

MAGAZINES: A HISTORICAL SURVEY

Magazines are the most successful media format ever to have existed.

This is a big claim when the apparent dominance of television in the last 50 years or the printed book across the last 500 are considered, but magazines are so ubiquitous and their consumption so engrained in habit that their importance almost ceases to register and is thus overlooked. As Buckminster Fuller once noted in a broadcast lecture, people place importance on food and water as the sustainers of life but on a day-to-day basis it's actually air that we consume most. That is our biggest fuel. Like air, magazines play an often disregarded part in our quotidian existence: the pleasure they bring, and the ways in which they bring it, give them a social value; their ability to influence patterns of behaviour or consumption or aesthetics a cultural one; and their role as educators and informers an intellectual one. What is more, when the magazine is in printed form this is achieved at a readily-attainable cost – and in the age of the internet the cost of consumption is sometimes zero.

Yet compared with other cultural products such as television, newspapers, cinema and radio, magazines have generally not been taken seriously by either the (self-professedly) more high-minded 'fourth estate' branches of the journalism industries or the academy. 'Academic disciplines have almost routinely concentrated on the other legs of the print triad [i.e., newspapers and books]' notes American media scholar Dorothy Schmidt, '... but scant attention is given to the continuing role of magazines as reflectors and molders of public opinion and political and social attitudes' (Schmidt 1989: 648, in Abrahamson 1996b: 4). Laurel Brake argues that magazine journalism was not highly regarded in the nineteenth century, '... the low status of periodical literature is associated with many of the same factors which figure in the feeble welcome Victorian critics accorded the novel' (1994: 30), and in the twentieth century Liesbet van Zoonen observed that the 'traditional press' perceived magazine publishing as one of the 'low-status fields of journalism' (1998b: 39).

Academics studying journalism often use the word ‘magazine’ almost as an unthinking pejorative; Chambers et al. (2004) note that women are concentrated in ‘sectors considered to be “soft” news ... and the delivery of a magazine-style of journalism’ (p. 1) but later concede that ‘In Britain, periodicals played a vital role during the women’s suffrage movement ...’ (p. 152).

The landmark study of *Journalists at Work* by Jeremy Tunstall revealed that consumer magazines were:

... believed by many other journalists to be an extension of the advertising world rather than of journalism. The trade and technical magazines are a separate world again, with each one oriented primarily to the interest or industry which provides not only its readers and its advertising but also its news sources. (1971: 11)

John Hartley captures this tension when he contrasts serious journalism (‘the profession of violence’) with the ‘smiling professions’ that include lifestyle and consumer journalism and states, ‘They are routinely despised by serious journalists’. Yet when it comes to a likely future direction for journalism as a whole, ‘the magazine sector has been leading the way for at least the past decade’ (2000: 40, 45).

Encouragingly, the latter idea has been picked up by other media researchers. John Tulloch (2000) identifies magazines as ‘the main source of the innovations in the publishing industry that created the modern popular press’ (p. 139), while Martin Conboy (2004) flags up ‘the ability of magazines to influence the mainstream of journalism’ (p. 162) and acknowledges that they have been ‘heralds of social and cultural change’ (p. 163).

The very word ‘magazine’ calls forth a variety of responses. It might connote a thick, luxurious, women’s glossy or a throwaway weekly gossip sheet. It could just as easily be connected with a favourite hobby as with a profession. Perhaps it may be associated with a supermarket or a satellite television provider. Magazines are all of these things and more – they cover an incalculable range of subject matter, styles and modes of delivery. They give pleasure to millions, information to millions more, and frequently manage to marry pleasure and information in a way that is unique to the form. This combination of a kaleidoscopic nature, the provision of pleasure and an ability to evolve, adapt and survive has led to the axiom that opened this chapter: magazines are the most successful media form ever to have existed.

And yet even this straightforward magazine history remains a surprisingly neglected area, considering the magazine has had a fundamental and intrinsic influence on publishing history. Conboy (2004: 163) notes the ‘cross pollination’ process by which newspapers have appropriated magazine formats and genres – the transmission of aesthetics – while Rooney (2000: 107)

has enlivened current debates about tabloidisation and dumbing down by considering whether 'tabloidisation' might in fact amount to a 'magazinization', although that argument implies a certain view of what magazines are and what they do (Tulloch, 2000: 139). Historical parallels with current journalistic practises have been observed at least as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century – for example the concepts of 'targeting' the reader, relying on reader contributions, and involving the reader with 'competitions, special offers and inducements to buy' (Beetham and Boardman, 2001), while as far back as the seventeenth century women's periodicals have been seen to provide an early (if fleeting) forum for disenfranchised women 'of lower and middle rank' to participate in 'an alternative and competing public sphere' (Halasz, 1997, in Conboy, 2004: 129).

