PERIODIC PUBLISHING AND RHETORICAL TIME:
THE BIRTH AND "DEATH" OF THE NEWSPAPER

A Dissertation in

English

by

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ABSTRACT

Social, cultural, and technological processes are speeding up every year, such that the lived experience of the “pace of life” has changed drastically. Social acceleration (as this phenomenon has been dubbed) is often linked to changes in communication and publication technology. The field of rhetoric and composition does not have a theory of time robust enough to explain or analyze the phenomenon of social acceleration. This dissertation proposes an expanded rhetoric of time, building upon existing theories of time (such as Kairos, chonotopes, and other tools used to understand the temporal aspects of the rhetorical situation), and expanding the focus of rhetoric to include the epistemological view of time: the ways in which context, social convention, and technology/publication medium shape how audiences perceive and make sense of time. This project investigates a specific case, as a focal point for unpacking the value of an epistemological view of time: the birth (and death) of the newspaper—and, through that case, the larger concept of periodicity. I argue for an expanded understanding of how publication systems and temporal qualities (such as periodicity) can shape audiences, and suggest that the field of rhetoric and composition as a whole has been too focused on “locating” the audience, and not cognizant enough of how audience members are positioned in time.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF FIGURES** ........................................................................................................ vi

**LIST OF TABLES** ........................................................................................................ vii

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** .............................................................................................. viii

**Chapter 1** *The Pace of News and the Problem of Time in Rhetorical Theory* ............. 1

  - The Problem of Media Speed and Periodicity .......................................................... 5
  - How Periodicity and Seriality Explain Media Speed .................................................. 9
  - Why Newspapers? Rationale For Subject Selection ................................................ 12
  - Historiography and Technology Studies: Combining Methodologies ...................... 15
  - Overview of Chapters .......................................................................................... 20
  - Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 23

**Chapter 2** *Theories of Time, Audience, and Technologies of Delivery* ..................... 25

  - Concepts of Time in Rhetorical Theory .................................................................. 27
    - Time as a Strategy ............................................................................................... 32
    - Time as a Function of Argument ....................................................................... 38
    - Time as Epistemological Framework .................................................................. 41
  - Audience .............................................................................................................. 44
    - Locating the Audience ....................................................................................... 48
    - Technologies of Temporal Audiences ................................................................ 60
  - Delivery as Time and Space ................................................................................... 64
  - Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 73

**Chapter 3** *The Birth of the Newspaper: Periodic Production and the Public Sphere* .... 76

  - Newspapers as Conversation Starters: Theories of the Public Sphere .................. 81
  - The Circumstances of Delivery: the Clock, the Post, and the Coffeehouse ............. 89
    - Clocks and Communities ................................................................................... 91
    - The Post as System and Metaphor ..................................................................... 95
    - Coffeehouse Conversations ............................................................................... 102
  - Theories of Context: The Public Sphere as a Function of Temporal Systems .......... 107

**Chapter 4** *Periodic Publications Themselves: The "Birth" of Daily News* .................. 110

  - A Definition of "News" and the Historical Context of Daily Publication ................ 114
  - News Products: The First Daily Newspaper and Periodicity as Marketing Strategy ... 117
    - Periodicity As Economic Strategy ..................................................................... 119
    - The Daily Courant as an Instance of Somerville’s Periodicity ........................... 121
  - Opinion and Commentary: the *Spectator* and the Essay Sheet ............................ 127
    - Advertisements in the *Spectator* ..................................................................... 136
  - Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 140
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Acceleration Defined</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “Death” of the Newspaper: Problems for a Periodic Medium</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Call it a Crisis?</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions and Future Work</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferences</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Issue of The Daily Courant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Issue of the Spectator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure A: First Issue of *The Daily Courant* ................................................................. 176

Figure B: First Issue of the *Spectator* ........................................................................ 177


LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1: Temporal Modes Explained................................................................. 30

Table 1-2: Theories of Audience Explained...................................................... 31
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Chapter 1

The Pace of the News and the Problem of Time in Rhetorical Theory

On June 12th, 2007, near the end of his term as Prime Minister of Britain, Tony Blair gave a speech that addressed, in part, the role of “the media” in politics, claiming that “the relationship between politics, public life and the media is changing as a result of the changing context of communication in which we all operate” (BBC). Specifically, the Prime Minister argued that the increasing pace and intensity of news production and consumption are becoming all-consuming, that “the media world—like everything else—is becoming more fragmented, more diverse and transformed by technology,” such that “the news schedule is now 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It moves in real time. Papers don't give you up to date news. That's already out there” (BBC). The changes that Blair described are focused around the perception and lived experience of time, especially the temporal aspects of textual interaction: the “schedule” with which information is published. As far as the Prime Minister was concerned, life as we know it has changed in perceptible and potentially dangerous ways. Everything now moves faster than ever before. This perceived change in media speed, I will argue, has serious implications for the practice of rhetoric.

Blair is, of course, using “the media” as a term for the various organizations who profit from the collection and distribution of information as “news.” The distinction (and connection) between a concept of “the media” and “media” as the plural of medium is a productive, if somewhat belabored, topos. As scholars of society and technology are fond of pointing out, it is no accident that these organizations are discussed in terms that
point explicitly to the technological means through which they communicate. Just as the medium of the telephone or of the hand-written letter both convey information and shape the information that they convey, so do we think of the people, institutions, and networks of the “mainstream media.” It is true, if not very original, to say that “the media” are often treated as another medium, sometimes in the most reductive of ways: we expect them to be an impartial conduit for information and are frustrated (though we should not be surprised) to find out that they have inherent affordances and limitations.

In the course of his speech, Blair blasts the news media, suggesting that it—as a group—“hunts in a pack” and is “like a feral beast, just tearing people and reputations to bits” (BBC). Blair explicitly blames this “feral” behavior on media speed, noting that (for those in “public life”), “a vast aspect of our jobs today—outside of the really major decisions, as big as anything else—is coping with the media, its sheer scale, weight and constant hyperactivity” (BBC). That last term, “hyperactivity,” is at the heart of his complaint. While Blair’s speech does include a harsh critique of the individuals and institutions that make up the news media, his argument about the media's predatory impulses ultimately focuses on the “pace of life” and other time-oriented concerns. Essentially, Blair contends that technology has sped up and fragmented the way people communicate, to the extent that there is no time for deliberate thought or action.

Blair is certainly not alone in his concerns over the “hyperactivity” of the media. Howard Rosenberg and Charles S. Feldman, in No Time to Think: The Menace of Media Speed and the 24-hour News Cycle, argue that the means of communicating have begun to determine the content of communication; in other words, “the public’s right to know has been supplanted by the public’s right to know everything, however fanciful and even
erroneous, as fast as technology allows” (17). James Gleick, in *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything*, laments that

some instances of public opinion appear faster than ever, as nightly television analysts and daily newspaper commentators compete with Internet pundits to explain events, make judgments, put them into a moral context, and create a kind of instant selectivity. History cannot really be written that fast. (97)

Just as Blair does, Rosenberg, Feldman, and Gleick invoke technology as the cause of temporal changes in communication practices, which have, in turn, changed the nature of communication itself.

While these commentaries focus specifically on rapidity in news reporting, they also gesture more generally toward the various implications of “media speed.” The “media” referred to in “media speed” acts as an ambiguous, overarching term which seems to apply almost interchangeably to the people who are involved in producing and reporting “news,” the technologies those people use to communicate, and the systems and organizations within which people and corporations interact. In the same way, the “speed” that so many critics decry is not limited to the literal amount of time a message takes to move from person to person. Media speed often refers to a change in the attitudes or habits of those producing or receiving messages, or in the situation within which those messages are understood.

One example is the level of urgency an individual feels around the need to respond to another's message. Such feelings of urgency can often depend on the medium through which the original message was delivered. For instance, a request for
information might seem to demand a more immediate response if communicated through an email than the same request would if relayed through a physical letter sent through the postal system. The "response speed" associated with a given medium can also change depending on context, however: with a message conveyed via email versus one conveyed by voice mail (telephone), the question of which one requires a more immediate response will depend largely on the culture, habits, and attitudes of those producing and receiving those messages. The arguments being made by Blair, Gleick, and Rosenberg and Feldman all rest on the assumption that the pace of communicative interaction (both the actual speed and the perception of speed) has increased dramatically in recent years, but that pace is a function of rhetorical as well as technical matters.

Concern over media speed, the rapidity of the news cycle, and the “hyperactivity” of public discourse, then, can only be understood within the larger context of changing attitudes toward time. Indeed, complaints about the speed of news go hand in hand with critiques of an increased “pace of life” more generally, a phenomenon scholars have dubbed “social acceleration” (Hanson, Hassan, Hassan and Purser, Rosa, and Rosa and Scheurman). Social acceleration refers to both perceived and actual changes in social time, a broad category of study that can refer to anything from the rate at which institutions change to the amount of time it takes to accomplish a given task (for more information on Social Acceleration, see Appendix A). Although not limited to discussions of new media, concerns about social acceleration do tend to focus on social changes (both real and perceived) that are related to technological innovation. The shifting techno-social contexts of communication in today’s society, and the anxieties that connect texts and their audiences to different conceptions of time, are complicated
sites for research that have implications at individual, institutional, and cultural levels. This project seeks to address the implications of media speed at all of these levels.

This dissertation establishes a vocabulary and context for discussing the changes in communication technologies—primarily networked digital technologies—that have been labeled as the cause of a change in the "pace of life," the subjective experience of time in everyday life. The field of rhetoric and composition lacks the full terminology necessary to adequately analyze how, or in what ways, these changing technologies might be involved in temporal experience. What does it mean to talk about the “speed” of communication in a non-quantitative sense (i.e., not the literal speed with which a message travels across a given distance, but rather that sense or feeling of speed that accompanies a particular type of communication)? How do various media alter or enhance the perception and experience of time in the use of rhetoric? How does one study the temporal effect of a communication system, rather than focusing on the temporal qualities of singular (non-repeating) texts? These questions suggest a significant gap in our understanding of how different concepts of time, rhetorical time, really, affect the production and consumption of texts.

The Problem of "Media Speed" and Periodicity

The specifically *temporal* problems that trouble Blair, Rosenberg and Feldman, and Gleick, problems of “media speed,” “hyperactivity,” and “space/time compression” (concepts to be discussed in more detail later on), can in part be restated as problems of
“periodicity.” In this case, periodicity should be understood as an aspect of publication practice: a text is “periodic” if it is part of a series that is published at regular intervals. These terms might seem outlandish, but their more common version, the description of newspapers and magazines as “periodicals,” is commonplace enough. Such texts have, as one of their defining characteristics, a particular relationship to time: the “when” of their publication/dissemination occurs not in response to a given event, but within the framework of a repeating series, instead. The newspaper is “today’s paper,” with the expectation that there was a “yesterday’s paper” and that there will be a “tomorrow’s paper.” A large part of what seems to bother media critics who are worried about speed is an apparent departure from a predictably periodic cycle of news; value is ascribed to the cycle itself, despite the fact that newspapers are being pushed out of the media marketplace in part because they are seen as too slow. In contrast to the stable, traditional news "cycle," Web content, which is updated “in real time,” departs from the established schedule of periodicity.

What are some of the features of periodicity? What does it mean for a text to be periodic? Two qualities help to define periodic texts and distinguish them from one another: frequency and regularity. Frequency is the measurement of how often a text is published (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.). Newspapers appear more frequently than magazines, which are published more frequently than most scholarly journals. Regularity is the consistency with which a periodic text appears on time: a periodic text that is meant to appear daily can be completely regular within that timeframe (the newspaper is published every day) but irregular with regard to the specific time of publication or
delivery (some days the papergirl drops it on your doorstep at 5:30am, other days she sleeps through her alarm and doesn’t get to your house until 7:30am).

For many events, then, the expectation of regular recurrence, their periodic quality, is not considered remarkable. Certainly, the sun rises and sets each day, defining that unit of measurement, but while that periodic occurrence relates closely to how human activity (indeed, all life) is structured in time, we take it for granted.\(^1\) Taking that same type of periodicity for granted in human-initiated events, however, would be misguided. Natural cycles recur regularly as a result of physical laws and the mysteries of nature, but human constructs usually mimic those cycles not out of necessity, but out of convention. There is no logical reason for a newspaper to be daily rather than, say, thrice-weekly (a standard at the beginning of the eighteenth century), except that a more frequently distributed paper can a) have more current news, and b) sell more copies.

Unlike frequency and regularity, periodicity itself is not a variable quality; a set of texts cannot be more or less periodic, but they can be published more or less frequently, more or less regularly. Texts that are more regular and more frequent will likely be more recognizable as periodic, though, meaning that their periodicity will be more apparent, even if it is not actually greater or lesser than for another set of texts. Traditional periodicals, such as print newspapers, magazines, or scholarly journals, have set publishing schedules that do not deviate; daily newspapers are printed and distributed

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\(^1\) It is worth noting that while the regularity of the rising and setting of the sun is, in one sense, rather low (the amount of time between rise and set changes from day to day, fluctuating with the seasons), in another sense the regularity is rather high (the sun doesn’t take the day off). It’s interesting to consider the ways in which, using the period of a day as our model, humankind has often created periodic systems that are both more and less regular than the phenomenon they are modeled after.
every morning, new issues of *Newsweek* and *The New Yorker* come out each week, and most scholarly journals publish at most three or four times a year.

Newer publication technologies, such as blogs, social networking sites, and Web content generally, often support a more fluid approach to publication. “Updates” can come at unexpected times, as dictated by events, the mood of the author, or any of a number of other factors. That fluidity is accompanied by concern over the kinds of audiences created by this new form of periodicity (if we can call it that): Rosenberg and Feldman worry that today’s news readers have shorter attention spans and are less concerned with well-reasoned arguments: Blair suggests that because of the “pace” of news, what matters is not interest value, but “impact,” such that “the audience needs to be arrested, held and their emotions engaged. Something that is interesting is less powerful than something that makes you angry or shocked” (BBC).

The break between traditional, periodic news and the “accelerated” publication of digital information can be understood as a movement away from strict periodicity and toward a broader notion of seriality. Serial is the broader, more inclusive term; all periodic texts are part of a series, but not all serial texts are periodic (meaning they can be irregular, unrelated to any organized schedule). Newspapers are periodic, and are defined by their periodicity, because if the paper does not get published each day, how can it be “today’s paper”? On the other hand, an independent zine that struggles to find material to print, might be a serial but have a publication schedule that is irregular enough that it cannot be called periodic. Many “new media” texts (blogs, status updates, podcasts, etc.) are by nature serial endeavors, but may or may not be (and more often are not) periodic.
How Periodicity and Seriality Can Explain Media Speed

Seriality and periodicity manifest themselves in contemporary writing technologies in the most basic, *definitional* features of both genre and instrumentation. For example, blogs are generally defined as *regularly updated* webpages that publish in reverse chronological order and often allow for reader comments. Blog audiences expect those updates, and the structure of blogging software is designed to encourage them. Another exemplar of this phenomenon is the podcast, a collection of digital audio files published on the Web. What distinguishes them from other types of audio files is that they are "an episodic series of audio files subscribed to and downloaded through web syndication or streamed online to a computer or mobile device" ('Podcast'). The definition of "podcast" may have shifted since its creation: the original term was a portmanteau of "broadcast" and the device the files were most often pushed to (the iPod), whereas now podcasts are not always expected to be pushed to a device, or even to have a regular schedule. Nonetheless, their seriality and their use of web syndication are usually considered definitional characteristics.

Web syndication, the practice of pushing content out to subscribers (audiences) through the use of RSS feeds, is itself some of the best evidence of the ways in which many methods of digital publication are defined by their periodic natures. RSS was originally an acronym for "RDF Site Summary," where "RDF" was itself an acronym for "Resource Description Framework." RSS came to be dubbed "Really Simple Syndication," however, because the software has been used to allow websites to "syndicate" their content, meaning new content posted to a given website is then sent to
those who "subscribe" to a given RSS "feed." RSS feeds function practically in much the same way that subscriptions to traditional print periodicals do: by stating an interest in a given publication, a reader can enter into a relationship with the publisher to be included in the "delivery route" that defines the publication’s audience.

These phenomena have received a great deal of critical attention, in which advocates often argue (some more cautiously than others) that these technologies will inspire a revolution of "citizen journalism" that will replace the more traditional, professionalized model. At the very least, these modes of writing, and of delivering texts, are becoming increasingly popular, and are more and more likely to be incorporated into mainstream news environments. Yet while many scholars have examined the genre conventions and pedagogical applications of these forms of writing, little attention has been paid to the ways in which these technologies can contribute to changes in the fundamentally temporal relationships between text and audience, and between the author and the methods of delivery.

To provide a new perspective on the future of the newspaper, and on the function of periodic time in digital writing, this project approaches this topic through the lens of historiography. In order to understand how concepts of time and the “periodic press” are changing, this dissertation turns to the (multiple) origins of the periodic publication of news in English. One way to imagine the next step in the evolution of news distribution, and to understand why so many people are so upset about the very idea of a “next step,” is to look at the origins of the system that is “failing.”

² Despite a fair amount of media attention to the subject, the claim that the new millennium is the beginning, or even the culmination, of an era of “the death of the newspaper” seems presumptuous to me.
reading of “news” become a habit, a regular practice that became an institution, which in turn became an integral support of “free society”? Such an endeavor entails an examination of the social, technological, political, and historical contexts of early newspapers, as well as a specific focus on and analysis of the first daily newspaper and the first daily “essay sheet.” The historiographic features of my argument provide a framework within which the dynamics of more recent events can be understood. Ultimately, this project suggests that the future of news publication can and should be informed by a thorough understanding of its past. Specifically, I examine the ways in which changing cultural concepts of time have affected the ways in which the news— itself a multi-faceted, polysemous term—is produced, consumed, and understood.

The main question this project seeks to answer is: “How do changes in periodicity (itself a feature of delivery) affect our understanding of audience?” This dissertation takes the medium of the newspaper as an example, attempting to answer these related questions: how do various concepts of time, particularly the periodic publication schedule of serial texts, define the relationship of the audience to the news they are consuming? What role have newspapers traditionally played in the formation of discourse communities and “publics,” and how will that role change with the recent changes in communication technologies?

Through an examination of the specific example of the newspaper as the paradigmatic periodic text/genre, I will explain the ways in which periodicity has (until

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While there does seem to be a trend towards newspapers closing and readers finding their news online instead, newspapers have far from disappeared. Although I refer to the newspaper as a system that is “failing,” that usage should be understood as including an implicit “maybe”: whether newspapers actually eventually disappear is something time, and not this project, will have to tell.
recently) acted as an unexamined influence on the rhetorical construction of audiences. Such a project has much larger implications (beyond just an exploration of the future of newspapers): the expanded understanding of the role of time in rhetorical practice that this project offers, particularly in relation to technologically mediated contexts, will help to explain not only the contemporary "pace of life" problem articulated by Blair in the opening of this chapter, but also a larger set of unexamined temporal lenses that will be taken up in the conclusion of this dissertation. In other words, not only will understanding periodicity help to explain the accelerated "media speed" of today, but it will also suggest other types of temporal relationships that have yet to be adequately understood but are central to an understanding of the rhetorical situation.

**Why Newspapers? Rationale For Subject Selection**

Why approach a discussion of new perspectives on audience and delivery through a discussion of eighteenth-century British newspapers? There are a number of reasons. First, on the most basic level, this project takes the periodic press as its focus. The perspective on time in rhetorical theory that I advocate begins from a recognition that we need a better understanding of how serial texts function differently from singular texts. By singular texts, I mean simply those that are published or circulated outside of any expected temporal relationship to similar texts (a novel, a poem, an essay, or any other genre could be published either singularly or serially, although some genres will lend themselves more easily to serialization). The newspaper genre is by far the most
prominent example of periodic publication, and the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are clearly marked as the period during which the newspaper gained the hold on Western culture that it has maintained to this day. The publication of the first daily newspaper in 1702 is an important milestone, but perhaps even more important is the simple fact that only after the turn of the eighteenth century did the number of newspapers published in English cease fluctuating and establish a steady upward trend of growth. By studying the origins of the periodic press, I demonstrate some of the ways in which the quality of periodicity has shaped our understanding of how audiences and communities are formed.

In addition, on a theoretical level, both this time period and the texts that originate from it form the basis for Jurgen Habermas’s theory of the “bourgeois public sphere,” which has in turn proved wildly influential in current discussions of audience in rhetoric and composition. Conversations about the public sphere are oriented around a need to understand the ways in which groups of people who are not formally associated with one another through economic or political institutions can come together to both discuss and act upon issues they have in common. Although often complicated by questions of political, economic, and social theory, theories of the public sphere are essentially ways of thinking about conversations that happen through, about, and alongside periodic texts. By examining the historical period that has served as the basis for this discussion, I highlight the important role that a temporal perspective can bring to the discussion of audience.

The specific texts I have chosen to examine from this period are meant to serve not only as representative examples of their respective genres but also as innovations on
those genres. For instance: by examining the first issues of the *Daily Courant*, the first daily newspaper, I both analyze the newspaper genre to which the *Daily Courant* belongs and the ways in which it is a modification of that genre because it was published daily. Thus, while the textual analysis focuses primarily on one publication at a time (the other subject being the *Spectator*, the first daily essay-sheet), I consider examples of each periodical’s contemporaries as well.

The contextual historiography used in this project is meant as a starting point, to inform a larger study of recent social and technological changes. Along with the “media hyperactivity” problem, this project also responds to the “newspaper crisis,” a situation that received a flood of attention in 2008-2009, during which media critics have lamented the diminishing prospect of print journalism’s continued viability in light of newspaper closings, bankruptcies, layoffs, and cutbacks. That conversation serves as a framework for this project, such that the texts and contexts examined in the historiographic sections relate to the modern-day phenomena that contribute to “social acceleration” and changing distribution of news. Indeed, some of the concerns over the “death” of the newspaper include an over-emphasis on commentary rather than “factual” reporting, excessive triviality and lack of depth (e.g., news via Twitter), questions about what “counts” as news, a breakdown of the democratic system, etc. Those same concerns are mirrored in the discussions surrounding seventeenth- and eighteenth-century newspapers and the coffeehouses they were consumed in, and so my analysis of the earlier period is meant to inform the larger discussion of more recent issues.

Critiques of media speed are often made in comparison to an idealized past; the clichéd version of those critiques looks something like this: things are much worse now
than they used to be then. This idealized past is characterized as one in which news was checked more thoroughly for accuracy, in which commentary was more deliberate and thought-out, in which the individuals who make up “the public” were, if not superbly informed, at least engaged with the issues and events of the day. Indeed, while much of the critique of media speed focuses on the lapses of the present and the perils of the future, there is an implicit argument concerning the role that “slow” media have played in shaping modern society. Thus, the debate over the speed of news delivery is necessarily a debate over society’s understanding of how periodicity has functioned in the past, and how the current pace of news compares to that past. This project uses a focus on the “birth” of the newspaper to begin understanding the controversy over the newspaper’s impending “death.”

**Historiography and Technology Studies: Combining Methodologies**

New technologies is a historically relative term. We are not the first generation to wonder at the rapid and extraordinary shifts in the dimension of the world and the human relationships it contains as a result of new forms of communication, or to be surprised by the changes those shifts occasion in the regular pattern of our lives. (3)

—Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New*

In the quote above, Carolyn Marvin argues that new media are only new in context; what is new for us now will someday seem as old as the devices and modes of communication that we take for granted today—the telephone, the printing press, the
radio, the television—and which themselves shocked and awed other “generations” of media users. What strikes me most about Marvin’s claim, though, are the three discrete notions of time that she invokes. First, she references historical relativity and the broad sweep of a “generation,” indicating a perspective capable of stepping out of time, dividing it into chunks, and evaluating it from a distance. Second, Marvin’s reference to the “rapid and extraordinary shifts” in “human relationships” hints at a recognizable perception of time in-the-moment: the sound of a friend’s voice on the telephone, or a parent’s terse reply in a telegram. The third concept of time is the most important, however, in part because it encompasses the first two and yet is distinct from either. When Marvin mentions “the regular pattern of our lives,” she touches on a way of thinking about time that is neither the broad, sweeping concept of time as an ongoing background to events, nor is it time as a collection of opportune moments between concrete beings (this binary could also be discussed as the difference between a field and a particle, or the axis of a graph and a single point). Indeed, the “regularity” of a pattern, the cyclical nature in which things repeat and recur, changing and yet staying the same, suggests a concept of time that is both continuous and yet particular. Although Marvin’s focus was certainly different, her statement about our relationship to technologies of communication ultimately points out a need for new ways of approaching how we understand time.

To this end, I advocate an approach to studying technology that is contextually situated and non-deterministic, using history in the study of phenomena that are categorized as “new.” As Lisa Gitelman says in the opening of *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*, “I begin with the truism that all media were
once new as well as the assumption, widely shared by others, that looking into the
novelty years, transitional states, and identity crises of different media stands to tell us
much, both about the course of media history and about the broad conditions by which
media and communication are and have been shaped” (1). Gitelman cites Marvin as her
immediate intellectual predecessor, and both react strongly to an instrumentalist trend in
the field of media history, which focuses primarily on technological developments rather
than the social (and I would say, rhetorical) dimensions of media adoption and
integration. Indeed, Marvin speaks directly to the question of audience when she claims
that, in an instrumentalist model, “new media are presumed to fashion new social groups
called audiences from voiceless collectivities and to inspire new uses based on novel
 technological properties” (4). Rather than creating a new audience out of whole cloth, I
would argue along with Marvin that new media can have an effect on practices, intrude
upon negotiations of power, and influence habits, such that “new practices do not so
much flow directly from technologies that inspire them as they are improvised out of old
practices that no longer work in new settings” (4). Thus I take it as vitally important to
study not only the history of periodic media (such as the early newspaper or the more
recent weblog), but also the social and rhetorical contexts within which those media were
developed.

Traditional work on the history of rhetorical technologies has, until recently,
neglected much of the available material in this field. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey
Pingree’s recent collection New Media, 1740-1915 is one of the first books to take
seriously the idea that innovations in communication technology are not limited to the
present day, and that the history of such innovations (even those that are failed and
obsolete) can be worthwhile and informative to current studies of technology. Marvin’s work on the telegraph, like Gitelman’s work on the phonograph (in *Always Already New*) and the collected work on various other old technologies, suggests that some patterns of social reaction to new technologies can be recognized and analyzed, while also pointing out the need to constantly contextualize the social reception of technologies. My argument will be modeled after the work of Marvin and Gitelman, although I will apply my conclusions primarily to contemporary perspectives on rhetorical theory.

Like Gitelman, my project is meant to deal with two historically disparate periods, but the two are meant to “speak to” one another. My discussion of early periodicals should be read as a lens, a means of better understanding the social and technological changes of recent years. More importantly, it should also be understood as an investigation in its own right, both into the enduring power of periodicity and into how we can use the past to understand the present.

This dissertation moves toward an answer to the challenge Gitelman lays down to “imagine what a meaningful history of today’s new media might eventually look like” (1) by closely examining the context out of which today’s new media have grown. My historiographic practices are modeled closely after Cheryl Glenn’s, from her book *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*. I use rigorous contextualization to establish the cultural and rhetorical circumstances for the time period and location that I am discussing, and I analyze specific instances as examples of broader trends. I understand the practice of historiography to be a re-construction of past events that not only interrogates the relationship of historical narrative to the available evidence but also acknowledges the positionality of the
historiographer as a part of, and influence on, the creation of that narrative. Perhaps the best way to articulate my attitude toward the practice of historiography as a methodology comes from a descriptive metaphor offered by Richard Lloyd-Jones, in an essay from *Learning From Histories of Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of Winifred Bryan Horner*. In that essay, Lloyd-Jones claims that, rather than seeing history as a collection of facts, as he had been taught in school, we ought to understand facts as simply the “hooks” upon which one hangs the brightly colored thread of historical narrative. The more hooks one has the more complex and interesting the story, but the thread can be hung on the hooks in a number of different ways, and indeed the hooks themselves are not necessarily fixed. What’s more, he points out that revisionist historians often move hooks around or discover hooks that have not been used before; the *fun* of history is most to be found in the various weavings of the narrative thread, and the *truth* of history is most to be found in the relationships made between the hooks, rather than the hooks themselves. I think the “truth” of any historical project is necessarily a mediated one: while the “hooks” of “fact” (or evidence, or documents) are a necessary and desired framework upon which to build an historiographic project; the end result is going to vary depending on who is hanging the threads.

For my purposes, a “technology studies” methodological lens entails approaching technological phenomena as historically and socially contingent, yet also capable of inherent biases. What that means is understanding that technology is not value-neutral, and is not separate or distinct from everyday human activities. Langdon Winner, a scholar whose work helped to create the field of technology studies, suggests that we ought to see technologies not simply as “tools,” but rather as “a form of life.” In other
words, the technologies we use are simultaneously products of social construction (the rules, connotations, and typical uses of a given technology determined by the cultural context of its use and dissemination) and of inherent affordances (the biases that Winner describes, such as the unavoidable violence of a nuclear bomb, or the implications inherent in a machine designed to increase efficiency). Approaching literacy technologies as neutral tools not only risks re-inscribing oppressive power relations, damaging the conditions of human life, and ignoring the economic, social, and political impact of history, but it also fundamentally misrepresents the very thing that we as scholars are meant to be studying: the influence of technology on the production of rhetoric (and vice versa).

**Overview of Chapters**

This first chapter has established the problem my dissertation will address: how to explain time generally, and the problem of media speed more specifically, in rhetorical theory. These opening sections have also defined the temporal phenomena through which I will explore the problem of media speed (periodicity and seriality), and the specific texts and period I will use as examples of those phenomena (the first daily newspapers in eighteenth-century England). Lastly, this chapter has established the methodological perspective that I will be using throughout the project: historiography and technology studies.
Chapter Two, “Theories of Time, Audience, and Technologies of Delivery,” articulates the connection between the particular medium that is the focus of this project (the regular publication of news in newspaper form) and the areas of rhetorical theory relevant to its study. Specifically, the second chapter suggests that discussion of the “newspaper crisis” centers around the ways in which texts create groups or communities (audiences, publics) and that our understanding of that phenomenon is limited. To better comprehend how texts reach and shape audiences, I argue that rhetorical theory needs to adopt a new way of talking about time, one that includes an understanding of serial and periodic texts. The chapter discusses how the field has talked about time, audience, and the canon of delivery, and suggests ways in which each of these areas could be developed and expanded.

