An Introduction to the Early History of Newspaper Advertising

M.C. Barrès-Baker, Brent Museum

Advertisement in the *Kilburn Times*, 28th May 1870. This is one of the earliest advertisements to appear in a local paper in what is now the London Borough of Brent.
“The man who first took advantage of the general curiosity that was excited by a siege or battle to betray the readers of news into the knowledge of the shop, where the best puffs and powder were to be sold, was undoubtedly a man of great sagacity, and profound skill in the nature of man. But when he had once shown the way, it was easy to follow him” - Dr. Johnson, *The Idler* No. 40

“ADVERTISE UNTIL PEOPLE CALL YOU INSANE; then keep advertising”
– *Advertiser’s Gazette* (April 1872) q. in article on Knies
Today, traditional newspapers are in decline, faced with competition from television and the internet. Advertising revenue, especially from classified adverts, is plummeting. Swiss and Dutch papers have lost 50% of their classified advertising revenue to the internet. Some people even believe that newspapers will cease to exist, at least in the developed world. Philip Meyer, in his book *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age* (University of Missouri Press, 2004), calculates, not entirely seriously, that, if current trends continue, the last U.S. paper will close in early 2043.¹

Newspapers existed prior to printing.² The Romans had acta, daily handwritten sheets that were posted up in the forum, and probably copied and sold. The Chinese had tipao, which were circulated among officials during the Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.-C.E. 221). By the end of the T’ang dynasty (C.E. 906), these newsheets were being printed. In late medieval and early modern Western Europe handwritten nouvelles à la main were distributed by correspondents called nouvellistes to subscribers, usually aristocrats or businessmen. In Venice, handwritten weekly newsheets, known as gazzette³, existed as early as 1566.

The first printed news story may have been an account of a tournament, printed in Italy c. 1470. The first known English printed newsletter, *Requests of the Devonshyre and Cornyshe rebelles*, was published in 1549.⁴ Neither of these was in any sense a newspaper, however, as they were both one off publications reporting a specific event.

The first European printed periodical appeared in Cologne in 1588. It was published twice a year, to coincide with the dates of the Frankfurt book fair. In 1594 a second biannual paper was published, again in Cologne. Called *Mercurius Gallobelgicus*, it was written in Latin and read as far afield as England.⁵


³ The name was derived from the gazzetta, a Venetian coin.


⁵ Stephens - *A History of News* pp. 150-1. The earlier paper was published by Michael von Aitzing. *Mercurius Gallobelgicus* would last for 40 years.
The history of English newspapers can be traced back to the corantos of the
1620s. Based on German and Dutch models dating back to the first decade of
the seventeenth century (some of which were widely read in England),
corantos provided a flowing ‘current’ of news (hence their name), rather than
being stand-alone publications. The earliest surviving English language
coranto was published in Amsterdam on 2nd December 1620 under the title *The
new tidings out of Italie are not yet com.* Much of it was concerned with the
recent Battle of the White Mountain outside Prague (8th November 1620),
which had forced King James I’s daughter Elizabeth of Bohemia into exile.
Protestant readers’ interest in the fate of their co-religionists on the Continent
during the Thirty Years’ War was to play an important part in the success of
early English corantos, though it also created a new market for regular
handwritten reports by scriveners.

The first domestic English coranto was published in 1621 by Thomas Archer of
Popes-head Alley, Cornhill. English corantos may have been the result of
James I’s attempts to stop imports from Holland. A translation of a Dutch
publication, it has not survived.

In September 1621 Archer was imprisoned for publishing without a licence.
However, by then someone called N.B. (probably Nathaniel Butter, though
possibly Nicholas Bourne) had obtained a licence to print translations. A copy
of the 24th September 1621 edition of his publication *Corante, or, News from
Italy, Germany, Hungarie, Spaine and France* survives. It is the earliest
surviving English periodical.

In 1622 Butter produced a new weekly as part of a syndicate that included both
Nicholas Bourne and Thomas Archer. This publication adopted the quarto
book size of between eight and 24 pages, as opposed to a large single folio
sheet. This ‘newsbook’ format would remain standard until 1665. Numerous

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6 For two useful timelines see *The Newspaper Society’s* page cited in footnote 3 above and *The British

7 It is believed that the first newspaper appeared in Strassburg (modern Strasbourg) in 1605. The first
extant copy of this paper, called the *Relation*, dates from 1609. Alternatively, it has been claimed that
the first European newspaper appeared in Hungary as early as 1485. See the *BDZV* (The Federal
Association of German Newspaper Publishers) website’s article *400 Jahre Zeitung - 1605 erschien in
Straßburg erstmals die „Relation“* "http://www.bdzv.de/pressemitteilungen+M5a3957bb4a1.html" and
*A Short Chronology of Communication* on the *Colorado State University* website
"http://lamar.colostate.edu/~hallahan/hchron.htm". [compare this with Frank p. 2 and check details]

8 According to the *Dictionary of National Biography* (available online to subscribers at
"http://www.oxforddnb.com"), we do not know when Butter was born. His father, a London stationer,
died c. 1589. Butter died in 1664.
other newsbooks followed, including Butter and Bourne’s *The Swedish Intelligencer* (1632), which clearly catered to an audience wishing to read about Protestant successes in the Thirty Years’ War. Some of these began to develop an editorial voice, and/or used headlines and woodcut illustrations to attract readers. By 1626 papers were well known enough for playwright Ben Johnson (1572-1637) to attack “news-mongering” in his play *The Staple of News*.

In an attempt not to alienate the authorities all these publications reported only foreign news, not domestic events, but even so they were eventually banned.\(^9\)

The abolition the Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission in 1641 led to a period of total press freedom. The same year’s *Diurnall Occurrences in Parliament* marks the first reporting of Parliament. Then late November ‘41 saw the appearance of the first weekly publishing English home news, *The Heads of Several Proceedings In This Present Parliament*. Though Parliament made an attempt at censorship in March 1642, journalism took off with a vengeance.\(^10\)

Once the Civil War had broken out the number of newsbooks increased significantly, though the concentration on domestic news seriously harmed Nathaniel Butter, who left journalism in 1642. At least 350 publications would appear between 1642 and 1665.\(^11\) Some reported single events, like this one on the April 1643 siege of Reading. Others were weekly publications, with names like *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, *The Parliament Scout*, *Mercurius Civicus* or *Mercurius Aulicus*. This last, ‘*The Court Mercury*’, was the official Royalist newssheet, published in Oxford by the acerbic John Birkenhead (1617-1679), and apparently secretly reprinted in London.

From June 1643 London newsheets had to be licensed, but this did little to reduce their numbers. They were only suppressed in October 1649,\(^12\) and again

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\(^9\) A Star Chamber decree of 1586 had subjected printing to state control. A full ban operated from October 1632 to 1638, when Butter and Bourne were given a monopoly, albeit now subject to a new tougher Star Chamber decree of 1637 (see Haig pp. 16, 24, 29, Dahl p. 280 and Frank pp. 6, 14-15).

\(^10\) Frank pp. 21-2.


\(^12\) In 1647 New Model Army commander Sir Thomas Fairfax had pointed out “the mischiefs that will happen by the poisonous writings of evil men sent abroad daily to abuse and deceive the people”, and
in 1655. A free press would not return in law until 1695, though in practice the licensing laws lapsed in 1679.

