

Magazines in the Age of Specialization Chapter 9

The Story of *Cosmopolitan*



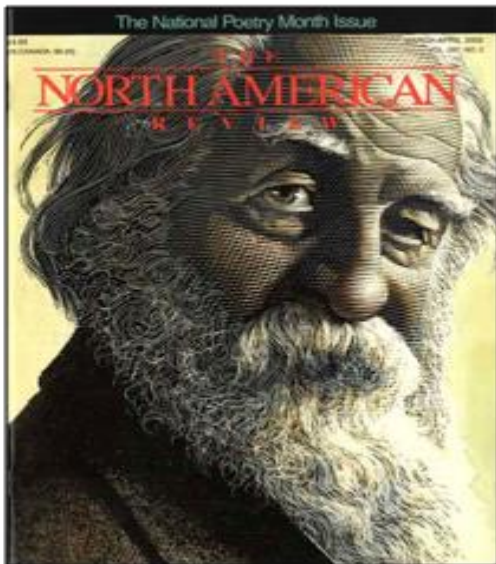
“The story of how a '60s babe named Helen Gurley Brown (you’ve probably heard of her) transformed an antiquated general-interest mag called *Cosmopolitan* into the must-read for young, sexy single chicks is pretty damn amazing.”
-*Cosmopolitan* magazine

- Nearly all consumer magazines depend on advertising.
- In fact, the U.S. consumer economy, for better or worse, owes part of its great growth to the consumer magazine industry, which has both chronicled and advertised consumable lifestyles and products for more than a century.

- By the turn of the 19th century, advertisers increasingly used national magazines to capture consumers' attention and build a national marketplace.
- Throughout that time, magazine pages have generally maintained an even balance of about 50 percent editorial content and 50 percent ad copy.
- But now, for fashion magazines in particular, the line between editorial content and advertising is becoming increasingly less important.

The Development of the Early U.S. Magazines

- The idea of specialized magazines devoted to certain categories of readers developed throughout the nineteenth century.
- Literary magazines also emerged. The *North American Review*, for example, established the work of important writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Mark Twain.



The Rise of General-Interest Magazines

- In 1821, two young Philadelphia printers, Charles Alexander and Samuel Coate Atkinson, launched the *Saturday Evening Post*
- It was the first major magazine to appeal directly to women, starting the “Lady’s Friend,”—a column that addressed women’s issues.
- During the 1800s, the weekly *Post* became the first important general-interest magazine aimed at a national audience.
 - longest-running magazine in U.S. history.