The histories of newspapers and magazines have been closely entwined down the years and although there are obvious similarities – until very recently both could accurately be described as material that was printed on paper and issued at regular intervals – there are also significant practical and cultural differences in their production. According to James Playsted Wood (1956), 'The English newspaper developed in the late seventeenth century out of the political pamphlet and the newsletter. The English magazine developed out of the newspaper within less than fifty years after the first newspaper was founded'. Wood credits Daniel (*Robinson Crusoe*) Defoe with founding 'what is usually ... described as the first magazine in English'. In 1704 Defoe was serving a sentence in Newgate prison for writing and circulating *The Shortest Way With Dissenters*, a religious tract, but these circumstances did not prevent him from starting the *Review* and publishing it weekly. This periodical printed not only news but also articles on 'domestic affairs and national policy' and it survived until 1712 (Wood, 1956: 3–4).

However, while the *Review* may have incorporated the miscellaneous content characteristics of the magazine form, an equally strong argument could be made for the *Ladies Mercury* of 1693. Not only did this publication contain a miscellany of material (ostensibly generated from questions sent in by readers) it also targeted a very specific readership – women. Amongst other topics, *Ladies* promised to help readers with 'all questions relating to Love etc' (Ballaster et al., 1991: 47).

Neither the *Review* nor the *Ladies Mercury* used the word 'magazine' in their titles, and this was not widely adopted to describe a particular form of print publication until 1741, when Edward Cave first published the *Gentleman's Magazine*. There had been magazine-like periodicals published in the UK before then, among them the *Athenian Mercury* (1690), a forerunner of the *Ladies Mercury*, and then the *Tatler* (1709) and *Spectator* (1711). Although the latter was a daily publication it was considered a literary journal rather than a newspaper, rather as the *Economist* currently describes itself as a newspaper rather than a magazine.

Media historians (Davis, 1988; Wharton, 1992; Reed, 1997) tend to name the *Journal des Scavans*, published in Paris in 1665, as the first ‘magazine’ on the grounds that it contained a miscellany of content that made it metaphorically like a storehouse (*magazin* means shop in French and the word derives from the Arabic work for storehouse – *makhazin*). The *Journal*, an adjunct to publishers’ booklists, contained digests of books, writers’ obituaries and bibliographies – a formula copied for the English *Weekly Memorials for the Ingenious* in 1682. However, like most historical ‘firsts’ it is a useful starting point rather than a definitive genesis: Morrish (2003: 5) argues that *Erbauliche Monats-Unterredungen* (1663) has a claim to be the first magazine, while Tony Quinn of Magforum.com goes back to 1586 with *Gynasceum, sive Theatrum Mulierum ...* (*The Gynasceum or Theatre of Women, in which are reproduced by engraving the female costumes of all the nations of Europe*) published in Frankfurt.

As with ‘What was the first?’, the more general question ‘What is a magazine?’ has been asked many times in the past and, as we will see, continues to be asked today. The answers are many and varied, involve both logic and emotion, invoke both history and prediction, and leave us just as uncertain after we have heard them as we were before we raised this query. Until recently, common sense (that dangerous quality) had allowed us to believe we *knew* what the term ‘magazine’ meant; according to Frank Luther Mott, pre-eminent historian of the medium, the magazine is a ‘bound pamphlet issued more or less regularly ... containing a variety of reading matter and ... a strong connotation of entertainment’ (1930: 7). Furthermore Fred and Nancy Paine devote 690 pages to listing sources of information about magazines but still conclude, ‘for all that magazines have been studied, analyzed, and written about, their number and purposes remain as elusive as their precise definition’ (Paine and Paine, 1987: 15). The Periodical Publishers Association (PPA), trade body for the magazine industry in the UK, offers a definition on its website that takes us into all kinds of areas:

Magazine. (noun)

The word ‘magazine’ describes branded, edited content often supported by advertising or sponsorship and delivered in print or other forms. Traditionally, magazines have been printed periodicals which are most commonly published weekly, monthly or quarterly. These may be supported by printed one-off supplements and annual directories. Increasingly, magazines exist online where content is available through websites or in digital editions, or delivered by email as an electronic newsletter. Many magazine brands also deliver tailored information services to their audiences. Magazine brands also engage with their audiences face-to-face by organising exhibitions, conferences and other events. (www.ppa.co.uk/all-about-magazines/what-is-a-magazine/; accessed 21/5/10)

Barry McIlheney, chairman of the PPA, added his own opinion in an interview with *InPublishing Magazine* (July/August 2010). Having been recently appointed to the post, he was keen to explain his thoughts on the PPA's role, the essential nature of a magazine and its independence from any particular substrate:

It's not just about saying magazines are great, but promoting high quality editorial content with a magazine heritage delivered across any platform. It sounds a mouthful, but I'm talking about the unique mix of words and pictures and the relationship with the consumer that 'magazine' means, and that's a mix that doesn't just have to be delivered via paper and ink. (www.inpublishing.co.uk/kb/articles/barry_mcilheney_interview.aspx)

Nevertheless, as far as print was concerned, for a long time it was possible to accept a working definition that stated a magazine 'should contain articles or stories by different authors, and that it should be published at regular intervals, which can be any period longer than a day' (Davis, 1988: 3). This was sufficiently flexible to allow for the examination of a wide range of publications while still acknowledging the etymology of the name, which could be understood to be 'descriptive of the publication's content rather than its format' (Paine and Paine, 1987 : 10).

