

# Communities, Publics, and the News



# How and Why Does News Matter?

- Noam Chomsky: News should report the truth on important public issues, but instead it distracts or lies, and people therefore vote for conservatives or don't vote at all
- Schudson: this is too simple. News is a "subtle cultural influence on human affairs, not an overt force controlling society."



# Two Poles of the Public

- The Public as Community, a place for consensus and solidarity
- The Public as the Public Sphere, a place for reasoned criticism and debate



# The Idea of a Public Sphere

- Public Space
- People are free to talk in an unconstrained way
- People are on equal terms
- People follow rules or norms of discourse
- Historical examples: Greek philosophers (Socrates), Parisian salon, English Coffee Houses, Colonial Taverns



# The Nation as an Imagined Community

- Benedict Anderson: The Nation "is an imagined political community - - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."
- "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."
- "The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet."
- "Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings."



# Two Poles of the Public

- Imagined Communities
  - News as community-building
  - The Newspaper and the Nation-State



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## Top Stories

Thursday, September 20, 2007

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### Colchester educator is Teacher of the Year

Published: Wednesday, September 19, 2007  
By Matt Sutkoski  
Free Press Staff Writer

COLCHESTER – Diane Bahrenburg, Vermont's newest Teacher of the Year, cried a little Tuesday afternoon on the Colchester High School Auditorium stage.


Vermont Education Commissioner Richard Cate had just announced to a house packed with raucous Colchester High School students that Bahrenburg had received the honor. They gave her a screaming, cheering, rock star reception. She playfully tried and failed to get the teenagers to settle down. "We love you!" a girl yelled. Finally, they were quiet enough for her to talk.

"I have the best job in the world because I get to work with you," she told the students. "But my job just got better today."

Bahrenburg, 51, of Colchester said her selection as Teacher of the Year was mostly the product of a successful school system built on the expertise



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THIS WEEK IN PHOTOS

Diane Bahrenburg, the 2008 Vermont Teacher of the Year, is congratulated by Dick Pecor of Colchester, a member of the district school board, after the award ceremony Tuesday in Colchester.