The Rise of General-Interest Magazines

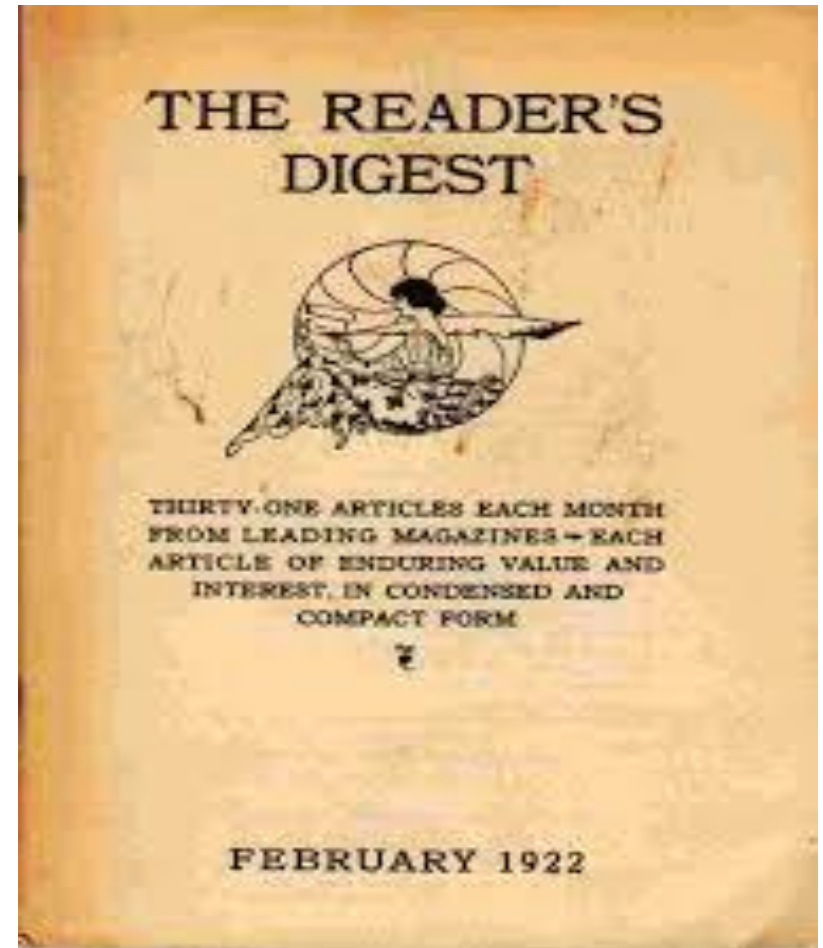
■ *Saturday Evening Post*

- When Cyrus Curtis bought the *Post* in 1897 for \$1,000, it had a circulation of approximately ten thousand.
- **Curtis's strategy for reinvigorating the magazine included printing popular fiction and romanticizing American virtues through words and pictures (a *Post* tradition best depicted in the three-hundred-plus cover illustrations by Norman Rockwell).**



The Rise of General-Interest Magazines

- ***Reader's Digest***
- The most widely circulated general-interest magazine during this period was *Reader's Digest*.
- Started in 1922 by Dewitt Wallace and Lila Acheson Wallace for \$5,000 in a Greenwich Village basement,
- *Reader's Digest* championed one of the earliest functions of magazines: printing condensed versions of selected articles from other magazines.



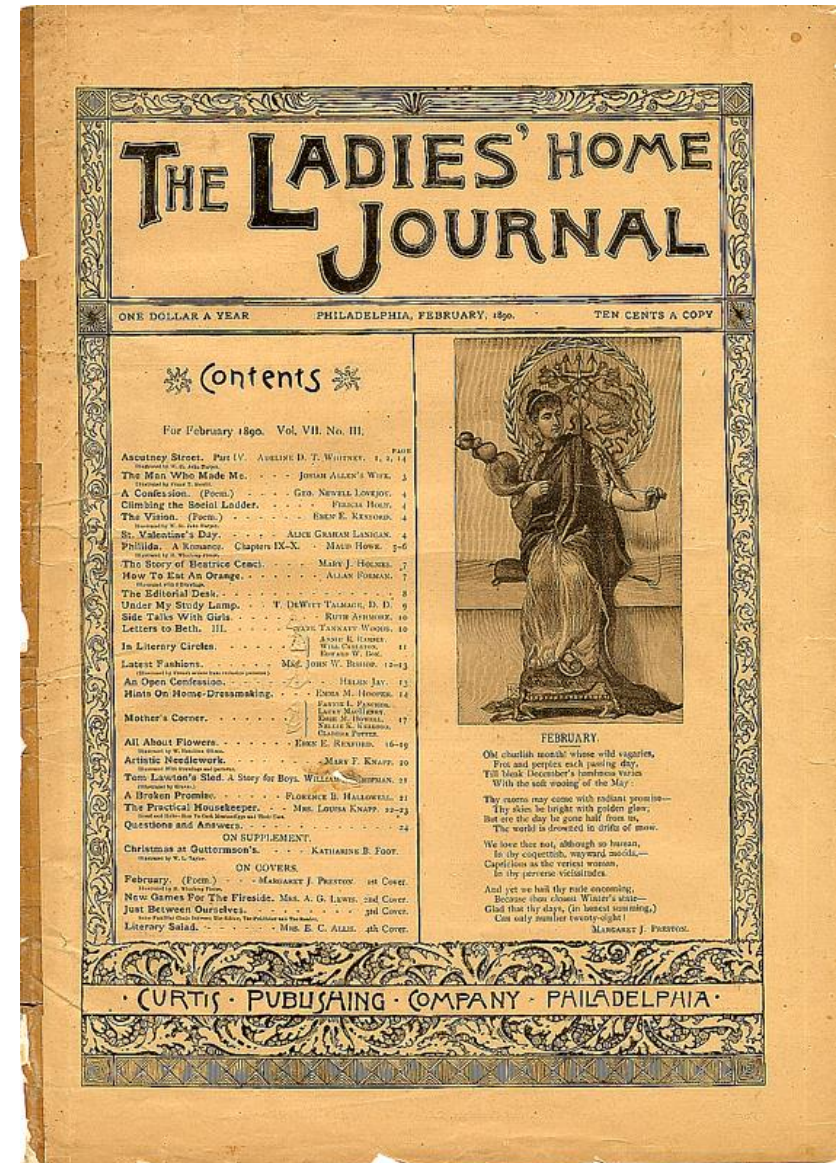
The Development of Modern American Magazines



