

False News: A Historical Perspective

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When did misleading news begin?



Misleading false news is not a new phenomenon.

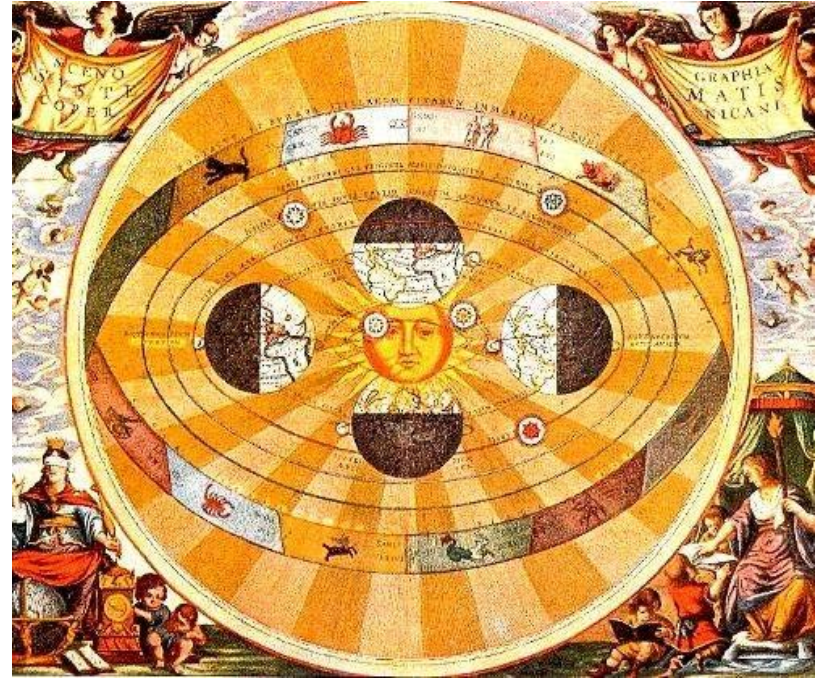
The Printing Press



- Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1439.
- The printing press allowed information to be spread widely and rapidly.

Science vs. Religion

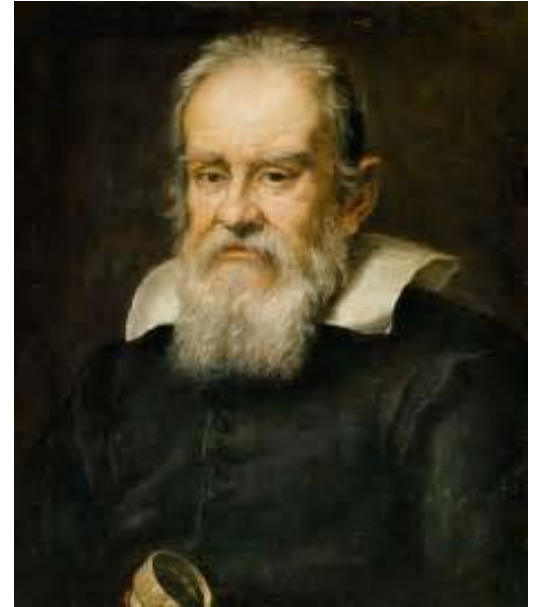
- Galileo Galilei's heliocentric theory, the Earth and other planets orbit the sun, was challenged by the church. He was summoned to an inquisition in Rome by Pope Urban VIII in 1632.
- He was found "vehemently suspect of heresy".



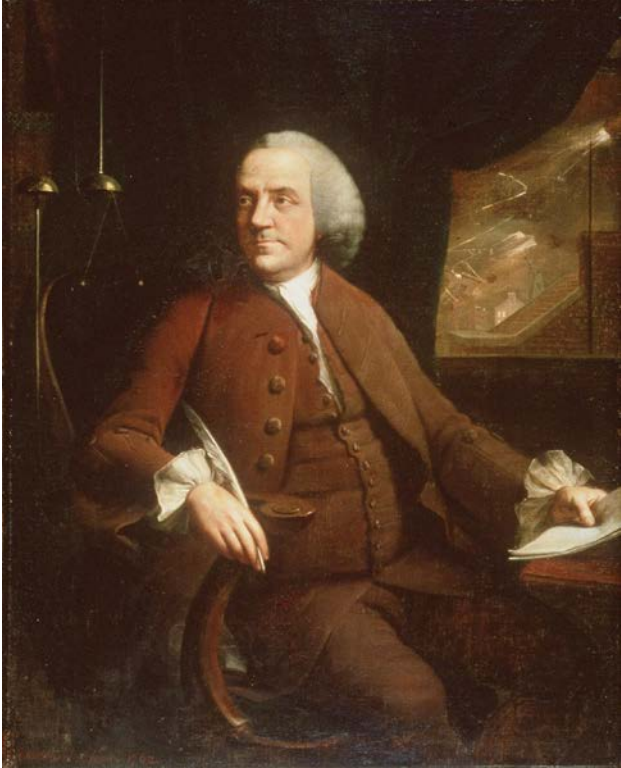
Heliocentric: sun is at the center of the solar system