Chapter Three, “The Birth of the Newspaper: Periodic Production and the Public Sphere,” begins with an in-depth contextualization of the eighteenth-century circumstances surrounding publication and the invention of the periodical press. Specifically, I discuss the organizations that facilitated the distribution of periodic texts and the technological changes that contributed to creating an institutionalized schedule of publication. This chapter also addresses the role of public sphere theory, based on Jurgen Habermas’s analysis of eighteenth-century coffeehouse culture, in understanding textual audiences today. Habermas and those who have built upon his work have relied heavily on descriptions of early newspapers as a source of evidence; my own investigation recognizes a debt to their scholarship while at the same time critiquing some of the conclusions drawn from it. I go on to point out the ways in which public sphere theory depends upon (although often does not acknowledge) a discussion of media: the
“spheres” being discussed are always spaces, either physical or textual. Those spaces come about as a result of rhetorical technologies, a point which is not often articulated. The mediated nature of public spheres is the first of many reasons contemporary theorists should care about eighteenth-century periodicals. This chapter ends by connecting the discussion of periodical contexts in the eighteenth century with present-day concerns over the advent of "network culture" and the proliferation of digital news contexts. I make reference throughout to the ways in which this historical work relates to current understandings of periodic publication, public sphere theory, and theories of audience and delivery.

Chapter Four, “Periodic Publications Themselves: The ‘Birth’ of Daily News,” begins where the last left off: describing how current controversies surrounding digital, networked communication can be understood and analyzed through the lens of this particular historical example. This chapter continues that project by looking at specific periodicals in their historical context, including a more detailed look at several extended examples to argue a broader point: that at the historical moment of the advent of daily, periodic news publication, there was a shift in how the reader of the periodical was addressed, a shift that became more tangible as the medium/genre matured and developed. I analyze two specific categories of periodicals: essay-papers (with the Spectator as my main example), and news-papers (with the Daily Courant as my main text, but looking also at London Gazette, the official newspaper of the British government in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries). I also briefly address the use of advertisements (in each category) as a genre of periodic writing in their own right, and one that both co-existed with and heavily influenced the other two.
Chapter Five, “Social Acceleration and the ‘Death’ of the Newspaper,” synthesizes the arguments made in the previous four chapters, and explores the myriad ways in which the historical evidence and theoretical frameworks can contribute to an understanding of the current context. I claim that the anxieties fueling commentary on the contemporary "newspaper crisis," when understood in the context of early English newspapers, are revealed to be durable topoi, commonplaces that shape and are occasionally shaped by the ongoing discussion of how informational texts can help to create, maintain, and empower audiences. The extent to which those commonplaces have been altered by technological (not to mention economic and cultural) contexts provides material for encouraging the latter goal: much research remains to be done on the effect of technology on the "pace of life" generally, but especially on the production and consumption of news and the temporal experience of audiences.

Conclusion

The treatment of time in rhetorical theory, while robust in its own way, is limited in its explanation of the temporal influences at work in rhetorical practice. A certain perspective, in particular, is lacking. Traditional discussions of time, focusing primarily on the function of kairos in the standard model of the rhetorical situation, have neglected to explain the temporal influence of enduring technological and social structures. In the midst of a whole host of technological "revolutions" which many claim will/have forever change(d) the way human beings think, communicate, and live, this particular historical moment provides a powerful exigence for better understanding how the context of
rhetorical practice can alter the temporal experience of rhetors and audiences alike. Focusing on the example of newspapers and periodic publication is meant to bring focus to this admittedly expansive topic; the larger implications of the project, however, are far-reaching. From the extension of rhetorical theory proposed in the following chapter, to the historical work in the two after that, to the application of the conclusions of those three to the present context, this project aims to significantly change the way the field of rhetoric and composition deals with time, by advocating for a systems-level perspective on the temporal aspects of the rhetorical situation and the construction of audience.

The next chapter will explore the ways in which time has been discussed in rhetorical theory, and will demonstrate that much of the vocabulary and modes of thought have not changed since Aristotle first formulated his treatise *On Rhetoric*. The perspective of the ancient Greeks, focused on the opportune moment to give a speech, or the methods for determining the best time in a speech to raise one’s voice, did not move far beyond the concerns of the present moment. Rich as the vocabulary of rhetorical temporality is, it does not account for the ways in which the rhetor’s and audience’s understanding and experience of time is constructed by context. Especially when the systems of communication being used lend themselves so thoroughly to displacing, compressing, shifting, or otherwise altering time, an understanding of rhetorical time must include a sense of the systems level analysis of what time actually is for those being persuaded (and doing the persuading). Chapter Two will therefore examine not only theories of time, but also the ways in which those theories are related to our understanding of audience.
Chapter 2

Theories of Time, Audience, and Technologies of Delivery

Time forms such an integral part of our lives that is it rarely thought about. There is no need, it seems, to reflect on the matter since daily life, the chores, routines and decisions, the coordination of actions, the deadlines and schedules, the learning, plans and hopes for the future can be achieved without worrying about what time might be. It is, in fact, extraordinarily difficult to think and talk about time. (5)

—Barbara Adam, *Timewatch*

I begin with what would seem to be simple questions: how does the field of rhetoric and composition talk about time? What are the arguments and key terms, and who are the most prominent theorists? Where can one find the most comprehensive account of time’s role in rhetorical theory? Time is a nebulous and difficult concept; as Barbara Adams points out above, the sheer omnipresence of temporal concerns (the deadlines and routines of everyday life) does not translate into an equivalent need to analyze time. Indeed, there is something of a disconnect between the practical questions of timing and theories of how time functions. As a fundamental dimension of existence, time serves as the medium through which humans experience change in the world; because we are constantly within time, explicitly discussing temporality is quite difficult. Indeed, scholars of rhetoric and composition have not focused very much on time itself, explicitly.

Yet while few theorists of rhetoric have chosen to focus on temporality exclusively, time is nonetheless ubiquitous. Indeed, as James Kinneavy has argued so
persuasively, one specific understanding of time (kairos) could be seen as “the dominating concept in sophistic, Platonic, and, in a sense, even in Ciceronian rhetoric” (80). While Kinneavy’s important work has established the centrality and importance of this one specific aspect of temporality, the conceptual framework for discussing the function of time in rhetorical theory remains relatively limited. *Kairos* as a concept does not lend itself to an analysis of systems or recurring situations, studies that go beyond the radical particularity of singular instances. This chapter examines the existing ways of understanding time in rhetorical theory, and attempts to expand that understanding.

In order to adequately discuss time as a factor in the creation, distribution, and reception of texts, this chapter will triangulate the temporal theories articulated in the first section with theories of audience and technologies of delivery in the second and third sections, respectively. More specifically, this chapter makes two arguments: first, that theories of time in rhetoric have been limited to a certain type of discussion (strategic or topical, rather than epistemological), and second, that discussions of rhetorical practices generally, and audience and delivery specifically, have long been associated with, and over-determined by, concepts of space (neglecting, thereby, the temporal dimension).

Without a doubt, the location and physical characteristics of a given place where rhetoric occurs can help to explain the speech acts associated with that space. As theories of space and place have become more popular in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, however, there has been a tendency to forget that space is intimately connected to time.4

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3 Examples include works such as Roxanne Mountford’s *The Gendered Pulpit*, Mark Nunes’s *Cyberspaces of Everyday Life*, or *The Locations of Composition* edited by Christopher Keller and Christian Weisser.

4 It is important to note that I am aware of the problems associated with attempting to consider space and time separately. Indeed, in scientific terms the two are so fundamentally connected as to be considered one entity: spacetime. The idea of spacetime developed out of Albert Einstein’s discovery of the concept of
I analyze the discussions surrounding both theories of audience and technologies of delivery and the ways in which each has been linked to various ideas of spatial and temporal relationships. Scholars have long understood that modes of delivery and audience analysis need to account for spatial considerations and can be understood through spatial metaphors. My contention is that there has been little attention paid to connecting these concepts with the idea of temporal change. Ultimately, I suggest that reimagining rhetorical theory (and audience and delivery specifically) through a temporal lens that focuses especially on the quality of periodicity can provide a much needed addition to our current understanding of rhetorical practice, and the ways in which communication systems help to construct our understanding of time.

**Concepts of Time in Rhetorical Theory**

Dates of update seem to be the most prevalent dates on the network, begging a chronology that is ever refreshed and refreshable, but rarely anchored against an explicit calendar of publication or circulation. Many have called for a way to certify whoness on the Internet—with electronic signatures or proprietary watermarks, for instance. Yet the problem of whenness looms at least as large... (137)

—Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New*

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special relativity, a theory which states, among other things, that instead of functioning as an absolute—time here is the same as time everywhere else—chronology actually changes in relation to the speed which an object is traveling, such that an object moving near the speed of light would experience a radically different passage of time than an object at rest. Although the effects of relativity are not likely to effect the phenomena I discuss in this project, the connection between space and time is nevertheless a topic of some concern. I will address this connection in further detail in Chapter Four.
Time is not a subject that is often directly discussed in the field of rhetoric and composition, especially with regard to writing technologies. As Danielle DeVoss, Ellen Cushman, and Jeffrey Grabill have noted, “many researchers pay attention to the what and why of new media without paying attention to the when of new-media composing” (15). Indeed, aside from essays explicitly dealing with the first two topics of this section (kairos and chronotopes), there is little mention of time at all in the field of rhetoric and composition. Devoss, Cushman, and Grabill’s article argues for understanding time as a component of the institutional contexts within which new media composition occurs. Geoffrey Sirc, in his essay “Serial Composition,” advocates for a revision of the stand-alone essay model of writing, suggesting that shorter, connected assignments (such as blog posts) might be more likely to orient students toward realistic writing situations. Neither essay cites other work in the field on the subject of time.

Time in rhetorical theory can be understood in (at least) three ways: 1) as a strategy for making an argument, 2) as a category (topos) of argument itself, or 3) as a perspective or an epistemology (in other words, as an interpretive lens that allows one to perceive the world). I will call these three ways of understanding time “temporal modes.” For the temporal mode of strategy (what might also be called a principle of composition, and might connect to the concept of kairos), one might imagine a child judging the proper time to approach her parents with a request; the child understands that not all moments are the same, and that by waiting for the right moment (or at least one that is better than others), she is more likely to receive a favorable answer. The timing of when she makes her argument is vital to its success.
The mode of time as a category of argument could be exemplified by a senator making the case that a budget must be passed quickly, because the time leading up to a deadline is running out. If the government does not pass a budget by a certain time, negative consequences will take place; therefore, the timeliness of a given action becomes a reason supporting an argument (rather than a strategy that organizes and shapes the argument). The distinction between these first two understandings of time can also be understood as the difference between “acting according to” and “talking about” time.

Time as an epistemology is perhaps the hardest of the three to understand. Temporal orientation governs an individual’s expectations of how the world works; I can only understand myself to be late for a meeting in relation to the expectations of others, and my own sense of obligation or guilt about being late will stem from the experiences with/in time I have had up to that point. As a point of view, my experience of time can shape every other action I take.

Along with these different modes of thinking about time, there are different vocabularies available in current rhetorical scholarship that can be useful when discussing time. Those vocabularies each have their own history, and each one has a given set of affordances. One vocabulary is better for talking about some things, another vocabulary is best used for a different set of things. As one way to illustrate the different modes of talking about time, I will associate a given vocabulary with a particular mode. The association is, almost by definition, artificial: each vocabulary (kairos, chronotopes, and the discourse of seriality) can be applied to, and can help to explain, each of the three ways of thinking about time (as strategy, as argument or topos, and as epistemology).
Still, the association is helpful not only as an organizing framework, which provides a specific order for the presentation of each theory, but also as an indication of the ways in which these vocabularies tend to function in current scholarship.

The three modes of thinking about time are certainly not mutually exclusive. Moreover, most discussions of time deal with each of the three categories to some extent. This section argues, however, that the third mode of understanding time, as an epistemology, has been overlooked. More to the point, I argue that the current vocabularies used for discussing time in rhetoric places undue emphasis on conscious, moment-oriented, strategic decisions about time, rather than the various factors that shape one’s epistemological understanding of time.

This first section of the chapter analyzes three ways of thinking about time (as a strategy, as a category, or as an epistemology) through the lens of three different vocabularies or time: the Greek concept of *kairos* (by far the most widely used in rhetoric), the Bakhtinian theory of "chronotopes" (which has had moderate coverage in the field), and the textual descriptions "periodicity" and "seriality," which are the key terms of this project, and are under-discussed in the field.

Table **1-1**: Temporal Modes Explained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporal Modes</th>
<th>Explanation of Temporal Mode</th>
<th>Framework/Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Helps the rhetor to plan when to make a certain argument, how best to go about persuading an audience. Time as a resource, to be used wisely.</td>
<td><em>kairos</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical</td>
<td>A characterization of time as belonging to a certain &quot;type,&quot; either as a way to discuss a kind of argument or as the subject matter being argued about.</td>
<td>Chronotopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological</td>
<td>A way of behaving in time that is temporally marked, a way of understanding what the temporal qualities of a given text or system <em>mean</em>.</td>
<td>Periodicity/Seriality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ultimate purpose of this investigation is to offer a vocabulary or a logic of time, a grammar through which to think about time as a characteristic of and actor in rhetorical systems, rather than as a component of singular situations.

The second section of the chapter surveys several theories of audience in rhetorical theory, and uses the three temporal modes to explain how those theories of audience came into being, and in what ways they are limited. I argue that theories of audience have been over-determined by spatial considerations. As a result, three ways of thinking of audience have gained prominence in rhetorical theory: audiences as real people (the audience "addressed"), audiences as a concept in the author's head (the audience "invoked"), and audiences as a set of conventions or community standards (the audience as a "discourse community").

Table 1-2: Theories of Audience Explained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience Mode</th>
<th>Explanation of Audience Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Audiences are real people, with real characteristics. Audience characteristics can be known and measured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invoked (or fictional)</td>
<td>The audience is a concept in the mind of the author, a re-creation of the type of person the author imagines will be receiving the author's message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse Community</td>
<td>Audiences are groups with shifting boundaries, sets of conventions and attitudes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These three concepts of audience are the basis for understanding the impact of a shift in temporal perspective on rhetorical theory, and leads to a more thorough analysis of the "discourse community" theories of audience in Chapter Three.

The third section of the chapter examines the fifth canon of rhetoric (delivery) and addresses the renewed importance of delivery in contemporary technological contexts. Specifically, this third section argues that changes in delivery technologies have resulted not only in a need for new theories of delivery, but also in a renewed importance of a new
temporal perspective. Discussions of distribution and circulation in digital contexts, particularly, prompts the need for an in-depth analysis of how time factors into the recovery of delivery in digital rhetoric.

**Time as a Strategy**

Since the publication of George Kinneavy’s landmark essay “Kairos: A Neglected Concept in Classical Rhetoric” in 1986, scholars of rhetoric have dealt with the question of time primarily by referring to the Ancient Greek concept of *kairos*. Kinneavy defines *kairos* as “the right or opportune time to do something, or right measure in doing something” (80), yet such a simple explanation belies the term’s complexity. Indeed, *kairos* is a complex concept with numerous meanings, a term that can be translated in a number of different ways, including: “‘symmetry,’ ‘propriety,’ ‘occasion,’ ‘due measure,’ ‘fitness’ ‘tact,’ ‘decorum,’ ‘convenience,’ ‘proportion,’” and more (Sipiora 1).

The variety and range of concepts that fall under the umbrella of *kairos* highlights the complexity of the term. Kinneavy insists that *kairos* cannot be separated from ethical considerations (the “rightness” of a moment being tied directly to concerns over how one judges what is “right,” beyond mere persuasive effectiveness). Indeed, *Kairos* seems to function as a blanket term for the practice of assigning value (for example, *kairos* is said to describe “qualitative time,” as opposed to *chronos* and “quantitative time” (Miller). I will elaborate on *chronos* in the epistemology section). Three related terms, used to modify *kairos*, are specifically related to value: *eukairos, kakairos*, and *akairos*. *Eukairos* is opportune timing, *kakairos* is inopportune timing, and *akairos* is a lack of
opportune-ness. Carolyn Miller describes the earliest uses of *kairos* as having a spatial dimension, related to both archery and weaving: in each case, *kairos* refers to an opening, a space through which an arrow or a shuttle must pass to be successful (1984:84).

Indeed, *kairos* has been described as “the ancient term for the sum total of ‘contexts,’ both spatial (e.g., formal) and temporal (e.g., epistemic), that influence the translation of thought into language and meaning in any rhetorical situation” (Sheard 291). Ultimately, then, while “right time and proper measure” can often serve as a convenient shorthand definition, these various other connotations serve to demonstrate the rich and multiple meanings of *kairos*. Indeed, those same multiple meanings are one important reason that *kairos* does not function well as a master-term for time in rhetorical theory.

Kinneavy grounds his discussion of *kairos* in classical texts from both the Sophistic and the Platonic schools. For instance, he quotes at length from Plato’s *Phaedrus*, in which Socrates argues that the art of rhetoric can only be perfected when one has the capacity to declare to himself with complete perception, in the presence of another, that here is the man and here the nature that was discussed theoretically at school—here, now present to him in actuality—to which he must apply *this* kind of speech in *this* sort of manner in order to obtain persuasion for *this* kind of activity—it is when he can do all this and when he has, in addition, grasped the concept of propriety of time [*kairos*]—*when* to speak and when to hold his tongue [*eukairos* and *akairos*] … it is only then, and not until then, that the finishing and perfecting touches will have been given to his science.
Surprisingly enough, “the term [kairos] does not occur in Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric” (Kinneavy 67). Despite that fact, Kinneavy argues that the treatise’s emphasis on “a specific act in a concrete case” should be read as an equivalent appeal; essentially, that by arguing for rhetoric to be understood as working on a case-by-case basis, Aristotle was articulating the importance of kairos to the larger project.

Beyond the many definitions offered by the use of kairos in Greek literature and philosophy, there are two main senses in which scholars of rhetoric have tended to approach kairos. In her forward to Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis, Miller notes two competing definitions that come out of that collection (and which can be seen in the translations and definitions offered above): one is of kairos as an expected or conventional order, the social context that determines propriety. When is it appropriate to say something? What kind of timing do our conventions demand? The other definition of kairos is almost the opposite: “the uniquely timely, the spontaneous, the radically particular” (Baumlin and Sipiora xiii). This second meaning casts kairic speech as independent, detached from artificial convention and connected to the persuasive power of the unexpected. Between the two, these definitions situate kairos as directly related to context: either the social context of genre (one’s thesis statement should be revealed at the end of the introduction, because that is when the audience expects it), or the context of the rhetorical situation (an appeal to national unity is more powerful after a tragedy).

The connection between kairos and the “rhetorical situation” has been firmly established. In an essay titled “Opportunity, Opportunism, and Progress: Kairos in the Rhetoric of Technology,” Miller offers an analysis of kairos’s value within technological
contexts, wherein she lays out three ways in which kairos serves as a useful concept: first, that it “combines both realist and constructivist understandings of situation (as represented by Lloyd Bitzer and Richard Vatz in contemporary discussions) and emphasizes the dynamic interplay between the two” (83); second, that kairos can usefully engage two distinct models of “change over time”: continuous (evolutionary) or discontinuous (revolutionary); and third, kairos is both temporal and spatial, as the connection to rhetorical situation indicates. Indeed Miller, noting the connection between the Greek roots that relate to weaving and archery, points out that kairos can be defined as “a rhetorical void, a gap, a ‘problemspace,’ that a rhetor can occupy for advantage” equivalent, in some ways, to Bitzer’s definition of “exigence” (84).

As these various definitions and uses suggest, if one uses the terminology of kairos, one necessarily focuses on particular moments. Kairos cannot be understood beyond the specific instance; a strategy that is successful in one moment might be disastrous in the next. Those moments are therefore isolated and unique pieces of time. Even the definition of kairos that is tied up in convention and “appropriateness” only makes sense when understood as applying to individual cases. Knowing the "right time and proper measure" in a general sense can guide you toward success in specific instances, even though that knowledge is ultimately no guarantee. What’s more, the “rightness” of “right time and proper measure,” while certainly related to various institutions, traditions, and systems of thought that structure the rhetorical situation, is ultimately judged based on the radical particularity of the moment. Kairos might explain how time relates to a given system, but only up to a point; beyond that point, the moment itself determines all.
Jordynn Jack writes that “*kairos* dictates that rhetorical discourse should always suit the particular moment in which it occurs” (Dissertation 13). Given the context from which *kairos* arose, a focus on “the moment” is perhaps unsurprising; when giving a speech, both the speaker’s and the audience’s experience of time is immediate, proximate: they are joined, as much as possible, in the same moment. As a principle of composition for written rhetoric, however, *kairos* ceases to make quite as much sense. To consider the *kairos* of a written argument, is the author meant to consider the timing of when she is writing, or when her readers will be reading? How is she to know when her readers will be reading? In some situations, the author perhaps has more control than others. In fact, periodicals tend to be one of those cases: published as widely as possible, but usually only for a short time, periodic texts often aim at very specific temporal targets. Today’s newspaper is meant for today’s newspaper reader, and while there might be some consciousness in the mind of the author that the story will be archived, and perhaps someday referenced by a historian or anthropologist, that remote audience is unlikely to have a great effect on the writing in the article.

The limitations of *kairos* as a moment-focused vocabulary may not immediately be apparent (how is that a problem, a skeptical reader might ask?). But changes in rhetorical situations and contexts, particularly in the means of persuasion available to rhetors, does not always happen in a singular moment, and is not always perceptible to the rhetor or critic in a given moment, or even in retrospect. A focus on individual moments cannot easily account for patterns, habitual practices, or the unconscious and often uninvestigated influence of accretion. As a rule, the framework of *kairos* presents time in one of the common ways that humans experience it: always in the present,
looking back at the past and forward at the future. While such a perspective is, to some degree, inevitable, that same inevitability can present itself as a bias: a failure to recognize that moments are connected, one to another, in ways that defy perception.

One example of a situation that the bias of \textit{kairos} imposes limits on is time-shifting. Technologies of communication have evolved over centuries (sometimes gradually, sometimes rapidly), and in the process of evolving they have dramatically impacted the scope of a given rhetor's temporal (and spatial) reach. Where a speaker in ancient Athens could only reliably count on reaching the ears of those present at the moment of that one speech, a writer in even eighteenth-century England had a panoply of communication options that altered not only who he or she could reach, but how often and how quickly. Indeed, time-shifting is one of the oldest purposes of rhetorical technologies: the temporal properties of a discourse are "frozen" or otherwise altered to make that discourse available to those not immediately present in time or space.

While certainly not the earliest occurrence of the phenomenon of time-shifting, the periodic publication of texts is a primary example of the ways in which such practices allow for a level of coordination and interaction between audience members that would not have previously been possible. That coordination can certainly involve conscious strategizing that happens in the moment: a newspaper that expects its readers to send its text to relatives who live outside of the normal circulation of that paper can address a secondary audience with a specific set of concerns, overcoming spatial barriers by manipulating temporal ones. The habits of thought that such a practice engenders, however, will likely be unavailable for examination if the framework one uses considers only the rhetorical efficacy of employing the practice in the moment. (I will explore the
issue of audience coordination in more depth later in this chapter, and the phenomenon of using the postal system to distribute newspapers in the following chapter.)

To summarize, then: the framework of *kairos*, as a moment-based, strategy-oriented theory of time, cannot adequately explain what makes those periodic texts so different from "singular" texts. While *kairos* is certainly very useful to discussions of rhetorical practice (a usefulness demonstrated by its widespread adoption in rhetorical criticism), the limitations described here suggest that additional perspectives on the rhetoric of time are worth exploring in some detail.

*Time as a Function of Argument*

Another lens for understanding the relationship between rhetoric and time can be found in a term coined by Mikail Bakhtin: the chronotope. Bakhtin defines the chronotope as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (82). Brought into rhetorical studies by a number of scholars (e.g., Mutnick, Prior and Shipka, Schryer), the chronotope is probably best understood, at least in the sense I intend to use it, through Jordynn Jack’s treatment in her essay “Chronotopes: Forms of Time in Rhetorical Argument.” According to Jack, Bakhtin uses the idea of the chronotope to describe a variety of types of relationships between space and time in literature: adventure time, historic time, folkloric time, and carnival time, “each of which grounds a different set of narrative events and patterns” (53). Thus, each situation necessitates a different understanding of what time is and how it works; those understandings of time, those chronotopes, in turn affect narrative flow
and (for our purposes the most important) perception of reality and the persuasiveness of language. The chronotope is not limited to fiction, however; Bakhtin points out that “this term [space-time] is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor” (82). Indeed, the chronotope appears several times “in other domains, including mathematics, biology, and language in general” (Jack 53).

Jordynn Jack’s use of this concept focuses on the ways in which different perceptions of space-time affect the rhetoric surrounding a given issue (in Jack’s case, genetically modified foods in Canada). For instance, Jack describes the chronotope of space-time compression as referring to “technologies that seem to accelerate or elide spatial and temporal distances, including technologies of communication (the telegraph, telephones, fax machines, the Internet), travel (cars, trains, jets), and economics (the imperative to overcome spatial barriers, open up new markets, speed up production cycles, and reduce the turn-over time of capital)” (Jack 57). She also elaborates, however, on a variety of ways in which various concepts of space-time can compete, overlap, and ultimately interact.

For the purposes of this project, periodicity (or seriality) could be seen as a competing chronotope to the moment-oriented theories of kairos. Traditional rhetorical theory, grounded in a concept of time that originated with the in-the-moment appreciation of a speech, conceives of time as a collection of such moments, which can only be apprehended one at a time. The competing chronotope of periodicity focuses on repetition and the pattern or cycle that serial texts follow. Where a moment-oriented
focus provides a better understanding of the various forces and motivations affecting a given piece of rhetoric, a chronotope of periodicity might allow a better systematic understanding.

At its base, the chronotope is a characterization of time. Different attitudes, beliefs, and ways of acting are attributed to a certain “type” of time (for instance, Jack points to a chronotope of scientific progress that has certain features and effects, and is unified mostly by the term “scientific progress” itself). Because Bakhtin pulls his theory from varying senses of time portrayed in works of fiction, the richness of the “chronotope” vocabulary is most obvious when discussing the ways in which various attitudes toward time have certain characteristics, and alter argumentation in a given way.

To say that kairos and periodicity are competing chronotopes is not to say that the two are mutually exclusive, however, or indeed that they cannot be used side-by-side. Time is not a thing, to be described as either one color or another, either hot or cold. A useful analogy might be to think of how physicists describe light: we can think of it as either a particle or a wave (wave-particle duality). Thinking of light as a particle allows us to explain one kind of phenomenon (e.g., the photoelectric effect, wherein matter emits electrons after being exposed to radiation of a certain sort), while thinking of it as a wave allows to explain another (e.g., visible light, ultraviolet light, and infrared light, previously thought to be unrelated, are revealed to be all be electromagnetic waves, just with differing frequencies). The two perspectives on time, kairos and the periodic/serial frame, map well onto the discussion of particles and waves: neither perspective is exclusively correct, strictly speaking, and both can be used to describe the same phenomenon, but each can be more or less useful for a specific purpose.
Moreover, reducing these two paradigms to a simplistic binary would be counter-productive: one can view time as periodic and still consider individual moments, just as one can view time as *kairotic* and still discuss patterns and other aspects of time. For instance, Thomas Rickert suggests that “whether thought of in terms of timeliness, decorum, or situation, *kairos* defines a rhetor’s relation to a unique opportunity arising from an audience or context, one that calls for a proper response. The art of *kairos*, in short, is invention on the spur of an unpredicatable, irrational moment” (72). Rickert’s claim that *kairos* is necessarily invention “on the spur of an unpredictable, irrational moment” seems like an incomplete view of how *kairos* functions, especially in online writing (though more generally as well). For instance, might *kairos* apply to texts written not in anticipation of a specific moment, but for a certain type of moment? Should we apply *kairos* to the publication and dissemination of a text, rather than simply to its creation? These questions suggest that even our understanding of *kairos* could be more nuanced and robust.

*Time As Epistemological Framework*

The thing that is missing from those other two accounts is a sense of what effect time has when it is not actively brought into the conversation. How does a given orientation toward time alter behavior when the actor doesn’t consciously strategize about that orientation?

Of course, both of the previously discussed frameworks do address that question somewhat. Treatments of *kairos* are closely linked to the concept of the rhetorical
situation, and a discourse of *kairos* would tend to influence its users to view those situations in terms of individual moments. The epistemological portion of *kairos* leads to a worldview of one waiting to act, anticipating a moment to pounce and analyzing the available data to best judge what that moment is.

The epistemology of the chronotope, on the other hand, would be influenced by the way in which Bakhtin’s categories are defined by the narratives out of which they come, and which they are used to support. When using the vocabulary of the chronotope, attitudes toward time are seen as stemming from character, motivation, circumstance, etc. A chronotope is, almost by definition, related to the idea of a topic, a common-place. The chronotope works as a type of argument, or an influencer of arguments.

This project illustrates the idea of time as an epistemological framework through the concept of periodicity (and, to a lesser extent, the broader term of seriality). Paying attention to periodicity (and attendant concerns of frequency, regularity, and other such subsidiary terms) necessitates a focus on elements of rhetorical interaction that the previous two modes do not consider. The accretion of habits and tendencies that form patterns of behavior (what Bourdieu would call "habitus"), as well as the influence of non-human actors and structural contexts, would be brought to the forefront, in favor of more conscious, anthropocentric discussions of an argument's "timing" or the "type" of time being discussed.

A negative definition of the epistemological view of time could help to explain it, and could be found in the examination of what *kairos* is not. For instance, many scholars (e.g., Frank Kermode, John E. Smith, William H. Race) describe *kairos* in contrast to another Greek concept of time, *chronos*. *Chronos* represents a concept of time that is
distinct and set apart from human considerations: time as a facet of nature, a fundamental characteristic of the physical world, an objective and implacable force. While *kairos* involves “timing” or judgment, *chronos* is a “fundamental conception of time as measure, the quantity of duration, the length of periodicity, the age of an object or artifact” (Smith 4). Although he uses it in a much different context, Smith’s mention of periodicity here is important: he casts the periodicity of a phenomenon as "natural," as outside the sphere of human decision making.