- Postal Act of 1879
 - Lowered postage rates
 - Increased magazine circulation
 - Advertising revenues soared.
- Advertisers
 - Used magazines to capture attention and build a national marketplace

The Development of Modern American Magazines

- One magazine that took advantage of these changes was *Ladies' Home Journal*, begun in 1883 by Cyrus Curtis.
- Prior to *LHJ*, many women's magazines had been called cookie-and-pattern publications because they narrowly confined women's concerns to baking and sewing.
- *Ladies' Home Journal*
 - First with a circulation of one million in 1903



The Development of Modern American Magazines

- Launched in 1886 as a magazine for “first-class families,” *Cosmopolitan* began as a literary publication, offering both general-interest articles and fiction..

- *McClure’s Magazine* inaugurated the era of muckraking in 1902 with Ida Tarbell’s investigative series on the Standard Oil Company monopoly.

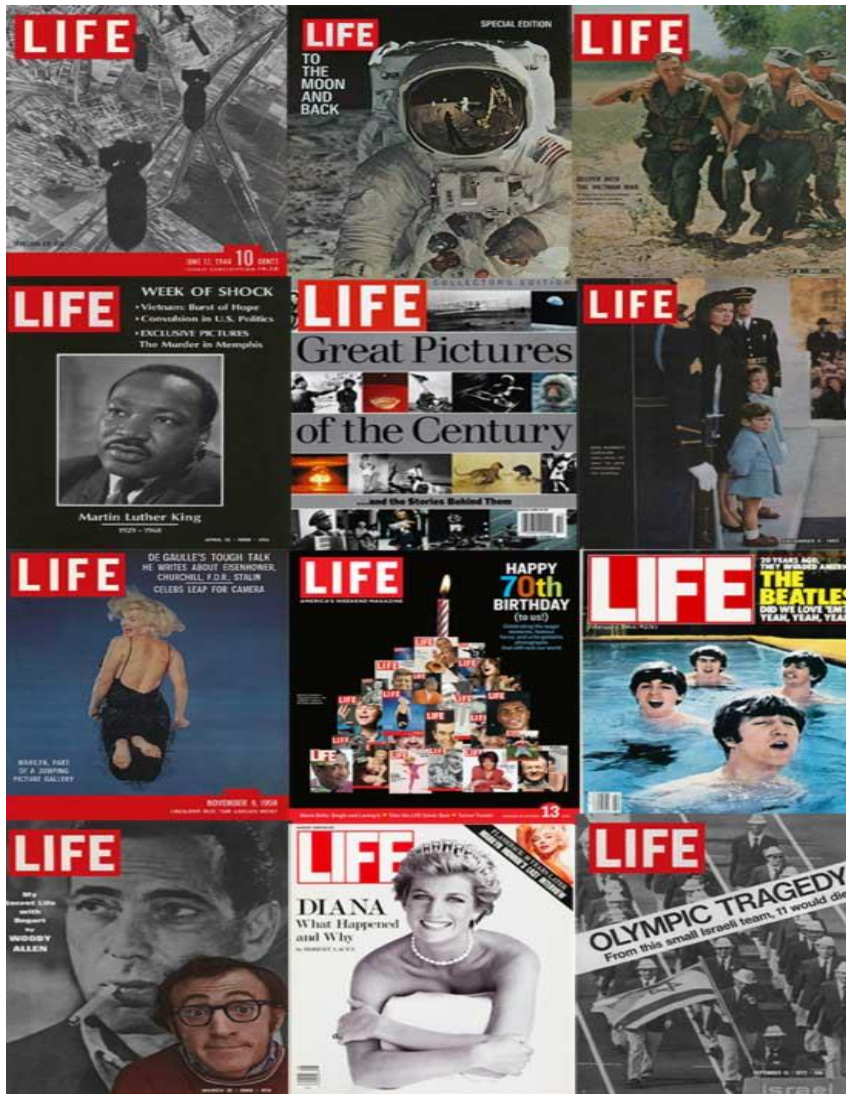


The Development of Modern American Magazines

- Time During the general-interest era, national newsmagazines such as Time were also major commercial successes.
- Begun in 1923 by Henry Luce and Briton Hadden,
- Time developed a magazine brand of interpretive journalism, assigning reporter-researcher teams to cover stories while a rewrite editor would put the article in narrative form with an interpretive point of view.



The Development of Modern American Magazines



- General-interest magazines
 - Prominent after WWI through the 1950s
 - Combined investigative journalism with broad national topics
 - **Photojournalism**
 - Gave magazines a visual advantage over radio

The Fall of General-Interest Magazines



- In 1970, *Life's* circulation peaked at 8.5 million, with an estimated pass-along readership of nearly 50 million. *Life's* chief competitor, *Look*, founded by Gardner Cowles in 1937, reached 2 million in circulation by 1945 and 4 million by 1955. It climbed to almost 8 million in 1971.
