# The Image of the Journalist in Silent Film, 1890 to 1929: Part Two: 1920 to 1929

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# Introduction

This is the second and final installment in the landmark study of “The Image of the Journalist in Silent Film, 1890 to 1929.” It covers 1,514 films from 1920 to 1929. Part One covered 1,948 films from 1890 to 1919 for a total of 3,462 silent films featuring journalism. There are also 21 appendices[[1]](#endnote-1) totaling more than 10,900 pages with each appendix documenting each of the encoded films in the complete study with reviews from trade magazines, periodicals and newspapers, posters, lobby cards, advertisements, photographs and, when available, still frames from the films themselves. In the endnotes of each article (Part One and Part Two), films by category are listed for easy reference if a researcher is interested in further studying a specific type of journalist. All in all, this study makes up the first comprehensive study of the beginning of cinema’s earliest depictions of the journalist.

# It is a popular misconception that the modern image of the journalist really began in the 1930s and 1940s. But as this study and other studies dealing with the image of the journalist in 19th and early 20 century fiction and film have decidedly proven, the image of the modern newspaper and magazine journalist started in the 19th century and reached fruition in the silent films of the first three decades of the 20th century. By the time newspaper films appeared in 1930, it was a well-established and popular genre that audiences not only understood, but also appreciated and even loved or loved to hate. In the first motion picture theaters more than 100 years ago, the image of the journalist came alive from the pages of novels and the front pages of the newspapers to grab the audience’s imagination and never let go.

# Literature Review

There is no complete study of the image of the journalist in silent films.

Although many of the silent films featuring journalists have been lost forever, a fairly accurate picture emerges through reviews and commentaries about the films when they first appeared on the screen. Publications referred to include *Variety,[[2]](#endnote-2)* *The New York Times,[[3]](#endnote-3)* *Motion Picture News,[[4]](#endnote-4)**The Moving Picture World,[[5]](#endnote-5)* *Exhibitor’s Herald[[6]](#endnote-6)* (and in 1927, *Exhibitor’s Herald* and *The Moving Picture World* merged as *Exhibitors’s Herald-Moving Picture World,* and almost immediately *Exhibitor’s Herald-*World), *The Film Daily,[[7]](#endnote-7)* *Billboard[[8]](#endnote-8), Photoplay Magazine,[[9]](#endnote-9) Picture-Play Magazine,[[10]](#endnote-10)* *Screenland Magazine[[11]](#endnote-11),* and dozens of newspapers from around the country including *The New York Daily News, The Chicago Tribune,* and *The Los Angeles Times[[12]](#endnote-12).*

Three key references used throughout are the Internet Movie Database (IMDb; imdb.com),[[13]](#endnote-13) “the world’s most popular and authoritative source for movie, TV and celebrity content,” the American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films (afi.com),[[14]](#endnote-14) and the online IJPC Database of the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture Project.[[15]](#endnote-15) These comprehensive databases were used in resolving conflicts involved in decisions concerning inclusion, date and genre determination, spelling, and other details.

Another important online resource is the Silent Era Web site (www.silentera.com), a collection of news and information pertaining to silent era films, which also includes a comprehensive search feature and was invaluable in evaluating the status of any silent film included. The Web site also offers a complete listing of silent film websites.[[16]](#endnote-16)

Pioneer journalism film historian Richard R. Ness, in his book, *From Headline Hunter to Superman*: *A Journalism Filmography,[[17]](#endnote-17)* offers a definitive account of films featuring journalists from 1890 to 1929. His commentaries and capsule reviews are referred to throughout this project. His filmography (subtitled “The Silent Era”) was invaluable in creating the initial list of films to be included and his commentaries and capsule reviews were also used extensively throughout the study’s 21 appendices (including Part One).

Four books by Howard Good, professor of journalism at SUNY New Paltz and the first historian to investigate the image of the journalist in popular culture emphasizing novels and films, were valuable resources in dealing with novels and films from 1890 to 1930. His four ground-breaking books are *Outcasts: Acquainted With the Night: The Image of the Journalist in American Fiction, 1890-1930*; *Outcasts: The Image of the Journalist in Contemporary Film*; *Girl Reporter: Gender, Journalism and the Movies* and *The Drunken Journalist: The Biography of a Film Stereotype*.[[18]](#endnote-18)

Research from the books *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film* by Joe Saltzman and *Heroes and Scoundrels: The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture* by Matthew C. Ehrlich and Joe Saltzman were utilized in summing up the general images of the journalist in the early 20th century.[[19]](#endnote-19)

Film Historian Larry Langman has specialized in silent film research and the books referred to include *American Film Cycles: The Silent Era; A Guide to Silent Westerns Arts,* and with Daniel Finn, *A Guide to American Silent Crime Films.[[20]](#endnote-20)*

In analyzing the silent film era, Ken Brownlow’s *Behind the Mask of Innocence, Sex, Violence, Prejudice, Crime: Films of Social Conscience in the Silent Era, The Parade’s Gone By…* and *The War, the West and the Wilderness;[[21]](#endnote-21)* Terry Ramsaye’s *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture Through 1925*;[[22]](#endnote-22) Raymond William Stedman’s *The Serials: Suspense and Drama by Installment[[23]](#endnote-23)* and Michael Slade Shull’s *Radicalism in American Silent Films, 1909-1929: A Filmography and History[[24]](#endnote-24)* helped give context to the era and the time.

# Methodology

The first problem was to identify any silent film dealing with journalism. We started with the films listed in Ness’s *From Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography,* which yielded 210 films featuring journalists and those silent films listed in The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture (IJPC) database (ijpc.org), which yielded 931 results. We then searched through dozens of periodicals and books for films featuring journalists. The American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films was invaluable in this search process as were the periodicals listed in the literature review. We then searched through newspapers.com (<https://www.newspapers.com/)>, the largest online newspaper archive with 12,200-plus newspapers from the 1700s to 2000s and *The New York Times* archive.

In *The Image of the Journalist in Silent Film, 1890 to 1929: Part Two: 1920 to 1929*, a total of 1,514 films, with each character and event identified and all of the information encoded for the tables, were annotated into a total of 21 appendices (11 appendices in Part One, and another 10 appendices in Part Two: Appendix 12, 1920; Appendix 13, 1921; Appendix 14, 1922; Appendix 15, 1923; Appendix 16, 1924; Appendix 17, 1925; Appendix 18, 1926; Appendix 19, 1927; Appendix 20, 1928; Appendix 21, 1929. In the endnotes, future researchers can also find a complete list of films dealing with specific journalists, such as cub reporters, female reporters, or pack journalists.

We also decided to include films made outside the United States since silent films were usually made for international audiences. Titles in the original language were either translated or, if deemed unnecessary, left out. “While silent films were well suited to consumption in a variety of cultural contexts, this was due less to their status as a universal language of images than to their intertitles and the flexibility they provided. Intertitles were not simply translated from source to target languages but creatively adapted to cater to diverse national and language groups: the names of characters, settings and plot developments, and other cultural references were altered as necessary in order to make the films internationally understandable for different national audiences. By 1927, “the intertitles of Hollywood films were routinely translated into as many as thirty-six languages.” [[25]](#endnote-25)

Although most of the silent films featuring journalists have been lost forever[[26]](#endnote-26), a fairly accurate

picture emerges through reviews and commentaries about the films when they first appeared on the screen. Descriptive critics in a variety of publications offer detailed plot and character summations that often rival a viewing of the film itself in veracity and commentary.

Whenever possible, the silent films were viewed and annotated. But many silent films are either lost or their whereabouts unknown, and some prints only exist in museums around the world. We have noted whether a film has been viewed or not by listing the film’s status and whether it was “Unavailable for Viewing,” “Not Viewed,” or “Viewed” in all appendices.

The size and quality of the entries were dependent on the various sources involved. That is the reason some films are given a paragraph and some films are given several pages. The importance of a specific film on the image of the journalist in popular culture does not always coincide with the amount of space given that film. It all depended on the availability and quality of the secondary source involved (periodicals covering the silent film era). An individual periodical might change over a period of time, covering the films in less detail and even ignoring some films because of lack of space. We printed the best descriptions of the film available, emphasizing the journalism in that film, or filling in important plot details necessary to understand in evaluating the final product for coding purposes. If a film is located and screened, then there are more details with individual frames from the film itself and viewing notes.

Each film is categorized by decade, genre, gender, ethnicity, media category, job title, and description (evaluation of the image presented by each journalist or group of journalists on a subjective scale from very positive and positive to negative and very negative, to transformative positive and transformative negative to neutral). When a film features more than one journalist character, multiple instances of gender, ethnicity, job title, and description were recorded. These results were checked and re-checked until accuracy and consensus were confirmed.

A journalist is defined as anyone who performs the journalist’s function: to gather and disseminate news, information, and commentary, regardless of the medium.

The most difficult category was in determining whether a character’s image is positive or negative. Often a central character combines both positive and negative attributes. The journalist could get away with anything as long as the end result was *in the public interest.* The journalist could lie, cheat, distort, bribe, betray, or violate any ethical code as long as the journalist exposed corruption, solved a murder, caught a thief, or saved an innocent. If the journalist, however, uses the precious commodity of public trust in the press for his or her own selfish ends; if the journalist uses the power of the media for his or her own personal, political, or financial gain; if the end result is *not in the public interest*, then no matter what the journalist does, no matter how much he or she struggles with his or her conscience or tries to do the right thing, evil has won out.[[27]](#endnote-27) A positive designation was given if the journalist primarily serves the public interest or if the journalist is just doing the job expected of him/her.

A negative designation was given if the journalist fails to act in the public interest, or if the journalist was using the power of the media for his or her own personal, political, or financial gain.

Very positive and very negative were reserved for those images that left no doubt whether the journalist was a hero or a villain.

Transformative positive and transformative negative were deemed necessary to isolate those journalists who (1) act negatively throughout the film, but who in the end serve the public interest and transform into a positive image, or those journalists who (2) act positively throughout the film, but end up not serving the public interest and using the news media for personal, economic, or political gain, transforming into a negative image.

Neutral was reserved for mostly anonymous journalists who were in groups or seen in the background, or who figured slightly in the plot or action of the film or television program. Most were just doing their job in a quiet, unobtrusive way.

One of the key problems in doing a fair evaluation is that an audience may view a journalist positively even if that journalist acts in unethical and unprofessional ways. This can occur because of a variety of factors: an attractive actor in the role, a character the audience wants to succeed no matter what he/she does, a situation where the end (true love) outweighs the means (negative behavior on the part of the journalist). We have tried to evaluate the images as they might be conceived by the audiences of the period using the standards of the time, not the standards of today. While we might abhor a journalist who steals, lies, deceives, and ignores basic rules of journalism and label his/her actions negative, the audiences of the period often considered such journalists heroes and judged them as a positive image. Obviously some of these decisions are debatable even after hours of debate. This is a subjective category and we worked hard to reach consensus, but it is still a subjective description. However, any researcher can go through each appendix, check each film’s coding, read the comprehensive reviews, and determine whether the description should be revised.

We divided characters identified as journalists into major and minor categories. A major character influences the outcome of the story or event. He or she is usually a leading character played by a major actor of the time. A minor character does not play a significant role in the development of the film. He or she is usually a part of a larger group―i.e., journalists in a news conference or roaming around in packs, or those journalists who function as a part of the editorial or technical staff. Films with unnamed characters or characters who appeared briefly and then disappeared are included in the minor category.

We decided to include films in which a newspaper story played a significant plot point. Examples include articles or pieces that expose scandals and wrongdoing, provide erroneous information (such as a fake death), alert principals about some important news, or events that cause the characters to take important actions. Journalists in films with such articles were identified as Unidentified News Staff.

We also made a decision to include scanned copies of the original reviews in the appendices whenever possible. We felt this would make it easier for future researchers who would not have to search through original periodicals as we did. When an original review was barely readable, we would retype it for easier reading. Also, summaries of the journalists/journalism in the film were also typed up. If a film was available, individual frames emphasizing journalism were captured and added to the description along with specific viewing notes.

Finally, in many of the periodicals covering the silent film industry, there are occasional articles and illustrations we believe would be of interest to this audience. We’ve added some at the end of each appendix. Specific areas included all of the newsreels and, beginning in 1925, the advent of sound as a possibility for the silent films.

# Results

The following 10 tables[[28]](#endnote-28) summarize the results by decade, genre, gender, ethnicity, media category, job title, and descriptions of the journalist’s professional and personality traits.

## Decade

A breakdown by years appears in the following Table 1. A total of 1,514 films were documented.

**Table 1: Decade**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **Movies** |
|  |  |
| **1920** | **173** |
| **1921** | **132** |
| **1922** | **146** |
| **1923** | **141** |
| **1924** | **168** |
| **1925** | **145** |
| **1926** | **169** |
| **1927** | **145** |
| **1928** | **162** |
| **1929** | **133** |
|  |  |
| **Totals** | **1514** |

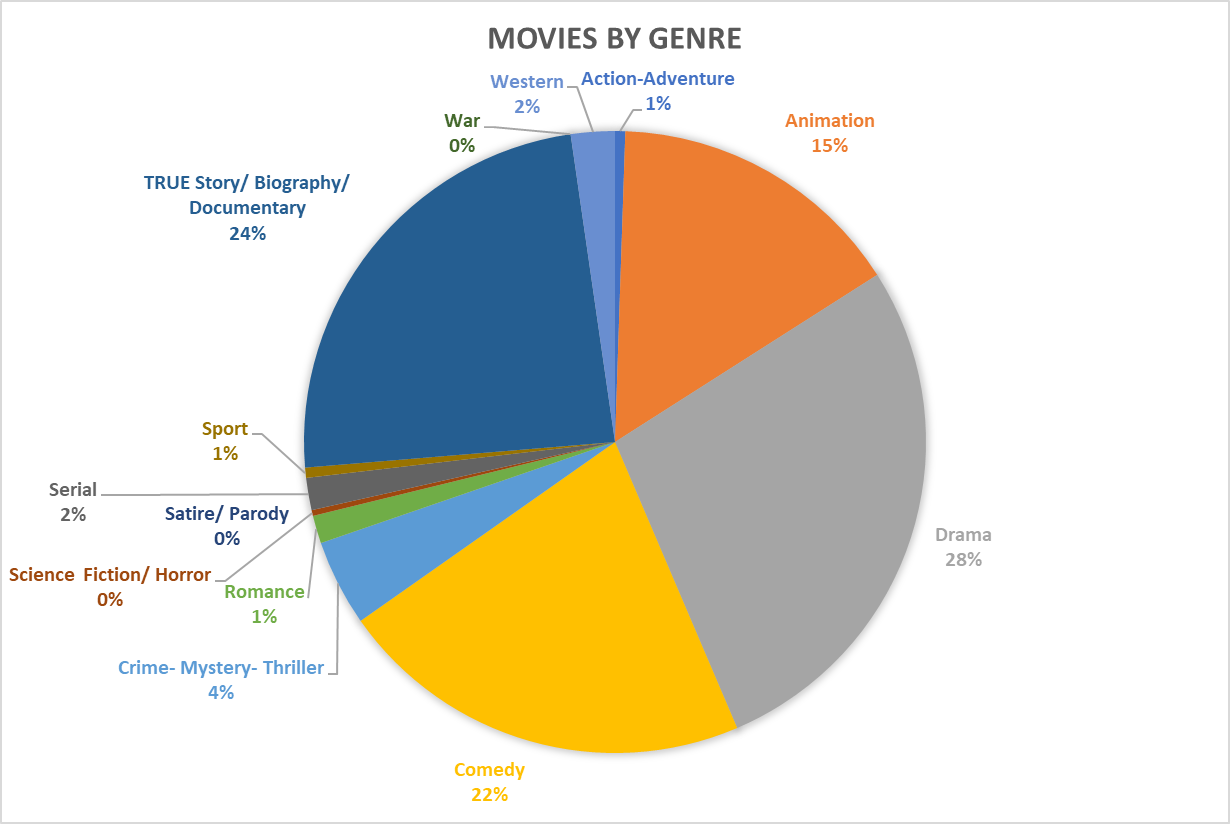
## Genre

The films were separated into generally accepted genres to see how the image of the silent film journalist was treated in action-adventure, animation, drama, comedy, crime-mystery-thriller, romance, satire/parody, science fiction/horror, serial, sports, true story-biography-documentary, war, and western.[[29]](#endnote-29) Journalists appeared in drama (28 percent of the total), in comedy (22 percent), True Stories-Biography-Documentary (24 percent), Animation (15 percent), Crime-Mystery-Thriller (4 percent), Serials (2 percent), Westerns (2 percent). Romance, Action-Adventure, Sport, War and Satire-Parody were all at 1 percent or less.

**Table 2: Genre**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **Action-Adventure** | **Animation** | **Drama** | **Comedy** | **Crime-Mystery-Thriller** | **Romance** | **Satire/**  **Parody** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **1920** |  | **10** | **52** | **26** | **4** | **2** |  |
| **1921** | **2** | **6** | **51** | **31** | **5** | **2** |  |
| **1922** | **1** | **14** | **41** | **24** | **5** |  |  |
| **1923** | **2** | **20** | **34** | **32** | **5** | **3** |  |
| **1924** | **1** | **28** | **28** | **21** | **18** | **4** |  |
| **1925** |  | **30** | **47** | **19** | **1** |  |  |
| **1926** | **1** | **24** | **26** | **33** |  | **2** |  |
| **1927** |  | **28** | **22** | **35** | **4** | **2** |  |
| **1928** |  | **28** | **29** | **40** | **5** | **3** |  |
| **1929** |  | **15** | **33** | **23** | **13** | **1** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** | **7** | **203** | **363** | **284** | **60** | **19** | **0** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **Science Fiction/Horror** | **Serial** | **Sport** | **True Story/**  **Biography/**  **Documentary** | **War** | **Western** | **Total- All Genres** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **1920** |  | **65** |  | **11** |  | **3** | **173** |
| **1921** |  | **15** |  | **18** |  | **2** | **132** |
| **1922** | **1** | **32** |  | **23** |  | **5** | **146** |
| **1923** |  | **5** |  | **36** |  | **4** | **141** |
| **1924** | **1** | **21** | **5** | **39** |  | **2** | **168** |
| **1925** | **1** | **15** |  | **30** |  | **2** | **145** |
| **1926** |  | **38** |  | **40** |  | **5** | **169** |
| **1927** |  | **10** | **1** | **40** |  | **3** | **145** |
| **1928** |  | **10** |  | **46** |  | **1** | **162** |
| **1929** | **1** | **10** | **1** | **33** |  | **3** | **133** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** | **4** | **221** | **7** | **316** | **0** | **30** | **1514** |



## Gender

As expected because of the social mores of the time, many journalists are male (about 65 percent), but there are a surprisingly large group of active and hard-working female journalists included (10 percent). Journalists who showed in in groups featuring mostly men with a handful of women made up about 25 percent of the total.

## Table 3: Gender

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **Movies**  **MALE** | **Movies**  **FEMALE** | **Movies**  **Group** |
| **1920** | **116** | **48** | **72** |
| **1921** | **102** | **14** | **60** |
| **1922** | **143** | **43** | **59** |
| **1923** | **127** | **14** | **53** |
| **1924** | **164** | **18** | **50** |
| **1925** | **144** | **15** | **61** |
| **1926** | **206** | **25** | **61** |
| **1927** | **150** | **15** | **58** |
| **1928** | **198** | **21** | **60** |
| **1929** | **189** | **29** | **55** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** | **1539** | **242** | **587** |

## 

## Ethnicity-Race

As expected because of the social mores of the time, many of the journalists were white (almost 76 percent). Black and Asian journalists showed up in only in three films each. As newsrooms were integrated in real life in the mid-to-late 20th century, so did the movie newsrooms. But it happened long after the silent era was over.

**White**―a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

**Black or African-American**―a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

**Hispanic or Latino***―*a person who classifies him/herself as Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or anyone who indicates that they are Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin.

**American Indian or Alaska Native**―a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

**Asian**―a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and residents of Hong Kong, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands and Thailand.

**Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**―a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

**Unspecified**―Mostly groups of journalists who are not easily identified by ethnicity. Also, includes journalists who do not fit into ethnic categories, or were not identified as major or minor characters.

**Table 4: Ethnicity**

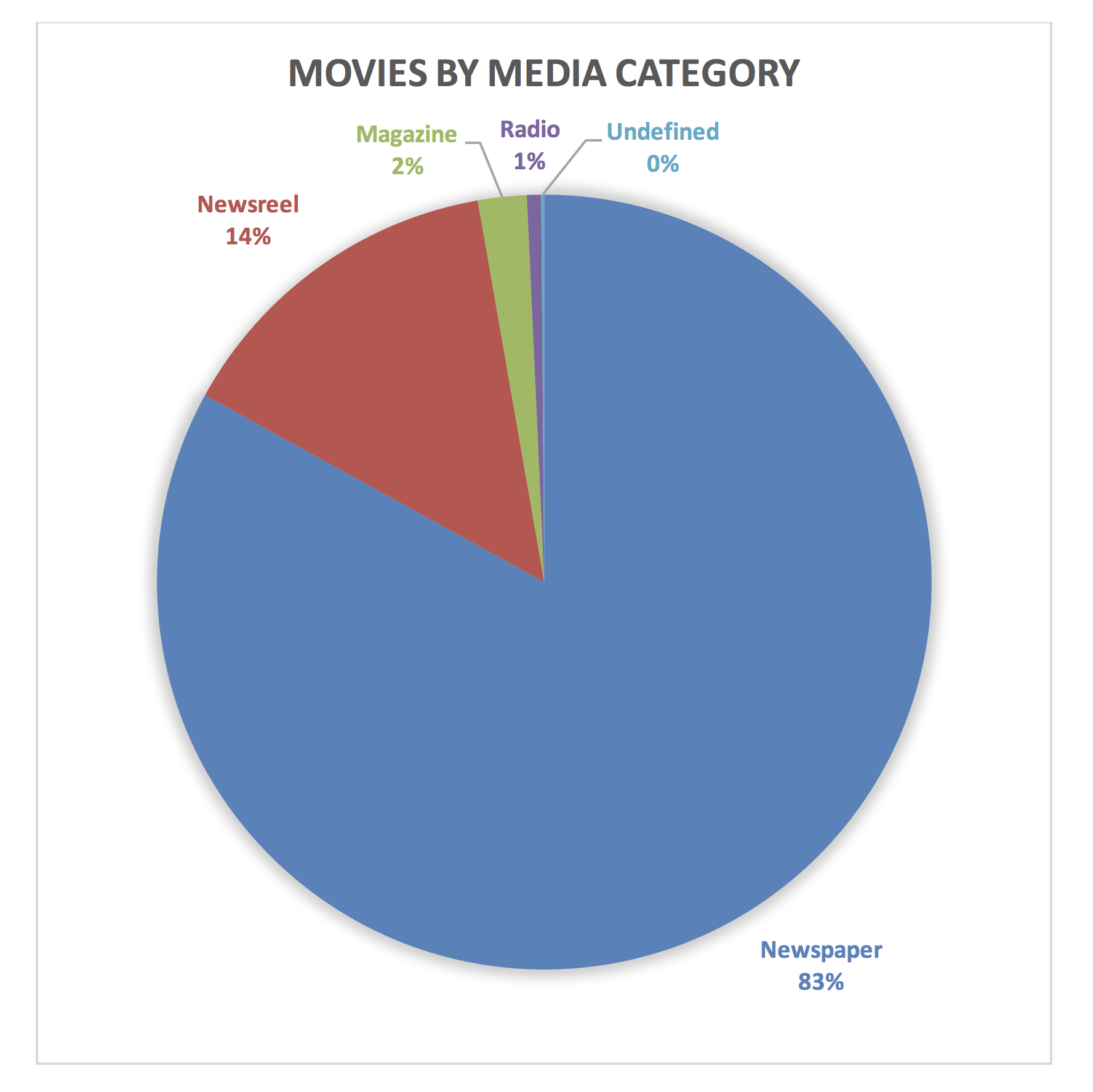
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **White** | **Black** | **Hispanic** | **American Indian** | **Asian** | **Native Hawaiian** | **Unspecified** |
| **Latino** | **Alaska Native** | **Pacific Islanders** |
| **1920** | **170** |  |  |  | **3** |  | **63** |
| **1921** | **119** | **1** |  |  |  |  | **56** |
| **1922** | **187** |  |  |  |  |  | **58** |
| **1923** | **141** |  |  |  |  |  | **53** |
| **1924** | **183** | **1** |  |  |  |  | **45** |
| **1925** | **160** |  |  |  |  |  | **60** |
| **1926** | **232** |  |  |  |  |  | **60** |
| **1927** | **166** |  |  |  |  |  | **58** |
| **1928** | **218** |  |  |  |  |  | **61** |
| **1929** | **218** | **1** |  |  |  |  | **54** |
| **Totals** | **1794** | **3** | **0** | **0** | **3** | **0** | **568** |

## Media Category

As might be expected, newspapers completely dominated the media category depicted in most silent films. Eighty-three percent of the movies featured newspaper reporters. Newsreel came in a distant second (14 percent) and magazines, radio and undefined combined for the remaining three percent.

**Table 5: Media Category**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **Newspaper** | **Newsreel** | **Magazine** | **Radio** | **Undefined** | **Total** |
| **1920** | **167** | **5** | **2** |  |  | **174** |
| **1921** | **122** | **2** | **8** |  |  | **132** |
| **1922** | **125** | **16** | **3** | **1** | **1** | **146** |
| **1923** | **116** | **15** | **10** |  |  | **141** |
| **1924** | **135** | **30** |  | **3** |  | **168** |
| **1925** | **118** | **28** | **1** |  |  | **147** |
| **1926** | **135** | **32** | **3** | **1** |  | **171** |
| **1927** | **117** | **28** | **1** | **1** |  | **147** |
| **1928** | **127** | **34** | **2** | **2** |  | **165** |
| **1929** | **104** | **27** | **1** | **1** | **1** | **134** |
| **TOTALS** | **1266** | **217** | **31** | **9** | **2** | **1525** |



## Job Titles

There are 18 specific job titles. Here are the definitions. Note: these definitions are used for all of the IJPC studies, so there will be job titles that weren’t created until long after the silent film era was over. They are included for consistency of definition.

**Anchor, Commentator**: a person who presents news on television, radio, the Internet, or other media, a news presenter also known as newsreader, newscaster, anchorman or anchorwoman, news anchor, or simply anchor. This category also includes Commentator: a person who adds analysis and occasionally opinion to his or her news reports for any media, usually radio or television. Also a Radio Announcer.

**Columnist, Blogger**: a person who writes a regular column or opinion piece for a newspaper, magazine, pamphlet, Internet site, or any other medium.

**Critic:** a professional judge of art, music, literature, such as a film critic or a dance critic who evaluates and appreciates literary or artistic works. Forms and expresses judgments of the merits, faults, value, or truth of a matter.

**Cub Reporter:** a person who is young and inexperienced and works in all media. An aspiring reporter who ends up in the job, a novice reporter, a trainee. Knows little about journalism. First job in journalism.

**Editor, Producer:** a person who assigns stories and edits copy for a newspaper, magazine, Internet, or other medium. Usually referred to as a city editor, managing editor, or editor-in- chief. This category also includes producer and executive producer: a person who controls various aspects of a news program for television, radio, the Internet, and other media. He or she takes all the elements of a newscast (video, graphics, audio) and integrates them into a cohesive show. Title includes the producer of a specific news program, a field producer who is in charge of field production of individual news stories, a producer in charge of news programs. In many silent films, the editor and publisher are indistinguishable. If the journalist is primarily working as an editor―gathering the news, writing the stories, headlines, and editorials, being the person responsible for the production and distribution of the newspaper―we use that job title (editor). If the journalist does little as an editor, but acts mostly as the owner making publishing decisions, we use that job title (publisher).

**Illustrator, Cartoonist:** a person who provides decorative images to illustrate a story in a newspaper, magazine, or other media. A commercial artist-journalist. A cartoonist creates drawings that depict a humorous situation often accompanied by a caption. Drawings representing current public figures or issues symbolically and often satirically as in a political cartoon. A caricaturist: drawing humorous or satirical cartoons.

**News Executive**: a person at a broadcast station or network or other media who is in charge of the news department. Executive in charge of news. A management position. Newsreel supervisor.

**News Employee**: a person who works in any media with a nondescript job such as editorial assistant and other newsroom employees, printers, and other workers in composition, telegraph operators, copy boy or girl, office boy or girl, newsboy or newsgirl, web developer, graphic designer, audio and video technician, multimedia artist, digital media expert. Also includes printer’s devil, typically a young boy who is an apprentice in a printing establishment who performed a number of tasks, such as mixing tubs of ink and fetching type.

**Photojournalist, Newsreel Shooter**: a person who creates still or moving images in order to tell a news story. Titles include photographer, cameraman or camerawoman, shooter, stringer, paparazzi, and anyone else using a photographic device to make a photographic record of an event. Also includes newsreel cameramen and camerawomen.

**Publisher, Media Owner:** a person who is a successful entrepreneur or businessman who controls, through personal ownership or a dominant position, a mass media related company or enterprise. Referred to as a media proprietor, media mogul, media baron. A publisher usually specifically refers to someone who owns a newspaper, a collection of newspapers, magazines, or newsreels.

