More recent development of another form of political committee, the "527 group" (after the tax law from which they emerged) has greatly changed political communication in many campaigns. Five hundred twenty-seven groups have an identical purpose to that of other PACs, except that they are obliged to refrain from explicitly advocating or opposing any candidate for any federal election. If they meet this condition, 527 groups evade the financial restrictions associated with PACs, and fall outside of the Federal Election Commission's regime of accountability. Just such a 527 group—the "Swift Boat Veterans for Truth"—played a part in undermining the military service record of 2004 Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, and might well have helped determine the occupant of the White House. Yet, in other ways the Swift Boat campaign highlighted the capacity of journalists to probe the activities of political committees and add to public awareness, such that the key charges against John Kerry's war record were investigated and disputed by leading journalists, including those of ABC's *Nightline*. Perhaps as a consequence of this scrutiny, *Time* magazine subsequently found that only a minority of swing voters saw the Swift Boat campaign as credible.

The complexity of the laws governing PACs and 527s, often coupled with the lack of definitive links between PACs and the political figures they help elect, presents an uninviting prospect for a news desk concerned with simplicity and immediacy. Yet as expanding media platforms such as the Internet make distributing political messages easier and identifying their originators more difficult, the role of the knowledgeable, probing, and impartial journalist becomes a more vital component of the democratic system. Recent attempts have been made to introduce uncertainty to the FEC's scope for financial regulation, most notably the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002. Journalists need to stay alert to the nature of these changes and help invoke the spirit of the original campaign laws. However, it is inevitable that in the public interest-driven battle to counter the resources of special interest groups such as PACs, journalists will find it ever more difficult to determine which elements of political public discourse are genuinely popular and which are orchestrated.

Michael Higgins

See also Congress and Journalism; Election Coverage; Equal Time; Sound Bites; Spin

Further Readings

Campaign Finance Guide, "The Federal Election Campaign Act: A New Era of Reform." http://www.campaignfinanceguide.org/guide-34.html (accessed July 2008).

Federal Election Commission. "Federal Election Campaign Laws, 2008." http://www.fec.gov/law/feca/feca.pdf (accessed July 2008).

Gais, Thomas L. *Improper Influence: Campaign Finance Law, Political Interest and the Problem of Equality.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.

Johnstone, Meredith A. "Stopping 'Winks and Nods': Limits of Coordination as a Means of Regulating 527 Organizations." *New York University Law Review* 81 (2006): 1166–205.

Miron, Jeffrey A. "Campaign Finance Reform: Understanding the Real Issues." The Library of Economics and Liberty. http://www.econlib.org/library/columns/mironcampaign.html (accessed July 2008).

Scheuer, Jeffrey. *The Sound Bite Society.* New York: Routledge, 2001.

Woodward, Bob, and Carl Bernstein. *All the President's Men.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974.

Political Broadcasting

See Equal Time; Sound Bites

Political Reporters

American political reporters strive to keep politicians honest, to serve as proxies for the public, and to inform citizens so that they can make better political choices. Many political reporters think of themselves as an independent and vital "Fourth Estate," which operates as a check on political power.

The reasons journalists pursue politics as a specialty are as varied as their backgrounds. Some are attracted by the rich narratives of elections and struggles for power; others relish the role of

watchdogs or referees in the political game. Some are drawn by the policy debate to explain the promises and positions of politicians. Others seek to rub shoulders with the powerful or have an impulse to reform a system they see tilted to the privileged. And, at various historical points, political journalists have been partisans and ideologues.

Regardless of their motives, the group of journalists specializing in politics has played a critical role in American democracy, and their reach has extended to all forms of media. Since the 1960s, these journalists have grown in influence and attracted controversy.

Political reporters constitute one subset of the many journalists who cover public affairs, monitoring the city halls, schools boards, state houses, Congress, and the White House. Political columnists are another subset, although they sometimes overlap with the reporters. Since the 1930s, columnists have been viewed as the royalty of political journalism and the career goal of many reporters.

