

# Journalism in the Early 20th Century

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Journalism in the early 20th  
century was marked by  
**continuities** from the 19th  
century

# Print Media in the Early 20th Century

- Number of English-language daily newspapers grew from 850 in 1880 to 1,970 in 1900
- Number of weekly newspapers tripled
- New magazines served different specialized information needs and audience wants
- Print journalism thus **became more niche** than ever before



# Muckraker Journalism



Source

# The Professionalization of Journalism

- First journalism schools established in 1908
  - Began process of formally training journalists via shared education
  - Relatively few journalists were university-educated during the early 20th century
- “Objectivity” and “neutrality” did not become norms in U.S. journalism until 1920s
  - Driven mostly by **commercial imperatives** at first

# Journalism and Public Relations

- Public relations originated as a distinct practice in the early 20th century
  - Involved creating a new skillset for influencing intermediaries (e.g., journalists) to generate positive attention for clients (e.g., companies or celebrities)
- U.S. government quickly took note of PR and began using PR itself
  - By 1910, had press agents distributing handouts
  - Under President Wilson, began hosting governmental press conferences
  - Had established press relations offices by 1930s

# Key Takeaways

- Muckraking was an early form of investigative journalism that sought to call attention to social ills and corruption
- Contemporary cultural emphasis on neutrality and objectivity in U.S. journalism is a historically recent phenomenon
- Public relations became a distinct industry at the start of the 20th century