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THE EVOLUTION OF THE SUMMARY NEWS LEAD

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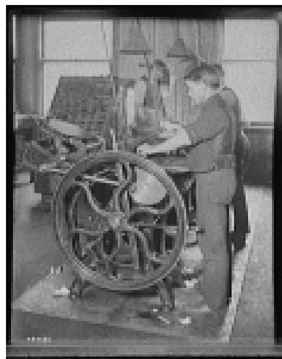

Photo: Printing press, Richmond & Backus Co., Detroit, Michigan, ca. between 1900 and 1910. Photo Courtesy: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection.

ABSTRACT
The hypothesis of this study is that the development of the summary news lead and the inverted pyramid story form is twofold: (a) that the introduction of the summary news lead and the inverted pyramid story form came into common use not, as is widely-believed, during the Civil War (1861-65), but during the Progressive Era (ca. 1880-1910); and (b) the development of the summary news lead was not a by-product of the technical constraints of the Civil War, but an outgrowth of the rise of science and education, especially higher education, in turn-of-the-century American society.

INTRODUCTION

American journalism textbooks teach, almost as axiom, that the summary news lead and the inverted pyramid story form came into use during the Civil War. As recently as 1990, Joseph R. Dominick's communications textbook, *The Dynamics of Mass Communication*, stated:

The Civil War which altered so many things in the United States also changed American newspaper journalism. A new reporting technique emerged as telegraphic dispatches from the war zone were transformed into 'headlines' to give the reader the main points of longer stories that followed. Because telegraph lines were unreliable and often failed, the opening paragraphs of the news story, the 'lead,' told the most important facts. The rest of the story continued details. If the telegraph line broke during a story, a least the most important part would probably get through. Thus the 'inverted pyramid' style of reporting was developed.[2]

Similarly, in his textbook on media, *Communication Technology*, Everett M. Rogers wrote that Associated Press correspondents during the Civil War were instructed "to put the most important facts in the first sentence of the news story, with less crucial information in each succeeding sentence." [3] Rogers, like Dominick, asserts this change was due to malfunctioning telegraph lines. Popular author Michael Crichton pushes back the invention of the inverted pyramid to the invention of the telegraph.[4]

Journalism historians also credit the technical shortcomings of the telegraph with the shortening of stories and the shift away from the early nineteenth-century prose style of news writing. Jean Folkerts and Dwight L. Teeter note, "Reliance on the expensive and erratic telegraph wires encouraged reporters to put the most critical information at the beginning of stories and to write shorter stories, eliminating the flowery phrases of the past."[5] The resulting articles, stripped of literary excesses, approach the inverted pyramid style, complete with a summary news lead. "The uncertainty of telegraph wires also contributed to reporters' changing from a chronological style of reporting to a style that recorded certain facts first, although the degree to which reporters used a 'news lead' varied."[6]

In his history of the *Chicago Tribune*, Lloyd Wendt suggests that *Tribune* reporters "began to curtail their flowery nineteenth-century style to fit the needs of telegraphic news" — but not so much

as to avoid editorial comment and the older wending, paid-by-the-inch chronological style.7

Historian David T. Z. Mindich claims that Lincoln's Secretary of War and noted Civil War censor, Edwin M. Stanton, initiated the form in his wartime dispatches.8 Mindich suggests that Stanton's control of the telegraphs coupled with his "terse, impersonal" style led to the popularization and dissemination of the inverted pyramid structure and summary news lead across the front pages of American newspapers.9

Thus, the romantic story of the creation of the summary news lead the very hallmark of American journalism — is seductive, almost logical.

Born of the Civil War, the defining event of the nineteenth century, and spread across great distances by an innovative homegrown technology, the summary news lead seems intrinsically bound up in American lore. But the role of the summary news lead in American journalism of that era was extremely limited. That form of news lead and its correlated inverted pyramid structure might have been invented during the Civil War, but it was certainly not a favored form then or even decades later. A review of newspapers from 1860 to 1910 indicates that the summary news lead did not appear in any consistent manner until the turn of the century.

This suggests that factors other than the Civil War and battlefield expedience led to the development of the summary news lead and the inverted pyramid story form.

HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis concerning the development of the summary news lead and the inverted pyramid story form is twofold: (a) that the introduction of the summary news lead and the inverted pyramid story form came into common use not, as is widely-believed, during the Civil War (1861-65), but during the Progressive Era (ca. 1880-1910); and (b) the development of the summary news lead was not a by-product of the technical constraints of the Civil War, but an outgrowth of the rise of science and education, especially higher education, in turn-of-the-century American society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To test the theory that the summary news lead was introduced and became an increasingly preferred form during the Progressive Era, a representative sample of American newspapers was surveyed from 1860 through 1910. Every fifth year was reviewed, e.g., 1860, 1865, 1870, 1875, etc. Using a table of random numbers, seven issues of each newspaper were read for each selected year: the fourth Sunday, the twentieth Monday, the eleventh Tuesday, the thirty-fifth Wednesday, the fortieth Thursday, the ninth Friday and the first Saturday.

