
WINDOW ON COMMUNICATIONS

IS IT TIME
FOR AN EVEN-NEWER JOURNALISM?



Back in 1914, a small group of English, French and German immigrants lived peacefully together on a little island lost in the midst of the vast ocean. The island was not equipped to receive cablegrams and was visited only occasionally by an English mail boat. In September of that year, the inhabitants, while awaiting the arrival of the boat, were still discussing one of the main events in the last newspaper they had received two months earlier, namely: the upcoming trial of Henriette Caillaux, accused of killing Gaston Calmette, the director of *Le Figaro* (a French daily newspaper). Henriette, the wife of France's Minister of Finance, had shot Calmette point-blank because she believed him responsible for a press campaign against her husband. So it was with more than usual impatience that the entire population of the island gathered on the dock that morning in mid-September, eager to find out from the captain of the mail boat what sentence had been passed on Madame Caillaux. Instead, they were greeted with the astounding news that France and England had been at war with Germany for the past six weeks. During that time, the French, English and Germans on the island had all been living together like friends instead of enemies....

This is the story with which, at the first half of the last century, Walter Lippman, an American journalist, opened his talk on the important role information plays in creating public opinion. At that time journalism—which served to both spread news and comment on it—was taking on a bigger and bigger role in the process of building society. In our day, however, it seems that printed news, challenged by the new media, is in a stage of transition. Even though creating public opinion is still the fundamental goal of the traditional mass media like TV and radio (it is enough to think of the by-now compulsive race of many candidates for public office to make sure they appear on TV), there has been a significant rise in the number of newspaper readers who are abandoning printed news in favor of news available through the Internet. But does this trend confirm the fact that traditional journalism is now a thing of the past? Or does it offer us the chance to rethink journalism and perhaps point it in new directions?

Over the course of history, the print medium underwent major innovations whenever it listened to the times and changed with them. One of these pivotal moments was the 1970's,

which saw the dawn of a “new journalism” in the United States. In a time in which American society was still feeling the effects of the Kennedy administration and was also rocked by youth revolts, flower children and anti-war protests, a type of journalism written with the language and structure of literature emerged.



With explosive innovative force and an innate ability to involve the reader, this new journalism broke away from the traditional rules of impartiality and balanced writing and instead recounted stories through the eyes of persons directly involved in them. This new form of journalism streaked through the sky of the national and international press like a meteor, blazing a trail that modern journalism continues to follow. One of the best known representatives of the trend was Truman Capote whose “non-fiction novel,” *In Cold Blood*, should hold an important place in the library of every journalist and communicator because it is an example of how journalism can respond to the challenges facing the traditional print medium in this digital age of “hot media” and Twitter.

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