

## **Newspapers Part 4: Changing Technologies, New Voices, and the Trend toward Corporate Ownership** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Newspapers**

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### **Changing Technologies, New Voices, and the Trend toward Corporate Ownership**

In the late nineteenth century many editors of the larger papers began to correspond with their counterparts around the state. Much of their correspondence related to news items, but often it consisted of gossip, small talk, or [jokes](#) <sup>[5]</sup>. Some newspapers belonged to the Southern Associated Press, one of seven regional groups that exchanged news with the original New York Associated Press. In 1915 the Associated Press (AP) opened its first branch office in North Carolina, just in time to provide coverage of the country's entry into [World War I](#) <sup>[6]</sup>. The AP wire service soon became essential to the 15 or so newspapers that subscribed to it.

The dominance of newspapers as the main source of information for the average North Carolinian began to be challenged soon after the turn of the century. [Advertising](#) <sup>[7]</sup> revenues had contributed greatly to the growth of the newspaper industry and enabled papers to afford such new technology as Linotype, photo engravings, and wire press services. But by 1914, as society grew more technologically advanced and the means of communication were becoming institutionalized, a transition in newspaper publishing was under way. Newsreels in [movie](#) <sup>[8]</sup> theaters had started to become popular about 1910. When [radio](#) <sup>[9]</sup> appeared in 1920, it initially had little effect on newspapers, but as its appeal increased, it began to drain some advertising dollars from the press. In North Carolina, as elsewhere, the rise of [television](#) <sup>[10]</sup> in the 1950s caused great attrition of individual newspapers. The economic impact of advertising losses from both TV and radio was heavy. As people increasingly turned to TV for their news, afternoon papers ceased publication, and by 1998 not a single city in the state could claim two daily newspapers.

Improved technologies helped surviving papers serve their readers with ever greater speed and accuracy, given the rapid changes in news gathering, editing, production, and distribution. Electronics made the most impact through the facsimile transmission of news, computerized editing systems, photocomposition machines, offset presses, and digital color in what, for many decades, had been a black-and-white medium. Numerous local papers began to carry syndicated columns from successful large city newspapers across the country even as many editors began to focus on local news, "human-interest" stories, and other articles aimed more at entertainment than education.

Throughout its history, the North Carolina press has produced a number of journalists who became leaders in their profession and have been recognized by induction into the [North Carolina Journalism Hall of Fame](#) <sup>[11]</sup>. The long list of these individuals includes Harriet Doar, pioneering literary journalist of the *Charlotte Observer*; Beatrice Cobb, widely quoted columnist and publisher of the *Morganton News Herald* from 1916 to 1959; Jack Claiborne, author and longtime correspondent and columnist for the *Charlotte Observer* <sup>[12]</sup>; and Harry Golden, civil rights advocate and publisher of the nationally recognized *Carolina Israelite* <sup>[13]</sup> from 1941 to 1968. Among the journalists who worked on a North Carolina paper before going on to national prominence, either in print, TV, or radio journalism, are Vermont Royster, [Edward R. Murrow](#) <sup>[14]</sup>, Tom Wicker, David Brinkley, Clifton Daniel, Charles Kuralt, and Charlie Rose.

In addition to some of the larger papers, the *Tabor City Tribune* (1946-91), *Whiteville News Reporter* (1904-), and *Washington Daily News* (1909-) have all been awarded the [Pulitzer Prize](#) <sup>[15]</sup>. Several newspapers were created specifically for North Carolina's [African American](#) <sup>[16]</sup> communities. In 1927 Louis E. Austin (1898-1971) became majority shareholder and editor of the *Standard Advertiser, Durham* <sup>[17]</sup>'s only black paper. He renamed it the *Carolina Times*, adopted "The Truth Unbridled" as its motto, and built his weekly into one of the state's most important African American newspapers. The *Times* preached racial pride and protest throughout the [segregation era](#) <sup>[18]</sup>, exhorting blacks to buy from each other, to educate their children, to oppose injustices like police brutality, and to vote. Its outspoken editorials inspired many [civil rights](#) <sup>[19]</sup> struggles and successes in the 1960s.

The *Carolinian* in Raleigh, another prominent black paper, was founded in 1940 by Paul R. Jervay Sr. as a politically independent weekly, publishing news of importance to the black community. The mission of Greensboro's *Carolina Peacemaker* <sup>[20]</sup>, established in 1967 by John Marshall Stevenson, has been to unify African Americans and provide a journalistic outlet for expressing ideas and issues relevant to black life in the modern world, including civil rights, politics, religion, local government, and economics. Other black papers continuing to publish in the early 2000s were the *Winston-Salem Chronicle* and the *Wilmington Journal*. With a growing [Latino](#) <sup>[21]</sup> population, North Carolinians also gained access to several newspapers catering to Spanish-speaking citizens and immigrants. These included *El Sol* and *La Noticia* in

Charlotte, *Nuestro Pueblo* in Durham, and *La Conexión* in Raleigh.

Mergers and acquisitions by powerful conglomerates marked the newspaper industry in both the state and the nation by the 1990s and early 2000s. The trend toward corporate ownership, as well as the rise of nonprint media such as the Internet, has led to a decline in the number of local newspapers. By 2006 several North Carolina papers were owned by large conglomerates, including the *Lexington Dispatch*, *Hendersonville Times-News*, and *Wilmington Star-News* ([New York Times Company](#) [22]); the *Jacksonville Daily News*, *Burlington Times-News*, *Gaston Gazette*, *New Bern Sun Journal*, and *Shelby Star* ([Freedom Newspapers](#) [23]); and the *Asheville Citizen-Times* [24] ([Gannett Company](#) [25]). This ownership paradigm is believed to have undermined attention to local affairs and the relative balance that the North Carolina press has traditionally achieved. But it has also been argued that the rise of the Internet-which has seen individual websites become part of the daily operations of most newspapers-has increased reader access to news, information, and opinion.

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[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) [37]

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