The newspapers and corresponding years surveyed were among those available in Los Angeles area libraries: *Atlanta Constitution* 1870-1910; *Alta California* (San Francisco) 1860-1890; *Arizona Daily Star* 1880-1910; *Boston Globe* 1880-1905; *Chicago Tribune* 1860-1910; *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.) 1860-1865; *Los Angeles Daily Herald* 1875-1890; *Los Angeles Express* 1875; *Los Angeles Record* 1890-1910; *Los Angeles Times* 1885-1910; *Lynchburg Virginian* 1860-65; *Macon Daily Telegraph* 1860-1865; *New York Times* 1860-1910; *New York World* 1880-1905; *Sacramento Bee* 1860-1910; *Sacramento Union* 1870-1890; *San Diego Union* 1875-1910; *San Francisco Bulletin* 1860-1880; *San Francisco Chronicle* 1865-1910; *Santa Fe New Mexican* 1870-1910; and the *Washington Evening Star* 1860-1865.10

The selection of papers was based primarily on availability. The study also attempted to span geographic regions. In some cases, a selected year was missing from the newspaper holdings; in those instances newspapers from the preceding years or the following years were used. Some collections were incomplete.

For each newspaper surveyed, the number of stories were counted as well as the number of summary news leads. The guidelines for what was considered a "summary news lead" were as follows:
(1) A summary news lead consisted of a first sentence that included the core facts of the story, answering the questions of who, what, where, when and why or how.
(2) Stories consisting of less than five sentences that had portions of the "who, what, where, when and why or how" in the first sentence could not be said to have a summary news lead, since a "lead" requires something to be led. The brevity of the article made it

doubtful that the writer purposely employed a summary news lead. The first sentence was merely one-third to one-fourth of the entire story. Two examples of this type of brief story follow.
Proceedings were yesterday instituted in the Twelfth District Court (Judge McKinstry's) by A.M. Heslep, against the proprietors and publishers of the San Francisco CHRONICLE, asking judgment against them on a charge of libel. The alleged libel is contained in an article published in the CHRONICLE of December 1st, 1869, entitled "Heslep and the Reporters," which was based upon a statement made by Heslep at an anti-Coolie meeting, which severely reflected upon reporters for the press. Plaintiff alleges that the article was libelous and false; that he was a practicing attorney at the time of such publication, and that his reputation was injured thereby. He asks judgment for damages in the sum of $10,000 with costs.11
Or, similarly, from the *Boston Globe:*

GLOUCESTER, May 16 This afternoon John Fanten, six years of age, fell overboard from the town wharf, in the rear of the almshouse, and had sunk for the third time when he was rescued by John Welsch, aged thirteen years, who dove after him.12

RESEARCH RESULTS
The following is a summary of the newspapers examined during five-year intervals between 1860 and 1910:

Table 1

Summary News Leads in Daily Newspapers, 1865-1910

Year	**Number of Stories Analyzed**	**Summary News Leads**	**Percentage**
1860	**2,043**	**2**	**0.10%**
1865	**2,002**	**0**	**0.00%**
1870	**2,622**	**1**	**0.04%**
1875	**3,467**	**5**	**0.14%**
1880	**4,475**	**12**	**0.27%**
1885	**5,031**	**19**	**0.38%**
1890	**6,766**	**46**	**0.68%**

1895	6,736	77	1.14%
1900	4,782	202	4.22%
1905	4,174	277	6.64%
1910	4,689	517	11.03%
Totals	46,841	1,163	2.48%

Table II

Year	Population	Percent Illiterate
1860	31,443,000	NA
1870	38,558,000	20.00%
1880	50,156,000	17.00%
1890	62,622,000	13.30%
1900	76,094,000	10.70%

TABLE 1 DISCUSSIONϒThe data indicate that, contrary to what many historians and journalists have noted, comparatively few examples of the summary news lead can be found in newspapers of the 1860s. In fact during 1865, when the Civil War ended, no examples of stories that used the summary news lead or inverted pyramid writing.were found.

These traditional news structures may have been invented, or used in correspondence from reporter to editor, but they did not frequently see print in the papers in this study. The favored style, the old-fashioned "story model," mitigated against concision for most of the century.

Relatively few stories employed the summary news lead during the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, according to the survey. It was not until 1895 that even 1 percent of all stories surveyed had summary news leads. The results were uniform, as no single paper or geographic region accounted for more leads than others, with one notable exception. The New York World, published by that tireless proponent of journalism education, Joseph Pulitzer, had summary leads for 1.8 percent of its stories in 1880 and 1.2 percent in 1885.

Between 1890 and 1900, however, this study found a significant nationwide increase (from 46 to 202) in the number of stories with a summary news lead and the inverted pyramid story form. The trend continued steadily upward, with 280 summary news leads recorded in 1905 (more than six percent of the stories analyzed). By 1910, one-of-nine news stories surveyed used the summary news lead and inverted

pyramid construction. Based on this data, the Chicago Tribune had the highest percentage of summary leads of any paper in 1910, 18.7 percent (238 of 1,276 total stories analyzed). 13

The evidence suggests that the change in writing style, and in particular the tendency toward using a summary news lead, was instead a phenomena resulting from new social trends at the turn of the century, not of unreliable telegraph lines during the 1860s.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION

What caused this change in newspaper writing if it was not the technological constraints of the telegraph during the Civil War? This study proposes that it was the influence of the events and thought of the "Progressive Era."

