

Topic 1.3. History of Journalism

Exercise 1. Read the text.

Introduction to the History of Journalism – pre-1690

The first time that people received the news was back during the times of the Roman Empire in around 130 BCE, before the year 0. The daily events, called *acta diurna* in Latin, were carved into stone and put up in public places, such as a market square, so that people could read them.

People could read about births and deaths, marriages, and the results of legal trials. Around the same time in China, a similar thing was happening. The Chinese government sent out messages called *dibao*, meaning government report, to local governors, people who were in charge of an area. They then shared some of the information with the local people. For over a thousand years people got the news this way until a German man called Johannes Gutenberg invented a machine that created many pages of text, very quickly. The machine had small metal parts that moved so that any text could be created and then many identical copies made. He called this machine the printing press. In the year 1454, Gutenberg began to use his printing press and a year later he printed a copy of the Bible, the first book printed like this. Gutenberg's invention changed the way that people got their news. It was now much quicker and cheaper to print texts and almost anybody could do it. However, the government still controlled what people wrote.

In Europe in the 1620's, people wrote single-page newsletters called *Corantos*, writing about wars and other interesting news. However, governments censored them, meaning they stopped people writing about topics they didn't like. The governments wanted these *corantos* to only print propaganda, that is, information that helps the government. In England in 1644, John Milton, a famous poet, wrote and published *Areopagitica*.

This speech called for the freedom of the press, meaning that people should be able to report the news without government trying to stop them. Many of the ideas that Milton wrote about are very important to the modern principles of journalism, but it didn't really change the way that governments controlled information in newspapers at that time. In 1665, a newspaper called *The Oxford Gazette* began in England, the oldest newspaper printed in English. Many people learned about the great fire of London a year later by reading about it in this newspaper. People can still read this newspaper today.

Public Occurrences, the first newspaper in the Americas, was published in Boston in 1690. It contained only four pages and was supposed to be published every month, however, it was censored immediately and only one edition was ever published.

As we have seen in this video, in the early history of journalism, governments wanted to control the information that people received.

The authorities censored newspapers when they did not like what was being printed. In the next video we will look at the steps that allowed the press to become free, not controlled by the government. In the next video, we will look at the history of journalism after 1690.

