

*Section V*

## The Newspaper

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*THE importance of the press in its relation to government and society lies in the influence that it may exert on the opinions, morals, tastes, and standards of living of the people. The success of a democratic government depends upon public opinion, and the newspaper, it is generally assumed, plays an important part in expressing, guiding, and creating that opinion. The welfare of society, likewise, is dependent upon the maintenance of standards of conduct compatible with the well-being of all its members, and, again, it is generally held that the newspaper influences those standards. Thus, although the newspaper is conducted as a business enterprise, it performs functions that are vital to the success of society and government.*

WILLARD GROSVENOR BLEYER  
"Newspaper Writing and Editing"  
Houghton Mifflin Company

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### ORGANIZATION AND PRACTICE

**I**T IS essential that a publicity man or anyone engaged in publicity effort have a thorough understanding of the organization and practice of the newspaper, its func-

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tion, and its requirements. This applies to all mediums through which publicity is propagated and distributed.

Directing his remarks to publicity men, William L. Ayers, Chicago public-relations consultant, said recently:

. . . may I admonish each of you to keep yourselves up to date. Particularly should you be informed on the "who's who" and "what's what" of each newspaper that you may have occasion to contact in your city or territory. Know the men you should contact; know the policies of the newspapers you should contact. Too often the publicity man says: "Oh, I know the managing editor—or perhaps it's the publisher—of the paper. I don't have to worry about how I'll get along over there." Well, some day he may be in for a big surprise that he isn't aware of at that moment. Deliver your story or discuss your idea with the right man in the newspaper. If it is a state legislative matter, try to work with the legislative correspondents of the various papers. Keep them informed as far as you can of what is going on. If the story belongs in the financial department, don't send it to the city editor; if it belongs on the editorial page, don't try to put the idea over with the managing editor, unless you're sure he has a voice in the editorial policy.

The starting point in any publicity effort is to have an understanding of particular newspaper's requirements, its interests, and, most of all, its methods of operation. No two newspapers operate exactly alike. In no two newspapers will the various editors have exactly the same duties. Therefore, it is essential to understand something of the organization and working procedure in each newspaper in those cities in which you would have direct contact.<sup>1</sup>

The publicity man must have a practical knowledge of the newspaper, its procedure, standards, and organization, in order to

1. Get the maximum cooperation from the press.
2. Avoid misunderstanding and criticism.
3. Know how to prepare and to whom to send press releases.

<sup>1</sup>Address before members of the American Petroleum Institute, Stevens Hotel, Chicago, Ill.

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### GENERAL

The writing and editing organization of a metropolitan newspaper is directly under the supervision of the publisher, who is responsible to the board of directors. If the newspaper organization provides for an editor in chief, he and the associate editors are immediately subordinate to the publisher.

The editorial staff composed of editorial writers may be directly responsible to the editor in chief or to the managing editor, depending upon the particular plan of organization of the newspaper. The editorials appearing in the larger newspapers are always written by members of the editorial staff or by recognized contributing editors; editorials by outsiders are not accepted. The larger papers carry no comment other than in the Letters to the Editor and the special columns, also written by experts in particular fields.

Ayers says:

The managing editor is directly responsible for the news content of the paper—working closely with, and sometimes even under the direction of the editor. He supervises the make-up editors, the news editor, the telegraph editor, the city editor; and is not only an active news supervisor, but a business administrator as well, concerned with the budgets, staff efficiency, size of the staff, etc. But foremost always is the news policy. The managing editor passes on to the various editors the policies as to emphasis to be placed upon local news as against war news or political news, the play to pictures, typographic style, dress, and the thousand and one details that go to distinguish a good newspaper, and yet frequently are not even apparent to the average reader.

Usually during the active period of the day you will find the managing editor flanked by a news editor and a make-up editor. The news editor has his hand on the flow of all news; knows what