Three aspects of the Progressive Era may account for the change in journalism style. First, there was a surge in scientific discoveries, inventions and thought. Second, the surge in science provoked a corresponding revolution in education. And third, the revolution in education changed not only the general public and its interest in, and thereby its demand for, the facts, but also profoundly changed the journalists who wrote the news.

The changes of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Gilded Age, or Mark Twain's "Big Barbeque," followed by the Progressive Era were profound. Science and invention revolutionized transportation, communication, business, and agriculture. In agriculture, for example, a bushel of wheat that required three hours of human labor to produce in 1830 required less than 10 minutes to produce by the turn of the century. Likewise in industry, early machines that allowed a worker to make about 5,000 straight pins per day were replaced by automatic machines; by 1900, one worker could oversee the daily production of 15 million pins.14

Its foundation established in antebellum America with cell theory (1838) and Darwin's theory of evolution (1859), scientific thought accelerated as well after the war with the advent of the germ theory of disease (1864). This was followed by the rise of social sciences, including sociology (1883), psychology (1890), and anthropology (1888). The dramatic increase in post-Civil War scientific progress is perhaps best illustrated by activities in the United States Patent Office. In the years between 1790, when the office was created, and 1860, 36,000 patents were granted. More than ten times that many (440,000 patents) were issued between 1860 and 1890. Since 1900, the average number of patents issued annually has equaled or exceeded the total number of patents issued in the entire history of the country before 1860.

Some of the key inventions and discoveries made during the latter part of the nineteenth century included the telephone in 1876; the light bulb in 1879; the kinescope in 1889; and radio transmission in 1895. An experimental airplane was introduced in 1896 with the Wright brothers taking their famous flight in 1903; and Henry Ford introduced of the affordable Model-T in 1908.

The discovery of X-rays in 1895 and Einstein's introduction of the theory of relativity in 1905 transformed science from working with the mechanistic and tangible to exploring invisible forces not easily understood. The general public could no longer "see" what scientists were researching, giving rise to a greater public demand for verbal explanations.15

By the end of the nineteenth century, Americans believed science was on the verge of mastering nature. "Science was moving ahead on all fronts, reducing ignorance and producing new tools for the amelioration of the human condition. A comprehensible, rational view of the world was gradually emerging from laboratories and universities."16

Inevitably, changes in science and education and the growing sense of professionalism produced changes in newspaper writing style, changes which show a gradual evolution of the summary news lead and inverted pyramid story form.

Bernard A. Weisberger's history of pre- and post-Civil War journalism — Reporters for the Union — describes reporters' writing in the mid-nineteenth century as "florid; it jingled with euphemisms and its clauses were strung together like the joints of caterpillar, but there was enough sting in his ideas to make his stories stimulating to read."17

These stories, aside from their overly ornate style, did not have summary news leads. In the first few sentences of this story, published in the New York Times, the basic facts of the story are strewn throughout a baroque prose style: Bristol, England, Dec. 17, 1860—An unusual degree of excitement was caused here this morning by an alarm of fire; and the consternation was not a little heightened when it became known that the conflagration had broken out amongst the shipping in the floating harbor. The ships' sea bow, on board of which the fire broke out, and in whose destruction it result, was a fine American-built ship, belonging to a New York firm, of some 1,400 or 1,500 tons of burden.18 In contrast to the descriptive style of most newspapers, Weisberger found that the Associated Press style "recorded only dry matters of fact and detail"19; however, most AP stories were just briefs, stories wrapped up in a sentence or two. Due to their brevity, all the facts who, what, where, when and why or how were jammed into the first sentence. In fact, that's all a wire story is. Consider, for example, the following story from the New York Times.

> NEWARK, N.J.Mrs. Louisa Hemenover, aged 26 years, committed suicide yesterday by cutting her throat with a razor. She was deranged from illness. She was highly esteemed.20 Items like this might appear to contain a summary news lead. However, there is nothing in them but the most basic information, they cannot even be called stories. A "lead" requires a story to follow, that is, something to be led.

Meanwhile, the population of the United States had almost tripled since the beginning of the Civil War, growing from 31 million in 1860 to 92 million in 1910.21 The growing complexity of life in America, along with the scientific revolution, led to a demand for increased education, as noted in Foster Rhea Dulles'

study, The United States Since 1865. There was not only a tremendous growth in the number of public schools and in student enrollment, but an extension of both ends of the educational spectrum –
– kindergartens and graduate schools. The greatest advance was at the high school level. While the total school population doubled between 1870 and 1900 to a total of 15 million, the number of high schools rose from 500 to over 6,000.22 By 1910 nearly 18 million children were enrolled in public schools.23
Population and Illiteracy Rates in the United States, 1860-1910 24

Table II Discussion

As Table II indicates, America had a booming and increasingly well-educated population. While the population nearly tripled after the start of the Civil War, illiteracy rates fell by almost one-third. The audience base was large and increasing, and it was hungry for information.

There was a parallel, if less spectacular growth in higher education. The number of colleges and universities rose from 563 in 1870 to 951 in 1910; the enrollment at those institutions rose almost sixfold, from 63,000 in 1870 to 355,000 in 1910.25 At the same time, graduate and professional education expanded, spurred by Congress and public demand alike.

In 1862, Congress enacted the first Morrill Education Act, setting aside land grants to build public universities. New land grant universities, such as Cornell sought to wean higher education away from the classics-based curriculum taught at older colleges. In place of Greek and Latin, students at schools such as Cornell and the University of Wisconsin were educated in an "all-purpose" curriculum that taught engineering and agriculture, along with Homer and Cicero.