Among political journalists, print and broadcast media form another dividing line. Television introduced the "news anchor," a prominent figure encompassing the roles of editor, reporter, and commentator. At the national level, news anchors have played important roles in political journalism, presiding over national party conventions and election nights and moderating presidential debates. Several of these anchors first gained prominence as political reporters, including Walter Cronkite (1916–2009), John Chancellor (1927–1996), David Brinkley (1920–2003), Dan Rather (1931–), and Tom Brokaw (1940–).

So what separates the rubric of the political reporter from other political journalists? For the purpose here, three attributes define the political reporter: delivering news and analysis with the next election always in mind; offering information with the stated purpose to inform, not persuade; and striving for independence. To appreciate this category of journalists, one must understand their origin and evolution.

Origins

The entanglement of American journalism and politics dawned with the nation. By the first truly contested presidential election of 1800, partisan newspapers provided the political discourse between the burgeoning parties—Federalists (Hamiltonians) versus Republicans (Jeffersonians). The partisan press peaked in the Jacksonian era of the middle third of the nineteenth century when "Old Hickory" won office through the creation of a network of partisan newspapers. Several editors served in Jackson's "kitchen cabinet," and their newspapers drew financial sustenance from government printing contracts.

These journalists would be more familiar today as political operatives or propagandists. Their rise was also part of the democratization of the young country's politics, a path of upward mobility by artisans and immigrants who manned the presses. Not until the early twentieth century would the craft draw from the nation's educated upper crust, and even today political journalism remains a route for strivers from the hinterlands to climb the social ladder.

The importance of partisan journalists began to fade in the mid-nineteenth century with urbanization and media commercialization. Newspaper publishers and editors replaced their loyalty to party with allegiance to advertisers and the large circulations they demanded. Journalists were still connected to politics, but the seeds were sown for the pursuit of a goal that would mark the political reporter in the next century. Journalists sought to be independent political voices, not the mouthpieces of party organizations.

Three of the most famous "independent" journalists of the second half of the nineteenth century—Horace Greeley (1811–72), Joseph Pulitzer (1847–1911), and William Randolph Hearst (1863–1951)—were political power brokers who held elective office during their careers. Greeley and Hearst had ambitions for the White House. As late as 1920, both major party nominees, Democrat James M. Cox (1870–1957) and Republican Warren G. Harding (1865–1923), were Ohio newspapermen. Since that election, however, rising professional standards of independent journalism have argued against such direct political involvement, although a few remain tempted.

In the early twenty-first century, journalism is dotted with political professionals and journalists who move through the "revolving door." For example, ABC News' Chief Washington Correspondent George Stephanopoulos (1961–) is a

former aide to President Bill Clinton, while journalist R. Anthony "Tony" Snow (1955–2008) moved from Fox News to become the White House press secretary for George W. Bush.

Objectivity

Starting in the 1920s, the "objective" school of journalism arose with the growing professionalism of the craft. The goal was to separate opinion from fact-based news, and political journalists adopted distinct job descriptions. Columnists wrote commentary and reporters chronicled the words and actions of politicians. The reporters were bounded by the objective goals of balance and impartiality, which often translated into deference to authority. This weakness materialized in the 1950s as unquestioning news dispatches became the conduit of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy's "red baiting" charges. Campaign reporters rarely ventured beyond accounts of the candidates' speeches and travels, and they turned a blind eye to the personal lives of the politicians.

New Influence

This passive role of the political reporter was transformed by a number of factors, starting in the 1960s. Social upheaval over the Vietnam War gave reporters new license to question authority. The journalistic exposé of the Watergate scandal of 1972 to 1974 also supercharged the adversarial role of the reporter.

The era also witnessed changes in electoral politics that enhanced the influence of the new breed of political reporters, who were better educated and more politically sophisticated. Party organizations withered as direct primaries increasingly determined the choice of party nominees. Television advertising weakened the ability of party leaders to control communications to voters. Money flooded the process to pay for the advertising. The new politics created subspecialties in reporting beats to cover media advertising and to follow the money. News organizations increasingly used public opinion polls to track campaigns.

