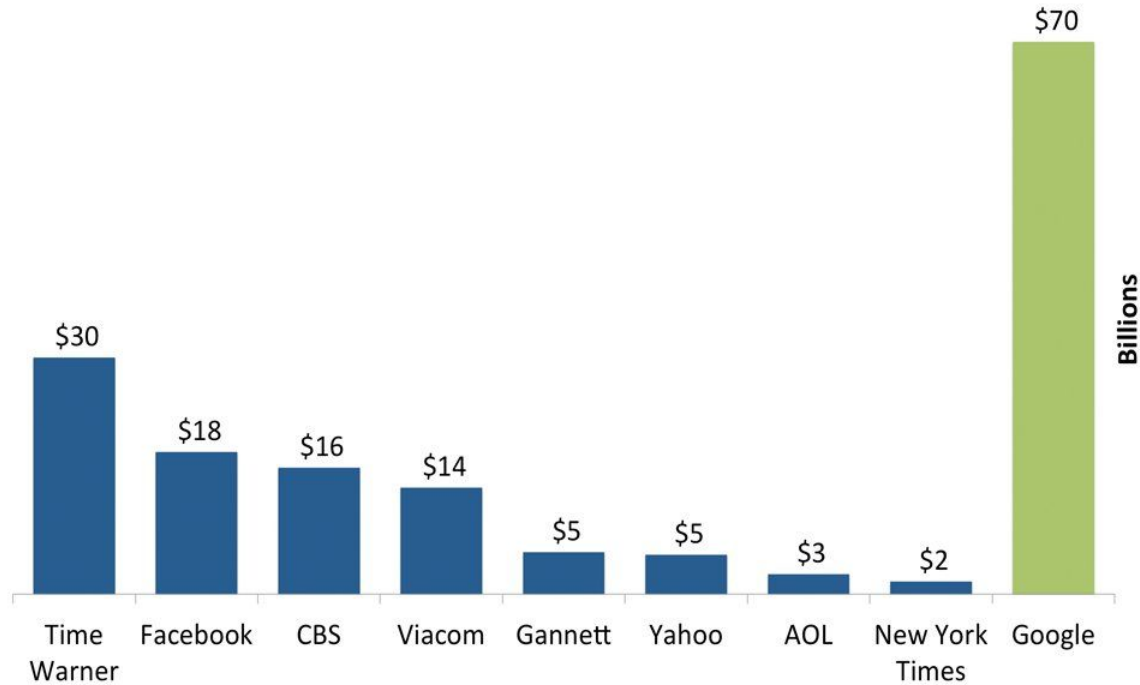
Accurate as of July 29, 2016 (10:50am ET)



Alphabet = the company formerly known as Google, reorganized & renamed in 2015

Estimated 2014 Revenue

Select Media Companies



Source: Company Filings, BI Intelligence Estimates

BI INTELLIGENCE

WE are the commodity that is sold...

...to advertisers

...& to those who want to buy data about us in order to sell more to us



How have social media platforms influenced our understandings of journalism and truth?



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“News is the information you need in order to have engaging conversations with someone.”

-- Marc, 20, Anglo American, Seattle

How have social media platforms influenced our understandings of journalism and truth?

If I saw more people who looked like me - other than stories that are about crime or sports - I might pay attention.”

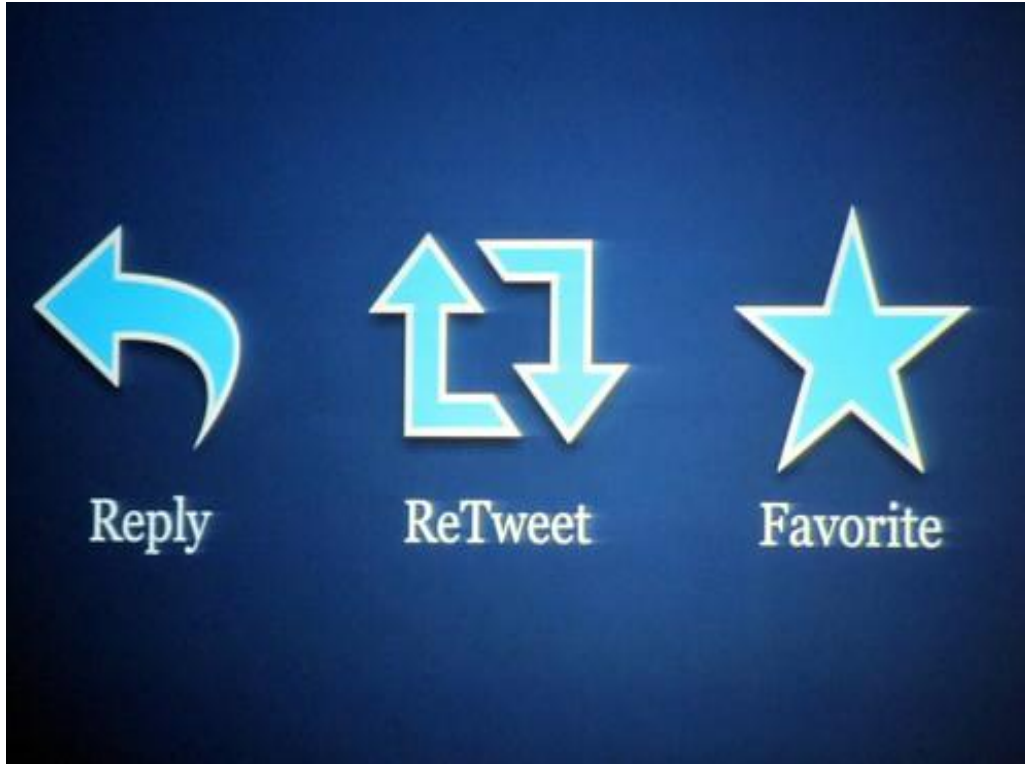
-- Yasud, 16, African American, Denver

How have social media platforms influenced our understandings of journalism and truth?

“Honestly? I start every morning by looking at Instagram, and if something shows up as a meme, I figure I’d better find out why.”

-- Leo, Anglo American, 17, Denver

How disinformation spreads:



Disinformation campaigns: the coordinated spread of disinformation as a means of influencing public opinion.

- (1) Content strategies
- (2) Legitimation strategies
- (3) Spread strategies

Recuero, Soares, Zago & Vinhas (2020): Studied 20M tweets to identify characteristics of disinformation campaigns aimed to influence the Brazilian election of 2018.

Disinformation is damaging communities around the world.

We work to empower people with knowledge and tools to build resilience against harmful, false, and misleading information.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



We aren't going back to the days of Walter Cronkite.



FUTURE



loading...

Signs of hope



1. Continued trust in local news
2. Greater sophistication in understanding & combatting disinformation & a greater appetite for considering what we want from our social media environment
3. Truth that is oriented toward imagined possible futures: what could the best outcome look like? What stories can we tell of how we are getting there?



The way to right wrongs is to turn
the light of truth upon them.

— *Ida B. Wells* —

AZ QUOTES



THANK YOU