The greatest reform in university curriculum in the post-Civil War era occurred at Harvard, 26 where President Charles W. Eliot introduced a radical system during his tenure from 1869 to 1909. He said: The endless controversies whether language, philosophy, mathematics, or science supplies the best mental training, whether general education should be chiefly literary or chiefly scientific, have no practical lesson for us today. This University recognizes no real antagonism between literature and science, and consents to no such narrow alternatives as mathematics or classics, science or metaphysics. We would have them all, and at their best.27 According to John Brubacher and Willis Rudy's Higher Education in Transition, "modern languages, natural sciences, social sciences, all were clamoring for more room. Eliot's remedy was to upset the venerable hierarchy of the arts and give them all a respected place."28 He set an example for a diversified education that was scorned by traditionalists and embraced by reformers.

The land grant universities were strengthened by the second Morrill Education Act of 1890, providing federal funds and encouraging state funding for new colleges. These new institutions were supposed to train students in agriculture and mechanical fields, but most often ended up training them for the white collar jobs a newly-industrializing America required.

These were bold steps, first spelled out in the "Foundation Ideas" of Cornell President Andrew Dickson White. The revisions included increased development of the sciences, integrating liberal and practical education, and establishing links with high schools to encourage more people to come to college.

The speed with which land grants adopted a vocational or "real-life" education fit with what Alexis De Tocqueville earlier had called America's pragmatic view of life. He observed that Americans demanded "that the education of the greater number should be scientific, commercial and industrial rather than literary."29

As more American students flocked to public-funded institutions, private universities faced growing competition and pressure to offer vocational courses. To survive, the older private schools had to follow the land grants' lead and offer new engineering and business classes — as well as the theology and classics courses that had been their staples.

Eventually the pragmatic curriculum, featuring "applied sciences," overwhelmed the classics. The professions, particularly medicine, were reborn between 1880 and 1890. At the same time, many universities began to admit students with no background in Greek or Latin. By 1905, even Yale had eliminated its Greek requirement, and state universities in the Midwest and West had dropped, or were in the process of eliminating, the classics from the core curricula.

Vocational classes were not the only subjects to crowd out the classics. The social sciences filled the void left by once required classics, religion and philosophy courses. Introduced to the academy around 1876, social science departments had become a fixture in higher education by the turn of the century.

The incorporation of scientific method into both natural and social sciences increased the function of universities as catalysts for technological and social change. Further, the women and men who staffed social science departments often were impassioned by the ideal of progressive reform — and used their classes as a pulpit to preach against corruption and other social ills in America.

Singing the Progressive anthem, philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) proclaimed, "Science is to mean for us a mode of life whose single, animated purpose is to find out the real truth, [and] which pursues this purpose by a well-considered method."30 This statement could easily have come from a journalism textbook it establishes a link between objective reasoning and scientific thought and how such investigation to discern accurate information can yield "the real truth." The "well-considered method" could be analogous to the summary news lead and inverted pyramid form: fact and reason are paramount. Even if such Progressive zeal sometimes irritated university presidents and trustees, those ideals did fit with the late-nineteenth century vision of the university as public servant. Supported by a Progressive governor, "Fighting Bob" LaFollette, the University of Wisconsin was the model of this academic trend, often using research specifically to improve state agriculture or politics.31 The "Wisconsin Idea" established the university as, in the words of education historians Brubacher and Rudy, a "'watchtower,' taking an active part in improving society, serving as an essential instrument of public

service. It would strengthen, in this age of universal knowledge, creative work of all kinds, at whatever cost."32

The Progressives themselves were college educated. Among Progressive Party organizers in California, for example, historian George E. Mowry noted that three of four had a college education. Many Progressives saw journalism as their lever with which to pry the world.33

William Allen White, yet to settle on a career as reporter-editor-sage, had enrolled "with glowing delight" at the revitalized University of Kansas after a lackluster two years at the College of Emporia. We wiped out the classical course which I had started at the College of Emporia and took the literary-scientific course, which required two years of college Latin, two years of German and French, and some balance between the physical sciences zoology, chemistry, botany, geology and the other humanities, history, English, economics, sociology, psychology, and political science. And, of course, there were two stiff years of mathematics, which were to be my academic stumbling block and the doom of my college degree.34 White was not alone among the "new breed" who would take up journalism. Exposed like Bill White to the new scientific method and philosophy, these young people fostered a "scientific," that is, factual style of news writing.

Not incidentally, many, perhaps most, of the young reporters of the Progressive Era saw themselves as social scientists and/or political reformers who sought solutions to society's problems through the application of wit. Numbers of them would become, for a time, muckrakers, "those publicity agents of change," as the Weinbergs put it. Their stories clinically reported facts heaped upon facts "until dry certitude set in."35

More bluntly, Clarence Darrow insisted the new science-oriented society of the Progressive Era required more facts and fewer furbelows in the daily papers, saying that the world has grown tired of fairies.36 This demand for information and for its presentation in a "scientific manner" exerted influence on how the news was written.