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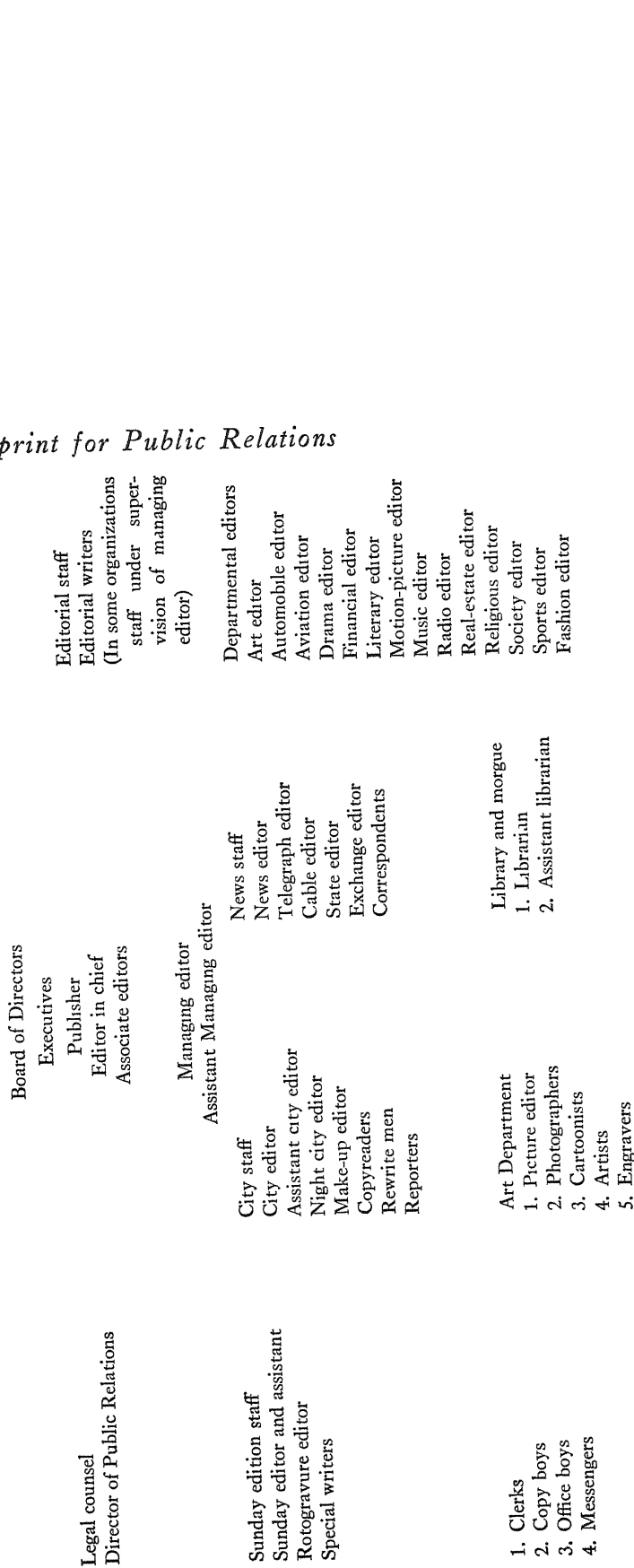
the domestic wire news is from the telegraph editor, the local news from the city editor, the foreign news from the cable editor, and other respective news from the various other news departments such as sports and financial, or from the special departments such as theater, music, society, woman's page, and real-estate section. This procedure, too, varies with the size of the paper, according to the size of the city and the size of the staff. Now against this volume of news there is the matter of space. Here the make-up editor enters. He has his dummies from the advertising department; he knows exactly how much space the ads will require, and on what pages they will be located; he knows how many pages the paper should run in keeping with the total amount of advertising. He says there is so much space available on the general news pages, the sports and financial pages, and the inside pages devoted to women's features, books and similar features, in addition to that consumed by art, cartoons, syndicate features, picture pages, and other such usually inflexible features. It is up to the news editor, therefore, to conform to these space limitations, and, therefore, he passes on to the various editors the rulings on play of stories.

Ofttimes what at 10 A.M. appears to be a worth-while story may be curtailed 50 to 75 per cent by edition time simply because of space limitations or the greater importance of stories from other departments; and it is a frequent occurrence that considerable news may be crowded out entirely. Here is where the publicity man suffers—not because his story wasn't worthy, but because there were just too many things of greater importance that had to be handled. Not of greater importance to the publicity man, because almost invariably he considers the editor's judgment terrible when some stuff of his is crowded out, but of greater importance to the men at the top who make the decisions.

The mortality of publicity copy, therefore, may have nothing to do with the standing of the publicity man, the excellence of his writing, or a paper's policy toward publicity in general, but may be due solely to the competition for white space. The success or failure of a newspaper rests solely upon the use to which it puts its white space, and the editors best know how to use it. Theirs is the responsibility of selection when white space is limited.