Galileo's heliocentric theory was proven to be true but the church held the power to control public discourse.



Politics & Partisanship



1782, Benjamin Franklin fabricated a story in a **real** Boston newspaper, the *Independent Chronicle*, about King George's gruesome crime of scalping children, women, and men.

He also composed a **fake** letter from a **real** naval hero, John Paul Jones, urging Americans to unite and declare independence.

Benjamin Franklin's fabrication was driven by his desire to gather momentum among the Americans to fight for independence.

At that time, writing and publishing were exclusive to the educated intelligentsia and those who had the money and power.



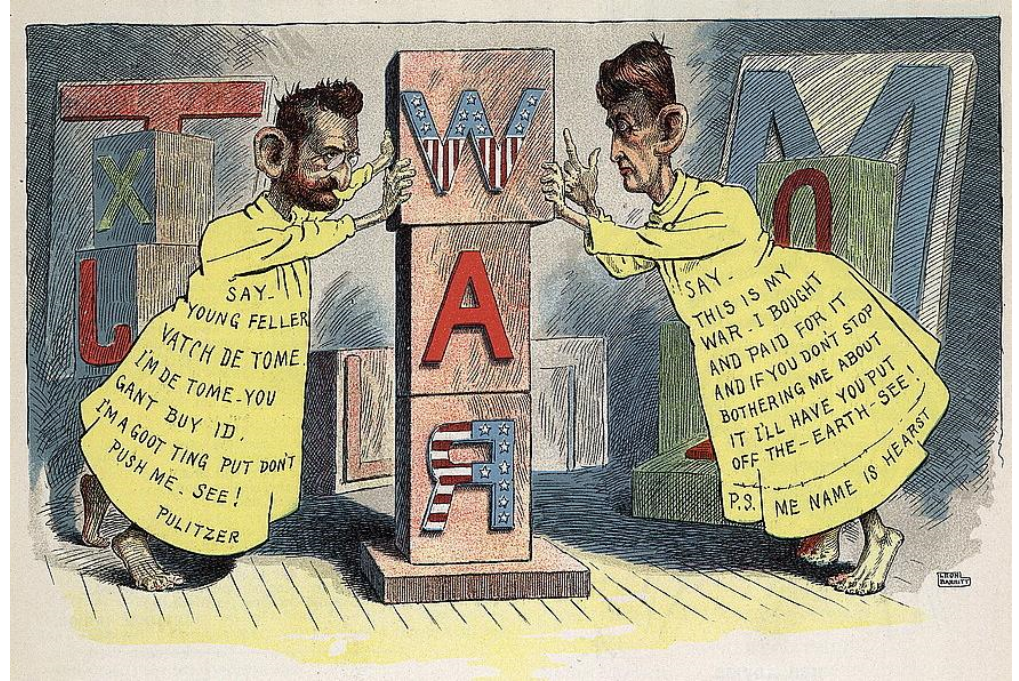
First Newspapers in America

- The first newspapers were funded by political party NOT ads. Newspapers were dependent upon partisan support and readership. It was almost like a wing or mechanism of political parties to spread ideas.
- At that time, almost all newspapers were partisan.



Yellow Journalism

A type of journalism that is not based on truth or research, uses eye-catching headlines to sell papers and make a profit.



“You will furnish the picture, I will furnish the war”

SPANIARDS SEARCH WOMEN ON AMERICAN STEAMERS
DRAWN BY FREDERIC REMINGTON



AN IMAGINARY INCIDENT PICTURED BY FREDERIC REMINGTON IN THE NEW YORK JOURNAL

\$50,000 REWARD.—WHO DESTROYED THE MAINE?—\$50,000 REWARD.
EDITION FOR GREATER NEW YORK
NEW YORK JOURNAL
AND ADVERTISER.

