

# Chapter One

## ECONOMICS: OWNERSHIP AND COMPETITION

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### Introduction

AT THE START of the twentieth century commercial newspapers were becoming large industrial operations whose economies of scale, and increasing reliance on advertising revenue, kept prices low and built up an ever-expanding readership. The *Daily Mail*, launched in 1896, had by 1900 a circulation of over half a million. Sold for a halfpenny, the sale price was less than the cost of production. The gap was made up by advertising (Royal Commission on the Press 1949: 14–15). Replacing smaller, often family-owned businesses, most national newspapers required significant capital investment, with high running costs and with a pattern of high returns and failure rates that characterised this volatile industry throughout the century. This chapter explores the economics of newspapers in print and online publishing in Britain and Ireland. As the terrain to map is already vast, periodicals and other important sectors are ignored, to concentrate on the topography of newspapers.

### Part 1: Newspaper Economics

Newspaper costs and revenues shifted with changes in production, distribution and consumption across the decades, yet some core features remained stable. Most newspapers competed in what is described as a dual-product, or two-sided market: a market for consumer sales and a market for advertising revenue. Most sales were made through individual purchase, or home delivery arranged by consumers with retailers. In 1933 an estimated three-quarters of national dailies were home

delivered by newsagents, while around one-fifth of national dailies, but a much larger proportion of Sunday and evening papers, were sold at news-stands (Political and Economic Planning 1938: 67). Street vendors also played a significant role, especially for urban evening papers. Features common across Europe and the USA, including street-kiosk sales, and subscription arranged directly with publishers, were both uncommon in the UK or Ireland, until digital-era subscriptions.

The ratio of dependence on revenue from advertising or consumer sales varied considerably; however, a persistent pattern was that so-called quality papers received a higher proportion of their revenue from advertising over sales. The second Royal Commission on the Press found the ratio of advertising to sales revenue for quality papers to be 74/23 in 1937 and 73/24 in 1960, while for popular papers it was 50/49 in 1937 and 45/54 in 1960 (RCP 1962: 23). In 1976, advertising provided 60 per cent of the revenue of quality national papers, but only 28 per cent for populars (Henry 1978:12). This had several important consequences. The popular press, deriving a greater share of income from consumers, was under pressure to compete with content that would maximise sales: entertainment, celebrities, scandal and sports. The quality press, more reliant on advertising income, could sustain a competitive position on comparatively lower circulation. Focusing editorial content on attracting readers with high value for advertisers, the qualities provided public affairs coverage in a manner approximating the free press of 'democratic mythology' (Sparks 1999: 59).

Socio-economic inequality in society was reflected in the allocation of advertising finance and in turn the distribution of economic resources to media. Quality papers could charge advertisers rates nearly four

Table 1.1 Advertising revenue as a proportion of total revenue. Adapted from RCP (1977: 32)

Newspapers	Total advertising revenue as a proportion of total revenue			Display and classified as proportions of total advertising in 1975	
	1960	1973	1975	Display	Classified
National popular daily	45	36	27	85	15
National quality daily	73	70	58	62	38
National popular Sunday	46	38	31	91	9
National quality Sunday	79	74	66	68	32
Provincial (daily, Sunday)	60*	67	60	39	61
Provincial (weekly)	79	84	84	44	56

\* Sunday figures not available

times as high as populars (RCP 1962: 69). While papers with a greater proportion of revenue from advertising could survive, others with higher sales but lower advertising revenue share, such as the *Daily Herald*, failed. Illustrating the complexities of managing these interdependent revenue sources, *The Times* in the early years of Thomson Organisation ownership, from 1965, increased circulation but lost advertisers and so initiated moves to shed newly acquired readers. The broadened readership profile offered less appeal for advertisers targeting high-net-worth consumers, and advertisers were unwilling to pay higher rates to reach consumers who could be accessed more cost-effectively across other media channels.

A third key resource is state subsidies. The self-promoted myth of press freedom as freedom from state patronage has always been at odds with reality. Through much of the twentieth century direct financial aid for newspapers was limited in both Britain and Ireland but indirect aid has been considerable, in the form of reductions on business rates and taxes. Yet the countries differed markedly too, with the Republic of Ireland sustaining newspaper Value Added Tax (VAT) rates as high as 23 per cent, while UK newspapers remained VAT-free, a form of public subsidy worth £594 million in 2008 (Nielsen and Linnebank 2011).

Newspapers share characteristics with other industrial sectors that are prone to market concentration. There are high so-called 'first-copy' costs, the costs of producing one issue, and relatively low marginal costs in the production and sale of additional copies. Many copies may need to be sold before 'break-even' point, but beyond that considerable profits can be achieved from high volume sales. Consequently, there are significant economies of scale available in production (RCP 1977: 46) as well as economies of scope, arising when 'shared overheads or other efficiency gains . . . make it more cost-effective for two or more related products to be produced and sold jointly' (Doyle 2002b: 14), driving corporate expansion. Achieving economies of scale and scope means that existing firms with high volume will usually operate at lower unit cost than a new firm entering the market, creating a barrier to market entry. Of course, competitors may have other advantages, but where market entry is difficult there tends to be concentration of ownership. In addition, the newspaper business, while often profitable, has been subject to considerable risk and uncertainty because of high investment and running costs. This has tended to limit ownership to very wealthy individuals, large commercial companies, or investors, all of whom tend to be advocates of capitalist economics and the political arrangements that facilitate them. Historically this has fuelled concerns that the major means of communication would tend to be owned by the

powerful and wealthy, because the strategies for profitability required huge resources. One report from the 1930s (Political and Economic Planning 1938: 313) estimated that at least £1m a year for five years was needed to establish a popular national newspaper.

The commercial press that developed in the nineteenth century required significant investment in on-site printing facilities. Into the twentieth century, large-circulation papers could be printed by external contractors, reducing initial capital outlay, as the *Observer* was (PEP 1938: 72). So, relatively undercapitalised papers could be launched and become viable with sales growth. A significant cost for all though was paper and ink, with newsprint, manufactured from wood pulp and other materials, estimated by the second RCP (1962) to make up 33 per cent of costs for national qualities and 42 per cent for popular newspapers. Shortly before the Second World War, UK newspapers were using 22,000 tons per week, falling to 4,200 tons in 1942 after the government imposed severe restrictions. Daily newspapers were reduced to an average of four pages, although with increased hunger for news sales rose (Seymour-Ure 1991: 16). Newsprint rationing was relaxed in 1946, then reimposed in 1947 on the grounds of reducing imports to meet the balance of payments crisis, and in the context of a worldwide paper shortage. Newsprint was the last product released from post-war rationing when restrictions were lifted in 1956 (Williams 2010: 177).

During the Second World War, the UK Government also imposed restrictions on advertising, limited to 40 per cent of total publication space for daily and Sunday papers and 45 per cent for evening papers. One consequence was that advertising rates soared in a newspaper sellers' market, but more importantly advertising revenue was redistributed more evenly across newspapers. The forced contraction of pagination, and more even distribution of advertising revenue, sheltered newspapers from competition and aided economically weaker ones (RCP 1949: 57). The second RCP (1962: 6) judged rationing to have been an important factor inhibiting both market entrants and market innovation by incumbents, although UK provincial papers benefited from greater demand for advertising. The lifting of newsprint restrictions increased competitive pressures on weaker titles, with UK Sunday and evening papers suffering most (Seymour-Ure 1991: 16–18).

Editorial labour costs made up between 11 and 22 per cent of total costs in 1960 (RCP 1962: 26), around 16 per cent of costs for quality dailies and 14 per cent for popular papers, although the latter's actual expenditure was greater. According to the second RCP (1962: 69) 'The typical popular newspaper spends three times as much as the typical

quality because of the emphasis which it puts on such things as the speedy collection of all possible news and pictures, preferably of an exclusive nature.' The third RCP (1977: 50) found the gap had narrowed, with popular papers' editorial costs on average one and a half times those of qualities, but the latter now carried about twice as many editorial pages as popular papers, compared to only a quarter more in 1960.