In the vacuum previously filled by party leaders, political reporters became gatekeepers. To a considerable extent, reporters decided whether candidates met "expectations"—frequently set by the reporters themselves—in the outcome of primaries or televised debates. Whether a candidate's off-the-cuff gaffe became a crippling mistake would rest largely with reporters. Indeed, in presidential politics, the "invisible primary" of polls, punditry, and money weeds candidate fields before the first votes are cast.

Journalistic form also changed. Theodore H. White (1915–86), the son of poor Jewish immigrants to Boston who worked his way through Harvard University, reshaped the campaign narrative with his *Making of the President 1960,* the first in a series of books by White and his imitators who created a new genre. No longer would coverage center on chronicling a campaign; instead, the campaign unfolded as a dramatic story, told from the inside. The genre would bring new attention to the political process, the historical forces shaping elections, and the character of the politicians.

The change in the role and prominence of political reporters was classically captured by *Rolling Stone* writer Timothy Crouse (1947–) in his 1973 book, *Boys on the Bus*. The son of a Broadway writer and fresh out of college, Crouse portrayed the press corps as a traveling band of mostly male reporters from the big newspapers, news magazines, and television networks who rated the winners and losers, reveling in the horse race. He introduced the term *pack journalism*—referring to the tendency of reporters to produce homogenous coverage—into the political lexicon. Most barriers to women in the political press had fallen by the mid-1980s, but the problem of pack journalism remains for reporters of both genders.

The 1980s witnessed growing scrutiny by reporters of the personal attributes of politicians. This emphasis culminated in 1988 when reporters single-handedly eliminated the Democratic presidential frontrunner, Colorado Senator Gary Hart, by exposing his sexual peccadilloes. In the same period, political scholars, who had long discounted the role of journalists in shaping elections, began to attribute significant influence to journalists as framers of elections. But scholars also criticized the political reporters for being too entranced by the campaign "horse race," serving too often as agents of polarization and cynicism.

The rising influence of political reporters in the last half of the twentieth century was fueled by the newly dominant political medium—television.

The broadcast networks introduced political reporters who would soon achieve fame surpassing that of the columnists. Network correspondents engaged in reporting that was interpretative ("instant analysis"), distinctly mediated ("sound bites"), and highly visual. The three networks lavished money on the coverage by employing expensive technologies and building sophisticated political units to showcase their "talent." In the mid-1970s, more mobile Minicams and videotape increasingly replaced film, accelerating the speed of coverage and making it easer to edit in the correspondent's "voice-over" to dominate the story.

As political changes reshaped journalism, so journalism transformed politics into an activity increasingly governed by media. Satellite technology accelerated the speed of politics even more with live coverage from virtually anywhere and the pursuit of picturesque backdrops for staged political events. Media strategies came to dominate campaigns.

New Media

The 1990s was an important transitional decade for political reporters, although the trends were sometimes contradictory. In response to criticism saying that they were too easily manipulated by candidates who were sophisticated about the new media politics, reporters introduced fact-checking techniques that often made them seem even more adversarial. Reporters created the "Adwatch," a journalistic vetting of the truthfulness of advertisements. They also built a subspecialty in the "the money and politics" beat. Armed with new computer technologies, reporters tracked campaign finances, highlighting the exploding influence of money on politics and bolstering reforms.

These aggressive techniques coincided with an effort to temper political reporters. Civic journalism sought to reduce journalistic detachment, deemphasize horse race campaign coverage, and refocus on issues of interest to citizens. Civic journalism had many applications but in political coverage, news organizations experimented with in-depth polling of citizens to create issue agendas for elections that candidates would be asked to address. The questions of ordinary voters would be asked directly by reporters to candidates or they were posed in "town hall" meetings involving panels of voters who were selected in the surveys. Civic journalism has faded as a distinct movement, but the movement's legacy is a more self-reflecting and interactive media.