DARIA BISHOP, for the Free Press

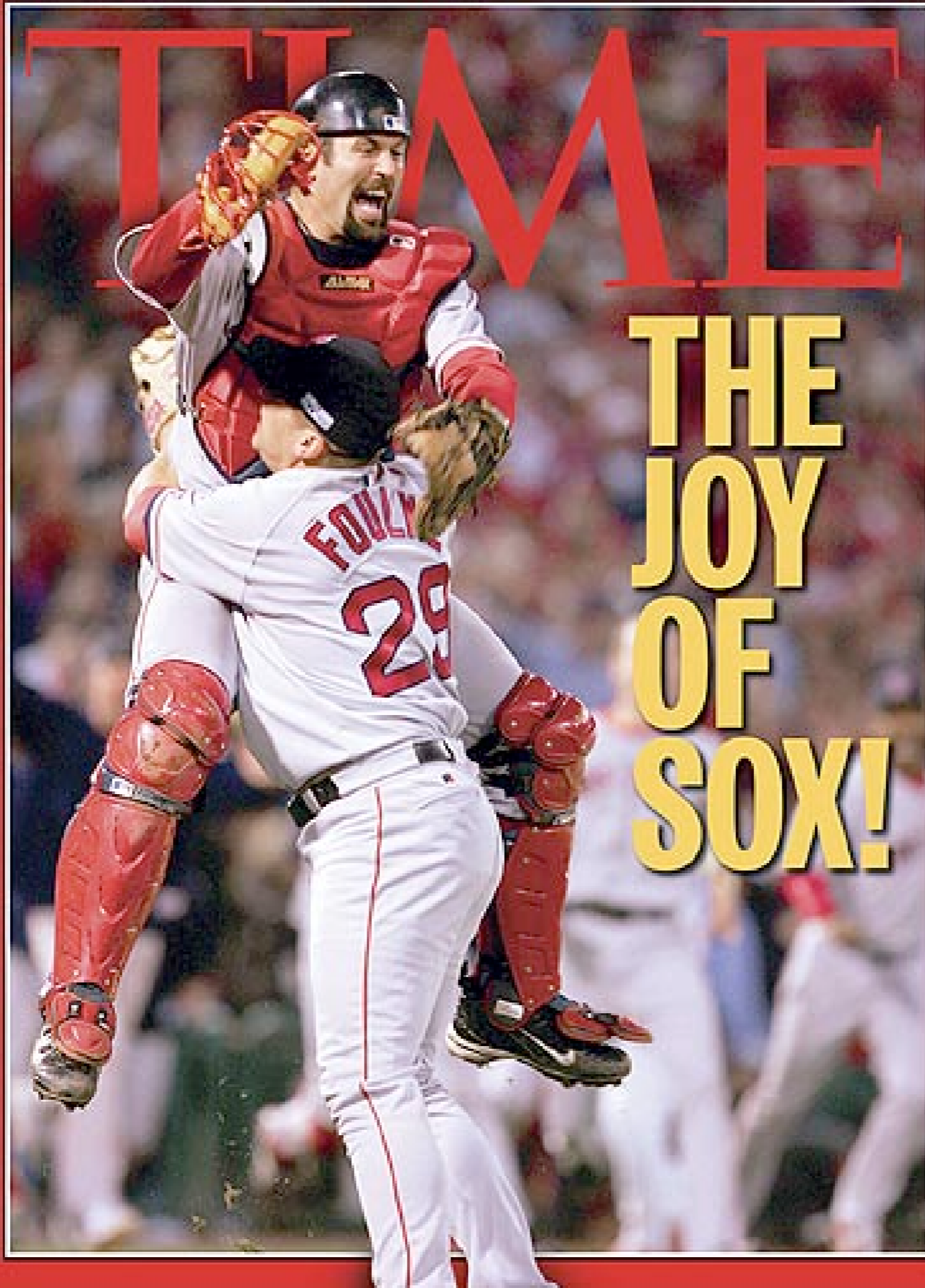


- ▶ Colchester
- ▶ Fire damages Colchester home, closes Vt. 15
- ▶ The Green Mountain Iron Dog & Dog Business Expo
- ▶ Interactive home exercise classes in the works



NOVEMBER 8, 2004

www.time.com AOL Keyword: TIME



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- A black and white historical photograph showing a group of soldiers on a battlefield. They are gathered around a tall pole, raising the American flag. The flag is flying in the upper left quadrant of the frame. The soldiers are in various poses, some reaching up to the pole. The background is a cloudy sky and a distant horizon. The image has a grainy, historical quality.
- Imagined Communities
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# Two Poles of the Public