**Reporter, Correspondent:** a person who reports news or conducts interviews for newspapers, magazines, television, radio, Internet, or any other organization that disseminates news and opinion. Referred to as a journalist, a newspaperman or newspaperwoman, newsman or newswoman, a writer, a sob sister, a magazine writer. A freelance writer for any multimedia.

**Real-Life Journalist:** a person who exists in real life. Uses real name and real occupation in a fictional film or TV program. He or she is not played by an actor.

**Sport Journalist:** a person who writes, reports, or edits sports news and features for any media. Includes writers, reporters, editors, columnists, commentators, hosts, online specialists.

**War Correspondent, Foreign Correspondent:** a correspondent is a person who contributes reports to a variety of news media from a distant, often remote, location, often covering a conflict of some sort.

**Press Conference Journalist:** a person who attends a news conference or press conference in which newsmakers invite journalists to hear them speak and, most often, ask questions.

**Pack Journalist:** a person who joins other reporters chasing after stories. They often travel in packs, usually armed with television cameras and microphones. They cover fast-breaking news by crowding, yelling, shouting, bullying, and forcing their way into breaking news events. They often show up with their lights, cameras, microphones, and digital recorders as they shout out questions to the usually reluctant newsmaker in question. Pack Journalism is also defined as journalism practiced by reporters in a group usually marked by uniformity of news coverage and lack of original thought or initiative. A pack of journalists can also be a group of reporters, photojournalists, war correspondents, freelance writers, even newsboys following a story or a specific activity.

**Miscellaneous:** individual journalists unidentified in the film or TV program as to job description. Usually in the background functioning as editorial and technical staff.

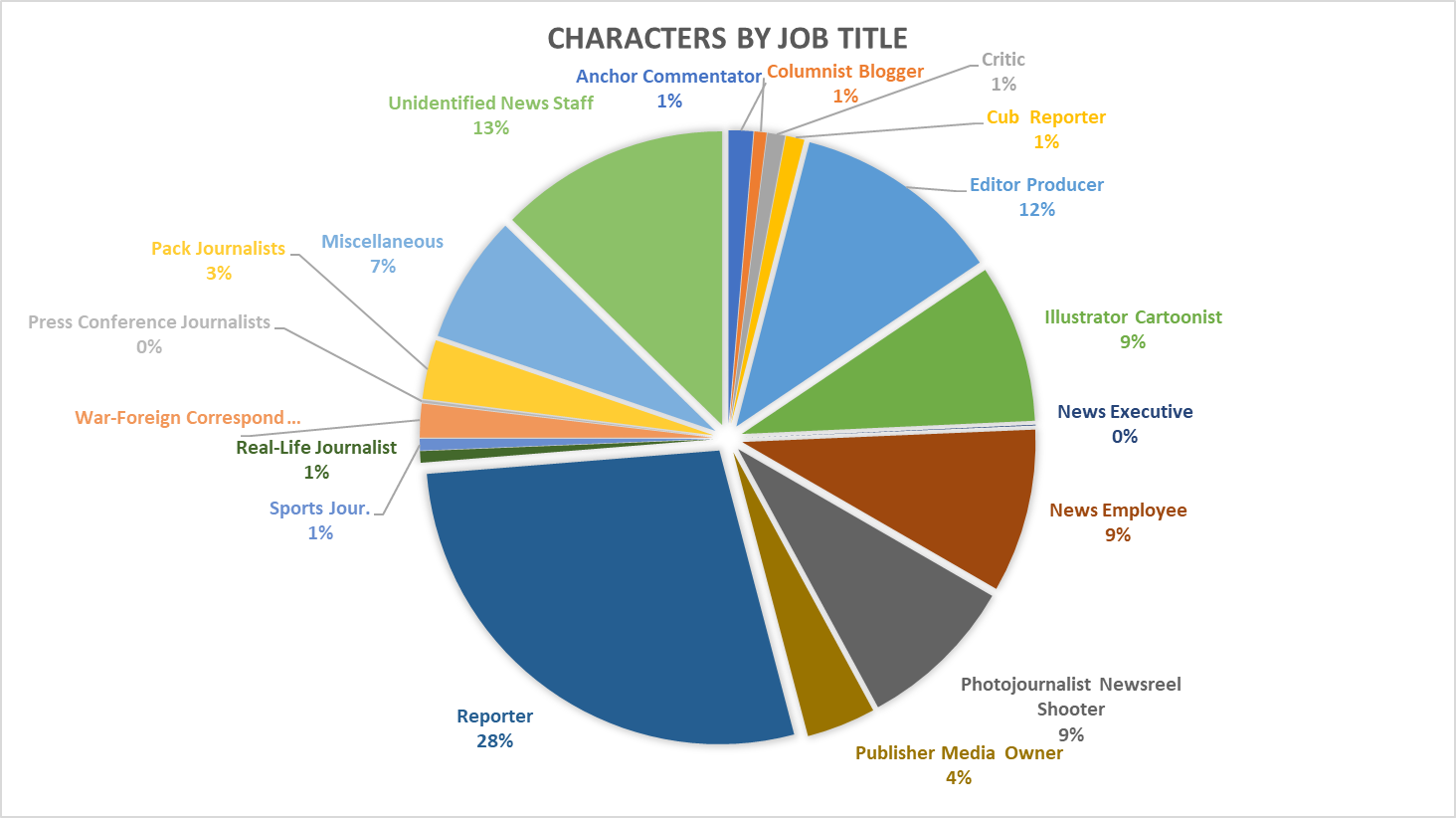
**Unidentified News Staff:** use of the news media―newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Internet, multimedia―by some unidentified news personnel or by some monolithic news organization as a significant plot point. Examples include articles or pieces that expose scandals and wrong-doing, provide erroneous information (such as a fake death), alert principals about some important news or events.

Reporters made up 28 per cent of the total journalists featured in the encoded films, followed by Unidentified News Staffs (13 percent), Editor-Producers (12 percent), Photojournalist-Newsreel Shooters (9 percent), Illustrator-Cartoonists (9 percent), News Employees (9 percent), Publisher-Media Owners (4 percent), Pack Journalists (3 percent). Cub Reporters, Critics, Columnists, Anchor-Commentators, Sports Journalists, War Correspondents and Real-Life Journalists were each one percent. Miscellaneous (mostly those journalists who populated the newsroom but were not identified) came in at seven percent.

**Table 6: Job Title**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **Anchor/ Commentator** | **Columnist** | **Critics** | **Cub Reporter** | **Editor/ Producer** | **Illustrator/ Cartoonist** | **News Executive** | **News Employee** | **Photojournalist/ Newsreel Shooter** | **Publisher/ Media Owner** |
| **1920** | **1** | **3** | **3** | **4** | **16** | **11** |  | **31** | **5** | **9** |
| **1921** |  | **2** | **3** |  | **24** | **11** |  | **16** | **5** | **5** |
| **1922** | **5** | **2** | **2** | **4** | **31** | **15** |  | **14** | **5** | **16** |
| **1923** | **3** |  | **2** | **1** | **22** | **21** | **1** | **22** | **23** | **13** |
| **1924** |  | **3** | **3** | **1** | **15** | **21** |  | **27** | **41** | **4** |
| **1925** |  | **1** | **4** |  | **15** | **31** |  | **20** | **25** | **6** |
| **1926** |  | **2** | **3** | **5** | **49** | **26** |  | **30** | **33** | **8** |
| **1927** | **13** | **1** | **1** | **2** | **17** | **27** |  | **21** | **24** | **9** |
| **1928** | **7** | **2** | **1** | **5** | **50** | **27** |  | **12** | **26** | **13** |
| **1929** | **3** |  | **1** | **2** | **34** | **16** |  | **20** | **20** | **7** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTALS** | **32** | **16** | **23** | **24** | **273** | **206** | **1** | **213** | **207** | **90** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Reporter** | **Real-Life Journalist** | **Sports Journalist** | **War-Foreign Correspondent** | **Press Conference Journalist** | **Pack Journalist** | **Miscellaneous** | **Unidentified News Staff** | **Total** |
| **1920** | **77** | **5** |  | **3** |  | **6** | **11** | **51** | **236** |
| **1921** | **53** |  | **1** |  |  | **8** | **8** | **40** | **176** |
| **1922** | **62** |  |  | **36** |  | **3** | **12** | **38** | **245** |
| **1923** | **33** |  |  | **4** | **2** | **12** | **12** | **23** | **194** |
| **1924** | **67** |  | **1** | **0** | **1** | **8** | **15** | **22** | **229** |
| **1925** | **57** |  | **1** | **1** |  | **9** | **29** | **21** | **220** |
| **1926** | **70** | **8** | **1** |  |  | **17** | **16** | **24** | **292** |
| **1927** | **47** | **1** | **6** |  |  | **4** | **23** | **28** | **224** |
| **1928** | **80** | **1** | **2** |  |  | **3** | **26** | **24** | **279** |
| **1929** | **115** |  | **3** |  |  | **8** | **15** | **29** | **273** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Totals** | **658** | **15** | **15** | **44** | **3** | **78** | **167** | **300** | **2368** |



## Descriptions of Major and Minor Characters

**Major Character (Major)**: a major character influences the outcome of the story or event. He or she is usually a leading character played by a major actor of the time.

**Minor Character (Minor):** a minor character does not play a significant role in the development of the film or TV program. He or she is usually a part of a larger group―i.e., journalists in a news conference or roaming around in packs, or those journalists who function as a part of the editorial or technical staff.

**Very Positive**: this is the journalist as a heroic character. This is the journalist who does the right thing, who fights everyone and anything to get the facts out to the public. He or she often exposes corruption, solves a murder, catches a thief, or saves an innocent. Everything he or she does is in the public interest. This is the kind of an image that makes the public believe that journalists are invaluable to any democracy. Journalists in a film would be evaluated as Very Positive (VP) if they have the following characteristics:

\*Shows that the journalist is an unqualified hero―he or she does everything possible to get a story out to the public, resulting in making the world a better place to live.

\*Shows the public that journalism is an important profession that holds the public interest above all else, that without journalists representing the public interest, corporations, government, and individuals would do terrible things. It makes the viewer feel that journalists are essential to making democracy work, to giving the public the kind of information it needs to make informative decisions in a democracy.

\*Presents an unvarnished image of the journalist as a heroic, important member of society.

**Positive:** these journalists will do anything to get a story that they believe is vital to the public interest, to the public welfare. They try to do their job without hurting anyone, basically people trying to do the right thing, but often frustrated by the system. They may be flawed, they may make mistakes, they may drink too much or quit their jobs in disgust, but they always seem to end up doing the right thing by the end of the story.

\*Shows the journalist often doing wrong things in pursuing stories that are in the public interest. The good the journalist does, however, outweighs the bad.

\*Shows the public that even when journalists are offensive, their jobs are important in making a democracy work.

\*Presents an overall impression that the journalist is more of a hero than a villain.

**Transformative Positive**: a journalist who conveys a negative image throughout the film, constantly doing negative things (unethical behavior, drinking heavily, stealing, wearing disguises, committing crimes to get a story), but who in the end serves the public interest and transforms into a positive image.

**Transformative Negative:** a journalist who conveys a positive image throughout the film, but ends up not serving the public interest and using the news media for personal, economic, or political gain.

**Negative**: these journalists are villains because they use the precious commodity of public confidence in the press for their own selfish ends. They use the power of the media for their own personal, political, or financial gain. They care less about the public interest than their own interests. They are interested in making more money, gaining power, doing anything to get what they want.

\*Shows that the journalist ignores the public interest in favor of personal, economic, or financial gain, thus losing the public’s respect.

\*Shows the public that journalism is―more often than not―a profession that is more concerned with personal gain than serving the public interest. It makes the public suspicious of journalists and creates a bad impression of what journalism is all about.

\*Presents an overall impression that the journalist is more of a villain than a hero.

**Very Negative**: These journalists often engage in unethical and often unlawful activities getting what they want at all costs, even committing murder or other serious crimes. They are manipulative and cynical. Often, they are publishers who use their power to corrupt government or business, to take advantage of the public. They are cheaters who are only interested in what is good for them, no one else. They usually are involved with the tabloid or sensationalistic press and often make up the anonymous news media chasing after individuals without regard for their privacy or safety.

\*Shows that the journalist is an unqualified villain who has no redeeming value, who has no concern for basic values, who will do anything to get what he or she wants regardless of the damage caused.

\*Shows the public that journalism is a profession filled with arrogant, morally bankrupt individuals who only care about themselves and not about the public or an individual. These journalists ignore the public interest completely.

\*Presents an unvarnished image of the journalist as a villain who engages in unethical and often unlawful activities including crime and murder.

**Neutral:** These journalists usually make up the anonymous members of the press corps and usually can be seen at press conferences taking notes or reacting to what the person is saying. They are usually nondescript characters who are simply there as journalists doing their job without offending anyone. They are often in the background and figure slightly in the plot or action of the film or television program**.** They are not major characters.

As noted, the image of the journalist in silent film description encodings were arbitrary and variable. Although we reached consensus among a number of journalists on each description, there are bound to be discrepancies between individual assessments.

Table 7 shows that in an evaluation of all the major and minor journalists featured in the silent films encoded, nearly 73 percent of the depictions were positive or very positive. Because some of the negative portrayals were so harsh, this result was a bit surprising. Nearly 20 percent were neutral. Only about seven percent of the images presented were negative or very negative.

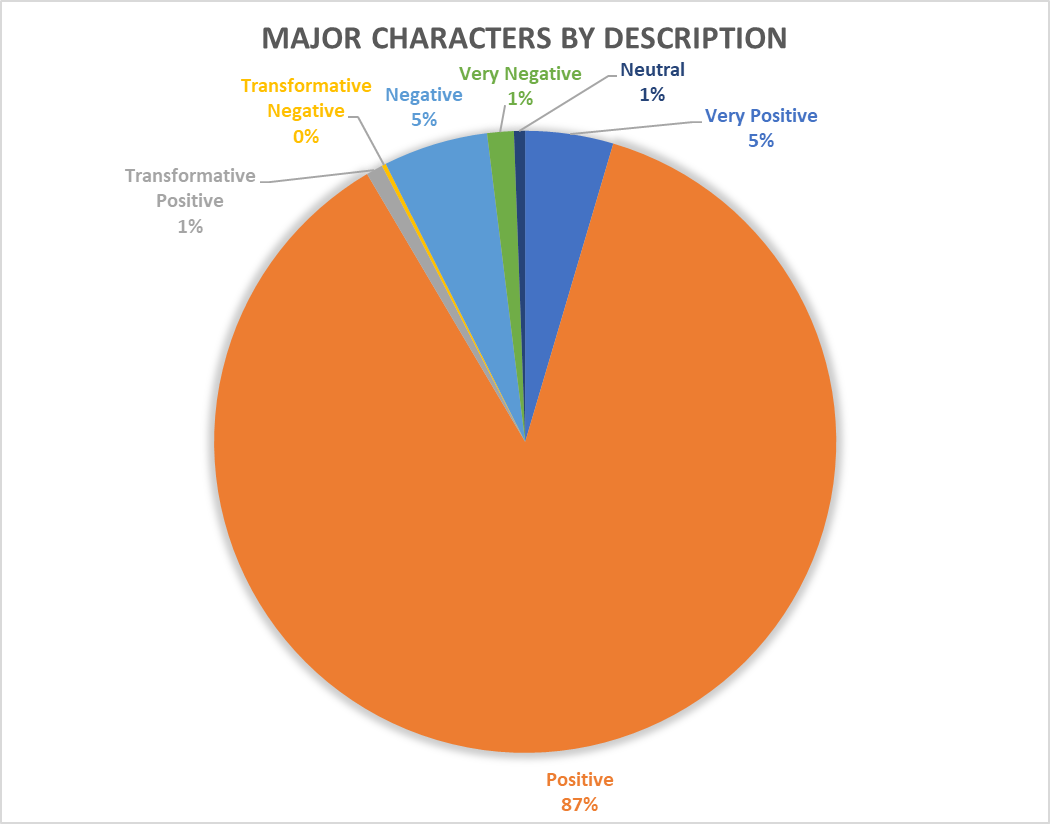
**Table 7: Major and Minor Characters by Description**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **Very** | **Positive** | **Transformative** | **Transformative** | **Negative** | **Very** | **Neutral** | **Total** |
| **Positive** | **Positive** | **Negative** | **Negative** |
| **1920** | **3** | **144** | **3** | **1** | **26** | **4** | **55** | **236** |
| **1921** | **17** | **91** | **2** |  | **18** | **1** | **47** | **176** |
| **1922** | **23** | **158** | **3** |  | **13** | **2** | **46** | **245** |
| **1923** |  | **140** |  |  | **18** | **1** | **35** | **194** |
| **1924** | **2** | **170** |  | **1** | **17** | **1** | **38** | **229** |
| **1925** | **2** | **155** |  | **1** | **12** | **3** | **47** | **220** |
| **1926** |  | **231** | **1** |  | **15** | **3** | **42** | **292** |
| **1927** | **3** | **150** | **1** |  | **15** | **3** | **52** | **224** |
| **1928** | **2** | **224** |  |  | **8** | **1** | **44** | **279** |
| **1929** | **12** | **196** | **2** | **1** | **4** | **7** | **51** | **273** |
| **TOTALS** | **64** | **1659** | **12** | **4** | **146** | **26** | **457** | **2368** |

Table 7A evaluated just the major characters. In this case, when a journalist was one of the featured characters in a silent film more than 90 percent were positive or very positive images. Only about seven percent were considered negative or very negative. As seen in Table 7B, minor characters were a different story. When the journalist appeared briefly in a silent film, only about 47 percent were positive or very positive. About eight percent were negative, and the remaining 45 percent were neutral – they either just did their jobs in the background of a newsroom or were involved in group journalism. The same percentages for major characters continued no matter what the genre (Table 8), gender (Table 9), and job title (Table 10).

**Table 7A: Major Characters by Description**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **Very** | **Positive** | **Transformative** | **Transformative** | **Negative** | **Very** | **Neutral** | **Total** |
| **Positive** | **Positive** | **Negative** | **Negative** |
| **1920** | **3** | **124** | **3** |  | **11** | **3** | **1** | **145** |
| **1921** | **17** | **63** | **2** |  | **11** | **1** | **1** | **95** |
| **1922** | **23** | **117** | **3** |  | **6** | **2** | **1** | **152** |
| **1923** |  | **109** |  |  | **10** | **1** | **3** | **123** |
| **1924** | **2** | **129** |  | **1** | **14** | **1** |  | **147** |
| **1925** | **2** | **119** |  | **1** | **5** | **3** | **1** | **131** |
| **1926** |  | **163** | **1** |  | **4** | **3** | **1** | **172** |
| **1927** | **3** | **114** | **1** |  | **5** | **3** |  | **126** |
| **1928** | **1** | **146** |  |  | **5** | **1** |  | **153** |
| **1929** | **12** | **114** | **2** | **1** | **3** | **2** | **0** | **134** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTALS** | **63** | **1199** | **12** | **3** | **74** | **20** | **8** | **1378** |



**Table 7B: Minor Characters by Description**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decade** | **Very** | **Positive** | **Transformative** | **Transformative** | **Negative** | **Very** | **Neutral** | **Total** |
| **Positive** | **Positive** | **Negative** | **Negative** |
| **1920** |  | **20** |  | **1** | **15** | **1** | **54** | **91** |
| **1921** |  | **28** |  |  | **7** |  | **46** | **81** |
| **1922** |  | **41** |  |  | **7** | **0** | **45** | **93** |
| **1923** |  | **31** |  |  | **8** |  | **32** | **71** |
| **1924** |  | **41** |  |  | **3** |  | **38** | **82** |
| **1925** |  | **36** |  |  | **7** |  | **46** | **89** |
| **1926** |  | **68** |  |  | **11** |  | **41** | **120** |
| **1927** |  | **36** |  |  | **10** |  | **52** | **98** |
| **1928** | **1** | **79** |  |  | **3** |  | **43** | **126** |
| **1929** |  | **82** |  |  | **1** | **5** | **51** | **139** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTALS** | **1** | **461** | **0** | **1** | **72** | **6** | **448** | **989** |

Most major characters appearing in drama (almost 85 percent), comedy (84.5 percent), romance (77.7 percent), and animation, serial, and true story-biography-documentary genres (nearly 100 percent) were overwhelmingly positive (Table 8)

**Table 8: Descriptions-Major Characters by Genre**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Genre** | **Very Positive** | **Positive** | **Transformative Positive** | **Transformative Negative** | **Negative** | **Very Negative** | **Neutral** | **Total** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Action-Adventure** |  | **5** | **1** |  | **2** |  |  | **8** |
| **Animation** |  | **200** |  |  | **1** |  |  | **201** |
| **Drama** | **8** | **227** | **7** | **3** | **39** | **12** |  | **296** |
| **Comedy** |  | **167** | **3** |  | **25** | **5** | **1** | **201** |
| **Crime-Mystery-Thriller** | **4** | **43** | **1** |  | **4** | **2** |  | **54** |
| **Romance** |  | **7** |  |  | **2** |  |  | **9** |
| **Satire-Parody** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **0** |
| **Sci-Fi-Horror** |  | **2** |  |  |  |  |  | **2** |
| **Serial** | **43** | **201** |  |  |  |  |  | **244** |
| **Sport** |  | **3** |  |  |  |  |  | **3** |
| **True Story-Biography-Documentary** | **2** | **325** |  |  |  |  | **7** | **334** |
| **War** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **0** |
| **Western** | **6** | **20** |  |  | **1** | **1** |  | **28** |
| **TOTALS** | **63** | **1200** | **12** | **3** | **75** | **19** | **8** | **1380** |

Male (92.71 percent) and female (92.54 percent) major characters were also overwhelmingly positive. Since a major character is usually one of the leads of the film, most screenplays preferred positive lead characters the audience would like (heroes) leaving negativity to minor characters in the film (villains). (Table 9).

**Table 9: Descriptions: Major Characters by Gender**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gender** | **Very Positive** | **Positive** | **Transformative Positive** | **Transformative Negative** | **Negative** | **Very Negative** | **Neutral** | **Total** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Male** | **52** | **969** | **10** | **2** | **59** | **20** |  | **1112** |
| **Female** | **11** | **173** | **2** | **1** | **14** |  |  | **201** |
| **Group** |  | **58** |  |  | **1** |  | **8** | **67** |
| **TOTALS** | **63** | **1200** | **12** | **3** | **75** | **19** | **8** | **1380** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

In descriptions of major characters by job (Table 10), publishers-media owners (almost 30.5 percent), critics (23 percent), columnists (20 percent), and editors (almost 14 percent) were rated more negatively than any other job category. War correspondents, cub reporters, illustrators-cartoonists, commentators, sports journalists and news employees were among the most positive images of the journalist in popular culture.

**Table 10: Descriptions: Major Characters by Job**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Job Title** | **Very** | **Positive** | **Transformative** | **Transformative** | **Negative** | **Very** | **Neutral** | **Total** |
| **Positive** | **Positive** | **Negative** | **Negative** |
| **Anchor/** |  | **27** |  |  |  |  |  | **27** |
| **Commentator** |
| **Columnist/** |  | **13** |  |  | **2** |  | **0** | **15** |
| **Blogger** |
| **Critic** |  | **8** | **2** |  | **2** | **1** |  | **13** |
| **Cub Reporter** |  | **22** |  |  |  | **1** |  | **23** |
| **Editor/** | **3** | **128** | **1** |  | **14** | **7** |  | **153** |
| **Producer** |
| **Illustrator/** |  | **207** | **1** |  |  |  |  | **208** |
| **Cartoonist** |
| **News** |  | **1** |  |  |  |  |  | **1** |
| **Executive** |
| **News** | **1** | **88** |  |  | **8** |  |  | **97** |
| **Employee** |
| **Photojournalist** | **1** | **155** |  |  | **6** |  |  | **162** |
| **Publisher/** | **3** | **42** | **3** |  | **13** | **8** |  | **69** |
| **Media Owner** |
| **Reporter/** | **37** | **436** | **5** | **3** | **28** | **3** | **0** | **512** |
| **Correspondent** |
| **Real-Life** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **0** |
| **Journalists** |
| **Writer** |
| **Sports** |  | **7** |  |  |  |  |  | **7** |
| **Journalists** |
| **Press** |  | **3** |  |  |  |  |  | **3** |
| **Conference** |
| **Journalists** |
| **Pack** |  | **27** |  |  |  |  | **2** | **29** |
| **Journalists** |
| **Unidentified News Staff** |  | **2** |  |  | **1** |  | **2** | **5** |
| **Miscellaneous** |  | **6** |  |  |  |  | **4** | **10** |
| **Correspondent** | **18** | **26** |  |  |  |  |  | **44** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTALS** | **63** | **1198** | **12** | **3** | **74** | **20** | **8** | **1378** |

# Discussion[[30]](#endnote-30)

“Stop the Press!” shouts the cub reporter in the 1928 *The Power of the Press* not once but twice. In *Speakeasy* (1929)*,* an angry city editor is chewing out a staff member for missing a story. In *Gallegher* (1928), a reporter shouts to an empty phone after the city editor hangs up: “You can’t fire me! I quit right now!” In *Love is a Lie* (1927-1928), gigantic newspaper presses grind out newspapers in an opening scene that had become very familiar to silent film audiences. Newspaper film after newspaper film began with the presses rolling, spilling out the newspapers of the day In the late 1920s, the silence ended when audiences first heard the ear-splitting sound of the large newspaper presses at full speed.

Many of the stereotypes established in silent films from 1894 to 1919 were expanded upon and refined in the 1920s. Familiar images of reporters, editors and publishers in the silent film era lasted throughout most of the 20th century and many are even used today. The way newspapers were printed – from the composing room to Linotype machines – were explored in documentary fashion**.**  Other recognizable images that became synonymous with newspapers in the public mind included close-ups of fingers rapidly typing out a story, packs of journalists chasing after newsmakers, and the ever-present telephone.

The most dominant journalists pictured in silent films were white male and female reporters and editors. Two continuing developments were the drunken journalist whose alcoholism was more or less accepted by the newspaper profession with humor and sometimes dismay, and the journalist becoming so familiar to silent film audiences that filmmakers used them readily in comedy films satirizing the role of the news profession.

By 1928, sound was a fact of life and newspaper films were tailor-made for the talkies – the busy newsroom explored in silent films suddenly exploded with sound. Clever title cards were replaced with rough-and-tumble dialogue written by former newspapermen who understood what it was to look – and sound – like a real newspaper journalist. Audiences loved it, and newspaper films in 1929 turned out to be some of the most successful early sound films leading into the golden age of newspaper films in the 1930s and 1940s.

## Male Reporters[[31]](#endnote-31)

**Male reporters**[[32]](#endnote-32) **in the late silent film era built on the stereotypes perfected in the early part of the century.**[[33]](#endnote-33)  **The “whatever it takes” mentality with the means justifying the ends as long as the reporters and editors got a scoop meant that anything goes when it came to getting that story even if it involved breaking the law or pretending to be anyone but a reporter.**

***The Big News,* one of the most effective talkies made at the end of the silent film era in 1929, sums up all of the familiar stereotypes and prototypes of the image of the journalist in film. It is a fitting end to the first two decades of cinema with its depiction of a wide variety of reporters, editors and other assorted journalists that became as well known to film audiences as the 1930s began as any character depicted in films**. You have the hard-boiled, often drunk male star reporter (Steve Banks) of *The Express*; his female reporter wife (Margaret Banks), a sob sister who works for a rival newspaper and is planning to divorce him because of his drinking among other things; editor Charles Sellon who is constantly battling with his star reporter as well as assorted personalities who populate the newsroom. Much of the action takes place in the newspaper office – the editorial room and the editor’s office. The film journalist’s contempt for police is demonstrated by a running gag involving the misspelling of a policeman’s name.

The film opens with Banks sleeping off a binge in the editor’s office. He is almost always drunk and fired on a daily basis. Hensel, the advertising manager, finds him asleep under newspapers and threatens to have him fired (again). Banks tells him, “Listen, Hensel, there are seventeen hundred and ninety newspapers in the United States, and I’ve only worked on sixteen of ‘em.” Banks is on the outs because his wife has scooped him on a story about a woman involved with narcotics. Banks’s excuse is that he went to a speakeasy to investigate the same story, but got drunk and was thrown out after insulting a prominent advertiser in their paper. To add to his problems, Margaret shows up at the paper to ask for a divorce telling him, “You’d be one of the best newspapermen in this town if you’d only quit drinking.” City editor Art O’Neill tells Banks: “Here’s a story in the *Morning Herald* by your wife. Looks like she beat you to it.” The city editor also tells Margaret that she is miscast. She should have been Steve’s mother, not his wife. The mannish society editor –advice-to-the-lovelorn editor Vera is usually dressed in a suit and tie and Banks kids her from the minute she gets into the office about the way she dresses and her demeanor.