At the same time in the 1990s, journalists found new competitors in the changing media environment. Conservative talk radio hosts emerged as powerful voices. Cable news networks began to siphon off viewers from the networks, particularly political audiences, first with creation of CNN and C-SPAN in the 1980s and later with MSNBC and Fox News in the mid-1990s.

The rise of Fox, which emphasizes commentary, was an important development. While declaring itself "fair and balanced," Fox attracted conservatives who viewed it as a welcome alternative to what they perceived as the liberal slant of the broadcast networks and public broadcasting. Polls showed Americans increasingly dividing their media preferences along party lines, though public esteem for all political media declined.

In the face of stiffer competition and dwindling audiences, the broadcast networks retreated from political coverage, cutting staffs and folding political units. The networks remain important, but the political media world shifted toward cable television, which is dominated by talk shows. Ironically, important players in the new "talk" world were traditional reporters from newspapers and magazines. These new "talking heads" often delivered more commentary than would have been permitted in their own media.

Entertainment programs joined in this mix, as politicians sought alternative venues that sidestepped the political reporters. The 1992 presidential campaign saw Clinton play his saxophone on the Fox network's *Arsenio Hall* show and defend his marriage on *Phil Donahue*. By the early twenty-first century, comedians such as Jon Stewart (1962–) of *The Daily Show* were quizzing politicians along with the reporters.

If the changing world of television reshaped political journalism, the rise of the Internet at the century's turn brought about a sea of change. Political reporters found uncharted territory in a new medium through which to report and present the news, but also a new virtual campaign to cover. They also encountered another competitor—and critic—the blogger.

The political Internet blossomed in the 2000 presidential election as candidates used the

Internet to organize supporters and raise money. Political reporters were assigned to cover the online campaigns, and the Internet became a new tool for reporting. Reporters accustomed to the leisurely deadlines of morning newspapers or evening news shows were tasked with filing breaking stories to websites, accelerating the flow of political news.

Print and broadcast journalists extended content to their name brand websites, but nontraditional Internet-based vehicles also emerged to deliver political news. The conservative *Drudge Report* rose as an important portal of political news, and Internet-only political magazines, such as *Salon.com* on the left, emerged. The Internet also undercut the finances of metropolitan newspapers and news magazines, the engines of political journalism for the previous century. A number of top political reporters fled to the new Internet organizations as the print organizations cut staffs, particularly in Washington. A prime example was *Politco.com,* launched in early 2007 by attracting reporters from the major newspapers and magazines. *Politico.com* offers a new model for traditional political journalism aimed at elite audiences.

During the 2004 presidential election, bloggers demonstrated the power of the Internet not only to comment on the reporting of the mainstream media outlets but in some cases to actually affect that political coverage. Named for their interactive weblogs, these new political voices are reminiscent of the old partisan press. They are highly polarized by political party and ideology and many actively recruit and support candidates. Bloggers have become self-appointed critics of the mainstream political journalists, challenging their accuracy and fairness. In 2004, bloggers played a key role in discrediting documents used by CBS News in questioning President George W. Bush's service in the Air National Guard during the Vietnam War. The ensuing flap led to Dan Rather's early retirement from CBS. Political reporters now cover the new online media world as a discrete sphere of political discourse; political reporters increasingly have been asked to participate in that world by writing their own blogs.

To conclude that political reporters have reverted to their partisan origin would be an overstatement, however. Most professional journalists who cover politics remain committed to the ideal of the independent and objective arbiter of politics that arose in the last half of the twentieth century. Yet political reporters in the new era are more embroiled in the political debate, and their influence is diminished as they struggle for mass audiences. For citizens, the new era has brought a wealth of sources of political information, if they seek them. Citizens also face a harder task of filtering what information can be trusted. As never before, citizens need to know the political reporters who bring them their news and their backgrounds.

