

Print Journalism- An Introduction

Part 1

Notes by

Dr. Drishita Chakraborty

Faculty, Dept. of Mass Communication & Journalism

A.C. College, Jalpaiguri

Journalism is the practice of collecting, evaluating, producing, and sharing news and information. The people who collect, evaluate, produce, and share this news are called journalists. Many different forms of journalism exist today, such as investigative reporting, crime reporting, political reporting, sports reporting, and many others.

Journalism forms a key part of the broader media landscape. The media serves several core functions in our society. One obvious function is providing entertainment. The media can trigger our imagination, offer a source of fantasy, and provide a path for escapism.

When we look at mass media, it divides into two main categories: print media like newspapers and magazines, and broadcast media like radio and television. While people relied on newspapers and magazines for their news in the 19th and early 20th centuries, electronic journalism—especially television journalism—has taken the lead over the past 50 years.

Today, advances in technology are blurring the distinction between the print and broadcast media. The Internet makes information available that is also published in newspapers and magazines or presented over the radio and TV. This book, *Journalism: Principles, Process and Practice* and *Audio and Video Journalism*, examines the principles and processes in journalism.

The main objective of journalism is to help people make choices about their lives, their communities, their societies, and their governments. Various elements form part of good and trustworthy journalism, but the obligation to truth, or “getting it right”, is a quintessential element of a journalist, the one who pursues this discipline.

●Journalism and Mass Communication

Mass communication is the study of how information is disseminated to large audiences through various channels. Journalism, as a key component of this field, involves the practice of reporting on current events and developments through newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Today, we're interconnected through multiple forms of media, whether it's receiving updates on the latest cricket scores or learning about global natural disasters. The reach and impact of mass media are largely credited to advancements in technology. Mass communication refers to the widespread distribution of information to a broad audience, whether at a national or global level. It's often said that journalism serves as the first draft of

history. While mass communication focuses on the act of spreading news, journalism specifically deals with the gathering, analysis, and dissemination of news through both print and electronic media. This field encompasses various professional roles, including reporting, writing, editing, photography, and broadcasting. Journalism is the process of collecting, evaluating, and presenting news and information, often through established channels such as television, radio, social media, and print publications. The individuals responsible for this communication are typically professional journalists who represent media organizations. The essence of journalism lies in its commitment to providing accurate and timely information about local and global events, trends, and issues. Mass communication and journalism are defined by their mediums, target audiences, and the nature of the information they convey. Public relations, another facet of mass communication, focuses on delivering messages to the public, often without targeting specific individuals or groups. While mass communication encompasses both fictional and non-fictional content, journalism is dedicated to factual reporting and storytelling.

● **The Five Core Principles of Journalism**

1. *Truth and Accuracy* – Journalists cannot always guarantee ‘truth’, but getting the facts right is the cardinal principle of journalism. We should always strive for accuracy; give all the relevant facts we have and ensure that they have been checked. When we cannot corroborate information, we should say so.
2. *Independence* – Journalists must be independent voices; we should not act, formally or informally, on behalf of special interests whether political, corporate or cultural. We should declare to our editors – or the audience – any of our political affiliations, financial arrangements or other personal information that might constitute a conflict of interest.
3. *Fairness and Impartiality* – Most stories have at least two sides. While there is no obligation to present every side in every piece, stories should be balanced and add context. Objectivity is not always possible, and may not always be desirable (in the face, for example, of brutality or inhumanity), but impartial reporting builds trust and confidence.
4. *Humanity* – Journalists should do no harm. What we publish or broadcast may be hurtful, but we should be aware of the impact of our words and images on the lives of others.
5. *Accountability* – A sure sign of professionalism and responsible journalism is the ability to hold ourselves accountable. When we commit errors, we must correct them and our expressions of regret must be sincere, not cynical. We listen to the concerns of our audience. We may not change what readers write or say, but we will always provide remedies when we are unfair.

●Ethics of Journalism

It includes principles of ethics and of good practice to address the specific challenges faced by professional journalists. The basic codes and canons commonly appear in statements drafted by professional journalism associations and individual print, broadcast and online news organizations.

While various existing codes have some differences, most share common elements including the principles of truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness and public accountability, as these apply to the acquisition of newsworthy information and its subsequent reportage to the public.

Professional and Ethical Standards for Journalists:

1. As the press is a primary instrument in the creation of public opinion, journalists should regard their calling as a trust and be eager to serve and guard their public interest.
2. In discharge of their duties, journalists should attach due value to fundamental human and social rights and shall hold good faith and fair play in news reports and comments as essential professional obligations.
3. Journalists should observe special restraint in reports and comments dealing with tensions likely to lead, or leading to civil disorder.
4. Journalists should endeavour to ensure that information dissemination is factually accurate.
5. Responsibility shall be assumed for all information and comments published. If responsibility is disclaimed, this will be explicitly stated.
6. Confidences shall always be respected. Professional secrecy must be preserved.
7. Any report found to be inaccurate and any comment on inaccurate reports shall be voluntarily rectified.
8. Journalists shall not exploit their status for non-journalistic purposes.
9. Journalists shall not allow personal interest to influence professional conducts.
10. Journalists shall not accept or demand bribe to give or delay publicity to news or comments.
11. Freedom in the honest collection and publication of news and facts and the rights of fair comments and criticism are principles which every journalist should always defend.