The scope to reduce editorial costs was regarded as comparatively limited. By contrast, the labour costs of production were problematised, especially after 1945. By the time the second Royal Commission laid out evidence on labour costs, a fierce struggle over interpretation was underway that would intensify during the battles over 'new technology' in the 1980s, most notably the Wapping Dispute in 1986 when 5,500 printworkers were sacked by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. A decade earlier the third RCP (1977: 216) regarded 'higher productivity through reductions in manpower and the introduction of new technology' as the principal means to achieve sustainability. The industry, it argued, could cut thousands of jobs and reduce total labour costs by 25 per cent (RCP 1977: 43).

Half of Fleet Street was running at a loss in the 1960s, cross-subsidised by the profits of provincial papers or from other business activities (Seymour-Ure 1991: 34). With labour costs running at between 40 and 50 per cent of total costs, and average wages for manual printworkers higher than in any other UK industry, the second RCP concluded that high wages and low productivity were barriers to market entry (RCP 1962: 29, 31, 39). Three main explanations were given, the chief one being that union power to halt production, and the economic and reputational costs arising from lost sales and advertising, inhibited tougher management action. Next was the effectiveness of unions in negotiating beneficial arrangements, such as 'ghost' labour payments, that persisted under normal operations. The third explanation was poor management. Instead of maintaining a collective stance through the Newspaper Proprietors' Association (founded in 1906 and renamed the Newspaper Publishers' Association in 1962), individual firms acceded to poor deals which other firms were obliged to match.

The changes in the 1980s arose not only from new technology but also from the weakening of union power, confronting legislative, policing and other state resources deployed by the Thatcher government on behalf of politically aligned publishers like Rupert Murdoch. After the move to computerised printing and production at Wapping, and road distribution by TNT, Murdoch's News International reduced costs by an estimated £80m per year (Greenslade 2003b: 477). By 1987 profits

of £111.5 million fuelled the enormously expensive forays into US broadcasting and UK satellite television that marked the next phase of News Corporation's worldwide expansion.

Distribution costs across a network of wholesalers and retailers accounted for a high proportion of the retail price. Early in the century most newspapers were distributed by train or van. Rail also supported provincial papers, most of whom served a market based on an average one-hour distance by train from where they were printed. Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe, printed a northern edition of the *Daily Mail* from 1902 and soon afterwards established simultaneous printing of the same edition in London and Manchester. Apart from the *Manchester Guardian*, the London papers dominated distribution across England and Wales, with four dailies simultaneously printed in Manchester by the 1930s (PEP 1938: 3), while *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald* circulated throughout Scotland as national papers, alongside 110 mostly local ones (PEP 1938: 49). Scotland's market included the London papers, some like the *Mail* and *Express* printed in Scotland, and the *Daily Record*, with editorial and ownership links to the *Mirror*. Newspapers have been rooted in place, a physical, 'perishable' product distributed within constraints of space and time, written in the language of its readers and characterised by geo-cultural affiliations. While technological innovation, most notably the internet, has enabled many of these constraints to be overcome, the embedded practices of producers and readers, the path dependencies as new institutionalists put it, persisted and remain relevant in understanding both contemporary and historical newspaper markets. Having outlined the main costs and sources of income, the next section explores their influence on the way newspapers developed.

## Part 2: British and Irish Media Systems and Newspaper Market Structures

For newspapers, as for so much else, their development was both markedly different and intimately connected across Britain and Ireland. Ireland was under British imperial rule until 1922 when it was partitioned into the Free State (from 1947 the Republic of Ireland) and six counties in the north-east, which remained part of the United Kingdom. The ownership and structure of newspapers reflected these geopolitical divisions. Provincial papers had been developed by Protestant settlers but there was an expansion of Catholic and nationalist papers in the second half of the nineteenth century, after Catholic emancipation in 1829. By 1859 there were 130 regional papers. The revolutionary

forces that led to the 1916 Rising were nurtured in small periodicals appearing from the late 1890s, but not reflected across any of the major media properties. Founded in 1905, the *Irish Independent* served an increasingly wealthy and mildly nationalist Catholic middle class, while the Protestant owned *Irish Times*, founded in 1859, articulated the interests of Southern unionism. After the Treaty of 1922, these national broadsheets, which survive, were joined by new papers representing emergent political-social blocs, notably the *Irish Press*, aligned with the party that emerged from anti-Treaty republicans, Fianna Fáil.

The UK newspaper market has been large enough to support several competing national titles. The Irish market has been, and remains, considerably smaller. A population of over 8 million before the Great Famine and mass emigration had fallen to 3.2 million people in 1900, and in 1910 Ireland's share of the total British population was a little under 10 per cent. Yet, in both countries national papers have dominated sales, in contrast to the predominance of regional papers across Europe (Doyle 2002b: 125). Britain's relatively small geographical area, transport links and urbanisation, as well as the centralisation of political and economic power in London, helped to form a dominant national newspaper market.

In Ireland, population size, geography and infrastructure contributed to smaller markets and reduced competition. Religious affiliations of owners, readers and advertisers also structured markets in ways quite unlike anywhere else in Britain. For instance, advertising from many Protestant-owned businesses in Dublin funded the *Irish Times* 'to an extent probably not warranted by the paper's circulation' (Horgan 2001: 63). Northern Ireland, with a population of 1.5 million in the 1920s, was a region bitterly divided on political and religious grounds, with polarisation greater than anywhere else in Britain. Northern Ireland had three morning papers; the *Belfast Newsletter* (founded in 1737) was owned by Century Group and read by supporters of Protestant and Unionist traditions, with the smaller circulation *Northern Whig* (1824–1963) and the *Irish News* serving Northern nationalists and Catholics. Significantly, the market was too small to support rival evening papers and so the *Belfast Telegraph*, owned by Unionists, achieved a cross-community readership roughly in proportion to the population. In 1970, 87 per cent of the *Newsletter's* readership was Protestant, and 93 per cent of the *Irish News's* readership was Catholic (Horgan 2001: 102). Yet Catholics were more likely than Unionists to read British papers, whose Irish editions tended to remove the more virulent anti-Irish sentiments some offered to their British readers (Curtis 1996). The relatively high number of regional

papers in Northern Ireland can be partly explained by the sectarian barriers to common ownership and amalgamation where an economic case would otherwise be compelling. The market presence of British newspapers, increasingly with separate editions for the Republic and for Northern Ireland, became a sometimes fiercely contested policy issue in the South, as social and religious conservatives railed against foreign news values, as well as an economic competition issue.

### Periodisations

The century can be divided into three unequal length periods within which there are sufficient commonalities within the industrial organisation of newspapers to justify such crude demarcations. These are, first, the period from 1900 to the end of the Second World War. The second period, from 1945 to 1990, marks the uneven growth and decline of mass-circulation printed newspapers, and the third period, of internetisation, runs from 1991. Britain and Ireland share common features in this periodisation but differ very significantly in other ways. For instance, Ireland was formally neutral during the Second World War, avoiding Britain's enormous war debt, yet its economy grew more slowly, and low growth, as well as social conservatism, fuelled a wave of emigration from the 1950s that affected both the sales and editorial character of Irish newspapers.

The first period, 1900–44, is characterised by the growth of mass-readership commercial papers, intensifying competition for cost-efficient, higher-volume sales led by the popular press, and accompanying pressures towards chain ownership and concentration. The second, post-war period, 1945–90, saw the further rise and then decline of print circulation. UK circulation increased between 1930 and 1947, by 80.5 per cent in the case of national dailies and 100.5 per cent for Sundays. Profits averaged 10.3 per cent on capital investment. Total expenditure on press advertising increased from £159m in 1956 to £214m in 1960. The easing of newsprint restrictions saw a return to fiercer competition, increased pagination and rising production costs. Many of those who had read two or more papers, when newspapers were small, took to reading fewer larger papers. Sunday newspaper circulation dropped from 23.6 million in 1965 to 17.7 million in 1985. Closures followed, particularly affecting mid-market nationals and provincial papers (Williams 2010: 174). The year 1957 marked the high point in UK newspaper sales, with a long-term circulation decline thereafter. By the end of the 1950s television was starting to replace newspapers as the main source of national news. The rise of commer-

cial television from 1955 also affected newspapers' display-advertising revenue and by 1958 ITV's advertising revenue was greater than the combined advertising revenue of national newspapers.

