

# Unit 2

## Foundation of the Free Press

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Journalism 1002

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Today's lecture will cover:

## Themes in Early Western Civilization Press History



## Ben Franklin and the Early American Press





# Remember

- Keep up with readings. Check syllabus!
- Coming to class is the best way to succeed in this course



# Check in: Have you...



Checked the syllabus for the next few weeks, noting when you have readings and assignments?



Made plans with your video project group to get started?



Noted when the video project is due?



Put future due dates on your calendars?



Made a checklist of things to catch up on?  
Checklists do help.



# Self-care



Get sleep



Get outside for a brief walk



Eat real meals



Reach out to people who understand and can boost your confidence

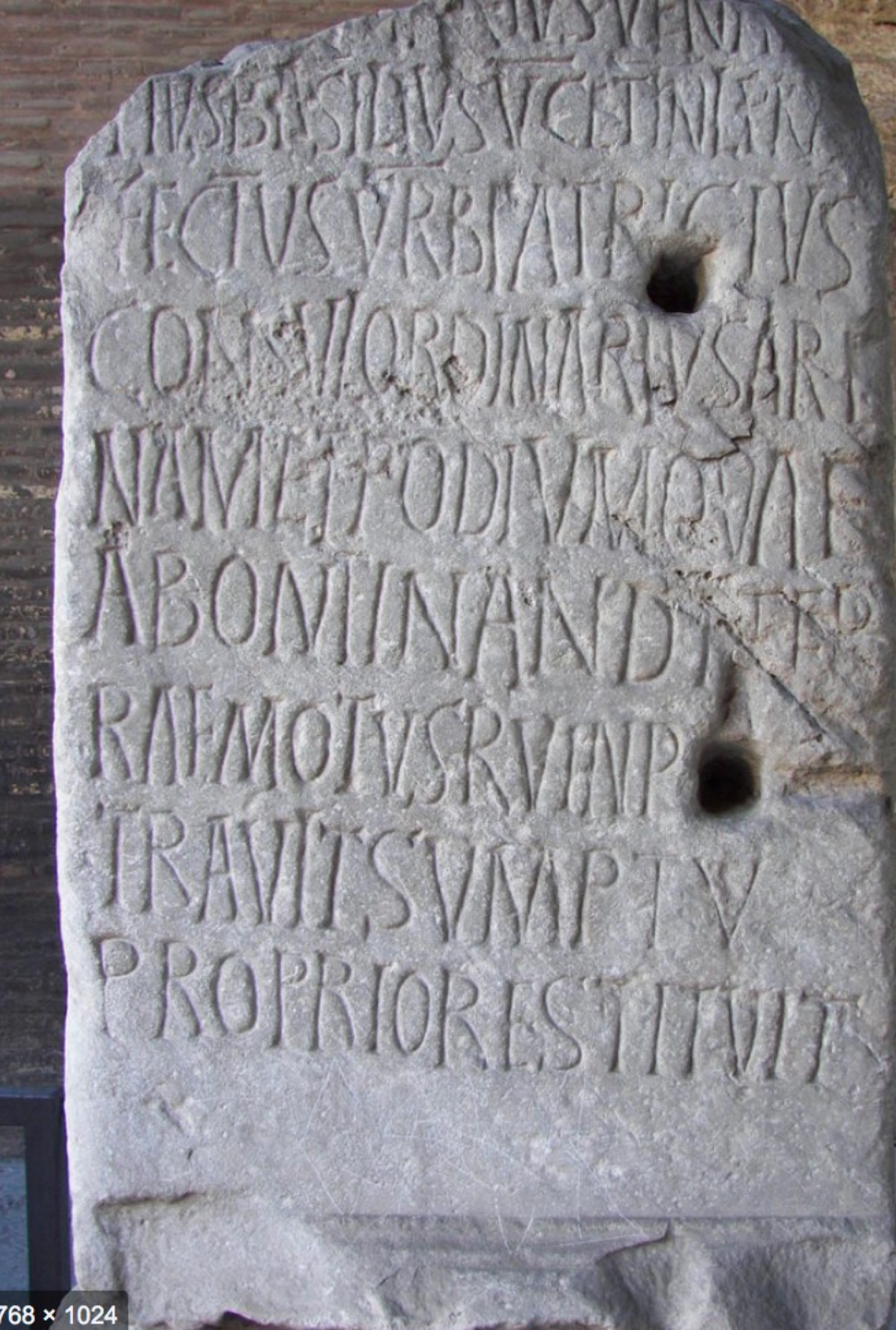


Remind yourself of your big goals in life



Give yourself some credit





Rome, 59 B.C.E.- c. 100 A.D.