12. Journalists shall be conscious of their obligation to their fellows in the profession and shall not seek to deprive fellow journalists of their livelihood by unfair means.
13. The carrying on of personal controversies in the press in which no public interest is involved shall be regarded as derogatory to the dignity of the profession.
14. It is unprofessional to give currency to rumours or loose talk affecting the private life of individuals.
15. The press shall refrain from publishing matters likely to encourage vice and crime.

John C. Merrill's Theories of Press Responsibility:

John C. Merrill propounded three theories of press responsibility. These are as follows:

1. That which is legally defined or determined by the government.
2. That which is professionally defined or determined by the Press NIKON twelve.
3. That which is pluralistically defined or determined by the journalists themselves.

International Principles of Professional Ethics:

1. The journalist's social responsibility.
2. The journalist's professional integrity.
3. Elimination of war and other great evils confronting humanity.
4. Promotion of a New Information and Communication Order (NICO).
5. People's right to correct information.
6. The journalist's dedication to objectivity and reality.
7. Public access and participation.
8. Respect for privacy and human dignity.
9. Respect for universal values and diversity of cultures.

The Code of Ethics in Journalism:

All journalists must follow a code of ethics. This code has the following tenets:

1. **Wisdom.** He must act with wisdom during his duty hours. He would become wise only after getting expedience, learning from his seniors, editing good editorials, and doing his duty in an honest manner.
2. **Courage.** He must cover the event irrespective of the fact that his life may be in danger due to his coverage of dangerous events. He may be told to bypass war news, but he must cover the battlefield with dauntless elan.
3. **Temperance.** He should do his duty by combining human values with pragmatism. He cannot afford to become a hero or martyr at all times. He must study the situation first and then : take a decision.
4. **Justice.** He must cover the news and report it with full sincerity so that the subjects covered by his news/article/feature get justice due to his writings, coverage or presentation.
5. **Truth.** He must report only the facts and data related to the event. He must not alter such facts and data.
6. **Money.** He must not accept money to alter the news or defame a person or an organisation through his reports and features. He must not get money from the corporate sector players to promote their mean commercial interests. He must serve his newspaper, magazine, journal, or TV channel through his honesty, integrity, and hard work.

● Yellow Journalism

Yellow journalism is a term coined in the 1890s to describe sensational coverage of events in newspapers to attract readers and boost circulation. In many ways, it was its day's version of "clickbait" or "fake news." While the term came to be used broadly for irresponsible reporting, it had its origins in the fierce competition between two New York City papers, the New York World and the New York Journal, and their hard-charging, high-profile publishers, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst.

Pulitzer had purchased the New York World in 1883 and, using colourful, sensational reporting and crusades against political corruption and social injustice, had won the largest newspaper circulation in the country. His supremacy was challenged in 1895 when Hearst, the son of a California mining tycoon, moved to New York City and bought the rival Journal. Hearst, who had already built the San Francisco Examiner into a hugely successful mass-circulation paper, soon made it plain that he intended to do the same in New York City by outdoing his competitors in sensationalism, crusades, and Sunday features.

This all-out rivalry, driven by competition for mass readership, led to large circulations for both papers and encouraged the adoption of attention-grabbing techniques—characterized by sensationalism, exaggeration, and the prioritization of reader appeal over restraint—that were

subsequently emulated by other newspapers, contributing to a broader shift in journalistic style toward visual presentation and sensational content.

In addition to transforming newspaper practices, yellow journalism contributed to shaping public opinion on foreign affairs. In the late 1890s, Hearst sent reporters to cover unfolding events in Cuba, then under Spanish rule. That reporting often emphasized atrocities and dramatic narratives, which helped generate public sympathy for Cuban independence and increased pressure on the U.S. government to intervene. Hearst's interests involved economics far more than foreign affairs: Impending war sold newspapers.

On February 15, 1898, the USS Maine exploded in Havana Harbor, Cuba, leading to the deaths of 260 people on board. Pulitzer and Hearst had their circulation boon. Hearst's Journal, in particular, laid blame for the disaster on the Spanish and published headlines calling for action by the U.S. government. Slogans such as "Remember the Maine, to hell with Spain!" became a rallying cry.

The ultimate cause of the sinking of the Maine remains unclear to this day, but there is evidence that it was a tragic accident. Nuance, however, was not part of the press coverage driven by Hearst and Pulitzer, and that coverage was impossible for U.S. Pres. William McKinley to miss. It may be hyperbolic to say that yellow journalism was responsible for the start of the Spanish-American War later in 1898, but it certainly contributed to public opinion leading up to the war.