However, using frequency as part of the definition (claiming that a magazine cannot be published daily or, rather, that anything published daily is *de facto* not a magazine) simply raises another set of questions following the emergence of newspaper supplements such as the *Guardian's* G2, which calls itself a daily magazine, and newspapers that have adopted magazine-like, highly designed story treatments (Portugal's daily *i* is an excellent example of this – see <http://timholmes.blogspot.com/2009/11/newspaper-news-magazine-aesthetic-i.html>). We also face a problem that Davis and the Paines did not – the regularly updated digital manifestations of print titles – leading to the conclusion that frequency can no longer be considered a reliable or unproblematic indicator.

And neither can physical form or appearance. The magazine has moved on from paper and is now found on the internet as a website, on mobile phones as a WAP-site, on smartphones as an app, and in other evolving forms and formats that will change with advances in technology. Furthermore, it does not take much cultural exploration to encounter an ever-expanding range of postmodern artefacts that will push the boundaries of what anyone thought a magazine could be. For example:

- *Pop-Up* calls itself 'the world's first live magazine, created for a stage, a screen, and a live audience ... *Pop-Up* showcases the country's most interesting writers, documentary filmmakers, photographers, and radio producers, together, on stage, sharing short moments of unseen, unheard work. Books, films, journalism, photography, and radio documentaries in progress. Obsessions and digressions. Outtakes, arguments,

and live interviews ... An issue exists for one night, in one place.' (www.popup-magazine.com/about_us.html; accessed 20/5/10)

- *Rotary Magazine* was a project that used 200 miscellaneous slides and a slide projector, all purchased from eBay. After organising the most interesting slides from the collection and creating typographic slides to complement them, the editors projected *Rotary Magazine* issue 1 to give 'an alternative browsing experience, allowing many people to view at the same time and at their own pace. As the magazine was projected this also meant no paper or printing was necessary for viewing, resulting in a more sustainable outcome.' (www.jackmaxwell.co.uk/index.php?/work/rotary/; accessed 20/5/10)
- *48 Hour* magazine was more conventional inasmuch as it resulted in a printed product, but the whole project was, as the name suggests, put together in a 48 hour period beginning on 7 May 2010. The editors revealed a theme and contributions were crowd-sourced (i.e. invited from all-comers). Not only did the idea work, after publication the magazine was granted a degree of legitimacy when it received a cease-and-desist letter from the American broadcasting company CBS claiming to own the rights to the name '48 Hours' for its television magazine programme. (48hrmag.com; accessed 20/5/10)

Are these artefacts magazines? Professor Samir Husni (a leading scholar of magazines also known as 'Mr Magazine'), of the University of Mississippi, would certainly argue they are not. Husni, director of the Magazine Innovation Center, starts from the position that print magazine publishers in the USA have been their own worst enemies by training readers to expect magazines to be cheap as a result of offering deeply discounted subscriptions (see Chapter 2 for more on this). In a blog post entitled *So, What Is A Magazine, Really?*, he states unequivocally:

Magazines are much more than content. Magazines are much more than information, words, pictures and colors all combined in a platform that serves nothing but as a delivery vehicle. Magazines, each and every one and each and every issue of every one, are a total experience that engages the customer's five senses. Nothing is left to chance. It is a total package. Without the ink, the paper, the touch, the smell, the look, the taste, it will not be called a magazine. (mrmagazine.wordpress.com/2010/06/11/so-what-is-a-magazine-really-read-on/; accessed 1/7/10)

(See also www.stateofthemedial.org/2010/magazines_summary_essay.php)

On the other hand, Dr Susan Currie Sivek of the Mass Communication and Journalism Department at California State University, Fresno, believes that 'it's time for traditional magazines to learn from these projects that are on the boundary of our current understanding of a magazine. It's time to consider all the new ways the essential qualities of "a magazine" can be expressed' (sivekmedia.com/2010/04/29/definition-of-magazine/).

However, if we examine academic and commercial research into the form it is possible to perceive some underlying principles of the *ur-magazine*

in a set of findings that are repeated across the literature. Click and Baird (1990: 5) struggle with the 'difficulty of arriving at an acceptable definition', before abandoning the attempt in favour of describing how magazines work by forming 'personal relationships that are built among the writers and editors of the magazines and their readers'. The specific role that magazines fulfil within the ecology of media forms is explained by David Abrahamson thus:

... it has long been the unique function of magazines, rather than newspapers or the broadcast media, to bring high-value interpretative information to specifically defined yet national audiences. (1996a: 1)

Johnson and Prijatel (1999: 5, 7) state that 'magazines are highly specialized in content and in audience', going on to note that 'audience and content work in tandem ... Magazine editors see their readers as part of a community; readers of a successful publication have a sense of ownership of *their* magazine'. When considering the reasons for success or failure, they identify three major factors:

- 1 a highly focused editorial philosophy;
- 2 a clearly defined formula;
- 3 a thorough understanding of and connection with the audience (1999: 109).

(There is, of course, one more very important factor for a *successful* magazine that we will come to in Chapter 2.)