College educated, the leaders of the Progressive movement believed, as the universities increasingly taught, that science could be used as a tool for reform, a tool to cure societal ills. "Under the influence of Darwinism," George E. Mowry noted, "the rising social sciences, and a seemingly benign world, the Progressive had traded some of his old mystical religion for a new social faith. He was aware that evil still existed, but he believed it a man-made thing and upon earth. What man created he could also destroy, and his present sinful state was the result of his conditioning."37

As these men and, in growing numbers, women entered the work force — and the newsrooms — they brought with them their knowledge and training in scientific thought. The influx of these Progressive-minded people was to generate profound changes in both the concept and treatment of news.

The newspaper industry as well as the newsroom was feeling the influence of postwar change; the physical look and content of papers was altered substantially. Headlines became integrated into the design, simultaneously attracting readers and teasing the news content of a story. The Civil War had broken the editorial stranglehold on the front page. Readers demanded news from the battlefields; official dispatches had been featured prominently, bumping long-winded essays to later pages.38 While advertising sales supplanted circulation sales as the chief source of income for newspapers, advertisers too lost their monopoly of the front page.39 Printing expenses were high, but new presses could print unprecedented numbers of papers, balancing the cost. Press associations, wire services and chains afforded more news coverage. More hard news was becoming the premium.

By the late nineteenth century, E.W. Scripps had begun his newspaper chain. Like magazines which were gaining in popularity and competing with newspapers for readership, chains sought to provide specialized papers for the masses. But unlike magazines, chain papers were inexpensive and free from advertiser and special interest control.40 Scripps also realized that a heavy-handed editorial policy would be deadly: Believe in the people; "vox populi" may not always be vox Dei, but it is the nearest thing we've got, and if we follow that, we shall not be far wrong — thus shall we develop a true and enlightened democracy.41 By the end of the nineteenth century, in other words, a changing audience was controlling a changing newspaper focus.

"This was the beginning of the golden age of American newspaper journalism," T.H. Watkins wrote in his biography of Harold L. Ickes, one of the morefiery of the Progressives. It was a period that extended from about 1890 to World War II, after which the world of journalism, like every other world, changed forever and not always for the better. The men and women whose names survived that remarkable era are invariably described as "legendary," and they defined the reporter's breed for all time—Ring Lardner, Damon Runyon, Gene Fowler, Ray Stannard Baker, Ida Tarbell, Elizabeth Cochrane (Nellie Bly), Dorothy Thompson, Stanley Walker, George Ade, Lincoln Steffens, Heywood Broun, Eugene Field, Grantland Rice, Sherman Duffy, Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur and a dozen more.42 For many of the newcomers, the newsroom was a continuation of the classroom. They intended to work only long enough to plumb society's lower depths before they set out on "real careers." David Graham Phillips, Willa Cather, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Kathleen Norris, Upton Sinclair and Jack London, among others, all intended careers as realistic novelists. Sinclair's fictional The Jungle was the most celebrated muckraking work. Their gritty, naturalist literary style was in stark contrast to the romanticism of antebellum America — just as the editorial and reportorial styles of news stories was gradually shifting away from the flowery pre-Civil War era journalism.43 Indeed, Dreiser recalled that his first newspaper editor in 1892 made him answer "Who or what? How? When? Where?" in the first paragraph of his stories, the essence of a summary news lead and the basis for a good story.44

Others turned to law as the means to reform, notably two of Fremont Older's stalwarts in the San Francisco Bulletin city room just before the turn of the century, John Francis Neylan and Eustace Cullinan.45

Editors, some anyway, were eager for these brightly polished youths. In 1897 Henry J. Wright, city editor of New York's Evening Post, became editor-in-chief of the Commercial Advertiser; he brought Lincoln Steffens along to help re-make the newspaper. In his autobiography, Steffens says he chose reporters for the paper who were educated; for Steffens and the Commercial in 1897, that meant a college degree: Commercial reporters were sought out of the graduating classes of the universities, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Columbia, where we let it be known that writers were wanted — not newspaper men, but writers. . . . My practice was to take as many university graduates as came each year after their Commencement, and trying them out in the summer when the older men were on vacation, select in the fall those that we liked, "we" being myself, Lachaussee, and the other reporters, who were harder judges than I was. Most of the men who made good were from Harvard.46 Steffens had a love-hate relationship with his college education; throughout his autobiography he weighed its worth in respect to his career. He wrote that "next to my clothes and general beautifulness, the heaviest handicap I had [in landing a job] was my claim to a college education."47 But while Steffens derided the traditional "Greek, Latin, mathematics"48 taught at Berkeley in the mid 1880s, he acknowledged the benefitsof an education, particularly a scientific education, on his character a character that would influence his journalism. "But the best I got out of it all was objectivity."49