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- The first known news poster:  
*Acta Diurna*
- ... which meant, “Daily Events” in Latin
- Chiseled on stone or metal tablet and posted in public



# Barbarians invaded Rome in the 400s. Rome fell in 476

- Romans had perfected book publishing
- After the fall of the Roman Empire, monks mostly took over the role of book publishers.



# Moveable type

- Movable type was first created by **Bi Sheng (990-1051)**, who used baked clay to create separate characters.
- This allowed for much flexibility in creating pages.
- The Yuan-dynasty official **Wang Zhen** is credited with the introduction of wooden movable type, a more durable option, around 1297.
- <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/songdynasty-module/tech-printing.html>



# How books and ideas reached readers: up to 1200

- News got out through people crying out: criers.
- Religious figures, especially monks, took over teaching people how to read.
- Books were hand-copied by monks too—until the 1200s.



# Gutenberg version of the Bible, mid-1400s

- Printed by Johann Gutenberg
- He was an upper-class resident of Mainz, Germany
- Also created moveable type: individual cast-metal letters (instead of an entire page plate)
- These letters could be moved around and set in place with thin strips of lead
- So one set of metal letters could make infinite pages
- Roll ink on the letters and then press it against paper









# King Henry VIII of England

- Became king in 1509
- Required the press to be licensed and censored from 1538 onward.
- First king to place press under state control. This continued into the 1600s.
- Henry VIII died in 1547



# First newspapers in Europe

- The earliest surviving issues of weekly newspapers were:
- Strasbourg, France—the Strasbourg Relation, 1605
- ... and in Wolfenbüttel, Germany., in 1609.
- By 1623, newspapers were being printed not only across German-speaking Europe, but also in the Low Countries—coastal countries of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.



# King James version of the Bible, 1611

- Note: the Bible is not one book – it is many, from many authors and compilations of authors (early crowd sourcing). Followers of Judaism and Christianity made the choices of what would go into it during the first century AD.
- The Bible is an early example of offering multiple viewpoints.
- The King James version shaped the English language significantly and is the source of an astonishing number of metaphors and phrases.



# Some phrases from the King James Bible

- A man after his own heart
- A stumbling block
- At their wit's end
- Bottomless pit
- Death, where is thy sting
- Fallen from grace
- Fell flat on his face
- Fight the good fight



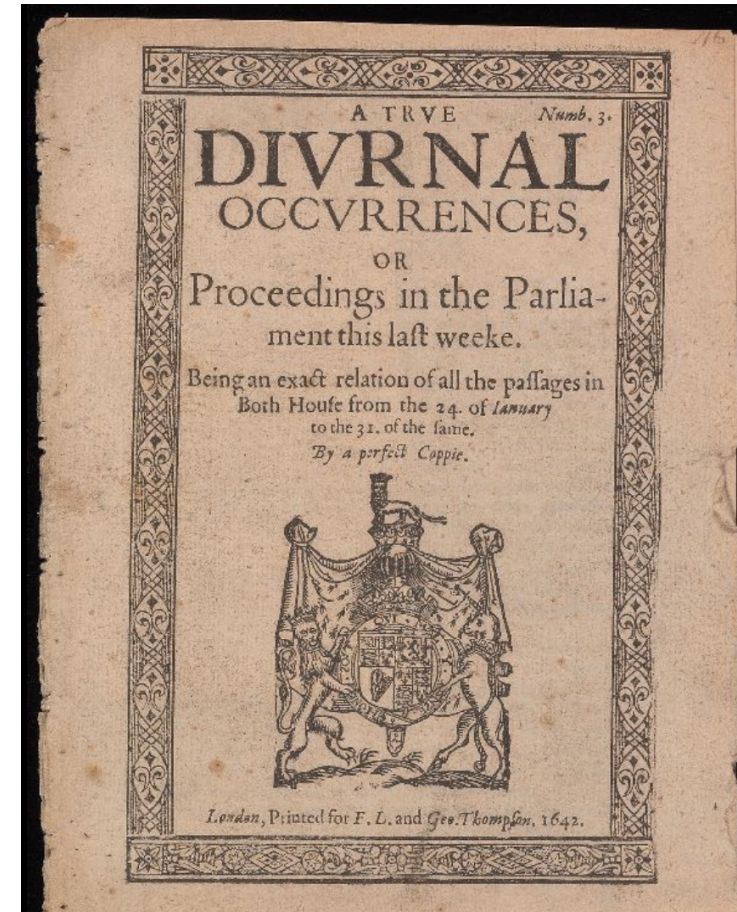
# ...and more phrases from the King James Bible