This general pattern of focus and engagement can also be found in studies of specific magazines, such as Valerie Korinek's thorough examination of *Chatelaine*, the Canadian women's magazine, which focuses on how readers connected with this in the 1950s and 1960s:

These readers were not passive consumers whose interaction with the magazine was limited to writing their yearly subscription cheque to Maclean Hunter, but an engaged, and engaging, group. (2000: 8)

Extrapolating from this material, the essential characteristics of the magazine form, a General Theory of Magazines as it were, might include the following:

- 1 magazines always target a precisely defined group of readers;
- 2 magazines base their content on the expressed and perceived needs, desires, hopes and fears of that defined group;
- 3 magazines develop a bond of trust with their readerships;
- 4 magazines foster community-like interactions between themselves and their readers, and among readers;
- 5 magazines can respond quickly and flexibly to changes in the readership and changes in the wider society.

Newspapers may fulfil one or more of those requirements – and there is evidence that some newspapers today are trying to fulfil more of them¹ – but not all of them simultaneously. Because of the newspaper's history/legacy as a vehicle of the Fourth Estate, it has been unusual (until relatively recently) for it to base its content on a consideration of the readers' *actual* needs or wishes, as opposed to a paternalistic provision of what the editor or proprietor determined that readers *ought* to need or want. Thus throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, although a newspaper may have been held in respect, it would rarely foster community-like interactions between readers and even less rarely be regarded as a 'friend' in the way that both academic and commercial research confirms magazines are able to do (see for example Hermes, 1995; Beetham, 1996; Korinek, 2000; Consterdine, 2002).

For the moment, although it is important not to allow the definition of the word to become fossilised, as far as print goes we can still claim to 'know' what is meant by 'a magazine' because we have had the best part of 300 years to become familiar with the term. As noted above, the first British publication to use it as part of the title was *The Gentleman's Magazine*, founded by Edward Cave, a printer, in 1731. Cave perceived 'there was a public among the middle classes for miscellaneous information of a kind not obtainable from the daily or weekly news-sheets' (Clair, 1965: 163) and used the name 'to mean a periodical drawing material from many sources, his 48-page monthly initially being mainly a digest from other publications, though gradually original contributions were introduced' (Davis, 1988: 5). Harold Herd (1952: 55) gives us an example of the contents from an edition of 1736:

- I Proceedings and Debates in Parliament.
- II Essays, Controversial, Humorous and Satyrical; Religious, Moral and Political: Collected Chiefly from the Publick Papers.
- III Dissertations and Letters from Correspondents.
- IV Select Pieces of Poetry.
- V A Succinct Account of the most remarkable Transactions Foreign and Domestick.
- VI Births, Marriages, Deaths, Promotions and Bankrupt.
- VII The Prices of Goods and Stocks, Bills of Mortality, and Register of Books.

As Katherine Shevelov puts it, Cave's publication 'evolved from a digest of summaries of other publications into an independent periodical issuing its own, distinct content' (1989: 174). This combination brought it a good audience, as Cave's contemporary Samuel Johnson remarked:

Cave used to sell ten thousand of *The Gentleman's Magazine*; yet such was then his minute attention and anxiety that the sale should not suffer the smallest decrease, that he would name a particular person who he heard had talked of leaving off the Magazine,

¹For example, the *Daily Telegraph's* adoption of 'reader clubs'; see www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2010/feb/03/telegraph-website-stop-chasing-hits

and would say, 'Let us have something good next month'. (Quoted from Boswell's *Life of Johnson* in Clair, 1965: 164)

It is worth noting that Johnson contributed some of the illicit parliamentary reports at a time when such reporting was strictly controlled and licensed. This may have been one reason for the magazine's popularity – Marjorie Plant (1939: 57) cites a circulation for Cave's magazine of 15,000 after ten years.²

However, Cave himself was following in the footsteps of Peter Motteux who published *The Gentleman's Journal or the Monthly Miscellany* from 1692 to 1694. Shevelov describes this as 'an influential example of the "miscellany" periodical that later became the "magazine"' (1989: 26). *The Gentleman's Journal* contained not only articles of news, history, philosophy and poetry, but also music (Henry Purcell regularly contributed compositions), fiction in the form of short stories, and illustrations from woodcuts.³

²Ballaster et al. (1991: 50-54) have an excellent section on the emergence of the magazine, including more about Cave.

³There may be a connection between this flowering of periodicals for the 'gentleman' and the emergence of the category 'gentleman' which Habermas (1989: 9) outlines briefly in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. If a social category has been defined in certain terms and is accorded certain attributes it seems likely that there will then be a demand for didactic material to assist existing members of that category to ensure that they meet the necessary requirements of general informedness, etiquette, social awareness (by which we could also mean gossip), and so on. Furthermore, given a degree of social mobility, or even the aspiration to social mobility, new members of that class or members of other classes who aspired to become members might well require sources of information to bring them up to the required standards. Such material published in book or periodical form would allow such novices to study in private either to supplement, or to obviate, the potentially embarrassing need for, or to overcome the lack of access to, personal tuition.

And since the new knowledge was based on humanistic learning, which required only the ability to read or to listen as someone else read, rather than ability at jousting or feats of arms, which required lances, swords, horses and large open areas, it became considerably easier to acquire as much knowledge as was needed from books and periodicals. Naturally the ability to read was itself a marker of class, although not necessarily of nobility or aristocracy. The ability to afford or obtain access to reading material was yet another marker of class and status, affluence and influence. In this need for knowledge as a means of making oneself socially acceptable we might be able to see the roots of specialist periodical publishing, especially after the capitalist commercial economy gave rise to the development of commodity fetishism, branding, and market segmentation.