From 1655 to the fall of the Commonwealth only the official publication, *Mercurius Politicus* (which had first appeared on 13th June 1650, and came out on Thursdays), and a second official periodical, the *Publick Intelligencer* (which came out on Mondays), were available. Both were published by Marchmont Needham (1620-1678). It was also in this period that the earliest newspaper advertising developed.

Written advertising has existed pretty much as long as writing. In Thebes in Ancient Egypt Hapu the weaver killed two birds with one stone when advertising for a runaway slave:

“... For his return to the shop of Hapu the Weaver, where the best cloth is woven to your desires, a whole gold coin is offered....”

The first printed advertisement in England, and perhaps the world, was a handbill announcing a prayer book, printed in 1472. This was, however, not a newspaper advertisement. Neither, one suspects, was the ad quoted by advertising historian Henry Sampson in 1874 as “the oldest newspaper paragraph approaching to an advertisement”. This publicised a book describing an unknown plant, written by “Magister Cunan” and printed by Matthew Welack in Wittenberg. The advertisement appeared in a German pamphlet of 1591, which Sampson surmises was also printed by Welack. It seems, however, pretty clear that the pamphlet was not a periodical, since it described the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the assassination of Henri III of France, events that had happened two to three years before.

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13 Born in Burford, Oxfordshire, and educated at All Souls’ College, Oxford, Needham initially supported Parliament in the Civil Wars. He went over to the King in 1647, nicknaming Cromwell “Nose Almighty”, but returned to the Commonwealth side in 1650. Like Renaudot, Needham practised medicine and, in *Medela Medicinæ, a Plea for the Free Profession and a Renovation of the Art of Physick* (1665), argued that student doctors should study chemistry as well as anatomy (D.N.B.)


Sampson’s second candidate for the first newspaper to carry an advertisement is the French _Journal Général des Affiches_, better known as _Les Petites Affiches_. This was founded in October 1612 and, amazingly, still exists. In the 1870s this legal periodical was “the journal of the domestic wants of France … especially the medium for announcing any public or private sales of property”. Sampson assumes that it published advertisements from the start.\(^\text{16}\)

Most historians believe that the first advertisement in a periodical appeared in England, in Nathaniel Butter’s weekly newsbook for 16\(^\text{th}\) September 1624, though Butter had already in a sense advertised back numbers in August 1622 and a supplement in 1623. The 1624 advertisement read

“In the last printed News of September 11, I told you there could be no perfect description of the siege of Breda … since this, is come ouer a perfect description of the same, the substance whereof is formerly set downe in this Relation. I doe propose likewise to cut the Map, wherein you may with the eye behold the siege, in a manner, as lively as if you were an eye-witness: you may not expect this Map this six dayes.”\(^\text{17}\)

A few months later, on 1\(^\text{st}\) February 1625, Archer’s _Mercurius Britannicus_ carried an advertisement the following publication:

“An excellent discourse concerning the match between our most Gracious and Mightie Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, and the Lady Henrietta Maria, daughter of Henry the Fourth, late King of France … with a lively picture of the Prince and Lady cut in Bronze”.\(^\text{18}\)

The 1624 advert was an important development, though it was essentially self-publicity rather than the selling of space to an independent advertiser. This may also be true of the 1625 advert. In any case, both advertisements are for reading matter. The first newspaper advertisement outside the printing trade that I can find reference to appeared on 21\(^\text{st}\) November 1626 in a Dutch periodical. Printed in a different font from the news, it publicised a sale of cargoes from captured ships, notably sugar, ivory, pepper, tobacco and logwood. In July 1633 another Dutch paper, _Courante uyt Italien en de_
Duytschland, gave notice of animals from India that were on show “at the Old Glass house, for the benefit of the poor”. It is not however clear whether this was a payed for advert or, like a film review on the B.B.C., essentially a news item. The same is true of a reference, in 1634, to the sale by auction of the late Mr. Bernardus Paludanus’ “world famed museum”. 19

The wider possibilities of combining newspapers and advertising would be explored in France a few years later. 20 In 1628 or 1630 the medical doctor and philanthropist Théophraste Renaudot (c. 1586-1653) 21 set up the bureau d’adresse in Paris, at the Maison du Grand Coq in the rue de Calandre near the Pont Saint-Michel. 22 He had been made the King’s physician and Commissaire Général des Pauvres du Royaume in 1612, 23 and had had permission to create an “intelligence office” since 1617.

The bureau d’adresse was a sort of clearing office intended to help the unemployed find work, but it was also a learned academy, a chemical laboratory and a printing house. It also quickly became a place where people could buy and sell goods, a sort of Louis XIII-era version of eBay. Furthermore, from 27th March 1637, Renaudot was allowed to operate a charitable pawnshop, a mont de pieté modelled on establishments he had seen in Italy around 1606. 24 In the words of Stephen Auerbach, in his Louisiana

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19 Sampson pp. 64-5. The animals were “an elephant, a tiger and an Indian stag”.

20 For the early history of French newspapers read Pierre Albert’s Les Débuts de la Presse en France on the IFLANET (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) website <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla63/63albp.htm>. There is an article on La réclame au XVIIe siècle in La France Pittoresque numéro 2 (Avril/Mai/Juin 2002), but I have not seen it.


22 The only book entirely devoted to this establishment I can find mention of is Michel Emery - La Maison du Coq (1885). The rue de Calandre no longer exists, but the bureau is commemorated by a plaque on the quai du Marché Neuf.


24 See the Théophraste Renaudot entry in the Catholic Encyclopedia on the New Advent website <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12770a.html>. These Italian pawnshops were called monti di pietà.
State University doctoral thesis “Encourager le Commerce et Rêpandre les Lumières:” The Press, the Provinces and the Origins of the Revolution in France: 1750-1789, “people from around Paris brought in all manner of goods to the Bureau in hopes of finding buyers … people posted notices for jewelry, utensils, watches, and even land and royal offices”. Renaudot published a table listing things and services that could be obtained via the bureau in alphabetical order. It includes animals like “Dogues, & autres Chiens, Chatz d’Espagne, Singes, etc.”, bouquets of flowers, coaches, gardeners, undertakers, a “Gazette de nouvelles etrangeres”, rare books and manuscripts, “modes nouvelles”, windmills, watermills and “vins excellentz”.

When Renaudot began publishing the newspaper La Gazette in 1631, he linked the new paper to the address bureau by printing classified advertisements in La Feuille du Bureau d’Adresse (1633-51), one of La Gazette’s supplements.

An idea of the sort of goods advertised in the Feuille can be gained by looking at the September 1633 issue, which is quoted in Solomon’s Public Welfare, Science and Propaganda in Seventeenth Century France. Seigneurial lands (60,000 livres), a Paris townhouse near the old rue du Temple (30,000 livres), an atlas (48 livres), a “new coat which is still not finished, scarlet with silver braid, lined with satin” (18 écus) and a “young dromedary camel” (at a reasonable, but undisclosed, price) are all for sale, while “someone is looking for a travelling companion to go to Italy in two weeks”.


26 Solomon pp. 227-32. The “gazette” referred to may be a foreign publication, and not Renaudot’s 1631 Gazette (see below), which included French news. A dogue was larger than a chien and often used for hunting. The French mastiff, for example, is officially known as the Dogue de Bordeaux. Males can weigh up to 68kg. A chat d’espagne was probably a tortoiseshell (see the felinomania website <http://www.felinomania.com/faq.htm#faq3>).