The movie’s newly discovered voice allowed for intense verbal sparring between Banks and editor Addison. One such discussion eventually degenerates into an incoherent shouting march, a screaming fight in which Banks, mirroring the famous speech in *The Front Page*,[[34]](#endnote-34) tells the editor, “I’m sick of this bum racket anyhow. It isn’t even a racket. It’s a disease that gets into your blood and wrings you out like an old mop. What are newspapers for? ...something to put under carpets. Plugs for ratholes. Wrapping paper for bootleggers. Bed quilts for bums in the park, and a lot of other things.” The editor: “You’re a quitter. You’re yellow. And, worst of all, you’re not even a good newspaperman…throwing mud at the honorable profession of journalism. And why? Just because you fell down on a news story?” Banks: “You can’t talk to me like that. I’ve forgotten more about news than you’ll ever know.” Editor: “Sent out on an assignment and what happens? Drunk and disorderly in a cheap speakeasy.” Banks: “Well, where do you suppose news come from, the old ladies home?” Editor: “Oh, bah, your wife’s a better newspaperman than you are.” An angry Banks leaves to get a story that will blow the city apart and make the editor beg him to come back. He leaves the office announcing that he has been fired. The rest of the staff is clearly used to such claims because one of them observes it is the third time he has been fired this month, and a staff member later tells Margaret that Steve and Allison “have these fights about twice a week just to prove they’re not effeminate.”

Banks goes to the speakeasy after leaving the office, confronts a criminal and ends up getting an exclusive bombshell of a story. He goes back to the office and the reporter and editor have another screaming fight. Banks says he has the story of a lifetime but won’t give it to *The* *Express* because he was fired. “I scooped the whole town on this story on my own time. And I’m gonna have it published, too. But not in your punk sheet. I’m gonna sell this to a decent newspaper.” The editor finally mollifies Banks by offering him a raise and calling him the best newspaperman he knows. Banks leaves the editor’s office and a criminal enters Addison’s office and kills the editor. Since Banks left by a back way and was not seen existing the office by anyone in the newsroom, he is charged with the murder. As soon as the editor’s death is confirmed, the city editor yells at the staff to get to work and get out a story on it. Banks clears himself with the help of a Dictaphone record running when the criminal committed the murder. The criminal is arrested and Steve and Margaret are reconciled when she discovers the flask he is drinking from now contains tea.

The reviewers mostly praised *The Big News* as one of the best newspaper films to date. Mordaunt Hall, writing in the *New York Times,* said the film “manages to hold its own as a breezy newspaper play with amusing repartee. The picture possesses a temp accented by an engaging ribaldry that makes it good to look at and easy to listen to. The characterizations are expertly drawn, especially that of the reporter who spends his pay check in the speakeasy and whose wife, a sob-sister on another newspaper, wants to divorce him because of it. Robert Armstrong, in the role of the reportorial sot, is a credible type of the itinerant journalist….the story is hardly important, considering the admirable way in which the spirit of a newspaper office has been brought to the screen. The men in the story seem really to work for a living and have as much fun as possible at the same time. The production lacks mobility and seems more of a photographed play than a motion picture.”[[35]](#endnote-35) The review was one of many raves the film got upon its 1929 release. “Pathe’s ‘Big News’ is worthy of any rave it gets. And that goes for the superlatives they’ll probably use in the press sheet. The theme picks a news room of the daily in a second-class city. Radio recorders never forgot to keep the typewriters clicking into their mikes. The writing tempo never ceases.”[[36]](#endnote-36) A newspaper reviewer added: “It should be diverting to the general public as to the gentlemen of the press themselves. There are many reporters in the world like Steve, and Armstrong’s impersonation is decidedly well done. Steve has printer’s ink in his blood. Once a newspaperman, always a newspaperman, he believes that. They fire him. They take him back with raise. He’s clever, likeable….he’s fond of hard liquor. His ups and downs, his bad ‘breaks’ and the thrills of his job make him an appealing fellow. The audience is with him through thick and thin.”[[37]](#endnote-37)

A female reviewer loved the film “glorifying the American Newspaper Man” but was annoyed at the way the newspaper women were portrayed: “My only quarrel with ‘Big News’ is that they have fallen for the fallacy that most newspaper women wear funny clothes and flat-heeled shoes and go about slapping everybody on the back. I worked on a newspaper once and I was always catching my high French heel in the headlines. It isn’t fair.”[[38]](#endnote-38) Pathe picked up the raves by advertising that “Big News” was “the finest all-dialogue picture of newspaper life ever filmed.”[[39]](#endnote-39)

**Silent film audiences used to seeing the carefree, drunken, happy journalists solving murders and romancing everyone might have been a surprised at another 1929 newspaper film that was a depressing realistic look at the toll the profession of journalism took on the personal lives of journalists. *Gentlemen of the Press* was a painfully realistic look at a seasoned newspaperman’s disillusionment with the world of journalism in the late 1920s.**

The film opens in the newsroom, a busy place with eager newsmen printing the news of the day. They are committed to their work even at the cost of their personal lives. Wickland Snell, a star reporter and editor, is no exception – he is the hero of his newsroom, writing, editing, supervising one top story after another including a byline account of celebrity aviator Charles Lindbergh’s landing in New York. Into this white male enclave, a female reporter comes in and gives her copy to the editor. She seems to be barely tolerated.

Snell has one personal achievement: his daughter. She is now a grown woman and Snell carries a picture of her he shows to anyone on the staff he can grab. His daughter comes to the newsroom to see her father with some news: she has just married a young man. Snell hopes he is working in some respectable profession, but then her new husband tells Snell he is a member of the news profession, a cub reporter. Snell is obviously unhappy about this. But a big story breaks and Snell rushes to his typewriter while his daughter and her husband look on.

Snell decides that since he missed his daughter growing up as well as her wedding he is going to quit the paper and take a plush job as a public relations man at a large firm at a princely salary. He also gives his daughter’s husband a job as his assistant.

For a while, Snell has been having a fling with his secretary, a good-time girl who is impatient with Snell’s preoccupation with his job. She decides to take a fancy to the girl’s husband who responds to her advances. Snell’s corrupt boss holds a press party for the “newspaper boys” without telling Snell. There is plenty of booze and food and the reporters are obviously enjoying themselves until the pompous boss gives them a self-serving non-story. An embarrassed Snell apologizes to his friends, later reads the riot act to his boss and then quits his job going back to his newspaper as night city editor. He has some drinks with the almost-always drunk reporter Charlie Hatton to celebrate his return to journalism and he also makes sure his daughter’s husband stays away from his former secretary.

His daughter gives birth to a healthy baby, but she remains hospitalized in critical condition. Snell starts to leave the office to see her when a big story breaks involving a ship disaster and he reluctantly remains at the paper to get out an extra. His daughter’s husband calls him because his wife wants to hear her father’s voice before she dies, but he is too busy shouting out instructions to the staff to listen on the phone. When he does, it is too late. His daughter is dead and his profession once again has destroyed his personal life. Stunned, Snell stares into the camera while the “Extra” with the ship disaster story is being distributed by copy boys running through the newsroom. A young Yale graduate who has been pestering Snell for an interview about journalism as a career, tries to talk to Snell but all the veteran can do is to mutter: “Get out. Get out before it poisons you.”

Reviewers who had seen the stage play on which the film is based were a bit critical, but generally they applauded the way the newspaper world was depicted. One reviewer called the film “a knockout. Newspaper pictures in the past, have been soggy with sentimentality and crammed with technical errors that have drawn only guffaws from the lads with the pad and pencil. But not this baby. This all-talkie is the film version of a stage play of the same name written by five New York newspapermen…A fast, smart and cynical story about the press boys, all lighted up with plenty of horse laughs and awash with enough tears to use up the most lachrymose customer.”[[40]](#endnote-40) One critic praised the realism of the film, but had some reservations: “While this is perhaps the most authentic story of newspaper life yet filmed, it proves disappointing in several respects. With the original play enjoying the collaboration of well-known newspapermen, the screen version has been able to retain the atmosphere, especially in the city room of the big metropolitan daily. This follows the stage version closely, and the characters are well cast and natural. But it loses out in the toning down of the hardboiled dialogue which made the play talked about.”[[41]](#endnote-41) The *Variety* reviewer added, “In general the picture serves up a somber, if accurate portrait of newspaper life. Accuracy in many aspects is natural, considering that Ward Morehouse of the New York *Sun*, aided and abetted by five more co-authoring scribes on other local dailies, is responsible for the script.”[[42]](#endnote-42) A newspaper critic praised the realism if not the sentimentality of the plot: “The scenes in the news room of the Chronicle are, I suppose, authentically mounted, and above the din of rattling typewriters, the observer may hear what is probably a genuine sample of the small talk and wisecracks peculiar to the trade. Walter Huston plays the role of the dyed-in-the-wool newspaper man who is forever advising everybody else to get out of the game but who can never stay out of it himself. He brings credibility to the characterization, and that, perhaps, is praise enough in view of the caricatures that the movies have made of newspaper reporters in the past.”[[43]](#endnote-43)

**Male reporters continued to be crime fighters, crusaders and investigative reporters solving a crime, exposing corruption or a secret conspiracy, or doing whatever it takes to serve the public interest. Crusading reporters, editors, and even publishers were heroes of the early cinema fighting for the “little guy,” exposing corruption at the highest levels and proving that as long as there was a newspaper willing to risk all, nobody was above the law. The crime reporter. often a police reporter, was more detective than reporter, courageous but unprincipled, risking his or her life to get a story, obsessed with capturing the criminal and standing up for justice. As in the early silent films, crime reporters dominated films about journalists well into the 1930s and 1940s.** In *The Final Extra* (1927), cub reporter Pat Riley greatly admires his senior colleague reporter Tom Collins who is murdered when he’s about to reveal the name of the leader of a gang of bootleggers in an expose he’s writing for the newspaper. Historian Richard R. Ness wrote, “Even before the movies could talk the conventions of the journalism genre had been established, as indicated by this familiar plot.”[[44]](#endnote-44) The title cards are filled with the images of the journalist silent film audiences were familiar including an overzealous opening: ‘Here shall the Press the People’s right maintain/Unawed by influence and unbribed by gain/Here Patriot Truth her glorious precepts draw/Pledged to Religion, Liberty and Law.’

The story begins with Joe Williams, Managing Editor of the *Tribune* “to whom news is the breath of life,” telling Collins, his star reporter, “Great day for news, Collins – headline stuff from all over the World.” Tom Collins: “whose ‘nose for news’ had earned him the post of feature writer,” tells his editor, “When the rum ring story breaks, Joe, it will be the most sensational expose in the history of the paper…and when I name ‘The Shadow’ the gang’s leader, it’s going to shake the whole town…and I’m going to break up the gang if it’s the last assignment I ever get.” Meanwhile the young Pat Riley, who “was a bear on the Harvard football team, but only a cub on the *Tribune* staff,” daydreams that he is covering a real story and exposing crooks. A co-worker breaks his reverie, yelling, “Hey, ‘Cholly,’ the boss says for you to hurry – this is a daily newspaper, not a monthly magazine.” Riley turns in his story. The editor tells him, “Yeh, it’s OK – you certainly write a great line of society stuff.” The cub complains, “I guess I’m doomed to write this society slush the rest of my life.” Williams assigns him to cover a musical revue run by showman Melvin LeRoy as a reward. Riley meets Collins’s daughter who is a dancer. LeRoy, really a crime boss, gives the veteran reporter Collins a tip on the gang that sends him to his death. The reporter is shot down by gangsters. “They got me – call the *Tribune* and have them tell my daughter,” he tells police who come to his aid before he dies. Back at the *Tribune* office, the editor, wearing a green visor, gets the phone call telling him about his star reporter’s murder. He looks over at Riley: “The gang got Collins tonight. It’s a tough assignment my boy, but someone must break the news to his daughter, Ruth.” Riley gets that assignment and promises to get the men who killed her father.

One of the crooks who killed the reporter says, “Collins’s death will be a lesson to these newshounds to lay off us.” His cohort disagrees: “Don’t fool yourself – I know those birds – they’ll hound us worse than ever.” Riley is assigned to cover a party given by LeRoy who advises him to stick to society news. The cub tells him, “I’m going to break up this gang if it’s the last assignment I ever get.” Riley overhears a nervous gang member tell the others, “I warned you not to kill that newspaperman….” After a fight, the cub is captured, but plays dead and attacks his captors, escaping to phone his paper. The crooks call LeRoy, their boss, to tell him that Riley has escaped and LeRoy makes plans to kidnap Ruth Collins and take her to his mansion. Riley calls the editor, “Hold the presses – I’ve got positive proof that LeRoy is The Shadow.” A copy boy runs the copy to the pressman with the presses roaring. Meanwhile, Riley goes to LeRoy’s mansion and rescues Ruth, shouting to police: “I’m Riley of the *Tribune*. There’s your man.” Police arrest LeRoy and Riley gets on the phone and tells the editor: “I’m engaged. Put that in your Final Edition.” The end is superimposed over a shot of the presses rolling.

A surprising sound featurette, *Copy* (1929) sums up the journalism of the late 1920s in good fashion. One reviewer wrote: “A newspaper sketch that has much to recommend it. It catches the atmosphere of the newspaper office with invariable accuracy.”[[45]](#endnote-45) All of the action takes place in a metropolitan newspaper, the *Daily News* office, which is filled with seasoned newsmen. Signs on the wall say “Is it Fit to Print?” and “Is it Interesting?” Tommy is the assistant city editor who holds down the desk until the hard-boiled city editor, John Mack, arrives. One of his reporters and rewrite men, Adams is told to get going on the advice-to-the-lovelorn column. Reporter Frank Pratt and the group are bemoaning the fact that it is a rotten day for news: no news at all. Tommy finds a pair of dice and throws them on the floor where the boys in the editorial room start up a game. The fun stops when the city editor arrives. Mack arrives shouting about a series of stories he wants on a ship owner’s disregard for safety measures on his ships. Lithographers, including a female, set the type for the story. The pressmen get out the edition and newsboys sell the newspaper on the street. As the city editor barks out orders, the ship owner, a large advertiser, complains to the managing editor about the stories in the newspaper on his ships. He calls Mack “a scandalmongering hack writer.” The managing editor calls Mack back into his office where the ship owner is asking for him to be fired. The managing editor tells Mack to kill the story, but the city editor refuses and he is fired. The copy boy Jimmy asks Mack why he didn’t slug the ship owner and Mack tells him: “the typewriter is mightier than the fist.”

Just then, Tommy comes running in, saying one of the boats mentioned in the story is on fire with many women and children aboard, headed for a church picnic. This proves the city editor right and Mack shouts at the ship owner that he is responsible for all of the death and destruction, then tells the managing editor that he’ll quit after he gets out a special edition on the fire. Mack runs out of the managing editor’s office to supervise the coverage. “We’ll find out if you are journalists or just reporters,” he shouts to the staff. More than 350 are believed dead in the fire. Mack shouts he wants the story on the lack of safety measures blasted all over the paper, three pages, 21 columns. The disaster story turns personal when it is discovered Mack’s wife and six-year-old child were onboard the burning ship and there are no survivors. The staff conspire to keep the names off the list so Mack won’t find out until later, but the editor learns the news and is devastated. Just as the film is about to end, Mack learns his wife and daughter missed the boat because they were late. He is overjoyed, but yells at his wife on the phone for not telling him where they were. Jimmy tells him: “Hey, the boss wants to see ya.” The city editor: “You tell ‘im I’ve gone home.” Mack puts on his coat and leaves the city room as quickly as he can.

**The role of newspapers as both a force in fighting corruption and turning a spotlight of publicity on criminals as well as the newspaper as a victim of manipulation by such forces** is demonstrated in *Protection* (1929). Newspaperman Chick Slater is assigned to do a story on a bootlegger who uses modern business methods to run an efficient rum-running ring. He discovers prominent city officials are shielding the bootlegger, but since the bootlegger also controls the newspaper, he uses his influence to keep the story from being printed. Slater quits his job and takes over a crusading rival paper, *The Register.* Another reporter is promoted to editor of the bootlegger’s paper, but he and his sob sister girlfriend also leave and go to *The Register.* Slater publishes his expose and the bootlegger tries to kill Slater as he arrives in his office but fails and is killed by a colleague as he leaves the newspaper office. In *The Reckless Age* (1924), the owner of a local newspaper who runs a scandal sheet discovers a sensational story about a rich girl and her father buys the paper to suppress the story.

***Freedom of the Press* (1928) was among several newspaper dramas that depicted actual events in which bootleggers and gang leaders either manipulated the press or physically took over the operations of the paper**. The plot of *Freedom of the Press* is based on the real-life murder of Canton, Ohio, newspaper publisher Don Mellett. In the film, Bill Ballard, youngest cub reporter on the *Free Press,* is the son of the owner of the newspaper. He is in love with the ward of a political boss and is outraged when his father, John Ballard, who also functions as the editor of the paper, breaks a story accusing the political boss of being the “man higher up” in the city’s vice ring. As one reviewer put it: “The veteran editor tries to reason with his hot-tempered son and points out to him the sacred obligation of a newspaper in exposing crime. Even friendship doesn’t count.”[[46]](#endnote-46) The senior Ballard is brutally murdered by the political boss’s henchmen. Bill, stunned, but with an awakened conscience, takes his father’s place at the helm of the great daily and determines to carry on his father’s fight against corruption. To do this he places himself in a difficult position – the political boss and his associates bring every possible pressure to bear on young Ballard. The young publisher courageously wages a campaign against the corrupt mayoral candidate, preventing him from becoming the city’s mayor. On the eve of the election, a bomb is thrown into the newspaper office. The newspapermen carry on their work despite the flames in the editorial rooms. The presses are in the basement and the edition is on the street before that part of the plant is ruined. The political boss realizes he has lost and kills himself.

The film was among several newspaper dramas that depicted actual events in which bootleggers and gang leaders either manipulated the press or physically took over the operations of the paper.[[47]](#endnote-47) In *Jazzland* (1928), the assassination of a small-town Midwestern editor served as the inspiration for this film. Owner-editor Homer Pew and his brother Hamilton run a small-town Midwestern newspaper. The two brothers had opposed a big city nightclub, the Jazzland, opening in their small New England town and attempt to learn the identity of the owner. Hamilton is murdered at the club and his brother exposes the killer.

**Even with these new, realistic films depicting journalism close to what it actually was in real life, there were the films that glorified the male reporter making him a daredevil hero, especially in the serials, which were fading but still popular among audiences if not film critics.**[[48]](#endnote-48)In *Double Adventure* (1921), reporter Bob Cross tries to get the goods on a notorious gang of crooks. In the process, he performs daredevil stunts -- jumps across a wide chasm on a motorcycle, jumps through a skylight, climbs hand-over-hand fashion on a rope stretched across treacherous water while the villains, knives in hand, await their chance, jumps from a falling tower into a tree, jumps from one automobile to another with both machines traveling at sixty-mile-an-hour rate, climbs up the side of a twelve-story building, dives from the saddle of a speeding motorcycle over the rail of a bridge, extremely high above the water.[[49]](#endnote-49) In *Haunted Valley* (1923), reporter Dick Foster of the *Morning Globe* shows up in episode eleven when he gets wind of what is going on in Haunted Valley thinking it may be a sensational story. “Reporters are not just troublemakers,” Foster tells a man he is trying to interview. “Of course I want a story, but in return I may be able to help you.” What follows is a series of adventures in which the reporter is imprisoned and tortured. fights his captors and escapes, meets the heroine, Ruth Ranger, and helps her decode a secret map, almost gets crushed to death in an elevator explosion (chapter twelve), saves Ruth from falling to her death off a mountain (chapter 13), escapes another explosion (chapter 14), and in the final chapter, discovers a platinum mine, saying “You’ll have to excuse me. I’m going to hurry back to my paper. This is the greatest story of the age and nobody’s going to beat me to it.” Foster gets the story but the hero gets the girl.[[50]](#endnote-50) In *The Scarlet Streak* (1925-1926) Bob Evans, a snappy star reporter of *The Times,* is sent out to work night and day to “get a story” of a mysterious death-dealing invention that its inventor and his daughter hope will prove so terrible in its effect that it will end all wars. The leader of a band of unscrupulous international crooks wants the invention so he will be able to rule the world and he will stop at nothing to gain control for the plans. After many thrilling adventures, the criminal band is dispersed and the death machine is permanently destroyed. The reporter and the inventor’s daughter fall in love and apparently live happily ever afterward.[[51]](#endnote-51)

**There were two continuing film series featuring police reporters.** Tip O’Neil (1924-1925) is an investigative reporter doing whatever it takes to solve a crime. In *Midnight Secrets* (1924)*,* he investigates crooked politicians and, in an effort to stop the journalist, the crooks kidnap his sweetheart and hide her on a yacht, but the reporter locates her, fights off the political boss’s henchmen and rescues her. An advertisement reads: “He was a cub – now he’s a bear. He jumps from a hydroplane to a speed boat in mid-ocean to save the girl he loves.”[[52]](#endnote-52)

Ned of the News is police reporter Ned Hargraves, who works for a metropolitan daily who is featured in twelve silent films in 1921-1922, but only three could be verified as having been made. In *A Treacherous Rival* (1922) Ned Hargraves is sent out to get a story on a band of smugglers. Reporter George Mitchell of the opposition paper, *The Globe*, is on the same story. Ned finds the outlaws’s lair. Mitchell is overpowered and tied up, but manages to escape. He leads a posse to the band’s meeting place and rushes back to secure a scoop, but Ned overtakes him and after a spirited struggle, beats him to the telegraph wire to file his story first. In *The Call of Courage* (1922), Ned shows up at a small western town in search of a feature. He is held up by and forced to change clothes with a horse thief and is arrested by the sheriff and thrown into jail. It is the day before the election and the local newspaper is fighting the re-election of present administration. The editor of the local paper is made a prisoner by the candidate for sheriff to keep him from printing an expose before the election. Ned escapes from jail, is pursued and wounded. The editor’s daughter helps him elude the posse. The editor escapes and rushes back to his printing office where, with Ned’s aid, he gets out the paper exposing the sheriff. The editor wins the election and the reporter gets the girl.

**Feature-length films continued to create the illusion that the reporter was capable of capturing criminals and righting wrongs far better than the police**.[[53]](#endnote-53) In *The Hole in the Wall*, made twice, once in 1921 and again in 1929, Gordon Grant is the police reporter for the *Chronicle.* He is trusted by the chief of police who often asks for his help: “I’m a newspaperman. I never read the newspapers. I don’t care who was at the opera, who was run over or who committed suicide,” the reporter tells him. The problem facing police is a jewel heist. “There’s not a ray for hope,” says the chief. “Do you want me to print that?” asks Grant, laughing. The chief asks the reporter if he has any hunches about the robberies and the reporter points out that other robberies also involved spiritualism and a female medium-fortune teller. “Mystery has always interested me…that’s why I like this racket,” he tells the cop adding that he’ll follow his hunch and visit the medium. He solves the crime and ends up with the medium who turns out to be an innocent victim and is, by coincidence, his childhood sweetheart.[[54]](#endnote-54) In *While the City Sleeps* (1928), the relationship between reporters and police are explored in a brief scene in the film. Police reporter Wally, an old-time veteran newspaperman, chides a police detective. telling him, “S’matter Dan…lookin’ at the world through corn plasters?” The plains clothes policeman responds, “Listen, you bum reporter! I’d rather have corns on my feet than where you’ve got them.” The two have been roughly jousting with each other in the pressroom for years. The old reporter holds out his hand after 20 years of working together to show there are no hard feelings. He also takes the occasion to plant a bottle of liquor in the policeman’s pocket to get him into trouble with the police chief.[[55]](#endnote-55) In *The City that Never Sleeps* (1924), reporter Cliff Kelley exposes a woman’s suitor as a crook.[[56]](#endnote-56)

In *Living Lies* (1922), reporter Dixon Grant is assigned by his editor to investigate a syndicate of crooked financiers. He gets hold of an incriminating piece of paper and the crooks try to bribe him, then torture him to locate the paper, but he escapes and prints an expose article. The evil gang leader tries to escape in a houseboat, but the boat goes over the falls and he is killed. In *Rouletabille Among the Gypsies* (1922), reporter Joseph Rouletabille, one of the great journalist heroes of the early silent film era, is a handsome and energetic young reporter, solving cases using pure logic and reasoning. In *The Hidden Menace* (1925), reporter Christopher Hamlin of the *Evening Star* out scoops the competition and earns the animosity of the other journalists. He smells another scoop after learning that a crazed sculptor has abducted his lovely model and is holding her prisoner, hoping to create the ultimate work of art. The daredevil reporter falls in love with her and saves her in the nick of time. In *Peggy of the Secret Service* (1925), newspaperman Hal Tracey loves secret service agent Peggy who is pursuing a sultan’s brother who fled to the United States with the royal jewels. When Peggy attempts to arrest the sultan on a ship, there is a fight and Hal is thrown overboard. Peggy, for the first time in her life, forgets her duty and dives in after him and rescues him. She then follows the sultan to his mountain hideout and joins his harem to get closer to him. But her position becomes more perilous each night until the reporter shows up to rescue her from the harem. The sultan is arrested and the jewels are recovered. Peggy and Hal want to get married, but her chief has other ideas – he has a new and important assignment for Peggy. Unlike most of the endings featuring reporters in silent film, in this one, marriage will have to wait.

In *The Verdict* (1922), a star reporter-detective for the *Daily News* solves a murder. A collector of live bugs and insects is found dead in bed with a tiny mark on his forehead, and his niece is accused of the murder. The reporter sleeps in the room where the murder was committed and during the night sees a tarantula creeping over the pillow and the mystery is solved. He writes the story and appears before the jury just in time to save the girl from being locked up for her uncle’s murder. In *Shadows of the Night* (1928), reporter Jimmy Sherwood works on a metropolitan daily and is aided by his faithful dog, Flash, as they capture an underworld gang leader In *Trickery* (1922), a reporter from the *News* has a good day: He discovers two crooks and beats them up, gets back a young man’s money and returns a diamond to a Hindu sect getting a large award and wins the girl in the process. In *Crooks Can’t Win* (1928), Jimmy Wells, a fresh newspaper reporter played by comedian Joe E. Brown, is a humorist for a paper who is assigned by the city editor to solve a series of robberies. He helps an ex-cop turned truck driver prove his innocence after he is accused of being part of a gang of silk thieves. Together, they capture the gang, and the young reporter gets his copy in before the deadline. In *The Jazz Girl* (1926) reporter Rodney Blake is after a group of rumrunners and meets a woman turned detective who wants the same thing. Both believe the other to be a liquor trafficker, but eventually they figure out and join together to catch the gang’s ringleader. In *The Flash* (1923), a young police reporter thwarts the enemies of a police campaign to clean up the city.[[57]](#endnote-57) In *Feel My Pulse* (1928), reporter Wallace Roberts goes undercover to write an article on gang of rumrunners.[[58]](#endnote-58) In *The Breaking Point* (1924), Reporter Louis Bassett is a bloodhound (“Bassett by name and basset by nature”) and revives an old scandal 10 years after the murder, tying an innocent man to the unsolved crime. In this latest film, he recovers a book stolen by gypsies and thwarts a female villain.

**Reporters often would do anything to get a story, even skirting the law to get the information they needed to put corrupt people into jail or to bring the complete story to the public.**[[59]](#endnote-59)In *Laughing Lady* (1929), reporter Al Brown of *Picture Press* is hanging around trying to get some news when he overhears a big scandal story about a prominent society woman who is having a torrid affair with the dashing lifeguard who saved her from drowning at a recent beach party. “Anyone have a nickel?” he asks. When a man asks what the story is about, he tells him, “Read about it in tomorrow’s morning paper.” The rest of the plot shows how far a reporter will go to get that story. He rushes back to the city room to tell city editor Harry about his big exclusive story. The *Picture Press* Extra headlines: “Wife of Hector Lee Prominent Banker Ordered from Exclusive South-Ampton Hotel. Life Guard Discovered in Room.” The story spreads the scandal. The woman’s husband reads of the incident and decides on an immediate divorce. In the divorce court, his attorney presents the woman as a depraved person unfit to care for her child. She refuses to defend herself and subsequently is dropped by all her society friends. Brown is in court to cover the proceedings and calls in the story. “Get out an Extra,” he tells the city editor. “I’ll give you the flash on it as soon as the jury comes back.” Brown follows up the story by visiting the wife who is devastated by the scandal. The woman’s best friend is there when Brown arrives. When the woman leaves for another appointment, she tries to convince the reporter to be fairer to her friend over more than one drink. When the woman returns, Brown tries to interview her, but she has nothing more to say to the press. When she takes a phone call from the attorney who now is in her corner, he pretends to bend down to pick up some papers that he purposely dropped, eavesdropping to everything she says. He realizes the lawyer is coming over to be with her and wants an exclusive picture of the lawyer leaving her apartment. He goes back to the city room and convinces the editor that this exclusive will mean a raise for him. He grabs a photographer and rushes back to the woman’s apartment, waiting for the lawyer to leave. The woman explains to the lawyer he can’t leave because she can’t stand another scandal. But as he leaves, the flash goes off, the picture is taken and the two journalists run back to the office. The lawyer has an idea. He calls the newspaper and tells the city editor that he and the woman are engaged and want the photographer to return to take a better picture of them. The angry city editor tells Mac to inform Brown that their photo is useless. There is no scandal. The woman is delighted by the plan and agrees to marry the lawyer.[[60]](#endnote-60)

In *Chinatown Nights* (aka *Tong War)* (1929), reporter James F. Williams is a mischievous, interfering, stuttering newspaper reporter from the *City Examiner.* He is sitting at a bar reading his latest story, clipping it out and putting it into his wallet when he comes up with an idea about how to cause some trouble so he can get a better story: he arranges to have leaders in a Chinese gang start a war for a front-page story. He calls each one up, tells them the other is gunning for them and not to show up that night at a Chinese theater. Before he leaves the bar, a barkeep tells the other old-timers: “That Williams is a smart cracker.” The other responds: “Too bad the boy stutters.” When the fight the reporter arranges breaks out, he’s there to watch it and rushes back to the city room to tell the city editor about the story. He describes the scene in gory detail including people being trampled in the aisles in the Tong war, but he didn’t get all the details on the best angle for the paper – a white society woman was in attendance. The city editor refuses to print the story because the reporter doesn’t know the woman’s name.