The number of provincial morning papers declined between 1945 and 1990, with the greatest loss between 1955 and 1964. No new paid-for provincial morning paper was launched after 1945, and several evening papers closed in towns that had competing papers (Seymour-Ure 1991: 48). Monopoly evening papers survived with falling circulation until a wave of closures in the 1960s. Weaker competing evening papers closed everywhere except in London, Glasgow and Belfast, while new markets were filled only by monopolies, with twelve evening papers launched between 1959 and 1970 in towns that did not have one. In the Republic of Ireland, the number of provincial papers fell from seventy-one in 1950 to forty-one in 1969.

The growth of freesheets, free newspapers distributed to households, from the early 1970s, increased diversity of supply where independently owned businesses competed, but these tended to have restricted news coverage and so added little editorial diversity (Thompson 1988). Freesheets generally had low initial fixed costs, contracting out their printing to third parties, and typically employed small numbers of journalists and advertising sales teams. Their growth helped to accelerate the rate of decline of the local paid-for weekly press. Average weekly circulation fell by 15 per cent between 1980 and 1986, and the number of titles fell. The freesheet share of the regional press advertising market grew to 35 per cent by 1990, concentrated in the more affluent southern counties (Williams 2010: 217). In response, regional newspaper chains launched their own freesheets and gradually bought up many of the new market entrants. The freesheet phenomena declined in the 1990s, when the number of copies fell from 42 million in 1989 to 29 million in 2004, before another wave of freesheet growth in urban markets.

### Capitalisation, Ownership and Concentration

Large-scale newspaper publishing has been characterised by high sunk costs. The second Royal Commission (RCP 1962: 31) reported that each rotary press might cost £90,000, with £2m needed to re-equip a machine room. Significant capital was also required to build up a profitable position for a new market entrant. This included pre-launch costs such as recruitment of staff and preparation of dummy copies to iron out both production processes and editorial direction, as well as heavy promotional expenditure across an extended launch period.

A new paper also needed to offer marketers considerable incentives to purchase advertising in an uncertain product with low circulation and limited market data. As the second RCP noted, the most daunting challenge was not initial investment but financing inevitable trading losses in early years while circulation and advertising revenue were built up (RCP 1962: 82). In the event of failure there were also enormous, irrecoverable costs. Franklin Thomasson's failed effort to launch a new Liberal daily, following the party's election victory in 1906, cost him more than £300,000 (Williams 2010: 139). There have been four main sources of capital investment shaping the ownership and control of newspapers. The first is private individual or family wealth. The second is investors, most commonly in public limited companies but also privately owned businesses. The third is funding derived directly or indirectly from political parties (including state resources), trade unions, co-operative societies or other membership-based associations. The fourth is from ordinary individuals.

The first Royal Commission showed the complex varieties of ownership and control arrangements. There were private companies fully controlled by individuals or families. There were businesses owned by trusts that were controlled by families or by a range of investors and appointees. There were joint stock companies ranging from private limited companies to public companies whose shares were listed on the London Stock Exchange. The first RCP made much of 'joint stock' newspaper ownership, where shares may be so widely dispersed that no individual or group is able to exercise effective influence on the paper's policy, yet acknowledged that both the Mail and Express groups had a 'single dominant shareholder' (RCP 1949: 15). Lord Rothermere held only a minority stake of around 21 per cent of the Daily Mail and General Trust, yet no other shareholder held more than 1 per cent. Share ownership also increased pressure for dividend payments to investors and so 'incorporated the profit motive more fully into newspaper production' (Williams 2010: 140).

## Concentration

In the 1900s, most commercial newspapers were owned by very rich men who had built their wealth from publishing, or cross-subsidised their newspapers from inherited wealth or other business activities. In Britain, Alfred Harmsworth (Lord Northcliffe) established and controlled a news empire that by 1914 held 40 per cent of the national morning newspaper market, 45 per cent of the evening and 15 per cent of Sunday circulation, with papers including the *Daily Mail*, *The*

*Times*, *Weekly* (later *Sunday*) *Dispatch*, and London *Evening News*. Associated Newspapers, controlled by Lord Rothermere on his brother Lord Northcliffe's death, had three national dailies (*Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *The Times*), several Sunday papers, more than 100 weeklies and monthlies, as well as magazines. Rothermere sold *The Times* to the Astor family, another branch of which already owned the *Observer* (bought from Northcliffe). Lord Beaverbrook had a controlling interest in the Express group with fewer papers than Rothermere but a combined circulation of 4.1 million, out of a total 13 million circulation on the eve of the First World War.

The Berry brothers, later Lords Camrose and Kemsley, established the largest newspaper chain in the country, and at their height in the 1920s owned twenty provincial daily papers, three nationals, six Sundays including the *Sunday Times*, six weeklies and over eighty magazines, until the break-up of the business in 1937. Thereafter Kemsley Newspapers Ltd was controlled by Lord Kemsley and his family, with 50 per cent of shares, before it was sold to Thomson in 1959. The *Daily Telegraph* was owned through a joint stock company, yet Lord Camrose and family owned all the ordinary shares and a majority of the preference shares. *The Times* was controlled by major shareholders, Colonel J. J. Astor and Mr John Walter, with Astor



Figure 1.1 Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook, c. 1918

chairman of both Times Publishing and Times Holding company. By the late 1970s six of the nine national newspapers in Britain had ultimate control wrested in individuals, families or their trusts. Only Reed International had shares that were widely held and traded (RCP 1977).

In 1913 Northcliffe, Beaverbrook, Camrose and Kemsley, between them owned nearly half the national and local daily papers as well as a third of Sundays. The political interventions of these press barons have been much examined, although, as Williams (2010: 165–7) discusses, it was not typical of the behaviour of at least some of their contemporaries, including Lord Riddell, owner of the *News of the World*. Yet this represented an overwhelming concentration of media power in the hands of wealthy capitalists, however they chose to exercise it. As the century progressed there were more ways for undercapitalised papers to launch, yet those competing in mass markets needed steeply rising circulation to survive. The majority failed, including *News on Sunday*, the *Sunday Correspondent* and Robert Maxwell's *London Daily News*.

### Political Press

The UK's party-owned newspapers have included the Communist Party's *Daily Worker*, relaunched in 1966 as the *Morning Star*; *News Line*, published by the Workers' Revolutionary Party; and *Socialist Worker*. The largest-circulation party newspaper was the *Daily Herald* reaching peak sales of 2.1 million in 1947, but its relationship with owners was a complex and often fraught one, atypical of party-owned newspapers across Europe. The *Herald* was established by trade union activists and while it was owned and supported by the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, they were reluctant sponsors. In 1961 the Mirror Group, whose *Daily Mirror* had increased sales by 246 per cent between 1930 and 1947 to 3.7 million, bought Odhams, giving them a 51 per cent controlling share in the *Daily Herald* which they subsequently relaunched as the *Sun* in 1964, after the TUC sold back its remaining 40 per cent stake. Losing £17.75m a year by 1968, the ailing paper was sold to Murdoch's News International in 1969. In a political system then dominated by Conservative and Labour parties, this meant that from the mid-1960s there was no formally aligned Labour paper, only support from the *Daily Mirror* and, more erratically, *The Guardian*, with electoral support for New Labour between the mid-1990s to mid-2000s from others, such as the *Financial Times* and, amid internal opposition, the *Sun*.

The *News Chronicle* was acquired by and amalgamated with the *Daily Mail* in 1960, marking the loss of one of the few surviving papers

aligned with the Liberal Party. One of the great Co-operative Society papers, *Reynolds News*, survived into the twentieth century and was relaunched as *Reynolds News and Sunday Citizen* in 1944 and then as a tabloid, *Sunday Citizen*, in 1962, before closing in 1967. While some left-wing periodicals, such as the *New Statesman*, have relied on wealthy patrons, left-wing newspapers have needed the resources of collective organisations to survive. The right-supporting press has tended to be closely aligned with, but not owned by, right-wing parties. Instead, the interlocking of wealthy individuals, financiers, corporate owners, managers and senior journalists with the Conservative Party has been a feature of the 'establishment' broadsheets, the *Telegraph* and *The Times*, through to the volatile conservative-populism of the mid-market *Mail* and *Express*, and the tabloid *Sun*.