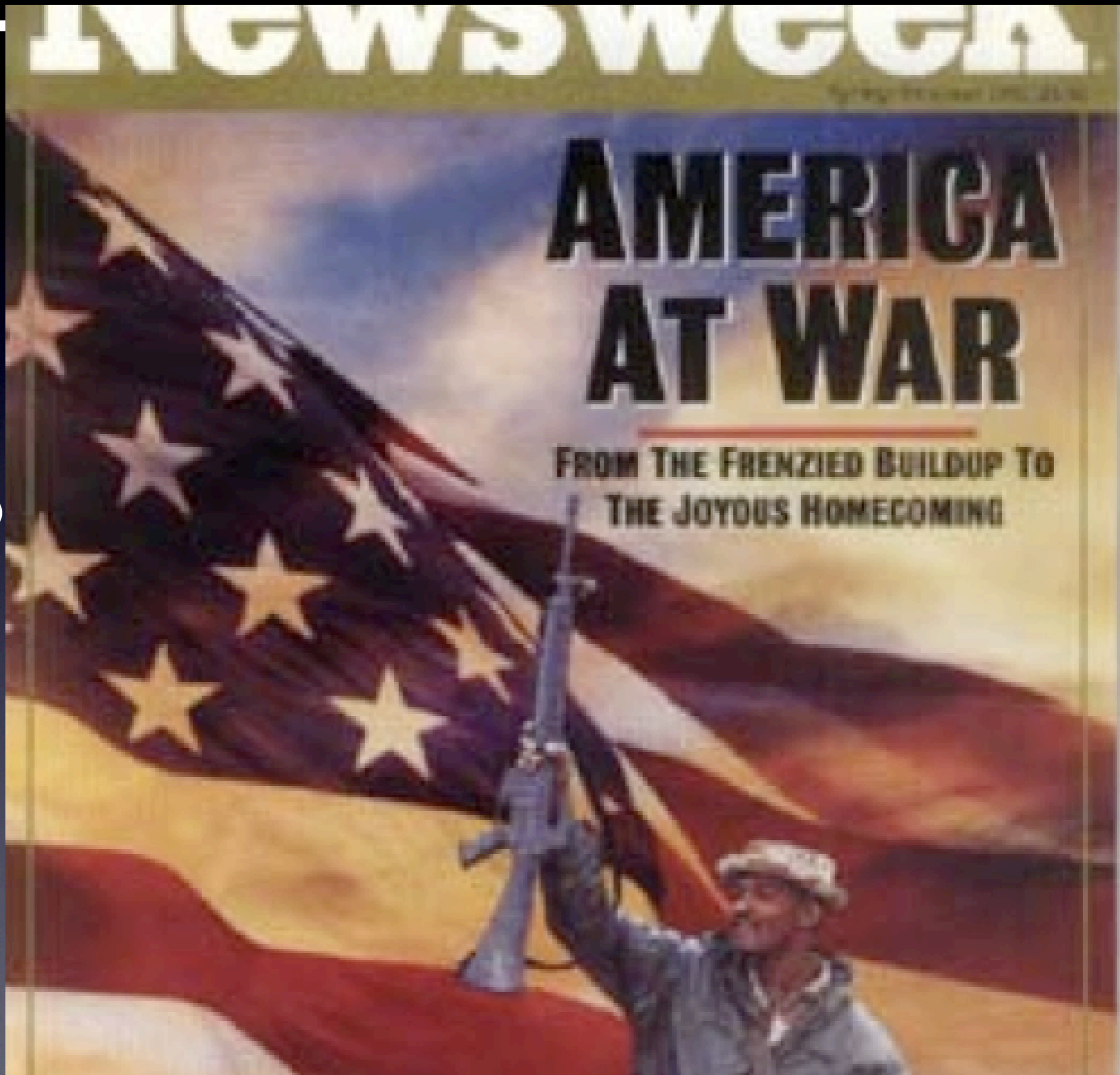
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