In *Not for Publication* (1927), Pike, the editor of the *Sentinel*, opposes a deal between a contractor and the water commissioner to build a dam. He gets his reporter, Philip Hale, to burglarize the contractor’s safe so they can get evidence against him.[[61]](#endnote-61) In *Legally Dead* (1923), reporter Will Campbell gets arrested so he can interview prison inmates to support his theory that most victims of capital punishment are wrongfully executed. His wife walks out on him and the reporter develops a romance with a female prisoner. After he is paroled, he gets a job at a bank and thwarts an attempted robbery, but a detective is shot, Will picks up the gun and pursues the murderer. Police arrest Will who is tried, convicted and hanged. But he is revived with adrenaline by a doctor friend after his innocence is proven. Will goes home to find his wife remarried and he and the woman he met in prison, who was also paroled, find happiness. In *The Lost World* (1925), reporter Ed Malone of the *London Record-Journal* joins an expedition to a plateau in South America inhabited by prehistoric creatures to get an exclusive story. The film opens in London where the explorer is preparing to sue the paper for not believing his story. He is also believed to have nearly killed three reporters so the newspaper is happy to send young Malone who volunteers for the assignment to get an exclusive interview with him. After being chased by the explorer, Malone sneaks into his home and convinces him that his paper might finance an expedition to find a missing member of the explorer’s team if the paper is given exclusive rights to the story. A deal is made and the adventure is underway.

**Sometimes reporters are accused of crimes they either did not commit or have were involved in an accidental killing and end up in prison.** In *Man, Woman and Sin* (1927), a naïve slum boy, Al Whitcomb, gets a job folding papers and then is assigned to the pressroom at *The Morning World* in Washington D.C. After saving the star reporter from a fight in a nightclub, the reporter convinces the city editor to promote Whitcomb to a cub reporter. His life changes drastically when Bancroft, the publisher of the newspaper, calls the editor and tells him, “Get some reporter to escort the Society Editor to the ball.” Society Editor Vera Worth walks into the editor’s office and looking at Whitcomb, she says, “What about that boy?” He escorts the spoiled, glamorous and easily bored Worth to the posh ball. When they return to the newsroom, each writes an account of what happened – and the cub is shocked when he sees his story in print. He falls in love with Worth, who turns out to be the publisher’s mistress. A fellow reporter who sees what is going on tells him, “For God’s sake, go easy kid! Don’t you know she’s Bancroft’s….” The cub gets angry and shouts back: “Don’t you say anything about her…!” When the publisher finds the reporter and his mistress together in the apartment on which he’s been paying the rent, a fight breaks out and Whitcomb accidentally kills the jealous newspaper owner in self-defense. Vera, to save her reputation, perjures herself at the trial and Whitcomb is convicted of murder. The reporter’s mother begs Vera to recant her evidence and tell the truth freeing the reporter. Vera watches the reporter leave prison before driving off while Whitcomb walks away with his ever-devoted mother. A newspaper reviewer wrote, “The news story is an ultra-modern romance laid in a newspaper office – in a big Washington daily. The thrill of news gathering in the national capital is embellished with a startling plot and a remarkable romance.”[[62]](#endnote-62)

In *Out with the Tide* (aka *Silent Evidence)* (1928), newspaper reporter John Templeton is suspected of murdering his sweetheart’s father, a banker. The reporter escapes from the police and with his girlfriend, who never lost faith in him, they track down the real killer to Shanghai and get him to confess that he was hired by the banker’s partner to commit the murder. In *Chains of Evidence* (1920), a reporter once unjustly jailed is accused of stealing radium from a doctor and murdering the judge who sentenced him. He eventually is cleared and marries the judge’s daughter. In *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1921), a writer serves a three-year prison sentence to protect his mother-in-law, who killed her husband. He gets a job as a reporter under an assumed name and writes an expose of a corrupt mayor who gets him fired. Sob Sister Marjorie Daw finds him a job helping the newspaper owner’s invalid daughter write a biography of her late father. Together they expose the mayor and the journalist’s kiss and intense love enables the invalid girl to walk again. In *Runaway Girls* (1928), reporter Jim Grey is in love with a manicurist who becomes a model. She is sent to an apartment on the pretext of modeling clothes for a female customer and finds a man-about-town waiting for her. Panicked, the woman manages to telephone her sweetheart, Jim, who rushes to the apartment gun in hand. The man is shot to death and the reporter is arrested by the police. But it soon turns out the fatal bullet was fired by a father whose daughter was raped and murdered by the man. He saw him attacking the model and decided to take action. Wedlock seems destined to be in the reporter’s future. In *The Greatest Menace* (1923), journalist Charles Wright Jr., the son of the district attorney, wants to write the true story about the evils of drug addiction. When he is accused of the murder of a young drug addict, the newspapers have a field day covering the case. But he is found not guilty and is reunited with his family.

**Courageous journalists are often murdered in the line of duty.** In *Black Waters* (1929), newspaper reporter Jimmy Dancy says “I’m a reporter on the Press. We’d been tipped to watch ‘Tiger’ Laraby – and I managed to get aboard but they got me and tied me up.” He is part of a group of strangers invited for an alleged houseboat party. After the guests are told they will be killed one by one, they find the mooring line has been cut and they are drifting out to sea. Darcy is among those who are murdered before the mystery is solved. In *The Gray Dawn* (1922), an editor is murdered when vigilantes take over San Francisco in the 1850s. In *Riders of the Dark* (1928), editor Molly Graham and her brother Jim run the town newspaper when their father, the editor, who was in favor of law and order, is killed when the newspaper office is destroyed. A U.S. cavalry lieutenant helps them and arrests the female editor after she accidentally shoots one of her father’s killers – because he wants to make sure she will be protected, falling in love with her along the way. When the bandits attack the jail to get to her, she is saved by the lieutenant and the cavalry. In *Eyes of the Underworld* (1929), publisher-owner John Hueston is shot and killed because he is planning to print an expose of a criminal gang. Historian Richard R. Ness writes that it is the image of the publisher who “demonstrates the recognition of the press as a force in opposing corruption.”[[63]](#endnote-63) In *The Gray Dawn* (1922), an editor is murdered when vigilantes take over San Francisco in the 1850s.

**Sometimes evil journalists meet up with death as well**. In *Every Woman’s Problem* (1921), tabloid newspaper editor Morse of the *Democrat* oversees a yellow newspaper. Bootleggers blow up the newspaper and kill the editor. In *The Notorious Lady* (1927), Gilbert Patton is a wealthy publisher who has made every proposal that a man can make to a woman with the exception of one – marriage. He has been spreading rumors about a woman who has rebuffed all of his advances: “These false rumors that are linking my name with yours – why haven’t you stopped them?” she asks him, to which he answers, “Because I started them.” “You’re as contemptible as that! What do you think these untruths will bring you?” the woman says to him. When her husband breaks in on them, the publisher pulls a gun, they fight, the gun goes off and the publisher is killed. [[64]](#endnote-64)

**Journalists sometimes try to do the right thing after they do the wrong thing. In many films, reporters have to choose between their job and what they believe is the right thing to do. Sometimes they put aside their professional ethics to do favors for the woman they love, friends or businessmen. Often this means putting their personal interests and future happiness above their duties as a reporter.[[65]](#endnote-65) Sometimes this involves the worst thing a journalist can do: suppress a story rather than publish it.** In *Broken Barriers* (1928), reporter Charles Hill investigates the death of a weak-willed candidate for mayor who decided to quit the race when faced with a newspaper expose. When the candidate tells the political boss that he is quitting, the boss threatens him with a gun and the candidate has a heart attack. The political boss arranges to make it look as if the candidate died in an automobile accident. Hill, a crack newspaper reporter, is suspicious of the “accident” and gets a job working for the political boss. The reporter falls in love with the man’s daughter. Although he finally gets the story, it is never published because editor Thomas Walker kills it as a wedding present for the reporter and his new bride. The *Variety* was not impressed: “If the audience is sufficiently illiterate to believe that a publisher would tear up a graft scandal yarn and cover up technical murder evidence, all because his star reporter falls for the bad guy’s daughter, then they’ll go big for ‘Broken Barriers”…(the reporter) is a strictly screen newspaperman….”[[66]](#endnote-66) A reviewer for a newspaper disagreed, “The story has to do with a newspaper’s crusade to break the power of a political boss. The boss is strongly entrenched, but the newspaper believes its power is more than equal to the political organization’s….the editor and his star reporter are crusaders and they are bent on cleaning up the town. The fact that the boss himself gets away from all punishment even though his power is broken is due only to the fact that his daughter falls in love with the reporter and even the most hard-boiled editor in the world softens under certain influences.”[[67]](#endnote-67)

In *Whispers* (1920), Pat Darrick is a scandal sheet reporter (“a scandal hound”) and is assigned to cover a married man seen with another woman. When he discovers the woman involved is the woman he loves, he refuses to turn in the story and leaves the yellow rag to run a country newspaper with the woman and her father. [[68]](#endnote-68) In *A Man Must Live* (1925), Geoffrey (Jeff) Farnell, played by matinee idol Richard Dix, goes to war and returns penniless so he is forced by circumstances to take a job on a scandal sheet, *The New York Chronicle.* City editor Job Hardcastle “gives Farnell warning that his stories lack the hectic pep his readers demand.”[[69]](#endnote-69) He then assigns Farnell to get a story on a society divorcee now working in a cabaret. The reporter takes pity on her when he discovers her dying of consumption, but tells the city editor he can’t find her. Afraid of losing his job, Farnell discovers that a war buddy is involved in narcotics, but while trying to get a photo to go with his story he discovers his friend’s sister is a girl he once loved. Farnell tries to kill the story, and the editor promises not to print it. But when the editor breaks his word, Farnell assaults the city editor and loses his job.[[70]](#endnote-70) In *Minnie* (1922), a newspaperman loves Minnie, the homeliest girl in town. She decides to invent a lover who sends her letters and gifts and to avoid exposure, she tells the newspaperman that an unidentified body at the morgue is that of her lover. The reporter investigates, finds out the truth, but decides not to write the story. Minnie is transformed by plastic surgery and ends up with the reporter. In *The Wizard* (1927)*,* a wisecracking newspaper reporter Stanley Gordon is told he has to get a story or lose his job. He gets wind of a murder by answering the police chief’s phone after he tricked the chief into having him handcuffed to a chair while demonstrating how quickly the cuffs can be used. Gordon discovers that a doctor whose son was executed for murder has trained an ape to attack his enemies. Gordon is almost murdered by the ape before the solves the case.[[71]](#endnote-71)

In *The Last Edition* (1925), reporter Clarence Walker is in love with Polly, the daughter of Tom MacDonald, assistant foreman in the *San Francisco Chronicle* press room. MacDonald is passed over for a foreman position. When MacDonald’s son gets a job in the district attorney’s office and is framed by a bootlegger, Walker reluctantly reports the story for the late edition and MacDonald tries to stop the press run. When crooks blow up the newspaper building, MacDonald is blamed and jailed along with his son. The reporter eventually uncovers evidence exonerating father and son, MacDonald is made foreman and a new newspaper plant is built. In *The Shady Lady* (1928-1929), correspondent Jimmie Haley represents the *New York Times* in Havana, Cuba. He helps a woman (“The Shady Lady”) and a man break up a gang of gunrunners. But it turns out the man and woman are rival gunrunners who want to get rid of the opposition. The woman saves the reporter when he is caught while trying to get a flash picture of the gunrunners at work. She turns out to be a fugitive murderess, but Jimmie decides to drop the story when she cries and appeals to his emotions. As one historian put it, “Apparently, such tactics work for on screen reporters.”[[72]](#endnote-72) Another critic added, “An impossible reporter, the Havana representative of the New York Times is one of the heroes, but he is such a sap that the Times has good grounds for canning him at any stage of the proceedings. He recognizes the girl as the one wanted in the celebrated murder case, but he is too soft hearted to turn her in.”[[73]](#endnote-73)

**Some movie reporters do the worst thing a reporter can do: make up facts to make a better story.** *In the Headlines* (1929) features star police reporter Nosey Norton of the *Evening Press* and Anna Lou Anderson, a journalism graduate assigned to help him investigate a double murder. “Nosey” sends in a story to the effect that the murdered men were quarreling over a mysterious blonde. But the “blonde” is a figment of Nosey’s imagination. Real blondes, however, come on the scene to take part in the war that the ingenious reporter has started. Later, the budding journalist is kidnapped, but Norton arrives in time to prevent her from taking a drugged drink. He solves the murders and Nosey and Anna Lou get a paid honeymoon.[[74]](#endnote-74) In *Show Girl* (1928), Jimmy Doyle, a cynical reporter who works for a tabloid, will do anything for a story. He gets a front-page story on a nightclub performer after her partner finds her with a wealthy sugar daddy and stabs him. When she is kidnapped, the reporter convinces her to lay low so he can exploit the kidnapping in the newspaper by putting it on page one.[[75]](#endnote-75) In *The Princess of New York* (1921), a New York newspaperman, with some space to fill, makes up a story about a race horse who is ruined. The article causes repercussions. In *The Lying Truth* (1922), owners of the local newspaper disown their son, a drug addict, and pass the paper on to an orphan raised by them, Bill O’Hara. He creates a fake murder to increase circulation after the paper is blacklisted by a doctor. When the family’s disowned son’s body is found in the swamp, O’Hara is charged and about to be lynched when his foster mother arrives with the son’s suicide note.

**Sometimes the male journalist was depicted as a villain, often exposed by other journalists.** In *The Girl in the Glass Cage* (1929), reporter John Cosgrove is a con artist who steals and commits murder.[[76]](#endnote-76) In *Why Men Forget* (1921), a journalist steals the savings of iron plant workers and an innocent man is accused of the crime. In *The Capitol* (1919-1920), a newspaper reporter steals boats to keep an opponent on a remote island until a bill he opposes can be passed in Congress. In *High Steppers* (1926), after being expelled from Harvard, Julian Perryam gets a job as a reporter for *The Truth.* His father is the editor of a scandal sheet, *The Week.* Julian discovers his father’s publisher, Victor Buckland, is involved in stealing from a charity fund. With the help of fellow reporter Audrey Nye, who gets him the paper, Julian exposes Buckland who is then killed when a mob dynamites his building. The two reporters marry each other. In *The Tin Ghost* (1926), an inventor asks the manager of a newspaper to send some men out to witness a demonstration before a group of capitalists of an automaton he has invented. The newspaper manager sends reporter Lige Conley out on the story but he is secretly plotting to steal the invention himself.[[77]](#endnote-77) In *The Siren* (1927), South American newsman Felipe Vincenti was so disfigured by fire that he can pass himself off as another man. He revenges himself on a girl by having her accused of his supposed murder. In *The Family Closet* (1921), editor Charles Purcell of *The Leader* orders his reporter to get dirt on a man who refuses to drop a libel suit against the newspaper. They discover the man may have committed a bank robbery and even though he agrees to withdraw his suit, the editor and his henchman demand blackmail and the hush money is paid until it is revealed the man is innocent. In *Husbands for Rent* (1927), Waldo Squibbs is a snooping reporter who writes for a society scandal sheet and will do anything to spice up a story.

**Male reporters were often portrayed as just a decent fellow**.[[78]](#endnote-78) **More often than not, they just did their job. Some did their job too well and regretted it.** In *Mannequin* (1926), Martin Innesbrook is a crusading reporter for his uncle’s newspaper who is making his reputation by writing editorials against the practice of acquitting female criminals just because they are good-looking women. His girlfriend Joan (“Orchid”) Herrick, a model in a fashionable Manhattan dress shop, is tried for murder when a man is inadvertently impaled on her brooch during a struggle. The prosecutor attempts to use Innesbrook’s editorials against her at the trial causing him to regret his “sexless justice” campaign. Orchid is found innocent. She also discovers she was abducted at birth and her father is the judge at her trial. The ordeal over, the reporter and Orchid decide to get married**. Others did their job well, but ended up with the wrong results**. In the first silent film made of *Trent’s Last Case* (1920), reporter-artist Philip Trent investigates the death of a millionaire. His solution to the crime is absolutely brilliant – and totally wrong.[[79]](#endnote-79) In a remake, *Trent’s Last Case* (1929), the suave dilettante and freelance journalist Philip Trent is a painter turned crime reporter and sketch artist who is also an amateur detective. Again, Trent is once again totally wrong in figuring out who the killer is. But he does manage to fall in love with one of the suspects. Since the victim is an American and overbearingly vulgar, his death is viewed by the old-boy network of which Trent is a member as a matter of less than utmost importance.

**Journalists show up in a variety of films in which journalism was secondary to the plot**.[[80]](#endnote-80)

**Other times, a journalist plays a minor character instantly recognized by the audience because of his contacts and access into various levels of society.**[[81]](#endnote-81)

**Newspaper journalists, tired of being in a profession that gave them no respect or status, always seemed to strive for a better life, usually by writing a play for Broadway or a movie for Hollywood or a novel or book**.[[82]](#endnote-82)

**Newsreels used personnel as cameramen-reporters to get on-camera interviews with personalities, inventors, journalists and celebrities.[[83]](#endnote-83)** “Interesting People the Editor Meets” was featured in the 1928 *Pathe Review.* It included cartoonists, writers, entrepreneurs, publishers, sports personalities, fliers, businessmen and women, politicians, governors, journalists, admirals, and explorers.[[84]](#endnote-84) In 1928, sound came to the newsreels in a big way. The *Fox Movietone Interviews* were a series of sound interviews with important people including dramatist George Bernard Shaw,[[85]](#endnote-85) U.S. President Calvin Coolidge, Prime Minister David Lloyd George, the Prince of Wales and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

**Because the silent film titles could be easily translated, non-English speaking films could easily be seen in the United States without any communication problems. The silent film era was truly an international art form. Male journalists were portrayed in international films made in France, Germany, Italy, Norway, the Soviet Union and Norway. Films made in England weren’t a problem even when the talkies arrived**.[[86]](#endnote-86)

**No matter what the country, the image of the journalist was a familiar one to United States audiences since the non-American journalists displayed many of the same characteristics of hard-boiled American reporters.**

**France:** In *Belphegor* (1927), a fearless journalist Jacques Bellegarde of *Le Petit Parisien* investigates a masked-and-robed phantom who haunts the famous Louvres museum and one night murders an attendant near the statue of Belphegor. His investigation runs into difficulties, but a detective succeeds in unmasking Belphegor who turns out to be the journalist’s lover and mistress. In *The New Babylon* (1929), journalist Loutro is an anti-war, liberal reporter. At a ball filled with selfish bourgeoisie, the journalist announces to everyone that the French Army has just surrendered to the Prussians, emptying the ballroom in a panic. As the war goes on, Loutro expresses his anti-war sentiments – that war is essentially an instrument of “disaster capitalism” and only benefits wealthy investors. In *L’Argent* (aka *Money*) (1928-1929), Huret, “un journaliste,” is an idealistic aviator’s urbane journalist friend.[[87]](#endnote-87)

**Germany:** In *Der Teufelsreporter (*aka *The Daredevil Reporter)* (1929), a reporter who works for the Berlin newspaper *Rapid,* is an intrepid, daredevil reporter who will stop at nothing to get a story. He argues with his editor, who is off to get married, to give him a break and a good story to cover. But instead he is assigned to interview a group of American girls coming in that day on the train. Their chaperone turns out to be in the pay of a Berlin gang, which plans to kidnap the girls who are all heiresses and hold them for ransom. The reporter misses out on the interview to a rival paper, but goes after the girls. One of them, sensing something is wrong, manages to slip him a note urging him to keep an eye on them. By tracing a telephone call that the chaperone made from the train, the reporter is able to get a line on the gang’s Berlin hideout and follows the crooks to an island hideaway. There is a climactic car chase in which the reporter gallantly pursues the kidnapper. With the police following him, he is able to help rescue the girls before the distraught millionaire fathers pay the ransom. The reporter gamely holds the gang at gunpoint while phoning in his story to the editor, then calling in the police.[[88]](#endnote-88)

In *Pandora’s Box* (1929), newspaper owner Dr. Ludwig Schön is a respectable, middle-aged newspaper publisher who has a beautiful mistress, Lulu. When he breaks the news to her that he is going to marry the daughter of the Minister of the Interior, Lulu does everything she can to change his mind. The next day she goes to see the publisher’s son, Alwa. The publisher is unhappy to see her, but comes up with an idea to have her star in his son’s musical production to get her off his hands. When his son asks him why he doesn’t marry Lulu, the publisher scowls at him: “You don’t marry such women. That would be suicide.” The publisher says she will be a great success in the show because his newspaper will make sure of that. “But one more thing, boy,” he adds. “be wary of this woman.” The publisher makes the mistake of taking his future wife to see the son’s revue. When Lulu refuses to perform in front of her rival, the publisher takes her into a storage room to try to persuade her otherwise, but she seduces him instead. His fiancee finds them embracing. The publisher says to his shocked son, “Satisfied, Alwa? Now I’m going to have to marry Lulu. That’s my execution.” The defeated publisher resigns himself to marrying Lulu. While the wedding reception is underway, Alwa asks Lulu to go with him on his travels. His father finds them together and tells his son he is going to miss his train and escorts him from the room. Once they are alone, the publisher insists his new wife take the gun and shoot herself: “Kill yourself so you don’t make me a murderer too,” he says. When Lulu refuses, they struggle and the gun goes off, killing the publisher. [[89]](#endnote-89)

**Italy:** In *La Boheme* (1926), Rodolphe ekes out a meager existence writing for a newspaper in Paris in 1830. Through title cards he complains: “Well – to pay the rent, I suppose I must write that silly article for the editor of the *Cat and Dog Fanciers’s Journal!* If I could lose the habit of eating, I’d never have to write stuff for you!” When he turns in an article, the editor isn’t happy: “I asked you for a ten-inch article on a cat – and you give me eight inches on a rabbit!” Rodolphe responds: “Shades of genius – must I sell my brains by the yard?” The editor: “Give me something sentimental about a cat – or get out!” When Mimi, a poor seamstress, finally delivers one of Rudolphe articles, the editor tells her: “Rodolphe? Is he still alive? He is four weeks too late for last week’s edition. Monsieur understands that Rodolphe is a fool – wasting my time on his plays – he is through – discharge!” Mimi refuses to tell Rodolphe that he has been fired and pretends to deliver his articles about cats and dogs for the journal.

**Soviet Union:** In *Miss Mend (*aka *The Adventures of the Three Reporters* (1926-Soviet Union), three reporters and an office girl try to stop a bacteriological strike by powerful western business leaders against the USSR. The story is set in an imagined United States about a plucky working girl, Miss Vivian Mend, who joins a reporter Barnet, who works for the tabloid *The Littletown Herald* (“a muckraker who gets the news a half hour before it happens), photojournalist Vogel (“melancholic by nature, snapshot-taker by trade”) and a tubby office clerk, Tom Hopkins. They end up with a sensational story that the editor loves: “What a story! Just what we needed! We can squeeze a thousand lines out of this death.”

***Journalism and Alcoholism: The Drunken Journalist***

Practically every silent film dealing with journalism shows drinking as part of the social fabric of the newsroom, not only accepted but expected. Drunken journalists were commonplace in fiction during the late 19th century and the silent film era gave visual emphasis to that image.

Right from the beginning, silent films perpetuated the image of the alcoholic reporter (*The Big Scoop,* 1910, *The Rummy,* 1916, *The Fringe of Society,* 1916, *A Case at* Law, 1917, *The Night Workers,* 1917).[[90]](#endnote-90) Reporters drink because of the frustrations and pressures of the job, because of the disrespect and criticism of their profession and because they deal with “the seamier side of life: graft, saloons, prostitution, murder.” Even star reporters needed a drink or three to help them make it through the night.[[91]](#endnote-91) Many newspapermen kept a flask in their pocket, a bottle in their desks and seldom missed a daily session at the local bar.

Historian Howard Good explored the phenomenon in his definitive book on the subject, *The Drunken Reporter*: “We can’t understand what the hard-drinking journalist of American popular film represents unless we also understand popular attitudes toward drinking and drunkenness. Whether the journalist is a saint or sinner or a combination of both depends on whether drinking is defined as a normal society activity, an insidious addiction, or a moral evil. And if there is no single agreed-upon definition, as some scholars have claimed, then that ambiguity has an effect, too.”[[92]](#endnote-92) He adds, “For most of the silent era, alcoholism films reflected the dry values of the temperance movement. The films stressed the ill effects of drink, punished drinkers and equated happiness with abstinence…almost all of the drunken reporters and editors in silent films ultimately reform.”[[93]](#endnote-93)

Few newspapermen, in the privacy of a newsroom or a bar, would deny that the early silent film depictions of drunken reporters and editors were fairly realistic depictions of newspaper life. But spokespeople for newspapers were unhappy about the identification of newspaper life with alcoholism. “Being members of the press themselves,” writes Good, “they had a vested interest in denying that modern newspapermen were a bunch of drunks.”[[94]](#endnote-94)

The most powerful and accurate films about journalists who drank too much were the first sound films based on successful stage plays, *Gentlemen of the Press* and *Big News*, released in 1929. These films showed how newspapermen who drank too much ended up destroying their careers and their lives. [[95]](#endnote-95)

In *Gentlemen of the Press,* the major character, Wickland Snell, a long-time newspaperman who can drink with the best of them, realizes how being a newspaperman obsessed with the job can destroy a man’s soul. Often, seasoned journalists think of their profession as a disease-like addiction like alcohol. Old-timers like Snell continually warned newcomers to get out of journalism before it was too late. This film shows that alcoholism was rampant among newsmen. One of the characters, reporter Charlie Haven, a perpetual drunk played by Charlies Ruggles, a role that he would perform over and over again in the 1930s, epitomizes the lovable drunk newsmen tolerated and editors regularly fired. One critic wrote, “Charles Ruggles is comical as the constantly inebriated news hound without which – since ‘The Racket’ – no newspaper play has been considered complete.”[[96]](#endnote-96) A reporter in *The Racket* (1928) is covering the police beat and is always drunk. A colleague tells him, “You’d better cut that booze.” He answers, “It’s cut plenty before I get it.” The *Variety* reviewer praised the film’s authenticity when dealing with lackadaisical beat reporters: “The cast was one hundred percent. Skeets Gallagher, with a bottle in one pocket and ‘America-Merk’ (*American Mercury*) in the other, made a reporter’s role roll over and beg. Lee Moran as another legger also clicked.”[[97]](#endnote-97) Another reviewer added, “It has policemen who look like policemen, reporters who look like reporters, and crooks who look like crooks.”[[98]](#endnote-98)

Because of his alcoholism, reporter Steve Banks in *Big News* is having severe marital problems and faces being fired repeatedly. But it’s impossible not to like Banks as played by Robert Armstrong. He’s witty, good-looking and tough as nails. “His fondness for the bottle may be a flaw, but it is a glamorous flaw, a mark of his freedom from the gray and narrow confines of the Protestant work ethic,” writes Good.[[99]](#endnote-99) By the end of the film, Banks promises to reform and his wife believes him. He may be an alcoholic, but the film and the audience believe he can stop drinking whenever he wants to – if he wants to. As noted early, at the end of the film, Steve and his reporter-wife Margaret are reconciled when she discovers the flask he is drinking from now contains tea, not booze.

Good says the first decade of the talking pictures used alcoholism as a symbol for summing up the corruption of journalists and even journalism itself. It sometimes represented the cause and even the consequence of marriage problems. It was a metaphor for urban sin, not only destroying the individual but society in general. At the same time, excessive drinking symbolized an urbane sign of worldliness, a definition of masculinity and toughness, a “leveler of hierarchal organizations,” and “a trigger for comic action.” All of this suggested that “American attitudes toward drinking were still open-ended, still evolving.” From Prohibition to the onset of the Depression, “the shot glass in the hands of a journalism (or the flask on his hip) retained enormous vitality as a film metaphor.”[[100]](#endnote-100)

Here are some examples of how alcoholism pervaded silent films from 1920 to the end of the silent film era in 1929.[[101]](#endnote-101)

In *Deadline at Eleven* (1920), drunken New York crack reporter Jack Rawson helps Helen Stevens, a young female cub turned advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist with her copy. She gets Jack to give up drinking but he is enticed to the Press Club on the night he intended to follow a young reporter on a dangerous missing-girl assignment. The drunken Rawson awakens from a stupor, follows the young reporter and stumbles upon the scene of a murder. Slipping into unconsciousness again, Jack awakens the next morning to find himself accused of the killing. The columnist recognizes Jack at the police station and begs the police not to inform the papers of his arrest swearing she will discover the true murderer before her newspaper goes to press. Helen solves the murder, Jack escapes disgrace and Helen takes the seasoned reporter, who promises to reform, home to meet her mother.