I would suggest, though, that the concept of periodicity creates an odd interplay between *chronos* and *kairos*. Indeed, periodicity seems *akairic* in many ways: the production and dissemination of texts on a regular schedule disregards any judgment of the appropriateness of timing. A daily newspaper publishes once a day regardless of the events that it is reporting on, and length, format, and other “proper measure” concerns are often determined more by economic or technological constraints than they are by the judgment of the author. Still, its periodicity also *gives* a newspaper its sense of pertinence, and determines many newspaper conventions, thus influencing its sense of decorum and convention. A regularly published newspaper represents both the banal juxtaposition of fragments from a larger picture of *chronos* (according to Benedict Anderson, events discussed in newspaper articles primarily provide a window into the ongoing, unstoppable flow of time), and deliberate design aimed particularly at one moment in time (how to address the mood of the day, what headlines and stories will best capture public interest). The interplay between these two factors is complicated, and cannot be subsumed under the traditional descriptors of “timeliness.”
Instead of viewing time as (on the one hand) a resource to be manipulated or (on the other hand) a passive background against which events happen and are measured, this perspective attempts to understand how temporal forces shape perception. To return to an example from the early pages of this project: considering the periodicity of a "day" (the rising and setting of the sun), one could focus on the strategy of picking which time of day, or which day out of many, one could choose to make a given argument. But an epistemological point of view might ask what affect the division of life into "day" and "night," of roughly this or that length, has on the audience's understanding of argument more generally. Since the length of a "day" varies across points in space (a “day” near the Arctic Circle can last up to 6 "months"), how does that variation change rhetorical practice? The next section will examine the practical effects of these temporal theories on one prominent area in rhetorical theory: audience analysis.

**Audience**

The consequences of a focus on time as a strategic and topical phenomenon can be seen in some of the most foundational aspects of rhetorical theory. In one prominent example, Aristotle (his treatise *On Rhetoric*) refers explicitly to different senses of time, but does so only in the context of audience: he suggests that the frame of mind that an audience is in will determine how best to persuade them, and that audiences will have a different frame of mind if they are thinking about the past, the present, or the future.

Thus, in Book I, Chapter 3 of *On Rhetoric* (Kennedy 46), he divides rhetoric into three
categories: deliberative, forensic, and epideictic (these “species” of rhetoric are also
described as, respectively, political, legal, and ceremonial). Each division is associated
with a certain type of time: political rhetoric looks forward to future events, forensic
rhetoric makes claims about the past, and ceremonial oratory draws on both past and
future to make some kind of comment about the present. Aristotle uses the three
categories to structure the rest of Book I, with Chapters 4-8 devoted to deliberation and
the utility of future action, Chapter 9 dealing with ceremonial speech, and Chapters 10-14
treating forensic investigations of past crimes.

Aristotle’s discussion of time in relation to these categories is fairly brief, and
worth quoting in full:

> [e]ach of these has its own ‘time’: for the deliberative speaker, the future
> (for whether exhorting or dissuading he advises about future events); for
> the speaker in court, the past (for he always prosecutes or defends
> concerning what has been done); in epideictic the present is the most
> important; for all speakers praise or blame in regard to existing qualities,
> but they often also make use of other things, both reminding [the
> audience] of the past and projecting the course of the future (Kennedy
> 48).

The division of time into different "types" has a distinct resemblance to Bakhtin's theory
of the chronotope: time associated with these events is assumed to have certain
characteristics, and time itself can be the subject of the argument (what shape the "future"
will take, attempting to build consensus around what the "past" looked like, etc.). This
characterization of time suggests that temporal orientation (toward the past, future, or present) is related to the genre of the discourse, that the mindset of those involved (and the rhetorical situation they are in) gives time certain characteristics.

Perhaps even more important, Aristotle’s mention of how time effects rhetorical practice relates directly to strategic concerns: how the rhetor and the audience interact, and what arguments will best persuade that audience. He argues that “a speech consists of three things: a speaker and a subject on which he speaks and someone addressed, and the objective [telos] of the speech relates to the last (I mean the hearer). Now it is necessary for the hearer to be either an observer [theoros] or a judge [krites], and [in the latter case] a judge of either past or future happenings” (Kennedy 47-48). For Aristotle, there is strategic value in anticipating how a given temporal orientation will affect the audience. On Rhetoric places a large emphasis on the importance of audience accommodation, and time is another means of accomplishing that persuasive end. Thus, according to Aristotle, time is a characteristic of situations, a topic that may be the subject of argument, and even a state of mind that audience members might be in, but none of those definitions allow for an exploration of time as a way of understanding what audiences are and how they come to be (the epistemological view). While both the chronotopic and the strategic articulations of time are valuable, a different interpretation of time's role in rhetorical theory could yield new and interesting information about how the concept of audience works in contemporary rhetorical practice.

Although the term “audience” is ubiquitous in more recent rhetorical theory, that very ubiquity has lead some scholars to suggest that our understanding of audience has become oversimplified, that “audience has been deconceptualized and, thus,
deproblematized by some researchers and practitioners in composition” (Porter 1). At the same time, despite its seeming simplicity and essential role in the field’s understanding of rhetorical theory, the concept of audience has remained vexingly difficult to pin down. Audience represents a kind of paradox, then; as Douglas Park put it, audience “as a subject for theory and for the teaching of writing,” is “obvious, crucial, and yet remarkably elusive” (Meanings of Audience 247). James Porter uses even stronger terms, suggesting that the term audience “floats and slides, means one thing here, another there. The more it is used, the less we are capable of seeing it: the term sometimes becomes transparent” (7). In other words, while everyone understands that audience is important (and seems, in many ways, quite simple), the concept nonetheless remains more elusive and complex than its widespread use would suggest.5

One reason audience remains such a slippery concept, I would argue, is that research on audience has tended to discuss the topic primarily in spatial terms. The problem of trying to figure out where, exactly, the audience for a given text is located (in the world, in the text, in the conventions of a community, or in the author’s head) has preoccupied scholars of rhetoric since Walter Ong began investigating the radical break between oral and textual cultures. Despite the various twists and turns of audience scholarship, the question of location has persisted, through discussions of whether the audience is fictional or real (“addressed” or “invoked”), whether an audience should actually be called a “discourse community” or a “public,” or even whether changes in

5 This argument should not, I think, be too controversial, as it has become an almost requisite part of any introduction to rhetorical theories of audience, including: Porter 1991, Park 1982, Ede and Lunsford 1984 and 1996, Eberly, etc.
communication technologies will make the idea of audience obsolete. However, while the lens of a spatial vocabulary has proved itself to be very valuable, it is only one way of understanding the nebulous collection of theories and questions we call “audience.” I argue that a greater sensitivity to the temporal dimensions of audience, literally the “when” rather than the “where” of textual reception, would help to clarify not only what we mean by “audience,” but why the concept has been parsed out in the ways that it traditionally has.

**Locating the Audience**

The purpose of this section is to investigate how an emphasis on the spatial dimensions of audience (rather than the temporal ones) has shaped our understanding of the concept. The section begins with a brief overview of the major arguments in audience scholarship, throughout which I argue that an emphasis on location has over-determined our understanding of this area of rhetorical scholarship. Next, I suggest some ways in which a temporal lens can provide a new perspective on these traditional understandings of audience. Finally, I argue that by articulating a shift, from strategic and chronotopic approaches to an epistemological understanding of temporal audiences, recent changes in the field's understanding of audience (many of which are directly related to changes in literacy technologies and the technologically mediated context of contemporary rhetoric) can be better explained and understood.

The impulse to “locate” the audience is a thread that runs through most theories of audience, in some cases more overtly than in others. Perhaps the best example of this
trend is the introduction to James Porter’s 1991 monograph, *Audience and Rhetoric*, which includes a section titled “The Problem of Locating Audience.” The section is one of two descriptions of “The Problem of Audience” (the title of the introduction), and in it Porter argues that not only is determining the audience’s “location” the central focus of scholarship on audience, but the question of location is essential for any practical use of the concept of audience in composition pedagogy. The use of “location” here is meant to be both literal and figurative; indeed, the various meanings of location in this context are precisely the point. As Porter puts it, “the question rhetorical theory asks is, where is the audience located? In the text? Outside the text? Or somewhere in between?” (x).

Clearly, the question of location is not simply a question of demographics, but also one of ontology: what the audience *is* on a fundamental level can be determined by where the audience is found. While this line of questioning has certainly proven useful over the years, I would argue that it has limited the scope of rhetorical theory and left several key concepts unexplained.

Rhetoric and composition scholars have historically focused on two main controversies surrounding our understanding of textual audiences. First, what is the nature of the audience? Second, given a certain nature, how do we effectively take into account the importance of that audience? Those two questions can also be re-phrased as explicitly spatial questions: how do we locate the audience ontologically? (Or, put another way, is my reader in my head, or out in the world?). And second, can the location of the audience tell us anything about how to address it? (Which, if put differently, might read: how does our understanding of “where” the audience is affect our understanding of what rhetoric is and how it is composed?). I will review the ways in
which the field has sought to answer these questions, and point out opportunities for fine-
tuning our understanding of these issues. I will then examine the ways in which theories of audience have (and ought to have) changed in response to changing technologies and theories of writing.

The first of the two questions has dominated the discussion of audience in rhetoric and composition. Answers to that question have ranged from 1) insistence that audiences are made up of real, knowable people, with quantifiable characteristics, to 2) theories that the audience is always only an image in the mind of the author, to 3) arguments that audiences are “discourse communities” (or some other abstract group identity) whose conventions and expectations are collective, mutable, and grounded in history. The juxtapositions of those three points of view have, in many ways, determined the current consensus on audience: depending on which view of “audience ontology” one takes, a number of conclusions about the practical task of audience analysis follow logically.

The first stance articulated above, that audiences are real people, I will call the “classical” or “realist” position. This position is best summarized “as referring to the actual people existing apart from and prior to the discourse” (Porter 3). Certainly, this stance is the one most often adopted when one faces the practical task of teaching audience analysis in a composition class. As mentioned above, the realist position stems in part from the oratorical tradition, wherein the speaker’s audience was present, visible, concrete, and thus knowable. In Book Two of On Rhetoric, Aristotle catalogues a number of potential emotional states and character traits that could influence one’s audience. In doing so, he places great emphasis on the importance of a rhetor adapting to the needs, desires, prejudices, and fears of those being addressed, and argues that the
individual’s life experiences are an important factor in determining how they will best be persuaded. This classical approach to audience at once attributes a large amount of importance to the task of “reading” one’s audience, and yet also attributes a fair amount of power to the audience: if the rhetor wishes to persuade the audience, the argument being presented must be shaped to the needs and desires of the listeners.

The classic example of treating an audience as “addressed” is the use of demographic information (e.g., age, class, race, gender, and the like) about the people reading or likely to read a given text. To use a simplistic example, *ESPN Magazine* might hire marketing professionals to study the characteristics of the people who subscribe to their periodical. While subscription is not identical to readership, a report that analyzes the “who is our subscriber base” question would likely offer insight into the identities of the real people who read the magazine, and the author could attempt to adjust her rhetoric for that “type” of person.

The second stance on the nature of audience, that of the audience as a construct in the mind of the author, is a direct response to the realist position. In what could be considered the beginning of modern scholarship on audience, Walter Ong famously posited that “The Writer’s Audience is Always a Fiction,” suggesting that the shift from oral to print culture separated authors from readers in a way that speech makers were not separated from their aural interlocutors.\(^6\) Because of their division across space and

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\(^6\) Ong’s discussion of orality and literacy, extended in his books *Orality and Literacy* and *Technologizing of the Word*, is echoed in the work of numerous others, including Marshall McLuhan (*Gutenberg Galaxy*) and Eric Havelock (*The Muse Learns to Write*).
time\(^7\), the author cannot be seen as addressing his readers as an “audience;” they are, more properly understood, individual and separate readers\(^8\) whose experiences of the text would necessarily be divorced from each other. More importantly, given the author’s (relative) lack of control over a disseminated text, the nature of those readers could presumably never be known; an author’s readership might be largest, and most definitively characterized, centuries after the author has died.

Ong arrives at two conclusions based on his understanding of textual audience: first, that the author of a written text necessarily creates an image in her mind—during the act of composition—of those whom she is addressing, casting them in a certain “role” as readers who both desire and understand certain things. This image of the reader is located firmly in the “imagination” of the author, but is also transmitted into the text itself.\(^9\) Second, Ong suggests that readers must accept and take up the “role” attributed to them, such that they “have to know how to play the game of being a member of an audience that ‘really’ does not exist” (12). To return to the simplistic example used above, the “fictional” (or “invoked”) audience of ESPN Magazine will necessarily have an interest in sports. Among a host of other assumptions and strategies, the author of an ESPN Magazine article will be writing for a reader who could, conceivably, think that a

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\(^7\) Although Ong does mention temporal separation briefly, he does not follow up on the effects such a disconnection might have on an author’s imagined idea of who their audience would be. 

\(^8\) Ong does note that the word “readership” suggests something of the unity described by “audience,” but he also points out that “readership” is not a collective noun. It is an abstraction in a way that ‘audience’ is not” (11). A “readership” implies an indeterminate, and ever-changing, number of people, and is perhaps best suited to texts that are continually published; periodicals have “readerships” more than books do. I will revisit this topic in later chapters.

\(^9\) Ong’s idea of the audience as a “fiction” closely resembles the theory, prominent in Reader Response Theory, of an “implied reader,” a concept described in detail by Wolfgang Iser, (The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response, and The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett), and other “reader response” critics.
given sporting event is interesting or important. That does not mean all of the readers of
ESPN Magazine will necessarily have that interest, but if they do act as readers, they will
be called upon to take up the role of someone who is interested in sports, and they enact
that role to greater or lesser degrees of success. While the readers may be widely varied
in their actual characteristics, they are brought together by their participation in the
“fiction” the author has created.

This stance raises questions about whether the term “audience” can even be
accurately applied to a collection of readers; Ong notes that, while audience “is a
collective noun,” “readers is a plural. Readers do not form a collectivity, acting here and
now on one another and on the speaker as members of an audience do” (11). Ong’s
mention of “here and now” is vital: speech has an immediacy that printed texts do not,
and the “role” of a text’s reader is, for Ong, necessarily an isolated one. He gives the
example of “a speaker addressing an audience equipped with texts,” and suggests that,
when the speaker directs the audience to read silently, “the audience immediately
fragments. It is no longer a unit. Each individual retires into his own microcosm” (11).
In opposition to the immediacy of the speech and the importance of audience reactions,
Ong suggests that “Written or printed narrative is not two-way, at least in the short run.
Readers' reactions are remote and initially conjectural, however great their ultimate
effects on sales” (16). Ong’s concept of the audience as a fiction depends absolutely on
the remote-ness of the reader, and while that remoteness may involve spatial distance, it
necessarily involves temporal separation.

Ong’s strong dichotomy between texts and speeches is, predictably, problematic.
What if the speech’s audience members are not paying attention? Are they part of the
audience by virtue of proximity? Although he never articulates it, Ong’s implicit argument about what constitutes an audience seems to depend almost entirely on two factors: attention and synchronicity (not his terms). The audience is the collection of people who are paying attention, but that criterion is qualified: if I tape the speech and give it my attention at a later date, I am not, according to Ong, part of the audience. My membership in that group is dependent on my also being in the right place at the right time. Indeed, the temporal question seems primary to Ong’s distinction: the only case in which a textual audience exists is in the author’s head, because while readers may be reading the same thing in the same place at something like the same time, they are not actually synchronized.

Ultimately, however, Ong acknowledges that his “audience as fiction” theory applies even to spoken communication; while “oral communication, which is built into existential actuality more directly than written, has within it a momentum that works for the removal of masks,” the masks (fictionalizations) to which Ong refers are a necessary part of language use. For Ong, then, the difference between the speaker’s and the writer’s “audience” is one of degree, not of kind; even as two people speak to each other face-to-face, they are fictionalizing each other, speaking to the conversational partner they imagine that they have in front of them, even while they revise that fiction with each of their partner’s reactions.

Scholars of audience often compare the current problems of audience with characterizations of audience in the oratorical tradition, setting up a dichotomy of “simple past” and “complex present”: in oral societies, the speaker’s audience were the people within earshot, while in print cultures one’s audience could receive the author’s argument
in a variety of ways, times, and places, without the author’s knowledge or acknowledgement. Thus the audience of a speech is cast as simple, concrete, and inherently “present,” while the audience of a written text is complex, ephemeral, and inherently “future.” Although this binary relationship is undoubtedly an oversimplification, and one that shortchanges the complexity of oral traditions in problematic ways, it remains a central tenet of those studying the rhetoric of written communication. In attempting to decipher the complexities of the textual audience, then, scholars have tended to focus the main controversies of audience through spatial terms and theories, perhaps with the implicit notion that, if the textual audience could be made to more closely resemble the audience of a speech, it would thus be easier to understand.

As Park puts it, “for an audience to ‘assemble,’ there must be a physical setting. For written discourse, the exact analog to the place of assembly is the means of publication or distribution” (Analyzing Audiences 493). Historically, for the audience of an oral presentation, the medium of communication was the place itself (the sound waves travelling through air, the echoes off of an amphitheater’s walls). The place made the audience. Who was able, or allowed, to be physically present? For written communication, the link between audience members (readers) is a common experience of the space of the page; while the readers themselves might be spatially and temporally disparate, they are linked by a common reading experience, an interaction with words that have been duplicated as exactly as possible.

During the two decades following Ong’s groundbreaking essay, the discussion of the writer’s audience was thoroughly extended, and a wide variety of alternatives were proposed. Those advocating for a traditional sense of the audience as “real” (see, e.g.,
Kollar and Monroe, Pfister and Petrik, Mitchell and Taylor, Flower) contended strongly with those in favor of Ong’s “fictional” or “invoked” audience (see, e.g., Park, Kroll, Long 1980), while others attempted to mediate between the two positions. Indeed, the controversy continued into the early 1990s (see Long 1990, Tomlinson), despite an emerging consensus among composition scholars that the “both/and” stance that acknowledged both sides, in some form, had become the dominant point of view. The definitive argument for mediating between the two sides appeared in 1984, in a special issue of *College Composition and Communication* on the topic of audience, when Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford published a co-authored essay entitled “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy.” Their essay has become the best known discussion of audience in the canon of Rhetoric and Composition scholarship.10

Ede and Lunsford’s main argument is that one cannot view audience as either addressed or invoked, and that overemphasis of one or the other leads to serious negative consequences. Too much of a focus on real, “addressed” audiences, “in its extreme form becomes pandering to the crowd” (159). Indeed, as Ede and Lunsford put it, “the toothpaste ad that promises improved personality, for instance, knows too well how to address the audience” (159), and in doing so ignores the ethical responsibility of the

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10 The most comprehensive response to the problem of the nature of textual audiences, and arguably the best-known discussions of audience in the field, are a series of articles written by Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford. Ede published two “historical review” essays (first in 1979, then again in 1984), aimed at summarizing and critiquing extant research on the topic of audience; Ede and Lunsford’s co-authored 1984 essay makes an argument for understanding audience as both “invoked” (a la Ong), and “addressed” (following the more classical, “realist” model); and a 1996 follow-up to the first co-authored essay revisits and challenges some of the pair’s earlier assumptions.
rhetor. Similarly, Ede and Lunsford also caution against Ong’s concept of the author creating “roles” for the reader to fulfill, noting that the various roles an author might choose to create are more often than not disempowering to the reader, and may perpetuate a problematic exploitation or domination of a given subject position.

The third type of audience theory, which I will call the “group view,” begins to move away from the individualistic focus of asking whether “the reader” is real or imagined. Rather than attempting to define “the” reader or audience member, whether by behavior, ontology, or function, the “group view” theories tend to categorize readers and texts, looking for associations and characteristics that will allow one to delineate groups, as well as the ways in which the members of those groups interact. Returning one last time to our standard example: a broad (and relatively useless) definition of the audience of a given issue of *ESPN Magazine* might be anyone who happens to have read it. One way of knowing something more about that audience would be to investigate the conventions of magazines: what is accepted as good practice, what rules govern the organization, style, and content of the texts. As well, a group view might examine the overlapping commitments its readers might have to other communities, or the ways in which the texts are made use of for other purposes: as starter pieces for conversation, as a supplement to another type of text, etc.

The group view of audience comes in several versions. The two best-known versions of this stance are the concept of a “discourse community” and the various theories of publics, counter-publics, and the “public sphere.” These theories of audience attempt to do precisely what Ong claimed was impossible: theorize a collective identity for the group of individuals who share the experience of reading a given text. Porter
defines a “discourse community” as a “local and temporary constraining system, defined by a body of texts (or more generally, practices) that are unified by a common focus. A discourse community is a textual system with stated and unstated conventions, a vital history, mechanisms for wielding power, institutional hierarchies, vested interests, and so on” (106). Theories of discourse communities rely rather heavily on the concept of “convention,” the accepted practices and expectations that dramatically influence the choices authors make. The idea of a discourse community is perhaps the theory of audience that is most amenable to a discussion of time, because discourse communities are necessarily determined by a complex interplay between tradition (the durability of convention over time) and a given rhetorical situation (in this case, the immediate demands of individuals and contexts).\textsuperscript{11} Even the “group view” stance, despite being more focused on abstract concepts such as convention, is over-determined by a dominant spatial vocabulary. One of the main problems facing discussions of discourse communities is the problem of “boundaries,” and while discourse communities are (almost by definition) not limited to spatial characteristics, the vocabulary of space is nonetheless predominant.

As I suggested at the beginning of the Audience section (through the discussion of Aristotle), the simplified understanding of time has, at least in part, lead to the dominance of spatial concepts in rhetorical theories of audience. Even the theorists previously mentioned who do consider time (Ong, and to a lesser extent, Park and Porter) do so

\textsuperscript{11} This use of “rhetorical situation” is fairly limited. I mean here mostly that there is often a conflict between “the way things are done” and “what needs to be done now,” such that discourse communities develop as a means of negotiating between past, present, and future.
primarily as a way of "locating" an audience in time, sometimes one audience member at a time. An alternative perspective might be to consider how an audience’s experience of time (or temporal relation to a given text or context) might alter their understanding of, or persuasion by, a given rhetorical strategy. The epistemological temporal mode would provide a lens for understanding audience formation and impact in a way that merely “locating” the audience would not.

Theories of audience that focus on groups will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, in the particular context of early eighteenth-century newspapers and their role in the creation of the public sphere. For now, though, I would close by pointing out that Porter, in an attempt to better define “discourse community” as a concept, touches on periodicity when he asks: “should discourse communities be defined in terms of the object of study, in terms of research methodology, in terms of frequency of communication, or in terms of genre and stylistic convention?” Porter suggests here that the habits of interaction, the ways in which audience members have a relationship to time (and to each other, through time) might be a definitional characteristic of that type of rhetoric. The relational aspect of temporal perception is exactly the point here: an examination of periodicity is only one concrete example of an epistemological understanding of time that considers the impact of temporal characteristics in a broader sense than the simply strategic or topical.
Technologies of Temporal Audiences

Discussions of audience in rhetoric and composition do not tend to work in quite the same way that discussions of readers do in literary scholarship. For the student of literature, the reader is either a maker of meaning (a la reader response or deconstructionist theories) or an appreciator of Great Art. In either case, the reader is only the reader so long as she is connected to the text: there isn’t much concern with what the reader does after she puts the book down. Rhetoric, on the other hand, has as one of its main objects the actions of readers; it matters a great deal if, after reading a piece of rhetoric, the reader acts in accordance with or against the arguments of the text, whereas it is unclear what it would even mean to act “against” a piece of literature.\(^\text{12}\)

In a presentation he made as part of the “Google Authors” series, Clay Shirky suggested that when a text is published, the people who read it are being “synchronized,” meaning that, however disparate they are in space and time, they are being brought together through the act of reading that text. Shirky seems to be suggesting that within a limited temporal range (people who read a given text within the first day, week, or month of publication), the actions of those people can also be synchronized. He mentions William James, who said that “thinking is for doing.” The same thing holds true for publishing, claims Shirky: “Increasingly, publishing is for acting. When you put a piece of information out, at least part of what you’re doing is you’re synchronizing the minds

\(^{12}\) This is not to say that literature does not make arguments, but instead that those arguments are almost never sufficiently direct or ineligible to interpretation as to allow for a simple statement of agreement or disagreement. Indeed, if a piece of literature were easily agreed or disagreed with, that might be a good test for finding a bad piece of literature.
of the people who go there and consume that information, who read or listen or watch.”

Those people can then be brought together, says Shirky.

The promise of bringing people together, of forming a group, is what the very idea of an audience is all about. The purpose of persuasion is, usually, to inspire a certain action (even if it is only the incipient action of a change in attitude, cf. Burke). That action is more powerful and more likely to be effective if it is undertaken by a group rather than an individual (or even many individuals acting separately). One of the main challenges to group formation is the separation of potential members in space and time. Recent changes in communication technologies seem to have reduced some of those limitations; yet, while the “where” of audience formation is at least somewhat understood (the Internet having long been characterized as the “last frontier,” a space for, for instance, “virtual publics”), the “when” of those audiences is not as clear.

The proliferation of a wide variety of digital writing technologies and the attendant changes in the ways in which people read and write suggest a need for yet another revision in the theories of audience that have played such a central role in the cannon of rhetorical theory. Jay Rosen, a professor of journalism at NYU, has argued that during the “Age of Mass Media,” audiences were “atomized,” meaning that while they were “connected up” to the sources of information (newspapers, television, radio, etc.) they were not very well “connected across,” to each other. As a result, the decision of what counted as part of the “sphere of legitimate debate,” those topics on which there was the possibility of reasonable disagreement, was left up to a limited few, the “gatekeepers” of professional news.
Another new perspective that could perhaps be understood as an amalgamation of the “audience addressed” and “group view” frameworks is the concept of an audience as “traffic.” The metaphor of traffic treats the audience as a group, but not necessarily a cohesive one. Indeed, “traffic” is an apt description of the readers of texts, because like the cars on the road each individual reader comes to and leaves the text in their own way. As an ever-shifting mass of individuals, both readers and drivers are at once random and predictable: individuals might deviate from the norm, but patterns of behavior do emerge that can be used to predict the success of a given route (following the analogy, a route would be a text or a series of links, the path along which the traffic travels).

If one is intent on analyzing the people who view a given webpage, certain facts are readily available. The number of people who look at a given page is of primary importance, certainly, but more detailed information can also be obtained, such as how long each person looked at the page, what they clicked on, what time of day they were looking at the page, how they reached it, etc. This type of “traffic analysis” ultimately misses the forest for the trees: although more precise in its delineation of a specific group based on behavior (i.e., people who looked at this page, and possibly even articulable as people who looked at the page for a given amount of time, meaning those who took the time to actually read what was there), it is unable to tell, for instance, the difference between a user who reads a page intently for ten minutes and a user who leaves their computer for nine minutes and clicks away upon sitting down again.

Another example of recent technology-oriented scholarship on audience is Robert Johnson’s essay on the “audience involved.” Johnson’s theory suggests an alternative to the previously dominant model of seeing readers as either “addressed” or “invoked” (á la
Ede and Lunsford). The audience addressed were concrete beings, people who needed to be persuaded or at least appealed to, where as the audience invoked was a textual or conceptual construct, the ideas of who the reader might be (or ought to be) that then shaped the text, or even the reader herself. In contrast, Johnson’s theory of the audience involved considers readers as users, meaning they are both the agents who participate in knowledge creation and the rhetorical audience for the presentation of that knowledge.

Although Johnson positions his practice as a kind of mediation between the “invoked/addressed” binary, it seems like his “audience involved” comes down pretty heavily on the “audience addressed” side of the continuum, rather than eliding the distinction altogether. By bringing the “user” into the classroom, he is most certainly making the audience more immediate and concrete for his students. But in doing so, he also takes away some of the possibility inherent in the idea of the audience as “invoked.” Johnson doesn’t seem to think that “audience involved” is the same as “audience addressed,” and to a certain extent he is right; after all, there is a distinct gap between the practice of audience analysis based on data that is considered “real” (demographics and other statistical and factual claims to truth), and the practice of audience analysis based on asking “so what do you want us to do?” or “what do you think of this draft?” Still, that involved audience is by far closer to the concept of the “real” audience that is being “addressed” than it is to the fictionalized, “invoked” audience.

The traditional model of audience hasn’t considered connections among audience members because, quite simply, those connections lead to a separate communication event by the standards of this model. As soon as an audience member attempts to address the rest of the audience, that one individual becomes a rhetor, while the others remain a
mass of listeners. This disparity is even clearer when the rhetorical situation involves
print rather than speech. Replies to a published article can come in two forms: published
(and thus creating simply another such rhetor/mass audience situation) or private,
wherein individual audience members confer about their reactions to a given text. Only
when those two modes of response start to get confused, either because the boundary
between them gets complicated or the exchange of responses becomes some new kind of
conversation, that we start to see the idea of the audience as a mass of individuals
breaking down.

The atomization—or dispersal—of the audience in the traditional model has a
large effect on how we understand the role of temporal proximity as a factor of audience
definition. When the audience is a mass of individuals that don’t have as many ways to
communicate with each other, their temporal proximity doesn’t matter as much. Once
inter-audience relations become not only a reality but an overwhelming majority of
existing communication, we can no longer afford to think of audiences as static groups of
passive individuals.

Delivery As Time and Space

Classical rhetorical theory was devised a long time ago in cultures that
were rigidly class bound and whose economies depended upon slavery. They were invented for the use of privileged men, speaking to relatively
small audiences. Those audiences were not literate, and the only available
technology of delivery was the human body. (264)

—Sharon Crowley, Composition in the University
As one of the five canons of classical rhetoric, delivery is one of the germinal terms of rhetorical theory, and as such has occupied a prominent place within the history of the discipline. In studies of written rhetoric, however, the role of delivery has often been unclear, or even ignored entirely. Often described as one of the two “neglected” canons (the other being memory), delivery has been characterized as “overlooked,” “out of place,” and “an afterthought.” The reason for delivery’s neglect seems straightforward and commonly agreed upon: when the study of rhetoric shifted from the oratory that dominated the field for centuries to the written page, delivery became a somewhat flattened category. Where earlier scholars of rhetoric would provide detailed accounts of proper pronunciation, tone of voice, volume, and (perhaps most appropriate to this project) timing, those articulating a written rhetoric did not have an obviously available corollary to describe within writing.

Of course, many of those same qualities of spoken delivery have parallels in the language of writing instruction: the rhythm and inflection of the written word, the timing and tone of one’s arguments, etc. When those concepts are concretized in writing, however, they often become the province of Style or Arrangement. Delivery is considered too bodily, too spatial, too mutable a concept to refer to words and fonts. As James Porter has pointed out, “we do not typically use the term ‘delivery’ in connection with the history of print publishing. Delivery as a term was associated almost exclusively with speech, not with print” (210). Building upon Porter’s point, I would argue that the

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14 Martin Jacobi, Delivering College Composition
Elision of delivery in rhetorical theories of writing is directly related to the temporal differences between oratory and print.

Printed texts are seen as "fixed" in time. Indeed, an example from earlier in this chapter noted that the "time-shifting" properties of print were derived from the text's ability to overcome temporal barriers, so that two readers can experience the same text at different times. Oratory, on the other hand, is more obviously fluid and mutable, such that the "text" of a speech (which includes the body of the speaker) can be changed from moment to moment. Yet both types of rhetoric exist in time, even if the text's temporal qualities are harder to see (and are perhaps more dependent on contextual influence).