Some Political Reporters Since 1960

R. W. "Johnny" Apple Jr. (1934–2006)

Apple set the standard of the influential political reporter in his more than four decades with *The New York Times.* The son of an Akron, Ohio, businessman and educated in the Ivy League, Apple was the model of the brash and aggressive reporter. He is credited with first recognizing the importance of the Iowa precinct caucuses that propeled Jimmy Carter to the White House in 1976. In the ensuing three decades, Apple, known for his front-page analysis stories and fascination with the unfolding campaign, set the example for a generation of *The New York Times* political reporters whose reporting continues to influence the coverage of the rest of the political media.

David S. Broder (1929–)

Broder, who covered his first presidential race in 1960, is often called the "dean" of the political press. Growing up in a Chicago suburb, Broder combined graduate study in political science with a boyhood love of newspapers to land at *The Washington Post* in 1966 after quitting *The New York Times.* Over the next 40 years, Broder helped build the *Post*'s political coverage to rival the *Times.* A reporter who also wrote a column, Broder hewed to a nonpartisan and centrist approach. He inspired reporters to critique the mechanics of politics and to use shoe-leather reporting, as well as polling, to explain voter behavior. He won a Pulitzer Prize in 1973 and has written seven books, including 1987's *Behind the Front Page: A Candid Look at How News Is Made.*

Elizabeth Brenner Drew (1935–)

Drew led a cohort of women who entered the ranks of political journalism in the 1960s. A Cincinnati native and Wellesley College graduate, Drew became a prolific magazine reporter, book writer, and television commentator. For almost 20 years starting in 1973, Drew wrote *The New Yorker*'s "Letter from Washington," dispatches from a capital she portrayed as increasingly dominated by the corruption of money. In a 1983 book, *Politics and Money: The Road to Corruption,* Drew presciently recognized the flow into politics of unregulated large donations of "soft money," a term she popularized.

Jack W. Germond (1928–)

Germond and his partner for a quarter century, Jules Witcover (1927–), wrote a column for the *Baltimore Sun,* which relied more on reporting than opinion, and they co-authored a series of books on presidential campaigns from 1980 to 1992. Growing up in a middle-class Boston family, Germond used the GI Bill to pay for a journalism education at the University of Missouri, followed by several decades in newspaper jobs. But television talk shows made Germond, who is bald and rotund, the most unlikely of media stars, starting with the *McLaughlin Group* in 1981 and later on CNN and public broadcasting. The irascible, irreverent, and liberal Germond crystallized the caricature of the political road warrior, which he described in his 1999 autobiography, *Fat Man in a Middle Seat.*

Jeff Greenfield (1943–)

Greenfield, who joined CBS News in 2007 as senior political correspondent, is an example of the political analysts who act as independent sages on politics. The son of a New York lawyer, Greenfield is a graduate of Yale Law School who began his career as a Democratic consultant. Starting in 1983, he was the lead analyst for ABC News before moving to CNN in 1998. Known for his grasp of history, Greenfield gave CNN gravitas during the turbulent 2000 and 2004 elections. Writing widely on politics and media, he authored or co-authored 11 books, including the 2001 *Oh, Waiter, One Order of Crow: Inside the Strangest Presidential Election Finish in American History.*

Mark Halperin (1965–)

Formerly ABC News's political director who joined *Time* magazine in 2007, Halperin is a pioneer of online political journalism. Harvard educated and the son of a Washington establishment figure, Halperin got his break covering Clinton's 1992 campaign as an off-air reporter. But it was Halperin's commitment to the Internet that set him apart. In 2002, he founded ABC.com's *The Note.* The sassy newsletter became the source of political tips, rumors, and news for the political establishment, demonstrating the power of insider news delivered online.

Alexander Britton "Brit" Hume (1943–)

Hume, Washington manager editor of Fox News and anchor of *Special Report with Brit Hume,* is arguably the most respected unabashedly conservative political reporter. A Washingtonian educated at the exclusive St. Albans High School, Hume gained notice as an antiestablishment journalist, working for muckraker Jack Anderson (1922–2005), which led Hume to a 23-year career as a political correspondent with ABC News. Increasingly a critic of liberal bias in the mainstream media, Hume joined the migration to cable news in 1996, bringing credibility to the upstart Fox News.