If Machiavelli's *The Prince* could do this for a higher stratum of society, periodicals such as the *Gentleman's Journal* and *Gentleman's Magazine* and books such as the *Conversations* by Mademoiselle de Scudéry (Habermas, 1989: 10) could do the same for the emerging bourgeoisie. There may also be a connection between such material being published and the concept of 'the publicity of representation' which Habermas also describes.

All of the above titles share the ‘miscellany’ element that seems to be an important part of the early definition of a magazine. Another attribute of magazine-ness was discovered in 1691, when John Dunton and Samuel Wesley launched the *Athenian Gazette*, a publication predicated on the idea of supplying answers to questions sent in by readers. (This concept would be adopted by Alfred Harmsworth – later Lord Northcliffe – in the nineteenth century for his *Answers to Correspondents*, the magazine on which his fortune was based.) Dunton and Wesley renamed their magazine the *Athenian Mercury*, a title that Dunton adapted when he launched the *Ladies Mercury* in 1693. This was the ‘publication that may fairly be called the very first periodical for women’ according to Cynthia White (1970: 23), whose study of women’s magazines was one of the pioneering works in this field. The *Ladies Mercury* targeted a well-defined group of readers (women who had intellectual capital, monetary capital, and the need for social capital), the material it published provided for its readers’ information needs: by soliciting enquiries from them it encouraged a community-like two-way interaction, and readers trusted it to answer these enquiries honestly and accurately. As it first appeared in 1693 it can be seen to pre-date Defoe’s *Review* by some 11 years. If White and others see this as the first women’s magazine, an alternative label might also be the first specialist magazine — that is to say, the first one aimed at a specific niche in the market.

This is not to say that it was the first publication of any kind to be focused on a particular group, as Dr Louise Craven has noted, even though she appears to overlook the *Ladies Mercury*:

Was there any conception of reader preference and buying habit in seventeenth-century England? Evidently, the audience for newspapers was larger than previously thought: in 1678 Henry Care pleaded for improved typography and layout in news books as ‘they may fall into vulgar hands’ where ‘they have most need of good presentation’. The audience was also quite sophisticated, as diversification of newspapers in the later seventeenth-century reflects: specific geographical and social groups, as well as more familiar religious and political partisans were being catered for. Perhaps surprisingly, the female audience seems to have been ignored as yet. (The early newspaper press in England, in Griffiths, 1992: 11)

If it is difficult to define a magazine in general terms – how can a ‘specialist’ magazine be pinned down? Professor David Abrahamson (1996b: 28) came up with a useful definition in his study of postwar periodicals in America: ‘specific information in a specific form that can be expected to appeal to a definable segment of readers’. Abrahamson, an academic with the background of a practising journalist, locates this definition within the commercial context of ‘delivering’ those readers to ‘a group of manufacturers or distributors with the means and willingness to advertise their products and services’ to them.

It seems unlikely that there was a group of manufacturers or distributors in 1693 waiting for a vector to access the women's market, but the *Ladies Mercury* established the principle of distinguishing between groups of readers and making a particular appeal to their interests. Once this had been demonstrated to work it could and would be adopted by other publishers, so that the 'beginning of the reign of Queen Anne saw the periodical press firmly established, both in respect of newspapers and the periodicals of entertainment and instruction to which Cave had given the name of magazines' (Clair, 1965: 180). The variety was increasing too, for in the early half of the eighteenth century 'specialist publications mushroomed ... ranging from trade papers to political periodicals, literary journals to publications centring on gossip, scandals and manners and moral instruction' (Williams, 1998: 23).⁴

Magazines frequently acknowledged as landmarks in this period include the *Tatler* (April 1709) and the *Spectator* (March 1711). Samuel Johnson launched two different titles, the *Rambler* (1750) and the *Idler* (1758). If he followed his own advice – 'No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money' – we may assume that his ventures were profitable. Addison's *Spectator* certainly was: 'My publisher tells me', he wrote in the tenth issue, 'that there are already three thousand of them distributed every day; so that if I allow twenty readers to every paper, which I look upon as a modest computation, I may reckon about threescore thousand disciples in London and Westminster' (Plant, 1939: 57).⁵

Part of this success must be attributed to Steele and Addison's social awareness and commercial nous. According to Harold Herd (1952: 52–53), the *Tatler* 'invented a new kind of periodical journalism that was to develop into the modern weekly review ... a two-page, thrice-weekly paper intended to reflect in particular the more urbane outlook and interests of those who frequented the coffee-houses', while the *Spectator* 'daily reached a wide audience ... by means of a new and enlightened type of journalism that revealed keen observation of the contemporary scene'.

These titles were among the successes, but there seem to have been plenty of entrepreneurial publisher-editors willing to take the risk of launching their own magazines. Names that do not have the same sheen of longevity

⁴As Ian McBride, a lecturer at King's College, London, notes in a book review published in the *Financial Times* of 19 July 2003, 'Georgian society was, like our own, an information society: the newspaper, the novel and the periodical were among its successes' (p. 5).