The delivery of a printed text, which can include publication and circulation, formatting, and of course periodicity (for serial texts), has significant temporal implications. Those issues of delivery are further complicated by changes in delivery technologies.

As the quote from Sharon Crowley (above) indicates, technology and delivery have always been imbricated, such that one cannot mention the delivery of a text without at least implicitly referencing the use of technology. In Crowley’s example, the technology used is one quite often overlooked: the human body as a delivery system. Manuals of rhetorical practice that focused on delivery would often feature diagrams of hand positions, stances, facial expressions, and other ways of manipulating the body in order to convey a particular emotion, concept, or sentiment (Hawhee and Holding). To discuss delivery is necessarily to discuss the use of a medium, a technology of communication. The neglect of delivery as a subject of rhetorical theory should perhaps be considered ironic, then, as the shift in communication practice from oral to written rhetoric which obscured the importance of delivery was itself a change in the technology
of delivery; written language depends just as much on a codified set of delivery principles, but they differ drastically from those at work in oratory.

The advent of online writing and multimedia composition has certainly led to a rebirth of delivery as a category of rhetorical theory. No longer are the options for delivery seen as homogeneous: as soon as the media for communication multiply and begin to duplicate each other, questions of how to deliver a given argument proliferate. Until now, however, the answers to those questions have been framed primarily as spatial questions, and the advent of new technologies has spurred discussion of delivery precisely because there are a variety of new (virtual) spaces in which writing is appearing. Indeed, despite the modest resurgence of attention paid to delivery, until very recently there was no coherent sense of how, exactly, the “fifth canon” might be revitalized for the discussion of digital texts.

Changes in the field of composition, and especially in the development of new writing technologies, have changed the role of delivery and brought about numerous calls for a renewal of scholarship on the subject. In her keynote address to the 2005 Computers and Writing Conference, Andrea Lunsford pointed out that, of all the changes to the field of composition during her 30 year career, “no change has been more significant to me than the return of orality, performance, and delivery to the classroom” (170). Lunsford casts the “return” of delivery as an historical phenomenon, pointing out the way in which, “beginning in the mid-twentieth century, . . . and crescendoing in the last two decades, the arts and crafts associated with the fifth canon have moved to the center of our discipline” (170). The focus of the talk, and presumably the causal force behind delivery’s return, is the proliferation of a plethora of media available to
composition students in today’s classrooms. The more recent “crescendo” is likely meant to refer to a large number of new writing technologies, from blogs, wikis, and other “internetworked writing” (Porter) facilitated by the World Wide Web, to the multimodal expansion of audio and video composition.

Implicit in Lunsford’s arguments is a simple and straightforward claim for a certain kind of soft technological determinism: the variety and availability of communication technologies has increased rapidly, and therefore figuring out what to do with those technologies has become an important priority to our field. Because these modes of writing are there, and in use by others, we need to teach our students how to use them. Lunsford is certainly not alone in this claim. A year prior to Lunsford’s address, in her own chair’s address to the 2004 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Kathleen Yancy announced that “literacy today is in the midst of a tectonic change” (298). Yancy questions conventional and institutional definitions of “writing,” pointing out that writing IS "words on paper," composed on the page with a pen or pencil by students who write words on paper, yes—but who also compose words and images and create audio files on Web logs (blogs), in word processors, with video editors and Web editors and in e-mail and on presentation software and in instant messaging and on listservs and on bulletin boards—and no doubt in whatever genre will emerge in the next ten minutes. (298)
Yancy’s list of genres, and her re-definition of writing in terms of medium, serves to emphasize the extent to which traditional understandings of our field’s object of study need to be revised, along with our theories of how to approach the teaching of writing. Lunsford redefines the word “writing,” in a manner similar to Yancy’s redefinition a year earlier, casting it as “a technology” which, among other things, “tak[es] advantage of the resources of a full range of media” (171). The determinist argument that opens both talks is followed, in Lunsford’s case, by a narrative account of designing a First Year Composition course, a narrative that challenges some of the assumptions mentioned above: Lunsford and her colleagues encounter a series of problems, including student resistance to the idea that the multi-modal composing they are learning actually counts as “writing.” Despite a sophisticated definition of composition as the utilization of multiple media to create meaning, there still seems to be confusion about the role of those modes of delivery in the practical task of writing instruction.

James Porter’s recent essay “Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric” provides the first account of delivery that has been updated for “the distinctive rhetorical dynamics of Internet-based communication” (207), a context Porter describes as “a range of media, technologies, rhetorical venues, discourse genres, and distribution mechanisms— everything from online discussion forums to news outlets to academic journals to shopping malls to online museums to simulated game and lifeworld environments to wikis to blogs to social networking services (SNSs), and so on” (208). Porter begins by explaining the circumstances which led to delivery becoming a “degraded” area of study, suggesting that
delivery was a dominant concern of the much-maligned English elocutionary movement of the 18th century, with its excessive (some might say obsessive) focus on correct pronunciation and usage, as well as with decorum—the correct posture, stance, and gestures of the orator. … here is where the art of delivery became degraded. Delivery techniques became disconnected from rhetorical considerations such as emotional effect on audience (as in Quintilian) or ethical and political action (as in de Pisan).

(210)

The point here is that the stultification of oral delivery carried over into discussions of textual delivery as well. This argument is echoed by Robert Connors in his essay “Actio: A Rhetoric of Written Delivery (Iteration Two),” in which Connors describes composition’s treatment of delivery as “a series of terse, mechanical commandments” (65).15 By equating delivery with a stilted, limiting set of requirements on how a given text should be presented (“double spaced, with 1 inch margins”), composition scholars have limited our understanding of how changes in delivery can affect the life and function of a text.

As a remedy, and a response to the vibrant new possibilities for “Internet-based communication,” Porter lays out five categories or topics that should help to structure any inquiry into digital delivery: body/identity, economics, access/accessibility, interaction,

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15 Connors analyzes the variety of delivery choices made possible by early word processing software, focusing primarily on the availability of a wide selection of fonts. His essay, published in 1993, could be seen as a precursor to Porter’s work on mediated delivery, along with Robert Courage’s 2006 essay “Asynchronicity: Delivering Composition and Literature in the Cyberclassroom,” which, despite the title, does not have much to do with perceptions of time, but which does offer an insightful look at the delivery of instruction online.
and distribution/circulation. Body and identity is perhaps the most obviously related to traditional understandings of delivery. The advent of voice and video technologies has led to a renewed interest in oratorical delivery; an example might be the best method of addressing an audience through a YouTube video.\(^{16}\) Beyond “representations of the body, gestures, voice, dress, image,” however, Porter also includes within this category “questions of identity and performance and online representations of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity” (2).

Three of the other topoi Porter describes—interaction, access/accessibility, and economics—are types of relationships an audience might have, either with other audience members, with the interface itself, or with entities implicated in, but not necessarily directly involved in, the production and consumption of texts. Interaction, a topic made especially salient in light of popular focus on “Web 2.0” and potential of digital technologies to connect people with each other, demands a better understanding of both the affective and interpersonal impact of technologies, both social networking and otherwise. The dual terms of access and accessibility refer to the relationship a reader or writer might have to digital technologies: not simply whether they possess the devices necessary to make internetworked conversations available, but also the extent to which the digital environment accommodates their unique perspective and circumstances. Economics refers to commodification of text and textual practices, which could include

\(^{16}\) As mentioned earlier, less recent technological changes, such as the advent of radio and television broadcasting, have lead some scholars (most notably Walter Ong) to articulate a theory of “secondary orality,” or an emphasis on oral culture in literate and post-literate societies. While internetworked communication certainly extends the impact of that phenomenon, the bodily presence of a speaker in a cyberspace is uniquely paradoxical in a way that demands a new theoretical framework, but is beyond the scope of this project.
(but is not limited to) issues of copyright, authorship, control of information, or the politics and policies governing textual and informational sharing.

While all five categories suggest issues and concerns relevant to the delivery of news through digital writing, by far the most central to a discussion of periodicity will be the category of distribution/circulation. Porter makes a distinction between the two terms, arguing that distribution refers to the conscious choices a rhetor makes about the medium and publication context used to convey her message. An example Porter uses is deciding whether to contact a friend by email or by phone when setting up a lunch date for later that day. Clearly, contextual concerns inform distribution decisions. The ways in which an author can distribute a text varies widely depending on the context, in terms of the software shaping the actual digital delivery, but also in terms of the social and cultural meanings attached to different distribution methods. Porter describes a number of choices available to a rhetor distributing digital texts, choices ranging from HTML tags, keywords, Creative Commons licenses, and various other strategies and characteristics of texts that can be used to affect a text’s publication.

In contrast to distribution, circulation is cast as the life a message has beyond the author’s initial publication. Porter’s example is publishing a document as a .pdf, a format which discourages copying, as compared to publishing the same text as HTML with embedded keywords that maximize the chances of finding that text through a Web search. Porter places significant emphasis on the ways an author can try to make circulation happen (and even try to control it), noting that "[h]ow I design the work, license it, and tag it—and the location(s) I choose for its original distribution, and when I distribute it—all these matters play a part in determining the circulation potential for that
While the distinction Porter articulates is important, his focus on conscious choices made by the rhetor could be limiting. All texts, but especially digital texts, move through space and time in unexpected ways, and have lives that often extend beyond what the author ever thought possible. Paying attention to the consequences and effects of digital practices and habits can help us understand not only how to design better texts, but also the larger impact of a given rhetorical environment (in this case, the impact of digital writing environments on an audience's temporal experience).

**Conclusion**

Much of the theories of time in the field of rhetoric and composition focus on practical and concrete concerns, strategies for using timing to a rhetor’s advantage. In contrast, the concepts discussed in this chapter have all, in their way, been rather ephemeral, whether it is the idea of writing to an audience that is never really “there,” or the prospect of having little control over the actual delivery of carefully created texts. Time itself can be either ephemeral or concrete; it can refer to a date and time as a rhetorically significant marker attached to a text, or to a factor that has an unseen effect on reception and persuasion. This central theme of the chapter, the disconnect between presence and absence, is in this case primarily a disjunction between the presence of a speech context versus the absence of a writing context: written discourse is always already displaced, an attempt to bridge gaps in space and, of course, time.
The point of view articulated in this chapter, and advocated by this project, is not meant to replace practical considerations. An epistemological view of time does not make a strategic or topical approach obsolete. On the contrary, these various ways of understanding time can deepen and enrich each other. Knowing how a set of practices shapes peoples experience of time, or the inherent temporal affordances of a given technology, has the potential to make strategic approaches to persuasion eminently more successful. The fact that recent changes in reading and writing environments (the advent of digital rhetorics) have prompted a renewed interest in theories of audience and delivery makes those theories an excellent starting place for an investigation of the epistemological view of time, but the concept does have broader implications. For the sake of limiting the scope of this project, however, those implications will not be explored here.

Ultimately, despite the fact that vast changes are taking place with respect to how rhetorical production is delivered to its recipients, there has been little discussion of our changing understanding of who those recipients are and how they are consuming texts. I argue in the next two chapters that periodically produced texts have long been the basis for a fairly specific kind of group formation. Theories of audience have always depended on an understanding of groups of readers and listeners being joined by the texts they are consuming, and the periodic nature of those texts plays a large role in the creation of those audiences. I argue that this temporal perspective is vital to an understanding of how the rhetorical situation has changed over time. Moreover, I claim that—given the massive uptick in serial production with the advent of the Internet and always-on writing contexts—a discussion of how periodic production helped to create the public sphere
could be used to explain what effect a departure from periodicity may have on the use of rhetoric in public discourse.
Chapter 3

The Birth of the Newspaper: Periodic Production and the Public Sphere

The process of technological change is, usually, easily monitored. It is less straightforward to comprehend new procedures, new technical possibilities, and new structures for the organization of time, where processes have different paces relative to each other: education in all of these affects attitudes and expectations in authors, manufacturers and readers alike. Inevitably, as past everyday practice comes to require conscious study, so its own rationale slips gradually away. (2)

—David McKitterick, Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830.

Walking up to a coffeehouse in London circa 1700, the average patron might not even have been able to tell what sort of establishment he (and it was likely a “he”) was looking at. The coffeehouse was one of several kinds of “public house,” literally private homes which had been opened to paying customers. Indeed, “most coffeehouses were in fact hardly distinguishable from the rest of the buildings around them. Coffeehouse proprietors tended to live on the premises with the rest of their family” (Cowan 80). Upon entering a coffeehouse, our patron would likely see one large room, although some of the “larger and more prosperous coffeehouses may have offered several rooms to their various customers, perhaps even private rooms” (Cowan 80). The room would probably smell of tobacco smoke, the vat of coffee brewing in the fireplace, and whatever food was on offer that day.

As popular gathering spots, coffeehouses would see customers who only stopped in for a brief period amid other duties and errands, but also those who would sit for long
periods of time, talking, reading, and (of course) eating and drinking. Although based in a private home, our imagined coffeehouse could well have been both large and quite well-attended; indeed, it was “not unusual to find more than forty or fifty men together in a coffeehouse at the same time” (Cowan 84). The proprietor of the coffeehouse (usually also the head of the household, almost as likely to be a widow or unwed woman as it was to be a man) would spend most of her or his time behind the bar, onto which the patron would drop a penny upon entering, before seating himself at one of the available tables (which could be of varying sizes). Perhaps the most salient detail, for the purposes of this study, is the contents of those tables: pamphlets, notices, and the newspapers of the day. The coffeehouse was such a place that, “for a penny admission charge, any man who was reasonably dressed could smoke his long, clay pipe, sip a dish of coffee, read the newsletters of the day, or enter into conversation with other patrons” (Pelzer and Pelzer 40). Historical and theoretical accounts of the impact of early newspapers have tied them inextricably to the location of the coffeehouse; the patron described above represents both the concrete realities of early newspaper readership and the ideals of citizenship and public discourse that such readership has been said to create.

David McKitterick, in the quote which opens this chapter, argues that while technological change is easily monitored—i.e., specific tools and devices can be recognized and recorded—systematic or procedural change is much harder to pin down. While McKitterick's division of "technology" and "procedure" is problematic, his larger point is particularly appropriate to this project: some kinds of change are harder to measure than others, and "new structures for the organization of time" are often the hardest of all to perceive. Imagining those structures as perceived by the patron
described above is, at least in part, the project of this chapter. Many scholars have "located" the beginning of the "public sphere" in the coffeehouse described above. In fact, the very existence of a "public sphere" has been doubted precisely because some critics—focusing too closely on the lack of obvious, mechanical change—have discounted the kind of procedural and discursive change that proved foundational for modern civic discourse. I argue that several systemic changes—in the circulation of information and the telling of time—were responsible for the shift in attitude and behavior that lead not only to the rise of periodic publication of news, but also the widespread investment in "public opinion" as a valuable social force.

The emergence of the periodical press in England represented a significant change from earlier printing practices. The difference lay not in the physical devices and locations associated with periodicals, however, but in the frequency and type of use to which they were put. The mechanical press used to print the first daily newspaper (the *Daily Courant* in 1702) was not substantially different from those presses used fifty years earlier or later. Instead, as Richmond P. Bond notes, periodicals such as the *Spectator* were able to print daily issues primarily because they were published by two separate printers, who traded off the printing duties such that each one was only producing three of the six issues per week (xx-xxiv). Although the physical presses used to create a printed page were no different, the printers found a way to change the relationship between the audience and the printed material by a slight change in use: a change in procedure rather than in the material tools of their trade. The result of that change was a regular schedule of production, along with accompanying changes in format and content,
which began the tradition of periodic publication and irrevocably altered the print medium.

Similarly, several of the institutions that contributed to the establishment of periodic publication as a regular practice owed their popularity to shifts in "procedure." Coffeehouses did not differ radically from other locations that were licensed to serve food and beverages at the time, except that they distinguished themselves by becoming centers for the dissemination and discussion of periodically produced texts: simply by having copies of newspapers and essay-sheets available, the coffeehouse became an icon of a new age of communication. Because they served as locations for reading and discussing the news, coffeehouses and "coffeehouse talk" have long been associated with the creation of public opinion and the public sphere. As another example, while the postal service quadrupled in size between 1650 and 1714, the system as a whole remained remarkably similar to earlier incarnations (except for the invention of the London Penny Post). These seemingly innocuous changes in production and dissemination—the use of multiple presses, the coffeehouse table as a centralized location for textual distribution, even the invention of the Penny Post—were made to accommodate the fundamental difference of periodic (meaning regular and repeating), rather than episodic (meaning irregular and occasional), production of texts. Such changes ultimately created a sense of regularity, a new concept of audience participation, and a new attitude toward time. The textual products of these new writing contexts, the newspapers, essay-sheets, and other periodical texts of the turn of the eighteenth century, exemplify the changing relationship of text to audience, and suggest new ways of
thinking about the effect of periodic production and distribution on readership and reading practices.

Looking back on this period from the perspective of the present, one could easily forget that, while an environment of daily news publication has long been the norm, it was not always so. To return (briefly) to the McKittrick quote from the opening of the chapter, then: in order to understand the ways that that environment has shaped modern thought about news, the "past everyday practice" of life prior to daily news requires the "conscious study" of this chapter, so that the rationale behind that practice might be kept from "slip[ping] gradually away." The purpose of this chapter is to examine the principles of seriality and periodicity described in chapter one within the historical context of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Britain and particularly as it relates to publishing practices and theories of the public sphere.

In order to suggest a sense of how these technologies of periodicity developed and what impact they might have had in the realm of audience, this chapter moves from a discussion of various arguments concerning the public sphere, to contributing factors which influenced periodic publication (technologies and social concepts that impacted periodicals).

I will argue three points throughout: first, whatever “public sphere” existed at the time was always mediated, which is to say that it was a result of, and dependent on, a variety of communication technologies which have yet to be fully taken into account. Second, I claim that the influence of a changing conception of time, and specifically the principle of periodicity, has been underestimated in recent analyses of the societal impact of the newspaper. Lastly, I will argue that the effects of periodicity as a publication
practice extend beyond the creation of community (the public sphere theory), suggesting specific attitudes and expectations that are bound up in the form of periodic (and possibly all serial) publications.

**Newspapers As Conversation Starters: Theories of the Public Sphere**

The controversial, and yet widely influential, set of theories indicated by a discussion of the public sphere were first articulated by Jurgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*.\(^{17}\) Habermas claims that “a public sphere that functioned in the political realm arose first in Great Britain at the turn of the eighteenth century” (56). By “public sphere,” Habermas means a space, both physical and discursive, in which citizens could come together and form opinions, usually about current events. That space, in Habermas’ conception, could be described as: universally inclusive (or ideally so); a space for the formation of public opinion (a term which is itself somewhat contested); a source of and encouragement toward “rational-critical discourse,” meaning discussions where logic and argument, rather than rank and influence, carry more weight; a space apart from, and perhaps in opposition to, the will of the State, the purpose of which was to keep state authority in check; and dominated by a “rising middle class,” made up of those in the Professions (doctors, lawyers, and clergymen) as well as bureaucrats, military officers, shop-keepers, and merchants of all kinds.

\(^{17}\) First published in German in 1962, first translated into English in 1989.
Ever since the English translation of Habermas's work was published in 1989, various iterations of the theory of the public sphere have rapidly gained popularity as ways of describing audiences. Discussions of the public sphere (and subsequent critiques) have also spread across disciplines unconcerned with audience, however. I would argue that the importance and relevance of this theoretical framework is directly related to the explanatory power it offers for discussing the basis and origins of democracy and civic engagement. The Habermasian public sphere fits neatly into a narrative that ascribes to a "free press"—traditionally newspapers—the transformative ability to empower disenfranchised groups and re-shape social and political relationships (I say more about this dominant narrative in Chapter Five). All of which is to say that the public sphere's main "claim to fame" is the formation of "public opinion" as a political force, such that the "will of the people" became a legitimate motivating influence in political life.

As a result of the public sphere's popularity, early eighteenth-century coffeehouses—and the texts their patrons read in them—have garnered much attention due to their role as the primary evidence cited to support Habermas’s theory. Theories of the public sphere are often contentious: there are a number of different models of how the “public sphere” (or “spheres”) work, as well as serious questions of whether the historical examples upon which Habermas based the original theory are valid. Despite that fact, the concept of the public sphere remains an important part of our discussion of how readers become more than individuals (i.e., how they interact with others and come together to form audiences, communities, publics, etc.). Most conversations regarding the public sphere (and the periodicals that are used as evidence of the Public Sphere’s existence),
though, deal with it in spatial terms: who was sitting in the coffeehouse reading a periodical or listening to one be read? Who was allowed into the physical and discursive space of the “sphere” (even the metaphor is spatial)? What is missing from the above account, I would argue, is an understanding of the impact of time. Most models of the public sphere, and especially the Habermasian version, fail to acknowledge the importance of periodicity, the expectation and demand of regular publication, as a factor in constituting the audience of eighteenth-century periodicals.

Habermas grounds his project in a specific meaning of the word “public,” referring specifically to the term “public opinion” and the sense in which those terms reference a group of people, people whose opinions can be swayed, whose attention can be seized or distracted, whose conversations can shape societies. More specifically, Habermas is careful to limit his discussion to a specific type of conversation among certain people during a given time period: the rational-critical debates of the bourgeoisie in eighteenth-century Europe. Yet even while theories of the public sphere are ostensibly based on real people and situations, the implications of those theories are much more widely oriented. Social historian Craig Calhoun describes Habermas’s project as “an inquiry at once into normative ideals and actual history,” meaning the specific, limited cases that are cited are indicative of “norms” and traditions that have had an impact far beyond the original historical context (1). The concept of normative ideals is an important one here. While the public sphere may have only been a historical reality for a select few, Habermas is clear when he points out that the public sphere is not only a functional component of society or an actual set of texts and conversations that have
certain effects; the public sphere also serves as a standard, a set of criteria for how discourse should be used to shape society.

Despite its theoretical connotations, the eighteenth-century public sphere (as it has been described by Habermas and subsequent theorists) was distinctly situated in its particular context. To begin with, Habermas's "bourgeois public sphere" was the product of a specific set of social and technological circumstances, which were by no means permanent. Indeed, Habermas's original account details not only the public sphere's "birth," but also its eventual corruption and destruction, such that commercialization and corporate pacification of debate drained its political and educational force. In contrast to the seeming historical specificity of the "public sphere" concept, however, many scholars have read Habermas's theory as a counter-factual description of an ideal, an attempt to identify the component parts of an envisioned, if never truly realized, model for democratic deliberation.

Critiques of Habermas’s theory can essentially be broken into two distinct camps: those who modify or build upon his work (but accept the basic premises of his project), and those who reject the historical basis upon which the theory of the public sphere is founded. In the first group, Nancy Fraser offers a substantial feminist critique of Habermas’s theory while still arguing for its continued viability.18 Her argument focuses on four specific points that she sees as in need of revision. She claims that Habermas 1) overstates the accessibility of the public sphere, 2) wrongly limits discussion to only one

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18 A similarly feminist, but more historically grounded, critique is made by Paula McDowell in The Women of Grub Street. McDowell argues that many lower class women were more intimately involved in both the production and consumption of the public sphere than Habermas lets on. She uses Delrivier Manley, a prominent producer and distributor of periodicals, as a case study to demonstrate her claim.
public (Fraser suggests instead that there are multiple “publics,” a concept that is taken up by Michael Warner in his book *Publics and Counterpublics*), 3) mistakenly values the “neutral” bourgeois discourse as an ideal, something to be strived for, and 4) overestimates the effectiveness of “public” discourse at countering the will of the State. Fraser attempts to recuperate the concept of the public sphere as a "liberatory" theory of discourse, focusing especially on the possibilities for a decision-making model, a means of determining how groups can come together and discuss what actions to take collectively.

On the other side of the debate, several historians of eighteenth-century British literature and culture have raised objections to the historical viability of an actual Habermasian public sphere. The most vociferous denial comes from J.A. Downie in two essays entitled “How Useful to Eighteenth-Century English Studies is the Paradigm of the ‘Bourgeois Public Sphere’?” and “The Myth of the Bourgeois Public Sphere.” Downie suggests that the very idea of a “public sphere” during this time period is suspect, and he attacks Habermas’s claims on historical grounds, disputing several of the premises upon which the theory of the Bourgeois Public Sphere depends. Downie argues that some of the main pieces of evidence Habermas cites—including the founding of the Bank of England, the ending of government censorship, and the introduction of “cabinet government”—have been misinterpreted, exaggerated, or even simply mis-stated. Indeed, Downie makes a strong argument that the early eighteenth century was an era dominated not by the Bourgeois, but rather by the aristocratic classes. Downie does acknowledge that during the period being discussed “pamphlets and poems on affairs of state, as well as newspapers and essay journals, were published in huge numbers in an
unprecedented appeal to what would now be called public opinion” (“Myth” 58). Downie’s understanding of “public opinion,” however, differs greatly from that provided by Habermas, focusing primarily on propaganda and the manipulation of readers by political writers for hire, a far cry from an ideally egalitarian “reasoned discourse.”

A more forgiving take on Habermas’s theories, and a useful mediation between these two types of critique, is provided by Ann C. Dean in *The Talk of the Town: Figurative Publics in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Dean suggests that “in eighteenth-century Britain the public sphere was a figure of speech” (11), a way of representing the conversations going on in discrete physical spaces as abstracted and distributed. By describing scenes from coffeehouses, drawing rooms, and private clubs, authors were able to make readers feel as if they were participating in those same conversations, even if the reader had never actually visited any such space. Dean’s point is that the establishment of public opinion, ostensibly figured as a shared conversation, had to begin with the representation of conversations that the “public” (if we use that term as inclusively as it is usually meant) might not have had access to. Dean focuses primarily on two axes of variation in the description of “political conversation”: space and medium. The spaces Dean discusses are coffeehouses, court, and Parliament (although repeated mention is made of private meetings, in part as replicas of the King’s drawing room); the media are print, manuscript, and oral conversation.

Dean’s approach allows for a discussion of the public sphere *not* as a real collection of readers and responses, but rather as an idea of audience, a conceptual framework within which to imagine a type of discourse. The role of the periodical press in this model is not necessarily to reach every possible reader or listener, but rather to
establish the precedent, the system, upon which future public conversations would be based. Dean’s recuperation of the public sphere allows us to explain the establishment of the periodical press and the popularity of the coffeehouses without sacrificing a realistic understanding of the social and political circumstances under which the concept (if not necessarily the actuality) of “freedom of the press” and the “fourth estate” were grudgingly allowed to be born. As Julianne Schultz remarks in her book *Reviving the Fourth Estate: Democracy, Accountability, and the Media,*

> The eighteenth-century claim, that the press was entitled to its own independent standing in the political system, as the Fourth Estate, has become an ideal which continues to influence the attitudes of those working in the late twentieth-century news media, as well as politicians and citizens.\(^\text{19}\) (15)

Ultimately, the Habermasian conception of the public sphere is but one articulation (though perhaps the most widespread and fully developed in academic circles) of the legacy and impact of the newspaper. But how is the specifically periodic quality of newspapers understood within the discourse of the public sphere?

The role of time—and particularly the timing of periodic publication—in theories of the public sphere is generally taken for granted. Of course, Habermas does point out that, despite differences in “the size and composition of their publics, the style of their proceedings, the climate of their debates, and their topical orientations,” the various

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\(^{19}\) The term "Fourth Estate," as it relates to the press, is commonly attributed to Edmund Burke, who is quoted by Thomas Carlyle in his book *On Heroes and Hero Worship.* Carlyle reports that Burke, referring to the three Estates of Parliament (the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal, and the Commons), pointed to the "Reporter's Gallery" and said "there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all."
forums he discusses (i.e., English coffeehouses and French salons) “all organized discussion among private people that tended to be ongoing; hence, they had a number of institutional criteria in common” (36). In that sense, the “ongoing” nature of the discussions *is* cited as the cause, rather than a side effect, of the “institutional criteria" they had in common. Nonetheless, the constitutive role of periodic publication in the creation of the public sphere, as either historical reality or discursive ideal, has not been articulated in a straightforward way by many scholars.

The only theorist to actively acknowledge the vital importance of time and timing in the definition of the public sphere has been Michael Warner. Warner argues that, by its very nature, a public depends on the temporal continuity and extension of texts, an argument which could itself be an extension, perhaps, of Habermas's mention of "ongoing" discussion. Warner notes that “Not texts themselves create publics, but the concatenation of texts through time. Only when a previously existing discourse can be supposed, and when a responding discourse can be postulated, can a text address a public” (90). The premise is simple enough: for a public to be established, there needs to actually be some sort of expectation of back-and-forth conversation. That expectation is based, in this view, on a "concatenation" of texts, an accretion that is likely not the result of strategic planning, but instead the result of habit, circumstance, and the affordances of systemic bias. (I will say more about that last cause in the next section of this chapter).

Similarly, the conversation cannot be too closely controlled, or limited to just a few people. As Warner puts it, “Anything that addresses a public is meant to undergo circulation. This helps us to understand why print, and the organization of markets for print, were historically so central to the development of the public sphere” (91). Warner's
mention of circulation here dovetails well with Porter's discussion of delivery from chapter two: if circulation is the unintended life of a text beyond the control of an author, and texts meant for publics are necessarily meant to circulate, then one could postulate that a definitional feature of "public-ness" is the un-controllability of a text's circulation, including its timing.

Warner ultimately concludes that the “punctuality” of a public sphere’s circulating texts (“punctuality” is his term for some combination of frequency and periodicity) can be used to determine its level of political involvement: the shorter the temporal distance between an event and its discussion in the public sphere, the more "involved" that sphere is politically. Such a formula equates political engagement with speed or response time, suggesting that the significance of a response diminishes over time. That claim is problematic (and seems reminiscent of the thinking which led Tony Blair to lambast the practices of the news media), but does at least suggest some of the ways in which an analysis of the temporal affordances of the public sphere might allow for a critique of the practices that are said to constitute that sphere.

**The Circumstances of News Delivery: The Clock, The Post, and The Coffeehouse**

The birth of the newspaper and of the “bourgeois public sphere” are, for Habermas, simultaneous. Yet while he cites the existence of coffeehouses and early newspapers as some of the main evidence for the existence of a public sphere in the eighteenth century, Habermas’s explanation of the contexts within which those phenomena existed leaves something to be desired (as the critiques of his historical accuracy demonstrate). What
we do know is that during this time period, several systems of communication developed that aided in the conception and distribution of regularly published periodic texts, and helped to change the epistemological experience of time for consumers of texts.

