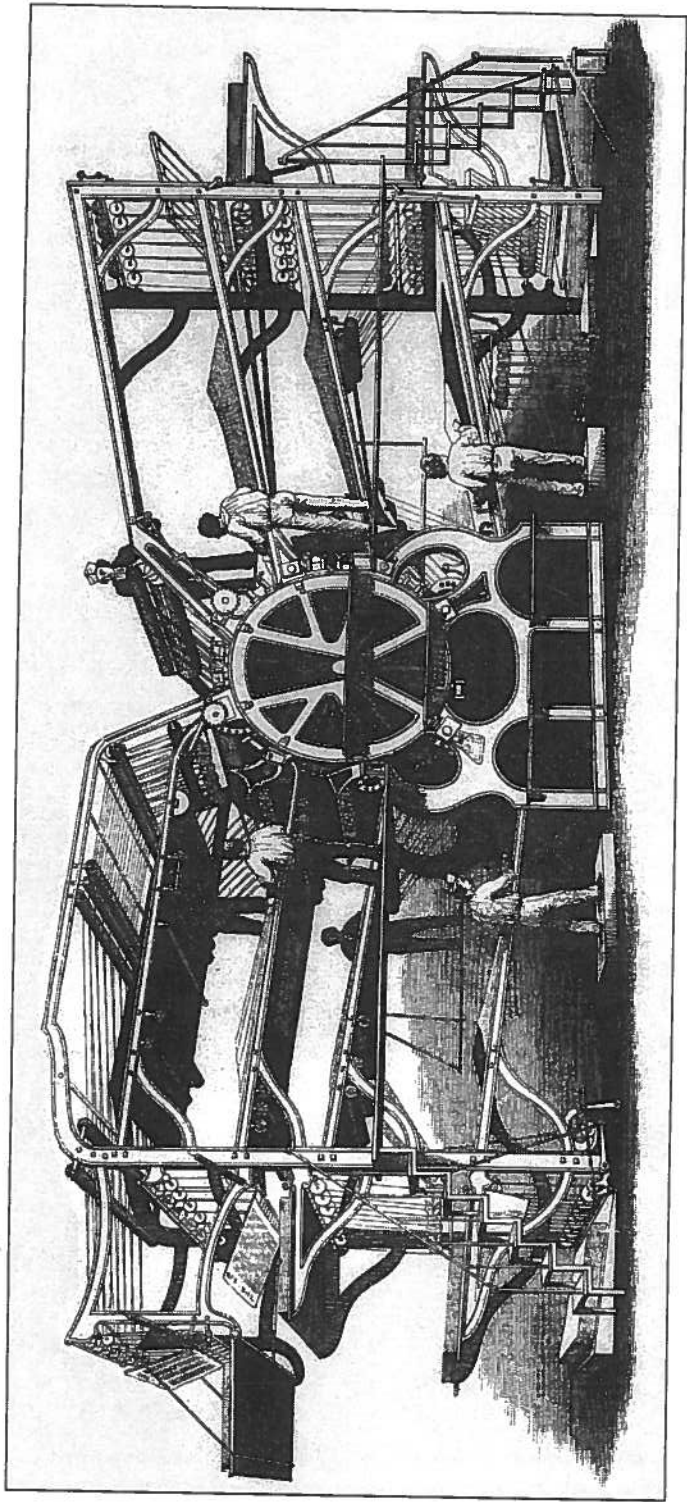


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Studies in Newspaper and Periodical History

1995 ANNUAL

EDITED BY
Michael Harris
and Tom O'Malley



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Preface

The 1995 volume of *Studies in Newspaper and Periodical History* reflects a wide range of work on serial publication, chronologically, geographically and theoretically.

It traverses the period from 1700 to the 1970s and has a distinct international dimension with material covering the United States, England, Wales, Germany and Australia. In fact, two of our articles—Jamie L. Bronstein's on the Land Reform movement and Peter Dowling's on the illustrated press in the nineteenth century—illuminate the way in which traffic in serial publication crossed between countries, integrating elements within the different communities in the context of shared concerns over social issues or, simply, over maintaining some sort of personal contact with lands left behind. In this context serial publication both followed the expansion of international trade and acted as one of the sinews binding together different cultural elements of the ever-expanding global economic networks.

A number of theoretical issues are addressed in this volume. Michael Harris' piece raises questions about the way in which the serial is conceived of as an object of study and how it might be inserted into wider debates about the role of the serial in print culture and into the wider cultural processes of the eighteenth century. This is a theme taken up in a slightly different way in other contributions. Mark W. Turner argues that understanding the place of the literary periodical in the nineteenth

tenor, Murray's piece detailed the manner in which his movement hoped to "fight to the death against racism."³⁸ Yet, although the struggle waged by the Panthers and other groups was to continue for several years, the April 1969 issue proved to be their last editorial soapbox within *Rolling Stone*.