The marginality of party papers in Britain, especially after the 1960s, bolsters the inaccurate self-image of British press independence, but is also in stark contrast to Ireland, which had a major national newspaper group aligned to Fianna Fáil that was either the governing or main opposition party from the paper's launch in 1931 to its demise in 1995. The *Irish Press* was established not under party control but with the leader of Fianna Fáil, Éamon de Valera, as controlling director of a commercial venture, with a board of directors that included Protestant as well as Catholic figures (Horgan 2001: 28–9). De Valera was challenged over the conflict of interest when campaigning to become President of Ireland, but maintained control, albeit increasingly loosely, until his death in 1975 (Horgan 2001: 93). Fianna Fáil also published its own party periodical *Gléas* from 1952 to the mid-1960s, succeeded by *Iris Fianna Fáil* and then *FF Newsletter* (Horgan 2001: 148). Yet the *Irish Press* was one of Ireland's major press groups, although an undercapitalised one. In the late 1960s, the paper was running sixteen-page editions, while its main rivals the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* ran thirty- to forty-page papers (Horgan 2001: 94). The *Irish Independent*, aimed at a Catholic middle-class readership, was broadly aligned with the Fine Gael party but was not party owned or controlled. Most other party papers in Ireland were short-lived with the exception of Sinn Féin's *An Phoblach*, in print circulation from 1970 to 2017.

### Chain Ownership

As the century progressed, the dominant form of ownership became public companies. Ownership by private individual or family persisted in the provincial press, especially in Ireland, but larger capitalised

national and provincial papers increasingly fell under chain ownership by publicly listed companies. The press barons of the 1920s and 1930s built up newspaper chains, setting a pattern for the provincial press through the rest of the century. While chain ownership had begun in the eighteenth century, only 10 per cent of UK evening provincial papers were chain owned in 1923. By 1939, 40 per cent of evening titles were owned by the five largest chains, whose share of the provincial morning papers had increased to 44 per cent from 12 per cent in 1921. By 1947, five chains controlled eleven of the twenty-nine mornings and thirty-three out of seventy-six evenings papers, with stakes in six more (Seymour-Ure 1991: 53). The largest group was owned by Lord Kemsley (six morning, nine evening, three Sundays). The Pearson family owned Westminster Press, controlled by Lord Cowdray, and was the second largest chain, with the Harmsworth brothers' Associated Newspapers, a separate Harmsworth chain, and United Newspapers controlling the rest. The increasing competition to maximise sales at the lowest unit costs favoured the growth of newspaper chains that could take advantage of economies of scale, invest in more advanced, efficient technologies, spread financial risks, use market power in negotiating with suppliers, and manage labour efficiencies across large, stratified workforces.

After 1945, independent ownership continued, but declined as chain ownership grew. Lord Kemsley sold all his provincial papers in 1949 to the international Thomson organisation. Regional chains, such as Iliffe in the West Midlands and Colmans in the east of England built quasi-monopoly positions through launches and acquisitions. Firms built market dominance through joint production of evening and weekly papers enabling production and editorial economies, and more efficient advertising sales operations. Concentration was less marked in Ireland's provincial press, a substantial proportion of which remained private limited companies. Into the 1980s, some forty different companies controlled 87 per cent of the regional press market, by circulation (Horgan 2001: 174). The 1990s saw growth, despite the competition from freesheets, but also cost-cutting from owners such as Scottish Radio Holdings, the third largest regional newspaper group in Ireland.

### Conglomeration, Transnational Ownership and Diversification

Between the 1950s and early 1960s, newspaper ownership became more concentrated in the hands of conglomerates, but most had publishing, or printing, as their core activity. Although there were some out-

liers, the more general shift from national to international capital, and from publishing-based to more diversified conglomerates, occurred from the 1970s. The third Royal Commission (1977: 2) reported that six of the ten companies controlling national newspapers had substantial interests outside newspaper and periodical publishing. Trafalgar House, a property business, bought Beaverbrook's newspaper group in 1978, subsequently selling on to United Newspapers in 1985. The Mirror Group was sold to International Publishing Company (IPC) in 1958, which then merged with paper manufacturing company Reed to form Reed International in 1970. The Thomson Organisation, led by Canadian newspaper owner Roy Thomson, moved into the UK market with its acquisition of *The Scotsman* in 1953 and then build up a chain of eleven provincial dailies. Thompson insisted on new marketing techniques for his papers, but this self-styled entrepreneurial proprietor avowed editorial independence and adopted a relatively hands-off approach. Elsewhere, interventionism persisted. Cecil King, a member of the Harmsworth family, acted like a press baron at the *Daily Mirror* but was appointed by directors who removed him as IPC chairman after his editorial attacks on the Wilson government escalated to a front-page challenge in May 1968.

The UK national press had negligible foreign ownership for the first half of the century, with the exceptions of the Canadian, Max Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook) and American, John Jacob Astor, empires, both launched by rich men seeking positions in British public life. After Thomson, a more decisive shift from national capital began with Rupert Murdoch's acquisition of the *News of the World* and the *Sun* in 1969. Falling stock value attracted international non-media businesses to acquire newspapers. In 1977, the Astors sold the *Observer* to US oil giant Atlantic Richfield who sold on in 1981 to Lohnro, a conglomerate with roots in African mining, leading to an infamous clash between its boss Tiny Rowland and the paper over its coverage of repression in Zimbabwe, where Lohnro invested.

By the 1980s, British and Irish national papers were owned and controlled by foreign-owned multinational conglomerates, or by national firms with diversified ownership beyond newspapers. There had been diversification previously. For instance, Lord Camrose invested in the British film company Gaumont, and Lord Rothermere was a joint owner of British Movietone News, but these were exceptions (Murdock and Golding 1978: 144–6). From the 1960s, ownership patterns shifted as newspaper groups diversified into film, television, music, book publishing and non-media businesses, countering declining newspaper revenues. Thomson owned Sphere Books, Scottish Television

and commercial radio holdings. The economic problems following the 1973 oil shock prompted further diversification, illustrated by Thomson buying a holiday business. In Ireland, the entrepreneur Tony O'Reilly bought into Independent Newspapers in 1973, was appointed chairman in 1980, and from a three-newspaper base made further acquisitions in media-related businesses in Britain, the US, Germany, Mexico, South Africa and elsewhere, with joint ventures including an Irish edition of the Express Group's *Daily Star*. A new Irish paper, the *Sunday World* was launched in 1973 by two businessmen, Hugh McLoughlin and Gerry McGuinness, partners in the Creation Group, which owned magazines including Ireland's first specialist financial magazine, *Business and Finance*. *Sunday World* was launched with capital of only £40,000, but strong early growth ensured it thrived with annual profit of £100,000 by 1975. The paper offered the first competition for British tabloids, and was a popular alternative to mid-market broadsheets like the *Sunday Independent* and *Sunday Press* which attempted to appeal to both popular and quality market segments. By 1977, however, Creation group's magazines were suffering during recession, and the *Sunday World* was sold to O'Reilly's Independent News and Media (INM) group.

### Patterns of Concentration: Ownership and Diversity

There is a vast literature on measurement of newspaper concentration, and an equally vast literature debating the consequences of concentration (Baker 2007; Hardy 2014). Many considerations must be added before numerical tables of ownership and market share can be incorporated into suitable accounts of the extent of editorial diversity, owner influence, or reader choice available. Yet, with the caveat that care is needed to read the full story, the headlines are telling. Between 1921 and 1948, the number of daily and Sunday papers in the UK declined from 169 to 128, with only one new national paper, the *Daily Worker*, launched in 1930. In 1948, there were 112 daily papers in the UK, nine nationals (all published in London), three London evening papers, with twenty-five morning and seventy-five evening provincial papers. Outside London, only Glasgow and Belfast had competing morning newspapers. By 1948, fifty-eight of sixty-six towns had a local monopoly supplier.