- Dramatically, though, both magazines suspended publication. The demise of these popular periodicals at the peak of their circulations seems inexplicable, but their fall illustrates a key economic shift in media history as well as a crucial moment in the conversion to an electronically oriented culture.

People Puts *Life* Back into Magazines

- In March 1974, Time Inc. launched *People*, the first successful mass market magazine to appear in decades.
- Instead of using a bulky oversized format and relying on subscriptions, *People* downsized and generated most of its circulation revenue from newsstand and supermarket sales.
- For content, it capitalized on our culture's fascination with celebrities. Supported by plenty of photos, its articles were short, with about one-third as many words as those of a typical newsmagazine piece.





The Domination of Specialization

- The general trend away from mass market publications and toward specialty magazines coincided with radio's move to specialized formats in the 1950s.
- With the rise of television in that decade, magazines ultimately reacted the same way radio did:
 - They adapted, trading the mass audience for smaller, discrete audiences that could be guaranteed to advertisers.
 - Two major marketing innovations also helped ease the industry into a new era: the development of regional and demographic editions.

Table 9.1: Top 10 Magazines

1972		2011	
Rank/Publication	Circulation	Rank/Publication	Circulation
1 <i>Reader's Digest</i>	17,825,661	1 <i>AARP The Magazine</i>	22,401,546
2 <i>TV Guide</i>	16,410,858	2 <i>AARP Bulletin</i>	22,204,197
3 <i>Woman's Day</i>	8,191,731	3 <i>Better Homes and Gardens</i>	7,633,372
4 <i>Better Homes and Gardens</i>	7,996,050	4 <i>Game Informer Magazine</i>	6,734,672
5 <i>Family Circle</i>	7,889,587	5 <i>Reader's Digest</i>	5,606,743
6 <i>McCall's</i>	7,516,960	6 <i>National Geographic</i>	4,463,196
7 <i>National Geographic</i>	7,260,179	7 <i>Good Housekeeping</i>	4,339,069
8 <i>Ladies' Home Journal</i>	7,014,251	8 <i>Woman's Day</i>	3,876,053
9 <i>Playboy</i>	6,400,573	9 <i>Family Circle</i>	3,846,672
10 <i>Good Housekeeping</i>	5,801,446	10 <i>People</i>	3,563,410