In *Homespun Folks* (1920), a drunken printer frames an editor for murder and confesses all under gunpoint when he is sober. In *Sunshine Harbor* (1922), a police reporter is drunk and is unable to cover a spectacular chemical fire so the girl reporter fills the assignment for him at a fearful cost: she is blinded by the fire. In *The Office Scandal* (1929), hard-boiled sob sister Jerry Cullen befriends drunken, down-and-out reporter Pearson who is accused of murdering a wealthy man. The girl reporter loves him and convinces the judge to throw out the charge on her simple say-so that he’s a “newspaperman on souse.” She then gets Pearson a job on her paper. She also bets the city editor that she will be able to break a murder story. She then forces a confession from the actual murderer. Love scoops all.[[102]](#endnote-102)

In *Deliverance* (1928), managing editor Patton almost hits publisher Grayson’s car in a collision because he is drunk. Because of this, Grayson, who is also a senator, asks his chief reporter George Meredith to conduct a survey on the effects of prohibition before voting on the Eighteenth Amendment. Opponents of Prohibition try to bribe the publisher-senator, but he records the conversation on a Dictaphone and publishes the story along with the result of the survey. The managing editor, who is not only an alcoholic but also leader of a gang of bootleggers, is fired and the reporter marries the publisher’s daughter.

Hugh O’Connell often plays a drunk reporter in a series of short newspaper films in 1929 written by Russell Crouse, the columnist for *The New York Evening Post.* These films, in which the reporter is sometimes so drunk he can barely function yet he always ends up with the story, was the source of audience-pleasing comedy since alcoholism was treated as a funny occupational hazard, not a serious addiction that could cause great harm to the journalist as well as those around him. As one critic put it, “Hugh O’Connell is finding cinematic reporting is just one speakeasy after another in a series of newspaper comedy shorts.”[[103]](#endnote-103) In *The Familiar Face (No. 1)*, O’Connell plays a drunk who is a crackerjack newshound for the *Times.* The city editor is yelling for one of the crack but soused reporters to go on a murder mystery. He is finally rounded up and given a photo of the suspected murderer. Still soused and too much so to grasp the sense of the assignment, the reporter goes to a speakeasy, meets with a stranger and drinks plenty more. The stranger tries to keep up with him. Hazily the reporter recalls having seen his companion’s face somewhere before. After a dispute over who shall pay for the drinks, the two drunks stagger out to go back to the reporter’s office to settle it. Back at the office the two fall asleep on chairs. Another reporter seeing the stranger recognizes him as the wanted murderer. A police officer is called and the man is handcuffed as the soused reporter is informed he has done a great piece of news work bringing the murderer right in and there is a $5,000 reward waiting for him. In *The Interview (No. 2),* Reporter Wetmore is the star reporter for the *Journal* who is always drunk. The star hack gets an assignment to interview a Wall street financier who plans to corner the cotton market. A cub reporter is sent along to make sure the star reporter remains sober and stays away from the gin. Unknown to everyone, the cub is the financier’s son. The souse falls into the required yarn and spills it to the city desk, then boasts to the cub: “What a scoop for ‘The Times.” The cub says, “You’re not working on the ‘Times’ anymore; you’re

working for the ‘Journal.’ The drunk, who forgot he was fired from the *Times* months ago, exclaims: “My God. I phoned the wrong paper.” In *Dead or Alive (No. 3)*, O’Connell is back to being the gin-soaked star reporter for *The Times*. The city editor sends his prize drunk news hound to find out how serious is the illness of a Wall Street financier. He gains entrance to the sanitarium through mistaken identity, finds the financier’s room and both start on a drinking bout. The reporter gets back to the office with an exclusive story and photograph to save his job.

## Female Reporters[[104]](#endnote-104)

**The image of the female journalist in popular culturerevolves around a dichotomy never quite resolved: how to incorporate the masculine traits of journalism essential for success―being aggressive, self-reliant, curious, tough, ambitious, cynical, cocky, unsympathetic―while still being the woman society would like her to be: compassionate, caring, loving, maternal, sympathetic. Female reporters in fiction have fought to overcome this central contradiction since the 19th century and are still fighting the battle today. In silent films, from 1894 to 1929, female journalists were gutsy journalists until the final reel when they usually married the man who had been wooing them throughout the film.[[105]](#endnote-105)**

**From the beginning of the silent film era through the 1920s, the female reporter,thesob sister,**[[106]](#endnote-106) **became a popular newspaper heroine. The best of the female reporters acted just like the male reporter: she was willing to do anything her male counterparts would do to get a story. But the female reporter was different: she always felt as if she had to prove herself, and more often than not the female reporter outwits, outfoxes, and out reports every male reporter in sight. Only then does she rate the highest compliment the males who dominated the world of journalism in the 1920s can pay her: “You’re a real newspaper*man*.” These courageous girl stunt reporters would do anything to get that exclusive story including solving crimes and doing the kind of daredevil stunts that male reporters also did in these early films, especially the serials.**

In *The Lion Man* (1919-1920), reporter Stella Donovan of *The Times* is sent by city editor Farris to cover a society circus being given by a millionaire, but since reporters are not allowed into the circus, she masquerades as a wire-walking performer. The millionaire is murdered and Stella tracks down the murders aided by a mysterious masked Lion Man. In episode two, she is rescued from a burning house, disguises herself as a boy, and descends from a building by a rope that someone is about to cut. In other episodes, she escapes from a deep well, a lion cage, a gun-fight, the rear of a moving train, a dungeon room slowly filling with water, and a mine explosion.[[107]](#endnote-107) In *The Fire Detective* (1929), reporter Gladys Samuels tries to unravel a mystery not only to save her father, but to get a big story for her and her newspaper. The reporter goes through a series of life-threatening perils before she gets the story.[[108]](#endnote-108) In *Fighting Hearts* (1926), Sally Tracy is the go-getter daughter of the owner of a newspaper in a small town that courageously fights the political villains who try to put the paper out of business after failing to buy it. In chapter three, grafters try to blow up the town quarry while the editor Harry Grayson, who becomes editor when her father’s health fails, fights off the villains and is saved by Sally in an aeroplane as she swoops down to save him in the nick of time just as he is about to be killed by an explosion; in chapter five, a rival for Sally’s affections wrecks the press by tossing a wrench into the printing press and stripping its gears, then hires thugs to hurt the editor so he can’t participate in the city’s annual auto race in which both men are entered. After a number of misadventures, the villains are captured, the money returned and Sally and Harry seem to be headed for marriage.[[109]](#endnote-109)

In *The Radio King* (1922), reporter Ruth Leyden appears in some of the chapters helping the hero who has invented a super radio designed to help military bases communicate. She and “the radio detective” provide the happy ending as military domination of the world has been secured for the United States.[[110]](#endnote-110) In *Her Dangerous Path* (1923), Corinne Grant is a small-town girl struggling to find her way in a big city and she is a different “modern woman” in each episode. Fate dictates the path that her type of character will undertake after making a life-altering decision. In episode four, she falls in love with a young reporter and in chapter seven the question is posed: “Should She Become a Society Reporter?” She risks her life to get a scoop covering a sensational divorce story involving a yacht and a chase in a motorboat by an aeroplane, then learns her story will not be printed because of “logrolling” (the practice of exchanging favors, here between the newspaper and the people involved), so she decides to look for another profession.[[111]](#endnote-111)

**Feature films featuring female reporters in the dominant role usually involved murder mysteries and exposes including disguises and escapes from perilous situations.** [[112]](#endnote-112)In *Pirates of the Sky* (1926-1927), reporter Doris Reed goes undercover to investigate the pirates of the sky.[[113]](#endnote-113) An amateur criminologist rescues her after the gang finds out who she is and what she is after.[[114]](#endnote-114) In *The Green Flame* (1920), New York City newspaper reporter Ruth Gardner investigates a gang of jewel thieves and murders. A detective tries to discredit a youth in the eyes of the girl reporter, but the youth turns the tables in the end and wins the reporter’s love. In *The Open Wire* (1922), Helen Dare, sob sister on *The Chronicle,* is sent by her city editor to investigate an oil company. She is captured and locked in the president’s office. Star Reporter Hayden gets word of her danger and rushes to her aid. He manages to hold off the villains until Helen gets the office on the wire for help. By the time the police land the two crooks in the station, the story is hot on the presses. Hayden is in the hospital with a bad bump but when he comes to, Helen is bending over him, all ready to go to press. In *Just in Time* (1925), reporter Sally works for the *Daily Milk* and is doing a series of articles on a mysterious gang that has haunted the city and threatened to destroy the newspaper. The editor’s son is kidnapped by the gang to stop his father from writing articles against the gang members. Sally rescues him by posing as a member of the gang. The gang discovers the identity of Sally and pursues her. But she leads them back to the newspaper office and into the arms of the police. Sally then marries the editor’s son.

In *A Woman Against the World* (1928), reporter Carol Hill works on a New York newspaper and longs for a good murder story so that she can show the male reporters what’s what. Reporter Bob Yates competes with Hill and gets the best stories. A murder story breaks – but the editor sends her to cover a wedding. She notices a button missing from the groom’s coat. Back at the office she learns that a button from a man’s coat has been found in the chamber of the murdered chorus girl. The groom is convicted and sentenced to die, but Carol believes he is innocent. She fell in love with him when first interviewing him and he loves her as well. Her editor is convinced he is guilty, but Carol, working more as a sweetheart than a reporter, gets a confession from the dead girl’s chauffeur, persuades the warden to postpone the execution and saves her sweetheart just in the nick of time. A reviewer said “the city room of the daily on the screen is not made to look like wild hotsy totsies.”[[115]](#endnote-115) In *Heroes of the Night* (1927), reporter Jennie Lee uncovers an election plot and ends up with a fireman who falls in love with her after losing his sweetheart to a policeman. The *Variety* reviewer summed up the plot this way: “There is some of the old-time plot wherewithal that is worked overtime, you know the kind about the newspaper woman who uncovers an election plot and the subsequent overthrow of a gang determined to cop the spoils at any cost and one of the dashing heroes of the ‘night’ rushing in and fighting his head off to place justice where it belongs.” [[116]](#endnote-116)

In *What a Night!* Dorothy Winston is the wealthy, if klutzy daughter of an industrialist who arranges to work on a newspaper in which her father is the major advertiser. Joe Madison, the reporter son of the paper’s editor, offers to show her the ropes. For five years, the editor has been waiting to get a chance to get a story exposing the political boss and a gang leader. He has a canceled check that gives him enough proof to allow publishing the story. Then the gang leader steals the check. He then charges the paper with a ruinous libel suit. Dorothy gets the check back along with photographic evidence shot by the paper’s society photographer implicating the crooks and proving that the underworld is ruling the city through the corrupt mayor. She gives the check to the editor and the male reporter falls into her arms.[[117]](#endnote-117) In *The Perfect Sap* (1927), newspaper writer Polly Stoddard tries to crack a gang of jewel thieves. A wealthy hopelessly nerdish young man is a correspondent-course detective. He poses as a crook and gets mixed up with jewel thieves, including Polly, believing she is a member of an underworld gang. He falls in love with her, then outwits the head of the gang, who is masquerading as a society man and wins the hand of Polly who reveals she is a newspaper reporter writing an expose of the underworld.

**Throughout the silent film era, a female reporter, trying to win her stripes, is usually given an assignment no male has been able to finish -- mostly getting an interview no one else can get.** In *The Whispered Name* (1924), reporter Anne Gray of *The News* is sent to interview a woman who is suing her husband for a divorce. She doesn’t realize that she is being named a co-respondent in the divorce suit. Her newspaper is conservative, but it turns out the city editor Fred Galvin is also secretly the editor of a scandal sheet, *The Tattletale,* and has been arranging a blackmail plot. managing editor John Manning, a fearless and honest journalist, who is in love with Gray, rescues her and beats up the city editor when he discovers his connection to the plot.[[118]](#endnote-118) In *Speakeasy* (1929), Alice Woods is a New York newspaper reporter who convinces her editor to let her get an interview with a fighter who just lost the championship. But the fighter refuses to see her in his dressing room so she forces her way into a speakeasy, his favorite hangout, with the help of fellow seasoned reporter Cy Williams who knows how to get into such places. The fighter, however, still refuses to talk so the reporter makes up a story saying he is planning a comeback. Eventually she falls in love with the fighter and proves that the fighter has been sold down the river by his crooked manager. With the reporter’s encouragement, she inspires the fighter to regain the middleweight title.

In a dozen films in 1924 called “The Old Man in the Corner,’ reporter Mary Hatley interviews an old man while sitting in a tea shop about how he solved a crime. The old man relies on sensationalistic newspaper accounts with an occasional courtroom visit and tells the reporter the story while tying complicated knots in a piece of string.[[119]](#endnote-119)

**Female reporters were used to cover the sentimental side of stories and to give a story the “woman’s angle.” This often led sob sisters to cover the underbelly of life, especially in the slums of New York City.** In *What No Man Knows* (1921), reporter Norma Harvey works for a leading New York newspaper and tries to help slum children. Title card: “One who has chosen newspaper writing as the best weapon with which to fight the battle of women and children – Norma Harvey, better known as ‘Our Blessed Lady.’” “City Editor Drake Blackley supports her crusades, but is more interested in other matters… than her charitable inclinations.”[[120]](#endnote-120)

In *Women Who Dare* (1928), writer Stella Mowbray comes from wealth but goes into the slums to aid the helpless as a nurse in a hospital. She writes articles for a newspaper attacking slum conditions even though her family owns extensive property in the slums. Based on her journalistic efforts, the authorities order an investigation of tenement conditions.

**Often, female journalists were thrown into the plot as characters who added color, humor, sex or villainy to the film.[[121]](#endnote-121)** In *Headlines* (1925), sob sister Phyllis Dale is a newspaper feature writer who keeps secret from her co-workers that she has an eighteen-year-old daughter. When her daughter is caught in a love triangle and scandal, Dale takes the blame, risking her reputation and career when her name appears in the headlines of the dailies. Later her daughter settles down with Roger Hillman, the easygoing city editor of Dale’s newspaper. In *Moulders of Men* (1927), reporter Anne Grey is in love with a doctor who is assigned to the narcotics squad. They try to aid a man who has taken a job with a dope smuggler to help his crippled brother. The man is jailed, but later provides information that leads to the arrest of the gang. Grey and the doctor end up together. In *The Abysmal Brute* (1923), society girl Maude Sangster, a journalist from a family of millionaires, is saved from drowning by a boxer. She discovers his profession when she interviews him and discovers corruption in the ring. They end up getting married.

In *The House of Horror* (1929), reporters Thelma and Joe are on the track of a missing blue diamond and go undercover to find it. They are among those gathered at the old house of a recluse where weird, frightening things are happening. At the end of the film, the two reporters reveal who they are – journalists in search of a good story. Advertised as a talkie, this silent film only has two minutes worth of sound. In *Show People* (1928), an old admiring female writer from a magazine comes to interview a Hollywood-hopeful who has been turned into a fake actress. “My paper is SO anxious to have a true story of your past…,” she tells the would-be actress. The girl’s self-centered leading man hogs the interview, making up stories about the girl. The female writer is won over and writes down whatever the two actors tell, swallowing all of the propaganda about the young actress whole. The result is a published two-page magazine spread. In *The Thirteenth Hour* (1927), reporter Polly is an eccentric, homely newspaperwoman who adds comedy relief to the story with her thrilling adventures in a haunted house.

In *The Vortex* (1928), reporter Bunty Mainwaring of the *Musical News* comes to see the composer because she is doing a “Young Composers Series” for the magazine. The composer falls in love with the girl reporter who came to interview him. They get engaged, but the young man is shocked to discover that his new fiancee is the mistress of his mother’s lover. The mother not only has face lifts, but also dates gigolos half her age. He breaks up with her, but at the end of the film begs her to come back to him. They kiss and the mother, now chastised, welcomes the girl into the family. *The Iron Trail* (1921), newspaperwoman Eliza Appleton is hired by a corrupt promoter to make an honest engineer look bad in the press, but instead of lambasting the engineer in print she falls in love with him. In *When Dawn Came* (1920), a magazine writer’s car hits a boy whom a doctor is treating. She convinces the doctor to leave the slums and come to the city where he doesn’t find his true self until he returns to a mission town, falls in love with a blind girl he operates on to give her sight, and refuses the journalist’s pleas for him to return to the city.

**Often “girl reporters” were used as inquiring reporters in film featurettes on vaudeville and musical comedy teams.** In the Vitaphone sound short, *The Maker of Melody (*aka *The Melody Makers (*1929*),* girl reporter Miss Merrill, a feature writer for United Syndicate, interviews composer Richard Rodgers and lyricist Lorenz Hart, the “Makers of Melody” on a bare stage. The boys tell her their story in songs and pictures. “Gentlemen, you are about to be interviewed,” she tells them as she sits down. “Hart: “Wait until I fix my tie.” Reporter: “Don’t you like being interviewed?” Rodgers: “Well, I don’t mind. As long as you don’t ask us which we write first, the words or the music.” Reporter: “I’m not going to ask you that. I think our readers would be more interested in knowing how you get the ideas for your hits.” Film skits illustrate their answers, ending with a production number featuring the song they wrote. [[122]](#endnote-122)

## Romance In and Out of the Newsroom

**Romance was often a key ingredient in silent films featuring journalists. More often than not, the reporters fall in love with each other.** In *Sunshine Harbor* (1922), Billy Saunders, a reporter from New York, wins the love of a girl reporter, Betty Hopkins, against the wishes of her father, an eye doctor. She leaves home, goes to New York, and becomes a successful newswriter. While covering a spectacular chemical fire, Betty is blinded. Billy proposes to her in the hospital but she won’t marry him because she is blind. Her father operates on her, restoring her sight and after a reconciliation, the father agrees to Betty marrying Billy. One reviewer wrote: “The antics of a newspaper city editor and his reporters depicted in this production undoubtedly will coincide with the mental picture the public has of these two important groups of the press.”[[123]](#endnote-123) In *The Open Wire* (1922), Reporter Helen Dare of *The Chronicle* is looking into an investment company whose officers are about to flee when she is locked in the president’s office. Star reporter Hayden gets word of her danger and rushes to her aid. He is captured, but Helen gets out of the room and releases her fellow reporter. During a fight with the villain that follows, Helen gets the editor on the wire and by the time the police land the two crooks in the station, the story is hot on the presses. Harden is in the hospital with a bad bump but Helen is there to comfort him. In *Lavender and Old Lace* (1921), reporter Carl Winfield, who works for a Boston paper, falls in love with newspaperwoman Ruth Thorne who also works at the paper. After a family crisis, they decide to get married. In *The Bellamy Trial* (1929), an unnamed red-haired “girl” reporter for the *Philadelphia Planet* is covering her first big trial. An unnamed smart-cracking “boy” reporter for the *New York Sphere* fills her in on court procedure and a romance develops. They fall in love. One reviewer wrote, “the humor and romance are provided by two very charming youngsters, Eddie Nugent and Betty Bronson, impersonating reporters. Indeed, Betty is so piquant and pretty you wonder why you don’t see her more often. She is inimitable.” [[124]](#endnote-124)

**Sometimes they fall in love with their source.** In *Anna Descends* (1921), reporter Howard Fisk, son of a newspaper publisher, investigates a jewel-smuggling ring and marries the woman who was his principal source on the story. In *The Average Woman* (1924), Jimmy Munroe, a newspaper reporter doing an article on “the average woman,” follows a woman for material. Her father is a judge and has the reporter arrested and sentences him to visit her once a week. Meanwhile she is blackmailed into marrying a crooked roadhouse operator who ends up killing a woman while trapping the girl in a roadhouse raid. She is saved before the marriage takes place and finally marries the reporter.

## Cub Reporters[[125]](#endnote-125)

**Silent film audiences loved cub reporters. They identified with the naïve young man or woman because they too were trying to figure out what journalism was all about. No one was better than the cub reporter to take them on that journey and the cub continued to be a key character in the films of the 1920s. It was hard for audiences not to root for the cub reporter, who was always the picked-upon underdog, especially when he or she turned defeat into a solid victory. Even when a cub didn’t get the story, he or she became someone the audience could root for.**

**The quintessential image of the journalist in popular culture in the late silent film era was *Power of the Press* (1928) featuring Douglas Fairbanks Jr. as cub reporter Clem Rogers with a supporting cast of one journalism stereotype after another, stereotypes that would be embellished and expanded in the 1930s. It was the last great silent film about journalism before the talkies took over and it was directed by Frank Capra, who would become an audience favorite, known as the populist American director in the decades ahead.** The film opens in the realistic *Times* city room where we meet the various characters who populate any editorial room from reporters to critics, sitting around, typing, dozing, chewing gum, reading the advice-to-the-lovelorn column, and cracking jokes. Cub Rogers is writing a weather report when a copy boy comes up to him and says: “Say, Brisbane,[[126]](#endnote-126) the whole world’s waiting for the weather report.” The city editor complains, “Two days before election and this paper’s about as lively as the Undertakers’s Gazette.” The cub responds, “No wonder your paper’s dull – you keep a good man like me on weather reports and death notices!” The cub hands over his several pages of his weather copy: “There’s a classic for you – change a word and you ruin it.” As the city editor crosses out most of the story, leaving about a sentence, a seasoned reporter, Bill Johnson, watches, sits back and laughs uncontrollably. The editor then tells the cub, “I’ll say this much for you stuff – it’s rotten.” The cub sulks then says, “Boss, speaking man to man, I don’t think you appreciate my full value.”

Breaking the quiet of the news room, the city editor gets a call: the district attorney has been murdered. No one is around so he yells at Rogers: “Examine the body – pump the servants – find who the police suspect – and *hurry!”* He sticks a press pass in the cub’s hat and sends him on his way. The cub runs back asking where he should go, and the city editor, shaking his head, tells him. When the cub gets to the crime scene, the more seasoned newspaper reporter Johnson is there and stops him from getting in. He doesn’t need any cub getting in his way. Rogers sees a girl leave the crime scene and runs after her. He tells a man in car who saw her (who turns out to be a criminal), “Don’t tell the other reporters…I want the scoop for myself.” The cub then runs back to the office and screams: “STOP THE PRESS!” He tells the city editor, “I won’t give you the story unless you print my name on it.” He tells the editor the woman must have killed him because he saw her run away. “If I could only be sure you didn’t dream this!” says the editor. Just then reporter Johnson calls from police headquarters: “I’ve discovered that Jane Atwill called on Nye (the district attorney) tonight – I’m following it up.” The editor scowls, “Too late – the cub landed the story, right under your nose,” then to the cub: “Hammer out that story – quick!” The editor then calls the pressroom: “Hold the press for a new front page.” At this point, Capra creates a mini-documentary showing how a story goes from Rogers’s typewriter through the editing process down to the pressroom to the printed edition in the newsboys’s hands and finally to the consumer. It shows in graphic detail how a news story was written, edited, printed and distributed in 1928, by this time a process familiar to most silent film audiences. The headline: “Candidate’s Daughter Involved In Murder of District Attorney” sums up the plot. Reporters, including the Johnson of the *Times*, go to the police station to get the story on Candidate Atwill’s daughter and the murder. They hound the candidate as he tries to take his daughter home.

Back at the office, two seasoned reporters are angry that the cub got the scoop of the year and the cub won’t let them forget it. His arrogance is overwhelming. “Just a cub’s dumb luck – stumbling on the scoop of the year!” says one seasoned reporter. The cub gloats, “I wonder what big story I’ll write today.” Atwill’s daughter shows up at the paper and tells the cub, “If I were a man, I’d punch your nose. You ruined my reputation – and killed my father’s chances of election.” The cub tells her, “We newspaper men must print the news, no matter who it hurts,” to which she responds: “and just to create a sensation to sell your filthy paper, you disgrace an innocent family.” She starts crying and the cub folds. “I’m sorry, little girl –I’ll have that story retracted in big type on the front page. They do whatever I say around here – the editor’s my pal.” The chastised cub goes to see the city editor; “I promised Miss Atwill we’d retract that whole story in today’s paper. We’ve ruined her reputation!” The editor ignores him: “News is news – no matter who it hurts.” The cub protests: “But I tell you she’s innocent – I saw her cry. If you don’t retract the story, I’ll resign!” The two seasoned reporters are laughing at the confrontation. The city editor looks up at him, “You can’t resign – you’re fired!” The two laughing reporters escort the cub out of the newsroom.

Rogers now is determined to find out who the real killer is and vindicate the woman he loves. He goes to a gun moll Marie’s secret apartment and finds the woman is eager to talk to him: “A reporter! Oh boy, how I love reporters.” She tells him everything she knows while he takes notes in a reporter’s notebook: “That’s a great story,” he tells her. The killer suddenly shows up and says, “Too bad it will never be printed.” He then tells the cub, “But I wouldn’t cheat the papers – let’s give them a better story….Write this – Fate forces Marie and me to part – so we have decided to end it all together.” The cub writes it down. “Now sign it. You’ll look so romantic when the coroner finds you – in each other’s arms.” Clem sees his chance and jumps the killer, capturing him and throwing him into a car. He and the candidate’s daughter then race back to the newspaper to reveal who the killer is, vindicate the candidate and get another sensational scoop., but the gang of crooks try to stop Clem in a wild auto chase that ends up at the *Times* building. The girl and the cub holding the killer rush into the city room: “STOP THE PRESS! Here’s the man who killed the district attorney!” The entire newsroom congratulates the cub and next story is blasted across the front page in headlines: “Blake Jailed in Nye Murder. Candidate’s Gunman and ‘Sweetie’ Confess. Atwill’s Election Assured.” And then a second headline: “Clem Rogers Engaged to Marry Jane Atwill.” The cub shows the girl the paper: “Who had the nerve to give them this statement?” she asks him. “You wouldn’t deny it, and get me fired again, would you?” he asks her. They kiss and the film ends.

**Other films made between 1920 and 1929 featured similar cub reporter heroes.**[[127]](#endnote-127) In *The Fatal Mistake* (1924), cub reporter Jack Darwin works for the *Evening Star*, which is involved in a rivalry with the *Herald.* When he is sent to get a story on a set of diamonds, he tries to get an exclusive photo of the never-photographed socialite. He climbs a trellis and gets a picture of a woman, but the city editor finds out after the photo is printed in a special edition that it was a maid, not the socialite, and Darwin is fired. At the unemployment office he finds the maid who also has been fired and they return to the mansion where the cub captures some robbers and saves the maid who turns out to be an undercover police agent as well as his childhood sweetheart. Darwin gets his job back, but refuses to give the editor the story until he is given three dollars for a marriage license so he can marry the maid. In *The Fighting Cub* (1925), Thomas (Tom) Patrick O’Toole, a copy boy on the *Daily News,* desperately wants to be a reporter so he begs Jack Turner, the city editor, for a chance. Turner tells him he can become a reporter if he gets an interview with a reclusive, publicity-shy philanthropist. O’Toole gets the interview and the promotion. The ambitious reporter also uncovers the hideout of a notorious criminal gang and calls the editor about his scoop. His conversation is overheard by Bull Conner[[128]](#endnote-128), the *News* police reporter who secretly works with the gang but wants to pull out, so he tips the police about their hideout. O’Toole goes to the thieves’s den for the story only to discover that the leader of the gang is the same philanthropist he interviewed who also wants to leave the gang. The police arrest the gang and O’Toole is able to clear the philanthropist but decides not to file the story even though it would make him famous. The *Motion Picture News* reviewer enjoyed the film, adding “Romance and thrills in a corking melodrama of newspaper life.”[[129]](#endnote-129) *The New York Daily News* reviewer was not as impressed: “Yes, it’s a yarn of newspaper life and the paper is the *Daily News.* But what a strange *Daily News!* The police reporter has his name engraved on his desk like a Wall St. broker, and walks into the managing editor’s office whenever the spirit moves him and sasses the executive something fierce! Otherwise it’s an exciting, clean-cut picture.”[[130]](#endnote-130)

In *The Cub Reporter* (1922), a crusading young reporter for *The Morning Times,* rescues the daughter of a jewel collector being held hostage by a Chinese tong trying to get a sacred jewel. He takes on an entire Chinatown gang and scores a scoop in the process. In *Live News* (1927), cub reporter Johnny is sent to cover a jazz-murder trial. He is told by the editor to get an interview with the beautiful vamp involved – the Queen of the underworld. It’s the biggest story of his young life. The female crook is arrested. Johnny is handcuffed to her and when she gets away, she drags the reporter after her as if he were a poodle. She takes him to a hotel and makes him register as man and wife. The cub wants to communicate with his paper and can’t because of the bit of steel that links him with the female crook. Eventually he does get the paper on the wire, calls the police who capture the woman freeing the cub. In *Bif! Bang!! Bomb!!!* (1920), a cub reporter is fired by his editor because his isn’t finding good stories. So he and his girlfriend disguise themselves as Bolsheviks to create copy about the Industrial Worker’s Union and they end up capturing some bomb throwers. In *The Magic Cup* (1921), cub reporter Bob Norton helps a hotel maid thwart pawnbrokers who substitute paste gems for real pearls. In *Wing Toy* (1921), cub reporter Bob Harris rescues the kidnapped daughter of the district attorney and then they are engaged to be married. In *The Scandal Hunters* (1925), the city editor wants a story about the mayor, but veteran reporters dodge the assignment because they know the mayor’s reputation for manhandling. Only Al Alt, a printer’s devil, will take the assignment and because he does he becomes a newspaper reporter. After a series of misadventures where the cub is thrown out of the mayor’s house repeatedly, he convinces the mayor’s daughter to help him get into the house. Once there, he learns of the mayor’s desire to become an expert equestrian and poses as a riding master. The finish shows him a wreck, after rival reporters jump on him after he finally lands the story. In *Stick to Your Safety* (1926), cub reporter Scoop Martin is nearly fired because he keeps passing up less sensational assignments. The editor’s daughter intervenes and he eventually saves the editor from a crazed bomber, landing a scoop for the paper, getting a raise and marrying the daughter.