Reviewing these trends, the first RCP (1949: 175) considered that the drive towards concentration in the provincial press was strong between 1921 and 1929 but 'much less pronounced' thereafter, while from 1921 'there was a marked tendency away from concentration of

ownership in the national Press'. Such optimism, underpinning the RCP's inaction on ownership, did not survive the second RCP, which used different arguments to support continued inaction. Since 1949, the second RCP reported, seventeen daily and Sunday papers had ceased publication and concentration of ownership had increased. The three largest newspaper groups controlled 67 per cent of total daily newspaper circulation in 1961, up from 45 per cent share in 1948. The top three Sunday newspaper owners had 84 per cent market share in 1961, up from 61 per cent in 1948. The third RCP (1977) reported further contraction in ownership: 220 companies published newspapers, compared to over 490 in 1961.

The intensifying commercial environment and matching orientation of post-war newspapers contributed to the right-wing drift that established a lasting dealignment between the spectrum of newspaper editorial opinion and public opinion (Curran and Seaton 2010: 66–99). This trend was exacerbated by the decline of left and liberal papers during a period of market contraction, with the loss of the *News Chronicle* (1960), *Daily Herald* (1964) and *Sunday Citizen* (1967). From the late 1970s, alongside increasing concentration of ownership there was increasing political assertiveness by national owners.



Figure 1.2 Robert Maxwell, 1989

In contrast to the 1950s and 1960s, proprietorial interventionism by Murdoch, Lord Matthews at the Express Group, Mirror owner Robert Maxwell, and Canadian Conrad Black at the *Daily Telegraph* (1987–2004) more closely resembled the era of ‘press barons’ in the 1920s and 1930s.

By the late 1990s, the top ten UK national titles were owned by seven companies, all with substantial other media properties. Measured by circulation share, the top four companies controlled nearly 90 per cent of the total market, 87 per cent in 1997 (Sparks 1999: 47), while the top two companies held more than 50 per cent. In Ireland, by 1990, the Independent group controlled over half (51 per cent) of the newspaper market. Amongst European states, only Austria had a dominant group with a larger market share, while the combined share of 75 per cent held by the INM and Press groups was the highest (Sanchez-Tabernero 1993). Whatever its debated effects, the commercial newspaper press was prone to concentration and corporate consolidation. Only market interventions to affect the ownership structures, behaviour, subsidy and financing arrangements could ameliorate or counter such powerful political economic tendencies. Very little occurred, instead came the promise that new technology could reshape markets by transforming the economics of publishing.

### New Technology, New Diversity?

Successive technological innovations have prompted optimistic claims for their transformative potential, shaping wildly inaccurate predictions (Curran 2011). New technology, in the 1980s, would allow a creative wave of competition by reducing cost barriers for new entrants and by rejuvenating ailing incumbents. New technology was indeed transformative across the newspaper industry. After high initial investment in switching to electronic typesetting and computer-aided printing, newspaper publishers benefited from improved operating margins (Doyle 2002b: 123–4). Yet, measured in terms of market access, increased diversity of supply and greater plurality of ownership, this was a pitifully limited techno-revolution.

New UK national papers were launched, but only *The Independent*, from 1986, survived to the end of the century. *Today*, launched in 1986 by Eddie Shah, was sold to Lohnro within months, then to Murdoch’s News International in 1987, before it was shut down in 1995. When it closed, the paper had a readership of around 560,000, even higher at 650,000 on the three days it sold at a reduced cover price, yet it suffered from rising costs and falling ad revenue, as well as an increas-



Figure 1.3 *The Independent's* 'It is, are you?' advert, 1986

ingly indifferent owner keen to strengthen his other papers' readership share, notably *The Times*. The *Sunday Correspondent* folded barely a year after launch in 1989. Other papers that failed after a few months or years, included *Scotland on Sunday*, *Wales on Sunday*, and the *North West Times*. *News on Sunday*, a labour movement paper, was barely viable at launch and lasted only eight months (Chippindale and Horrie 1988).

New technology reduced capital costs, but launch costs for editorial staffing and marketing remained high. Costs also rose in the post-Wapping era, with higher distribution charges, colour-printing expenses, fluctuating newsprint prices, and costs arising from more intense competition for advertising finance and readers. As well as supply-side issues, identifying and meeting demand remained as risky and uncertain as ever. The slender number of successes included the *Daily Sport*, but that paper's mix of sexism, sleaze, sport and sensation was barely a simulacra of news.

In Ireland, a successful new entrant was the *Sunday Business Post*. Launched in 1989 by four Irish journalists backed by venture capital, the paper achieved a circulation of 26,000 in its first year against a target of 17,000, and was selling 57,000 in 2009 before sales and revenue declined. It became a largely foreign-owned paper, acquired by Trinity Holdings in 1997, and printed by the Belfast Telegraph group rather than inside the Republic. The *Irish Press*, facing losses of £3.5m in 1984, moved to computerised typesetting in 1985 but the industrial conflict and settlement terms 'effectively cancelled out any potential savings' (Horgan 2001: 108), leaving the group vulnerable to takeover or collapse, the latter occurring in 1995 after a foreign



Figure 1.4 Front page from cartoon leaflet *The Scum*, February 1987, a spoof of the *Sun* produced in solidarity with the strikers at Wapping. Sold at 10p, with all profits donated to the strike fund

investment deal with US publishing company Ingersoll failed (Burke 2005: 79–127).

### Competition?

A celebrated feature of newspaper history is the fierce rivalry permeating through institutions and enveloping proprietors, editors, journalists and other staff. At various times, some markets were characterised by fierce competition, at others by securely ensconced monopolists, yet the newspaper business has deviated from textbook accounts of free-market competition. Firms acted to reduce competitive threats in various ways, most notably by buying up already established rival titles. Newspaper managers also pursued a range of ways to outspend rivals, especially in their most vulnerable launch phase. Actions to damage new entrants included launching spoiler papers, some sustained only until the immediate threat receded, such as Associated's *Evening News* produced in 1987 to see off competition to the *Evening Standard* from Maxwell's short-lived *London Daily News*.

Evelyn Waugh's 1938 comic novel *Scoop* captures both the fierce institutional rivalry between papers as well as their pack mentalities and co-dependencies. The mixture of competition and co-operation,

co-opetition, among journalists was matched at corporate levels, for instance in arrangements to set prices for suppliers and consumers. The second RCP, typically generous towards owners, judged there was no price fixing but found a 'degree of consultation between the various proprietors' (RCP 1962: 60). Proprietors discussed the timing of price increases in 1961, subject to agreements registered with the Registrar of Restrictive Trading Agreements.

In oligopolistic markets informal price-setting aids coexistence, but is vulnerable to rivalrous behaviour by a firm seeking competitive advantage (Doyle 2002b: 128). That occurred when Murdoch's News Corporation, facing debts of around 13 billion Australian dollars, and falling sales for its UK News International newspapers, launched a price war. In 1993, the *Sun's* cover price was cut, leading to increased sales, with profits used to cross-subsidise a price cut at the loss-making *The Times*, maintained until 2005. This episode of 'predatory pricing', challenged unsuccessfully by MPs against a pro-Murdoch government, was estimated to have cost News International £175m. *The Times's* circulation doubled but *The Independent* lost some 20 per cent of its sales and brought a paper once 'independent' of a dominant owner into the hands of Tony O'Reilly's INM Group. The price war also demonstrated that reader loyalty was not as entrenched as assumed; *The Times* increased circulation from 360,000 in June 1993, when it sold for 45 pence to 724,000 in June 2000, selling at 30 pence (Doyle 2002b: 127, 131).

Newspaper businesses have tended to compete where necessary, but have sought to sustain monopoly or oligopoly positions where possible. The newspaper industry became increasingly concentrated across Europe from the 1920s (Leurdijk et al. 2012). There have been powerful pressures towards market concentration as competition for audiences to drive advertising income, and cost efficiencies, made it increasingly difficult for weaker players to survive independently. There are common features in the demise of the *Irish Press* and *Daily Herald*. Both retained a substantial readership but one that failed to attract sufficient advertising interest being older, more male, working-class, and with comparatively modest disposable income. In 1964, the *Herald* had 8 per cent circulation share but a bare 3.5 per cent share of advertising. Yet higher costs, underinvestment, outdated and party-constrained editorial, and falling market appeal, all contributed to its demise (Smith 2000: 183, 169–200).