Steffens' university-honed objectivity served him well at the Post. When he first joined, editor Henry Wright had told him that trouble on Wall Street was imminent, and that he required a reporter who knew something about "the beat" in order to cover it: Wright said . . . "we" must have a man down there, a special reporter, who would give all his time and thought to the financial news. He knew, he said, that I had no experience of banking and business, but he had noticed that I worked and read up on any subject I was reporting. My universities had taught me to study. He thought I could learn enough to "cover" Wall Street in the emergency.50 The demand for better educated reporters on newspapers concurred with a rise in literacy in the United States. In Ray Stannard Baker's 1945 autobiography, American Chronicle, the author discusses the "new journalism" of the turn of the century tailored for the more educated public: "For the first time in history great masses of the people were becoming literate. They were reading more than ever before with boundless new human curiosity that had to be satisfied."51 The older Charles A. Dana of New York's Sun also believed in college training and higher education for his reporters—but favored a classical rather than "modern" education. When Dana was at The Sun he was quoted as saying: If I could have my way every young man who is going to be a newspaper man, and who is not absolutely rebellious against, should learn Greek and Latin after the good old fashion. I had rather take a young fellow who knows the Ajax of Sophocles, and who has read Tacitus, and can scan every ode of Horace—I would rather take him to report a prize fight or a spelling match, for instance, than to take one who has never had those advantages.52 Sophocles, Tacitus and Horace prepared young writers for literary, not journalistic careers. In his 1933 autobiography Watching the World Go By, Willis J. Abbot recalled the "literary" writing styles of New York papers in the last decades of the century. "In those halcyon times newspapers valued well-written stories, and a column and a quarter was looked upon as quite normal for a narrative built upon a news item which to-day would be given two inches."53 Abbot admired the writing style at Dana's Sun in the 1880s, describing it as a model of rigid condensation throughout — yet when a good story came in, the lucky reporter could get columns in which to tell it if he

had the true art of story-telling. Every newspaper, nowadays, even the ones that print forty pages to an edition, preaches the virtues of condensation. But the real test of journalistic ability is to tell when to be profligate of space and when to throw brevity to the winds.54

By the time Lincoln Steffens joined New York City's Evening Post in 1892 newspaper writing was casting off its florid style. In his autobiography, Steffens notes, [T]he news department of the Post had, theoretically, nothing to do with the editorial policy. Reporters were to report the news as if happened, like machines, without prejudice, color, and without style; all alike. Humor or any sign of personality in our reports was caught, rebuked, and, in time, suppressed. As a writer, I was permanently hurt by my years on the Post. The editorial page and, to some extent, to book, theater, and music reviews, were the only departments which were really written.55 Steffens wanted to return to the more literary style of the 1880s. In his autobiography he describes the types of writers he wanted for the Commercial: They were picked men and women, picked for their unusual, literary prose. I hated the professional newspaper man. . . . I wanted fresh, young, enthusiastic writers who would see and make others see the life of the city. This meant individual styles, and old newspaper men wrote in the style of their paper, the Sun men in the Sun style, Post men in the Godkin manner.56 Dana at the Sun also attempted to retain the literary quality of the writing: "Dana saw no reason why the news column should not be as well written as any piece of literature, for to him reporting was an art."57

However, Dana's and Steffens' wishes to retain literary style in news writing did not coincide with the national trends. As educated men and women entered newsrooms nationwide, writers dropped the overly elaborate, "story" form and began leading stories with the more terse five W's and an H.58 While Steffens lamented the demise of "personality" in news stories, a journalism textbook from 1894 stressed that reporting the news need not be limited to enumerating humdrum facts: "Truth in essentials, imagination in non-essentials, is considered a legitimate rule of action in every office. The paramount object is to make an interesting story." 59 There was same room for creativity, but old school reporters felt limited, even stifled by the new wave of journalism.

In James Melvin Lee's A History of American Journalism, the author cited New York's Evening Post manager E. L. Godkin's vision of this "new type of journalism": The Times under [Raymond's] management came nearer the newspaper of the good time coming than any other in existence; in this, that it encouraged truthfulness — the reproduction of the facts uncolored by the necessities of a "cause" of the editor's personal feelings — among reporters; that it carried decency, temperance, and moderation into discussion, and banished personality from it.60 The fearsome Charles Chapin, city editor of Pulitzer's Evening World in the late 1890s, would hasten the coming of that style by creating the legman/rewrite system of beat coverage. Individual style was deliberately squelched; news copy was mass produced.61 All this would be hastened by the establishment of journalism schools — that is, citadels of rational, practical training in a profession.

A representative of the old school, Dana opposed journalism schools. "I do not see how a college instruction in journalism can be of any adequate practical use the newspaper office is the best postgraduate college that the newspaper profession can have."62

Dana's despised rival, Joseph Pulitzer, owner of the competing New York World disagreed. He predicted in 1904 that "[b]efore the century closes, schools of journalism will be generally accepted as a feature of specialized higher education like schools of law or of medicine."63 Just as Pulitzer's World eclipsed Dana's Sun, so Pulitzer's concept eventually prevailed.

According to Merle Thorpe, a professor of journalism at the University of Kansas in the early years of the twentieth century, by 1915, thirty-nine universities offered journalism courses, with a total faculty of 72 teachers and 2,040 students.64 Thorpe described the journalism department where he taught: At the University of Kansas, with whose work I am most familiar, three-fourths of the students' time is taken up with study in such subjects as history, English, political science, philosophy, psychology, the natural sciences, and law, while the rest of their time is devoted to thirteen courses in technical journalism. These cover news-gathering and news-writing, news-interpretation, newspaper administration, advertising, editorial problems, comparative journalism, history of journalism, and editorial practice. A laboratory is maintained where students apply the theories of the classroom to the practical publication of a six-column, four-page daily newspaper.65 As Thorpe figured, journalism schools would not only produce "technically trained men." Their graduates would be professionals. "[T]hey will inspire the new generation of newspaper workers with a realization that while there is a great ethical value in the truthful gathering and printing of news, there is a greater goal in publishing a dynamic and purposeful newspaper."66

By 1912, objective, that is, "scientific" reporting was the accepted standard. In the midst of the political campaign that year, Theodore Roosevelt teasingly urged William Allen White, "Now about that article. Try not to poise it on the knife edge of that balanced, judicial attitude you assume sometimes."67 A decade later, a textbook offers the following example of how to write a story on a local meeting: The bare statement that the association is meeting, where it is meeting, how long it is will be holding the convention, what it proposes to do in this meeting, and who is present of unusual interest who speaks, and how many persons present and where they are from.68 The summary news lead had evolved from an exception to the convention.