27 Renaudot, born a Huguenot, seems to have converted to Catholicism in 1631 in order to obtain permission to publish the Gazette. See the Musée Virtuel du Protestantisme Français <http://www.museeeprotestant.org/Pages/Notices.php?noticeid=763&scatid=136&lev=1&cim=0>.

28 Also referred to as Feuilles du Bureau des Adresses, while Jean-Claude Raymond writes of “l’Inventaire du bureau d’adresse, véritable journal de petites annonces portant sur les emplois, les locations immobilières, la préparation de voyages, la liste des grands du royaume” <http://jcraymond.free.fr/Celebrites/R/Renaudot/RenaudotPresse.php>. The Feuille was issued monthly. Although Renaudot was a philanthropist, he does not seem to have had any qualms about absorbing Vendosme and Martin’s Nouvelles de divers endroits, a rival paper.

29 Solomon p. 54.
After Renaudot’s patrons Richelieu and Louis XIII died in 1642-3, the Paris medical faculty, which had developed a hatred of Renaudot, managed to get the **bureau d’adresse** closed down.\(^{30}\) Renaudot (and later his family) kept the monopoly on newspaper publishing, however, and *La Gazette* survived.

Ironically, since the *Gazette* was now no longer accompanied by an advertising supplement, its monopoly meant that newspaper advertising in France fell well behind developments in Germany and the English-speaking world during the first half of the eighteenth century. An attempt by Nicolas de Blegny (1652-1722) to set up another address bureau in 1691, accompanied by a publication called *Le livre commode des adresses de Paris pour 1692*, met with little success.\(^{31}\) Amongst other things the *livre commode* advertised jewellers like “Bel, place du College Mazarini, Blanque, rue Dauphine et les frères Sehut, même rue”.\(^{32}\) It does not appear to have been a periodical, however.

Renaudot’s *Gazette* was to have an important influence on the creation of the French provincial press a century later, even though the practice of printing it in provincial cities as well as Paris initially retarded the emergence of provincial newspapers.

There were attempts to set up address bureaux similar to Renaudot’s in a number of countries. As we shall see, in Austria, Germany and Denmark these efforts eventually met with success.\(^{33}\) There was also an attempt in England

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\(^{30}\) The **bureau** was closed by a decree of the prévôt of Paris (the King’s representative in Paris, based in the Châtelet) dated 9th December 1643. The dean and faculty of medicine of the University of Paris raided the Maison du Grand Coq two weeks later, and it closed completely in 1644, though it was revived briefly in 1647 (see Solomon p. 217 and W. Boyd Rayward - *Four Lives in Search of a Story: or the Republic of Letters and Information Infrastructure on the eve of modernity*, on the Danmarks Biblioteksskole website <www.db.dk/be/BDB/Bibliotek%20og%20Samfund/Four%20Lives%20in%20Search%20of%20a%20Story.doc>). Rayward’s paper is apparently unfinished, but it contains much interesting information on both Renaudot and Samuel Hartlib, who, as we shall see, attempted to set up an address bureau in England. The Paris medics hated Renaudot for a variety of reasons. For one thing, he had established a free clinic and was planning to open a hospital in direct competition with the faculty. Furthermore, as a graduate of Montpellier University he was sympathetic to the more practical aspects of the new Paracelsian science, such as the use of antimony internally, a practice that the Galenists of Paris wrongfully thought to be criminally unprofessional. For more on Paracelsians and Galenists, read Allen Debus’ article *Chemistry and the Universities in the Seventeenth Century* in the Brazilian journal *Estudos Avançados* 4(10), available on the Scientific Electronic Library Online website <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/ea/v4n10/v4n10a09.pdf>, especially pp. 185-8.

\(^{31}\) Solomon p. 217. Like Renaudot, de Blegny was a medic (see *Histoire de la Psychiatrie En France* website <http://psychiatrie.histoire.free.fr/pers/bio/blegny.htm>). He published under the pseudonym of Abraham du Pradel. The *livre commode* was reprinted in 1878 and 1973.


\(^{33}\) For details of address bureaux outside France read Anton Tantner’s project description *Frühneuzeitliche Adressbüros Eine Vorgeschichte der Internet-Suchmaschine* (2005) <http://adressbueros.tantner.net/projekt.html>.
when, around 1646, Samuel Hartlib\(^{34}\) (c. 1600-1662), and his friends began discussing setting up a body they called the Office of Publick Address.

Hartlib was a half-English, Cambridge-educated refugee from the Thirty Years’ War. He came from Elbing\(^{35}\) in Polish Prussia and, like Renaudot, was a philanthropist. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography* one of his many activities in England was running “a general news agency”\(^{36}\). Hartlib was interested in Renaudot’s bureau and wrote to friends in Paris asking them about it. Two printed documents about Renaudot’s bureau were found among Hartlib’s papers.\(^{37}\)

Both an educational establishment and a welfare office, Hartlib’s Office of Publick Address would, unlike Renaudot’s, have been divided into two parts. Hartlib wanted the Office of Publick Address for Communications, the scholarly part to be based in Oxford. It was this aspect of the offices that he was most interested in. The Office of Address for Accommodations, the part dealing with everyday matters, interested Hartlib less.\(^{38}\) It would have in fact been a series of offices in different cities, though in the words of Hartlib’s friend, the Scottish divine John Dury (1596-1680), “no doubt London will bee the most Centrall place”.\(^{39}\)

Each accommodation office would have provided the public with information under four headings, “necessties or … charity” (helping the poor), “usefulness

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\(^{35}\) \Now Elbląg in north-western Poland.\) Hartlib’s father was a Protestant Polish merchant (“the K[ing] of Poland his merchant”, according to Hartlib (Turnbull p. 1)), his mother the daughter of an English merchant from Danzig.

\(^{36}\) *D.N.B.*

\(^{37}\) Webster p. 44.

\(^{38}\) In fact, Hartlib felt that the commercial aspects of the Office for Accommodations, without the higher values of the Office of Communications, “are not at all worth the looking after, and are rather a snare and encumbrance unto a Christian Soule” (quoted in Webster p. 47).

\(^{39}\) John Dury - *Considerations Tending to the Happy Accomplishment of Englands Reformation* (1647) p. 53, quoted in Webster p. 136. Dury had been minister to the English Company of Merchants at Elbing from 1625-30 and had got to know Hartlib there (Turnbull p. 8).
of profit” (covering “trade, commerce and bargains for profit”), “performance or … duties” (covering “all actions which proceed from all relations of persons to each other in all estates and conditions of life”) and “delights and honour” (covering “ingenuities and matters unto the delight of the mind in all virtues and rare objects”). In the words of one writer, “what Hartlib was describing … was an agency that combined the functions located today in citizen's advice bureaus or neighbourhood information centres, labour exchanges, tourist information offices, and also in the classified advertising of the kind found in newspapers”.