## 1991–2011

The 1990s was a period of growth for many newspaper sub-markets in Britain and Ireland. While the internet would be proclaimed as the chief architect of the decline of newspapers, its actual impact was gradual. Even amongst early internet adopters, domestic, non-professional use did not pick up until the availability of browsers after 1993 and most users had limited and costly modem access until the widespread adoption of broadband. The initial impact of the internet for newspapers was in ventures to test online provision, many of which were costly failures: Express Newspapers Group, for instance, sold most of its internet properties in 2001. However, by 2006 over 800 regional newspapers had websites. The *Irish Times* launched its website in 1994, although an online newspaper, the *Irish Emigrant*, was launched in 1987 and reached some 20,000 subscribers worldwide before closing in 2012. The greatest initial impact of internetisation was on classified advertising in the regional press and the lucrative recruitment ads that were staples of national qualities. Regional newspaper advertising fell for the first time in fourteen years in 2004–5, challenged by online classified sites for property, motoring and jobs, and auction sites such as eBay. The regional press depended on advertising for 80 per cent of revenue, compared to 46 per cent for national papers (Williams 2010: 240).

The internet brought with it a flurry of futurological speculation that lumbering incumbents would be outpaced by a stampede of new digital companies. Reviewing two decades of disruption, a more complex pattern is discernible. New digital publishers have certainly emerged. The rise of freelance professionals, citizen journalists and pro-am bloggers and influencers have contributed to a massive expansion and reorganisation of news sources such that the problematics of information scarcity are transformed. Yet, legacy publishers ('news brands') have exploited advantages too, and remained the main sources of supply and the most accessed news providers. However, they are losing share among younger readers consuming news via digital native publishers such as Reddit, Vice and BuzzFeed. Google and other aggregators have attracted increasing numbers of viewers and taken the overwhelming share of advertising revenue from such encounters, as do the commercial social media services that incorporate newsfeeds, such as Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat.

The introduction of ICTs has led to cost reductions in news production and printing, as well as in back-office activities such as customer management. At the same time, due to declining sales, the average

costs per print copy generally increased. As well as online and mobile competition, paid newspapers were challenged by a second wave of free newspapers targeting commuters in affluent urban areas. The Metro group, owned by DMG media, a subsidiary of Daily Mail and General Trust, launched the Metro in London in 1999 and expanded to other towns and cities. In Dublin, the *Irish Times* and Irish Independent groups both launched free papers that the Competition Authority permitted to merge as the *Metro Herald*, running from 2010 to 2014.

If internet disruption was the chief explanatory narrative of business managers, underinvestment was the counter-narrative of their critics. Owners were maximising profits while revenue declined, by cutting staffing and production costs, allowing news brands to plummet in a spiral of neglect. In the UK, local papers declined from 1,687 in 1985 to 1,286 by 2005, with 242 closing between 2004 and 2011, while leading newsgroups maintained substantial profits (Ramsay and Moore 2016).

### Diversifying Revenues

During the 1990s, newspapers incorporated gifts and gimmicks, such as CDs, DVDs and wall charts, amongst other giveaways. Such promotional activity has accompanied periods of increased market instability, notably during the circulation wars of the 1920s and 1930s. Readers' offers, another feature with a long history, also expanded considerably. The Daily *Telegraph* developed one of the earliest and most extensive portfolios, followed by *The Times*. Such offers involved commercial partnerships for goods and services such as holidays, entertainment, clothing and household items, featured in advertising and more controversially in editorial tie-ins and profit-sharing transactional journalism. In 1989 Tim de Lisle resigned from *The Times* when the arts page he edited was remade to promote a tie-in for Sky, an indicator of increasing corporate cross-promotion (Hardy 2010).

Readers' offers provided modest revenue streams for papers losing sales and advertising revenue, but also became more integrated into the other major development, the growth of subscription to digital content, print editions or both. *The Times* offered subscribers' discounts and privileged access to cultural and sporting events. Users could now subscribe to a newspaper, buy a physical edition at a news-stand, pick up a free newspaper in higher density areas, access news online for free or from a paywall, or use free or paid-for apps on smartphones, tablets or other personal devices. However, efforts to make good the loss of advertising by more effective retailing, through paywalls, micropayments and subscription largely failed. Successful monetisation online

was mostly restricted to products serving elite or specialist audiences, with attributes of high value content (relatively non-reproducible or fast), scarcity in supply, valued user interface and cross-platform availability. Within the period, pay models tended to stall after reaching a small segment of their total consumer market willing to pay for content (Newman and Levy 2015).

## Media, Advertising and Branded Content

The failure to raise revenue from consumers has meant ever greater dependence on advertising. Yet advertisers became increasingly unwilling to subsidise content. The deal whereby advertising paid for journalism to attract readers who would see their ads has been unravelling since the early 1990s, as marketers have found more direct, information-rich and cost-effective ways to track and target consumers online (Turow 2011). Digital journalism is at the apex of two key trends: towards the disaggregation of advertising and media and towards greater integration of advertising within media. For digital journalism the fastest-growing form of ad-integration is 'native advertising', a form of branded content that is produced by or on behalf of a marketer and appears within or alongside publishers' own content offering. Ads mimic the editorial content surrounding them and follow the form and user experience associated with the context in which they are placed. Publishers deploy editorial staff, or set up more quarantined units such as *The Guardian's* Guardian Labs, to create brand sponsored content (Hardy 2018). The growth of native advertising reflects new pressures and opportunities, shifts in governing values across established media, and the spreading influence of formats and business models from the inaptly named 'pure players', digital-only publishers like BuzzFeed and Huffington Post, who attract a younger audience via social media and mobile (Newman and Levy 2015).

There are long-standing critiques of the influence of advertising finance on media, source dependency and churnalism, and intensifying PRisation of media (Davies 2008; Jackson and Moloney 2015). What is euphemistically called native advertising blends and amplifies these concerns. The most pertinent charge is that there is a powerful imbalance in the resources to fund effective public communications. Professional journalism promised to ameliorate that imbalance by producing communications according to values that serve democratic and cultural life, including accuracy, balance and editorial independence from vested interests. Yet, branded content favours resource-rich, commercial sources, sponsor-friendly coverage, 'bestselling' stories and soft

news. The central dilemma of native advertising is that revenue gain comes at the expense of eroding reader trust and undermining core jobs for news media (Piety 2016). Yet, the influence of advertisers has been a long-standing concern. The first RCP was pressed by the NUJ and others to examine the influence of advertisers on editorial policy and recognised that there may be direct or indirect pressure to avoid publishing anything detrimental to advertisers' interests (RCP 1949: 135). However, none of the RCPs met the need for systematic study to underpin policy proposals; the examples of advertiser influence presented were instead treated as isolated instances to be rebuked (RCP 1949: 143).

The introduction of 'new technology' in the 1980s significantly reduced printing production and distribution costs but editorial labour, marketing and other costs maintained high barriers to market entry. The internet reduced distribution costs to near zero for digital natives, but costs to sustain and promote rich, regular content origination continued to require significant funding.

## Conclusion

Commenting on the collapse of the *News Chronicle*, the second RCP (1962: 81) argued that the failure was not entirely the result of 'an inevitable law of newspaper economics; different and more consistent managerial and editorial policy might have saved this newspaper'. The solution was inspired leadership and capable managers: 'The only hope of the weaker papers is to secure – and some have done in the past – managers and editors of such enterprise and originality as will enable these publications to overcome the economic forces affecting them' (RCP 1962: 99).

Economic factors invariably need to be placed alongside other factors, but that does not mean we should follow the RCPs. All examined economic aspects in exemplary detail but then evaded considering the outcomes, as part of efforts to minimise the case for market interventions. The third RCP's modest proposals to strengthen anti-monopoly interventions triggered a minority report, whose members endorsed the first RCP's assertion that 'free enterprise in the production of newspapers is a pre-requisite of a free press, and free enterprise will generally mean commercially profitable enterprise in the case of newspapers of any considerable size and circulation' (RCP 1949: 157). The second RCP identified market tendencies towards concentration and noted with regret that the variety of opinion in the press had diminished since the first report. However, amid internal divisions, it rejected

advocating statutory limits, based on market share or the number of publications under single ownership, and instead proposed a tribunal to scrutinise transactions where combined weekly sales of more than 3 million would be in the hands of one undertaking (RCP 1962: 106–11). While faith in market self-correction diminished across the reports, the RCPs' evasions aptly illustrate the need for political economic analysis, because the political always works alongside economic processes to determine how resources are used and allocated.