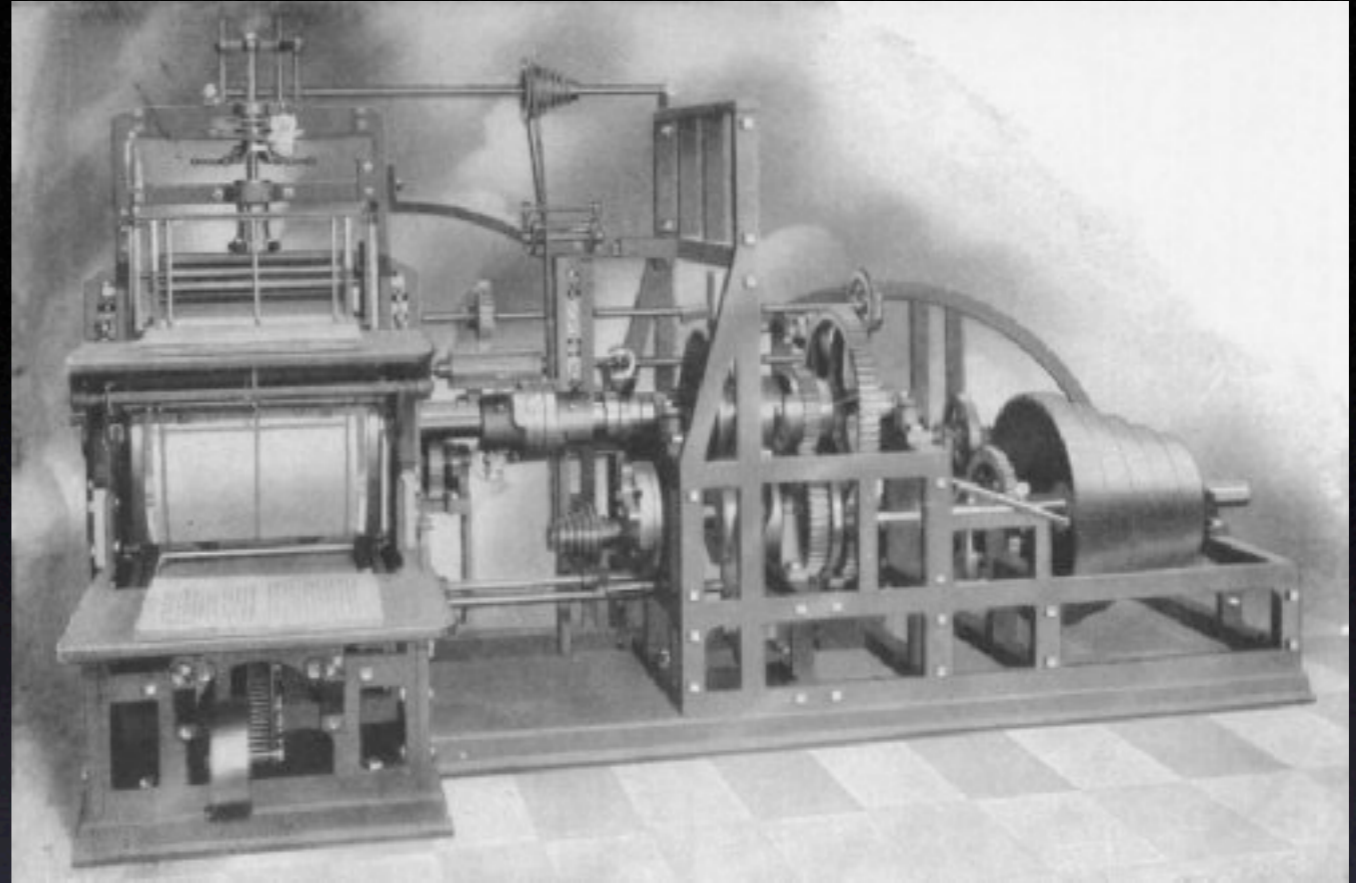