The Office of Accommodations would make considerable use of printed matter to disseminate information. According to Dury it would keep:

“Registers of all Commodities, Persons, Employments, Offices, Charges and Things which are Actually in being, and Usefully considerable in the Common-wealth, and which may be a matter of information to any for Addresse to that which hee in any kinde shall enquire after. Of these Inventaries and Registers some should be Perpetuall standing and the same; … but some others Registers and Bookes must bee kept of Changeable Matters also, and wherin daily Occurrences of New Accommodations and Communications to be imparted from one Man to another, are to bee recorded and kept for Information. These Occasionall Registers (for so they should bee called) should be of Two Sorts; the One Common and open to all to be lookt upon, containing the Summary Intimation of that whereof Information is to be given, to such as shall desire it. The other secret, and reserved for more speciall Use, containing the particular point of that Addresse, which is to bee given to such as stand in need to be informed of it”.

We can see that some of this printed matter was to be highly ephemeral, apparently being updated every day. On the other hand, unlike Renaudot’s *bureau d’adresse*, there does not seem to have been any intention to use a newspaper supplement to disseminate the information. However, Hartlib and Dury’s idea of using two registers, “the One Common and open to all to be lookt upon, containing the Summary” information, and “the other secret, and reserved for more speciall Use”, for “such as stand in need to be informed of it”, is an interesting development, providing advertisers with the same sort of security and anonymity that would later be offered by newspaper and magazine box numbers.

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40 W. Boyd Rayward - *Four Lives in Search of a Story: or the Republic of Letters and Information Infrastructure on the eve of modernity*. The description of the organisation of the Office of Publick Addresse for Accommodations preceding the quotation also comes from Rayward.

41 John Dury - *Considerations Tending to the Happy Accomplishment of Englands Reformation* (1647) pp. 43-4, quoted in Webster p. 130.
The proposed Office for Accommodations aroused more public interest than the Office for Communications. Oliver Cromwell reportedly looked favourably on Hartlib’s plans, and various people considered imitating the accommodation office, but in the end, although Hartlib published a pamphlet called *A further Discoverie of the Office of Publick Addresse for Accommodations* in 1648, the scheme came to nothing.

In August 1649 Henry Walker’s paper *Perfect Occurrences* advertised that Walker was going to set up an “office of Entries” in London. This sounds like a Renaudot-style scheme. It does not appear to have progressed beyond the advertisement, however.  

In 1650, however, Hartlib’s friend the London merchant Henry Robinson (c. 1605-73) opened a short-lived Office of Addresses and Encounters in Threadneedle Street, describing it in a pamphlet of the same name published that year.  

Although Hartlib and Robinson never managed to set up a successful address bureau, the post-1641 freedom of the press meant that newspaper advertising took off in Commonwealth and Protectorate London. Notices relating to lost animals were published, as well as adverts for patent medicines. One of the earliest of the former (sometimes quoted as the first newspaper advertisement) is an advert for the recovery of stolen horses that appeared in *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* in 1647. Interestingly, the editor was in need of funds at the time he ran the ad. Advertisements for literature were also common. In January 1652 *Mercurius Politicus* advertised “IRENODIA GRATULATORIA, an Heroick Poem ; being a congratulatory panegyrick for my Lord General’s late return, summing up his successes in an exquisite manner”. Later *Politicus* would advertise Izaak Walton’s *Compleat Angler* (published in 1653) and works by John Milton.

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42 Frank p. 182. It is interesting to note that Walker’s office was intended to replace bill posting, not compete with newspaper advertising.

43 The full title of the pamphlet was *The Office of Addresses and Encounters where all People of each rancke and quality may receive Direction and Advice for the most cheap and speedy way of attaining whatsoever they can lawfully desire ; or the only course for poor People to get speedy Employment and to keep others from approaching Poverty for want of Employment ; to the multiplying of Trade. &c.* According to the bookseller George Thomason (1602-1666), whose collection of pamphlets is now in the British Library, it was published on 29th September 1650. Robinson also wrote defending liberty of conscience and a free press and appears to have been involved in the post office. At the Restoration he claimed to have increased post office revenue from £3,000 to £30,000 per annum (*D.N.B.*)

44 Hartlib later attempted to set up a college in Dublin (1657-8). This also met with failure.

45 See Turner p. 16 for advertisements in general and Frank p. 124 for the stolen horses. The author of *The English Press* in *Continental Monthly* (February, 1864) reduces the number of horses by one and says the advert appeared in *The Impartial Intelligencer*, a short-lived paper that Frank shows only appeared in 1653. Sampson (p. 97) calls the stolen horses ad “what is considered be many to be the first bona fide and open advertisement”, but dates it to late 1650, appearing in *Several Proceedings of*
An interesting example of an advertisement for a quack medicine is mentioned by the physician Thomas Willis (1625-75) in his book *De Febris* (1659). In April 1643 a disastrous typhus epidemic struck the Parliamentarian and Royalist armies operating in the Thames Valley. Willis, then a student at Christ Church College, Oxford, observed the progress of the disease and noted the fad for “costly powders” claiming to provide a cure. One such, he says, was a “powder of ashy colour which a certain Aulicus had widely advertised in this city”. It seems highly likely that this is a reference to advertising by the Royalist propaganda paper *Mercurius Aulicus*, though I have to admit that I have not come across such an advert in Varley’s edition of *Mercurius Aulicus*.46

In June 1644 Nicholas Bourne’s *Le Mercure Anglois*, a French-language paper reporting English news, was advertised on a handbill given out on the streets of London. Though not directly relevant to our subject of advertising in newspapers, this was “probably the first example of a newspaper promoting itself by external advertisement”.47

According to advertising historian E.S. Turner, “the range of advertisements continued to widen” in the 1650s.48 In 1652 *The Faithfull Scout* published the first illustrated advertisement in an English paper, showing two lost jewels. By 1653 *The Perfect Diurnall* published some six adverts per issue, mostly mentioning new books, patent medicines and lost items, charging 1/- for each advert. In total they took up an average of half a page out of 16 pages in each issue. Another paper published the first advertisement for a cookery book. There were even parodies of adverts, for example a fake ad for a lost maidenhead in *Mercurius Democritus*, a humorous periodical briefly known as *Parliament*. H2M White Papers - A Little Bit of Advertising History Can’t Hurt You gives the date 1672 for this advertisement and, again, a different number of horses. One suspects that more than one advert is being considered here. In fact Sampson quotes two within a week of each other, showing how common stolen horse advertisements were. The ad for *Irenodia Gratulatoria* is quoted in Sampson p. 66.


47 Frank p. 70. The advert was in English, and since the *Mercure* was primarily intended for export it seems rather odd.

48 Turner p. 16.
Interestingly, the English word “advertising” was coined in 1655. Two years later, in 1657, there was an attempt to set up eight address offices in London. A 16-page advertising periodical called *The Publick Adviser* (sometimes referred to as *The Publick Advertiser*) publicised their services. The scheme probably involved Marchmont Needham, Cromwell’s newspaper monopolist.

*The Publick Adviser* “consisted almost entirely of advertisements” and arranged the ads according to type. It charged advertisers a lot more than Needham’s conventional newspapers, possibly so as not to compete with them. Small ads were split into eight sections, including Shipping, Stage Coaches, and Lost and Stolen. Houses were also advertised, the price of the advertisement depending on the value of the house. It cost £1 to advertise a property valued at £240. *The Publick Adviser* is often quoted as making the first mention of chocolate in England, in June 1657:

> “in Bishopsgate Street, in Queen’s Head Alley, at a Frenchman's house, is an excellent West India drink called chocolate to be sold, where you may have it ready at any time, and also unmade, at reasonable rates.”