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CHART OF A METROPOLITAN-NEWSPAPER ORGANIZATION



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The managing editor, aided by an assistant managing editor, is personally in charge of the following departments, each of which has a department head who is responsible to the managing editor. These departments, with the title of the department head, are

City staff—city editor

News staff—news editor

Art department—picture editor

Sunday edition staff—Sunday editor

Department editors (each departmental editor is responsible to the managing editor, but works with the city editor and the Sunday editor)

Library and morgue—librarian

Clerical department (no department head; composed of clerks, copy boys, office boys, and messengers)

*The City Staff.*—The city staff is composed of

City editor

Assistant city editor

Night city editor

Make-up editor

Copyreaders

Rewrite man

Reporters

The city staff gathers, writes, and edits local news and covers suburbs of metropolitan areas. The assistant city editor generally acts as head copyreader on the copy desk. Local stories appearing in other papers or stories phoned in by reporters out on assignments are written by rewrite men.

The men who work on the copy desk, the copyreaders, edit news to conform to the newspaper's style; they cut or revise the copy to meet space requirements; and, in many offices, they write the heads. The "slot man," or head copyreader, is frequently the assistant city editor and in some instances is the city editor himself. The copyreader,

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by the nature of his work, must have a sharp eye for what is good and bad in newspaper writing. The men at the copy desk are responsible for the accuracy and the literary form of what goes into print. The publicity man who tries the copy desk with long, careless, and inaccurate stories will win its undying enmity.

*The News Staff.*—The news staff handles and edits all news (other than local) gathered from all over the state, country, and world, and received by cable, telegraph, trans-radio press, wireless, telephone, mail, from correspondents, and through the wire services, such as the Associated Press, Reuter's, the United Press, the International News Service, and other news-reporting bureaus (this also includes regular or special features distributed by such services and agencies). State correspondents are directly responsible to the state editor, who is under the news editor. If the newspaper has foreign correspondents in its employ, it often will have a foreign editor on the news staff to supervise them and to edit the news they furnish. The exchange editor clips all items from other papers he considers significant and edits them for reprint. His is a minor job.

The news staff of a large metropolitan daily is generally composed of the following:

- News editor
- Telegraph editor
- Cable editor
- State editor
- Foreign editor
- Exchange editor
- Correspondents

*The Art Department.*—The art department is headed by the picture editor, who is directly responsible to the managing editor but who works more closely with the city editor and the news editor, since most of the pictures, drawings, charts, and special artistic sketches are described or

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are referred to in the news columns, the stories being written or edited by either the city or the news staff. Therefore, in many cases it is the city or news editor who asks that the art department furnish a picture or a drawing in connection with some story. Pictures and illustrations obtained for preparation by the art department may be used in any edition of the paper, including the Sunday edition. Many papers throughout the country unable to maintain a large staff of photographers and artists depend upon national art and picture services for illustrations for stories occurring outside their locality and upon commercial photographers and artists for illustrations and pictures needed to support local stories. For newspapers who do not have their own cartoonists, cartoons may be obtained through national syndicates.

The art department is usually composed of the following:

- Picture editor
- Photographers
- Cartoonists
- Artists
- Engravers

*The Sunday edition staff.*—The Sunday editor, aided by his staff, supervises the gathering and editing of all material for Sunday editions, with the exception of news for the main news section. The size of the Sunday staff varies, depending upon the size of the paper and the materials that the editor relies upon services and syndicates to supply. Many Sunday editors accept feature stories and special articles from free-lance writers to supplement material furnished by the regular staff. Sunday newspapers have set standards and requirements that the free-lance writer or the publicity man must meet; before preparing to write an article the publicity man should consult the editor and familiarize himself with the paper's style and form.



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The Sunday edition staff is composed of  
The Sunday editor and assistants  
Rotogravure editor  
Special writers

*Departmental Editors.*—The larger, better newspapers are departmentalized, particularly in regard to the Sunday editions. All stories and articles relative to a particular subject are grouped and printed on one page or in one section. This material is gathered by reporters or writers who have a special knowledge of particular fields. Thus, news and features pertaining to social events may be found in one particular section; another section may be devoted strictly to radio news, personalities, and programs. Sporting news was one of the first to be departmentalized. Today in certain allotted sections of the large metropolitan newspapers, there appears news of the automotive trades, religion, real estate, finance, drama, and many other features.

Each department editor is responsible to the managing editor. Following are the editors most frequently found on the larger papers. (In the smaller papers many of these departments are consolidated.)