⁵It is worth noting that in discussing the size and growth of the reading public during the eighteenth century, Ian Watt questions this figure, which, as he points out, is 'not disinterested'. Watt believes that 'the real proportion was probably no more than half of this', giving a reading public of less than one in 20 of the population (Watt, 1974: 39).

include *The Parrot* (1728, four issues); *The Bee* (1759, eight issues, edited by Oliver Goldsmith); *The Poetical Magazine; or, the Muses Monthly Companion* (1764, one issue); *Terrae-Filios* (1764, two issues); *The Trifler. A new periodical miscellany by Timothy Touchstone, of St Peter's College, Westminster* (1788, one issue); and *The Wonderful Magazine, and Marvellous Chronicle; or, New Weekly Entertainer* – which survived from 1793 to 1794, perhaps because of its all-bases-covered title. A quick scan of Muddiman's *Tercentenary Handlist of English and Welsh Newspapers, Magazines and Reviews* (1920) turns up scores of others.

'By this time' James Playsted Wood (1956: 8) notes, 'England had about 150 periodicals'. One of the material conditions that permitted and encouraged this expansion of titles and circulations was a doubling of the country's printing capacity; according to Marjorie Plant (1939: 86), in 1724 there were 103 printers in Great Britain (28 in the provinces and 75 in London) and by 1750 there were some 248 (120 and 128 respectively).

The actual number of magazines published is an important consideration in the history of the form because in the next era, that of industrialisation, specialisation and consumerisation, there was an explosion in volume, even if this was not recognised at the time.

William Poole, the Victorian librarian who gave his name to *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature*, believed it would be useful to catalogue periodicals because:

Every question in literature, religion, politics, social science, political economy, and in many other lines of human progress, finds its latest and freshest interpretation in the current periodicals. (1882: iv)

Poole's intention was to provide an index to articles appearing in British and American magazines – or, to be more accurate, those in 'a list of periodicals which it was desirable to index' (p. iv, emphasis added). This clearly implies strict, and unstated, criteria although we can make a good guess at these from the list quoted above. Clearly even a restricted listing would be an almost impossible task for one man to achieve within a reasonable time, so he recruited voluntary help among his fellow librarians. Even so there were only 25 English serials included in the plan for Poole's book, and of those only eight were eventually included in the first volume. One of the reasons for this, in Poole's dry opinion, was that the typical English librarian would not, or could not, 'give up for several weeks or months his hours of rest and recreation. Perhaps the climate and social customs of England are not so favourable as they are in America for night work' (p. vi).

By the time the Sixth Supplement to *Poole's Index* appeared in 1908 the total number of periodicals covered had risen to 190, not many more than the 150 Playsted Wood identified as existing at the end of the eighteenth century. This does not seem right, and when we discover that Vann and

Van Arsdel (1978: x) cite a figure of 16,000 periodicals published in the Victorian era, and that they note the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* was revising the figure upwards, it can be seen that Poole's pool was but a highly selective drop in the ocean.

Even then, the *Wellesley Index* covers only a fraction of the published periodicals in any depth, restricting its analysis to literary, philosophical, political or religious titles. This leaves a massive gap in titles aimed at both domestic and business markets, a point noted in the *Encyclopedia of the British Press*:

There were many other kinds of periodical publication which were aimed at particular sections of the public. One was the magazine for home reading for the middle-class family. Some had existed before the beginning of the century but they grew in numbers and popularity in the 1850s and 1860s. Early Victorian newspapers carried little in the way of features or reading matter designed for women and the family. Such material was provided instead by publications such as *Household Words* (1850), *All The Year Round* (1859) and others ... Yet another area in which there was a massive growth in the second half of this period was in the great range of specialist journals. They were the publications which served to keep the members of a sect or an economic interest or a profession in contact ... (Dr Lucy Brown, 'The British Press 1800–1860', in Griffiths, 1992: 29)

The principle underlying the choices made by both William Poole and Walter Houghton (editor of the *Wellesley Index*) seems to reflect the traditional stand-off between high and low culture, with literature and politics in the former camp and popular titles like those edited by Charles Dickens in the – unindexed – latter. This may have contributed to the situation noted by Lionel Madden and Diana Dixon:

... the more weighty studies of individual periodicals have tended to be devoted to the more obviously 'major' or 'significant' titles ... it is clear that the attention of students of the nineteenth century has tended to concentrate upon a relatively small number of frequently studied titles rather than upon the whole diverse field of Victorian periodicals ... Michael Woolf's comment in 'Charting the Golden Stream' (in *Editing Nineteenth-Century Texts*, ed. John M. Robson, 1967) still has applicability for the student of Victorian periodicals: '...what one must generally conclude about the current use of the periodicals is that scholars' needs have been met and that familiar evidence has been extracted only from familiar sources.' (*Histories and Studies of Individual Periodicals*, in Vann and Van Arsdel, 1978: 117/118)

Such an attitude certainly informs the comment by Richard D. Altick that:

The higher journalism—there is no better term for it—was an art indigenous to the Victorian periodical edited for the intelligent lay reader. Its forte was the treatment of a subject of interest to the educated mind, in a manner that was serious but not heavy, urbane rather than facetious or sedulously 'bright.' The writers in that genre discovered

a happy middle way between vulgarization and pedantry, an art almost lost today because evidently there is no demand for it. (1974: 67–68)

Given that much academic study of magazines – such as there has been – has tended to focus on a given set of ‘familiar sources’, it must make sense to look for fresh material. With at least 16,000 magazines to choose between there should be plenty of new titles and even whole sectors from this period of rapid expansion waiting to be investigated. And indeed there are, as Muddiman’s *Handlist* shows (1920).