The following sections describe and analyze three systems whose development directly influenced the creation of institutionalized periodic (and, in this case, daily) news: clocks, the postal system (and especially London's Penny Post), and (as has been mentioned already) the coffeehouse. All three occupied a dual role of both functional facilitation of publication and contribution to the symbolic creation of a discourse community. First, changes in clockwork technology were seen in the distinct physical changes in time-keeping devices, such that clocks and pocket watches were made more accurate and popular through advances in their physical make up. This surge in the popularity and accuracy of time keeping devices changed the functions of everyday life, making a regimented periodic schedule possible and allowing for a new hyper-awareness of time. Along the same lines, the temporal sense that clockwork provided, whether it was the personalization of a pocket watch or the shared-time of early industrialization, shaped a new sense of the individual as part of the larger temporal community of the public sphere.

Second, the postal system fulfilled a practical purpose by bringing to the printer the majority of the news (mostly foreign) that would make up the body of most newspapers of the time, as well as distributing many of the periodicals themselves throughout London and the surrounding countryside. At the same time, though, the post symbolically represented any system for overcoming physical separation in order to share information. Lastly, the popularity of the coffeehouse has been a hotly debated topic,
among both seventeenth-century critics and modern historians, precisely because the coffeehouse served as both the physical location in which many periodicals were read and the model for a certain type of conversation. These three contextual factors directly influenced the proliferation of periodic texts and the experiences of periodic readers. By examining them from an epistemological temporal perspective, this section demonstrates the ways in which an expanded understanding of time could inform a discussion of the birth of the public sphere.

*Clocks and Communities*

The very concept of time, and time’s relationship to representations of the world, was changing during this period, giving rise to new concepts of audience as well. For instance, Benedict Anderson has argued that newspapers work to enable the “imagined community” of a nation by offering, in part, “calindrical coincidence.” He argues that the “date at the top of the newspaper, the single most important emblem on it, provides the essential connection—the steady onward clocking of homogeneous, empty time” (33). The newspaper, in Anderson’s conception, serves as a kind of national schedule, a daily reminder that, regardless of personal tragedy or political upheaval, time marches on. He also argues that the ephemeral nature of the “news” contributes to the perceived connection between readers, such that “the obsolescence of the newspaper on the morrow of its printing . . . creates this extraordinary mass ceremony: the almost precisely simultaneous consumption (‘imagining’) of the newspaper-as-fiction” (35). The suggestion here is that the very idea of others reading the same text (and then discarding
that text and moving on, as one, to the next day's news) can create a sense of shared identity. While Anderson’s theory works best for later models of newspaper consumption (e.g., he describes the activity of newspaper reading as occurring in “silent privacy,” and suggests that the reader can imagine “thousands (or millions) of others” as fellow-readers), the system he describes was first developing at the beginning of the eighteenth century, with the publication of the first daily newspaper.

In this particular historical era, a series of technological innovations occurred that preceded, and contributed to, the “rise” of the periodical. Perhaps the least well-known of those innovations is the development of clockwork (“chronometry”), and specifically the invention of the pendulum regulator by Christiaan Huygens in 1656. The Huygens pendulum regulator worked by using the back-and-forth swing of a pendulum to measure and mete out the regular intervals required to keep accurate time, a technique that vastly improved the efficiency of clockwork. Thanks to the pendulum regulator, the level of detail available in time-keeping devices changed significantly: early clocks had only one hand, designed to measure hours, and were frequently incapable of doing even that. Pendulum clocks, by contrast, had a minute hand as well; by 1670, the first clocks with a third hand, for measuring seconds, had begun to appear. Stuart Sherman, in Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785, posits that the increased accuracy, portability, and popularity of time-keeping devices that followed this innovation changed the British culture’s relationship with time and, as a result, the ways in which narrative descriptions were ordered and produced.

Beyond the advances in accuracy, these advances in clockwork changed a number of material conditions of timekeeping that impacted the perceptions of seventeenth- and
eighteenth-century writers and readers. Indeed, the actual visceral experience of becoming aware of the time was changed during this period by changes to clockwork technology. For instance, the first known uses of certain onomatopoetic phrases used to describe the passage of time on a clock (as "Tick Tock" or "Tick Tick Tick") can be traced to this period. Time actually sounded different than it had before, a transformation that is more significant than it might at first sound. The new sounds made by clocks using Huygens’s techniques were not simply aesthetically distinct from their predecessors; Sherman argues that they “made available to sense and thought a new experience of time as it passed . . . Where church bells and clock towers had for centuries tolled time intermittently and at a distance, Huygens’s clocks, ticking steadily, translated time into a sound both constant and contiguous” (4). Perceptible time was now immediately present, constantly available, and fodder for everyday conversation. This new concept of time was, in this case, based on (among other things) the sensory perceptions of time-keeping technology.

The development of isochronicity (meaning time as measured in regular intervals) and the modern clock might seem like improvements rather than inventions. After all, the existing technology was improved, but not radically altered. Yet Sherman points out that “Huygens accomplished simply a change in scale, a sixtyfold improvement in accuracy . . . [but] the change in scale amounted virtually to a change in kind: the new clocks were the first to make the progress of time available to the senses by way of running report” (5). The effect of that change was a re-conceptualization of time itself: the hours of day could more easily be apportioned and scheduled, and individuals could
reasonably expect to share an accurate sense of what time it was. Hassan provides a
detailed description of this phenomenon, noting that

The time of the clock (relatively quickly) became what we **perceived** as
time and **experienced** as time and what **governed** temporal life. In other
words, a mechanized device that was imbued with transcendental
significance, replaced the human and natural timescapes that had evolved
over thousands of years. (7, emphasis in original)

Indeed, this last is of primary importance: the ability to synchronize one’s watch with
another’s, to have a personal sense of time that could be connected to a larger, communal
sense of time, was vital to the sense of community imparted by a periodic press.

As with the broader discussion of the public sphere, the extent to which clock-time was accessible to a broader public is questionable. Clocks generally, and especially
pocket watches, were widely conceived of as a luxury item, although E.P. Thompson
points out that “A clock or watch was not only useful; it conferred prestige upon its
owner, and a man might be willing to stretch his resources to obtain one,” given a
windfall or other good fortune (69). Indeed, Thompson suggests that there are reasons to
suspect that watch ownership had a wide appeal indeed: “the timepiece was the poor
man's bank, an investment of savings: it could, in bad times, be sold or put in hock” (70).

While these cases may have been the exception rather than the rule, they more than
indicate the extent to which clock-time fast became an essential element of social
interaction; to know the time was to be prestigious, and in turn fed the ubiquitous desire
to be “in the know.”
The effects of such a ubiquitous shift in perception and practice are distinctly hard to measure; temporal perception can alter attitudes and practices across a whole spectrum of life experiences. Pinning down a causal connection between the development of modern chronometry and the birth of the periodic press is beyond the scope of this project. This section does ultimately suggest, however, that identifiable changes in attitudes toward time can be identified during this period, and that—in conjunction with the other contextual systems analyzed in this chapter—those changes help to argue for the need to understand the public sphere as a temporal, and not just spatial, phenomenon.

The Post as System and Metaphor

The causal argument missing from the previous section is easier to make in this one: the growth of the postal system played a demonstrably important role in the development of periodicity as a temporal framework in England. While the influence of chronometry can be intuited from historical evidence of changing devices, preserved accounts of subjective temporal experience, and the essential connections between a society's ways of telling time and its relationship with time, such effects on "attitudes and expectations" (as McKitterick puts it) are necessarily hard to prove. On the other hand, the growth of the postal system, and especially the Penny Post, can be clearly shown to have jump-started the burgeoning field of periodic publishing, and should be considered inextricable from any discussion of the public sphere.

As with so many other aspects of theories of audience, discussions of the postal system in early modern England often revolve around theories of space. James How
argues that "the foundation of a Post Office available to the general public was an event which opened up new 'epistolary spaces,' much as the setting up of the Internet in our own era opened up new and seemingly unlimited cyberspaces" (1). How argues that the presence of the Post Office was necessary to create that "epistolary space" because the letter writer needed to know that the capacity to transmit a letter was there before he or she ever sat down to write (a similar argument to Warner's about the public sphere). He does note, however, that what makes such a space possible is the "continuity" offered by regular, frequent, and thus necessarily periodic, mail delivery. How notes that Habermas, in his discussion of the Public Sphere, comments on the timing of the mail as a corollary to the rise of a public press. Habermas argues that, "just as, according to Sombart's definition, one could speak of 'mail' only when regular opportunity for letter dispatch became accessible to the general public, so there existed a press in the strict sense only once the regular supply of news became public, that is, again, accessible to the general public" (16). As both scholars acknowledge, the regularity of mail delivery created the perception of a continuous stream of information and conversation. In much the same way that single frames of a film appear—when presented with the proper sequence, frequency, and regularity—to be one continuous entity (a moving picture), so too do frequent deliveries of mail combine to create the exchange of information How calls "epistolary space."

The relevance of "the post" to newspapers is demonstrated by, if nothing else, the sheer number of newspaper titles that contained some form of the word “post,” a testament to the periodical’s preoccupation with letter-sending technologies. The use of
“post” as a metaphorically-descriptive title began as early as the 1640s, with the early newsbooks: the *Flying Post* (1644), *The London Post* (1644, 1646-1648), *The Weekly Post Master* (1645), *The Parliament’s Post* (1645), *The Citties weekly Post* (1645-46), and *The Faithful Post* (1653-1655). Indeed, newspapers as a medium are widely considered to have replaced—we might say “remediated”—the scribe-written newsletters that had been circulating information about Parliament for decades. The letter was still seen as the primary vehicle for “news” information, and letters traveled (exclusively, after 1714) by post.

The “post” referred to in “postal system” referred to fresh horses that were made available (in the most basic sense they were “posted,” as in attached to a hitching post in a given location) at intervals along a given route. Established destinations often had permanent routes, but the majority were temporary, depending on the level of need for travel to a particular place at a given time. Although temporary "post" systems had been operated by monarchs as early as King Edward IV, toward the end of the fifteenth century (Robinson 5), the first regular post arrangement was not established until the middle of the sixteenth century, and it was not until the seventeenth century that "a few first faltering steps were made that would eventually lead—in the immediate years after Charles was executed—to the establishment of a permanent Post Office" (How 10).

Charles I was the first to officially make his Royal mail system available to the “public” in 1635 (although how many people could actually afford to send letters through it is

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20 Many of the titles mentioned here did not survive for long, being printed sometimes for only a month. The last, *The Faithful Post*, underwent a number of name changes during the nearly three years that it was active, all of which contained the word “post.” For more information, see Morrison, 30-31.
certainly questionable). The Civil War at once both spurred the organization of pathways for conveying information, and stalled the official consolidation of those pathways under one stable organization. The creation of a permanent general Post Office in the mid-seventeenth century (in 1657 by the Cromwellian government, and then again in 1660 by the newly crowned King Charles II) created a more reliable system for distributing messages.

Ultimately, however, the system of sending letters to people in other towns, counties, or countries was not a very organized endeavor, and—with a few notable exceptions—the composition and layout of the “post” did not change much between the English Civil War era and the mid- to late-eighteenth century (despite a substantial growth in size). One such "notable exception" was the invention of the Penny Post in 1689.

The Penny Post was a private business endeavor that sprang up in London in 1689, invented by a man named William Docwra. Whereas the standard postal system at the time had an established (you might say calcified) method of shipping letters out of London along a number of major roads, the Penny Post was devoted to the delivery of mail to various different neighbourhoods of London, a local (and one might say “networked”) system of delivery. There were hundreds of “drop off” points, and several sorting stations through which letters were circulated. The distribution of letters was much less centralized and linear, and resulted in speedy delivery from almost any point in the city to any other. Letters delivered within the city limits only cost the sender a penny, and those delivered to certain outlying counties cost a second penny. The Penny Post
was incredibly successful, so it’s surprising that it took the British government a whole two years to take it over.

Drawing from the *Calendar of State Papers, Treasury Books*, Howard Robinson lists the number of letters circulated each year by the Penny Post:

In 1697-98, for example, there were 77,530 letters and packets that paid the second penny, that is, that were directed to the country. The penny letters and packets totaled for that year 792,080. For 1701-2, the Penny Post took in and delivered 886,582 penny letters and packets and 86,719 that paid the second penny. In the next year, the total number of pieces of mail that passed through the Penny Post included 95,694 two-penny letters, and 951,090 penny letters.

The scale of those figures should be clear: the Penny Post met an enormous demand, and was wildly successful as a result. The population of Britain at the time was only 2.5 million, but 500,000 of those resided in London. Of those 500,000, one must assume that only a portion used the Post with any regularity; with over a million letters sent per year, though, the numbers suggest that the post quickly became a frequent method of delivering texts to others (for those who had the means to pay for it, of course).

Some critics have speculated that the need for a distribution mechanism for periodic texts was one of the main reasons the Penny Post was first proposed (or at least funded). Todd remarks that

The Post Office was a most convenient way for distributing the Whig anti-Catholic newsletters but the Whigs were far more interested in circulating their propaganda throughout London than throughout the rest of the
country. What more natural, then, than that Lord Shaftesbury should have backed the scheme of William Dockwra and Robert Murray for the establishment of a London Penny Post under the cover of which the Whig newsletters could be distributed rapidly throughout the whole of London and the suburbs? (Todd 10)

Todd’s confidence aside, to conclusively prove a causal relationship between the birth of the Penny Post and the rise of the periodical would be difficult at best. Specifically, determining the number of periodicalsthat were distributed by Post, or the extent to which circulation and readership increased, is far beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, the capacity to deliver and exchange messages rapidly, while always a possibility for the most wealthy citizens, had become a reality for a much larger group, a fact which symbolically included the public in the practice of sending and receiving information. The receipt of important news had long been the province of the wealthy, and an experience enjoyed only vicariously by the underclasses, a generalized system of mail delivery made the idea of correspondence accessible in a way it had not been previously.

Mercurius Civicus, on April 6th 1680, published an advertisement for the newly opened Penny Post, part of which suggested that the “undertakers” of the Penny Post, “finding that their Houses appointed for the Receit of such Letters are not as yet fully completed, have for the present and farther accommodation of all persons therein, ordered their messengers to call for all Letters at all CoffeeHouses in the High Roads and Streets following, every hour in some places and an hour and a half in the rest . . .” (Todd 18). The symbiosis between institutions such as the coffeehouse and the Penny Post (and
the implicit dependence on clock-time) should not be surprising; the post generally works as a system of limited centralization, requiring focal points that are accessible to users. Letters are brought to collection points, they travel a given distance, and then they are dispersed again. In the case of the larger postal system, the collection points were fairly limited, but the distance covered was great, spanning most of the countryside of England. The area covered by the Penny Post was smaller, but more dense; it was described, in 1690, as extending to any part of London or “any of the Towns or Villages round about it, for 15 miles compass, and upwards” (From Thomas De Laune’s Present State of London, qtd. in Todd, 50).

The unpredictability of previous postal systems, and the effort required to maintain regular contact over long distances, may have been two of the primary reasons for the deep connection between early newspapers and the postal system. Moving from a system of distribution where the timing of messages could not be anticipated, much less relied upon, to one where regular and frequent correspondence was not only possible, but easy, allowed letter writers (and the periodic publications that mimicked or "remediated" them) to establish ongoing conversations.

The Post generally, and the Penny Post more specifically, were designed as systems for one-to-one communication. A letter might be addressed to more than one person, or read aloud to a group, but it essentially functioned as “private” communication. When the post was adapted to circulate periodicals, however, it became a hybrid system of communication and mass media. The periodical genre allowed a forum for distributing the same message to a much larger group, and the post allowed for iterations of that message, re-sending the text possibly several times. While the
circulation of texts in this method is certainly simplistic in comparison even to the newspaper distribution systems of the early twentieth century, much less the complexity of online publishing, these early systems established the idea that such a broad conversation was possible.

**Coffeehouse Conversations**

What role did coffeehouses play in changing temporal attitudes in late seventeenth-century society, and how did those attitudes relate to the development of periodic publishing? Lawrence Klein, in “Coffeehouse Civility, 1660-1714: An Aspect of Post-Courtly Culture in England,” notes that the rise of the coffeehouse was associated with the continuing elaboration of print communication in these decades. Coffee sellers made sure that their patrons had plenty to read and discuss as they consumed hot beverages: the coffeehouse was *the* place to read broadsides, pamphlets, and periodicals. It was also a persistent object of controversy in these media. (32)

Of note in this quote is Klein's point that coffeehouses were both integral to the distribution of periodicals, and the subject of commentary within those same publications. He refers specifically to the debate surrounding the very existence of coffeehouses, which grew especially heated after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. A number of pamphlets were published calling for the closing of coffeehouses, on
the grounds that they promoted fallacious, possibly seditious discussions of national affairs (what might otherwise be known as “news”).

The debate was certainly contentious. Patrons of the “penny university” were cast as empty-headed gossips or boldfaced liars who were intoxicating themselves with a new (foreign) drug. Supporters of coffeehouse culture responded by arguing for the sobriety induced by coffee and the civility of the coffeehouse atmosphere. The dispute was highly political as well, with Royalist Tories condemning the coffeehouses and the Whigs supporting them. King Charles II attempted to close coffeehouses altogether when he “issued a proclamation to that effect in late 1675, on the grounds that coffeehouses attracted idle and disaffected persons and spawned false, malicious, and scandalous reports to the defamation of His Majesty's Government” (Klein 40). It took several decades for concern over the impact of the coffeehouse to fully die down, although Klein notes that “despite continued criticism in some quarters, after 1688—and especially in the reign of Queen Anne—a more accepting stance became evident” (32).

Brian Cowan’s *The Social Life of Coffee*, a history of the economic and social impact of coffee on British society, suggests a conservative account of the connections generally made between the “public space” of the coffeehouse and the “reading public”

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21 Several pamphlets, all with the name “The Character of the Coffeehouse” were published in the early 1660s, and can be found in Markman Ellis’ collection of coffeehouse documents.

22 Steven Pincus represents the less conservative account when he argues, in “Coffee Politicians Does Create: Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture,” for a strongly Habermasian interpretation of British culture, suggesting that “a public sphere in the Habermasian sense did emerge in later seventeenth-century England” and linking that claim to the statement that “coffeehouses were ubiquitous and widely patronized in Restoration England, Scotland, and Ireland” (811). Pincus suggests, in a way that even Habermas does not, that gender did not bar potential patrons from coffeehouse sociability. Citing several contemporary accounts, Pincus argues that “there is little warrant for the claim that women were excluded from coffeehouses” (815).
of periodicals. Cowan argues that the force behind popularizing coffee and other exotic beverages and experiences was the “virtuosi,” a group of wealthy, intellectually oriented, and slightly eccentric men. Not only does Cowan’s account identify this group as responsible for the popularization of the “coffeehouse culture” of the late seventeenth century, but he also suggests that any discussion of the “public” (the “penny universities” that coffee-houses were supposed to be) must take into account the fact that those frequenting coffee houses were primarily wealthy members of a leisure-class, those who had time to engage in what seems to have been a kind of dilettante-lifestyle.

Anxiety over the impact of news consumption, and the quality of that news, played into the debate over the class-based "character" of the coffeehouses. The debate surrounding the existence of coffeehouses, which grew especially heated after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, centered precisely on the budding “news culture” prevalent in those venues. Indeed, Roger L’Estrange famously argued that “a Publick Mercury should never have my vote; because I think it makes the multitude too familiar with the actions, and counsels of their superiors, too pragmatical and censorious, and gives them, not only an itch, but a kind of colourable right, and licence, to be meddling with the government” (1). In many ways, concerns over citizen involvement are exactly the opposite today: news is seen as a distraction, a way of swaying voters without engaging in substantive debate. At the time, however, the spreading sense that every British citizen had at least the ability, if not a need, to be "informed" (meaning regularly

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23 Roger L’Estrange was the Surveyor of the Imprimery and Licenser of the Press for Charles II. A Tory royalist, he was in charge of stamping out “dissenting” writings.
24 Roger L’Estrange, The Intelligencer, Published For the Satisfaction and Information of the People, no. 1 (31 August 1663), pp. 1-2
updated on the news of the day) was, whether condemned or applauded, recognized as a reality.

Fears about the impact of a surfeit of news on the citizenry were not limited to questions of sedition, though. Richard Steele

devoted several issues of his *Tatler* to the story of an upholsterer, known as ‘the greatest newsmonger of our quarter,’ who drove his business into bankruptcy and his family into poverty as a result of his chasing after news rather than attending to his affairs. (Cowan 239)

“News” was here figured as a triviality, but one with very serious consequences. Steele’s cautionary tale warned of the dangers of spending too much time on news, but also suggested a specific kind of news was at fault: in his parable, the upholsterer cares more about news from the Continent, and the War of Spanish Succession, than he does about information regarding his own family. The individual news-reader ought to be focused, in Steele’s view, on self-improvement and the betterment of society, rather than on information that is, essentially, “above their station.” News had long been seen as a gentleman's privilege, rather than the common man's right.

The public impression of coffeehouses, as far as can be determined, was directly related to these genteel origins: comparing coffeehouses and alehouses, Cowan suggests that “coffeehouses, by contrast, were a virtual tabula rasa whose social character was open to being cast with a more genteel and polite tone, and thus they came to be generally understood as places ‘too civil for a debaucht humour’” (105). This new social space “carried an air of distinct gentility that set it apart from other common victuallers and public-house keepers” (Cowan 147), although Cowan does posit the existence of “two
types” of coffeehouse; the first: those located in the wealthiest sections of the city, around the Royal Exchange, and those meant to serve the gentry. The second: more “modest and mundane,” and possibly unlicensed. The exact number of coffeehouses operating during this period is unknown, although Cowan’s assumption is that, “by the end of the seventeenth century, metropolitan London had at least several hundred coffeehouses, and perhaps more than one thousand” (154). Such a figure is an estimate, though; indeed, the “London Directories of 1734 provide the earliest source of precise data, and reveal 551 official London coffeehouses, a figure that neglects all unlicensed coffeehouses, of which there were a substantial number” (154).

Describing their treatment in popular periodicals, Lawrence Klein articulates two conflicting images of the coffeehouse, such that in one version the coffeehouse “was, at least potentially, a polite place—and perhaps even more important, a polishing venue, both civil and civilizing. This was a way to legitimate the coffeehouse” (34). Yet the coffeehouse was also seen as “associated with the disruption of the restorative goals of the 1660s and 1670s,” such that it “embodied a cultural reversal or inversion—of exactly the sort that some in England thought they had escaped when the monarchy was restored” (42). Thus the coffeehouse space could alternatively be described as either wealthy and whiggish or rebellious and “leveling.” I suspect that the truth lies somewhere in between the two: while Cowan is undoubtedly correct that the origins of coffeehouse culture are associated with wealth, leisure, and privilege, it is equally clear that the fashions of the aristocratic classes frequently trickled down to become the dominant living styles of the lower classes. Given the number of coffeehouses present in the city of London, and given the numerous contemporary accounts of a wide variety of social “types” meeting in
the coffeehouse, I suspect that by the turn of the eighteenth century coffeehouses ranged in quality and clientele from the meanest street vendor to the most exclusive club.

Klein’s discussion of coffeehouses offers a middle way between the un-reserved support for the public sphere offered by Pincus and the skepticism of Cowan. Klein claims that, during the latter half of the seventeenth century, “the coffeehouse evolved from a novelty into an essential institution of urban life in England, at least for males of the upper and middling parts of urban society” (31). The process of evolution that Klein refers to is related to the debates mentioned above, at the beginning of this section. Klein suggests that the coffeehouse, as an “aspect of post-courtly culture,” was the site of a “polite public,” a term, as Klein puts it, “meant to signal both a debt to the ideas of Jurgen Habermas about the eighteenth-century public and a disagreement with the designation of traits—such as "bourgeois" and “rational”—that he assigns to it” (32 n5).

The actual political and social influence of the coffeehouse as a public space is, ultimately, impossible to know definitively. Clearly, though, the coffeehouse was one of the most important distribution mechanisms for periodically produced texts during this time period. Not only that, but (as alluded to in connection to Dean, earlier) the coffeehouse served as an important metaphor upon which future conceptions of periodic texts would be based.

**Theories of Context: The Public Sphere as a Function of Temporal Systems**

England changed drastically in the fifty years between 1650 and 1700, going through social and political upheaval that fundamentally altered the way the English
people saw themselves and their country. Amidst those larger changes of government and population, however, were other factors that were perhaps less noticed at the time, and have been all but forgotten now. These contextual components of the larger rhetorical situation—the centralization of the Post Office and the invention of the Penny Post, the invention of the pendulum clock and the proliferation of accurate timekeeping devices, and the opening of hundreds of coffeehouses in the city of London—help to explain how a new system for producing and distributing text could come to represent a larger change in attitudes about time and communication. The three contextual components did not "cause" the rise of the periodic press in a straightforward sense, but they help to explain the mindset leading up to the first sustained period of regularly published news, and effect of that institution on the creation of audience formation and expectations.

In a larger sense, the argument made by this chapter has been that the traditional perspective on the origin of the public sphere has paralleled that of audience theorists in the field of rhetoric and composition: preoccupied with "locating" the object of their study (the dominance of a spatial paradigm), scholars have failed to notice the ways in which changes in temporal experience can lead to changes in the lived experience of rhetorical situations.

This chapter has also begun to probe the origins of the very concept of "news." While the question of what counts as "news" has been debated, in some form, since the humans gained the ability to discern between types of information, this particular era—counted in some sense as the origin point for almost all modern media—offers particular insight into why and how human beings share information in the ways that we do. An
epistemological view of time and rhetorical practice necessarily focuses not on particular instants in the history of human communication, but rather on the trends and larger changes that have shaped the organization of our systems of news delivery. Where traditional rhetorical analysis might focus on a particular speech or text, a broader epistemological view might examine the ways in which that text circulated, and seek to understand what that circulation means about the way the people interacting with that text see the world.

In a more concrete sense, a discussion of the definitional aspects of "news" as a concept are important for understanding the larger question of how the distribution of information affects the perceived pace of life. What counts as “news” helps to determine what counts as “urgent,” what types of information individuals should pay attention to, how often action of some sort needs to be taken (whether that action is reading, writing, or moving beyond the discursive realm), etc. The next chapter looks at particular examples of periodically published texts from this time period, focusing especially on the first daily newspaper (The Daily Courant) and the first daily essay sheet (the Spectator), to explore the question of what counted as “news” at the time, what the practical effect of periodicity was on audiences, and what parallels can be drawn to today’s discussions of the role of news in an always-on, digitally networked world.
Chapter 4

Periodic Publications Themselves: The "Birth" of Daily News

King William III's death was reported in the *London Gazette* on Monday, March 9th, 1701. The king had died the previous morning, from pneumonia related to an injury he sustained in a fall from his horse. The passage describing the king's death appears as follows:

*St. James's, March 8.* On Wednesday last Our late Most Gracious Sovereign King *William* the Third was seized with an Ague Fit and a Feaver, which returning upon him the following days, reduced him to a very weak and languishing Condition; All proper Remedies were applied, but not having the wished-for Effect, His Majesty expired at *Kensington* at Eight a Clock this Morning; Whereupon the Lords of the Privy Council assembling together at *St. James's*, Her present Majesty made a Most Gracious Declaration to them...

The entry continues, documenting the first acts of the new queen, Queen Anne, including the issuance of proclamations that are then reprinted in the Gazette itself. The announcement of the King's death entry is not the first in the paper, however; nor is it distinguished by any of the typographical conventions we might associate with important stories in modern newspapers (larger "headline" text, location in a certain place on the page, etc.). Indeed, an entry from March 7th precedes the one announcing the death of the king; the earlier entry discusses proclamations the king had made relating to relatively
minor affairs (a new tax on certain alcoholic drinks, an act enabling an Earl to sell land so that he could pay his debts, etc.). The reason for the multiple entries was that the London Gazette was published only twice a week, and each issue had to account for all of the events that had happened since the last. News items were not placed in the paper according to how important they were, but rather according to when and where they happened. Two days after the London Gazette reported the death of the King, The Daily Courant was published, the first English daily newspaper. This chapter investigates the pioneering texts that first exemplified the advent of daily periodic publication of news, and the effect of that publication schedule on the news itself.

The preceding chapter set out some straightforward conclusions about the function of time in rhetorical theory. Chapter three argued that a focus on periodicity can help scholars of rhetorical history better understand, and perhaps mitigate, the controversy over the Habermasian public sphere as an historical phenomenon. It also demonstrates the ways in which periodicity can function as an environment, an enduring configuration of systems (in chapter three, those systems were coffeehouses, the penny post, and time-keeping technologies). As discussed in chapter two, standard approaches to discussing temporal considerations in rhetoric figure time as a strategic or topical concern: a tool for better persuading an audience, or a subject about which that audience can be persuaded. Chapter three articulates an example of the epistemological perspective on time, which allows critics to look beyond the moment-to-moment considerations of kairos, and focus instead on how the temporal affordances of rhetorical technologies can shape a larger context of rhetorical production and reception. In this particular case, those systems discussed in chapter three are said to contribute to the
"rational-critical" discourse (in the words of Habermas) of the public sphere. The overall effect of the public sphere, and the systems that constitute it, has been characterized (through a metaphor of daily conversation/exchange) as both a civilizing and an empowering force for the promotion of "public" values. This chapter picks up where that one left off, using an analysis of the periodicals themselves to evaluate the effect they had on their audience.

Until this point, this project has (with some few exceptions) approached theories of delivery and audience as if they were separate or distinct from questions of content. In the sections discussing the problem of media speed, or the broad discussion of time in rhetorical theory, or even the delivery contexts that influenced the development of the public sphere—in none of these has the subject matter of the messages being delivered played a significant role. I have established this separation of form and content more for simplicity's sake than anything else; I do not believe such a separation is ultimately sustainable or defensible. No easy distinction can be made between what a person is trying to say and how they are attempting to communicate; as Marshall McLuhan famously remarked (so famously the phrase has almost become a cliché): "the medium is the message."25

Indeed, scholars of rhetoric and composition have long critiqued theories that establish a binary or dichotomy between form and content. Genre theorists such as Gunther Kress or Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin saw genres as a way of

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25 McLuhan actually wrote that "The medium is the massage," deliberately misspelling the word "message," in order to further emphasize his point, a point which could certainly be taken several ways: on the most basic level, that the chosen medium plays a large role in creating meaning, but also that each medium has different characteristics and affordances (i.e., a change in spelling means something very different in writing than it does if the sentence is being spoken aloud).
acknowledging the interplay of form and content. Judith Goleman, a composition scholar, resists the description of the college composition as a "skills-based" (and thus content-less) curriculum, arguing that: "instead of defining academic skills in the broadest sense as activities which transform bodies of knowledge into understanding, skill continues to be derided as a mechanics for making content transparent rather than intelligently different." Indeed, most scholars of composition tend to discuss form by another term, that suggests a closer relationship to meaning-making: style. In 1965, in an essay titled "Theories of Style and Their Implications for Teaching Composition," Louis Milic described a variety of positions on the role of form and content in composition, and discussions of style have much of the rhetoric and composition literature ever since. More recently, critics in the sub-field of computers and writing have pushed back against the argument that visual design (the graphical presentation of texts) can be separated from the more traditional persuasive aspects of those texts (Anne Wysocki articulates this position well in her essay "Impossibly distinct: on form/content and word/image in two pieces of computer-based interactive multimedia." ) In response to this tradition of complicating the form/content binary, this chapter seeks to suggest ways in which temporal elements of texts are truly stylistic (that is, impacting the meaning and impact of the text) where they may otherwise have been dismissed as merely formal.