The eight address offices were not a success and several closed. Oliver Williams set up a rival address office, and even published *The Weekly Information From The Office Of Intelligence* for one week in July 1657 to compete with *The Publick Adviser*. Williams’ scheme doesn’t seem to have taken off either.

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49 Frank pp. 219, 227, 230, 237, 239, 243. In 1649 a paper called *A Perfect Diurnall* had had more advertisements in it than any other paper, earning 2/- to 3/- a week from ads. This was however a different publication to *The Perfect Diurnall* (Frank pp. 172, 189). The editor of the humorous papers, John Crouch, also published real adverts. Another comic paper, *The Merrie Mercury*, appeared in 1700.

50 This date is given on the *ThinkQuest New York City* website’s Advertising from 1455-1956.


53 Frank p. 258. In 1660 Williams made an unsuccessful attempt to revive Needham’s *Politicus* and *Publick Intelligence*, which had folded, as vehicles for advertising rather than news. He was opposed by Henry Muddiman, a pro-Restoration journalist who had supplanted Needham, and his papers were closed down (Frank p. 265).
The first known advertisement for tea appeared in Needham’s *Mercurius Politicus* on 30th September 1658:

“THAT Excellent, and by all Physicians, approved China drink, called by the Chineans Tcha, by other nations Tay alias Tee, is sold at the Sultaness Head Cophee-House, in Sweeting’s Rents, by the Royal Exchange, London”.

More importantly for some of us, Needham also printed the first advertisement for beer. The majority of the ads in Needham’s papers, however, were for books, followed by medicines, though all sorts of things were advertised, including fire extinguishers.

The failure of *The Publick Adviser* and its attendant information offices cannot have mattered too much to Needham. He was making enough from adverts in his two conventional newspapers, *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer*, having raised the price of an ad from 6d or 1/- to 2/6d (as a monopolist, he did not need to worry about being undercut). By this time the two papers were often publishing the same adverts, and indeed the same news.  

According to Sampson, “most of the notices at this period related to runaway apprentices and black boys, fairs and cockfights, burglaries and highway robberies, stolen horses, lost dogs, swords and scent-bottles, and the departure of coaches…” He gives an example of an advert relating to a “lost” boy, who of course in all probability had run away:

“A Negro-boy, about nine years of age in a gray Searge suit, his hair cut close to his head, was lost on Tuesday last, *August* 9, at night, in St Nicholas Lane, London”.

Two years later, in 1660, the same paper carried an advertisement for “Most Excellent and Approved DENTIFRICE to scour and cleanse the Teeth, making them white as Ivory”. A luxury product, it cost 12d a sachet, rather more than a day’s pay for an agricultural labourer.

State control of the press continued after the Restoration. An act “for preventing the frequent abuses in printing seditious, treasonable, and unlicensed books and pamphlets, and for regulating of printing and printing

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55 Sampson pp. 70, 72.

56 Turner pp. 16, 18. The dentifrice advert comes from *Mercurius Publicus* for 20th December 1660. Frank p. 267 gives a slightly different wording from May 1660.
presses” was passed in 1662. In 1663 Charles II appointed Roger l’Estrange (1616-1704) as chief licenser and surveyor of the press (replacing Birkenhead, the former editor of *Mercurius Aulicus*). L’Estrange is quoted as saying that newsbooks made “the multitude too familiar with the actions and counsels of their superiors”, though he also thought “a gazette is none of the worst ways of address to the genius and humour of the common people” and, indeed, published two papers himself, both of which carried advertisements. Indeed Charles II’s appointment of L’Estrange as Surveyor of the Imprimery and Printing Presses specifically mentioned “the sole privilege of writing, printing, and publishing all narratives, advertisements, mercuries, &c.”

One of L’Estrange’s papers, *The Public Intelligencer*, became *The Oxford Gazette* in 1665, when the court moved to Oxford to avoid the plague. In February 1666 the *Oxford Gazette* became the *London Gazette* in February 1666. It is the world's oldest surviving periodical, as *La Gazette de France* ceased publication during the First World War. *The London Gazette* occasionally carried adverts, though entire issues could appear without any.

After the Great Fire of London in 1666, burnt-out businesses advertised their new address in the newsbooks, though not in as large numbers as might have been expected, according to Victorian advertising historian Henry Sampson. That the advantages of advertising were not yet fully recognised may also be indicated by the fact that when L’Estrange created *The Mercury, or Advertisements concerning Trade*, in 1668, it does not seem to have been a great success, closing after a few issues. By 1673, however, a free advertising paper, *The City Mercury*, was considered viable. Every Monday over 1,000 copies were given away “to all the Booksellers, shops and inns, and most of the principal coffee-houses in London and Westminster”, as well as being sent to other cities. The publishers felt that “this way of publishing is much more advantageous than giving away Bills in the street”. Most bills were thrown away unread, whereas they claimed that their 1,000 copies were seen by 20,000 people. This paper, again, however, did not last that long, though a paper with

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57 See *The English Press* in *Continental Monthly* (February, 1864). The Licensing Act expired in 1679, but was then renewed for seven years in 1685 [check date Monmouth invSION]. It expired again in 1692, and after being renewed for a year was abandoned in 1693.

58 There is a relatively lengthy account of L’Estrange in the *D.N.B.*

59 Turner p. 19, *Wikipedia* entry on Roger l’Estrange <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_L%E2%80%99Estrange> and *The English Press* in *Continental Monthly* (February, 1864), Sampson p. 76. L’Estrange’s other paper was called *The News*. Sampson believes that L’Estrange was “the first man who endeavoured to systematically convince the world of the vast uses” that advertising could be put to.

60 The *London Gazette*’s website is <http://www.gazettes-online.co.uk/>. L’Estrange’ Gazette rejected the quarto newsbook format.

61 *La Gazette* became *La Gazette de France* in 1762.
the same name appears again in November 1675. This seems to have had some of the trappings of an address office, since

“at the Office, which is to be kept for the Advertisements, any Person shall be informed (without any Fee) where any Stage-coach stands, where any common Carrier lies, that comes to any Inn within the Bills of Mortality”.

These newsbooks were about to get a new name. The English word ‘newspaper’ (actually “newes paper”) first appears in September 1670.

In 1681 John Houghton (d. 1705), who at least at the end of his life was an apothecary and dealer in coffee, chocolate and tea, launched A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade. According to E.S. Turner this was “a paper published primarily for advertisements”, although it also ran articles for the improvement of farming and trade, pointing out for example that sheep eat turnips. Houghton seems to have been one of the first to see possibilities in the jobs market, printing advertisements such as this: “I want a complete young man that will wear a livery, to wait on a very valuable gentleman”. He also advertised for new adverts, for example asking readers whether “advertisements of schools, or houses and lodgings about London may be useful”. They proved to be so. Houghton even seems to have realised that advertising was a form of news, telling advertisers “I desire all booksellers to send me no new titles to old books”.

Another market was spotted by whoever published the first sporting paper, The Jockey’s Intelligencer, or Weekly Advertisements of Horses and Second-hand Coaches to be Bought or Sold, which first appeared in 1683. By 1685 advertisements could cost up to 2d a line.