Regional Editions

- As television advertising siphoned off national ad revenues, magazines began introducing regional editions:
 - national magazines whose content is tailored to the interests of different geographic areas. For example, *Reader's Digest* for years had been printing different language editions for international markets.
 - Often called split-run editions, these national magazines tailor ads to different geographic areas.
 - Most editions of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Sports Illustrated*, for example, contain a number of pages of regional ads.
- Other magazines adapted this idea to advertising variations and inserts.

Demographic Editions

- Another variation of specialization includes demographic editions, which target particular groups of consumers. In this strategy, market researchers identify subscribers primarily by occupation, class, and zip code.
- In an experiment conducted in 1963, *Time* pioneered demographic editions by carrying advertising from a drug company that was inserted into copies of its magazine. These editions were then sent only to 60,000 doctors chosen from *Time's* subscription rolls.
- By the 1980s, aided by developments in computer technology, *Time* had also developed special editions for top management, high-income zip-code areas, and ultrahigh-income professional/managerial households.
 - Certain high-income zip-code editions, for instance, would include ads for more expensive consumer products.

Convergence: Magazines Confront the Digital Age

The image shows the homepage of the Salon magazine website. At the top, there is a red navigation bar with links for "Join Salon Core", "Sign in" (with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn), "179,715" (likely a subscriber count), "Like" (with a Facebook icon), "48k" (likely a follower count), "Hot Topics", "RSS", "Updates", and a search bar. The main header features the "SALON" logo in large white letters on a red background. Below the logo are navigation links for "POLITICS", "ARTS", "LIFE", "STUDIO", and "OPEN SALON". A featured article on the right shows a photo of Maggie Gyllenhaal with the text "Maggie Gyllenhaal, libertine" and "ARTS". On the left, there is a "SALON STUDIO" section titled "Top comedians riff on the media circus". Below that is a "VOICES" section listing several contributors: Alex Pareene, Andrew Leonard, Andrew O'Hehir, Cary Tennis, David Sirota, Glenn Greenwald, Irin Carmon, Jefferson Morley, Joan Walsh, Laura Miller, Mary Elizabeth Williams, Natasha Leonard, Steve Kormacki, and Tracy Clark-Flory. The main content area features a large article titled "WORSE THAN KEYSTONE" by Alyssa Battistoni, with a sub-headline "Environmentalists are focused on natural gas, but a bigger carbon disaster may be brewing in the Pacific Northwest" and a large image of a mining site. To the right of this is a smaller article titled "Drone filmmaker denied visa" by Glenn Greenwald, with a sub-headline "A Pakistani student is unable to accept his film festival award because he is denied the right to enter the U.S." and a small image of a drone. Below that is a section titled "A WEEK IN THE WARDROBE OF THE MAYOR'S DAUGHTER" with a photo of a woman sitting on a red sofa. At the bottom, there is a small section titled "The New York Times" with the URL "NYTIMES.COM".

- Magazines embrace digital content.
 - Webzines Online-only magazines such as Salon and Slate pioneered the Webzine format, making the Internet a legitimate source for news as well as discussion of culture and politics.