Gwen Ifill (1955–)

Moderator of PBS's *Washington Week* and correspondent for *The NewsHour with Jim Leher,* Ifill is a testament to the upward mobility of political journalism. The daughter of a poor black immigrant preacher in New York, Ifill built a career as a political reporter following the path of her white male predecessors. She came up through newspapers—from the city beat for the *Baltimore Sun* to the White House for *The New York Times*—and then to NBC News. In 1999, she pierced racial and gender ceilings to enliven and revitalize *Washington Week,* an institution of political journalism for almost 40 years.

Brooks Jackson (1941–)

As a reporter for the Associated Press and *The Wall Street Journal,* Jackson pioneered the "money and politics" beat in the 1980s. The product of

small-town Indiana, he arrived in Washington for the AP to help cover Watergate. In 1988, Jackson authored a respected book on campaign finance, *Honest Graft: Big Money in the American Political System*. He moved to television at CNN and in the 1992 election developed systematic truth testing of campaign messages in "Adwatch" segments. He took the approach to the Internet in 2004 to help found Factcheck.org, a nonpartisan website widely used by news organizations in monitoring campaign advertising.

James C. Lehrer (1934–)

Lehrer, executive editor and anchor of PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer,* is the quintessential journalist as referee, moderating ten presidential debates and helping establish public broadcasting in political journalism. Born in Wichita, Kansas, Lehrer got his start in Texas newspapers. Starting with the coverage of the Watergate hearings on public television, Lehrer teamed with Robert MacNeil (1931–) to make the *NewsHour* the premier public affairs television show. Lehrer's even-handed and unflappable style made him the choice of both sides of the partisan divide for his unprecedented role in presidential debates.

Walter R. Mears (1935–)

Mears, who covered national politics for the Associated Press from 1960 to 2001, is the model of the straight-reporting, fast-writing wire service political reporter. A no-nonsense New Englander, Mears worked his way up in the AP to set the pace of political news, famously writing news leads that others would follow. He won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the 1976 presidential election. In a 2003 memoir, *Deadlines Past: Forty Years of Presidential Campaigning,* Mears expressed the task of the wire reporter as "keeping the copy terse and keeping yourself out of it."

Roger H. Mudd (1928–)

A CBS News star from 1961 to 1980, Mudd is often called the most respected of the network political correspondents in their heyday. A tall, erudite life-long Washingtonian, Mudd made his mark covering the civil rights debate in Congress, broadcasting from the Capitol steps. Later for NBC News and public broadcasting, Mudd crystallized the image of the sober and knowledgeable reporter, and he was an early critic of television's slide toward sensationalism. Yet, Mudd conducted one of the most famous interviews with a candidate when he questioned—and staggered—Senator Edward M. Kennedy in his 1980 presidential quest with probing questions about Kennedy's personal life. (The shaken candidate had trouble saying why he wanted to be President.)

"Cokie" Roberts (1943–)

An analyst for National Public Radio and ABC News, Roberts helped establish NPR as a player in political news in the 1980s and became one of the most prominent political journalists of the 1990s. A New Orleans native born Mary Martha Corinne Morrison Claiborne Boggs, Roberts grew up in a politically prominent Washington family, and she brought her insider knowledge to NPR in 1978 as a congressional correspondent. With Linda Wertheimer (1943–) and Nina Totenberg (1944–), she formed a trio of women reporters who elevated NPR's Washington reporting. While keeping her NPR job, Roberts became a panelist on ABC's *This Week with David Brinkley* in 1988 and co-anchor of the Sunday talk show from 1996 to 2002.