- From strength to strength
- Give up the ghost
- God forbid
- Holier than thou
- Out of the mouths of babes
- Suffer fools gladly
- The blind lead the blind
- The powers that be
- Woe is me



# Early newspaper: *Diurnal Occurrences*

- Began in 1641 after the English Parliament abolished the Star Chamber, a secret court where decisions were made.
- Diurnal Occurrences came out daily (diurnal).
- Wrote of what went on in Parliament.





# Areopagitica

- Published in 1644 in England
- Written by John Milton in defense of freedom of discussion.
- This started because he had written a pamphlet on the merits of divorce, and the government would not let him circulate it.

generall of reading, what ever sort the Books be; and that this Order avails nothing to the suppressing of scandalous, seditious, and libellous Books, which were mainly intended to be suppress. Last, that it will be primely to the discouragement of all learning, and the stop of Truth, not only by disexercising and blunting our abilities in what we know already, but by hindring and cropping the discovery that might bee yet further made both in religious and civill Wisdome.

I deny not, but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how Bookes demean themselves, as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors: For Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a viall the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet on the other hand, unlesse warinesse be us'd, as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book; who kills a Man kills a reasonable creature, Gods Image; but hee who destroyes a good Booke, kills reason it selfe, kills the Image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the Earth; but a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great losse; and revolutions of ages doe not oft recover the losse of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole Nations fare the worse. We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of publick men, how we spill that season'd life of man preserv'd and stor'd up in Books; since we see a kinde of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdome, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kinde of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elementall life, but strikes at that ethereall and and fift essence, the breath of reason it selfe, slaies an immortality rather then a life. But lest I should be condemn'd of introducing licence, while I oppose Licencing, I refuse not the paines to be so much Historicall, as will serve to shew what hath been done by ancient and famous Commonwealths, against this disorder, till the very time that this project of licencing crept out of the *Inquisition*, was catcht up by



# John Locke's writings

- Another development in liberation of expression in England
- Mostly in favor of religious freedom
- Starting in 1689, he published four letters “concerning toleration”

TO THE

R E A D E R.

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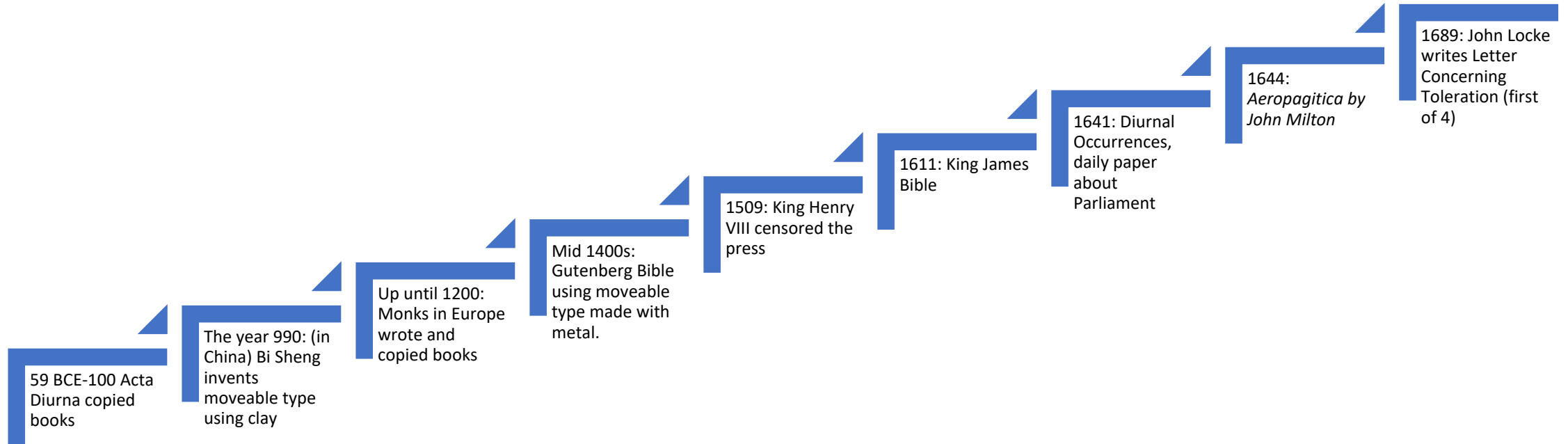
THE ensuing Letter concerning Toleration, first printed in Latin this very year, in Holland, has already been translated both into Dutch and French.—So general and speedy an approbation may therefore bespeak its favourable reception in England. I think indeed there is no nation under heaven, in which so much has already been said upon that subject, as ours. But yet certainly there is no people that stand in more need of having something further both said and done amongst them, in this point, than we do.