Art director  
Automobile editor  
Aviation editor  
Drama editor  
Fashion editor  
Financial editor  
Literary editor  
Motion-picture editor  
Music editor  
Radio editor  
Real-estate editor  
Religious editor

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Society editor

Sports editor

*Library and Morgue.*—Every newspaper maintains a library, its size and extent depending upon the size of the newspaper as well as the policy of the publisher. The average library is maintained for reference purposes in order that members of the staff may refer back to previous stories when current news requires a brief review of past events. Books, particularly those of a factual nature, are available for reporters and feature writers when occasion requires research in connection with special assignments and with stories on a specialized field or needing historical or statistical data. The large newspapers subscribe to many American and foreign periodicals and also receive newspapers in exchange agreement. These are usually bound and indexed for reference. Every newspaper also has copies of its own issues bound in volumes.

The morgue has photographs, clippings, and material of special significance filed for reference or for reuse at times when it is desirable to run a picture. Old pictures are used frequently to recall days and events forgotten. They may be used to support evidence, to prove a claim, to refute a charge. Such pictures and clipping files have often proved of great importance in the world of affairs.

The library and morgue staff is composed of

Librarian

Assistants

Filing and indexing clerks (only in large offices)

The newspaper office must have young men and boys to perform clerical and messenger service. In many instances these are young men learning the newspaper business, starting in as office boys with a view to becoming reporters, copy-readers, or rewrite men later.

Into this group fall

Copy boys

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Clerks  
Office boys  
Messengers

### ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURE

When the publicity-campaign program has been outlined, it is frequently necessary for the publicity man to see the publisher of each paper, explain the program, and ask for his support. This is especially desirable if the campaign is state-wide or national in scope. The publisher deserves a personal call for advance explanation. It is to the publisher's advantage to back a campaign in which the public is interested or in which definite advantages will be offered the public.

The editor in chief or the managing editor's support must also be sought. It is the editor who determines the tone of news stories and the space to be given them, and in most newspaper offices it is the editor who directs the writing of editorials in keeping with the policy of the paper. His support is of the utmost importance. He must be "sold" on the significance of the program; once convinced of its merit, he will probably bend his efforts toward its success. The publicity man must be prepared to give the editor a complete and honest personal review of the plan and what is to be accomplished. In every campaign there is a goal, a preordained objective.

An editor should not be burdened with the details of the campaign. When his support is gained, then all releases should be sent or routed through regular channels. The editorial staff will know of his decision on the matter, and he will have outlined to them how the campaign material should be treated. The staff will attend to the details. Each piece of publicity should not go to the editor, nor should the publicity man annoy him with too many

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visits. Publicity stories must stand on their own merits. Also, it displeases subordinates to have each piece of publicity reach them bearing the editor's specific approval. This may suggest to them that the paper is being used, that the editor's protection has been given to material which does not rate news space, a device that is not considered good practice and that should therefore never be attempted. An unfavorable opinion of the newspaper toward the publicity man may be avoided by observing the publicity man's code of conduct and practice.

The publicity man may and should supply the editorial writers with factual material to help in forming opinion favorable to the cause, but he is not called on to write the editorial itself. Such a move, as a matter of fact, would be thought presumptuous and would indicate lack of judgment on the part of the publicist.

However, in small towns the practice relating to editorials differs from that observed by newspapers in the large cities. In the newspaper office of the small town the editor welcomes editorials. The editor there is a busy man, frequently being the publisher, editor, and reporter. Because of his multitudinous duties he has little time for writing editorials, and he frequently accepts editorials written by those outside his organization. However, the publicity man will be required to prepare his editorials in line with the policy of the paper and in good form.

The publicity man should not overlook the Letters to the Editor section, for it provides him with an excellent opportunity to get his special message before the public. This section of the editorial page is widely read and offers the publicity man a splendid avenue to reach those readers who do not read publicity published in the form of general news. As these letters are signed, personal communications, very positive statements of opinion are permitted.

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Newspapers are usually glad to print letters from readers for two reasons: (1) They are a forum, a means of expression for people who might otherwise be unable to speak, and (2) other people like to read 'em.

Abusive and scurrilous letters can't be printed. That's because the law prohibits it. Law makes responsible not he who writes, but he who publishes. The true name of the writer is required simply as an evidence of good faith.

A smart New York publicity firm is now trying to take cash advantage of the letter privilege. Let's say it has Maisie Dishface, movie star, as a client. It writes a sample letter saying: "I thought Maisie Dishface was marvelous in 'Hot Hearts.' She brought home a great moral lesson to our people." It then distributes that letter to people who are supposed to copy it and send it to local papers under their own names. For every three letters these "clients" succeed in putting over, the agency pays \$1 plus postage.