From 1900 to the mid-1990s, the problematics of newspaper ownership could be discussed in terms of a scarcity model. Barriers to market entry placed a premium on considerations of who owned papers, how they exercised control amid other influences on editorial output, how capitalist ownership and economics shaped provision, and to what extent plurality was sustained to deliver the multiple 'jobs' and expectations for a democratic and culturally diverse media. The political economy of newspapers was one in which capital was required and rewarded within a policy environment which permitted market concentration. The patterns of profitability, though, were more complex and uneven than the record of growth and decline in paid-sales suggests. Significant factors included the responses of advertising markets to changing economic conditions and the differential allocation of advertising, news market conditions and sociocultural changes in demand, the cost base of newspaper production and distribution, regulatory actions and, yes, leadership and industrial relations. With internetisation this political economic formation did not disappear, as predicted. However, the new economic and market conditions also influenced the terms of political and policy formulation: from scarcity to abundance, from mono-media to convergence, analogue to digital, and from the dominance of commercial newspapers to a crisis, opening up space for solutions ranging from hyperlocal community journalism, low-profit social enterprises, to rescue by public investment, including public service media cross-subsidies.

Economics did not determine what newspapers communicated, but economics has shaped the broader contours of content provision. This includes the active influences arising from ownership and control by capitalist proprietors and businesses oriented to commercial goals. But equally striking are the gaps in provision, when the political economic conditions affecting supply meant that demand was not served, and a wider range of voices and perspectives was not heard. If the cry of reformers through most of the century was for increased pluralism in supply, the added calls at the end were for 'exposure diversity' (Napoli 2011). All of this mattered less, many argued, amid newspapers' slow

descent from the high circulation 1950s, but news brands remain a potent force, shaping lenses through which we observe and are observed in the world.

Table 1.2 National Daily and Sunday Newspaper Ownership and Circulation figures, 1930–2017<sup>a</sup>

Newspaper Group (owner) [National Paper]	1930 <sup>b</sup>	1937 <sup>c</sup>	1947 <sup>d</sup>
Associated Newspapers/DMGT (Rothermere) [ <i>Daily Mail</i> ]	21 (1,845) <sup>k</sup> <i>Mail</i>	16 (1,579) <i>Mail</i>	13 (2,077) <i>Mail</i>
Astor [ <i>The Times</i> ]	2 (186) <i>Times</i>	2 (191) <i>Times</i>	2 (269) <i>Times</i>
Barclay Brothers [ <i>Daily Telegraph</i> ]			
Beaverbrook [ <i>Daily Express</i> ]	20 (1,693) <i>Express</i>	22 (2,204) <i>Express</i>	25 (3,856) <i>Express</i>
Camrose [ <i>Daily Telegraph</i> ] [ <i>Morning Post</i> ] (amalgamated with <i>Telegraph</i> in 1937)	2 (175) <i>Daily Telegraph</i> 1 (120) <i>Morning Post</i>	6 (559) <i>Telegraph</i>	7 (1,015) <i>Telegraph</i>
Cadbury [ <i>News Chronicle</i> ]	17 (1,451) <i>Chronicle</i>	13 (1,324) <i>Chronicle</i>	11 (1,625) <i>Chronicle</i>
Guardian [ <i>Manchester Guardian</i> ; <i>The Guardian</i> ]			
Hollinger (Black)(1987–2004) [ <i>Daily Telegraph</i> ]			
<i>The Independent</i> (1986–97) (Independent News and Media/ O'Reilly (1997–2010); Lebedev from 2010)			
Johnston Press (acquired <i>i</i> from Independent in 2016) [ <i>i</i> ]			
Kemsley Newspapers [ <i>Daily Graphic</i> ]	11 (926)	7 (683)	5 (772)
Mirror Group (Daily Mirror Newspapers Ltd) (IPC 1958–70)	12 (1,072) <sup>l</sup> <i>Mirror</i>	13 (1,328) <i>Mirror</i>	24 (3,702) <i>Mirror</i>
News International; News UK [ <i>The Sun</i> ; <i>The Times</i> ; <i>Today</i> ]			
Nikkei Inc. [ <i>Financial Times</i> ]			
Northern and Shell [ <i>Daily Express</i> ; <i>Daily Star</i> ]			
Oldhams [ <i>Daily Herald</i> ]	13 (1,118) <i>Herald</i>	20 (2,032) <i>Herald</i>	14 (2,135) <i>Herald</i>
Pearson [ <i>Financial Times</i> ]			
Pergamon (Maxwell) [ <i>Daily Mirror</i> / <i>The Mirror</i> ]			
Reed [ <i>Daily Mirror</i> ]			
Thomson [ <i>The Times</i> ]			

1961 <sup>e</sup>	1976 <sup>f</sup>	1987 <sup>g</sup>	1997 <sup>h</sup>	2007 <sup>i</sup>	2017 <sup>j</sup>
[22] 16 (2,610) <i>Mail</i> 6 (981) <i>Sketch</i>	13 (1,755) <i>Mail</i>	12 (1,759) <i>Mail</i>	17 (2,344) <i>Mail</i>	21 (2,365) <i>Mail</i>	24 (1,389) <i>Mail</i>
2 (253) <i>Times</i>				8 (891) <i>Telegraph</i>	8 (466) <i>Telegraph</i>
27 (4,328) <i>Express</i>					
8 (1,248) <i>Telegraph</i>	9 (1,308) <i>Telegraph</i>				
2 (245) <i>Guardian</i>	2 (306) <i>Guardian</i>	3 (494) <i>Guardian</i>	3 (428) <i>Guardian</i>	3 (368) <i>Guardian</i>	3 (147) <i>Guardian</i>
		8 (1,147) <i>Telegraph</i>	8 (1,130) <i>Telegraph</i>		
		2 (293) <i>Independent</i>	2 (288) <i>Independent</i>	2 (251) <i>Independent</i>	(online only)
					4 (263) <i>i</i>
[38] 29 (4,561) <i>Mirror</i> 9 (1,394) <i>Herald</i>	26 (3,708) <i>Sun</i>	[32] 27 (3,993) <i>Sun</i> ; 2 (350) <i>Today</i> ; 3 (442) <i>Times</i>	[34] 28 (3,877) <i>Sun</i> 6 (821) <i>Times</i>	[34] 28 (3,214) <i>Sun</i> 6 (654) <i>Times</i>	[34] 26 (1,517) <i>Sun</i> 8 (444) <i>Times</i>
				7 (815) <i>Express</i> 7 (804) <i>Star</i>	3 (192) <i>Financial Times</i> [13] 6 (369) <i>Express</i> ; 7 (407) <i>Star</i>
1 (132) <i>Financial Times</i>	1 (174) <i>Financial Times</i>	2 (280) <i>Financial Times</i>	2 (327) <i>Financial Times</i>	4 (441) <i>Financial Times</i>	
		21 (3,123) <i>Mirror</i>			
	27 (3,851) <i>Mirror</i>				
	2 (310) <i>Times</i>				