By this time also, adverts were well known enough to be used for satirical purposes. In 1681 a publication called Heraclitus Ridens, which clearly rejected the rumours of a ‘Popish Plot’, contained a series of parody advertisements, one of which publicised

“A MOST ingenious monkey, who can both write, read, and speak as good sense as his master, nursed in the kitchen of the late Commonwealth, and when

62 Sampson p. 77-80.
63 Stephens - A History of News p. 150.
64 Turner pp. 21-3, Sampson pp. 83-93 and D.N.B. The D.N.B. suggests that A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade started in 1681 rather than 1682, as stated by Turner, whose source is Sampson, writing in 1874. The publication folded in 1683, though Samson, who is not very reliable as to dates, says it reappeared in 1692.
they broke up housekeeping entertained by Nol Protector, may be seen do all his old tricks over again, for pence apiece, every Wednesday, at his new master’s, Ben. Harris, in Cornhill”. 66

Despite all the activity in the mid-seventeenth century, many trace the appearance of true newspapers to the time of William of Orange, after the disappearance of the Licensing Act in 1693. It looks likely that the first provincial paper was either The Worcester Postman (which claims to be related to a newsheet founded in 1690, and which still exists, as Berrow’s Worcester Journal), The Stamford Mercury (1695) or The Norwich Post (c. 1701). There were also some evolutionary dead ends. For example, The Flying Post (c. 1695), which was half printed newspaper and half blank sheet, so that “any gentleman” might “write his own private business, or the material news of the day” before posting it to a provincial friend. 68 Like the postcard beermats one finds in some pubs today, it is not surprising that this gimmick did not change people’s reading and/or writing habits.

The first regular English daily newspaper, the Daily Courant, was launched in 1702. 69 Two years later, on 1st May 1704, in Boston, Massachusetts, the new Boston Newsletter published an advertisement seeking a buyer for an estate in Oyster Bay, Long Island. This may have been the first advertisement in an American paper, though some U.S. websites give the impression that it was the first newspaper advertisement in history. 70

In fact, advertising was spreading everywhere. Despite the closure of Renaudot’s bureau d’adresse, and the failures of Hartlib, Robinson, Williams and the Publick Adviser scheme, numerous address bureaux existed in Austria, Germany and Denmark by the mid-eighteenth century. These either published advertising periodicals in conjunction with existing papers, or produced their own periodical. The earliest of these Intelligenzblätter, which were clearly inspired by Renaudot and/or the Publick Adviser, was published in Vienna in 1703. The first in Germany appeared in Frankfurt am Main on 1st January 1722.

66 Sampson p. 83.
67 See Berrow’s Worcester Journal website <http://www.berrowsjournal.co.uk/history/chapter1.htm>.
69 The Courant was hardly a modern daily. According to the author of The English Press “it was but a puny affair of two columns, printed on one side of the sheet only, and consisted … mainly of foreign intelligence”. The earliest daily in Europe, and therefore the world, was Einkommenden Zeitungen, first published in Leipzig on 1st July 1650 (see BDZV article).
70 Mentioned on the Advertising Age website’s Advertising History Timeline <http://adage.com/century/timeline>. The timeline only mentions developments in the U.S.A.
Intelligenzblätter were official publications, providing information rather than news. They were monopolies, offering advertisers no option but to use them (this was known as Insertionszwang), and, furthermore, state employees were obliged to subscribe to them (this was called Abonnementszwang). These regulations made them a useful source of revenue for the authorities. It has been calculated that there were at least 560 of them.71

Back in England, by the early eighteenth century the newspaper had gained “a hold on London’s commercial classes which it has never lost”.72 Advertising played a part in this. Ads were still aimed primarily at a wealthy readership, but they covered a wide range of goods and services, including books, theatrical performances, wine, coffee and tea, wigs, quack medicines, cosmetics, lottery tickets and domestic staff (including slaves). These advertisements used visual gimmicks such as the ubiquitous pointing hands (which were still very popular in the nineteenth century), asterisks and wooden block engravings. They also made much use of “N.B.” to emphasise features and benefits.73

Even literary and gossipy publications, such as Richard Steele’s (1672-1729) Tatler, founded in 1709, and Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Steele’s Spectator, founded in 1711, contained advertisements. The latter included a line reading

“LONDON: Printed for Sam. Buckley, at the Dolphin in Little Britain; and Sold by A. Baldwin in Warwick-Lane; where Advertisements are taken in.”74

The Tatler for 30th November 1710 contained an advert for Mrs. Salmon’s waxworks, including “an Old Woman flying from Time, who shakes his head and hour-glass with sorrow at seeing age so unwilling to die. Nothing but life can exceed the motions of the heads, hands, eyes, &c., of these figures, &c.”, while in 1711 we find jokey advertisements in The Spectator, as well as


72 Journalism historian Stanley Morison, quoted in Mitchell Stephens’ History of Newspapers.

73 Turner p. 24, 26-7. Hans-Heinz Meissner, in his 1931 Ph.D. dissertation Das Inserat in den grossen deutschen politischen Tageszeitungen von 1850 bis 1870 (mentioned in Ronald A. Fullerton - A prophet of modern advertising: Germany’s Karl Knie in Journal of Advertising (Spring 1998) p. 4 <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3694/is_199804/ai_n8804578/pg_1>) seems to have thought that pointing hands were a nineteenth century phenomenon, but Joseph Addison, quoted in Turner, considered them (wrongly) to be already somewhat passé in September 1710. They had in fact been in use since at least 1660. More complex woodcut illustrations eventually became so numerous and repetitive that they died out. Illustrations did not reappear until the later nineteenth century.

74 The Tatler and The Spectator are both available online on the Montclair State University website <http://meta.montclair.edu/spectator/project.html>.
references to supposed advertisements in other publications. On 14th March 1711 *The Spectator* mentions a fictitious personal ad, supposedly in the *Daily Courant*, while on 16th March it published a spoof advertisement of its own:

“ADVERTISEMENT.

*On the first of April will be performed at the Playhouse in the Hay-market, an Opera call’d The Cruelty of Atreus.*

*N.B. The Scene wherein Thyestes eats his own Children, is to be performed by the famous Mr. Psalmanazar, lately arrived from Formosa; The whole Supper being set to Kettle-drums.*”

To be parodied in this way, newspaper advertising was clearly not only taking off, but actually providing a measure of entertainment in its own right. Addison confirms this, writing in *The Tatler* for 14th September 1710, in what may be the first newspaper article on advertising, that “it is my custom in a dearth of news to entertain myself with those Collections of Advertisements that appear at the end of all our Publick Prints”.

Around this time, the first newspaper advertising wars developed. In the years before 1710 there was an advertising war over razor strops. Then, in 1711, port was forced to fight for market share with French products that were again becoming available as Britain withdrew from the War of the Spanish Succession.

In 1712 Parliament imposed stamp duty on both newspapers and advertisements. The duty doesn’t seem to have put people off. In 1728 there was a quarrel between coffee house owners and newspaper publishers. The coffee house owners wanted news for their customers to read, but claimed that up to 50% of material in the papers was advertising. The coffee-house proprietors threatened to start publishing their own news, but nothing came of it.

Instead, in 1726, we see the launch of *The Public Advertiser*, later *The

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75 This is a joke against George Psalmanazar (c. 1679-1763), a Frenchman who pretended he had been to Formosa. The reference to him “eating his own children” means him eating his words by admitting his traveller’s tales were nonsense, something that Psalmanazar did not actually do until 1728. For more about Psalmanazar read Jack Lynch - Orientalism as Performance Art: The Strange Case of George Psalmanazar on the Rutgers University site [http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Papers/psalm.html](http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Papers/psalm.html).