# The History of News

- Ways in which history matters: "conditions not of our own making"
- The printing press and the distribution of knowledge:
  - the increase in communication across time and space
  - "fixity" and the new role of writing in society



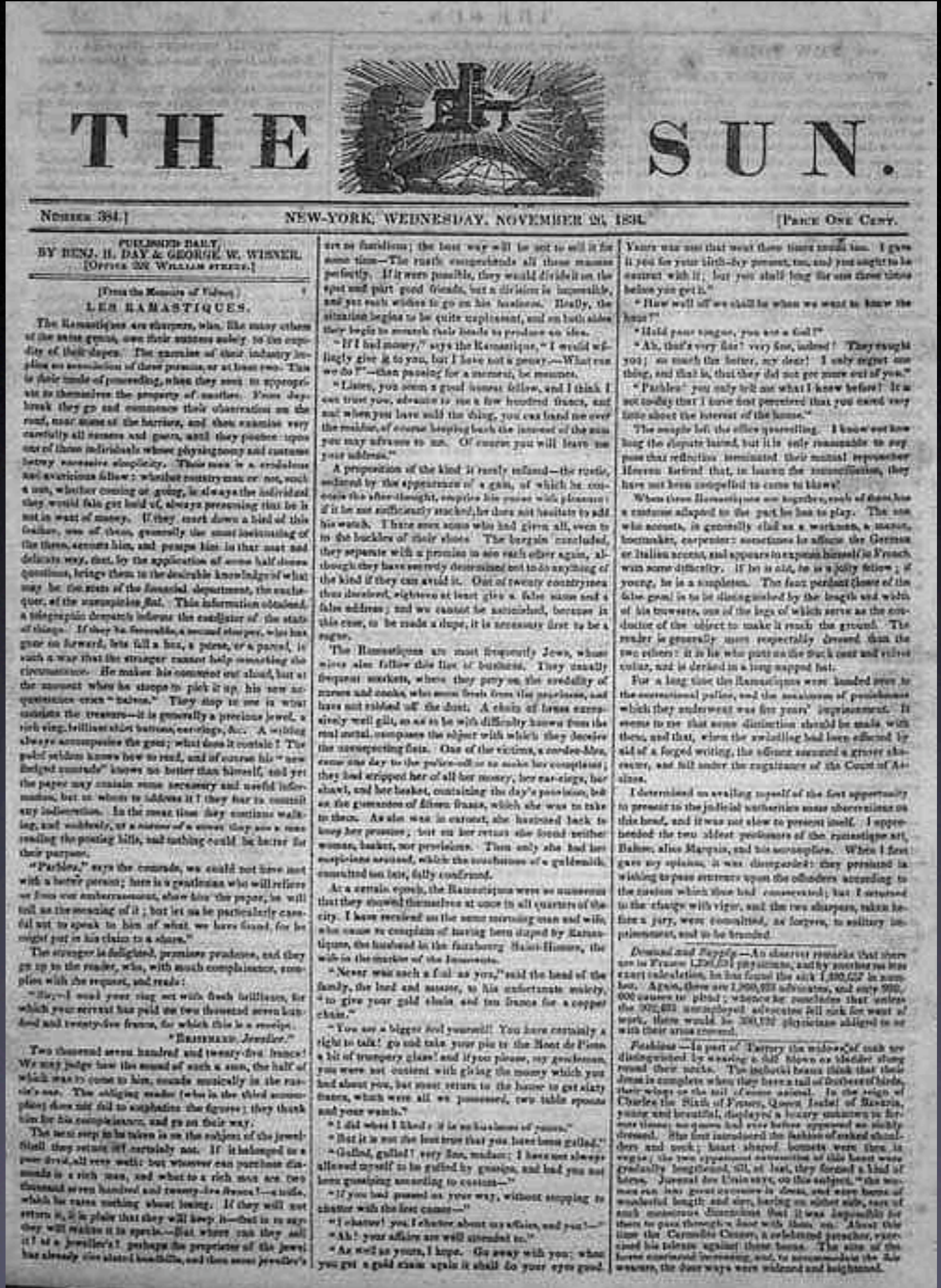
# The Birth of Media Gatekeeping



The modern newspaper is born on November 29, 1814, when *The London Times* became the first newspaper to be printed by steam, allowing for larger circulation at lower cost. On the first day of the machine's operation, troops were hired to prevent violence by soon-to-be-unemployed print shop workers.



- The "Penny Press": The New York Sun began publication September 3, 1833, as a morning newspaper (edited by Benjamin Day with the slogan "It Shines for All")



# THE SUN.

NUMBER 394.] NEW-YORK, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1834. [PRICE ONE CENT.

PUBLISHED DAILY BY BENJ. H. DAY & GEORGE W. WISNER. (OFFICE 202 WILLIAM STREET.)

[From the Memoirs of Vidocq.]  
**LES RAMASTIQUES.**

The Ramastiques are sharpers, who, like many others of the same genus, owe their success solely to the capacity of their sleep. The exercise of their industry implies an accumulation of these passions, or at least two. This is their mode of proceeding, when they meet in appropriate to themselves the property of another. From day-break they go and commence their observation on the road, near some of the barriers, and then examine very carefully all passers and goers, and they possess tips on all those individuals whose physiognomy and costume betray excessive stupidity. Their man is a credulous and avaricious fellow; whether countryman or not, such a man, whether coming on going, is always the individual they would like to get hold of, always possessing that he is not in want of money. If they meet down a bird of this feather, one of them, generally the most insinuating of the three, accosts him, and, perhaps him in that most and delicate way, first by the application of some half dozen questions, brings them to the desirable knowledge of what may be the state of the financial department, the exchequer, of the unsuspecting fool. This information obtained, a telegraphic despatch informs the cashier of the state of things. If they be favorable, a second sharper, who has gone on forward, lets fall a hint, a promise, or a parcel, in such a way that the stranger cannot help accepting the circumstance. He makes his comment out aloud, but at the moment when he stoops to pick it up, his new acquaintance cries "wait!" They stop to see if what contains the treasure—it is generally a precious jewel, a rich ring, brilliant shot buttons, earrings, &c. A rubbing always accompanies the gem; what does it contain? The pick seldom knows how to read, and of course his "new-fangled ruse" knows no better than himself, and yet the paper may contain some necessary and useful information, but at whom to address if they have to consult any individual. In the mean time they continue walking, and walking, at a distance of a couple they see a man reading the posting bills, and nothing could be better for their purpose.