Chapter four begins, then, by unifying, rather than isolating, issues of form and content. In this chapter, I analyze the text and context of two important periodic publications: The Daily Courant (which, as was previously stated, was the first daily newspaper in English), and the Spectator (the first daily "essay sheet" in English). I do so both through an historical lens, attempting to understand the meaning of these texts
among the events of their time, and through a technological lens, articulating the
technical changes in periodic publishing that these texts represent. To that end, the first
section of the chapter further illustrates the historical and technical context these
publications existed in. The next two sections of the chapter focus on two competing
theories about the effects of periodicity on audiences and on the periodic texts
themselves. In the first of these two sections, I use the publication of *The Daily Courant*
to comment on and analyze the theories of C. John Sommerville, a newspaper historian
who argues that the advent of periodically published news had a detrimental effect on the
audiences consuming it (briefly put: that periodicity is primarily an economic strategy, a
stimulus designed to provoke a monetary response, a sales tactic pure and simple). In the
second of these two sections, I use the publication of the *Spectator* to comment on and
analyze the work of Stuart Sherman, a scholar of literature who argues that the diurnal
(resembling a diary) form of periodic publications—resulting from changes in time-
keeping technology and a new awareness of time—served to facilitate feelings of
connection and strengthen a sense of communal identity in the audiences who read them.
Overall, this chapter seeks to answer the following fundamental question about periodic
publication: what effect does periodicity have on the news itself and on the audiences that
consume it?

**A Definition of News and the Historical Context of Daily Publication**

The time period (1702-1712) and texts I have chosen to study here are not arbitrary; they
mark the establishment of a prolonged period of success for periodic publication and the
trend of daily publication. Prior to 1688, the number of periodical titles in print for a given year fluctuated between two extremes: single digits (often five or six in a given year), when the government had control of the press and allowed primarily state-run vehicles for disseminating the "party line," and as many as 60 or 80 distinct periodicals, during those periods of unrest when control of the press was lost. In those previous occasional "explosions" of periodic publication, large numbers of serials were published in response to various political and social crises, situations which also allowed for printing because of a lack of government's ability to regulate the press (the Civil War, 1642-45, the end of the Interregnum, 1660, the Popish Plot, 1682, and the Glorious Revolution, 1689, being the most obvious examples). In contrast, the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695 did not lead to a massive outpouring of publication; instead, it set the stage for a gradual, sustained increase.

According to R.S. Crane and F.B. Kaye's *A Census of British Newspapers and Periodicals, 1620-1800*, there were twenty-five periodicals printed in 1702, the year the *Daily Courant* began its thirty-three-year run. Some of those periodicals included: the *Post-Boy*, *The Flying Post*, and *The Post-Man* (three trice-weekly papers printed on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday); *The English Post*, and the *London Post* (two thrice-weekly papers printed on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday); the *London Gazette; Dawk's Newsletter*; the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Academy*, and the *Collection for

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26 Twenty Five was more titles than had run in any of the ten previous years, but was nowhere near the high volume of individual serials prompted by more exciting times: during the Civil War, between 1642 and 1649, the average number of periodicals per year was in the mid-forties, and 1648 saw as many as 80 discrete runs of serial publication.
the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade. The next decade would see that number more than double.

In contrast to previous years, the number of periodicals would almost exclusively continue to grow from that point on, abandoning the fluctuations associated with "crisis" publication. The Stamp Act of 1712 caused a substantial dip in the number of periodicals in print (from sixty-five in 1711, to fifty-one in 1712, to forty-five in 1713, although the numbers quickly exceeded sixty-five again only two years later in 1715); other than that one period of regression, the number of periodic titles in print grew steadily from the beginning of the century on. During the beginning period of that trend, periodicals first began to appear daily, a practice which would eventually become the norm for news production. The texts of those periodicals should provide evidence for better understanding how and why daily publication was standardized.

To understand publication practices at the time, especially in relation to news, it is necessary to understand some basic facts about the historical context of this specific period. As has been mentioned previously, the vast majority of news published during this time was foreign news. Throughout this period, newspapers focused on troop movements, alliances, and battles related to what would later be called the War of Spanish Succession (1702-1715), a war which lasted through the entire print run of the Spectator (and the first half of the life of The Daily Courant). The conflict involved British troops on the Continent, defending a variety of allies. At this particular historical moment, William III sat on the throne of England, his co-regent and wife Mary II having died in 1694. The two, both Protestant monarchs, had replaced the deposed (and Catholic) James II in the Glorious Revolution of 1689. William's support for the allied
countries (including the Netherlands, the duchy of Savoy, Prussia, and Portugal) was meant to keep Louis XIV's grandson from being installed as the king of Spain, thus effectively merging France and Spain, two of the largest empires in the world at that time (and both Catholic countries). The war had only mixed support at home, however, with Tory party members arguing for a naval strategy rather than the land-war that was eventually carried out.

News Products: The First Daily Newspaper and Periodicity as Marketing Strategy

The Daily Courant (1702), the first newspaper in English to be published daily, functioned as an aggregator, collecting news from a variety of sources and presenting that news in one place. Printed in two columns on one side of a single half-folio sheet, the paper purported to bring readers "all the Material News as soon as every Post arrives," and was composed of simple summaries of various events that had been reported in foreign newspapers. Each item of news was reported under the title and date of the foreign newspaper from whence it had been collected. The service the paper offered, then, was to offer a collection, summary, and translation of news stories from a variety of sources (in a variety of languages) that the reader would otherwise have to collect for

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27 Some discussions of early newspapers, primarily online sources, make reference to another early newspaper, the Norwich Post, which is cited as a possible challenger to the Courant for the title of "first daily newspaper in English." While there was a paper titled The Norwich Post that was published from 1701 until 1712 (approximately), that paper was, at least for the majority of its life, a weekly paper. Indeed, according to R.M. Wiles the Post's subtitle for at least the first eight years of its publication was "To be Publish'd Weekly: Containing An Account of the most Remarkable Transactions both Foreign and Domestick" (Freshest Advices 463). I have found no evidence that the Norwich Post was ever a daily paper, much less functioned as such prior to The Daily Courant. Even if it were the case that the Post had chronological priority, however, and was in fact a daily, the Courant would still provide by far the better case study, given the simple fact that it is available for study and the Post, lacking extant issues, is not.
themselves. Readers were presented with a series of excerpts from a larger body of content, with the understanding that tracking down and reading the originals would be difficult, perhaps impossible, without the help of this intermediary text.

The decision to publish the Courant as a daily occurrence, increasing the frequency of distribution rather drastically as compared to its contemporaries, was in part a response to the demands of the rhetorical situation discussed in the previous chapter. The demand for news, and the changing relationship between the audience for periodicals and their cultural concept of time, brought about a new form of writing: the periodicity of thought and discussion that was established by newspapers such as The Daily Courant is the same paradigm against which modern media are straining today. In order to better understand the latter, then, we must first understand the origin of periodicity in early eighteenth-century newspapers.

I have read and analyzed three months of issues from the first run of The Daily Courant (the first three months of a daily paper seeming like a reasonable sample of what that publication looked like during the early years of its existence). There is a gap in the issues I have available, however: the collection I am accessing is missing the issues ranging from March 19th to April 22nd. One significant fact related to that gap should be mentioned here: The Daily Courant was first published on March 11th, 1702 by Elizabeth Mallet, a bookseller; the paper changed ownership at some point in late March or early April, and during that time Samuel Buckley took over the ownership and management of the Courant, and in the process modified (but did not significantly change) the function of the paper. In this section I analyze the ways in which this first daily newspaper demonstrates both the affordances and the structural demands of periodic publication,
particularly those that helped to establish diurnal publication as the standard of news reporting.

**Periodicity as Economic Strategy**

C. John Sommerville, author of *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (1996), takes a decidedly negative stance toward periodicity generally, suggesting that "periodicity in publishing (or broadcasting) constitutes a bias all by itself," and that periodicity's "decontextualizing and deconstructing effects are part of its essential nature" (3). Indeed, for Sommerville, "periodicity is about economics;" more specifically, he claims that "periodicity is a marketing strategy, a way of holding property in information—information of the most ordinary sort. Beyond that, it is a way of turning everything into information of the most ordinary sort"(4). In other words, the publication schedule, and the attendant structural and thematic effects of that schedule on the texts themselves, are designed solely as a profit-making venture. For Sommerville, the regular production of texts does not satisfy a certain desire of the audience, but rather the desire for texts is artificially manufactured in order to create an audience.

As proof of his arguments about the evils of periodic publication, Sommerville describes the birth of English journalism as a brief flowering of social consciousness and valuable discussion, fleeting phenomena that are corrupted by the commercial pressure of producing news for consumption. Sommerville's account corresponds closely with Habermas's, suggesting a similar period of "liberation" offered by the periodical press,
but focusing especially on Habermas's insistence that the public sphere was eventually corrupted and taken over. Sommerville describes periodic publication as flawed from the outset, however, such that what Habermas sees as a "golden age" before corruption set in, Sommerville sees as the grace period before periodicity really took hold. Casting periodicity as nothing more than a marketing strategy might seem reductive, but Sommerville's study does yield a number of ways of thinking about periodicity that are worthwhile for our purposes here.

Sommerville's view of periodicity has several specific manifestations with regard to the origin of periodical publication. He argues that, "in England, the tendencies of periodical publication became apparent within the first years of the enterprise" (13). Accordingly, what "became apparent" was a series of "structural tendencies" that are necessarily connected to the periodic—and especially daily—publication of news, and which supposedly persist today, such that these texts 1) have a "forward spin" that orients the reader toward what will happen next (in the next issue), 2) push for change, so that they have something to report, 3) create excitement, whether positive or negative, 4) present reports in terms of facts, which Sommerville describes as "knowledge in atomic form, not knowledge as part of a larger whole, which is wisdom" (8). Along with these four "tendencies," Sommerville also suggests that, to make "today's product important" means 1) relating everything to politics, 2) highlighting conflicts, 3) adopting anonymity, 4) substituting social norms for social values, 5) "using statistics to represent social reality," and finally, 6) keeping reports short (10). Following this course of reasoning, serial publication would necessarily only publish short, inflammatory, "forward spun" accounts that buck tradition but do not contribute to an in-depth critique of the issues of
the day. While the production of news was certainly a commercial venture, so too were all aspects of the print trade. In order for news reporting to be sustainable as a practice it had to support itself economically; to reduce it solely to that motivation, however, is not helpful for explaining what effects periodicity has on readers.

Sommerville takes to task "standard histories of journalism," which "have not concentrated on the effects of the product upon readers," focusing instead on the perspective of the producers of news, and "such matters as libel law, editorial objectivity, and censorship" (13). The goal of my project is similar in focus to Sommerville's, concentrating primarily on the medium itself and the ways in which the medium's users were shaped as a group (and in turn, how that audience shaped the genre of the periodical).

**The Daily Courant as an Instance of Sommerville's Periodicity**

There can be no doubt that one of the explicit motivating factors for producing a daily newspaper was the perceived "convenience" of the reader. Indeed, the first several issues of the *Daily Courant* ran a statement, at the bottom of the front page, pointing out that "This Courant (as the Title shews [sic]) will be Publish'd Daily: being design'd to give all the Material News as soon as every Post arrives: and is confin'd to half the Compass, to save the Publck at least half the Impertinences, of ordinary News-Papers." By receiving news "as soon as every Post arrives," the reader of *The Daily Courant* is kept as up to date as possible. The concept of "up-to-date" was substantially different from today's understanding, however. The first issue of *The Daily Courant* had a number
of dates on it: Wednesday, March 11, 1702 was at the top, and it has already been noted that the simplicity of that heading underscored the importance of its periodicity (where the London Gazette would have had "published by authority," The Daily Courant only had the date; daily-ness WAS its authority). Each news item appeared with a date, though, as well as a location, and the date was often substantially different from what was printed at the top of the paper. Although each item was ostensibly taken from the foreign periodical under whose heading it appeared (which were also dated), there was little sense of unity to the temporal landscape of a given paper: while everything printed might be new information that day, the events reported had often occurred as much as two weeks earlier.

The claim of providing "half the Impertinences" to the reader was a remarkable strategy, although it did not last long. Indeed, the first issues of The Daily Courant were printed only on one side of a half-folio sheet, rather than the double-sided printing that the London Gazette had made the norm of newspaper publishing. For most papers, at least half of the second page was taken up with advertising (to be dealt with more fully in a later section). The "half the Compass" approach was only maintained while the paper was under the direction of Elizabeth Mallet; under Samuel Buckley the back page was entirely taken up with advertisements, usually a recurring set announcing books from Buckley's shop.

Most papers were at least nominally oriented toward the distribution of news from London to the rest of the country: the Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday papers were published on the days that the Post left town, and readers could, after finishing with their newspaper of choice, mail it off the same day to friends or relatives not fortunate enough to live in
the information-hub that was London. The Monday-Wednesday-Friday papers, although not published on "post days," were able to survive by filling in the gaps, providing a first take on news that arrived on off days.

The layout of the newspapers was determined chronologically, for the most part. As news came in, the printer would arrange the type, leaving local news (the most likely to change or be added to at the last minute) for last. That chronological arrangement related strictly to when the news was *received*, however: within the body of the paper, each item could be labeled with dates ranging anywhere within even a month of the date of the paper's publication. Local news, always a sparse commodity, appeared on the back page, usually directly above the advertisements. The number of local news items (those labeled with the heading "London") varied from paper to paper and issue to issue, but some trends can be established:

The first daily newspaper, while serving as a sort of "clearing house" for information from abroad, made clear a strong aversion to offering commentary on that news. Along with the notice mentioned above, and seemingly in place of advertisements more generally (although when space allowed, both notices were listed under a heading that read "Advertisement"), the first seven numbers of *The Daily Courant* ran the following (rather lengthy) statement:

*It will be found from the Foreign Prints, which from time to time, as Occasion [sic] offers, will be mention'd in this Paper, that the Author has taken Care to be duly furnish'd with all that comes from Abroad in any Language. And for an Assurance that he will not, under Pretence of having Private Intelligence, impose Additions of feign'd Circumstances to*
an Action, but give his Extracts fairly and Impartially; at the beginning of each Article he will quote the Foreign Paper from whence 'tis taken, that the Publick, seeing from what Country a piece of News comes with the Allowance of that Government, may be better able to Judge of the Credibility and Fairness of the Relation: Nor will he take upon him to give any Comments or Conjectures of his own, but will relate only Matter of Fact; supposing other People have Sense enough to make Reflections for themselves."

This statement of purpose highlights several important characteristics of the Courant (and, to some extent, issues dealt with by newspapers of the time more generally): the focus on foreign news, the claim of objectivity, an interest in the formation of public opinion, etc. By casting itself as entirely focused on foreign affairs, the Courant escaped one of the primary criticisms leveled at newspapers: an unhealthy interest in domestic affairs that could be disruptive and destructive. The circumscribed focus also provided a clear niche for the Courant: while most other papers at the time were also primarily concerned with foreign news, the Courant could claim a specialized focus that might lend it credibility, or at least a clear purpose.

The Advertisement from the first issues drops out as more space is required for news (especially in the one-sided format). After the switch from Mallet to Buckley, this initial Advertisement doesn't reappear immediately (although there are plenty of general advertisements, almost entirely for books for sale in Buckley's store, the Dolphin). But on April 30, 1702, Buckley re-prints the explanation of the "project" of The Daily Courant, obviously using the Daily-ness of the paper as a selling point. The explanation
is slightly different, though: in addition to some alterations to the original phrasing, the later version includes the statement that

   By following this Method, he [the author] hopes he shall be thought to perform what he takes to be the proper and only Business of a News-Writer; first, giving the freshest Advices from all Quarters, which he will certainly be able to do (let the Post arrive when it will) by coming out Daily; and next, delivering Facts as they come related, and without inclining either to one Side or the other.

Buckley goes on to re-print the revised statement at various points throughout the run of *The Daily Courant*, seemingly as a place-holder for slow days, when news was lacking to fill front-page space.

Ultimately, the evidence of the *Courant* seems to challenge the argument that increased frequency of publication (and periodicity more broadly) leads to stories that are shorter, oriented on facts rather than on knowledge, and pointed toward the future rather than to the present and the past. If that were the case, we would presumably expect that a paper whose frequency was greater than others would have shorter stories, or at least less depth of coverage. Yet the more regular coverage seems to at least somewhat have the opposite effect: with more space to fill, more "time" must be spent on a given story. A paper that publishes two or three times a week has simply less space for news; even though they use more of that space (usually taking up about half of the second page with news items, whereas the *Courant* almost always uses only the first page) the amount of space is still remarkably different: a single page published six times a week is substantially more than a page and a half published thrice a week (a comparison between
6 pages and 4.5, when thinking about amount of information conveyed, is substantial).

This seems to imply that more information is being conveyed in the daily.

Also, the Courant includes much less in the way of local news. Even though there are items included that are under the heading of "London" (odd how local news is classified in a manner almost identical to that of foreign news), there are generally only one, two, or maybe even three short notices mentioned in that section, in the Courant. In other papers, anywhere from 6-10 are usual. Partly, this has to be due to the paper's express intent to report primarily foreign news. If periodicity made this paper desperate for news, though, and looking primarily for items that would attract attention, local news would seem like a valuable commodity. We see here, perhaps, a reaction against periodicity, a need to look more official, more conservative. Without the added supplement of local news, though, it seems like the Courant is giving significantly more detail on foreign news... how else is it managing to fill up so much space?

Unfortunately, the length of a given piece of news, or even average length, seems like an imperfect variable for measuring the level of engagement a newspaper provides. Partly, there's a question of what that length indicates: to what extent is a short article indicative of lack of interest, as compared to lack of information, or even a lack of elaboration on the part of the original source? Space limitations based on the amount of other information to be supplied on a given day would certainly have an effect on layout. To what extent could the publisher of the news choose to expand or contract a given story? It's hard to say. The vast majority of this type of paper were conglomerations of news from other sources, either in letter form or as periodicals from other countries. Newspaper publishers are thus set up to be ciphers; the news is meant to be impartial, but
not just impartial in the sense of no judgment rendered, so much as it is impartial in the sense of no interference whatsoever.

How does this impartiality relate to the theory of periodicity put forward by Sommerville? On the one hand, Sommerville makes the point that this kind of fake objectivity is a means of embellishing the authority of news, making it more saleable... at the same time, the form of this news is consistently that of the letter, something that is pretty intensely personal. Readers are advised to make their own judgments about the news provided based primarily on (in the case of the Courant) their impression of the reputation of the country from which the news comes. There is not much in the way of a personal approach to newspaper information, though: even entries based on personal letters to the author tend to only obliquely reference that fact, noting that "letters from Mantua say" something, but otherwise providing no information about the senders or recipients of those letters.

**Opinion and Commentary: the Spectator and the Essay Sheet**

Walking with two friends in 1691, John Dunton fell unusually silent, struck by “a thought . . . [he] would not exchange for Fifty Guineas” (Dunton XX).\(^{28}\) Dunton, then 31, was a bookseller by trade, but had met with only modest success. The innovative thought which he valued so highly, however, was to become one of the most successful periodicals of the decade: *The Athenian Gazette, or Casuistical Mercury, Resolving all*...
the most Nice and Curious Questions proposed by the Ingenious.\textsuperscript{29} The Athenian Gazette was published semi-weekly (Tuesday and Saturday) for almost 6 years, amassing almost 600 “numbers” which were bound into 20 bound volumes.\textsuperscript{30} Over the course of its (at that time unusually) long run, “Dunton printed the answers to nearly six thousand questions” (McEwen 3). Dunton described the initial concept to his two friends as “a confused Idea of concealing the Querist and answering his Question” (Dunton XX). The Athenian Gazette was a question and answer periodical, and the first of its kind: Dunton and his collaborators published questions which they believed had common appeal, and then proposed answers to those questions. What made the periodical truly groundbreaking, however, was the extent to which the Athenian Gazette solicited audience participation: while Dunton did not hesitate to supply questions when they were lacking, publication depended heavily on queries supplied by readers. The lifespan and tangible evidence of audience participation which the Athenian Gazette can lay claim to mark it as the most notable forerunner of later periodicals.

Dunton's Athenian Gazette was arguably the first of what would become by far the best-known examples of early eighteenth-century periodicals: the famous "literary" periodicals, those which have been deemed by posterity to have artistic and cultural merit. Addison and Steele's Spectator, [Steele's?] Tatler, Defoe's Review, Swift's Observator, and a select few others dominate the historical and critical attention periodicals have received. Often connected with a resurgent concern with "politeness" in

\textsuperscript{29} Referred to henceforth as the Athenian Mercury.
\textsuperscript{30} Early numbers were published weekly; for a brief period in 1692, the Athenian Gazette published thrice-weekly, to forestall a rival periodical; finally, the last ten were published simultaneously, undated, to complete the twentieth volume. For the most part, though, the semi-weekly, Tuesday-Saturday schedule held. For more information, see McEwen pg. 19.
social settings, these periodicals are seen as primarily providing entertainment and a
pleasant mode of obtaining non-specialized information (often on literature, taste,
fashion, custom, and other general interest areas of knowledge).

The essay periodical has been likened to, among other things, the work of modern
day newspaper columnists. Donald F. Bond suggests that "in subject matter the
periodical essay ranged from reflection on the latest happening in London or Paris to
contemplation of the universe and man's place in it (xiii)". In many ways, the "essay
periodicals" were a hybrid form between books and newspapers. The individual issues of
the Spectator and the like were published with the express purpose of later collecting the
sheets into bound volumes, to be sold for a substantial amount (especially in comparison
to the price of a single issue). A similar practice exists today for both newspaper
columnists and bloggers: a gradual accretion of material is later collected and edited into
a book that, regardless of whether the original content was free or provided for minimal
investment, almost always exceeds the initial investment required to read the individual
pieces of writing. Writing distributed over time and space, then, is considered less
valuable than the collection.

Within the day-to-day publication of these periodicals, the participation of readers
was vital to the essay sheet's survival. Bond notes that, "because of the many letters from
readers which it received and published, [the essay periodical] combined the voice of the
author with the widest form of 'audience participation'" (xiii). When the Spectator was
first published, commenters noted with surprise the "diurnall" (daily) nature of the
periodical. John Gay, for instance, noted that
We had at first no manner of Notion, how a Diurnal Paper could be continu'd in the Spirit and Stile of our present Spectators; but to our no small Surprize, we find them still rising upon us, and can only wonder from whence so Prodigious a Run of Wit and Learning can proceed; since some of our best Judges seem to think that they have, hitherto, in general, out-shone even the Esquires first Tatlers" (The Present State of Wit)

The answer to Gay's implicit question of whether the authors of a daily essay sheet could really manage to produce a new essay each day was, simply put, that they could not: the Spectator (and to a certain degree, all of the periodicals in this category) depended heavily on reader submissions (even if, as was usually the case, the letters that the editors received were subsequently edited and re-arranged before they were published).31

So what was the Spectator? As an example of an essay sheet or "answer periodical," the Spectator was, in many ways, typical of its genre. Most issues took the form of a letter or informal report from the narrator, known as "Mr. Spectator," about his activities or musings. Mr. Spectator is characterized as a silent, contemplative, and eminently observant man, and his persona (or eidolon) was the central focus for most of the periodical's commentary: the observations and commentary offered in each issue were cast as coming from a detached, objective witness, an almost disembodied witness to

31 There are two extant collections of previously unpublished letters written to the Spectator (both of which also include letters to the Tatler). One was published by Charles Lillie in 1725, and fills two volumes; the other was published by Richmond P. Bond in 1959. The 26 letters to the Spectator in Bond’s New Letters to the Tatler and Spectator (Austin: U of Texas P, 1959) are from two collections. The first 15 are from “the Marlborough Collection at Blenheim Palace,” and were written during the first run of the Spectator from 1711-1712. The other 11 letters are from the Tickell Collection, all of which were likely received during Thomas Tickell’s editorship of the Spectator during its second run in 1714. Charles Lillie, who published the larger collection of letters, was a bookseller who helped to sell advertisement space in, and individual issues of, the Spectator.
everything happening in London (or elsewhere, such as when Mr. Spectator visits a
country estate, although interludes such as those were rare). The *Spectator* addressed "a
broad range of topics crucial to everyday life in eighteenth-century England: dressing and
dueling; visiting and conversing; reading and writing; love, courtship, and marriage;
education and religion; commerce and finance; business and pleasure" (Mackie 2). The
periodical's commentary on these topics placed it in an unusual category as a publication;
while responsive to current events and the latest trends or fashions, the *Spectator* at least
nominally aimed to transcend day-to-day concerns, in a way that *The Daily Courant* most
certainly did not. Indeed, an apt characterization might be that the *Spectator* was an
explicit project of social improvement, one "addressed to questions of manners, taste, and
morality" (Ketcham 3), but also aiming to accomplish lasting political and social change.

Whereas Dunton's *Athenian Mercury* had represented itself as a group of men, a
rotating set of narrating eidolons who all belonged to the same social club, the *Spectator*
was always written from the perspective of Mr. Spectator. He did belong to a similar
type of club, however (a common conceit for essay sheet periodicals of the time), and the
other club members (ostensibly drawn from various strata of society, although all were
vaguely genteel in nature) often served as his interlocutors. In fact, along with the
aforementioned letters (whether authentic or fictionalized by Addison and Steele) from
audience members, the arguments and discussions between these various personae served
as one of the driving forces of the periodical.

The purpose of the periodical was, as expressly stated by the narrator, to provide
its audience with topics of conversation each day such that Mr. Spectator could
pronounce, in No. 10 of the first series, that “I shall be ambitious to have it said of me,
that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to
dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee-Houses” (Bond I 44).
Critics have tended to read this statement as an attempt to move “civil discourse” from
“private” spaces to “public” ones, a project very much in line with the discussion of the
public sphere in Chapter Three.

Mr. Spectator famously estimates his readership to be approximately 60,000, a
number he arrives at by multiplying the print run of 3,000 by 20 readers per copy (which
he considers “a modest Computation” Bond I 44). Also in No. 10, Mr. Spectator
describes three groups of people which he considers to be the principal audiences for his
essays: other spectators, Blanks, and women. He defines the “other spectators” as those
who “either by the Affluence of their Fortunes, or Laziness of their Dispositions, have no
other Business with the rest of Mankind but to look upon them” (Bond I 45). The Blanks
are described as those who cannot think for themselves, while “the Fair Sex” is
characterized as corrupted by society, such that “their Amusements seem contrived for
them rather as they are Women, than as they are reasonable creatures” (Bond I 46). The Spectator proposes to educate female readers, or at least “diver” them “from greater
Trifles” (Bond I 47).

Erin Mackie argues that the Spectator offered a moderately progressive approach
to social commentary, advocating a kind of proto-Bourgeois stance toward fashion and
manners that supported a lively and "new" perspective on social issues, on the one hand,
while also actively attempting to establish a set of norms and social protocols that would
protect the established social order. She notes that
Both in its overt content and in its operational logic, the bourgeois discourse of taste is characteristic of the large historic shift from absolutist to hegemonic modes of sociopolitical control. Hegemonic power governs through the individualized internalization of normative standards which are increasingly embodied not so much in formal legislation but in modes of style, taste, manners, sentiments, and affections (Mackie 21).

The *Spectator* was both promoter and regulator of that which was tasteful and valuable, suspicious, on the one hand, of "fashion" (the ephemeral and fluctuating whims of social groups), while on the other hand advocating for a type of fashionable living that was both conversant in, and yet disdainful of, the rhetoric of newness, such that "the rhetoric employed by the papers, while ultimately confirming a standard of rationality, only does so through a kind of transformative appropriation of the irrational rhetoric of the fancy" (Mackie 24).

The daily nature of the *Spectator* could be seen as a unifying characteristic; Benedict Anderson, for instance, claims in *Imagined Communities* that "the date at the top of the newspaper" is "the single most important emblem on it" (33), because it coordinates "a daily, mass ceremony": reading the newspaper. While Anderson's discussion of newspapers, nationality, and imagined communities does not focus specifically on the period in question, he offers a counterpart to the Habermasian concept of community formation: where Habermas claimed that readers saw themselves in the content of periodic texts, Anderson argues that the activity of reading regularly is what created connections between individuals.
Building off of Anderson's work, Stuart Sherman claims that, through the *eidolons* (personae) used to narrate various periodicals during this time, readers began to see themselves as living in a time-regulated world. Sherman argues that advances in time-keeping technology lead to a diary-keeping, self-reporting form of writing, one that induced readers to examine their own lives, breaking events down into diary-entry form.

The question of genre is especially important here: Sherman argues, of the *Spectator*, that its "readers understood themselves (within the fiction) to be receiving through print a daily, current report from an intensely private consciousness" (113). The effect was a "hybrid of genres": "The *Spectator* reads like an essay, came out like a daily newspaper, and looked like one too in its typeface and general design" but, most importantly for Sherman, "its most surprising innovations—its timing and its persona—gave it the salient features of a diary, but of a diary turned inside out" (113-114). The tone, form, and style of a diary became, according to Sherman, the way in which readers connected to periodicals, texts which were "to be read by a wide and varied public in the diurnal rhythm, and at the running moment, of its making" (113-114). As ongoing commentary, these texts suggest new ways of thinking about current events, even while they were limited in exactly what events they reported.

Especially given the periodical's connection to the postal system, Sherman argues that readers began to see the medium as a way of corresponding with a given author, a correspondence that gained all the more value for being shared with a large, anonymous group. The periodical press became a forum for the shaping of national identity and character, and a way for individual citizens to voice their concerns and appeals to an otherwise unreachable audience. This hypothesis casts periodicity as a community-
building force, the habits of which helped individuals know themselves as part of a group.