Convergence: Magazines Confront the Digital Age

- Although once viewed as the death knell of print magazines, the industry now embraces the Internet.
- Magazines move online.
 - Magazine companion Web sites ideal for increasing reach of consumer magazines
 - Feature original content

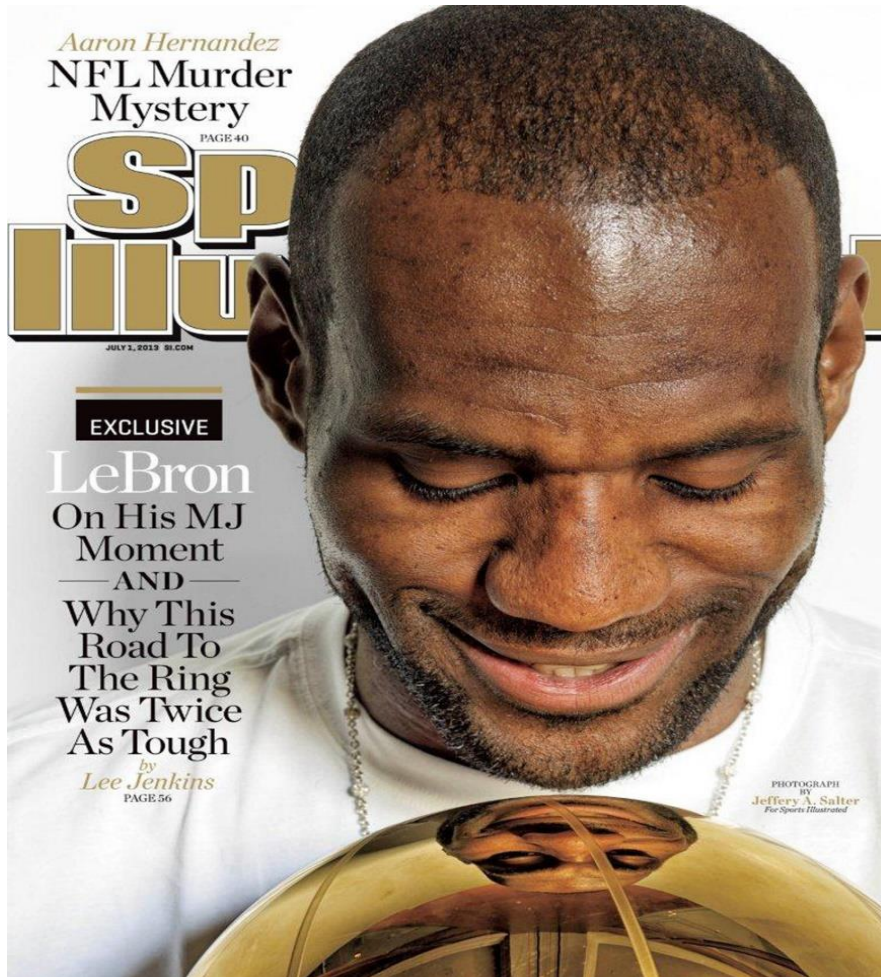


The Domination of Specialization



- Magazines grouped by two important characteristics
 - Advertiser type
 - Consumer
 - Business or trade
 - Farm
 - Target demographics
 - Gender, age, or ethnic group
 - Audience interest area (sports, literature, tabloids)

The Domination of Specialization (cont.)



- Magazines are also broken down by target audience.
 - Men and women
 - Sports, entertainment, and leisure
 - Age-group specific
 - Elite magazines aimed at cultural minorities
 - Minorities
 - Supermarket tabloids

The Domination of Specialization (cont.)

- With increases in Hispanic populations, magazines appealing to Spanish-speaking readers have developed rapidly.



Magazines in a Democratic Society

- Contemporary commercial magazines provide essential information about politics, society, and culture, thus helping us think about ourselves as participants in a democracy.
- Unfortunately, however, these **magazines often identify their readers as consumers first and citizens second. With magazines' growing dependence on advertising, controversial content sometimes has difficulty finding its way into print.**
 - **More and more, magazines define their readers merely as viewers of displayed products and purchasers of material goods.**
- In the midst of today's swirl of images, magazines and their advertisements certainly contribute to the commotion.
- **But good magazines also maintain our connection to words, sustaining their vital role in an increasingly electronic and digital culture.**