

Topic 1.3. History of Journalism 1690 – present day

Exercise 1. Read the text.

History of Journalism – 1690 – present day

For most of the 18th century, governments still controlled what people wrote. For example, in the USA in 1722, a young Benjamin Franklin took over as editor of a newspaper called The New England Courant, because his older brother was in jail. The government accused him of writing things that were not true. Later in the 18th century, people began to believe in a free press.

Edmund Burke, an Irish politician, was making a speech about the three parts of government called the Three Estates. Then he pointed to the Journalists and called them the fourth estate, meaning that writing the truth was an important part of governing a country. We still called journalism the fourth estate. A few years later, in 1791, ten amendments to the US Constitution called the Bill of Rights became a law.

The first amendment talked about freedom of religion. Freedom of speech and also freedom of the press. This amendment protects journalists rights by making sure the government cannot control the information or opinions that journalists publish. Even though journalism was no longer controlled by the government most newspapers in the early 19th century were biased, meaning they only told one side of the story or one point of view and were read by people who agreed with their opinion. In 1835, however, a newspaper called The New York Herald was started with the goal of providing unbiased news that everyone could enjoy. This newspaper also tried to be politically independent, not preferring one political party over another.

In the 1850s, newspapers moved from being just local to national. The technology improved, so it became easier to print and distribute many more newspapers. Hundreds of thousands of people could now read the same newspaper on the same day in different parts of the country. The early years of the 20th century saw a new type of journalism, investigative journalism. This involved a journalist looking into and writing about powerful people and industries. An example of this investigative journalism is when Upton Sinclair wrote the Jungle in 1906. Readers learn about the unhealthy practices in meat packing factories and the bad conditions for the workers.

Although newspapers continue to be popular throughout the 20th century, by the 1920s, they also had to compete with news on the radio. Listening to news on the radio allowed the whole family to sit down and hear the news at the same time. And they could also listen to things live as they are happening instead of waiting until the next day to read about them.

In the 1950s television became popular and nearly every family in the USA had one. People could now see pictures as well as hear people talk about the news.

The internet became popular in the 1990s. And online newspapers began to replace print copies. Today over half the adults in the USA get their news from Twitter or Facebook. As we have seen, over hundreds of years the government have tried to control the news. The press has worked to become freer and more independent. Because of new technology, people can get their news from many different places. Next, use your notes to check your understanding of the history of journalism.