76 Turner p. 25.


78 An act condemned by some at the time as a tax on knowledge. The duty on advertisements went up in 1757, 1789 and 1803. It was then reduced in 1833 and finally removed in August 1853. The duty on newspapers was removed two years later (for more detail on the taxes see Turner pp. 24, 31, 51-2, 83 and Concise History of the British Newspaper Since 1620).

79 Turner p. 28 and Concise History of the British Newspaper Since 1620.
London Daily Advertiser, and on 3rd February 1730 we see the launch of a newspaper called The Daily Advertiser, which claimed “this paper will consist wholly of Advertisements, together with the Prices of Stocks, Course of Exchange, and Names and Descriptions of Persons becoming Bankrupt…” Journalism historian Stanley Morison has described this paper as “the first modern newspaper”, though those of us who throw away the business supplements of modern daily papers without reading them might disagree. The Daily Advertiser’s approach influenced many London papers in the 1740s, and the suffix ‘Advertiser’ began to replace the suffix ‘Post’ in newspaper titles. By 1759 Samuel Johnson could write in The Idler that “advertisements are now so numerous that they are very negligently perused”.80

Meanwhile, advertising was taking off on the American colonies. In 1729 Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) took over the fledgling Pennsylvania Gazette,81 which included pages of "new advertisements" for products such as soap, books and stationery which Franklin made more readable by using large headlines.82 13 years later Franklin's General Magazine printed the first American magazine ads. Then, in 1743, The New York Weekly Journal published the world’s first half-page newspaper advert.

Canada’s first newspaper was The Halifax Gazette, first published on 23rd March 1752. It contained news from Europe and from other British colonies, but, according to the Nova Scotia Archives, “the only local content came from advertisements: Leigh and Wragg advertised their school at the ‘Sign of the Hand and Pen’ on Granville Street; Proctor and Scutt sold butter by the firkin at their store near the North Gate; and legal documents were drawn up at the corner of Sackville Street from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., six days a week”. French Canada’s first newspaper, the bilingual Quebec Gazette, appeared on 21st June 1764, using the first true printing press in Québec. It too published merchants’ advertisements, as, presumably, did Massachusetts immigrant Nahum Mower’s (1779-1830) Canadian Courant and Montreal Advertiser, founded in 1807.83

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81 The paper had come into existence in 1728. It ceased publication in 1800, but was re-established as the alumni magazine of the University of Pennsylvania in 1902. The name is also used by a U.S. blogger called Timothy R. Gray <http://pennsylvaniagazette.blogspot.com>. Readers will have no trouble finding biographical material on Benjamin Franklin on the internet.
83 See Halifax Gazette - Canada's First Newspaper on the Nova Scotia Archives & Record Management (NSARM) website <http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/virtual/gazette/> and Early Printing in Eastern
Advertisements could be used to make political as well as financial profit. During the American War of Independence, following U.S. General Horatio Gates’ defeat at Camden on 16th August 1780, a newspaper in British-held New York ran the following ‘advert’:

“REWARD
Strayed, lost or stolen ... on the 17 August last, near Camden, in the State of South Carolina, a whole ARMY consisting of horse, foot and dragoons, to the amount of near TEN THOUSAND...”

The Pennsylvania Packet had already run a spoof personal ad in 1773 in which a lady called “American Liberty” had explained “my reason for leaving him [British rule] was because he behaved in an arbitrary and cruel manner”.

By 1820 many U.S. papers had the word “Advertiser” in their titles. Unencumbered by taxes, either on adverts or on the papers themselves, U.S. publishers, unlike their British colleagues, could sell their papers cheaply and devote between 50% and 75% of their space to advertising. 1833 saw the launch of The New York Sun, which many consider to be the first modern mass-market newspaper, although London had a ‘penny press’ before New York. Publisher Benjamin Henry Day (1810-1889) sold his paper at a very low price to make it more accessible to the public, making up his deficit through advertising. Around this time it was calculated that New York’s newspapers published 1,456,416 ads in a year, as opposed to 1,020,000 adverts in all

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84 Clorinda Clarke - The American Revolution 1775-83 (Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd, 1968) p. 69. In reality Gates’ force consisted of 4,100 men, many of them unfit for duty. For examples of rather more conventional adverts published during this war, see the extracts from New Jersey newspapers on the DigitalCommons@Providence College website

85 Stephens - A History of News p. 188.

86 According to Mitchell Stephens’ History of Newspapers article, “more than half of the newspapers in the largest cities had the words ‘advertiser’, ‘commercial’ or ‘mercantile’ in their names”.

87 Turner p. 124.

88 Mitchell Stephens - A Call for an International History of Journalism, on the New York University website. Stephens bemoans the Americentric tendency of many historians of journalism.

89 Yusun Jung - The Malleable Corantos A Prototype of the user-involved on-site customization for the online newspaper (2003) p. 11. The modern New York Sun is a totally different newspaper.
Britain’s newspapers combined. This is not surprising, given that it cost 29 times less to advertise in New York.90

In 1835 James Gordon Bennett (1795-1872) created The New York Herald, a similar paper to the Sun. Within a decade the Herald would be “the leading advertising medium in America” and by 1866 it would have the highest circulation in the U.S.A. Circulation brought advertisers and advertisers brought income, as another U.S. journalist, Horace Greeley (1811-1872), explained to a British audience in 1851.91

Over a decade after the Sun and Herald appeared, Greeley’s The New York Tribune doubled its advertising volume in the 12 months between October 1849 and October 1850. A few years later, in 1856, yet another New York literary paper, The New York Ledger, created the first full-page newspaper advertisement (the advertisement was in another paper, advertising the Ledger).92 Bennett and the Herald resisted using larger type. Bennett, like many others, felt that double-column displays and large fonts disadvantaged smaller advertisers. Nonetheless, they became common after the 1860s.93

In England the situation was similar, despite John Leigh Hunt’s 1808 attempt to found a paper (The Examiner) that took no advertising.94 Advertising, known as ‘puffing’ or ‘puffery’ because it was boastful, was becoming more democratic, with products like blacking now being advertised as well as more expensive products like books. The literary advertiser Henry Colburn (d. 1855), who advertised Disraeli and Fenimore Cooper, among others, made

90 Turner p. 124.
93 ThinkQuest New York City - Advertising from 1455-1956 dates the introduction of double-column displays to 1867. The same site suggests that the first true advertising agency was created in 1871. The Emergence of Advertising in America: 1850-1920 page, however, mentions 20 advertising agencies in New York at the outbreak of the American Civil War. The argument that a smaller number of adverts would disadvantage smaller advertisers was used in Britain in the 1920s as an argument against radio advertising, see Turner p. 284.
94 Turner p. 51. The Examiner survived until 1881 (see the Spartacus Educational page devoted to it <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jexaminer.htm>). A later, and less successful, attempt to do without advertising was Ralph Ingersoll’s New York daily PM, which was published from 1940 to 1948 (see Mitchell Stephens - History of Newspapers and Philip Nel - About the newspaper PM on the Kansas State University website <http://www.k-state.edu/english/nelp/purple/miscellaneous/pm.html>). Three years before the appearance of PM, The Washington Daily News had printed the first perfumed advertisement.
himself unpopular by using the same techniques used to sell more mundane products. By 1830 Colburn was spending as much as £9,000 per annum on advertising. Increasingly, advertisements relied on cod Greek product names and ridiculous polysyllabic words to sell their products.