SUMMARY

The more direct, factual way of writing is now evident in nearly every daily newspaper across the country, from the front page to the sports page. The inverted pyramid form of writing provide readers with immediate, relevant information unlike stories of the mid and late nineteenth century that employed a flamboyant, narrative style. The summary news lead, then, was developed by progressive, educated, science-oriented journalists in response to social factors that went beyond the limitations of the telegraph during the nineteenth century.

NOTES

1. Written by Errico, based on a draft by April, and initial research by April, Asch, Khalfani, Smith and Ybarra. Advised by Professor Ed Cray. The paper was originally accepted for presentation at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's Graduate Education Interest Group at the AEJMC's 1996 conference in Anaheim, California.

2. Joseph R. Dominick, The Dynamics of Mass Communication (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1990), p. 92.

3. Everett M. Rogers, Communications Technology (New York: Free Press, 1986), p. 30.

4. Michael Crichton, "Mediasaurus," Wired, September/October 1993, pp. 57-59. Crichton asserts, "The inverted pyramid story structure was a response to the newly-invented telegraph; reporters were not sure they could get the whole story in before the telegraph broke down, and so began to put the most important information first."

5. Jean Folkerts and Dwight L. Teeter, Jr., Voices of a Nation: A History of Mass Media in the United States, Second Edition (New York: Macmillan College Publishing Co., 1994), p. 205. 6. Ibid., p. 189.

7. Lloyd Wendt, Chicago Tribune: The Rise of a Great American Newspaper (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1979), p. 155. Also see Bernard A. Weisberger, Reporters for the Union (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1953), p. 293, who notes that most of the copy of Civil War correspondents was "cursed by the mid-century affectation of 'high-tone' style. The dragged a clanking chain of moralities after them like Marley's ghost.... Wherever foursquare statements could be replaced by euphemism, the substitution was made, apparently on the theory that a naked fact was an indecent affront to sensitive subscribers."

8. David T. Z. Mindich, "Edwin M. Stanton, the Inverted Pyramid, and Information Control," Journalism Monographs, Number 140 (August 1993), p. 2.

9. Ibid.

10 As a point of comparison, we also examined a paper representing the African American press, the weekly Baltimore Afro-American, from 1900-1910. In 1900, of the 19 stories examined, none had summary news leads. In 1905, of the 20 stories, three had summary leads (15 percent). In 1910, of the 15 stories, two had summary leads (13 percent). While the results are far from conclusive, it is interesting to note that, based on our cursory analysis, the Afro-American actually had a higher

11. San Francisco Chronicle, March 4, 1870, p. 3.

12. Boston Daily Globe, May 17, 1880, p. 1.

13 In 1900, the Tribune registered summary leads in only 2 percent of its stories (compared to 4.2 percent nationwide), growing to 8.5 percent (compared to 6.6 percent) by 1905. This suggests that, while the modern news story form got a toehold in turn of the century New York papers, particularly Pulitzer's World, it was the Chicago paper that really popularized and adapted to the form.

14. Samuel Eliot Morison, et al., The Growth of the American Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 55.

15. It is also arguable that there was increased public demand to read about the new breed of heroes, the inventors. Thomas Alva Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, John Augustus Roebling, George Eastman, George Westinghouse and Henry Ford were instrumental in building a new civilization based on machines and mass production and it is likely that the public was interested in knowing about these

"revolutionaries."
16. The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 27, 15th ed., 1995, p. 41.
17. Bernard A. Weisberger, Reporters for the Union (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), p. 22.
18. The New York Times, January 7, 1860.
19. Weisberger, p. 87.
20. The New York Times, August 29, 1860.
21. Thomas Snyder, ed., 120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1993), p. 11.
22. Foster Rhea Dulles, The United States Since 1865 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969), p. 104.
23. Snyder, p. 34.
24. Ibid., p. 11, 21.
25. Ibid., p. 75.
26. John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy, Higher Education in Transition: A History of American Colleges and Universities, 1636-1968 (New York: Harper & Row,
1968), p. 110.
27. Charles W. Eliot, Education Reform (New York: Century Co., 1898), p. 1. Cited in Brubacher and Rudy, p. 110.
28. Brubacher and Rudy, p. 115.
29. Sol Cohen, ed., Education of the United States: A Documentary History (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 939. Also note Earle D. Ross' "Contributions of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities to Higher Education," William W. Brickman and Stanley Lehrer, eds., A Century of Higher Education: Classical Citadel to Collegiate Colossus (New York: Center for the Advancement of Education, 1962), p. 95: "Like other basic institutions -- ecclesiastical, political, and industrial -- New World education, at all levels, has drawn freely and heavily upon the Old. The English classical traditions, the French Enlightenment, the German zeal for new knowledge -- however formal and meticulous, along with the periodic uprisings in behalf of the unprivileged masses -- were all reflected in a country of unprecedented opportunity. At the same time geographic and demographic contrasts resulted in profound and far-reaching alterations and adjustments. The emerging product was to be a uniquely American type of university system."
30. Thomas Knight, Charles Peirce (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1965), p. 26.
31. Probably no academic had greater impact than John R. Commons, professor of economics at Wisconsin, whose student and protégé, Edmund Witte, became executive director of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Committee on Economic Security, which drafted the Social Security Act of 1935 -- an omnium gatherum of old Progressive proposals. See Witte's The Development of the Social Security Act (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962).
32. Brubacher and Rudy, p. 166-167.
33. George E. Mowry, The California Progressives (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1963), pp. 87-88. Of the 47 organizers on whom Mowry could find biographical data, 17 were attorneys, 14 were journalists, 11 independent businessmen or realtors and three doctors. The newsmen were in positions of influence. "At least half of the journalists owned their own papers or worked for a family enterprise."