NO. 2,372. PUBLISHED WEEKLY. NEW YORK, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1904.—10 PAGES. PRICE ONE CENT.

DESTRUCTION OF THE WAR SHIP MAINE WAS THE WORK OF AN ENEMY

\$50,000!
\$50,000 REWARD!
For the Detection of the Perpetrator of the Maine Outrage!

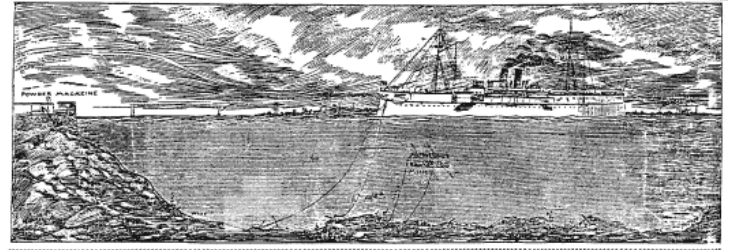
The New York Journal offers a reward of \$50,000 for the detection of the perpetrator of the Maine outrage. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who furnish information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the Maine outrage. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who furnish information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the Maine outrage. The reward will be paid to the person or persons who furnish information leading to the conviction of the perpetrator of the Maine outrage.

Assistant Secretary Roosevelt Convinced the Explosion of the War Ship Was Not an Accident.

The Journal Offers \$50,000 Reward for the Conviction of the Criminals Who Sent 258 American Sailors to Their Death. Naval Officers Unanimous That the Ship Was Destroyed on Purpose.

\$50,000!
\$50,000 REWARD!
For the Detection of the Perpetrator of the Maine Outrage!

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NAVAL OFFICERS THINK THE MAINE WAS DESTROYED BY A SPANISH MINE.
Lopez, former British, the Journal's special correspondent at Havana, states that in the recent opinion of some Spaniards in the city there existed a set-off of four miles which he believes was the cause of the explosion. This is the opinion of several American naval officers. The explosion, it is believed, was caused by a mine which was exploded on the side of the harbor. The mine was a torpedero mine and it is thought the explosion was caused by sending a mine across through the mine. If this can be proved, the fatal nature of the Spaniards will be shown for the first time in opening the case and all the men had escaped from the mine. The Spaniards think in the picture above is the mine that exploded.

Hidden Mine or a Sunken Torpedo Believed to Have Been the Weapon Used Against the American Man-of-War—Officers and Men Tell Thrilling Stories of Being Blown Into the Air Amid a Mass of Shattered Steel and Exploding Shells—Survivors Brought to Key West Scout the Idea of Accident—Spanish Officials Protest Too Much—Our Cabinet Orders a Searching Inquiry—Journal Sends Divers to Havana to Report Upon the Condition of the Wreck.

Ethics of Journalism

James Gordon Bennett (1835) established new standards for journalism by utilizing interviews and observations to add details to news stories. Most importantly, his newspaper was funded by advertisers instead of political parties that enabled the newspaper to report stories on corruption and criticize politicians openly.



Watergate



June 17th, 1972 - 5 men broke into the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate office which subsequently revealed that Nixon was illegally tapping the DNC's classified conversations.

The Media and Watergate



The story of Watergate gained national attention through reporting by the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Two prominent journalists in the investigation were Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward of the *Post*. The Watergate Scandal was a catalyst for a public recognition of the importance of investigative journalism and the responsibility of the press to check the powerful.

21st Century

It wasn't until the rise of web-generated news that our era's journalistic norms were seriously challenged, and fake news became a powerful force again.

Digital news has brought *yellow journalism* back. Algorithms that create news feeds have no regard for accuracy and objectivity.



Social Media



Technology transformed the speed of information delivery. Today, footages could be instantly streamed on Facebook and YouTube that allowed us to be more informed first-handedly.

But technology is a double edge sword. Anyone can generate news not based on facts. Divisive ads on Facebook and Twitter accounts reached millions of people that potentially swayed the 2016 election.

What's the role of social media in journalism?

Should we hold technology companies to a higher standard in terms of publishing contents online?

HOW

FALSE

NEWS

CAN SPREAD