By the 1830s Robert Warren was marketing the first nationally advertised household product, Warren’s Patent Shoe Blacking. Warren’s adverts used bold type, capitalisation and italics to get their point across, though none of these were necessarily all that new. Some of the verses in the adverts were said to have been written by Lord Byron (1788-1824). This was not the case, but in 1824 Warren’s advertising inspired an entire book of parodic rhymes, while in 1825 the poet Thomas Hood (1799-1845) wrote an article on ‘The Art of Advertising made Easy’ for The London Magazine.95

More genteel papers, like The Times, relied on advertising as much as the penny press did. John Walter (1776-1847), who founded the paper in 1788, wrote that “A News-Paper … ought to resemble an Inn, where the proprietor is obliged to give the use of his house to all travellers who are ready to pay for it and against whose persons there is no legal or moral objection” and inserted adverts on the day of receipt. The Times ran its first full page advert in 1829, and its first four page ad in December 1834.96

The main competition to newspaper advertising came from bill posting. Unlike newspaper adverts, bills were not subject to a tax, and they reached a wider audience. Although bills had existed in Cromwell’s day, the heyday of bill posting was the 1830s and 1840s, when every available surface was covered in tattered bills, creating an environment every bit as ugly as that created by the if anything more subdued hip hop graffiti of today. This semi-chaotic bill posting was gradually replaced by self-regulation, hoardings and attractive posters, these last copying developments in France.97

The abolition of the advertising tax in 1853, the duty on newspapers in 1855 and the duty on paper in 1861 created a new environment for advertisers and publishers alike. Thomas Holloway (1800-1883), a purveyor of quack pills, was spending over £30,000 a year on advertising by 1855. Despite these developments, many British publishers, like Bennett in New York, refused to allow large fonts. Indeed, some looked down on advertising altogether. From the 1860s advertisers, faced with instructions only to use small type, sabotaged


96 Turner pp. 30-1, 55, 148. The Times originated in 1785 as Walter’s Daily Universal Register.

97 Turner pp. 76-80, 104-10. Commonwealth and Protectorate bill posting is mentioned by Frank (see note 39 above). For the later history of posters and hoardings, see Turner Chapter Ten.
the papers by filling entire pages with endless repeats of the same slogan, or creating large letters out of small ones, like this letter ‘T’:

TTTTTTTT
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This practice was also followed in the U.S.A. Large type did not really start being used until the late nineteenth century, and even then Lord Northcliffe (1865-1921) complained that *The Daily Mail’s* advertising manager, Wareham Smith, was “a damn nuisance to everyone who is trying to produce a good-looking paper” and “ruining the paper with … vulgar advertisements”.98

All sorts of papers relied on advertising. When *The Methodist Recorder and General Christian Chronicle* came into existence in April 1861 it enlarged its page within a month, enabling it to carry illustrated advertisements from 6th June.99 By the 1880s newspapers and advertising were so closely entwined that a handbook could be called *Dictionary of the World’s Press and Philosophy of Advertising*. In the decades that followed, *The Strand Magazine*, launched in 1890 and famous for publishing most of the Sherlock Holmes stories, could have 100 pages of ads. There was an advertising journal called *Fame* by 1892. *The Daily Mail*, launched in 1896, would be, in advertising historian E.S. Turner’s words, “the pace-setter in newspaper advertising for the next generation”, despite Northcliffe’s aesthetic objections. In 1914 £10,000,000 was spent on advertising in Britain, as much as was being spent on defence.100

Meanwhile, in France, in 1836, Emile de Girardin (1806-1881) launched *La Presse*, a mass-circulation ‘penny press’ paper. Girardin sold the paper at half the normal price, making up the shortfall with advertising revenue. By 1865, 33% of the content of French newspapers was advertising, and by 1904 25% of


99 Methodist Recorder Online <http://www.methodistrecorder.co.uk/history.htm>.

the income of some cheap papers (for example, Moïse-Polydore Millaud’s (1813-1871) *Le Petit Journal*, founded in 1863) came from advertising.\(^\text{101}\)

In Germany the *Intelligenzblätter* survived Napoleonic censorship because they contained nothing likely to cause political unrest, though reform led to the closure of the Prussian *Intelligenzblatt* in 1811. The rest were wiped out by the events of 1848 and their consequences. The name was however retained by several papers until c. 1930, and a paper based in Dorfen, Bavaria, is still called *Intelligenzblatt*.\(^\text{102}\)

The economist Karl Gustav Adolf Knies (1821-1898) was well aware of the success of newspapers and the advertising they carried in both England and the U.S.A. During his lifetime Germany was catching up with the anglophone countries. The quantity of newspaper advertising in the German states had been growing since the 1820s. During the 1850s this trend accelerated. One Berlin newspaper’s advertising income increased by 48% between 1850 and 1860.

Knies took advertising seriously, seeing it as essential in the modern business world. He would have a significant influence on its development in his native Germany, although he was initially ignored. In 1857 he published *Der Telegraph als Verkehrsmittel (The Telegraph as Means of Communication)*, a work that also covered newspaper advertising. This was the first theoretical analysis of advertising. Before Knies the best a businessman wanting to learn about the potential of advertising could hope for was articles in magazines and Phineas T. Barnum’s autobiography, published in 1855. Interestingly, Knies also saw the value that advertising would have to future historians.\(^\text{103}\)

The one thing everybody knows about nineteenth century newspapers is that they carried their advertisements on the front page, rather than having the main story there as newspapers do today. The change to this modern format occurred more recently than many would believe.

*The Methodist Recorder*, mentioned above, carried advertisements on its front page until 1937, and it was only in 1942 that *The Observer* replaced

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\(^{101}\) The material in this paragraph comes from *250 Ans de Pub* on the Musée de la Publicité pages of the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs* website <http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/fr/03museepublicite/expositions/250ans/index.html>, apart from Girardin’s strategy with *La Presse*, which is from the French *Wikipédia* entry on Girardin <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki%C3%A9mile_de_Girardin>. For more on Millaud see *JewishEncyclopedia.com* <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=620&letter=M>. *Le Petit Journal* had a circulation of about 1,000,000 c. 1890.

\(^{102}\) German *Wikipedia* article *Intelligenzblatt*. The Prussian *Intelligenzblatt* had existed since 1727.

\(^{103}\) Ronald A. Fullerton - *A prophet of modern advertising: Germany’s Karl Knies*. 
advertisements with news and photographs, under editor David Astor. The Observer had carried advertisements on the front page since it had been created in 1791. The Manchester Guardian, in other respects a rather modern newspaper, did not put news on its first page until 1952, and even then its editor, A.P. Wadsworth, only did this reluctantly. "It is not a thing I like myself," he said, "but it seems to be accepted by all the newspaper pundits that it is preferable to be in fashion." Astonishingly, The Dundee Courier continued to put advertisements on its front page until 30th March 1992.

Interestingly, the financial problems facing modern newspapers have led to some old-fashioned solutions. The Wall Street Journal recently started putting advertisements on its front page, while 24-hour banner ads on internet home pages are a very lucrative form of advertising.


105 Guardian Unlimited - The Guardian years (September 10, 2005) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/story/0,,1566083,00.html>.

106 Concise History of the British Newspaper Since 1620.