Dealing explicitly with the temporal experience of reading the *Spectator*, Ketchum notes that "Unlike the reader of a novel, the reader of the *Spectator* is not carried along by the logic of cause and effect or by the teleology of plot. Instead, he is carried along by habit, and this makes for a very different kind of reading than reading fiction" (97). The (supposedly) broad appeal of the *Spectator*, and the explicit “civilizing” project in which it was engaged suggest an almost didactic focus on not only the issues of manners and culture which made up the topic of so many issues of the periodical, but also on exactly the kind of habit that Ketchum mentions here. Indeed, Ketchum argues that "the work of the *Spectator* had been to prompt this attention to time and to stimulate a continuing process of thought, not, of course, in the geniuses of the age, but in the 'considering Person' who is the *Spectator* reader" (97). That “attention to time,” specifically an awareness of the clock meant to signal modernity, meant a departure from one version of temporality and an embrace of another, itself considered a kind of “civilizing” influence.

The popularity of the *Spectator* has been repeatedly cited as evidence for broader arguments concerning the growth and status of literature in early eighteenth-century society.\(^{32}\) R. M. Wiles, for example, suggests that the *Spectator*’s broad audience

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contributed to the expansion of the book trade during the eighteenth century, claiming that,

new and improved schools substantially added to the number of persons who could read; prosperity brought notably increased purchasing power to the middle classes; and a strong impetus to reading was given by the Tatler and the Spectator, by the newspapers, which rapidly became numerous in town and country, and by the spirited writings of Defoe, Swift, and Henry Fielding. (2)

The concept of a rapidly expanding reading public in the early eighteenth century is now seen as questionable, but the general importance attributed to the Spectator remains constant. Indeed, Scott Black notes that “while recent accounts of the Spectator have complicated the once-standard Whiggish story of the rising middle class that featured Addison as the prophet of the bourgeoisie, those complications have not so much changed the terms of the discussion as reversed them” (87). Black goes on to argue that, while the Spectator is assigned the role of “ideologue” or “agent of ‘class consolidation,’” the difference is minimal: instead of advertising the middle class, Mr. Spectator is now credited with creating it.

Advertisements in The Spectator

An advertisement is a notification, and we do not notify a man of what he does not care to hear about. Such a collection as our fortunate author has made transports us, his readers, in the twinkling of an eye, into the homes

33 For the argument against an expanded reading public in the Eighteenth Century, see J. A. Downie and Paul Hunter, op. cit.
and haunts of our ancestors. It brings us into the closest possible contact with their daily life. Literary men may write for posterity; but the advertiser must trade upon the present” (Lewis ix).

The above quote, from G. L. Kittredge's introduction to Lawrence Lewis’ monograph The Advertisements of The Spectator (1909), indicates a strong belief in the powers of advertisements to transport modern-day readers into an imagined past. While Kittredge may be overly enthusiastic in his appraisal of a commercial announcement’s ability to represent the reality of a given time period, he's right in suggesting that advertisements are an under-studied source for examining the function and circulation of periodic publication. Indeed, the advertisements included in periodicals of various sorts, and eventually the periodicals that functioned primarily as advertisers themselves, provided another type of news and engagement for the eighteenth-century audience.

Lewis claims that “then as now, advertisements and not subscriptions or sales of single copies, furnished the greater part of the revenue of a periodical” (68). Whether or not Lewis is correct in his assumption of the financial importance of advertisements (and Bond expresses a similar opinion in the introduction to his edition of the Spectator), the relevance of advertisements to a discussion of audience seems indisputable. Those paying to print an advertisement in the Spectator were perhaps the most directly invested (literally) in correctly gauging the character of the audience being addressed, their interests, and their available income. Richmond P. Bond estimates the cost of placing an advertisement in the Spectator at five shillings, approximately half the cost of advertising
in the *London Gazette*. Donald F. Bond refrains from any estimate of cost, but notes that a large number of other periodicals published at the same time were known to charge either 2 shillings or 2 shillings and 6 pence per advertisement.

Advertising in periodicals was only "the tip of the iceberg," however (Harris XX). While newspaper and essay-sheet ads had a much better chance of surviving for posterity (connected, as they were, to documents thought to have more merit), they do not nearly represent the massive amount of advertising activity occurring in London at this time. Handbills, hawkers who roamed the streets crying out notices, and even simple word-of-mouth networks (not to mention the centrality of the London Exchange and other known areas of commerce) accounted for a large percentage of available commercial notices, while those placed in periodicals were often incredibly repetitive. Indeed, advertising can serve as an analogy for the news stories of the time as well: only a limited view of a given story was available in a printed serial. That analogy is a valuable one for any discussion of periodicity as an early paradigm of news production: the periodical press was supplemental to an established system of "talk" and letter writing, a system which did not abide by the same rules, but which maintained a somewhat symbiotic relationship with the periodic press nonetheless. When later systems of news distribution adopted this periodicity more thoroughly, other non-periodic systems became supplementary instead (gossip, localized meeting places such as the proverbial "water cooler," etc.).

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34 Bond’s estimate can only be considered, at best, an educated guess. Although he offers comparisons to the prices of advertisements in other periodicals available at that time, there is no actual evidence of the price of an ad in the *Spectator.*
Advertising in periodicals of the early eighteenth century was often set off from the rest of the text with a heading (usually a simple "Advertisements") or a border of some kind, or even simple accent symbols such as pictographs (hands pointing to a given advertisement, a cluster of starts, etc.). This "frame" for advertisement was not totalizing, however: there are clear examples of advertisements appearing outside of the designated ad space. Indeed, the line between advertisement and news was perhaps intentionally blurred in some cases, possibly for commercial reasons: Harris notes that some news items were probably provided and paid for through a method similar to that reserved for private advertisement. Along the same lines, "in the 1740s readers were also paying for news to be left out and this was probably a longstanding service" (143). After 1695, "competition and the public demand for conventional and now widely available news narratives accelerated the process of convergence between the news serial carrying advertising and the advertising sheets which began to assume some of the characteristics of the newspaper" (144).

The importance of advertisements as contributors to an information economy are confirmed by contemporary sources as well. Indeed, Richard Steele famously claimed, through the persona of Isaac Bickerstaff in The Tatler, that it is my Custom, in a Dearth of News, to entertain my self with those Collections of Advertisements that appear at the End of all our publick Prints. These I consider as Accounts of News from the little World, in the same Manner that the foregoing Parts of the Paper are from the great. If in one we hear that a Sovereign Prince is fled from his Capital City, in the other we hear of a Tradesman who hath shutup his Shop, and run away. In
in one we find the Victory of a General, in the other we see the Desertion of a private Soldier. I must confess, I have a certain Weakness in my Temper, that is often very much affected by these little Domestick Occurences, and have frequently been caught with Tears in my Eyes over a melancholy Advertisement. (Tatler Thursday September 14, 1710)

As the advertisements in The Daily Courant (and the discussion of advertisements in periodicals such as the Tatler and the Spectator) have shown, the commercial influence of periodic publication cannot be underestimated. Moreover, the advertisement provided an important connection to the local community, much like the letters of readers did in the so-called "question periodicals." And, of course, advertisements were the fuel upon which periodic publication ran; for the early publisher to put out a newspaper, he or she needed first to have products (usually books) which the extra space of that newspaper could be used to advertise. The "public sphere" creations of textual interchange and civic discourse have always been underwritten by economic motivations, and periodical advertisements demonstrate that fact above all else.

**Conclusion**

This chapter opened with a discussion of a supposed dichotomy, a binary opposition wherein the two terms or concepts being opposed are jointly exhaustive and mutually exclusive (everything must belong to one of the categories or the other, and no part of one overlaps with the other). Such constructions are often intellectual exercises, and have a long history in the philosophical and rhetorical traditions. One of the most
famous of such is the problem of mind/body dualism that has long puzzled students of ontology. In one version of that problem, Kenneth Burke made use of an apparent dichotomy of his own that seemed to mirror the larger discussion: a distinction between "motion" and "action," essentially amounting to a distinction between phenomena and the meaning attached to those phenomena. Richard Lanham, in his book *The Economics of Attention*, offers another with the opposition of "stuff" and "fluff" (a simplification of a "form" vs. "content" binary). In most cases, these oppositions are meant as a starting point, a way of beginning to explain relationships between forces that are never so simple as an either/or distinction.

In each of these cases, the complicating factors that disproved the existence of a dichotomy also tend to provide theoretical explanations for the relationship between the forces described by the thought experiment. Burke discusses a distinction between motion and action as a way of articulating the difference between humans (as symbol using, creating, and interpreting beings) and the world around them (in other words, an argument for the unique priority of consciousness over unthinking matter). Nonsymbolic motion is the movement of matter: the lamp that falls from the table and, striking the ground, breaks. Symbolic action is, at once, both the same as and more than the motion it is based on. In one circumstance, the lamp that fell from the table has been dashed to the floor in anger, the result of a temper tantrum, instantly regretted. In another circumstance, the same lamp was shattered when the owner, in a fit of manic glee, decided to rid herself of burdensome possessions, signaling the beginning of a new chapter in her life. While the motion might appear the same, a different meaning would be attached to each circumstance. Burke mediates this apparent binary relationship,
however, by introducing the term "attitude," the quality by which motion can be considered to have "incipient action," even if that action is not realized.

Lanham, in turn, argues that post-industrial economies (which have also been called "knowledge economies") are defined by the predominance of "knowledge work" (the creation, analysis, manipulation, sale, and use of information). He characterizes the difference between industrial and knowledge economies as a distinction between "stuff" ("the real reality as the stone you kicked with your foot") and "fluff" ("the world we stub our foot on is only a printout that happens to have been made from the information available at the time") with this quote: "a young businessman recently profiled in the Wall Street Journal [said]: 'My dad always said to me, "you've got to dig it, grow it, or build it; everything else is just fluff."' So there you have the three ages of economy, redefined: agriculture, industrialism, and fluff" (5). Where industrial economies make real things, knowledge economies deal in intangibles. Lanham goes on to suggest that "an information economy thus implies a fundamental figure/ground reversal in how we think about the world we live in" (6). Where previously the dominant worldview valued tangible assets as more "real" than information (hence the young businessman’s quote above), now information is seen as the building blocks of things, such that manipulating information (DNA, or the order and arrangement of molecules) can, in turn, shape reality. For Lanham, this binary relationship is mediated (in a limited set of situations) by attention: in a system where both information and physical resources are abundant, the scarce resource of human attention is the necessary catalyst required to effect change in either area.
In much the same way that Kenneth Burke postulates "attitude" as a mediating term between "motion" and "action," so too does Richard Lanham pose "attention" as the mediator between "stuff" and "fluff," Lanham's terms for the form/content binary. Both men address a fundamental theoretical concern in philosophical thought: where does the boundary begin between the physical world and the mental one, and what does making a distinction between the two actually get us?

I would argue that my treatment of periodicity in the publications of The Daily Courant and the Spectator attempts a similar project as that of Burke and Lanham. On the one hand, an account of the economic effects of periodicity, the stark rationale of capitalist self-reproduction. On the other hand, an argument for the affective force of diurnal engagement as a creator of communal identity. In finding middle path through the opposition of these two views, this chapter argues for a more nuanced understanding of the effects that periodic texts have on their readers.

The distinction between The Daily Courant and the Spectator could be seen as the distinction between wire news (the news stories that circulate among many newspapers, for which no one paper offers a substantially different perspective; e.g., the Associated Press) and op-eds or exclusive content (which is written by local editors or journalists at one particular paper). The Daily Courant accumulated information from whatever sources it could find, and attempted to offer a certain breadth of coverage relating to what might be considered the important events of the day. The Spectator, on the other hand, was written by a handful of authors (although it included letters and parts of letters from numerous readers), and was devoted to more in-depth discussion of a given issue. One could see the distinction as one of fact vs. opinion, hard news vs. commentary. Indeed,
while the fact/opinion binary may be false ontologically, it is alive and well in considerations of genre.

Ultimately, there are two visions of time in periodical form being offered here. Sommerville casts the periodical as looking always to the future: how does one capture readers for the next issue, how can periodical publishing make itself necessary, unavoidable, and thus commercially viable? Sherman aligns periodical literature with the "diurnal form" and suggests that both focus instead on the present, on the reading of diurnal texts as an act of "simultaneity." For Sherman, the periodical reader uses that genre to imagine other such readers, to imagine a periodical author, an imagined community of homogeneity or at least one that is connected, knowable. Neither critic suggests that periodicals have much to do with the past, although Sherman points out that, while literary critics often don't know what to do with the odd genres of the private diurnal and the more broadly periodical, historians have long understood what to do with them: they are to be mined for data about the past. In a similar sense, we should not overlook the fact that many periodicals were printed with the express purpose of later being bound into book-form.

The stances taken by each argument stem in part from the material used as their bodies of evidence, however. Sherman mentions the function of dates in newspapers, but focuses almost exclusively on essay sheets and question periodicals: texts with fictional personas, letters from readers, and more literary content. Sommerville's argument for the corrupting effects of periodicity apply primarily to newspapers (in part because his work deals primarily with seventeenth-century texts, only touching on the later essay-sheets). His arguments about information as fact vs. as knowledge make the most sense when
applied to the stories of *The Daily Courant*, while Sherman's concept of diurnal form fits best with the *Spectator*. While both deal with "periodicals" broadly, and are aware of the other types of publication, neither accounts for this disjunction in their theoretical approach to periodicity.

Considering this genre distinction yields several important conclusions. The newspaper was considered an ephemeral object, whose use was determined solely by its ability to convey information of a certain type: *new* information, which needed to be distributed widely. In many ways, the essay-sheet functioned much more like a literary artifact, one which would be collected and studied after the fact, used as an example of or contributor to the wisdom of the day. Yet the essay sheet was still strongly shaped by the "diurnal" form, its content selected on a day-to-day basis as a fitting piece of commentary for that particular moment in time. The content of the newspaper was required to be authoritative (e.g., the *London Gazette’s* “published by authority” heading), and came from authoritative sources, even if the source’s authority was gained simply by being in the location that was written about (“letters from” as a persuasive strategy). The content of the essay sheet, on the other hand, was often reader-generated, and was designed to mirror the reader back to themselves. These texts serve as examples of community-creating documents, used as a crutch to foster dialogue between strangers.

In the final, concluding chapter, I use the theories of periodicity, epistemological time, and temporal context (which I have developed over the last four chapters) to discuss the contribution of this historical study to an understanding of the contemporary news distribution situation. I focus specifically on the "newspaper crisis" of recent years, and the discussion of how changing technological and social information-sharing practices
seem to be leading to the "death" of the newspaper as a medium for publishing news. Analyzing the myriad social and technological changes that have occurred between the early eighteenth and early twenty-first centuries would be a task that was neither useful nor coherent. For that and many other reasons, this is not a comparative or cumulative project. I am not attempting to make causal connections between texts, technologies, and social systems separated by hundreds of years and thousands of miles. Newspapers in the 1700s and in the early 2000s are very different types of documents, and explaining how those differences came about is beyond the scope of this dissertation. I do argue, however, that there are similarities that cannot be denied between the two rhetorical situations, and that an analysis of the eighteenth-century "birth" of periodic publication of news can help to explain the apparent "death" of it in the twenty-first century, and the value and cost of altering the temporal environment of news distribution.
Chapter 5

Social Acceleration and The “Death” of the Newspaper

…terms such as *instantaneity*, *real time*, and 24/7 quickly entered the social and technical lexicon to describe the kinds of time the network society generated, its greatly increased tempo, and its totalizing logic. (11)

—Robert Hassan and Ronald Purser, *24/7: Time and Temporality in the Network Society*

On Tuesday, November 27, 2009, American Public Media’s *Marketplace Today* ran a radio story entitled “A Slow Media Movement.” Sally Herships, the reporter narrating the story, describes waking up at 4am when her boyfriend’s cell phone rang… and he answered it: “This, to put it mildly, doesn't make me happy. I'm trying not to take it personally. My boyfriend is a journalist and a news junkie. And it's not like he needs an excuse to stay wired all the time. Connected is the new normal.” When Herships mentions being “connected” there is no explanation of what her boyfriend is connected to, precisely because the audience doesn’t need it. Connectedness is taken for granted, and the object of that connection (whether it be friends on Facebook, colleagues on LinkedIn, news stories from a Website, or a podcast through iTunes) is less important than the constant drive to be informed, communicating, and present.

Hership goes on to describe the ways in which the possibility of staying connected at all times seems to have led to unfortunate expectations; namely, that “people
who are totally wired expect everyone else to be, too.” Beyond the example of the 4am phone call, the story includes commentary by professors of journalism, interactive media, and information science, all describing the ways in which people’s reactions to modern technology often take the form of a perceived pressure to be constantly available. The problems of constant connection described in this story are often linked to questions of speed, and the breakdown of periodicity: the frequency with which we consume and produce texts has increased so rapidly that, like the individual frames of film in an old movie projector, they flow together into one seemingly continuous whole. The “pace of life” mentioned in Chapter One refers to precisely this concern: the perceived, lived experience of time through the medium of contemporary publication practices.

The omnipresence of “connecting” technologies, and the feeling that those connections must be “always on,” has inspired a strong reaction: a variety of social movements and self-help programs have developed to help people slow down their lives (some of these groups, ironically enough, advertise primarily online). The commentary on, and reaction against, this phenomenon has typically taken two forms: popular and scholarly. The popular resistance to the perceived speed of modern life has included books such as James Gleick’s *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything* (1999) and Carl Honoré’s *In Praise of Slowness: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed* (2004). These popular accounts, and shorter news stories such as the Public Radio piece mentioned above, are a form of social commentary that function, for all intents and purposes, as anecdotal evidence for a host of concerns related to the perception of degrading social structures, declining quality of life, and a less meaningful experience of the world around us.
Scholarly discussions of this anxiety vary widely, from gloomy dystopian
predictions, to more methodical critique, and even some cautious optimism. Notably, 
though, the field of rhetoric and composition seems to have next to nothing to say on the 
topic. At this point, at least, the conversation is dominated by sociologists, pointing up the political and economic variability of new concepts of time, such that “some are plugged in to a global time, of distantiated realtime interaction, and others are cut off into a local time, where events are, if anything, slowed down” (Crang 67). Ultimately, most theorists avoid making totalizing predictions of whole-scale societal change, pointing out that new social and technological developments build upon and work within existing structures, such that

cause and effect, linearity, spatiality, invariability, stability, clarity and precision are not being replaced but have alongside and superimposed contrasting temporal principles such as instantaneity, simultaneity, networked connections, ephemerality, volatility, uncertainty as well as temporal multiplicity and complexity. (Adam 2003,74)

One of the socio-cultural changes frequently identified in this way is “social acceleration.” Hartmut Rosa defines social acceleration as “a wide-ranging speedup of all kinds of technological, economic, social, and cultural processes and . . . a picking up of the general pace of life” (78).

This concluding chapter picks up, in many ways, where Chapter One left off. It focuses on social acceleration as a concept generally, but also as the “problem” which this dissertation is meant to help explain. Where the initial statement of this problem suggests something as simple as the fact that change is occurring and we do not yet
adequately understand it, I ultimately argue that social acceleration takes many and varied forms, and a nuanced analysis is required to understand this phenomenon. More specifically, I suggest that the historical perspective on the origins of periodicity and the critique of theories of audience offered by my earlier chapters provides an example of a “rhetoric of time,” a set of tools for better understanding the temporal experiences of audiences and rhetors. Furthermore, I argue that the difficulties facing newspaper production and circulation systems, which critics say is undergoing a possibly fatal crisis, can provide a concrete example of the utility of this work: I apply the historical perspective provided by Chapters Three and Four—and the theoretical lens established in Chapter Two—to analyze the ways in which the “death of the newspaper” conversation that has sprung up is evidence of anxiety over larger changes that have exerted widespread influence on communication contexts. What I lay out here is only a preliminary analysis, however; it is a suggestion of possible conclusions to be drawn. Finally, I summarize the conclusions, inferences, and implications of this dissertation project, in order to clearly catalog what we can know, what we suspect, and what further work remains to be done in this same area of interest.

Social Acceleration Defined

The idea of social acceleration itself is not terribly new: along with technological advancement and increased mechanisms of travel (of both material and information), the speed of various key activities (work, travel, communication) seems to increase. Given
the technological changes of the past 30 years, the fact that the perceived pace of an individual’s day-to-day life has changed should not be surprising. And in fact, social acceleration in general is not often considered "news;" when it is, the story usually is a lament that mourns a past culture of more deliberate and thoughtful action (because speed and thought are apparently mutually exclusive), yet decries the possibility of a solution (technological progress is inevitable, and speed is a product of that progress). We are seldom surprised that cultural shifts, and our interactions with technology specifically, are "speeding up" our lives.

We might be surprised to know, however, just how long this sensation has been around as a lived experience of human society. Most scholars writing on the subject are quick to point out that, contrary to popular accounts, “anxiety over the perceived acceleration of life, of the speeding up of every realm of our existence, of there never being enough hours in the day to do all that we want and need to do, is not as contemporaneous with our age as one might think” (Hassan 1). For example, R.D. Laing wrote in 1967 (long before any shift toward digital or mobile technologies) that “We live in a moment of history where change is so speeded up that we begin to see the present only when it is already disappearing” (Politics of Experience XX). Even earlier, John Dewey included a brief section in The Public and Its Problems (1927), entitled “The Mania for Motion and Speed.” Given its long history, then, the discourse of acceleration could, in fact, be considered “a constitutive trait of modernity as such” (Rosa 77).

Popular discussions of social acceleration—the newspaper or magazine articles lamenting inevitable speed—often lump a number of different phenomena into the same category, however. When attempting to understand social acceleration as a facet of
modern society, we would be well served to attempt some kind of taxonomy of perception and effect. Rosa provides one such in *High Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity*. Rosa argues that there are three facets of social acceleration that often get mixed up together: (1) technological change, (2) acceleration of social change, and (3) an acceleration of the pace of life.

The first facet, technological change, is fairly straightforward: the speed of various processes (software, manufacturing, etc.) and devices (faster cars and faster computers) increases as a function of technological development. Perhaps the best-known example of descriptions of noticeable technological acceleration is Moore’s Law, named for Intel co-founder Gordon Moore. In 1965, Moore published an article in *Electronics Magazine*, wherein he noted that the number of transistors that could be inexpensively placed on a circuit had been doubling since the invention of the integrated circuit in 1958.\(^{35}\) He predicted that the number of transistors per circuit (circuit density) would double every year for the next ten years, after which it would slow down to doubling almost every two years. The phenomenon of exponential growth is hard to comprehend in the abstract; the scale is such that, compared to “about fifty electronic components per chip in 1965,” there were “42 million electronic components were placed on an individual chip in 2000” (Swedin and Ferro, 68).

Moore’s Law is well-known for two reasons: first, the prediction turned out to be remarkably accurate. The number of transistors per circuit has followed a pretty straightforward line of exponential growth, carrying with it the rise of personal

\(^{35}\) Brief description of the history of circuits here.
computing. Not only that, but the range of the prediction is constantly being expanded; while no one seems to think that the growth described by Moore’s Law can continue forever, each decade brings the assessment that such growth will last “at least one more decade.” The second reason for the Law’s popularity is its broad applicability; a host of other technological phenomena have followed a trend similar to Moore’s prediction for circuits: hard disk storage, power consumption, RAM storage, network capacity, and computing performance per unit cost (the last is especially relevant: performance measured in speed is an unqualified association of value with how fast a given task is accomplished). Indeed, many people associate Moore’s Law with broader statements of technological acceleration (rather than the specific assertion concerning circuitry), a generalized sense that technological process is constantly accelerating, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

The other two categories of acceleration that Rosa describes (social change and pace of life) are perhaps less intuitive than the clear changes in technology. By “acceleration of social change,” Rosa refers to the rate at which society itself changes. This type of change can also be understood as “an increase in the decay rates of the reliability of experiences and expectations and by the contraction of the time spans definable as the ‘present’” (83). Importantly, this category refers to an actual, measureable period considered to be the “present,” itself defined as the “time span for

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36 It has been suggested that Moore’s Law is, in fact, a self-fulfilling prophecy; that, knowing the pace at which progress is expected, the industries involved have used Moore’s Law as a benchmark of success. The truth or falsity of this assertion would be nearly impossible to assess; fortunately, the answer is largely irrelevant when considering the effects, rather than the causes, of social acceleration.

37 One possible statement of this more general law is Ray Kurzweil’s Law of Accelerating Returns; for more information, see Kurzweil’s eponymous essay on the subject.
which . . . the horizons of expectation and experience coincide” (83). Social change can perhaps best be measured by alterations in social institutions. Rosa uses the example of the relationship between family and work cycles: the intergenerational model of early modernity saw each generation picking up the work of the former; the model of “classical” modernity was organized around one generation (my parents’ careers are X and Y) and “tended to disperse with the death of the couple” (84). The current (“late modernity”) model, however, shows “a growing tendency for family life cycles to last less than an individual lifespan,” while at the same time “occupations no longer extend over the whole of a work life; jobs change at a higher rate than generations” (84).

The last category of acceleration, the “acceleration of the pace of life,” is not so much complicated as it is ill defined. Rosa describes it as “an admittedly fuzzy concept,” but suggests as a possible explanation that it “refers to the speed and compression of actions and experiences in everyday life” (85). There are two possible aspects of “pace”: the actual, measureable lessening of time spent on a given activity, and the subjective perception of speed that is less apparent to empirical observation. Both aspects, however, are perpetual subjects of popular reports on how technology has altered “everyday life;” the anecdote that begins this chapter would serve as a prime example of this category of analysis.

In fact, one of the central “paradoxes” of social acceleration revolves around the relationship between technological acceleration and the pace of life. Simply put, there is a difference between the perceived promise of technology—that faster tech leads to more “free,” and less “wasted,” time—and the lived-reality of the pace of life—i.e., that as efficiency increases, free time decreases, and the benefits of speed are offset by related
costs. As Thomas Eriksen puts it, “more flexibility makes use less flexible, and more choice makes us less free. Why do most of us have less time to spare than before, contrary to what one might expect? Why does increased access to information lead to reduced comprehension?” (4). One useful example is Randall Kennedy’s theory of “The Great Moore’s Law Compensator,” colloquially known as “bloat.” Kennedy points out that, while computational performance increases in line with Moore’s predictions about advances in circuitry, software increases in complexity and size at an equivalent (or even higher) rate. The consequence is that, despite advances in hardware between 2000 and 2007, a copy of Microsoft Word 2007 running on Windows Vista (the 2007 operating system) will perform the same task in twice the time necessary for a copy of Word 2000 running on Windows XP (the 2000 operating system).

We return, then, to problem that began this contemplation of time and rhetoric: there is a perceived change in human society as a whole, one that has caused much distress among commenters and social critics. There exists a widespread belief that our world has begun to speed up: materially, socially, and perceptually/affectively. What could a revised rhetoric of time offer as an answer to this question? How could the concept of epistemological time, specifically, offer a better understanding of what is going on? How does social acceleration alter our understanding of audience and the ways in which serial texts help to define group identity, drive economic growth, promote debate, expose corruption, and a myriad of other beneficial effects? As befits the overarching subject matter of this dissertation, I will answer those questions by offering some specific thoughts on the case of the “death of the newspaper,” the inexorable
“crisis” (if something happening so slowly can thus be called) that provides such a unique instance of social acceleration at work.

The "Death" of the Newspaper: Problems for a Periodic Medium

Newspapers are like dinosaurs and the internet is the comet smashing into their lives…

—Jay Rosen (Flying Seminar)

On March 11, 2009, the *New York Times* ran a story about failing newspapers, the headline for which was “As Cities Go From Two Papers to One, Talk of Zero.” The occasion for the piece was the closings of the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, the *Rocky Mountain News*, and the *Tucson Citizen.*38  The article described how the transitions of Seattle, Denver, and Tucson from cities with two active newspapers to only one were part of a larger trend: struggling papers being put up for sale, or drastically reducing their staff, and the corporations that owned those newspapers filing for bankruptcy. Although not the paper’s first mention of the “newspaper crisis,” the *Times* article did lay out, in no uncertain terms, the likelihood of continued closings and bankruptcies, and called into question the future of the newspaper industry. Stories such as this one were common in late 2008 and early 2009, when a rash of newspaper closings and the prospect of bankruptcy or extreme downsizing for an even larger set of news corporations suggested to media critics that the traditional daily paper would have difficulty surviving the advent

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38 The Seattle Post Intelligencer ceased circulation of printed newspapers, but continues to publish current news on its website, [www.seattlepi.com](http://www.seattlepi.com). The other two papers have websites that are not updated, essentially memorializing the closed papers.
of the World Wide Web. As newspaper circulations have continued to shrink (both the raw number of papers sold\textsuperscript{39} and the circulation as a percentage of the population\textsuperscript{40}) the audiences for online news have continued to grow ("newspaper Web site audiences . . . increased 10.5 percent in the first quarter").\textsuperscript{41}

Newspaper readerships are, indeed, declining. What's more, while the decline has accelerated in recent years, newspaper readership as a percentage of the population has been decreasing since the 1960s, and the real number of newspaper subscribers has been decreasing since the early 1990s. All of the aforementioned developments have contributed to a curious situation: the newspaper industry is in trouble. Although both circulation numbers and "penetration" (the term for the percentage of the population who read newspapers) have been declining since the 1970s, the decline has only really begun to accelerate, and to affect the performance and viability of the papers themselves, in recent years. A 20-year study from the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism shows a steady slide in paid circulation. The Pew report notes that, in the United States,

Daily circulation, which stood at 62.3 million in 1990, fell to 43.4 million in 2010, a decline of 30\%. Sunday circulation held up slightly better, falling from 62.6 million in 1990 to 46.2 million last year, off 26\%.

\textsuperscript{39} Print circulation in the first quarter of 2009 declined by more than 7\% compared to the last quarter of 2008, continuing a downward trend that has been going on for years, but which intensified greatly in 2007.

\textsuperscript{40} For information on newspaper circulation as a percentage of the population, see Mark Louny'd essay "Circling the Drain." http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0910/circling-the-drain.html

1990, evening papers, which began to decline in the 1970s, made up about a third of daily circulation. In 2009, it was just over a tenth.

While there is no guarantee that the decline described here will ultimately lead to the newspaper disappearing entirely, at the very least it highlights that newspapers have effectively disappeared from the day-to-day lives of many readers and news-consumers.