"Parbleu," says the comrade, we could not have met with a better person; here is a gentleman who will relieve us from our embarrassment, show him the paper, he will tell us the meaning of it; but let us be particularly careful not to speak to him of what we have found, for he might put us in claim to a share.

The sharper is delighted, promises produce, and they go up to the reader, who, with much complaisance, complies with the request, and reads:

"Sir, I send your ring set with fresh brilliants, for which your servant has paid me two thousand seven hundred and twenty-five francs, for which this is a receipt."

**BENJAMIN JEWELLER.**

Two thousand seven hundred and twenty-five francs! We may judge how the sound of such a sum, the half of which was to come to him, sounds musically in the ramastique's ear. The obliging reader (who is the third accomplice) does not fail to congratulate the gaffer; they thank him for his complaisance, and go on their way.

The next step is to take in on the subject of the jewel; shall they return it? certainly not. If it belonged to a poor devil, all very well; but whoever can purchase diamonds is a rich man, and what to a rich man see two thousand seven hundred and twenty-five francs!—a trifle, which he raises nothing about losing. If they will not return it, it is plain that they will keep it—but in any case they will return it to some one. But where can they sell it? at a jeweller's? perhaps the proprietor of the jewel has already sold it to some jeweller, and then some jeweller's

are no favorites; the best way will be sent to sell it for some time.—The ramastique understands all these reasons perfectly. If it were possible, they would divide it on the spot and part good friends, but a division is impossible, and yet each wishes to go on his business. Ready, the situation begins to be quite unpleasant, and on both sides they begin to search their heads to produce an idea.

"If I had money," says the Ramastique, "I would willingly give it to you, but I have not a penny.—What can we do?"—then passing for a moment, he murmurs.

"Listen, you seem a good honest fellow, and I think I can trust you, advance to me a few hundred francs, and when you have sold the thing, you can lend me over the remainder, of course keeping back the interest of the sum you may advance to me. Of course you will leave me your address."

A proposition of the kind is rarely refused—the ramastique, seduced by the appearance of a gain, of which he conceals the true thought, accepts his proposition with pleasure; if it be not sufficiently marked, he does not hesitate to add his watch. There are some who had given all, even to the buckle of their shoes. The bargain concluded, they separate with a promise to see each other again, although they have secretly determined not to do anything of the kind if they can avoid it. Out of twenty countrymen thus disposed, eighteen at least give a false name and a false address; and we cannot be astonished, because in this case, to be made a dupe, it is necessary first to be a rascal.

The Ramastiques are most frequently Jews, whose sines also follow this line of business. They usually frequent markets, where they prey on the credulity of nurses and cooks, who soon break from the possession, and have not rubbed off the dust. A chain of brass excessively well gilt, or as it is with difficulty known from the real metal, compasses the object with which they decide the unsuspecting fair. One of the victims, a *coiffeuse*, came one day to the police-office to make her complaint; they had stripped her of all her money, her ear-rings, her shawl, and her basket, containing the day's possession, but as the guardian of *filles franca*, which she was to take to them. As she was in earnest, she happened back to keep her possession, but on her return she found neither woman, basket, nor provisions. Thus only she had her suspicions aroused, which the cunningness of a goldsmith, consulted on this, fully confirmed.

At a certain epoch, the Ramastiques were so numerous that they showed themselves at once in all quarters of the city. I have recited on the same morning man and wife, who came in complaint of having been duped by Ramastiques, the husband in the fairberry *Blaise-Honore*, the wife in the market of the *Immaculate*.

"Never was such a fool as you," said the head of the family, the head and master, to his unfortunate society, "to give your gold chain and ten francs for a copper chain."