In *Dangerous Traffic* (1926), an enterprising cub reporter, Ned Charters, works for the *Seaside Record* and has been getting scooped by a rival paper and is given one last chance to redeem himself: to get a story on a gang of bootleg hijackers. In a telegram to the cub, the city editor writes: “Our Rival Paper Has Again Beaten Us to the High Jack Story in Your Territory. This is your last opportunity. Make good or quit.” He becomes involved with federal agents investigating the gang, exposes the gang, beats a rival reporter on the story, and helps the agents break up the gang. He also gets the girl and scores two beats – a hot story on the gang of liquor hijackers captured and a getting married story for the matrimonial page. As he tells his new-found love: “Now we can send the editor two hot stories – one for the matrimonial column.” In *Is That Nice? (*aka *Is That Nice?)* (1926), enthusiastic cub reporter Ralph Tanner writes a scathing expose on a politician and gives the potentially libelous copy to a girl in the outer office. Newspaper owner-publisher Horace Wildert and Managing Editor Sherman Dyke are delighted with the story until they discover Tanner has no evidence to back up the story and that an unknown girl has gone to the politician with a copy of the article. A chastised Tanner won’t be defeated. He infiltrates the politician’s office and gets documents that substantiate his article. “Most of the film involves slapstick comedy – the cub stumbles around on skyscraper windows, is involved in wild automobile chases and puts on various disguises. “The title writer probed to the hilt for gags, finding some and hitting wild for plenty,” the *Variety* reviewer wrote.[[131]](#endnote-131)

**In film after film, the cub reporter is bullied, pounded and pushed into something resembling a reporter. Cub reporters mirrored more mature reporters in the stories they covered and the scrapes they got into. Often cub reporters were pitted against mature reporters to get the story and prove themselves worthy of the job. Editors often spent time educating their cubs as to what is news and what is a good news story while veteran reporters took every occasion to ridicule or play practical jokes on the newbie reporter.**In *The Racket* (1928), cub reporter Dave Ames of the Monitor pursues a story about a police captain determined to clean up the underworld. Veteran reporters such as Miller and Pratt from the Morning Gazette give the cub a hard time. One says: “New in the game, aren’t you?” “Oh no,” answers the cub. “I was on the Omaha Bee for a month.” “Fancy that,” responds one reporter. When the police chief sees them mocking the cub for naively expecting to interview the captain, the policeman takes pity on him and allows him to interview a singer willing to testify against the mobster. His editor doesn’t believe he got the story so the cub gives the story to Pratt and Miller so it will be published. Prompted by the captain, Pratt and Miller track a gangster to a funeral and circulate rumors that he is afraid of the captain. Denying it, the gangster claims that he is waiting to cause trouble until after the upcoming election on Tuesday. The newsmen later warn the police captain that if he is unable to stop the racketeer before the election, which the mob candidates are likely to win, the mobster will remain in power. A police patrolman, who saw the mobster killing an innocent pedestrian in a hit-and-run accident, is ready to testify against him. The racketeer goes to the station and when a bribe he offers is turned down, he shoots the patrolman at close range, then runs away, knocking down the cub reporter coming into the station. Ames later identifies the racketeer as the killer and the mobster is arrested.[[132]](#endnote-132) In *Atta Boy!* (1926), copy boy Monty Milde works for a large daily newspaper dreaming of becoming a real reporter. On his birthday, which falls on April Fool’s day, the star reporter Craven, as a joke, tells the kid he’s been promoted to reporter. He sends Monte to get an interview with a man who is furious because Craven wrote a story hinting that domestic troubles had been responsible for the kidnaping of his baby. The reporter has one misadventure after another, even being suspected of being the kidnaper. He finally discovers the kidnaper, recovers the baby and rushes to the newspaper office just as the father is raising the reward to $100,000.

In *Hold Still* (1926), Anne is told by the hardboiled city editor for the fiftieth time she can’t be a reporter (Title Cards: “The Editor had a sweet disposition, but he never used it. But Anne wanted to be a reporter and wouldn’t take ‘No’ for an answer.”). Two photographers fail to get a picture of a senator. (Title Card: “These boys say it’s impossible to photograph Senator Hangnail. Somebody will get that picture – and your job!” the city editor says to a reporter). Anne tells the city editor, “Having trouble with your men? Why not try a woman – *me*, for instance?” Anne is promised the job if she succeeds. (“You win! – and for my sake I hope you don’t make good”). To sabotage the female cub, the male reporters take action: “If she gets that picture, we’ll get the gate.” They get on the phone and say, “A woman is on her way to blow you up! She has a bomb in a black box!” Anne gets into the senator’s house and, because of the reporters’s phone call, she is suspected of being a mafia black-hand terrorist. Escaping that, she manages to snap several pictures but when they are developed, she discovers she photographed everything but the senator’s face. She then poses as a waitress and finally gets the picture. She is offered the job of cub reporter (“Young lady, I’m sorry to tell you you’re hired”), but her boyfriend tells her, “If you won’t be my wife, I’ll give someone else the job.” She decides to give up her reporter job rather than give up her boyfriend. “I’ll take your job,” she tells him.

## War Correspondents[[133]](#endnote-133)

## The world war was over, so there weren’t as many silent films featuring war correspondents as there were from the turn of the century to 1919, but the studios still churned out a few. War and foreign correspondents were usually depicted as glamorous heroes throughout the silent films era.[[134]](#endnote-134) In The Drums of Jeopardy (1923-1924), war correspondent Cutty is a soldier of fortune and a secret service man, who unravels a plot concerning two emeralds. In a ferocious fight, he kills the crook who stole the emeralds. In The Light That Failed (1923), war correspondent-illustrator Dick Heldar becomes famous for his wartime sketches and returns to London hoping to be an artist and paint his masterpiece, but a sabre wound he received in the Sudan causes him to lose his eyesight. His friend, another war correspondent, Torpenhow, who accompanied him into battle, falls in love with Heldar’s model and Heldar chases him away causing the woman, who doesn’t realize Heldar has gone blind, to slash his completed painting. Heldar is reunited with his childhood sweetheart who takes him home with her. In The Secrets of the Hills (1921), American correspondent Guy Fenton “dresses like a million-dollar fashion model and although he is supposed to be an American correspondent for an American news service in London, he is never without high hat and stick.” [[135]](#endnote-135) He rescues a girl in danger and finds himself involved in a mystery complete with secret codes, a creepy old mansion, counterfeiting, buried treasure and murder. In The Reporter (1922), the war correspondent for Old People’s Journal is sent to cover the revolution in Mexico where he fights desperadoes and wins the heroine.

## Real-life foreign correspondents played by actors were popular.[[136]](#endnote-136) In Livingstone (aka Livingstone in Africa) (1925), correspondent Henry Morton Stanley and New York Herald Publisher James Gordon Bennett decide to find the lost African missionary David Livingstone: “Find Livingstone – alive or dead. Spare no expense,” Bennett tells him. Supported by the Herald and England’s Daily Telegraph, Stanley leads the expedition in search of the missionary. The film is almost a documentary account of the life and times of Livingstone and the reporter who risked everything to find him. In With Stanley in Africa (1922), an 18-chapter heavily fictionalized serial, correspondent Henry Morton Stanley is helped by a rival female reporter Nadia Elkins as they search throughout Africa for the famous Dr. Livingstone.

**Reporters in silent films showed up throughout the world bringing back reports to the public and often following their hearts.** In *South of Panama* (1928), reporter Richard (Dick) Lewis, who represents an American newspaper, goes to the Latin American republic of El Tovar and ends up rescuing the president’s kidnapped daughter and capturing the crooks. The reporter, who is often used for comic relief, dictates his story to the American Consul’s daughter who types it as he reads it. They kiss and the woman is so flustered that she is typing gibberish very fast and the keys get stuck. Then the line is typed: “That’s all there is. There isn’t any more.”[[137]](#endnote-137) In *Hutch of the U.S.A.* (1924), a news syndicate reporter named Hutch is sent to investigate conditions in the Latin American Republic of Guadala. It turns out Hutch looks a lot like an executed American captain who was killed by a doctor. He ends up aiding the revolutionaries and leading a successful revolution. He falls in love with the villain’s daughter, marries her and both travel back to the United States.

In *The Humming Bird* (1924), American correspondent Randall Carey in Paris tries to get a story on a Parisian pickpocket, not realizing she dresses as a boy to lead a gang of thieves (she is known as “The Humming Bird”). She saves his life when a man tries to kill him with a knife, nurses him back to health and falls in love with him. When war breaks out, he enlists to fight for France and is wounded. She finds him and while he recovers, she is pardoned and decorated for her work in recruiting soldiers. In *Beau Sabreur* (1928), American journalist Mary Vanbrugh meets a legionnaire whom she snubs, remembering his vow to forsake women for France. The legionnaire embarks on a dangerous mission for the French government in an effort to offset a native uprising and save the territory for France by getting a French treaty to the sheik. Mary goes with him. The sheik holds up the treaty so he can add the reporter to his harem. While the legionnaire has found Mary to be a handicap in making his desert journey, he doesn’t want to turn her over to the sheik, so he escapes with her, kills a traitor in a duel and then confesses he’s in love with the journalist.

**Occasionally the life of a correspondent away from home is so depressing, the reporter will do anything to get out of an assignment – even commit the unthinkable.** In *Lure of the Orient* (1921), an American reporter is a carefree journalist in the Far East working out of China. He rescues a white man from an opium den and being hard up for a big story the journalist gets him to pose as a millionaire. The journalist soon gets on the trail of a story of a white merchant who tries to save himself from financial difficulties by marrying his ward to a “rich Chinaman.” The reporter rescues the girl, fights the Mandarin, and when ordered to return to China, he commits suicide.

***Editors****[[138]](#endnote-138)*

**If the urban newsroom was a bustling, noisy place in silent films, it became so much more when talkies came to the silent film era in 1928. Most of the time the audience didn’t need a title card to tell them how angry the city editor was and what he was saying to his reporters who didn’t do the job he had told them to do. The look of disgust on an editor’s face without a word said was enough for the audience to know this journalist was not happy and there would be consequences to pay.**

**Often the editor was as much of a journalist-hero as any reporter.**[[139]](#endnote-139) In *The Riddle Rider* (1924-1925), editor Randolph Parker is really the Riddle Rider who, when not wearing a black cape and mask, is the crusading editor of the local newspaper, the *Casper Star.* This journalist-hero avenges wrongs inflicted by the villains. The villains will stop at nothing to get a ranch owned by Nan Madden because underneath the barren soil of the ranch lay fabulous riches. The Riddle Rider foils every one of their plans, saves the day and gets the girl. At the end of chapter one, he rescues the heroine as a wall of water from a broken dam comes rushing down a narrow canyon, engulfing her. At the end of chapter two, he saves the girl from an exploding oil derrick. At the end of chapter three, he rescues the girl from a herd of stampeding cattle. The thrilling adventures continue for all 15 chapters.[[140]](#endnote-140) In the sequel, *The Return of the Riddle Rider* (1927), editor Parker is back as the crusading editor of the small-town newspaper in the West who disguises himself as the Riddle Rider so he can battle the evil forces that have attacked his peaceful community. In this sequel, he battles a mysterious villain who issues orders to his henchman only by telephone. The first chapter ends with Parker and the heroine falling through a rotten floor into an underground stream with unusually realistic waterfalls; in the second chapter, a floor on which the Riddle Rider is battling villains collapses, and in the third chapter, the heroine’s horse plunges over a cliff as Parker rides to the rescue.[[141]](#endnote-141)

In *The Cleanup* (1929), Oliver Brooks is a crusading newspaper editor who teams up with a determined police captain to fight bootleggers and racketeers. The gangsters try to kill the editor and the chief with a machine gun but the two heroes escape only to have another ambush result in the death of the chief and his men. The criminal then kidnaps the captain’s sister, but the young journalist rescues her and captures the crook. One reviewer wrote, “Here we have one of those fine, serious young fellows we all like to meet – and who hasn’t – the youthful editor whom destiny has appointed to clean up the world before the first edition’s on the street. He has curly hair, long points on his collar and a special hate for bootleggers. Before he gets through, he has points in his hair, a curly collar and a yen to remove himself as far as possible from the vicinity of bootleggers. Not bad.”[[142]](#endnote-142)

In *Homespun Folks* (1920), an editor exposes the shady past of a district attorney nominee. When the candidate shoots himself, a fired printer accuses the editor of the shooting. The editor’s daughter forces the printer at gunpoint to confess that he was lying. In *Counsel for the Defense* (1925), newspaper editor Arnold Bruce helps the daughter of a wrongfully imprisoned doctor expose a scheme by a wealthy banker to control the local waterworks and sell it to private interests. Her father, who was arrested on a false charge of accepting a bribe after he fought long and hard for the construction of a new municipal waterworks, is released to fight an epidemic and ends up saving the banker’s wife. The editor is jailed on a libel charge but is released and ends up with the doctor’s daughter. In *Todd of the Times* (re-edited issue, 1922), city editor Theobold Todd of *The Springfield Evening Times,* who is known as having the “keenest nose for news,” lacks ambition and is henpecked at home. When the paper’s owner puts him in charge while he is gone, Todd exposes a gambling ring and the pleased publisher makes him managing editor. He also uses the occasion to take control of his home life, “proving he is managing editor of his own establishment.”

**Some editors were just as corrupt as could be, using the press for personal, financial or political gain.** In *Her Story* (1920-1922), an editor of a yellow morning newspaper is unscrupulous and turns an innocent story into a socking, scandalous, lurid expose.[[143]](#endnote-143) In *A Beggar in Purpose* (1920) the editor of a union paper is bribed to incite labor unrest at a mill. In *The Thinker* (1922), the editor of a scandal publication sends an artist an anonymous letter suggesting that his wife loves one of his art students, causing great harm to the artist, his wife and the art student. In *The Man Without Desire* (1923), an editor receives gossip from a count’s maid about an affair which he prints and the count has the editor kidnapped and orders his hands crushed. Later, the vengeful editor gets the countess’s maid to poison her master’s wine and the plot spirals out of control. In *Loves of an Actress* (1928), Dr. Durant, the leading newspaper publisher in Europe, is in love with an actress as are two other men – the wealthiest man in France and a count who is a relative of Napoleon. The three are instrumental in making a poor woman the leading actress in the Comedie Francaise. When the actress throws them over when she falls in love with another man, Dr. Durant threatens to publish her love letters to the man, who is about to be appointed ambassador to Russia, in the same columns which previously had been devoted to praising her acting. The woman, to protect the man’s reputation, pretends that she has only been toying with his emotions. The letters are not published, the man goes to Russia and the actress, exhausted by life and love, dies peacefully.

**Sometimes the editor uses the press to do whatever he or she**[[144]](#endnote-144) **thinks is the right thing to do.[[145]](#endnote-145)** In *Out of the Storm* (1926), a publisher’s son is implicated in the suicide of a chorus girl, but he is protected by James Morton, the city editor of his father’s paper, even though both of them love the same woman. The city editor and the woman plan to elope, but the publisher’s son corners her at a restaurant and is slightly wounded in a struggle over a gun. Morton arrives after the shooting and takes the blame. The pair elope as planned, but when the son later dies of blood poisoning, Morton is convicted and barely escapes execution when his sweetheart who was ill and finally learns what happened, convinces the governor to free the city editor as he is being led to the death chamber. In *The Hollywood Reporter* (1926), editor Basil Manning of the *Hollywood Morning News* refuses to endorse a degenerate city boss for mayor. When the candidate threatens to expose the editor’s past prison term, the editor tells reporter Billy Hudson (known as“The Hollywood Reporter”) that he can marry the editor’s daughter if he can get dirt on the blackmailing candidate. With the help of photographer Dell Crossley, Billy proves that the politician runs a gambling den, Crossley gets a photograph and Manning headlines the story on the front page. Billy marries the editor’s daughter and Manning finally clears his reputation, having been framed several years earlier. In *Leap Year Leaps* (1920), an editor plays a prank on a young man. He inserts a picture of the wealthy bachelor in the newspaper saying the young rich man would welcome a leap year proposal. Soon the fake millionaire is besieged by a bevy of women of all types.

**By contrast to the rough-and-tumble urban editor,**[[146]](#endnote-146) **the country editor was usually a folksy, down-to-earth, soft-spoken journalist who worked in a small-town rural society that was the antithesis of a fast-moving, angry urban daily. In a small town, often the editor was more than a journalist; he was a member of the community who knew practically all of his readers. But in many respects, the editor was still the editor – in charge of putting out a newspaper favoring nothing but the public interest.** [[147]](#endnote-147) In *the Heart of a Fool* (1920), the editor of a local newspaper leaves the paper to become a mine foreman with the object of bettering the miners’s conditions. He is injured in an explosion. He is nursed back to health by the woman he loves. The film is based on a novel by famous small-town editor William Allen White. In *Bing Bang Boom* (1922), the editor of a local village paper helps a man who has been swindled out of his money. In *The Scarlet Car* (1923), the editor and owner of the local paper and the man who runs the bus line system and is the town’s local power, backs a politician for mayor before discovering he is corrupt. In *That Dirty Dog Morris* (1924), the editor of a local paper is asked by a friend to help him meet a pretty girl he saw on the train. But the editor falls in love with the girl and they get married, much to the surprise of his friend. In *The Steadfast Heart* (1923), a boy shoots a sheriff at the urging of his mother and is found not guilty. Both parents are killed and a kind-hearted man gets him a job on a local newspaper, but the townsfolk don’t want him around and send him away. Twelve years later, he returns to take over the paper, saving the town from a group of swindlers.

In *The Arizona Whirlwind* (1927), the editor of a local newspaper publishes the real story behind an attempt of a gang of crooked politicians to steal a valuable gold mine from the men who are the legitimate owners. In *Modern Daughters* (1927), the editor of a town newspaper meets a flapper when his car is forced off an embankment by reckless drivers headed for a beach party. The editor falls in love with the girl and gets involved in wild parties. The couple is lured into a roadhouse on the night of a long-expected raid and the girl’s father is killed when the owner of the local dive shoots at the editor and misses him. The editor is convicted and sentenced to death in the electric chair, but the girl convinces the governor to grant a stay of execution. In *The Head Man* (1928), a lawyer who was once a former senator and powerful politician is now only an alcoholic without any clients. But he still has a moral streak and refuses to join a crooked deal so the crooks can take over control of the local party and install a new mayor. They convince the lawyer to move to another town by giving him expenses and flattering letters of recommendation. But instead of leaving town, the lawyer has one more drink with his printer pal and comes home drunk. Editor-publisher Billy Hurd, who is in love with the lawyer’s daughter, sees the letters and prints them in his newspaper, entering his prospective father-in-law in the mayoralty race to run against the crooks’s hand-picked candidate. The drunk lawyer sleeps it off and discovers the next morning that he is the town’s new mayor. The editor has pulled a fast one on the crooks and wins the day – and the girl. In *A Noise in Newboro* (1923), an editor, who needs a scoop to put his “fearless, but dying newspaper” on a paying basis prints a story of a hometown girl made good that creates a “noise in Newboro” that wakes up the community and ends in righting wrong all around. In *The Devil’s Cargo* (1925), editor John Joyce comes to Sacramento in the 1849 Gold Rush and becomes a newspaper editor. He pushes for the reformation of the manners and morals of the town’s citizens. He thinks he is falling in love with the daughter of a minister, but she turns out to be a gambling house performer in her father’s casino. When he discovers this, he spurns her, but vigilantes, inspired by Joyce’s editorial policies, denounce him as a hypocrite. He and the woman are herded into a cargo ship to be taken East. They are rescued after the boat blows up. Joyce and the woman he loves are reconciled – with the editor finding out that love is more rewarding than reform.

**Sometimes, the editor repents just in time to do the right thing.** In *The Figurehead* (1920), an editor pushes his political party by discrediting the opposition with negative articles in his newspaper. A woman, who once helped save the life of the editor’s child, convinces the editor he is wrong and the editor sets things right. **Sometimes the editor makes a simple error**. In *Shameful Behavior?* (1926), Jack Lee, managing editor of a local paper, prints a photo of a woman who loves his brother and who has just returned from Paris, but an error in the composing room puts the picture over the wrong article – an accompanying item about a maniac woman escaping from an asylum and seeking revenge on her husband. A series of misadventures follow the mistake.[[148]](#endnote-148)

**Other times, the editor shows he is no better or worse than his readers.** In *Tea – With a Kick* (1923), Octavius Juniper is editor of a reform newspaper. A woman opens a tea room but a man she refuses to marry vows to ruin her business. He puts liquor in the tea pots and plants a bottle of rum in the cellar. The editor, one of the investigating reformers, discovers it and gets drunk. The tea room suddenly prospers when word gets out that she is serving “Tea with a Kick.” In *The Clean Heart* (1924), editor Philip Wriford suffers a mental breakdown from overwork and tries to escape his “other self” who he believes is following him. A journalist suffering a mental breakdown in graphic terms was rare then and now.[[149]](#endnote-149)

**Often editors showed up in minor roles usually for exposition purposes or to give the film a familiar character audiences knew right away.**[[150]](#endnote-150)

**Newsreels and non-fiction programs featured editors and publishers**[[151]](#endnote-151)

***The Journalist Goes West***

**Cowboys and itinerant printers show up as editors, reporters, printers and employees of small newspapers in the Wild West.** **These cowboy journalists usually clean up the town, capture or kill the bad guys and end up with the town’s best-looking woman.** In *Grinning Guns* (1927), publisher-editor Amos Felden is aided in fighting off ruffians by an admiring cowboy who uses the power of the press and his six-gun to restore law and order to a frontier town. The editor prints the name of one of the town’s undesirables in each day’s paper and proceeds to drive the identified individual out of town, despite the efforts of the gang to stop him. The head of the gang, a saloon owner, sets fire to the newspaper office. The cowboy kills him, restores the paper to its old self and marries the editor’s daughter. He forces the crooks at gunpoint to subscribe to the paper. In *The Danger Man,* a young “cowboy” editor tries to clean up saloons and dance halls in a western town and faces fierce opposition. In *Red Courage,* editor Pinto Peters who “knew as much about a small but snappy newspaper as an Eskimo does about B.V.D’s” [[152]](#endnote-152) but that doesn’t stop from Chuckwalla Bill buying the *Cinnabar Sentinel* and starting a reform campaign in a small western town. The corrupt mayor holds a mortgage on the newspaper, but the cowboy figures out a way to pay him off, captures a gambling house owner, and finds the woman of his dreams.

In *Playing It Wild* (1923), cowpuncher Jerry Hoskins wins an editor’s newspaper in a poker game and vows to rid the town of a crooked sheriff. Former editor Old Man Webb helps him carry on the battle while Hoskins disguises himself as an outlaw, ridicules the present sheriff as a coward, and says he is afraid of the new sheriff running against him. He also finds time to fall in love with the editor’s daughter, who at first hated him for cheating her father out of his newspaper. In *North Star* (1925), newspaper reporter Noel Blake in the Canadian Northwest helps a girl find her brother who believes he killed a man he knocked down at a party. The reporter takes in North Star, the man’s dog. The man was only injured, but the villain decides to exploit the situation by hiding the man. But Blake rescues the man and the dog chases the villain off a cliff to his death. In *Man Rustlin’* (1926), Buck Hayden becomes a reporter for a local paper run by Pop Geers. Hayden has one adventure after another including chasing down bandits, getting caught in the crossfire of a feud and recovering loot from a stagecoach robbery. His accounts of his adventures are so successful that they earn him a syndicated column from an eastern newspaper and he marries his school teacher sweetheart who had urged him to become a reporter in the first place.

**Sometimes the cowboy editor walks a tightrope between law and order and personal gain. But usually by the end of the film, he does the right thing.** In *The Jailbird (aka Shakespeare Clancy)* (1920), editor Shakespeare Clancy of the *Dodson Weekly Tidings* is a jailbird who walks out of prison six months earlier than expected hiding in a crowd of visitors. He goes to a small Western town with the prison’s printer, “Skeeter” Burns, where he has been left a failing local newspaper and a plot of land. When they can’t make a go of the paper, they devise a phony oil well scheme to sell the townspeople stock. But oil is really discovered and Clancy sees it as an omen – he reforms and returns to prison to complete his sentence.

**Sometimes the Western editor is just as much of a villain as his city counterpart.** In *Looking for Trouble* (1926), editor Jasper Murchison operates a small-town newspaper in Texas and has turned it into a scandalous, yellow publication aimed at helping the editor do whatever he wants to whenever he wants to do it. It’s also a front for jewel smugglers. He prints a scandalous story linking a woman with a man who works on her father’s ranch. Jack Pepper, a cowboy, forces him at gunpoint to retract the untrue story. When the gun goes off, Pepper is accused of trying to kill the editor and becomes an outlaw. The man and woman accused of an affair were actually trying to help the man’s wife who is being held a prisoner by a diamond smuggler working with the editor. Eventually Pepper captures the gang and reveals that Murchison is one of the smugglers, ending his reign of terror in the town.

**If the editor is female, she inherits the newspaper from her father or wants to bring law and order to her town. She is almost invariably helped out by a iterant cowboy.** In *Gentlemen of the West* (1923), a female editor-publisher runs a newspaper in the Wild West for her health and makes things hot for a crowd of real estate sharks. She is helped by a handsome cowboy and his four friends.

## Publishers, Owners and Media Barons[[153]](#endnote-153)

**The stereotype of the publisher or owner of the news organizations as a greedy, hypocritical, amoral journalist who rides sensationalism and tabloid journalism to bigger and bigger profits is one that became firmly established in the public mind during the silent film era. If the people’s right to know was abused, silent film audiences knew who to blame: not the reporter, not the editor, but more often than not, the publisher, the owner of the news media, who used the precious commodity of the public interest for his own personal, economic or political gain.** In *Youth and Adventure* (1925), Clint Taggart is a political boss who owns a newspaper and uses it to gain political power. A wealthy man, the irresponsible Reggie Dillingham, bets his attorney he can support himself for six months. He is a dismal failure until he snaps an incriminating picture of Taggart, a publisher who likes chorus girls. Taggart makes Dillingham managing editor of his newspaper to keep the story quiet. Surprisingly Dillingham immediately liberalizes the paper’s policy and falls in love with Mary Ryan, Taggart’s secretary. Aided by a dictograph machine, the editor exposes publisher Taggart as a bootlegger through his own newspaper. The paper’s staff backs Dillingham when Taggart brings in a gang of thugs to throw him out.[[154]](#endnote-154) In *Her Reputation* (1923), scandal-mongering publisher John Mansfield publishes a story written by his reporter Clinton Kent, making a woman look like an unfaithful lover. The woman gets caught in a flood and finds refuge on top of a house with the publisher’s son, Sherwood Mansfield. They fall in love. The publisher follows the woman to a mountain cabin; his car goes off the road and burns up causing a forest fire. Kent finds the woman, but she is reunited with the newspaper owner’s son who wires the paper to kill Kent’s story about her.[[155]](#endnote-155) In *The Telephone Girl* (1927), Van Dyke is the owner of a powerful party paper who promises to print a scandalous story on the opposing reform candidate that will swing the election. The candidate, supposedly a specimen of clean living, had been unduly familiar with a woman five years ago. The newspaper is about to go to press carrying the story without the name of the woman, intending to expose her later, when the situation is saved by the telephone girl who is presiding over the hotel switchboard pulls out all of the phone plugs to stop the print order from the publisher from going through to the editor. In *The World’s Applause* (1923), a newspaper publisher sees an actress and man leave a party just after the host’s dead body is discovered. The publisher takes a hand in the investigation and dogs the man’s footsteps until he is arrested for the murder, but it turns out it is his sister who killed the man. The publisher had used the power of his press to go after an innocent man. In *The Enemy Sex* (1924), newspaper owner Harrigan Blood wants to help a chorus girl to stardom through his powerful newspaper. But she doesn’t want to have anything to do with him.