**Why Call It a Crisis?**

Why is there so much anxiety over the fate of the newspaper industry? Richard Pérez-Peña, the author of the *New York Times* article, argues that media critics are so worried because “for more than two centuries, newspapers have been the indispensable source of public information and a check on the abuses of government and other powerful interests.” Pérez-Peña is not alone in his conviction. For many, no less is at stake than American democracy itself, in the form of the Fourth Estate, the feedback loop through which citizens learn about and then react to the events of the day. To summarize one view: "The traditional view of this process held that journalists would report, citizens would read the reports, and some form of public opinion would develop that helped to connect the will of the people with public action" (Rosenberry and St. John, 1). When critics wax poetic about the importance of newspapers as an institution (and of the journalism that institution supports), they are drawing on an old and well established trope that identifies newspapers as a foundational aspect of democratic, free society: the Fourth Estate, the voice of the People, the first rough draft of history.
The trope of the newspaper as a shaper of public opinion has circulated through public discourse for a long time; Alexander Andrews quotes Jeremy Bentham as saying that

Experience has shown that newspapers are one of the best means of directing opinion – of quieting feverish movements – of causing the lies and artificial rumours by which the enemies of the State may attempt to carry on their evil designs to vanish. In these public papers, instruction may descend from the Government to the people, or ascend from the people to the Government; the greater the freedom allowed, the more correctly may a judgment be formed upon the course of opinion—with so much the greater certainty will it act. (Vol. II, 179)

While early discussions of the newspaper describe it primarily as a transparent medium, easily bent to the will of those who published it, the larger purpose of journalism has long been seen as one of disseminating information broadly and impartially, and fostering informed debate. Not only are newspapers seen as influencing the conversations of the day, but they are also often called the "rough draft of history," the first step in the process of humankind documenting its own past.

Of course, the description of newspapers as providing a daily "rough draft of history" has, itself, a complicated lineage. Although often attributed as the original remarks of a variety of individuals spread over the latter half of the twentieth century (most notably Alan Barth of the Washington Post in the 1940s), variations on that same
sentiment were articulated as early as the first decade of the 1900s. Indeed, perhaps the fullest statement of the "rough draft of history" idea comes from an anonymous editorial, written in 1905, for *The State*, a major South Carolina newspaper. The editorial was an argument for studying newspapers in schools, and also characterized the newspaper as "the chronicle of the most important and interesting things of the day." Perhaps more to the point, the anonymous author argues that "to keep abreast of the times we must know what the people of the day are doing and thinking." Of course, the same impulse could be assumed to spur the omnipresent hunger for news that Blair described in his speech (mentioned in Chapter One), or that Steele critiqued in the *Tatler* (mentioned in Chapter Four). Yet as a way of addressing the sometimes near-frantic urgency associated with the consumption of news, newspapers have generally been considered one of the most moderate of solutions, allowing for “timely” transmission of information while also setting up controls on that information, a sort of brake to control the speed of distribution.43

The moderation associated with this medium has much to do with the identities that have grown up around it. As Dan Gillmor notes, there used to be three main “roles” that people used to occupy in the world of news, roles whose borders are blurring rapidly: 1) Journalists (the creators, the conduits of information, the funnel through which “news” flowed), 2) Newsmakers (the subjects of stories, those who are reported on and try to

43 Note that, as described in Chapter Two, distribution and circulation should be considered as distinct, but related, entities. Newspapers control the distribution of news (where the newspapers themselves are sold), but the circulation of texts and information does not tend to conform to the same regulated system.
control what is said about them), and 3) the people formerly known as the Audience (those who used to be consumers, but are becoming creators, distributors, and subjects themselves; whose contributions and influence used to be severely circumscribed by technology, by social convention, and by simple logistics). (4)

Gillmor’s taxonomy suggests, as have many other news-oriented social theorists (Shirky, Rosen), that what used to be “top-down” organization for disseminating information has started to resemble more of a “bottom-out” organization, such that fewer members of the audience need to directly access news sources because they can rely on other audience members to pass them on instead.

There is unquestionably a difference between reading a printed newspaper article and encountering the same text on the screen of a computer, alongside links, videos, and an entire virtual world. Indeed, some have argued that the medium of Internet news changes what news is in the first place; after all, content on the web changes continuously. Self-respecting companies no longer merely have web sites; they are about to improve their web sites. There can be no guarantee that a page that was available yesterday will be available today. Links must be updated monthly. Change is not a state of emergency, but a feature of everyday life. (Eriksen 3)

In this environment, where news is already a common commodity, those who would seek to distribute the news professionally are forced to compete with a very different market than they are used to. All news becomes, by necessity, “breaking” news, and the competition for coverage is spread among thousands of smaller entities.
On an institutional level, the role and function of news organizations seems to be changing as well; beyond the threats to newspaper sales and profitability mentioned earlier in this chapter, the very ways in which these institutions see themselves are being altered. From worrying about being scooped by kids with camera phones, to seeing the funds for investigative reporting imperiled by slashed budgets, the “watchdog” identity of traditional news organization has come into question.

With respect to the delivery of news, those who warn against the deleterious effects of social acceleration on society often argue that a more measured pace would allow for more and better deliberation (whether of the Democratic or the journalistic variety). In an era of ubiquitous replication, where a news story is “picked up” and repeated endlessly from an ever-growing number of sources, the “echo chamber” of the blogosphere is often mirrored by the frenetic bouncing of information around traditional news outlets. The daily newspaper, with the definitional limitation of once-a-day publication, is necessarily forced to take stories more slowly.

The question remains, though, whether a significant proportion of the mistakes habitually assigned to “haste” might not be made anyway, even given a more moderate pace of news reporting; after all, it is not the case that people only make mistakes (or poor arguments) when they are in a hurry. Indeed, the speed with which events are reported might lead to the opposite effect of what is generally expected: people may be more wary and critical of what they read, rather than taking it on faith, due in part to the atmosphere of skepticism and distrust. If a reader assumes that the article she is reading in the New York Times has been vetted and proofed extensively by an editor, and thus takes the statement as a hard statement of truth, that reader might not think twice about
reading it, absorbing it, and moving on. If, on the other hand, that reader is constantly
challenged, and required to provide proof of evidence (something that web texts can do
far more readily than print newspapers), she is much more likely to see the conflicting
interpretations of reality that are at work behind the scenes of any “newsworthy” issue.

Of course, in the taxonomy of the old style of journalism that Gillmor argued for
(of Journalists, Newsmakers, and Audience) he leaves out a fourth, vitally important
participant in the world of news: those willing to pay to run an advertisement in the
newspaper. While the roles of the first three may be blurring, this fourth member of the
“news world” has been fleeing the newspaper altogether. Personal ads, which used to be
a mainstay of newspapers, have shifted to online venues such as Craigslist, which offer
much faster responses and, importantly, are free. Corporate ad sales are declining as
well, in part due to circulation problems: many companies suspect that newspapers are no
longer widely read, and thus there seems to be less reason to advertise in them.

The advertisers are not wrong, either; fewer and fewer people are reading
newspapers. The reason for this shift in audience is both straightforward and
unsurprising. Online news is generally cheaper (with the exception of some pay-walled
sites, most notably the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, most newspapers
provide free online content), more convenient (why buy a paper, or even walk to the door
to pick up the delivered subscription, when you can just go online?), and more up-to-date
(the newspaper is updated once a day; a news website can be updated once a minute, if
necessary). Not only that, but the average age of newspaper readers has risen to fifty-
eight, which is “three years younger (!) than the average viewer of television’s evening
news,” meaning that traditional news outlets are catering to older and older audiences
Although the trend is even greater among the young, more and more people are getting their news from the Internet, whether from the websites of traditional news sources or blogs and other non-traditional sources. And not only do most readers look online for what might generically be called “news” (the important events of the day, national and international stories of importance to a large number of people), but online outfits easily encroach on what was, for a long time, the specialized purview of newspaper “sections.” Health, business, arts and leisure, sports, travel, all of these topics find more focused and specialized attention in the pages of websites than of newspapers.

Ken Doctor, a media critic, suggests that part of the reason for reader migration to internet news sources is the desire to buck the controlling influence of editors: rather than having gatekeepers tell you what is important and selecting from a collection of sources what you should know, you can now go right to the source. As Doctor puts it, “why take your local editors’ edited, truncated-for-print versions of The New York Times, The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and hundreds of other complete sources?” (10). His suggestion, then, is that readers go online looking for a more complete story. One of the benefits online news has over print is that the reader has the option to get a more complete picture, including background information, previous stories on the same topic, and conflicting opinions. Yet Doctor also suggests that online news readers don’t spend nearly as much time reading as do their print-consuming counterparts. Prior to the last decade or so, control over the flow of information was fairly heavily centralized. As Clay Shirky has put it, “until recently, ‘the news’ has meant two different things—events that are newsworthy, and events covered by the press. In that environment what identified something as news was professional judgment” (Shirky 64). Now, however,
the news is defined not necessarily by what people are being told, but rather by what they are telling each other, which means that the market for "professional judgment" has eroded significantly.

Newspapers are often cited as examples of texts that create (and have a particular relationship with) their audiences. The form of the printed newspaper, the medium itself, has remained relatively stable for more than two hundred years. But the delivery system for news is changing rapidly (as has been shown above), and the change in technology has made apparent a host of interesting questions regarding the audience for news, and the audience that newspapers are thought to create. In particular, harsh questions concerning the viability and the continued influence of the printed newspaper have yet to be answered. Recent economic turmoil has accelerated the existing debate over the future (and possible “death”) of the printed newspaper. The anxiety over the possibility of that occurrence, however, is not (or at least, not entirely) attributable to nostalgia for the feel of the physical newspaper object. Instead, the symbolic ritual of periodicity, the daily-ness and dependability of this type of news, is being traded for a construction of time that, while more fluid and potentially more convenient, is nonetheless a stark and sometimes confusing “change of pace.”

Conclusions and Future Work

The central question that this dissertation seeks to answer (as defined in Chapter One) is “How do changes in periodicity (itself a feature of delivery) affect our
understanding of audience?” Put another way, this project asks how the changes in pace of life that are ubiquitous in contemporary media commentary have changed how rhetoric constructs audiences, groups that are connected through the transmission of argument and information. To answer that question, this project has used an extended historical example to demonstrate a new way of analyzing the impact of temporal forces on audiences. The first chapter establishes the existence of a problem of media speed and periodicity, arguing that understanding these concepts would require a combination of technology studies and historiography, and would best be pursued through an analysis of one of the most prevalent and popular examples of periodic publication: the newspaper.

The second chapter argues that the current vocabulary available to scholars in rhetoric and composition skews any conversation about time toward a limited version of the rhetorical situation, such that those conversations focus on *Kairos* and an understanding of time in the moment, rather than focusing the systems and habits that structure how we perceive the temporal aspects of rhetoric. Chapter Two offered a possible correction, a perspective from which to view this kind of temporal change: epistemological time. Rather than understanding rhetorical texts strategically (how did the timing of this argument relate to the context at the time of its publication?), this perspective argues for understanding the systems that set up a specific temporal context. Chapter Two also elaborates on the effect of the epistemological temporal view on the classic rhetorical concepts of audience and delivery, especially in recent changing technological contexts.

Chapters Three applies the perspective of epistemological temporality to the context surrounding the publication of the first daily newspaper. This chapter takes as its
starting point the well-known argument that this period also saw the rise of what has been called the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and argues that, while many appreciate the spatial elements of this theory, the temporal elements have been underappreciated. Furthermore, while the type of audience created by this context is hotly disputed, the technological and social arrangements that support the creation of that audience can be easily understood as having certain temporal effects (specifically: the advent of the post, the coffee house, and advances in time-keeping technology allowed for a discursive atmosphere that was more widely synchronized, more focused on temporal continuity, and drew a distinct sense of social identity from a specific relationship to time).

Chapter Four applies the observations made in Chapter Three to two specific periodic texts which were published during that specific era: the first daily newspaper, *The Daily Currant*, and a popular daily essay-sheet, the *Spectator*. Each of these publications serve, in many ways, as exemplars of specific arguments about the broader effects of periodicity, both on periodic texts themselves and also on the audiences that consume them. Chapter Four ultimately concludes that while critics of periodicity offer valid concerns with this particular temporal organization, citing a profit motive and lack of depth in content, the benefits of a periodic schedule are extensive.

Where the previous chapters sought to contextualize and explain the prominence and complexity of periodic publication, this last chapter has focused instead on our current context: one in which the old standards of publication practices have been upended. This chapter has examined the phenomenon of social acceleration—itself a concept only comprehensible from the perspective of epistemological time—and has suggested that the arguments and anxieties over the “death” of the newspaper stem from
many of the same sets of concerns that arose around, and were answered by, the earliest of periodic publications.

I have broken up the findings of this dissertation into three categories: what we know for sure (conclusions), what we can reasonably claim, but may not have complete proof for (inferences), and future directions for research, where to go from here (implications).

**Conclusions**

*What, finally, do we know for sure about theories of rhetorical time and how they can help us to understand the changing concept of audience? What conclusions can we draw?*

Social scientists and popular commentary agree that a substantial portion of the population has experienced an increase in the “pace of life,” the affective experience of speed (how fast one thinks one’s life is moving). That experience is often talked about as connected to technological changes, particularly the advent of digital technologies: the Internet, mobile computing, etc. We can say with certainty that technology plays a role in the phenomenon of social acceleration; what exactly that role is, however, cannot be called certain at all. While much of the commentary on speed in contemporary culture assigns a causal role to technology, I have demonstrated that such straightforward connection is oversimplified. As described in Chapter Three, in many cases social structures and the systemic organization of resources can often have a far greater impact than strictly “technological” change: the printing presses used to print *The Daily Courant*
were the same ones that had been used for decades; only the circumstances of publication had changed. While technological contexts are often integral to the creation of social contexts that lead to altered experience of temporality, a strictly causal connection is not evident, although technological change can help to reveal social and cultural change.

One manifestation of the problem of speed is an anxiety over the ways in which texts (delivered at a certain pace or frequency) help to shape a larger sense of audience often called “public opinion.” To return to two quotes from the very opening of this dissertation, Rosenberg and Feldman note that “the public’s right to know has been supplanted by the public’s right to know everything, however fanciful and even erroneous, as fast as technology allows” (17), while Gleick laments that

some instances of public opinion appear faster than ever, as nightly television analysts and daily newspaper commentators compete with Internet pundits to explain events, make judgments, put them into a moral context, and create a kind of instant selectivity. History cannot really be written that fast. (97)

Anxiety over how public opinion is formed can also be understood as anxiety over what kind of audience the texts we consume will make us into. These critics connect their concerns directly to the speed at which information is being conveyed, and if those claims are a little hyperbolic, it can be excused by the fact that they have at least noticed the rhetorical force of these subtle forces: media speed and periodicity.

In an era when students will see fewer and fewer printed periodicals, and where the networked, digital media through which they read continues to evolve rapidly, our field has to have a better understanding of how the texts and contexts readers encounter
can shape their experience of the world. My dissertation’s contribution to this
correspondence is to suggest that an understanding of the role of time in the rhetorical
situation is incomplete without an understanding of how publication technology, the
medium of rhetorical transmission, can affect the audience’s understanding of the world.
The various ways in which the members of an audience can be connected or isolated,
unified or fragmented, have never been more apparent than our current historical
moment. Digital communication technologies make the precarious connection afforded
by the common experience of consuming a text pale in comparison to the instant
gratification of being “connected.” That relationship is incomprehensible without a better
understanding how these often invisible factors—the speed of communicative
technology, but also the pace of social structures that support publication—alter how
groups of people relate both to texts and each other.

This project has, above all, demonstrated that certain aspects of delivery (in this
case, the periodic nature of publication) can have a strong effect on the type of audience
the texts find and/or create. Smaller variations, such as of the frequency or regularity,
might also have significance, but this project focused on the simple fact of periodic
publication, demonstrating that regular recurrence can create certain effects: a shared
sense of identity, an opportunity to contribute, an economic imperative, a check on
political powers, and a pressure for information to be made public. Not all of these
attributes owe their existence solely to the periodic nature of news publication, but for all
of them the periodic quality is a necessary precursor.

This type of approach focuses primarily on relationships. For a text to be periodic
or serial, it must be part of a series: it has a relationship to the other items in that series,
and a perspective of epistemological temporality would look at that relationship, as well as a 5

Above all, this perspective looks at the ways in which these relationships are made into habits, the extent to which their significance is obscured by being made into routine, or the ways in which significance is created by routine.

Inferences

What do these conclusions suggest? What can we suspect, but not know for sure?

What I have argued for here is not a complete rhetoric of time, but rather a piece that needs to be included into the larger whole. What might such an expanded understanding of rhetorical time look like?

It would certainly include the traditional concept of *kairos* and everything that goes with it: attention to the context of the moment, historical forces and the relationship between the speaker, the audience, and the current context. This traditional focus deals primarily with the content of the message, focusing on medium only to understand how it might alter the kairotic possibilities of that particular message. There is, of course, also a temporal aspect to medium and genre, traditions and affordances that are built into various types of writing.

The changes to an audience that come about from moving away from strict periodicity and toward a broader seriality may encourage some interesting tendencies:
communities will likely be more reactive—instead of waiting for an appointed time to respond to events, responses can be put out as soon as the event occurs. That makes for a quicker response, whatever that response might be. On the other hand, though, assuming uniform increase in responsiveness would be foolish. Periodicity could be pulling things toward resolution that otherwise might have taken longer (feeling the pressure to get a given story done by a certain deadline, for instance).

To understand why this correction has been necessary, we might also ask why has traditional rhetorical theory tended to limit itself to a perspective on time that is focused on the content of the message and the moment it is published/spoken? I see three possible answers to that question; which of the three (or what proportion of each) is responsible is debatable. (1) History: the rhetorical tradition grew out of training in oral argument, and discussions of timing were bound up in when the proper moment was to make a given speech, or—during one’s speech—when to make a particular point. While the field of rhetoric and composition has moved beyond that ancient context to embrace the time-shifting nature of writing technologies, an implicit bias remains regarding how to understand time as a part of the rhetorical situation. (2) Content-over-context: from its origins in the Greek philosophical tradition, theorists of rhetoric have long been concerned with the content being conveyed by a given message, the argument that the rhetor is using to persuade the audience. Style and medium, while certainly attended to, are considered meaningful insomuch as they alter or enhance the meaning of that specific message. (3) Space: rhetorical theory has tended to focus on space to the exclusion of time. As pointed out in the treatment of audience in Chapter Two, the idea of “locating” the audience has long taken precedence in the larger task of understanding the effects of
rhetoric. Similarly, in commentary on digital media the language used to discuss online communication has mostly focused on space, or its absence.

**Implications**

*What has yet to be explained? What remains to be researched, and how could that pursuit of knowledge benefit the field of Rhetoric and Composition?*

The organization of audiences through/by time, as well as space, is certainly in need of more sustained scholarly focus. Critics should be concerned with not just where audiences are, but when, and how their “location” in time affects the rhetorical process more generally (everything from invention to production to distribution). Instead of simply seeking to locate the audience, though, a new theory of audience that accounts for an epistemological view of time might look at how the communicative media that audiences consume can shape their understanding of rhetorical practice more generally.

The first and most obvious question that remains to be answered is simple: what does an analysis of current publishing practices from the perspective of epistemological time tell us about the nature of audiences today? That broad question could take a number of forms. For instance, how might this perspective alter our understanding of the canon of memory in the digital age? The durability of information, the integrity of texts over time, is vastly different (and more complicated) in a system that relies on the storage and constant re-publication of data through digital means. How do rhetors come to understand the temporality of the audiences they are seeking to reach: in what ways do
these new circulation methods determine (or defy) expectations about who the audience will be?

Along with the question of durability, how do changes in periodicity and publication practices more generally affect the very concept of error. In a printed, periodic publication, the definition of error is altered by the difficulty of changing text after publication. To give some examples: stopping and starting a massive newspaper press is expensive; also, after the day of, editions of that day’s paper are no longer being printed at all. Retractions necessitate taking up room in a later edition. This system creates incentive to get everything right on the first try. Errors in a digital story are not nearly as problematic, in a lot of ways (although clearly it should not be expected that error in a blog post or online newspaper story does not matter). Updates can be re-published on a story as many times as they are relevant, and while errors are still damaging to the ethos of the author, there are established conventions for dealing with errors that have been shaped by the social conventions of the medium.

Another area of potential future investigation is the way in which temporal structures alter the affective relationship that audiences have with texts. In what way does frequency have an impact on the emotional aspect of textual consumption? For instance, the way in which people watch television has been changed forever by streaming Internet movie services like Netflix; the idea of “binge-watching” a television show has become common parlance, and the practice brings with it a fair amount of emotional baggage. To “binge watch” television is to undergo an activity shaped by the technological context of the medium, but also the pathologized medical discourse from which the term “binge” originates.
The opportunities for future work in this area are numerous. New communicative technologies and contexts are constantly emerging, and many offer distinct temporal relationships between rhetor and audience. Certainly further work needs to be done to understand how the new publishing contexts that have emerged in the last 50 years are altering social and cultural conceptions of time. Scholars of rhetoric and composition need to reach out across disciplinary lines, and learn from the work being done by sociologists, because any theory of how rhetorical practice functions in the world will be incomplete without some sense of how the media used to publish is shaping how audiences see the world. Above all, though, the field of rhetoric and composition needs to embrace an understanding of temporal analysis that moves beyond the limitations of *kairos* and *chronos*, and instead can allow for and explain the systems of social and technological forces that shape temporal experience.
Figure A
First Issue of The Daily Courant

Numb.

Wednesday, March 11. 1702.

From the Harlem Courant, Dated March 18. N. S.

Naples, Feb. 28. On Wednesday last, our New Viceroy, the Duke of Eclatons, arrived here with a Squadron of the Galley of Sicily. He made his Entrance dress'd in a French habit; and to give us the greater Hopes of the King's coming to sit, were to Lodge in one of the little Palaces, leaving the Royal one for his Majesty. The Marshal of Gran is also arrived here with a Regiment of French.

Rome, Feb. 25. In a Military Congregation of State that was held here, it was Resolved to draw a Line from Ancon to the Borders of the Ecclesiastical State, thereby to hinder the Incurions of the Transalpine Troops. Orders are sent to Civita Vecchia to shut up the Calleys, and to strengthen the Garrison of that Place. Signor Caffio is made Governor of Perugia. The March of Vasto, and the Prince de Calais, continue still in the Imperial Embassadors' Palace, where his Excellency has a Guard of 50 Men every Night in Arms. The King of Portugal has invited the Arch-Bishop of Lisbon, vacancy by the Death of Cardinal Sonnino, for the Inference his Second Son, who is about 11 Years old.

Vienna, Mar. 4. Orders are sent for four and a Regiment of Foot, the 5 and Countiers, and to that of Dragoneo, which are broke up from Hungary, and are on their way to Italy, and which consist of about 14 or 1500 Men, who take their March thither with all Expedition. The 5 new Regiments of Foot, that are now raising, are in so great a forwardness, that they will be compleat, and in a Condition to march by the middle of May. Prince Lewis of Baden is come to Court, to execute himself from coming thither his Preference being so very necessary, and so much deird on the Upper-Rhine.

France, Mar. 12. The Marquis d'Ursel is come to Strassburg, and is to draw together a Body of some Regiments of Horse and Foot from the Garrison of Alcall; but will not lend their 500 Men to Strassburg and Landau, which are already very weak. On the other hand, the Troops of His Imperial Majesty, and his Allies, are going to form a Body near Germenheim in the Palatinate, of which Place, as well as of the Line at Stras, Prince Lewis of Baden is expected to take a View, in three or four days.

The English and Dutch Ministers, the Count of Frice, and the Baron Vanter Meer, and likewise the Imperial Envoy Count Lowenstein, are gone to Nordlingen, and is hop'd that in a short time we shall hear from thence of some favourable Reflections for the Security of the Empire.

Ligie, Mar. 14. The French have taken the Cannon de Longue, who was Secretary to the Daims de Meas, out of our Castle, where he has been for some time a Prisoner, and have deliver'd him to the Provost of Marigny, who has carry'd him hence; for we do not know whether.

Penn, Mar. 19. Our Letters from Italy say, That most of our Reinforcements were landed there; that the Imperial and Ecclesiastical Troops seem to live very peaceable with one another in the Country of Parma, and that the Duke of Vendome, as he was visiting several Palaces, was within 100 Paces of falling into the Hands of the Germans. The Duke of Chassis, the Prince of Conti, and several other Princes of the Blood, are to make the Campaign in Flanders under the Duke of Burgundy; and the Duke of Maine is to Command upon the Rhine.

From the Amsterdam Courant, Dated Mar. 18.

Rome, Feb. 15. We are taking here all possible Precautions for the Safety of the Ecclesiastical State in this present Confusion, and have deird to raise 3000 Men in the Carmon of Switzerland. The Pope has appointed the Duke of Berwick to be his Lieutenant-General; and he is to Command Men on the Frontiers of Naples. He has also set up on him a Petition of 6000 Crowns a year during his life.

From the Paris Gazette, Dated Mar. 18. 1702.

Naples, Feb. 17. 600 French Soldiers are arrived here, and are expected to be follow'd by 3000 more. A Courier that came hither on the 14th has brought Letters by which we are affir'd that the King of Spain designs to be here towards the end of March; and accordingly Orders are given to make the necessary Preparations against his arrival. The two Troops of Horse that were Commanded to the Aranzone are post'd at Pescara with a Body of Spanish Foot, and others in the Fort of Monza.

Paris, March 18. We have Advice from Toulon of the 9th instant, that the Wind having long been favourable, 32000 Men were already at sea for Italy, that 35000 more were Embarking, and that by the 9th it was hoped they might all get thither. The Count d'Effers arrived there on the Third instant, and for all Hands at work to fit out the Squadron of 9 Men of War and four Frigates, that are appointed to carry the King of Spain to Naples. His Catholic Majesty will go on Board the Troadh, of 120 Guns.

We have Advice by an Express from Rome of the 8th of February, That notwithstanding the prevailing praetures of the Imperial Embassadors, the Pope had Cordon'd the Marquis de Vasto to leave his Head and his Effiti to be confir'd, for not appearing to answer the Charge against him of Publicly Scandalizing Cardinal Jordon.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It will be found from the Foreign Papers, which from time to time, as Occasion offers, will be mentioned in this Paper, that the Author has taken Care to be daily furnish'd with all that comes from Abroad in any Language. And for an Affluence that he will not, under Pretence of having Private Intelligence, impose any Additions of it, and Circumstances to an Action, but give his Extracts Entire and impartially; at the beginning of each Article he will quote the Foreign Paper from whence 'tis taken, that the Public, being from what Country a piece of News comes with the Allowance of that Government, may be better able to Judge of the Credibility and Prerogatives of the Relation: Nor will he take upon him to give any Comments or Conjectures of his own, but will reserve only Matter of Fact; imposing others to have Sence enough to make Reflections for themselves.

This Courant (as the Title shows) will be Published Daily (being designed to give all the Material News at first as every Paper arrives: and at a speed of 12 half the Compass, or twice the Public at least half the Impertinences, of ordinary News-Papers.

LONDON. Sold by E. Mallet, next Door to the King's Arms Tavern at Their-Bridge.
To be Continued every Day.

Thursday, March 1, 1711.

I have observed, that a Reader seldom peruses a Book with Pleasure 'till he knows whether the Writer of it be a blank or a fair Man, of a mild or choleric Disposition, Married or a Bachelor, with other Particulars of the like nature, that conduces very much to the right Understanding of an Author. To gratify this Curiosity, which is so natural to a Reader, I design this Paper, and my next, as Prefatory Discourses to my following Writings, and shall give some Account in them of the several Perfums that are engaged in this Work. As the chief Trouble of Composing, Digressing and Correlating will fall to my Share, I must do my part the Justice to open the Work with my own History.

I was born to a small Hereditary Estate, which I find, by the Writings of the Family, was bounded by the fame Hedges and Ditches in Wilmot the Conqueror's Time that it is at present, and has been delivered down from Father to Son whole and entire, without the Least Acquisition of a Single Field or Meadow, during the Space of six hundred Years. There goes a Story in the Family, that when my Mother was gone with Child of me about three Months, the dreamt that she was brought to Bed of a Judge: Whether this might proceed from a Law-Suit which was then depending in the Family, or my Father's being a Justice of the Peace, I cannot determine; for I am not to vain as to think it prejudged any Dignity that I should arrive at in my future Life, though that was the Interpretation which the Neighbourhood put upon it. The Gravity of my Behaviour at my very first Appearance in the World, and all the Time that I rubbed, seemed to favour my Mother's Dream: For, as she has often told me, I threw away my Rattle before I was two Months old, and would not make use of my Crib 'till they had taken away the Bells from it.

As for the rest of my Infancy, there being nothing in it remarkable, I shall pass it over in Silence. I find, that, during my Nurture, I had the Reputation of a very fruitful Youth, but was always a Favourite of my School-Master, who used to say, that my Farts were loud and would cause Stink, I had not been long at the University, before I disdained my Fart by a most profound Silence: For during the Space of Eight Years, excepting in the publick Exercises of the College, I scarce uttered the Quantity of an hundred Words; and indeed do not remember that I ever spoke three Sentences together in my whole Life. Whilst I was in this Learned Body I applied my self with so much Diligence to my Studies, that there are very few celebrated Books, either in the Learned or the Modern Tongues, which I am not acquainted with.

Upon the Death of my Father I was resolved to travel into Foreign Countries, and therefore left the University, with the Character of an odd unaccountable Fellow, that had a great deal of Learning, if I would but show it. An infatiable Thirst after Knowledge carried me into all the Countries of Europe, where there was anything new or strange to be seen; nay, to such a Degree was my Curiosity ruffled, that having read the Controversies of some great Men concerning the Antiquities of Egypt, I made a Voyage to Grand Cairo, on purpose to take the Measure of a Pyramid; and as soon as I had set my foot right in that Particular, returned to my Native Country with great Satisfaction.

I have passed my latter Years in this City, where I am frequently seen in most publick Places, tho' there are not above half a dozen of my Flock of Friends that know me; of whom my next Paper shall give a more particular Account. There is no Place of Publick Sport, wherein I do not often make my Appearance; sometimes I am threatening, now and then I am frequenting, being a Member of this Club; and which I form attentive to nothing but the Pol-Man, over-hear the Conversations of every Table in the Room. I appear on Sunday Nights at St. James's Coffee-House, and sometimes join the little Committee of Politicks in the Inner-Room, as one who comes there to hear and improve. My Face is likewise very well known at the Green, the Cocoa-Tree, and in the Theatres both of Drury-Lane, and the Hay-Market. I have been taken for a Merchant upon
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Academic Adviser, College of Engineering Advising Center  2013-Present

Consultant and Adviser, (FTCAP)  2012

Coordinator, Penn State Graduate Writing Center (GWC)  2009-2010

Coordinator, Penn State Learning’s Public Writing Initiative (PWI)  2009-2011

Composition Assistant, Penn State English Department  2007-2009

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The Pennsylvania State University  2004-2012

  Introduction to Rhetoric and Composition (ENGL 15)

  Writing in the Social Sciences (ENGL 202A)

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