Timothy J. Russert Jr. (1950–2008)

Before his untimely death in 2008, Russert was moderator of NBC News's *Meet the Press* and was considered political journalism's chief inquisitor. A blue-collar kid from Buffalo, Russert, a lawyer, entered journalism from New York Democratic politics. In 1984, Russert landed a job as an assistant to the president of NBC News and worked his way up to Washington Bureau chief for the network, and then moderator of the 60-year-old Sunday talk show in 1991. Russert took the show to dominance with a new format centered on him interrogating the powerful and frequently confronting guests with their impolitic past comments. Some observers have likened *Meet the Press* to a presidential primary test for White House hopefuls.

Leslie R. Stahl (1941–)

A correspondent for CBS's *60 Minutes,* Stahl rode the first wave of women coming to prominence in

television news and emerged as one of the most tenacious reporters of the adversarial generation. Growing up in an upscale suburb of Boston, Stahl secured a job in CBS's Washington Bureau in 1972, in time to cover Watergate. For the next 20 years, Stahl covered the White Houses of three Presidents and from 1983 to 1991 moderated the Sunday talk show, *Face the Nation*. In a highly personal 1999 memoir, *Reporting Live,* Stahl relished being described as "tough," a characteristic she was able to disguise behind an approachable, well-coiffed exterior.

Judy Woodruff (1946–)

Woodruff, a correspondent for PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* and one of the most recognized faces in political journalism, started her career as a "weather girl" for an Atlanta television station in 1969. The daughter of a soldier, the Georgia teenager was the first in her family to attend college, Duke University. In the mid-1970s, Woodruff, then in NBC's Atlanta Bureau, followed Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter to the White House for NBC, a job she kept into the Reagan years before leaving to work for a decade at PBS. In 1993, Woodruff moved to CNN, and for the next 13 years, she helped turn *Inside Politics* into one of the most watched cable news political shows.

Albert L. May

See also Anchors, Television; Blogs and Bloggers; Civic Journalism; Columns and Columnists; Congress and Journalism; Editors; Election Coverage; Government, State and Local, Coverage of; Polls and Public Opinion; Presidents, Coverage of; Publishers

Further Readings

Baldasty, Gerald J. *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

Crouse, Timothy. *The Boys on the Bus*. New York: Random House, 1973.

Factcheck.org. Annenberg Public Policy Center. http://www.factcheck.org (accessed October 2007).

Iyengar, Shanto, and Jennifer A. McGrady, *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007.

May, Albert L. "The Virtual Trail: Political Journalism on the Internet." Institute for Politics, Democracy & the Internet, October 2002. http://www.ipdi.org (accessed October 2007).

Mears, Walter R. *Deadlines Past: Forty Years of Presidential Campaigning: A Reporter's Story*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel, 2003.

Pasley, Jeffrey L. *The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic, Jeffersonian America*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001.

Plissner, Martin. *The Control Room: How Television Calls the Shots in Presidential Elections*. New York: The Free Press, 1999.

Politico.com. Capitol News Company. http://www.thepolitico.com (accessed October 2007).

Ritchie, Donald A. *Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Sabato, Larry J. *Feeding Frenzy: How Attack Journalism Has Transformed American Politics*. New York: The Free Press, 1993.

She Made It: Women Creating Radio and Television. The Paley Center for Media. http://www.shemadeit.org (accessed October 2007).

Shogan, Robert. *Bad News: Where the Press Goes Wrong in the Making of the President*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001.

Stahl, Lesley. *Reporting Live*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999.

Polls and Public Opinion

Put simply, public opinion is "what the public thinks," and a poll is a means for learning those views. But this definition masks substantial complexity. There is much debate about what the public is, what might constitute its thoughts, what polls actually measure, and what the import of expressed opinions may be.

What Is the "Public"?

Consider some images: a crowd at a baseball game, protesters marching with signs and banners, authors of letters to a newspaper, strikers on a picket line, parents at a school board meeting, supporters at an election rally, citizens of a country, members of a special-interest organization (like the ACLU), commentators on a blog, a thousand adults interviewed for a Gallup Poll. In political and social psychologist