**Some publishers use their newspapers to blackmail people into giving them money or power.** In *The Rustle of Silk* (1923), a newspaper owner publishes damaging love letters exposing a British member of Parliament hoping to be Prime Minister. He also has an affair with the British MP’s wife. In *The Fear Market* (1920), tabloid newspaper owner Major Stone uses his scandal sheet to blackmail clients. When one of the society women he blackmails commits suicide, the publisher’s daughter, who doesn’t know her father is the scandal sheet publisher, asks Editor-Publisher Oliver Ellis of a respectable newspaper to help her and crusade against the scandal sheet. Stone orders his henchmen to get something on Ellis. The daughter finds out her father is the publisher of the scandal sheet and shames him into giving up the publication. Ellis marries the daughter. About the film, one reviewer wrote, “Such papers do exist, as you well know, and in this picture you may get a very good idea of how this particular brand of blackmail is worked ‘within the law.’”[[156]](#endnote-156) In *All Dolled Up* (1921), an unscrupulous tattle-tale publisher who edits “Talk of the Town” suggests blackmail as a means of bilking a spinster of her money. In *The Social Code* (1923), publisher Colby Dickinson of a scandal-mongering society sheet, who often is a blackmailer, is found murdered in his apartment. Dickinson had stolen some letters he was planning to use to blackmail a socialite – if she doesn’t want the scandal reported in his newspaper, she has to pay to him to keep quiet. Her beau argues with him and a few hours later Dickinson is found dead. The rest of the film deals with the murder and the trial. In *The Guilty One* (1924), journalist H. Beverly Graves, identified as a publisher or editor in some reviews and a reporter in others, works for a scandal sheet and prints spicy personality items using his position to blackmail potential victims. It turns out Graves is not only a blackmailer, but a murderer who is forced to confess his guilt, saving the heroine’s brother and husband.

In *A Little Girl in a Big City* (1925), publisher D.V. Cortelyou of the magazine *The Gay Life,* falls for a pretty and innocent small town girl who wins the magazine’s beauty contest. When Mary arrives in New York, he arranges for her to stay with a woman of questionable reputation who often aids him in his nefarious schemes of blackmail and seduction. At a large party, the publisher obtains compromising evidence with which to blackmail the wife of a wealthy broker. He also makes rough advances toward the girl, and one of his assistants, reporter Jack McGuire, gives him a sound thrashing for trying to despoil such an innocent girl. When the rich woman being blackmailed turns to Jack for help, he and Mary attempt to trap the publisher in a net of his own making, but he is too smart, outwitting Jack and abducting Mary. He also kidnaps the rich woman and both are put into a deserted farm house. Jack finds out where they are, calls the police and Cortelyou is arrested. The rich woman is saved from the consequences of scandal and Jack gets a new job and proposes to Mary. One title card sums up the plight of newspapers at the time: “Jack McGuire, one of an army of reporters thrown out of work by one of the Big City’s favorite tricks – a merger of newspapers.”

**When a publisher’s son takes over the newspaper, even corrupt publishers may be defeated.** In *The Little Wanderer* (1920), a newspaper publisher is criticized by his son for exploiting the plight of the poor to sensationalize the news. The father says that his sensational stories have never hurt anyone except those that should be hurt. The son, to prove his point, decides to reform an unfortunate slum dweller, a girl who dresses as a boy. He falls in love with her, but the publisher forbids the marriage after he realizes she is the daughter of a man he framed. After a series of misadventures, the publisher admits his guilt, and the son takes over the paper to implement his ideals of urban reform (he also marries the girl). In *Smudge* (1922), a publisher’s son returns to take over the town newspaper. The two come into conflict over the use of smudge pots in citrus groves. The son is against them, reminding his father of the paper’s motto: “A newspaper should respect its community’s interests, even if they are in conflict with those of its owner.” The business interests who control the father get the paper’s editor to kidnap the son and his girlfriend, the leader of the reform movement. But he uses a letter press to spring open a door and escapes, stops the newspaper from putting out a special edition supporting the smudge pots, has the kidnappers arrested and then writes his own special edition. The issue is finally resolved with the development of a device by the young publisher that heats the groves without producing smoke. As Richard R. Ness, writes, “The film indicates the role of the press in influencing public opinion and also alludes to the possibility of the press itself being influenced by outside interests, particularly those with available capital.”[[157]](#endnote-157)

**Sometimes publishers use the power of their press to do good for the community and the society-at-large.** In *Contraband* (1925), Carmel Lee inherits a small town weekly paper, the Gibeon *Free Press,* along with printer Tubal, Simmy, a printer’s devil and reporter, and $200 in debt. Lee discovers the town is terrorized by a band of bootleggers who abduct and kill the local sheriff. Lee editorializes in her new paper for justice and reform. She hires the recently fired school superintendent, Pell, to gather news and write editorials and together they fight the crooks, are captured and escape. The leader of the gang turns out to be one of the town’s leading citizens. In *The Man Under Cover* (1922), newspaper owners Margaret Langdon and reformed conman Paul Porter thwart some swindlers who have been selling phony oil shares and return the money to the townspeople. In *Unconquered* (1922), a publisher-editor and his athlete friend rescue a princess that the newspaperman falls in love with and eventually marries. In *The Printer’s Devil* (1923), a printer’s devil convinces a man to buy a small-town newspaper, *The* Briggsville Gazette. The new publisher writes an editorial that angers a bank whose daughter the publisher is wooing. When the bank is robbed, he is accused but the real crooks are found.

**Publishers so familiar to silent film audiences that they were ripe for satire.** In *On the Front Page* (1926), the publisher-editor “and chief mud-slinger of a yellow newspaper” James W. Hornby of the *Daily Squawk* is angry because every other newspaper in town is scooping him. He gives his scapegoat son 24 hours to find a scandal about a countess who has come to town. The publisher threatens to disown his son if he doesn’t come through. After spending the night on the wrong street looking for the wrong countess, the young reporter comes up with a plan: his butler will be seen in a compromising situation with the countess and he’ll photograph them. The countess, who is sick of reporters, has other ideas. She holds a party that is raided by police who find the publisher’s coat that the butler had worn. One reporter says, “It was Jim Hornby, owner of the *Squawk.* We’ll burn him up.” The next morning newspaper headline: “Prominent Newspaper Publisher Escapes Raid But Leaves His Clothes Behind.” The senior Hornsby reads the article and is furious. The son comes to tell him he got the big scoop, and the publisher tries to hit him with a golf club and then chases him down the street. In *Red Hot Speed* (1929), newspaper publisher Colonel Long is conducting an anti-speeding campaign to send all violators to jail. The young assistant district attorney is trying to win his favor by supporting his campaign. When the publisher’s daughter is arrested for speeding, she gives a false name (Mary Jones) and is paroled in the custody of the assistant district attorney (who previously she had run down driving her roadster recklessly). The County vs. “Mary Jones” becomes a test case and the publisher goes to the assistant district attorney’s apartment to meet this notorious woman. The daughter and the district attorney learn he is coming and the girl escapes by a window as the district attorney finds another girl to impersonate “Mary Jones.” The Colonel, none the wiser, decides that the girl is a mental case. Meanwhile his daughter and the assistant district attorney fall in love and receive her father’s permission to get married – never letting on that “Mary Jones” and his daughter are one and the same.

In *Stolen Kisses* (1929), H.A. Lambert Sr. is the irascible publisher of a Detroit daily newspaper. His meek son and his wife go on a trip to Paris. The crotchety old publisher, who wants grandchildren, wants his son to be more manly and not let his wife run things and pay too much attention to her pet poodle. He goes with them and hires a Paris divorce lawyer to bring the bickering couple closer together. The lawyer decides to make them jealous of each other – he personally courts the wife and sets up the publisher’s son with a hot French number. After many complications and misunderstandings, the couple are reconciled and the publisher is satisfied with what he has done.

**Publishers often showed up in films that didn’t have much to do with journalism.**[[158]](#endnote-158)

***Silent Film and the Ethnic Press***

**Except for race films, most of the news media presented in silent films were owned, operated, edited and reported by white men and women. For the most part, the ethnic press was ignored in mainstream movies. However, there were a handful of films made in the 1920s that reflected a diversity of news publications in America. They included characters who worked for Jewish and Black newspapers.**

**Black journalists were primarily seen in pictures made for an African-American audience. Producer-writers took the images of white journalists they had seen in mainstream movies and translated those images into black journalists who mimicked their white counterparts.** In *The Dungeon* (1922), a woman publishes a story exposing residential segregation in a Negro newspaper risking her life to do so. In *As the World Rolls On* (1921), African-American Nelson Crews is editor of a leading black publication. In *The Flaming Crisis* (1924), a young, aggressive African-American crusading newspaperman Robert Mason exposes a labor leader’s political influence with the result that the man’s daughter breaks their engagement and when the man is murdered, Mason is accused and convicted of murder on circumstantial evidence. He makes a daring escape from prison and makes his way to the southwestern castle country where he falls in love with a cowgirl. He drives away a band of outlaws, gives himself up and finds out that the real murderer has confessed so he returns to cowboy country and the woman he loves. In the black-produced, written and directed *Within Our Gates* (1920), a newspaper account in a white newspaper describes a man who has been lynched as being “a recent victim of accidental death at unknown hands.” Two politicians read the article and manipulate a black minister into supporting the prohibition against African-American voting. Then the “manipulated press” is listed as one of the injustices that black people had to experience on a daily basis as it gives a false report of the victim of a lynching. In a newspaper column, “Law Proposed to Stop Negroes of the Vote,” a Mississippi senator justifies the bill saying that “from the soles of their flat feet to the crown of their head, Negroes are undoubtedly inferior beings, therefore, how can we in conscience permit them to vote?” The black director knew that such a blatant racial attack guarantees the unification of the black audience.

In the bizarre film, *Eleven P.M.* (1928), the story may or may not be a dream concocted by a struggling African-American newspaperman, Louis Perry, a light-skinned handsome man. He has written an article on reincarnation for editor Harry Brown’s religious paper, *Search Light.*  “Do you really believe this?” the editor asks him. Perry answers, “Yes, if there is a progressive stage of existence, there is a declining stage. I believe it is possible for a man by chance of thinking to take refuge in a lower form of material existence, for instance, cats, dogs and other creatures.” Brown tells him, “This is an interesting story. We go to press early tomorrow morning. Can I have it tonight. I’ll stop by for it at eleven p.m.” Perry is also a boxer, and a cigar-chewing fight promoter sets up a match for him that night. Perry plans to finish the article, box in the match and take out his sweetheart and her mother in the same evening. At this point the journalist falls asleep and the rest of the movie is a dream sequence. He wakes up with his girlfriend, her mother, the editor and the fight promoter all in his office. It has all been a dream – including the finished story. He then types the story up as Brown looks at his watch – it is 11:00 P.M.

The Jewish press is well-presented in a mainstream film called *Salome of the Tenements* (1925). Sonya Mendel is a reporter for an ethnic newspaper, *The Jewish Daily News.* She makes her way through life with a combination of good looks and a wit sharpened by the give-and-take of the East Side ghetto. She is nicknamed Salome because of her dancing abilities and powers of fascinating the other sex. As one reviewer put it, “Her success brings her the nickname of Salome, for heads fall, like that of John of old, at her attack. She lands as reporter for Jacob Lipkin, editor of a jargon newspaper and he, like all the rest, falls in love with her.”[[159]](#endnote-159) As a reporter she is assigned to interview a handsome philanthropist on the erection of a new settlement in the ghetto. He too falls in love with Salome and later, much to the chagrin of editor Lipkin, he marries her. A usurer blackmails her because she borrowed $200 to beautify her room to impress her rich fiancé and she signed a note for $1,500 payable when she married. The philanthropist finds out and is furious, considering her a gold digger. She proves her love for him because she is willing to sacrifice herself and go to prison rather than have her husband give up his life’s work for her people. In *Broken Hearts* (1926), Jewish writer Benjamin Rezanov flees the country when the government comes after him for “objectionable” political writings. In *Solomon in Society* (1922), a successful Hebrew tailor moves up in society but still reads a Yiddish newspaper to stay in touch with his East Side culture. In *His People* (aka *The Proud Heart,* 1925), newsboy Sammy Cominsky sells papers to support his Jewish Russian family on New York’s Lower East Side.

**The Chinese were particularly interesting to silent movie audiences and there were many films featuring either Chinese actors or white actors playing Chinese roles. These films usually ended in tragedy for the Chinese who always found themselves isolated in an all-white American culture**. In *Pagan Love* (1920), a Chinese publisher comes to America to go to a university and then start a Chinese newspaper in New York. This is one of the earliest views of the ethnic press. The melodrama has the publisher falling in love with a blind girl. He arranges for a doctor to cure her, and she runs away from him when her sight is restored. He goes back to China and commits suicide.

# Newsreel Shooters and Photojournalists[[160]](#endnote-160)

**The silent newsreels wasted no time becoming sound newsreels as early as 1928. Audiences, for the first time, could hear sound effects such as a ball hitting a bat, a crowd roaring at a touchdown, a newsboy shouting “Extra.” They couldn’t get enough of the talking newsreel.[[161]](#endnote-161) Often newsreels became even more popular than the feature films, and theaters specializing in newsreels were successful in the late 1920s and well into the 1940s before television news took over. Real newsreel cameramen as well as fictional newsreel cameramen became heroes to the public since they often risked their lives to cover natural and man-made disasters.**

**Newsreel cameraman were so popular and important to audiences by 1928 that comic Buster Keaton, in his film *The Cameraman,* could parody them and the audience would understand every joke and gag**. The opening title card states: “When acclaiming our modern heroes, let’s not forget *The News Reel Cameraman*… the daredevil who defies death to give us pictures of the world’s happenings.” A montage of real newsreel shooters in action follows, setting the stage for our hero: “And there are other types of photographers.” Enter Buster, a tintype photographer, who in order to win over Sally, a girl who works at the M-G-M Newsreel offices, decides to become a heroic newsreel cameraman. The sympathetic girl tells Buster, “You’ll have to buy your own camera before they’ll give you a trial here.” He pawns his old still camera equipment and goes to the newsreel office with a dilapidated second-hand newsreel camera where he is promptly ridiculed and then ignored.

A warehouse is on fire and Sally tells him, “You ought to go photograph the fire…they’ll buy any good film…so photograph anything that’s interesting.” Buster goes out and shoots everything he sees, but when his work is screened at the office, it is filled with double exposures, reversed images, split screens and enough weird effects to cause great laughter among all those viewing it including the editor, the boss, who hires the cameramen, and even the audience. The girl tells the disillusioned Buster, “Don’t be discouraged. No one would ever amount to anything if he didn’t try.” She gets a phone call about a Tong war and tips off Buster before anyone else. He runs to cover it before the other newsreel shooters find out. Along the way, he discovers a pet grinder’s monkey who won’t leave him alone. He gets exclusive footage of the Tong war and tells the veteran newsreelmen who show up, “I took the whole blamed war!” But when the editor looks at the footage, there is nothing there. The film magazine is empty. They accuse Buster of forgetting to put film in the camera and are angry at Sally for giving him the story before anyone else. Buster sadly tells the girl goodbye and leaves.

Later, he is shooting a yacht club regatta in an effort to redeem himself and spies his girl and a newsreel shooter traveling too fast in a boat that crashes. The shooter she is with runs away leaving her to drown, but Buster jumps into the water and saves her. When Buster goes to get help, the newsreel shooter shows up just as the girl wakes up and takes all of the credit for the rescue.

In the viewing room, one of the men comes in and tells the editor, “That little cameraman left this film here. He said you can have it for nothing.” They look at the film and shout: “It’s the Tong war!” Buster had discovered that the monkey changed magazines and that the Tong war film is complete as he shot it. The monkey also inadvertently filmed Buster rescuing Sally after the boat crash. After watching the film, the editor yells, “That’s the best camera work I’ve seen in years! Get that man here quick!” Sally is furious at the cameraman who took credit for her rescue and runs out to bring Buster back. He is redeemed and wins Sally’s love. As the film ends, he thinks crowds of New Yorkers are cheering him on as the newly hired MGM cameraman, but it’s really the actual footage of the ticker-tape parade for Charles Lindbergh, the first person to fly across the Atlantic, in 1927.

*The News Parade* (1928) is credited with being the first to use the newsreel cameraman as a journalist hero. “Newsreel Nick” Naylor is a newsreel photographer trying to get footage of a reclusive, camera-shy millionaire. The wealthy man is so reluctant to be photographed that the newsreel office has a separate closet for the cameras he has wrecked. Naylor follows the millionaire and his daughter to Cuba where he saves them from a kidnapper and gets his newsreel footage as well. Along the way, Naylor wins his stripes by getting exclusive pictures of a sensational airplane stunt by making a parachute jump. He also is shown grinding his camera aboard a fire truck rushing around New York and shooting pictures of boxer-celebrity Gene Tunney.

The *Variety* reviewercommented on the open field for movies when it came to the new, exciting popular newsreels. “First of the newsreel romance pictures to come in and leaving the field wide open for others on the way….It misses the newsreel boys just as the many newspaper and college pictures have falsified press and campus. Its chief contribution is that Fox has modestly refrained from plugging its own news service….Rather a shame the studio has botched a corking idea as there’s a lot of material which could be pieced together about the hit and run camera boys to make good program material. Newsreel men will scoff at this opus. It’s too broad to convince the public of anything other than being a mild slant on a profession of which it knows little. That the pictured angle is miles away from the genuine article is the story department’s fault. The yawn doesn’t show any of the real cameramen, except as a background, although the Fox News offices on Tenth avenue are flashed as is Truman Talley, actual head of the Fox News service, who is introduced by the name in a title which describes him as ‘the hard-boiled, straight-shooting chief of the newsreel staff.’” The disgruntled reviewer continues: “Would have been better if Fox had undertaken to screen this subject on the level and gone into more detail as to the enterprise and energy involved in turning out 104 newsreels a year…Patrons will still be in the dark on newsreels after this viewing, which doesn’t make it impossible for Fox to do the subject again – but do it. And anyway, the Fox News bunch deserve a better dedication.”[[162]](#endnote-162)

Mordaunt Hall, the *New York Times* reviewer, agreed: “With all the interesting data there was on hand for the making of a picture concerned with the experiences of a newsreel cameraman, the Fox Film Corporation has delivered a production which is little more than a burlesque of what it might have been…Instead of making this a serious depicting of the way in which a cameraman goes about his assignments, there is a story which is about as possible as finding buttered wheatcakes on trees.” Hall did say the film had some possibilities: “In the beginning one lives in hopes that the exploits are going to be impressive. There is Russell Muth, a Fox news cameraman, who has done many a daring stunt during his pictorial career. It was he who flew over the crater of Vesuvius and had a narrow escape with death. Mr. Muth is perceived sitting on a plank extended form a windowsill high up on a skyscraper. The comic hero is sent out to help Muth, and he too takes his place on an adjoining plank jutting out from another window….it is a pity that this idea is overdone eventually, but for a few instants it almost makes the audience gasp.”[[163]](#endnote-163)

*Hot News* (1928), an up-to-date comedy glorifying the newsreel cameraman, shows acameraman who is a woman, but she’s got a man’s name – Pat – and does a man’s job. Pat Clancy is the aspiring newsreel camera girl, hired by her father, the publisher, to work on *The Sun* causing the paper’s best cameraman, Scoop Morgan, to quit in protest of the hiring of a woman. *The Mercury* hires the disgruntled Scoop and there begins a heated rivalry between the two. A title card shows the competition between the two news organizations: “While the *Mercury* goes down the *Sun* was rising*.”* At first, Pat covers baby shows and the like, but soon she is given harder assignments.Pat gets a few lucky breaks and manages to get a beat on cameraman Scoop. The two cover a series of thrill pictures: a wrecked boat, a blimp landing that leads to some antics around the Statute of Liberty and an attempt to get pictures of the maharaja that finds both of them masquerading as adagio dancers. While Pat is covering a lawn party in honor of a nobleman from India, a thief attacks him, stealing a gem form his turban. Pat gets it all in her camera. After Pat exposes the theft, she and Scoop are kidnapped by a thief and taken aboard his yacht. But Pat’s assistant has taken the film to headquarters where the reel shows how the theft happened. Government boats pursue the yacht and arrive as Scoop and the thief are fighting it out with Pat calmly filming the whole grim business. By the time Pat and Scoop are rescued they have fallen in love and believe that two good newsreel cameramen should stay together.

Mordaunt Hall, the critic of the *New York Times,* wasn’t impressed with a woman playing a man’s role, saying that the female character “carries on the doctrine that women are equal to men in all things – even to being newsreel photographers. Maybe they are, but if feminism rampant in any way resembles the activities of ‘Pat’ Clancy, the world, as it is sometimes asserted, is not the same as it used to be…A man named ‘Scoop’… evidently pretty good at his job, is shown leaving that job because he won’t teach his boss’s daughter the art of photography. The daughter ‘Pat,’ no less, then steps forward to show ‘Scoop’ that he is only a man, while she is the incarnation of the feminist movement. That she does so is to be expected.”[[164]](#endnote-164) Another reviewer also mentioned the female lead in feminist terms: “Bebe Daniels is the camera girl of the picture and, as usual, she goes at once about the business of showing the young man how much better a young woman can do a young man’s work than a young man can do it. (If Miss Daniels isn’t elected chief high potentate by the feminists of this our contemporary civilization, it must be because the scattered membership hasn’t seen her last several pictures.)”[[165]](#endnote-165) The *New York Daily News* headlined its review, “‘Hot News’ Glorifies Girl Behind Newsreel Cameras.” The reviewer pointed out, “Naturally when one is going to prove to the cinema public that the newsreel cameraman or camerawoman is one of the seven or eight wonders of the world, there has to be a situation wherein the hero or heroine, given a tough assignment photographing a celeb who absolutely won’t be photographed, eventually succeeds in bringing home the negatives, positive….(Scoop is) never to be outscooped by any other newsreel photographer. Pat jams Scoop’s standing, as you may well imagine, until even Scoop has to admit – after she has turned in a news film showing a murder in the actual process of being committed (which leads to the capture of the murderer) – that she’s as good as he is.”[[166]](#endnote-166) Another newspaper reviewer added, “It tells a graphic and authentic story of what is undoubtedly one of the most exciting professions in the world – that of the newsreel cameraman.”[[167]](#endnote-167)

In *Chasing Through Europe* (1929), Dick Stalling is a brash freelance newsreel photographer based in London who travels the globe in search of a “hot scoop.” One reviewer said, “Nick plays the part of a newsreel cameraman on a roving assignment. The kind of job every newspaperman and cameraman has wished for since he was crazy enough to take up the work – but never gets.”[[168]](#endnote-168) He meets a wealthy American woman and helps her to escape from her crooked guardian who wants to put her in an asylum for refusing to marry his nephew. The plot provides an opportunity for Fox to make use of extensive newsreel footage shot by Fox News as the photog and the woman travel throughout Europe, photographing famous sites and important people (Mussolini and the Prince of Wales) along the way culminating in a cliff-hanging encounter with the bad guys at the Eiffel Tower and winding up in Rome. While photographing Mt. Vesuvius in Italy and getting startling shots from the mouth of the volcano, Stallings gets back from the location just in time to foil an attempt to kidnap the woman. The pair return to the United States to get married.

**Newsreels turned cameramen into recognizable heroes of the screen and the newsreel companies promoted their shooters with gusto.** One cameraman who became a celebrity during the silent film era and was known to most audiences was Captain Ariel Varges of International News who covered some of the great breaking news events. In *International News No. 48,* 1923, he takes striking, exclusive pictures of the ancient volcano of Bromo becoming active again in Java. When “The Newsreel Globe-trotter” ended a 250,000-mile adventure tour, International news presented the highlights of an amazing five-year trip (*International News No. 11,* 1924). Varges took a trip aboard a giant airship, the ZR-3 Zeppelin, constructed by Germany for the United States (*International News No. 78,* 1924). Varges was there to capture in dramatic moving pictures Christian General Feng, as he wins a decisive battle and the city of Tientsin, China, falls (*International News No. 18,* 1926); Varges, now head of the International Newsreel’s bureau in the Far East, and his Chinese assistant Wong, cover the Chinese War with exclusive vivid pictures showing the British force in India, the arrival in Shanghai of the Punjabi Battalion and the French Saigonese troops from Indo-China (*International News No. 16,* 1927).

Varges was the most famous but not the only cameraman who made international headlines. Cameraman Umberto Romagnoli of International News braved death to get remarkable crater pictures of an erupting volcano Mt. Etna in Sicily (*International News No. 64,* 1923). Pathe News cameraman Andrew Glattli covered the French-Rif war and at the risk of his life took his camera into the midst of hostilities securing sensational scenes of actual warfare(*Pathe News No. 52,* 1925). Pathe News cameraman Ralph Earle risks his life to secure spectacular and unusual pictures of Japanese earthquake pictures (*Pathe News No. 79,* 1923). Paramount News cameraman Al Johnson’s monoplane catches fire, forcing Johnson’s descent in a parachute. Johnson’s automatic camera in his plane caught the hurtling nose-dive through the air, the wreckage and an actual depiction of what a doomed flyer would see. The crank was kept grinding and everything was gotten, the camera having been thrown away from the wreckage making possible this remarkable film (*Paramount News No. 1,* 1927). Pathe News cameraman Robert Donanue rushed to the scene of New York’s most disastrous Fifth Avenue skyscraper fire at the Sherry Netherlands hotel to capture sensational scenes rushed to first-run Broadway houses in time for the opening shows the next day. Pathe News veteran cameraman Robert Donohue shot exclusive scenes of the revolution in Nicaragua (*Pathe News No. 12,* 1927). Pathe News cameraman Ralph Earle risks his life to secure spectacular and unusual pictures of Japanese earthquake pictures (*Pathe News No. 79,* 1923). Pathe News cameraman Giovanni Pucci covers the story of the eruption of Mt. Etna in Sicily, risking his life showing the volcano’s fury and the stream of molten lava. One reviewer said, “It has been said a picture is worth a thousand words. With this in mind one reviewing this bit of camera reporting can rightfully say that Signor Giovanni Pucci’s film record of the destruction of Mascali by a stream of molten lava is worth numberless columns of type”[[169]](#endnote-169) (*Pathe News No. 45,* 1923). An International News cameraman also shot “close-ups” of the seething Mt. Vesuvius volcano amid swirling smoke and deadly gases captured in *International News No. 22* (1924).[[170]](#endnote-170)

In 1929, Fox Movietone News began to give sound and cameramen credit on their clips, each being differentiated at the bottom of some of the title cards. It made the cameraman a minor celebrity (*Fox Movietone News, Vol. 2, No. 14,* 1929). A series in 1929 called “Cinema Heroes” offers scenes of the men who crank the camera for the Pathe Newsreel. All the famous Pathe News camera heroes are shown performing daring feats in their efforts to gather pictorial records of the world’s activities. One reviewer wrote, “A half dozen of the boys are shown with full credit given them in the titles, and this is bound to be one of the most popular Reviews yet shown.”[[171]](#endnote-171)

**Newsreels became very competitive and fought ferociously to get theater owners to take their newsreel. Fox News,**[[172]](#endnote-172) **International News,**[[173]](#endnote-173) **Kinograms,** [[174]](#endnote-174) **MGM News,**[[175]](#endnote-175) **Paramount** [[176]](#endnote-176) **and Pathe News**[[177]](#endnote-177) **took out full-page advertisements proclaiming their newsreel is the best, that they scored more scoops and exclusives than any other newsreel and that their newsreel was definitely the one theater owners should buy if they didn’t want to lose their audiences.**

**Cameramen made short films illustrating their craft**[[178]](#endnote-178) **and their ingenuity.**[[179]](#endnote-179)In the seminal *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Soviet cameraman Mikhail Kaufman is the man with the movie camera who travels around a city with a camera slung over his shoulder, documenting urban life with dazzling invention. There are scenes superimposing the cameraman setting up his camera on top of a second camera and superimposing a cameraman inside a beer glass. The film features three figures – the invisible filmmaker (director Dziga Vertov himself), the cameraman in the film (his brother Mikhail) and the film editor (Elizaveta Svilova, Vertov’s wife). It is both a film and a making of that film. Svilova is seen cutting the film, reordering shots that we then see on the screen followed by scenes of the cameraman shooting these very sequences. As one critic wrote, “Coming right at the end of the silent era, *Man with the Movie Camera* shows us everything that film can do and everything that the cinema ought to become.”[[180]](#endnote-180) In *Hunting Tigers in India* (1929), photographer-narrator commander George M. Dyott verbally illustrates what the audience is seeing in this chronicle of hunting big game in India with a camera and a rifle.

**Often they specialized in featurettes documenting celebrities, especially those living in Hollywood.**[[181]](#endnote-181)

**Nnewsreels became so well-known and popular that silent film producers started making both live and animated parodies of newsreels and especially the newsreel shooter.** In *Face the Camera* (1922), a newsreel cameraman tries to get material for his film weekly by shooting a bathing girl pageant. But he’s never in the right place to get the shots he needs. This film is a parody of a legitimate newsreel cameraman in action. *The Nooze Weekly (aka Mutt and Jeff’s Nooze Weekly)*  (1920) is a satire on the news weekly-newsreel format, a burlesque news pictorial. Newspaper comic characters Mutt and Jeff create their own Screen News Weekly parodying the real journalistic effort on the screen. In *Felix in Jungle Bungles* (1928), newsreel cameraman Felix the Cat travels to Africa to shoot pictures that will thrill the public. In one scene, Felix is pursued by savages, develops his film and projects it against a large rock showing the wild animals coming rushing toward the natives who flee in terror leaving Felix safe. In *News Reeling* (1928)*,* another cartoon character, Krazy Kat, becomes a newsreel cameraman in a parody of newsreels of the day. *Hodge Podge: Some Sense and Some Nonsense* (1922) is an animated burlesque of a newsreel. In the cartoon, a newsreel cameraman tries to photograph a waterfall with all kinds of problems.