One of the reasons for the growth of periodical titles in the Victorian period was, according to John S. North, ‘the fascination of the public with newspaper and magazine reporting of rapid developments in technology and science’ (*The Rationale: Why Read Victorian Periodicals?*, in Vann and Van Arsdel, 1978: 4). Analysis of Muddiman for the five year period 1890 to 1895 shows 141 titles that can easily be identified as covering such developments. These include both trade and leisure/hobbyist magazines that were influenced by scientific or technological developments but exclude others, such as farming and stock breeding, which would also have made some claim to scientific influence. Examples of titles are *Electricity* (1890); the *Engineering Review*; the *Humming Bird: a monthly magazine scientific, artistic and industrial review* (both 1891); the *Phonographic Herald* (1893); *Hardwicke’s Science Gossip* (launched in 1894 and extant until 1902); and *Technical Journals Review*, *Technical Papers Advertiser*, and *Technical Press Review* (all 1895).

Vann and Van Arsdel (1994) look at this area in *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society*. They state in their Introduction that they aim to ‘identify the ways that periodicals informed, instructed and amused virtually all of the people in the many segments of Victorian life’ (p. 3) and their sampling does indeed open up areas not previously examined, breaking away from the Poolean version of periodicals ‘worth studying’. However it can be argued, with conviction, that this does not go far enough in identifying new specialisations and new publishing sectors. For example, the chapter on Transport (pp. 179–198) covers railways, canals, roads and coastal shipping. with never a mention of the automobile. In fact, authors John E.C. Palmer and Harold W. Paar note: ‘Thus road transport, like the canals, appears to have generated little or no specialized periodical literature’ (p. 197). (As Palmer was a historian of early British railways and Paar a research officer for the Railway and Canal Historical Society it is perhaps not surprising that this area received such scant treatment.)

However, it does not take much thought to see that, of the modes of transport mentioned above, that which has had most impact on the world, never mind the UK, is road – bicycles, cars, motorcycles, lorries, buses. These have become everyday modes of transport, bringing with them a range of social,

industrial, military and environmental issues; road transport has ensured the decline of most of the other forms covered by Palmer and Paar. And far from generating 'little or scant' specialised literature, the bicycle alone inspired numerous periodicals in the last third of the nineteenth century and the motor car benefited from a weekly magazine dedicated to its cause – a magazine, *Autocar*, that thrives to this day – at a time when there were still only a handful of horseless carriages in the country.

To illustrate one sliver of this phenomenon further, by counting the number of cycling titles in Muddiman's *Handlist* it is possible to see that between 1875 and 1900 a total of 31 cycling magazines were launched. Numerous reasons can be ascribed post hoc:

- once John Kemp Starley's design for the Rover Safety model (1886) had standardised bicycle manufacture, marketing and advertising became necessary to create distinctions between brands, and specialised magazines provided excellent opportunities to reach potential markets;
- bicycle-based sporting and leisure pursuits expanded or split into specialised fields and these specialisations fostered magazines to cater for them;
- increasing numbers of people had sufficient disposable income with which to buy a bicycle and the leisure time in which to use it;
- a 'supervening social need' of the type posited by Brian Winston (1998) in *Media Technology and Society* created the conditions that made ownership and use of a bicycle acceptable, desirable and necessary.

The overall result was nine cycling titles launched between 1874 and 1879; another nine in the following decade; and 13 in the 1890s (Stewart et al., 1955). There was evidently at least one magazine to meet each social need – and it is a phenomenon worth noting that when one magazine is successful competitor titles will rapidly appear in that same sector of the market.

Such levels of activity indicated a force that was working strongly on the social, cultural, commercial and economic life of the country, one that helped to shape the world we live in today. The best sources for finding out how that force was viewed at the time (pace Poole, Houghton et al.) and how it helped to define the very phenomenon it was serving (pace Ohmann, 1996) must be the specialised periodicals of the day: as John S. North observed, 'Civilisation may never again have so sensitive an instrument for registering its course as the Victorian periodical press' (Vann and Van Arsdel, 1978: 5).

Indeed so – or, to put it another way: 'That's what magazines are so good at; they harness change as it's happening'. Sarah Bravo, then editor of *Real Homes*, produced this quote in the *Observer* Business Section (20 July 2003, p. 6), however she was not referring to Victorian periodicals. To chronicle the development of magazines in the twentieth century would be a substantial volume of its own, a volume that would need to chart

the development of new specialisms, new hobbies, new technologies, new trades, new professions, and whole new magazine sectors to serve new cultural phenomena.