Readers sometimes wonder why editors insist on checking and reserving the right to reject letters to the editor. This new dodge shows why. Some supersmart New York press agent has injured every newspaper reader to whom his "letters" column was a means of getting his honest opinion into print.<sup>1</sup>

The name is important. Naturally, a letter will find a larger audience if it is written by a person prominent in the community, because it will have added reader appeal. Such letters, too, are generally of such a nature that they make good reading. Situations, conditions, and community problems are usually discussed and opinions aired, often resulting in debates between individual citizens and groups.

The alert publicity man also cultivates the friendship of the managing editor. He holds his friendship by asking for no special favors and by meeting him halfway. It is the managing editor who actively directs the collection and presentation of all news in the paper. Subordinate to him are the city editor, the cable and telegraph editors, the make-up man, and the various departmental editors, re-

<sup>1</sup> Editorial, *New Orleans States*.

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porters, and photographers. Since he directly supervises the amount of space and placing of all stories, his approval and cooperation in the program will prove invaluable.

The Sunday edition of the newspaper carries longer and more detailed stories than the daily editions, owing to the amount of space available. It offers a good outlet for the publicity man if he can write an acceptable story touching on some phase of the campaign. The story must be dramatic, unusual, possess general public interest, and follow the style favored by the particular paper.

Free-lance Sunday stories, and this includes the publicity man's releases, are usually discussed with the Sunday editor before they are written. This is to make certain that they conform with the paper's policy and that they are handled in the best way which the Sunday editor, with his fund of experience, can suggest. The publicist should outline his story to the Sunday editor before preparing it.

Similar to the Sunday editions are the large special editions frequently issued by the newspapers when some extraordinary event—a holiday season, a shopping festival—produces enough advertising to warrant more space. Then, too, colorful feature stories are needed. The publicity man should have in his files several written articles concerning his clients that might be used at such times. Newspaper space is a flexible thing. A story that might be accepted on one day might be rejected on the next.

If the publicity man's campaign is nation-wide or larger, it will, of course, be necessary for him to keep in daily touch with the state editor and his staff and with the correspondents in the towns and communities throughout the state.

For instance, in a state-wide political campaign, if a meeting is held at a small town the publicity man should meet the town correspondent and put every service possible at his disposal. The correspondent will appreciate this cour-

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tesy and consequently will give his paper a better account of the meeting than he otherwise would.

The publicity man may at times act as one of the state editor's staff, sending in reports to him from various towns each day or writing longer stories at less frequent intervals, depending on the importance of his campaign.

If the campaign is an important one, a special reporter may be assigned to travel with the party and send in stories daily. This, of course, is an ideal arrangement, from the viewpoint of the publicity man.

At this point it may be well to add that in handling this type of publicity any action which might cause the local correspondent to feel he has been slighted should be avoided. The trained and experienced publicity man often gives correspondents credit where credit is not due. The best policy to follow is to cooperate with them to the fullest, supplying them with data so that they may send in the stories themselves. Without a definite understanding that he act as correspondent, the publicist should not send in his own stories, for two reasons: (1) He cuts into the income of the local correspondent, should he be working on space rates. (2) The state editor is acquainted with his staff members, who are chosen for their talent, knowledge of the locality, and reliability, and he would prefer their work. The publicity man sending in unasked-for material cannot reasonably expect it to be used.

In an ordinary campaign, confined to one city, the city editor is the newspaper official with whom the publicity man most often deals. The good will of the city editor should be cultivated most carefully and his friendship won, if possible. He is one of the busiest men on the newspaper staff. In large cities, it may be impossible to see him personally, at least at frequent intervals. His attention can be called to a dispatch by sending it by messenger or special delivery.

In the average town or city, the publicity man should be

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able to see the city editor personally on matters of some importance. He should never, however, remain longer than necessary. If he does, he will defeat his purpose. Long, boring, and unnecessary explanations and pleas are futile. His stories must stand on their news value and vie for favor with news from other sources.

Should the publicist represent a firm or organization whose affairs are of such public interest that a reporter is assigned to call regularly for news, he need not see the city editor personally, except when occasion warrants a personal call.

Every city editor keeps a book in which forthcoming events are listed according to date. Each day he assigns reporters to cover these affairs. The publicity man should keep him informed on all important activities of the group he represents. The city editor will judge for himself which of these are significant enough to warrant news space—all activities may not be reported. But it is important that he be advised. This is a small but very necessary service.