



Journalism 1908: Birth of a Profession

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The year 1908 was not remarkable by most accounts, but it was an auspicious year for journalism. As newspapers sought to recover from big-city yellow journalism and circulation wars that reached their boiling point a few years earlier during the Spanish-American War, press clubs began to champion higher education. And schools dedicated to journalism education, led by the University of Missouri, began to emerge. Now sanctioned by universities, journalism could teach acceptable behavior and establish credentials. It was nothing less than the birth of a profession.

Journalism—1908 opens a window on mass communication a century ago. It tells how the news media in the United States were fundamentally changed by the creation of academic departments and schools of journalism, by the founding of the National Press Club, and by exciting advances that included early newsreels, the introduction of halftones to print, and even changes in newspaper design.

Journalism educator Betty Houchin Winfield has gathered a team of well-known media scholars, all specialists in particular areas of journalism history, to examine the status of their profession in 1908: news organizations, business practices, media law, advertising, forms of coverage from sports to arts, and more. Various facets of journalism are explored and situated within the country's history and the movement toward reform and professionalism—not only formalized standards and ethics but also labor issues concerning pay, hours, and job differentiation that came with the emergence of new technologies.

This overview of a watershed year is national in scope, examining early journalism education programs not only at Missouri but also at such schools as Colgate, Washington and Lee, Wisconsin, and Columbia. It also reviews the status of women in the profession and looks beyond big-city papers to Progressive Era magazines, the immigrant press, and African American publications.

Journalism—1908 commemorates a century of progress in the media and, given the place of Missouri's School of Journalism in that history, is an appropriate celebration of that school's centennial. It is a lode of information about journalism education history that will surprise even many of those in the field and marks a seminal year with lasting significance for the profession.



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