The first 25 years of the new century saw the launch of *John Bull* (1906), a general interest weekly that would become Britain's biggest magazine; they also witnessed Condé Nast buy *Vogue* (1909); the birth of *Woman's Weekly* (1911), a cornerstone of IPC's rise to the top of British magazine publishing; and the foundation of the *New Statesman* (1913), *Vanity Fair* (1914), the *Reader's Digest* (1918), *Good Housekeeping* (1922), the *Radio Times* and *Time* (both 1923), and the *New Yorker* (1925). If we squeeze in one more year we can encompass the launch of *Melody Maker*, one of the first magazines to cover the new wave of popular music.

Taking these headline titles alone we have a patriotic but anti-establishment journal that supported the hard-done-by British private soldier (founded and edited by Horatio Bottomley, who also founded the *Financial Times* as a means of promoting his investment schemes); the epitome of high fashion; the epitome of a mass women's title; a standard-bearer for middle-class leftwing political thought; a chronicle of high society; a modern version of the 'miscellany' periodical that blazed a trail for brand extension into money-raising activities; the nonpareil of what has come to be known as the 'shelter' sector; a listings magazine for the new era of mass communication; the classic model for all news weeklies; the waspish literary journal; and the harbinger of a new period in popular music culture.

Alongside such launches there were technological developments in the improving quality and diminishing price of woodpulp-based paper, the perfection of the rotogravure printing process that eased and improved the reproduction of photographs, and the increasing adoption of colour plates, as well as commercial developments such as the institution of the Audit Bureau of Circulation (1914) that began to formalise methods for measuring a magazine's reach and readership for the benefit of advertisers.

During the twentieth century the magazine industry as a whole became increasingly skilled at adopting both technological and commercial developments and harnessing them to make and market attractive products that could address the particular needs of a particular readership. On the one hand, this could mean the desire amongst women aged between 20 and 30 to be kept informed of fashion trends in the high street: on the other, it could mean serious mountain bikers' need to know about new chainsets. Similarly, it could mean architects' requirement to be kept abreast of new developments and regulatory restrictions: on the other, it could mean the desire by advertising account managers to have a publication in which their photographic portrait might one day appear.

In *Magazines That Make History* (2004), Norberto Angeletti and Alberto Oliva identify a 'canon' of influential magazines from the twentieth century

(or just before): *National Geographic* (1888), *Reader's Digest* (1922), *Time* (1923), *Life* (1936), *Paris Match* (1938), *¡Hola!* (1944), *Der Spiegel* (1947), and *People* (1974). The majority of these are news-based titles, specialising in summary and analysis, but even within that genre it is instructive to note the change of emphasis from the straightforward 'hard news' of the earlier titles to the more people-, and specifically celebrity-, based news of the later ones. All of these titles, however, can be categorised as 'mass' interest, which is typical of magazines in the first half of the last century: publishing companies followed the general pattern of industrial development, which was focused on large corporations, and in this specific industry the costs of printing and paper meant that expenditure had to be amortised over a long print run. And just as importantly, personal identity was bound up in a fairly limited number of hobbies and interests.

Abrahamson (1996b: 19) identifies the 1960s as the key period for the expansion of magazine offerings in the USA: 'During the 1960s, the American consumer magazine industry completed a major transformation: a shift away from general-interest mass-market publications toward more specialized magazines'. Johnson and Prijatel (1999: 54) agree: 'In the 1960s, audience specialization became the name of the magazine game, with four new magazines appearing for every one that folded'. Abrahamson draws on Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber's work to draw out the socio-psychological reasons for the expansion of personal interests - and this is examined further in Chapter 7 (*Theorising The Field*) - but there were also relatively straightforward political-economy factors at work as everything became cheaper and more plentiful. Falling costs for paper, printing, typesetting, page composition, and colour reproduction combined with a decline in the power of the craft unions to lower the barriers of entry to accommodate new or short-run magazines.

A common adage in the British magazine publishing industry predicts that where the USA treads, the UK follows five years later. Like most commonplace sayings there is an element of truth to it, although British post-war development took somewhat longer to get into full swing. Paper was rationed until 1950, general rationing stayed in force until 1952, and the magazine world remained somewhat greyish until the 1970s or even 1980s, following which time it blossomed into a multi-coloured phantasmagoria. As in the USA, the increasing emphasis on individual identity and subcultural tribalisation (pace Marshall McLuhan's statement that 'our new electric culture provides our lives again with a tribal base'; see McLuhan and Zingrone, 1995: 127) combined with an increase in specialist consumption and technological changes to the material conditions of production to create a fruitful time for magazine publishers both large and small.

Although printing and production technology made significant advances in the 1960s and 1970s, it was not until 1985 that the introduction of postscript-based software (such as Aldus *Pagemaker* and Adobe *Illustrator*,

running on Apple Macintosh computers that could output to increasingly cheap laser printers) heralded the advent of desktop publishing (DTP) and revolutionised the production of magazines and newspapers – a revolution that could not have occurred without first Eddie Shah and then Rupert Murdoch defying, and destroying, the power of the print unions. Two years later Quark launched *XPress*, which rapidly overshadowed *Pagemaker*. Once in place, the ‘holy trinity’ of magazine publishing software (*Quark*, *Photoshop* and *Illustrator*) running on Apple Macintosh hardware must have given rise to more magazine projects than any other advances in print technology.