Our government has not only been partial in matters of religion; but those also who have suffered under that partiality, and have therefore endeavoured by their writings to vindicate their own rights and liberties, have for the most part done it upon narrow principles, suited only to the interests of their own sects.

This narrowness of spirit on all sides has undoubtedly been the principal occasion of our miseries and confusions. But whatever have been the occasions, it is now high time to seek for a thorough cure. We have need of more generous remedies than what have yet



# Timeline: Early press history







## Ben Franklin and the American Press



# 1690: an American newspaper tries publishing

- Benjamin Harris published *Publick Occurrences*
- Shut down and banned after one issue
- A little too blunt for the English government
- Royal governor of Massachusetts exerted power to censor the press

*New England News*

Numb. 1.

## PUBLICK OCCURRENCES

Both FOREIGN and DOMESTICK.

Boston, Thursday Sept. 25th. 1690.

**I**T is designed, that the Country shall be furnished once a month (or if any Glasse of Occurrences happen, oftener,) with an Account of such considerable things as have arrived unto our Notice.

In order hereunto, the Publisher will take what pains he can to obtain a Faithful Relation of all such things; and will particularly make himself beholden to such Persons in Boston whom he knows to have been for their own use the diligent Observers of such matters.

That which is herein proposed, is, First, That Memorable Occurrences of Divine Providence may not be neglected or forgotten, as they too often are. Secondly, That people every where may better understand the Circumstances of Publique Affairs, both abroad and at home; which may not only direct their Thoughts at all times, but at some times also to assist their Business and Negotiations.

Thirdly, That some thing may be done towards the Curing, or at least the Charming of that Spirit of Lying, which prevails amongst us, wherefore nothing shall be entered, but what we have reason to believe is true, repairing to the best fountains for our Information. And when there appears any material mistake in any thing that is collected, it shall be corrected in the next.

Moreover, the Publisher of these Occurrences is willing to engage, that whereas, there are many False-Reports, maliciously made, and spread among us, if any well-minded person will be at the pains to trace any such false Report so far as to find out and Convict the First Raiser of it, he will in this Paper (unless just Advice be given to the contrary) expose the Name of such person, as A malicious Raiser of a false Report. It is supposed that none will dislike this Proposal, but such as intend to be guilty of so villanous a Crime.

from them, as what is in the Forces lately gone for Canada; made them think it almost impossible for them to get well through the Affairs of their Husbandry at this time of the year, yet the Season has been so unusually favourable that they scarce find any want of the many hundreds of hands, that are gone from them; which is looked upon as a Merciful Providence.

While the barbarous Indians were lurking about Chelmsford, there were missing about the beginning of this month a couple of Children belonging to a man of that Town, one of them aged about eleven, the other aged about nine years, both of them supposed to be fallen into the hands of the Indians.

A very Tragical Accident happened at Water-Town, the beginning of this Month, an Old man, that was of somewhat a Silent and Morose Temper, but one that had long enjoyed the reputation of a Sober and a *Man*, having newly buried his Wife, The Devil took advantage of the Melancholly which he thereupon fell into, his Wives discretion and industry had long been the support of his Family, and he seemed hurried with an impertinent fear that he should now come to want before he dyed, though he had very careful friends to look after him who kept a strict eye upon him, lest he should do himself any harm. But one evening escaping from them into the Cow-house, they there quickly followed him, found him hanging by a Rope, which they had used to tie their Calves withal, he was dead with his feet near touching the Ground.