34. William Allen White, The Autobiography of William Allen White (New York: Macmillan, 1946), p. 139. One of Allen's freshman classmates was William E. Borah, later a United States Senator from Idaho and a Progressive stalwart. White's most influential teacher was James H. Canfield, who "taught me economics, sociology, political science and history" (p. 144). White would remain friendly with Canfield's daughter, best-selling novelist Dorothy Canfield, all his life.
35. See Arthur and Lila Weinberg, The Muckrakers (New York: Capricorn Books, 1964).
36. In Arena magazine, 1893: "The world has grown tired of fairies and angels, and asks for flesh and blood."
37. Mowry, p. 98.
38. James Marvin Lee, A History of American Journalism (New York: The Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1917), p. 318.
39. Alfred McClung Lee, The Daily Newspaper in America: The Evolution of a Social Instrument (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1937), p. 322.
40. Ibid., p. 215.
41. M.A. McRae, Forty Years in Newspaperdom (New York: Coward McCann, 1924), p. 35, cited in A.M. Lee, p. 215.
42. T.H Watkins, Righteous Pilgrim, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990), p. 57. Baker, Tarbell and Steffens, of course, were at the very heart of muckraking journalism.
43. For additional commentary on reporters-cum-novelists, see Shelley Fisher Fishkin, From Fact to Fiction: Journalism and Imaginative Writing in America (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) and Claudia F. Burgess, "Editors/Reporters Who Became Novelists," Media History Digest Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1983).
44. Theodore Dreiser, Newspaper Days (New York: Beekman Publishers Inc., 1974), p. 52. Dreiser writes of the conflict between factual reporting and "discursive" journalism that mimicked Dickens, even to the point of inventing details. This seems to be an important transformation in the history of the summary news lead. Dreiser's editors demand he "[w]rite a good strong introduction for, you know all the facts in the first paragraph, and then go on and tell your story." (p. 212) The lead story still had the novelistic breadth, but the lead paragraph had begun to emerge: "Accuracy, Accuracy, Accuracy! Who? What? Where? When? How? The Facts —The Color—The Facts! I knew what those signs meant: the proper order for beginning a newspaper story."(p. 476)
45. Neylan eventually became counsel to William Randolph Hearst, and like a number of one-time Progressives grew increasingly conservative as he aged. His friend Cullinan would remain a Progressive at heart, and play a part in launching the political career of the liberal California governor and later Chief Justice of the United States, Earl Warren.
46. Lincoln Steffens, The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens, Volume I (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), pp. 314-315.
47. Ibid., p. 171
48. Ibid., p. 112. Steffens prefers the sciences and the mysteries they can unlock: "When I knocked at the college gates, I was prepared for a college education in
some branches; my mind was hungry enough for the answers to some profound questions to have made

me work and develop myself, especially on lines which I know now had no ready answers, only more and ever more questions: science, metaphysics, etc."

49. Ibid., p. 115.

50. Ibid., p. 181.

51. Ray Stannard Baker, American Chronicle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), p. 93.

52. Charles J. Rosebault, When Dana Was The Sun (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1931) p. 290.

53. Ibid., p. 23.

54. Ibid., p. 26.

55. Steffens, p. 179, (emphasis added).

56. Ibid., pp. 312-13.

57. J.M. Lee, p. 374.

58. cf. Dreiser.

59. Ed Cray, "New versus Old Journalism," Lecture notes for Journalism 201, University of Southern California School of Journalism, Spring 1994.

60. Ibid., p. 351. Godkin opposed Dana on nearly every point. For a full discussion, see John Tebbel, The Compact History of the American Newspaper (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1969), pp. 190-3.

61. Charles E. Chapin, Charles E. Chapin's Story (New York: Beekman Publishers, 1974), p. 1xx.

62. Ibid., p. 291.

63. Joseph Pulitzer, "The College of Journalism," North American Review, No. DLXXX, May 1904, p. 642.

64. Merle Thorpe, "The Coming Newspaper," in The Coming Newspaper, ed. Merle Thorpe (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1915), p. 23.

65. Ibid., pp. 23-24.66. Ibid., pp. 25-26.67. White, p. 459.68. H.F. Harrington, Chats on Feature Writing (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925), p. 11.