Newspaper Group (owner) [National Paper]	1930 <sup>b</sup>	1937 <sup>c</sup>	1947 <sup>d</sup>
Trafalgar House [ <i>Daily Express</i> ]			
Trinity Mirror (1999–2018; renamed Reach 2018) [ <i>Daily Mirror</i> ]			
United [ <i>Daily Express</i> ]			
Total Circulation	8,567,567	9,903,427	15,449,410
<b>Top Three</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>National Sunday Papers</b>			
Associated Newspapers [ <i>Sunday Dispatch</i> , ceased 1961; <i>Mail on Sunday</i> ]	8 (1,197) <i>Dispatch</i>	5 (741) <i>Dispatch</i>	7 (2,061) <i>Dispatch</i>
Astor/ Observer Trust (from 1945) [ <i>Observer</i> ]	1 (200) <i>Observer</i>	1 (208) <i>Observer</i>	1 (384) <i>Observer</i>
Barclay Brothers [ <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> ]			
Beaverbrook [ <i>Sunday Express</i> ]	6 (928) <i>Sunday Express</i>	9 (1,350) <i>Sunday Express</i>	9 (2,578) <i>Sunday Express</i>
Camrose [ <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> ]			
Cooperative Press [ <i>Reynold News</i> ]	2 (283) <sup>l</sup> <i>Reynolds News</i>	3 (426) <i>Reynolds News</i>	2 (720) <i>Reynolds News</i>
Guardian Media Group (Scott Trust) [ <i>Observer</i> ]			
Hollinger (Black) [ <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> ]			
Independent [ <i>Sunday Independent</i> ]			
Kemsley [ <i>Empire News</i> ceased 1960; <i>Sunday Chronicle</i> ceased 1955; <i>Sunday Graphic</i> ceased 1960]	[16] 6 (940) <i>Sunday Graphic</i> ; 1 (153) <i>Sunday Times</i> ; 9 (1,284) <i>Empire News</i>	[20] 4 (651) <i>Sunday Graphic</i> ; 5 (730) <i>Sunday Chronicle</i> ; 2 (270) <i>Sunday Times</i> ; 9 (1,447) <i>Empire News</i>	[17] 4 (1,186) <i>Sunday Graphic</i> ; 4 (1,178) <i>Sunday Chronicle</i> ; 2 (568) <i>Sunday Times</i> ; 7 (2,068) <i>Empire News</i>
Lonrno (1981–93); previously Atlantic Richfield (1977–81) [ <i>Observer</i> ]			(Manchester)
Mirror Group [ <i>Sunday Pictorial</i> ; <i>People</i> ; <i>Sunday Mirror</i> ]	13 (1,946) <i>Pictorial</i>	9 (1,345) <i>Pictorial</i>	14 (4,006) <i>Pictorial</i>

1961 <sup>e</sup>	1976 <sup>f</sup>	1987 <sup>g</sup>	1997 <sup>h</sup>	2007 <sup>i</sup>	2017 <sup>j</sup>
	19 (2,594) <i>Express</i>		18 (2,442) <i>Mirror</i>	14 (1,585) <i>Mirror</i>	10 (604) <i>Mirror</i>
		[20] 11 (1,697) <i>Express</i> 9 (1,289) <i>Star</i>	[14] 9 (1,241) <i>Express</i> 5 (730) <i>Star</i>		
15,835,000	14,006,000	14,867,000	13,628,000	11,800,666	5,798,061
<b>87</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>71</b>
		10 (1,919) <i>Mail on Sunday</i>	15 (2,322) <i>Mail on Sunday</i>	20 (2,349) <i>Mail on Sunday</i>	24 (1,195) <i>Mail on Sunday</i>
3 (715) <i>Observer</i>	3 (670) <i>Observer</i>			5 (645) <i>Sunday</i> <i>Telegraph</i>	7 (345) <i>Sunday</i> <i>Telegraph</i>
17 (4,457) <i>Sunday Express</i>					
(688) <i>Sunday</i> <i>Telegraph</i>	4 (759) <i>Sunday</i> <i>Telegraph</i>				
1 (310) <i>Reynolds News</i>			3 (498) <i>Observer</i>	4 (472) <i>Observer</i>	3 (177) <i>Observer</i>
		4 (693) <i>Sunday</i> <i>Telegraph</i>	6 (938)		
			2 (311)	2 (214)	
		5 (973) <i>Observer</i>			
20 (5,306) <i>Pictorial</i> 20 (5,450) <i>People</i>					

Newspaper Group (owner) [National Paper]	1930 <sup>b</sup>	1937 <sup>c</sup>	1947 <sup>d</sup>
Mirror Group (Pergamon/ Maxwell) [ <i>Sunday Mirror</i> ]			
News International; News UK [ <i>News of the World</i> ; <i>The Sunday Times</i> ]			
<i>News of the World</i> [Riddell; Carr] <i>NoW</i>	23 (3,410)	25 (3,850)	27 (7,890)
Northern and Shell [ <i>Sunday Express</i> ]			
Oldhams [ <i>The People</i> ]	17 (2,499) <i>People</i>	22 (3,406) <i>People</i>	16 (4,671) <i>People</i>
Reed [ <i>Sunday Mirror</i> ]			
Thomson [ <i>The Sunday Times</i> ]			
Trafalgar House [ <i>Sunday Express</i> ]			
Trinity Mirror (1999–2018)			
United [ <i>Sunday Express</i> ]			
[Independent] (Plymouth)		(15)	
[ <i>Sunday Referee</i> ] (ceased 1939)	(73)	2 (342)	
[ <i>Sunday Mail</i> ] (Glasgow)	2 (244)	2 (333)	2 (588)
[ <i>Sunday Mercury</i> ] (Birmingham)	(55)	(64)	1 (125)
[ <i>Sunday Sun</i> Newcastle upon Tyne]	1 (119)	1 (88)	1 (202)
Total Circulation	14,600,000	15,700,000	29,300,000
<b>Top Three</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>60</b>

#### Notes

<sup>a</sup> The table includes UK-wide circulation only except for columns including data from RCP 1949 and 1962. Percentages rounded up to nearest whole number. The table omits small circulation papers and groups such as the *Morning Star*. The Mirror Group's *Daily Record* (Scotland) is not included. Figures for 2017 are for print sales in November and include bulk distribution. See <<http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/print-abcs-mirror-national-titles-hit-hardest-amid-industry-wide-circulation-drop/>>. <sup>b</sup> RCP 1949: 190–1; see also PEP 1938: 84. <sup>c</sup> RCP 1949. <sup>d</sup> RCP 1949: 190–1. <sup>e</sup> RCP 1962: 174–5. *Daily Worker* (60) and *The New Daily* are (23) not included in daily total. *The Independent* (32) (Plymouth) is not included in Sundays. <sup>f</sup> RCP 1977: 272–80. <sup>g</sup> Seymour-Ure 1991: 44–5; ABC. <sup>h</sup> ABC September 1997; print circulation only. <sup>i</sup> ABC September 2007; print circulation only. <sup>j</sup> ABC October 2017; print circulation only. <sup>k</sup> The first figure in each column shows circulation as a percentage of total circulation in the category (National Daily Paper; National Sunday Paper). The second figure in brackets is the actual circulation in 000s. <sup>l</sup> Estimated.

1961 <sup>e</sup>	1976 <sup>f</sup>	1987 <sup>g</sup>	1997 <sup>h</sup>	2007 <sup>i</sup>	2017 <sup>j</sup>
		[32] 17 (2,953) <i>Sunday Mirror</i> 15 (2,743) <i>People</i>			
	26 (5,138)	[36] 8 (1,424) <i>Sunday Times</i> ; 30 (5,360) <i>NoW</i>	[38] 9 (1,449) <i>Sunday Times</i> 29 (4,620) <i>NoW</i>	[40] 11 (1,244) <i>Sunday Times</i> ; 29 (3,446) <i>NoW</i>	[41] 15 (751) <i>Sunday Times</i> ; 26 (1,296) <i>Sun on Sunday</i>
25 (6,643) <i>NoW</i>				[10] 6 (727) <i>Sunday Express</i> 4 (485) <i>Star</i>	[11] 6 (323) <i>Sunday Express</i> ; 5 (248) <i>Star</i>
	42 (8,195) <i>Sunday Mirror</i> ; <i>People</i>				
4 (967) <i>Sunday Times</i>	7 (1,382) <i>Sunday Times</i>				
	18 (3,451) <i>Sunday Express</i>				
			[28] 15 (2,424) <i>Mirror</i> 13 (2,001) <i>People</i>	[18] 12 (1,452) <i>Sunday Mirror</i> 6 (722) <i>Sunday People</i>	[14] 10 (517) <i>Sunday Mirror</i> ; 4 (207) <i>People</i>
		13 (2,033) <i>Sunday Express</i>	8 (1,262) <i>Sunday Express</i>		
(32)					
2 (612)					
1 (210)					
1 (222)					
25,612,000	19,595,000	17,737,000	15,827, 279	11,757,304	5,058,529
<b>82</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>79</b>