"You say a bigger fool yourself! You have certainly a right to talk! go and take your pie to the *Mont de Pitié*, a bit of trowsers' glass! and if you please, my gentleman, you were not content with giving the money which you had about you, but must return to the house to get sixty francs, which were all we possessed, two table spoons and your watch."

"I did what I liked; it is no business of yours."

"But it is not the last time that you have been galled."

"Galled, galled! very fine, indeed; I have not always allowed myself to be galled by gossips, and had you not been guessing according to custom—"

"If you had passed on your way, without stopping to chatter with the first came—"

"I chatter! you I chatter about my affairs, and you?"

"Ah! your affairs are well attended to."

"As well as yours, I hope. Go away with you; when you get a gold chain again it shall do your eyes good."

Your wife and that head those three months ago. I gave it you for your birth-day present, and you ought to be content with it; but you shall long for me three times before you get it."

"How well off we shall be when we want to know the news?"

"Hold your tongue, you are a fool!"

"Ah, that's very fine! very fine, indeed! They caught you! so much the better, my dear! I only regret one thing, and that is, that they did not get more out of you."

"Parbleu! you only tell me what I know before! It is not today that I have lost my property; that you know very little about the interest of the house."

The couple left the office yawning. I know not how long the dispute lasted, but it is only reasonable to suppose that reflection, illuminated their mutual reproaches. However, behind that, in leaving the communication, they have not been compelled to come to blows.

When three Ramastiques are together, each of them has a costume adapted to the part he has to play. The one who accounts, is generally clad as a workman, a mason, bootmaker, carpenter; sometimes in the German or Italian accent, and appears to expound himself in French with some difficulty. If he is old, he is a jolly fellow; if young, he is a simpleton. The least pardonable of the false game is to be distinguished by the length and width of his trousers, one of the legs of which serve as the conductor of the object to make it reach the ground. The reader is generally more respectably dressed than the two others: it is he who puts on the duck coat and olive color, and is decked in a long ruffled hat.

For a long time the Ramastiques were hunted from the prosecutorial police, and the mechanism of procedure which they underwent was for years' improvement. It seems to me that some distinction should be made with them, and that, when the swindling had been effected by aid of a forged writing, the officer assumed a grocer's manner, and fell under the regulations of the Court of Assizes.

I determined on availing myself of the first opportunity to present to the judicial authorities some observations on this head, and it was not slow to present itself. I apprehended the two oldest practitioners of the ramastique art, Babou, alias Marguin, and his accomplices. When I first gave my opinion, it was disapproved; they persisted in wishing to pass sentences upon the offenders according to the custom which they had consecrated; but I returned to the charge with vigor, and the two sharpers, taken before a jury, were acquitted, as forgiven, to solitary imprisonment, and to be branded.

**Deceit and Stupidity.**—An observant remarks that there are in France 1,200,000 phisicians, and by another way the exact calculation, he has found the sick 1,300,000 in number. Again, there are 1,000,000 advocates, and only 900,000 causes to plead; whence he concludes that unless the 300,000 unemployed advocates fell sick for want of work, there would be 300,000 phisicians obliged to go with their arms crossed.

**Fashions.**—In part of Turkey the widows of such are distinguished by wearing a tall black or reddish shawl round their necks. The Turkish boys think that their dress is complete when they have a tail of different kind, their whips on the tail of some animal. In the reign of Charles the Sixth of France, Queen Isabel of Castria, young and beautiful, displayed a luxury unknown in former times; no queen had ever before appeared so richly dressed. She first introduced the fashion of ermine shawls and neck; next shawls, bonnets were then in vogue; the two ornaments mentioned at this hour were gradually lengthened, till at last they formed a kind of dress. Several few things, on the subject, "the woman can see great excesses in dress, and give birth of wonderful length and size, having on silver and gold, and such monstrous dimensions that it was impossible for them to pass through a lane with them on. About this time the Cardinal Cresser, a celebrated preacher, exposed his talents against these fashions. The size of the fashions increased increasing, and to accommodate the fashions, the door ways were widened and heightened.



# Concepts from Schudson

- Culture vs. direct effects: framing, moral amplification and reinforcement
- Professionalism: as much problem as solution
  - Historical rise of professionalism
  - "event-centered, negative, detached, technical, and official"