Epidemical Fevers and Agues grow very common, in some parts of the Country, whereof, tho' many dye, yet they are sorely unfitted for their employments; but in some parts a more malignant Fever seems to prevail in such sort that it usually goes thro' a Family where it comes, and proves

**T**HE Christianized Indians in some parts of Plimouth, have newly ap-



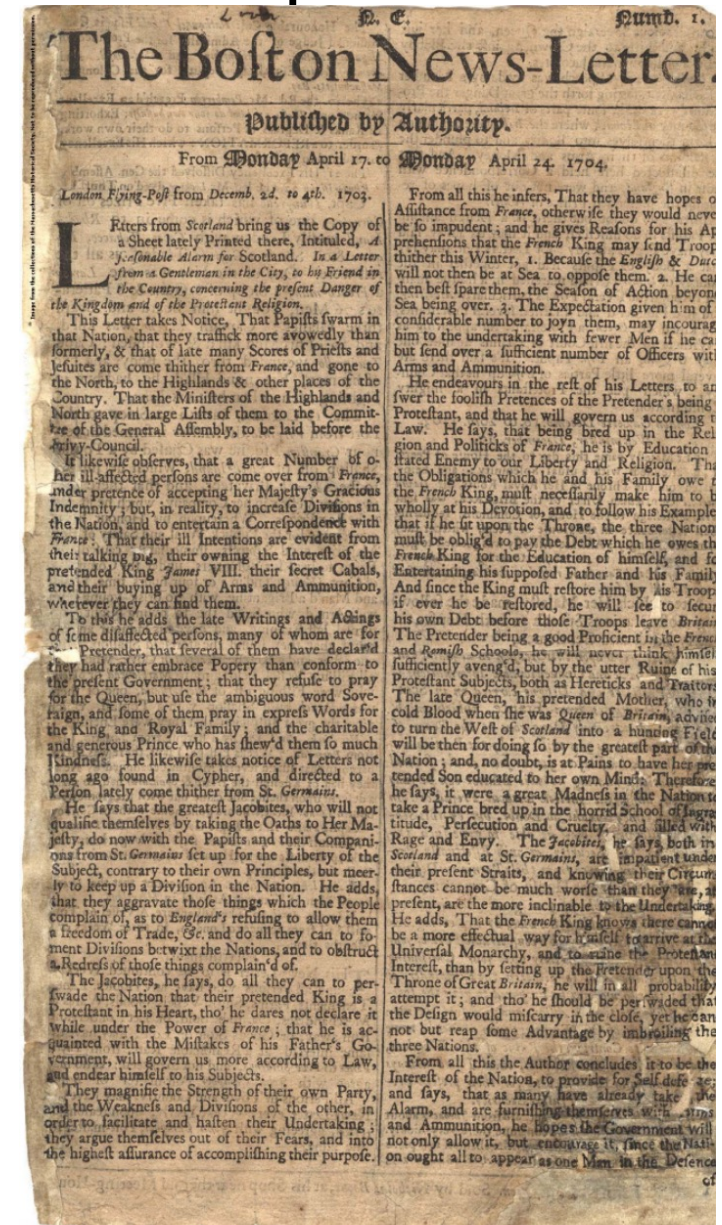
“Called the Iroquois Indians “those miserable Salvages, in whom we have too much confided.”

Wrote that French King Louis XIV was having sex with his daughter-in-law.  
All from Daly, 14.