Commercial Period

One might expect a certain lessening in political partisanship from a magazine covering a music genre that itself grew less political over time. But *Rolling Stone's* decision to deemphasize issues concerning the New Left seems to be more of a short-term response to market factors than a gradual evolution in political thought. The magazine's last political theme issue was a November 1970 special devoted to the Kent State murders and the Chicago Seven murder trial. Featuring editorials such as the following by Gleason, the issue proved to be an unparalleled newsstand flop:³⁹ "Music is the glue which has kept this generation from falling apart in the face of incredible adult blindness and ignorance and evilness. It is the new educational system for reform and the medium for revolution."⁴⁰

Here again, we see an interest in reform politics expressed as a function of new music. There appears to be some confusion as to whether a "reform" or "revolution" framework should be followed. In the context of the earlier-reviewed articles, however, it's clear that Gleason prefers nonviolent revolution.

Thereafter, *Rolling Stone* addressed issues concerning the New Left sparingly, expanding its editorial scope to include the type of social and international coverage one might expect to find in "a sort of hip *Playboy*."⁴¹ We see, for example, increasing use of features on such celebrities as Raquel Welch and Tony Orlando.

This isn't to say that *Rolling Stone* espoused only antiestablishment reporting frames prior to 1970. Indications of the magazine's intention to distance itself from elements of the New Left were apparent as early as 1969. Witness the following report about an Easter vacation rock festival in Palm Springs: "[the cops] exercised amazing restraint, ignoring blatant sexual activities, drinking and doping . . . until finally, the youthful vacationers asked for much of the trouble they got."⁴² This account is not unlike one found in a mainstream paper and was, in fact, picked up by *Time* magazine. *Rolling Stone* stopped short of condoning marijuana use in this example, picturing the demonstrators as deviant individuals who deserved to be arrested by local police. While the account might have been more sympathetic in the case of a festival emphasizing art or politics, we see clear limits on the magazine's capacity for youth-oriented advocacy.

This apolitical tendency was, no doubt, solidified by the ill-fated Kent State issue focusing on student activism in 1970. It wasn't until years later that we see any analysis of left-wing politics. And when the movement was later revisited, the magazine highlighted unusual representatives, portraying them in a somewhat different fashion.

The following 1974 report, titled "Strange Rumbling on the Left," isolates the National Caucus of Labor Committee as a deviant leftist organization with delusions of grandeur:

The cadres of one [NCLC] are zealots with limitless ends and they plan, for a start, to take over the United States in five to six years. They say you should hope they do because you'll be enslaved and starving if they can't stop the slide into depression and fascism that is already gaining momentum.⁴³

To be sure, the NCLC was marginalized even by political papers as a crackpot organization.⁴⁴ But the fact that *Rolling Stone* chose to highlight their deviance seems reminiscent of mainstream reporting styles. In particular, the article marginalizes the NCLC, referring to them as a group of strange zealots. It then trivializes the organization's stated intentions, making light of their language and goals in a somewhat sarcastic review of NCLC philosophy. The *New York Times* couldn't have done a better job of deprecating the New Left splinter group.

One could argue that, even during its underground period, *Rolling Stone* would never have condoned the type of revolution advocated by the NCLC. But, whereas seven years earlier the magazine rarely expressed apprehension about such radical groups, *Rolling Stone* was eager to defend the establishment here. As editor Wenner argued a few years earlier: "Rock and roll is now the energy core of change in American life. But capitalism is what allows us the incredible indulgence of this music."⁴⁵ As time passed, it seemed *Rolling Stone* was more concerned about pleasing readers who had money than preaching social change to those who didn't.

This isn't to suggest that *Rolling Stone* abandoned its incisive style of investigative reporting altogether. It was credited with being the first publication to detail the Patty Hearst kidnapping story in 1975. But, even here, the reporting style was more concerned with describing rather than advocating or explaining the actions of the Symbionese Liberation Army. In addition to the deprecatory techniques listed above in conjunction with the NCLC, *Rolling Stone* trivialized the SLA's effectiveness by emphasizing the group's limited size and internal dissension (as exemplified by the title of its April 1974 article—"Seven Forked Tongue in the SLA").

By 1975, it seemed as if *Rolling Stone* couldn't even condone the use of mild drugs such as marijuana, for which it had crusaded only eight

40. Ralph Gleason, "Music and Society," *Rolling Stone*, 14 November 1970, 16.
41. Leamer, *Paper Revolutionaries*.
42. "Rolling Stone's Rock World," *Time*, 25 April 1969, 78.
43. "Strange New Rumbblings on the Left," *Rolling Stone*, 4 November 1974, 11.
44. Gitlin, *Whole World is Watching*.
45. "Rolling Stone's Rock World," 78.
46. "Flora Purim, Jailed Songbird," *Rolling Stone*, 24 April 1975, 13.
47. David Armstrong, *A Call to Arms* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1981).
48. "Let it Bleed," *Rolling Stone*, 14 November 1970, 2.
49. Armstrong, *Call to Arms*.
50. *Ibid.*, 177.
51. "Sexuality Comes to the Suburbs," *Rolling Stone*, 6 January 1972, 6.
52. Hunter S. Thompson, "Fear and Loathing in Washington," *Rolling Stone*, 6 January 1972, 6.
53. Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1978); see also Gitlin, *Whole World is Watching*.
54. Pember, *Mass Media in America*, 106.

Sources for Newspaper and Periodical History