# 1704: first American newspaper to publish more than once)

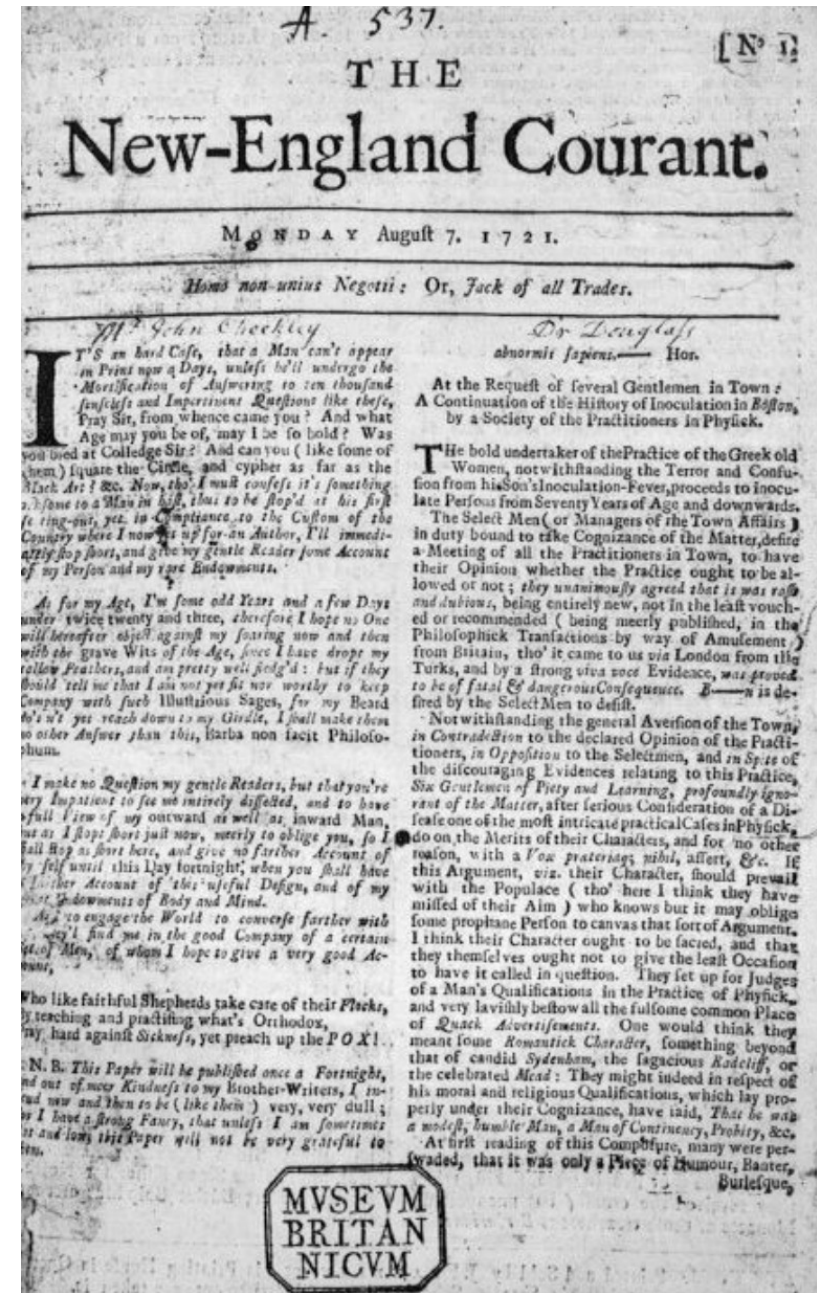
- John Campbell
- The *Boston News-Letter*
- A conventional paper, “Published by Authority” (of British)
- Aimed at businessmen





# 1719: a second paper in Boston

- *The New England Courant*
- Published by James Franklin
- It is here that Ben Franklin was printer's apprentice to his brother
- 1722, Franklin started writing under pen names





# 1723: “Rules for the New-England Courant”

- Ben Franklin wrote a satirical commentary after his brother was briefly jailed. But he apparently followed these rules for journalists, including:
- “... be very tender of the Religion of the Country.
- “... Do not cast injurious Reflections on the Reverend and Faithful Ministers of the Gospel....
- “By no means cast any Reflections on the Civil Government....
- “... and when you condemn any Vice, do not point out particular Persons.”



So Ben Franklin was cautious, avoiding politics.

But his brother basically fired him, so he left for other cities.



# Timeline

- 1729 Ben Franklin bought part interest in a Philadelphia newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*
- 1731 Franklin wrote “one of the bedrock statements” of journalism philosophy, “Apology for Printers,” in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*.
- Franklin published first issue of *Poor Richard’s Almanack*. Advice, wise sayings. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0093>
- 1735 Recent immigrant printer John Peter Zenger was jailed for “seditious libel” for criticizing the (British-appointed) New York governor.



# Let's look closer at two of those events

- What was the Apology for Printers?
- What was seditious libel?



## From Ben Franklin's "Apology for Printers," 1731

- 7. "That it is unreasonable to imagine Printers approve of every thing they print, and to censure them on any particular thing accordingly; since in the way of their Business they print such great variety of things opposite and contradictory. ...
- 8. "That if all Printers were determin'd not to print any thing till they were sure it would offend no body, there would be very little printed."



# Seditious libel

- Lying in print
- Doing so as “a challenge to authority and, ultimately, to the social order itself.”
- Zenger’s lawyer, Andrew Hamilton, argued that Zenger had printed the truth. A jury acquitted him.



# Most papers were published by printers during the colonial period

- The mechanical work of printing and the brain work of reporting and writing were often done by the same person.
- They printed:
  - Religious books, psalm books, sermons
  - Almanacs for farmers
- They published any news they could find, including very old information from abroad
- Stories about oddities "such as lightning strikes, baby goats born with two heads, meteor showers, and the like." (Daly, 20.)



# Ben Franklin's legacy to journalism

- Journalism is a business that presents controversial views
- Believed printers (and therefore, journalists) should present as many sides of the story as possible
- Newspaper should be a marketplace of ideas, a neutral repository
- Individual journalists could hold strong views