*Unreal News Reel* (1923-1924) is a burlesque newsreel that “sees all, knows all.” News incidents are satirized. The material used comes from earlier Fox comedies and the “news coverage” ranges from the Paris Olympic games, to vacationing politicians and royal guests to police dogs, aquaplaning, fireboats and train conductors. *Newslaffs* (1927-1928) is a cartoon newsreel parody offering travesties on news events of the day in a series of 26 one-reelers, nine produced in 1927, the rest in 1928. William C. “Bill” Nolan, creator of the Krazy Kat cartoons, wrote, directed, animated and produced the program. In *Roughest Africa* (1923), a cameraman travels to Africa with an explorer to capture and photograph various wildlife. A parody of documentary cameraman in action. In *Pop Tuttle’s Movie Queen* (1922), projectionist Pop Tuttle, who is manager, billposter, announcer and projectionist has trouble with the newsreel in the projection room in this “rube comedy.”

**Photojournalists**[[182]](#endnote-182) **appeared in many films featuring a reporter or even an editor as the main character. They also showed up in other films as minor characters and in many comedy shorts.**[[183]](#endnote-183)In *His Own Law* (1924), an itinerant photographer produces photographs showing that the cattleman who wants to take over a sheep ranch is actually rustling the cattle the sheep rancher is accused of taking. The photographs help free the innocent sheep ranch owner and end the villain’s career. In *The Shakedown* (1929), a photographer covers a fight. The director, William Wyler, plays the photographer with a speed graphic and a large blast of his flash capturing the action in the ring. In *Fifty-Fifty* (1925), a photographer is paid to take a picture of a woman in a compromising position so a scheming divorcee can break up a marriage to get the husband. He gets the picture and gives it to the divorcee who uses it to create a scandal. But her plan misfires. In *Naughty Baby* (1929), a photographer shoots a picture of a young millionaire and a woman masquerading as a society girl because she is trying to find a rich husband. The next day the paper carries a story on them and the millionaire discovers the woman is only a hat-check girl. In *Reel Life* (1928), a cameraman is a practical joker and takes moving pictures of guests at a house party embarrassing guests at the party, with one of the husbands shown in active flirtation with one of the beautiful guests in the garden. The wife puts the show out of business and gives a husband a sound drubbing. In *Never Again* (1924), a news photographer follows a married man addicted to the “flirt habit” and shows pictures of his escapades in a theatre in which his wife is in the audience

***Critics****[[184]](#endnote-184)*

**Most critics who appeared in the silent films were minor characters who showed up at a concert, a play or the opening of an art gallery and were incidental to the plot. Many of these critics were depicted as arrogant, bitter journalists who did more harm than good. Occasionally the critic took center stage as a major character, usually as a scoundrel.** In *We Moderns* (1925), critic Oscar Pleat, a married man, is a superficial critic. A young girl becomes dangerously infatuated with him and spurns her childhood sweetheart to attach herself to a large group of riotous, semi-artistic young people. Pleat becomes too bold in his advances to the girl and because of this, Pleat is thrashed by the girl’s childhood sweetheart. But she still can’t give up the critic until he tries to force his attentions on her during a jazz party aboard a zeppelin. She escapes after a plane crashes into the airship, sees the folly of her ways, reforms and returns to her sweetheart. In *The Hidden Light* (1920), music critic Harry Warren turns out to be one who attacks a blind musician and kills her secretary. The blind musician identifies him when she shakes his hand and recognizes his touch. In *Lola Montez, The King’s Dancer* (1922), journalist Jean Baptiste Rosemond de Beauvallion is the dramatic critic of the *Globe* who is involved in a political scandal involving dancer Lola Montez in Paris. He kills a rival journalist, who was Lola’s lover, over a contrived gambling affair.

**Critics could be helpful and presented a more positive image of the journalist.** In *Soul-Fire* (1925), music critics including Swann, “the most influential music critic in New York” enthusiastically receive Eric Fane’s symphony in D Minor. Fane has rejected his family’s money and sacrificed everything for his music. After the concert, Swann, the most dreaded of all the metropolitan music critics, tells Fane’s parents, “How well Fane has caught the gaiety of modern music – but what overtones of bitterness. Your son is a genius – a genius.” The film opens with two critics at a concert discussing the music of a new composer. As the orchestra plays the music, the scene fades into the composer’s life story. The film ends with the concert and the critics calling the music the work of a genius. In *Life’s Darn Funny* (1921), art critic Prince Karamazov comes to the rescue of two clothes designers. In *A Man’s Mate* (1924), art critic Veraign recognizes an artist who is suffering from amnesia, knows the artist is a genius and persuades him to go to the country to get inspiration. In *R.S.V.P.* (1921), an art critic gives advice to two struggling artists, one a cartoonist. In *Chained* (1927), critic Charles Switt is painter Claude Zoret’s critic and friend. After the painter completes his masterwork, he falls ill and Switt sits by his deathbed confessing he has always loved him. Zoret is in love with his male model and as he dies says, “Now I can die in peace, for I have seen true love.” Switt has sent a message to Michael to come at once, but a bankrupt countess who had seduced Michael prevents him from getting the message. In *Black Oxen* (1924), a critic gets entrapped in a love triangle. He is devastated when he is rejected, but he ends up finding romance with a flapper girl.

**Some journalists were identified as critics at the beginning of the film, but then did very little work as a critic throughout the drama with the audience often forgetting they were critics or reviewers in the first place.** In *Dynamite Smith* (1924), Gladstone Smith, a bespectacled book reviewer and literary editor of a San Francisco newspaper in 1898, gets excited when he is asked to be a real reporter and “cover” a fight on the waterfront. Smith sympathizes with the pregnant wife of a killer and flees to Alaska with her after the killer catches them together and beats up both of them. The woman gives birth, but dies after the baby is born. The killer shows up and chases after Smith and the baby. Smith escapes to a small settlement where he is appointed sheriff and falls in love with a restaurant cashier. The killer shows up and Smith decides to overcome his cowardice by hitting his own foot with an axe so he cannot run away. Smith captures the killer in a steel bear trap and lights the fuse leading to a load of dynamite so they will both die. The restaurant cashier shows up and Smith saves her from the explosion but the murderer is killed. Smith, the baby, and the girl he loves are safe. In *The Sea Wolf* (1926), book critic Humphrey Van Weyden is forced overboard when the boat he is on collides with a steamship. They are picked up by a seal schooner run by a tyrant and finally rescued as the ship is set afire. The ship’s master, now blind and deserted by his crew, refuses to quit his ship, which is enveloped in flames. In *Her Winning Way* (1921), literary critic Ann Annington reviews books for a metropolitan newspaper and she is assigned to interview an author who has resisted other reporters. She gets a job as a maid in his apartment, plants ladies’s garments about his room and hairpins in the bed to break up his relationship with a woman his mother picked out for him, and then is fired for tricking the author. She then realizes she is in love with him and he in love with her with the result that she does not report the details of his private life in her newspaper.

**Most of the time the critic just shows up doing his job, playing a minor character in the drama.**[[185]](#endnote-185) In *Blind Youth* (1920), a sculptor’s figure is praised by critics. In *Madame Guillotine* (1924), Monarchist critic-journalist Jean Guery is saved from the guillotine in the nick of time during the French revolution. In *Footlights* (1921), newspapers critics praise a young woman who pretends she is a celebrated Russian actress. Later newspaper reports the death of the “Russian actress” when the young woman stops pretending to be her.

**Real motion-picture critics were not happy about how the critics or their audiences were treated in silent films.** In *The Marriage Clause* (1926), a newspaper critic is described by the *Variety* reviewer “as bewhiskered professional character, dressed in the height of formality and of the type that scurries back-stage like so many Johns to shake the prima donna’s hands. It might occur to the same iconoclastic director that if he desires such touch, the newspaper boys generally hie themselves to the nearest telegraph office to take possession of a typewriter for a ‘notice’; or if an afternoon sheet, a trip downtown to complete the review.” The same reviewer was concerned about accuracy in depicting a real theater audience: “Some day, just to be different and possibly overlooking the incidental qualification that it would also be more true to life, some director will show a first night audience as a cosmopolitan collection of bootleggers, wisenheimers, newspapermen and night club hostesses, the majority of whom do not wear dress clothes.”[[186]](#endnote-186)

**As an amusing afterthought on critics in silent films, consider these silent films, one a surrealistic film taking Parisian art critics to school, the other fulfilling every wish a theatrical producer ever had about getting even with the negative critic:** In *Parisian Nights* (1925), Parisian art critics point out that the statues in a sculpture exhibition were *not* at all life-like and then the statues, which were posed, get up and walk out of the room. Rose Pelswick in the *New York Evening Journal* wrote: “The art critics shook their heads sadly, looked at the statues draped around the sculptress’s apartment and sighed that the lady would never be successful, because they didn’t look like human figures. The anatomy, they decided, was bad. (The sculptress) smiled, ordered the maid to turn off the lights and the critics gasped. In the darkened room what they had thought were statues got off the pedestals and walked out of the room.”[[187]](#endnote-187) In *Unknown Dangers* (1926), critic Frank Carter learns a lesson from real life after panning a play as being “untrue to life.” A firm of theatrical managers argue with the critic who persists that the play is based on absurd incidents that could not happen in real life. While the debate is going on, newspapers report the kidnapping of a judge’s daughter by a notorious gang. One of the showmen determines to stage a reproduction of the gang’s lair and lure the reviewer there. The actors in the company are made up to represent the gangsters and their girl their victim, but the reviewer overhears the plot and permits himself to be led to the place as a lark. It then develops that the deserted house picked by the theatrical managers is actually used as a hideaway by the real kidnappers and it is this situation that the critic walks into. When the theater men realize that they have sent the critic into a real den of criminals, they try to rescue the hero. The critic finally realizes the criminals are not play-acting and is wounded trying to help the judge’s daughter escape. The acting troupe arrives and all are imprisoned by the gang. But they had called the police and the gang members are arrested while the judge’s daughter and the critic admit their love for each other while the theatrical producers prove to the critic the strangeness of reality.

***Columnists****[[188]](#endnote-188)*

**Columnists in silent films were generally female and specialized in advice-to-the-lovelorn columns, dispensing advice via the newspaper to desperate men and women in love who want answers to their problems. Often the letters they received became the plot for a film. Though fictional, female columnists often followed real-life examples although most were portrayed as far more adventurous and courageous than their real-life counterparts.**[[189]](#endnote-189)In *The Lovelorn* (1927), advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist Beatrice Fairfax, a real-life columnist portrayed by an actress in this film, is shown writing letters to the lovelorn at intervals throughout the film. Mordaunt Hall of the *New York Times* wrote, “the most conspicuous asset is the showing of the typewritten advice dictated by Miss Fairfax, who is portrayed by Dorothy Cummings. Miss Cummings takes her duties very seriously and she is depicted sitting at a desk surrounded by half a dozen secretaries. She sighs as she realizes the predicament of the characters, and one conjectures that if she really burned with sympathy for each of the correspondents, she would be a nervous wreck in less than a week.”[[190]](#endnote-190) A shop girl asks columnist Fairfax for her advice when she falls for her sister’s lover. Neither sister ends up following Fairfax’s advice and the lover leaves both of them to marry into money. *Photoplay Magazine* wrote, “The tale of two sisters who could have avoided a lot of tragedy by heeding the wisdom of Beatrice Fairfax.” [[191]](#endnote-191) One film writer added, “Everybody knows about Beatrice Fairfax and her advice to the lovelorn, a syndicated newspaper feature that has been famous everywhere for years, but it takes MGM to dramatize this valuable asset into a great box-office attraction…The promotion angles will be plugged 100% by the Hearst newspapers in which Beatrice Fairfax is a leading feature. They are making this feature into a story to be run serially in addition to the regular Beatrice Fairfax column.”[[192]](#endnote-192) The *Variety* reviewer said the film was “an unsatisfactory picture for the big towns….it concerns a girl who wrote letters to the editor of a ‘Lonely Hearts’ column. That stamps her as a nitwit with every big town audience in the country.”[[193]](#endnote-193)

**Beatrice Fairfax was so well-known to silent film audiences who read her column and saw her featured in fictional films using her real name that other films created characters whose names clearly owed something to the real Fairfax.**[[194]](#endnote-194) In *How to Handle Women* (aka *The Prince of Peanuts*) (1928), columnist Beatrice *Fairbanks* is a sob sister and feature writer who interviews a prince without knowing he is an imposter.[[195]](#endnote-195) In *My Kingdom for a Hearse* (1928), columnist Beatrice *Barefax* (played by a male actor, Al Cooke), of the *Evening Star,* is at the desk idly doling out advice to lovers. A reporter on the paper acts as the columnist’s small son to win over a rich woman “Miss Barefax” is interested in. When the columnist discovers she has no money, he is reluctant to marry her. The reporter’s hat falls off, exposing his bald head revealing he is not a child and both journalists think it is best to make a hurried exit.[[196]](#endnote-196)

In *The Heart Specialist* (1922), advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist Rosalie Beckwith writes the kind of a column you’ll find “in the evening paper on the magazine or woman’s page.”[[197]](#endnote-197) Her editor wants to drop the column because he doesn’t really understand what romance is all about and he thinks Beckwith’s column is worthless, being too sentimental for any newspaper. He wants her to gain some insight into the kinds of romances about which she is writing and she wagers him that she can travel anywhere within 40 miles of the office and find the heart stuff he wants. She goes to a small town selected at random where she discovers a conspiracy to poison a war hero and take over his estate. She exposes the conspirators, gives up newspaper work, and romances the war hero. In *Are Brunettes Safe?* (1927), comedian Charley Chase is editor of a “Helping Hand” question-and-answer column in a Los Angeles newspaper. One day he gets a letter from an older lady who lives in a small town and hasn’t seen her son in years, but hopes to be reunited with him. She includes a photo and the son is the very image of the columnist, so Charley’s editor encourages him to go to the lady’s town and pose as her son for a human-interest story.[[198]](#endnote-198)

**Too often, the advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist is a male writing under a female pseudonym. Silent film makers seem to have delighted in the idea of a male journalist masquerading as a female columnist dispensing love and romance advice, a plot device common throughout the 20th century.** In *How to Educate a Wife* (1924), columnist Prudence Prue (aka Henry Bancks) writes a newspaper column on “How to Educate a Wife.” A prosperous friend tells a husband to enlist his wife’s charms as a means of winning customers and he quotes from the “Prudence Prue” column to win an argument, not knowing that his male friend writes the column incognito. In *Oh, What a Nurse!* (1926), cub reporter Jerry Clark substitutes for the advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist Dolly Wimple in the *Gazette.* Wealthy June Harrison is a girl who worships at the foot of this column and writes for advice. The cub, who is in love with her, advises her not to marry a fortune-hunter who is chasing her. Her penniless uncle, “Big Tim” Harrison, the owner of the paper and a political boss, wants her to marry so he can control her inheritance. The cub eventually saves her from the forced marriage by faking a fire on a ship and then marrying her himself. In the process, he switches clothes with a rumrunner who is disguised as a woman to elude police and impersonates a nurse while trying to capture the crooks.

**Another common type was the gossip columnist who snooped around high society in the hopes of getting a scandalous scoop. As with the advice-to-the-lovelorn columnists, most gossip columnists were women as well although the occasional man, writing under a female pseudonym, did show up.** In *Parlor, Bedroom and Bath* (1920), gossip columnist-Society Writer Polly Hathaway is known as *The Torn Tattler*. When a man’s wife says she cannot love her husband unless her women friends are chasing after him, he secures the aid of Hathaway to print risqué items in her column about him and blemish his reputation. In *Sunless Sunday* (1921), columnist of the *Morning Truth’s* Blue Law Brigade column investigates the breaking of Sunday laws involving drinking and dancing. She disguises herself as a boy and goes to a working men’s club. Her fiancé, who also works for the newspaper, doesn’t like the idea of his future wife being alone in a place with such a rough reputation, so he follows. After a series of misadventures, the reporter rescues the columnist just in the nick of time. In *June Madness* (1922), gossip columnist Hamilton Peeke works for a society scandal newspaper. He trails a woman who ran out of the church on her wedding day, then to a roadhouse where she is tricked by the columnist into doing a risqué dance number. Peeke agrees not to expose the heroine – for a consideration.

***Radio Broadcasters****[[199]](#endnote-199)*

**Silent film audiences in the 1920s were not unfamiliar with sound. Radio was making a great impression and bringing the sounds of the world into their living rooms. They were the audio equivalent of the pictures silent films created – dramas, comedies, mysteries, romances, satires, science fiction and horror, westerns, sports, documentaries and news. So when sound came to the movies, sound was nothing new, but pictures synchronized with sounds were thrilling.**

**The motion picture producers were smart enough to hire newscasters from radio to do what they did so well in radio for the new talkies. One of the most famous radio broadcast journalists in the late 1920s was Graham McNamee who was a household name. In 1929 when Universal created the talking newsreel they came up with the idea of “a talking reporter” who kept a running narrative throughout the newsreel, commenting and wisecracking about the events shown. There was no argument about who was the logical choice for “the talking reporter.” McNamee took the country by storm. The movies never looked back.** McNamee made his debut in *Universal Newsreel No. 1* (1929). “The talking reporter” innovation was copied repeatedly in future years, and was an enormous success. The *Variety* reviewer spoke for many: “In this week’s issue, Universal’s first with the famed announcer McNamee, while getting away from the ‘caption’ idea in talking, has not gone in for any verbal comedy socks. He has just made it interesting enough and holds sufficient attention without detracting from the pictured scenes, to make you almost forget this reel is without actual sound attached. McNamee does not show at any time. If Mr. McNamee can do that at the outset, he is limitless when grasping the full scheme and its opportunities for kidding, which will often arise. …anyhow Universal seems to have hit upon something….”[[200]](#endnote-200) The *Motion Picture News* reviewer concurred: “The talking sequences in the newsreel will eliminate subtitles, with the exception of the dateline to tell where the action takes place. Universal is adopting this method of news presentation coupled with rapid-fire description of news events because, it contends, the events covered will be newer and fresher than those contained in the average sound news which carries stale news stories or else magazine shots and stock news stunts that are not entirely up-to-date.”[[201]](#endnote-201) *The Film Daily* called Universal’s “Talking Reporter” a sensation, “acclaimed by critics as the sensation of the hour. He made his bow to the public in the first run houses of the country, and electrified theater goers by his vivid personality and his crisp, rapid-fire talk on the latest news of the day. The freshness and novelty of this feature swept the audiences with a thrill of surprise and pleasure, for it was the first time they had heard a talking newsreel with up-to-the-minute news. Even case-hardened critics were stirred by the novelty of the innovation into declaring that Universal’s talking newsreel marks a new day in news pictures, increasing their effectiveness a thousandfold.”[[202]](#endnote-202)

Prior to becoming a newsreel celebrity, McNamee was so popular that he showed up in dramatic and comedy films as himself. In *Knockout Reilly* (1927), radio reporter McNamee, a radio sportscaster who originated play-by-play sports broadcasting, gave the silent film audience a word picture of major sporting events and political conventions, presidential inaugurations as well as major news events. In this film he gives authenticity to the film and its characters by covering a major boxing event. He also made a brief appearance in *Oh, Baby!* (1926) at ringside in Madison Garden, New York, as himself.

**Other radio broadcasters were used in the first talkies in familiar environments, especially covering sports.** In *Salute* (1929), a radio sportscaster broadcasts the Army-Navy football game. He is shown intermittently on camera by the microphone, smoking, excitedly telling the audience what is going on throughout the game. In *The Kid Stakes* (1927), the wireless man, a race commentator, along with four reporters at the press table, cover the annual goat derby, taking notes at the press table. Title cards tell the story: “The Wireless Man worked overtime while a whole Continent ‘listened in’ with breathless excitement.” “2 FC speaking…listen folks! The greatest race of the year is about to start.” His overly enthusiastic narrative continues throughout the race with close-ups of the overly excited broadcaster intercut with the race itself. In *Dynamite* (1929), a radio announcer reports on a race run by society girls from beginning to end. A news photographer snaps a picture before the action begins and they’re off.

*Across the Atlantic Via Zeppelin* (1929) features a radio interviewer, Nils T. Granlund, in a silent film with sound interviews. One reviewer called Granlund an “interrogator” and master-of-ceremony.[[203]](#endnote-203) Hearst cameraman Robert Hartman was the only cameraman who has ever flown over the ocean and recorded the amazing scene for posterity and it is his silent film that makes up most of the film. It is a complete record, with dialogue and sound accompaniment, of the most talked of aerial trip since Lindbergh made his daring journey. Cameraman Hartman also is the star of another film, *Around the World Via Graf Zeppelin* (1929). He rides aboard the Graf Zeppelin showing what it is like to be in the dirigible as well as panorama views of the countries and seas. The silent film was later converted to sound with an invisible reporter-narrator explaining what we are seeing. Radio reporters and pack journalists also cover the event in the film.

In *Perfect Crime* (1928), radio newscasters cover a sensational courtroom trial in sound and when the verdict of guilty is announced, the audience hears for the first time the shrieks of the newsboys calling the extras outside the courtroom. This is the first talkie in which an entire courtroom trial is shown as well as heard. In addition to the talking sequences, the film was advertised as having thrilling mystery effects incorporated in the production including the groan and rush of the wind and the crack of lightning and roll of thunder. Mordaunt Hall of the *New York Times* was not impressed: “As an example of sound, the synchronization leaves much to be desired. The synchronization is faulty in many, many places, and several vocal selections are added in curious out-of-the-way scenes.”[[204]](#endnote-204) In *The Rejected Woman* (1924), news on the radio of the death of the hero’s father is sent by a Gotham broadcasting station and received in the northland by a friend who communicates it to his son. It is one of the first uses of the radio to communicate news in a silent film.

**Other films treated radio as the radio audiences have been listening to at home, but now had a chance to see as well as hear it.** The workings of the WOR station including close-ups of familiar broadcasting personalities are included in a spoken version of the International newsreel of the day (*International News No. 10,* 1924). Cameras went behind the scenes of another popular radio station, WENR, which has millions of fans who get their latest news from screenland on the station (*International News No. 5,* 1926). In *Easy Come, Easy Go* (1928), Robert Parker is a radio announcer fired by his father because of his profanity. Becoming overexcited on the air, Parker lets slip a few fortuitously unheard profanities. Fired from his job, he enters into an amusing series of misadventures with a veteran bank robber who saves his life. In *Broadcasting* (1922), radio broadcasters Johnny Jones, his friend Gertie and his pals catch a bank robber by means of their radio sets.

**Sportscasters and reporters**[[205]](#endnote-205) **not only appeared in films as themselves reporting on the events featured in the film, but were also occasionally featured as characters in dramatic films.** In *Night Parade* (1929), sportswriter Sid Durham finds out a fighter has been coerced into throwing a fight by a racketeer. He tells the boy’s father who takes revenge on the criminal. The boxer takes a beating in the ring, but is inspired by the arrival of his father and his sweetheart and wins the fight. Mordaunt Hall, writing in the *New York Times*: “The sports writer, strictly impartial, who looks after the ‘champ’ like a nursemaid.”[[206]](#endnote-206) In *The Tomboy*, sportswriter Minnie Ann Thomas, who is also the star batter for a local baseball team, exposes bootleggers who are supplying her father with liquor.

***Journalists as Comic Characters in Silent Films, 1920 to 1929***

**As silent film audiences became more and more familiar with journalists and the things they did in the movies, reporters, editors, publishers and every other type of journalist became prime material for silent and then early sound comedies.**[[207]](#endnote-207) **Audiences who had sat through one newspaper film after another were privy to many of the jokes and exaggerations exploited by film producers, writers and directors. By the 1920s, the audience knew if one of their favorite comedians was playing a reporter or an editor, they were in for a rollicking good time.** In *Hold Your Breath* (1924), Mabel’s brother is taken ill from the mustard gas that attacked him during the war so the city editor reluctantly lets her take over her brother’s job on a newspaper. She muffs her first assignments (the editor tells her: “We want news and plenty of pictures. Take that camera and go get ‘em!”). Title card: “Mabel finds news as scarce as corsets in the Fiji islands.” She brings back an “exclusive” but it’s already in the newspaper. “My star reporter phoned it in! We print news…not history,” the editor yells at her. Finally, Mabel succeeds, getting an interview with a reporter-hating millionaire curio collector who allows her to see some very expensive jewelry. While looking at the $50,000 bracelet, an agile organ-grinder’s monkey grabs it and escapes out of a window several stories above the city street. When Mabel tells the millionaire what happened, he doesn’t believe her and calls the house detectives. As they arrive, Mabel goes out the window in hot pursuit of the monkey and the detectives in hot pursuit of her begin a series of adventures high above the streets of Manhattan with Mabel clinging perilously to ledges, falling through awnings and darting in and out of high-story windows. The police finally catch her and the bracelet, and Mabel is glad to give up her reporting job to get married.

In *The Big Shot* (1929), reporter Fat of the *Evening Star* and photographer Snub (played by top comedian Snub Pollard) try to track down a reclusive Scotsman for an interview and photo. Title Card: “Fat – he was a leading light on the Evening Star until his fuse blew out.” The city editor grabs both of them and says, “Get an interview with this Scotchman who invented one-way pockets – get photos of him, too.” The journalism duo try to track down the reclusive Scotsman. The publicity-shy inventor tells his security man: “Keep these reporters out of here.” The security guard grabs a rival reporter, who has dressed up as a Scotsman, and escorts him from the estate roughly throwing him out of the gates and to the ground, just as Fats and Snub arrive. The persistent duo finally talk to the Scotsman about a picture and an interview for “your favorite paper – the *Free Press.”* Snub has problems with the camera and in the process almost drowns the man he is trying to photograph due to an errant fire hydrant. The Scotsman goes on the ship and the two journalists chase after him. Trying to secretly take his photograph, Snub falls overboard and Fat pulls him out of the ocean. The two stowaways are caught and put to work. They try to shoot another picture and blow up everyone with too much flash powder. In *Find the Girl* (1920), a reporter (once again played by Snub Pollard) deals with the efforts of an entire newspaper staff to get the news about a wealthy damsel who has been abducted.

In *The Kid Reporter* (1923), a newspaper secretary to a busy newspaperman gets a chance to become a real journalist when the owner of the *Daily News* offers the post of editor to the reporter who can recover a stolen necklace. A newspaper secretary (Baby Peggy) jumps at the chance. Disguising herself in a variety of costumes, five-year-old Peggy, with the help of a copy boy, finds the jewels and goes on to become the youngest ever female editor-in-chief in newspaper history. In *The Desert Song* (1929), columnist Benjamin “Benny” Kidd is the society reporter for *The Paris Herald* and along with his secretary Susan provide comedy relief in this first adaptation of the famous musical. Title Card: “Benny Kidd – society reporter of the Paris Herald – in Morocco for his health.”[[208]](#endnote-208) In *She’s My Girl* (1928), cub reporter George is assigned by his city editor to cover an exclusive society wedding from which all the best reporters on the paper had been thrown out. George’s many attempts to enter the home where the wedding is being held fizzles until he wraps himself in a carpet and finally lands in a room with the bride. Discovering that she is his childhood sweet and that she is being forced into an unwelcome marriage, George sets about to break up the nuptials. He ends up fighting a duel with the groom and other misadventures before being united with his sweetheart. In *Not the Type* (1927), publisher-editor Reginald Van Bibber runs a fearless newspaper and it’s no easy job, especially when the mayor gets angry about a story and the editor keeps falling in love with the mayor’s daughter. A couple of gangsters are hired to wreck the printing plant, but succeed only in mixing up the type for the lead story: the mayor’s address is interchanged with the address to the cooks’s union. There is abundant slapstick with the locale a print shop, the presses and paper chutes serving for mildly amusing gags.[[209]](#endnote-209) In *Have a Heart* (1928), blundering blowhard Jimmy “is always looking for work; someday he’ll find it, then he’ll have to quit. ”He applies for a job at a newspaper after reading: “WANTED. Bright young man. Must be courageous and bold. Apply to Editor of *Evening* Star before 9 A.M.” Jimmy is hired as a “fledgling reporter” by the editor who wants to solve the mystery of a haunted mansion: “We must solve the mystery of the haunted mansion in time for the evening edition.” Jimmy and the editor’s daughter go to investigate the spooky house that turns out to be occupied by a mad scientist, not ghosts. Jimmy falls through the floor and somehow ends up in the editor’s office covered in dust. “I’VE GOT THE STORY!” he yells to the editor. The editor looks at his story and says, “So have I – four hours ago.”

In *Partner in Crime* (1928), reporter “Scoop” McGee tries to prove the innocence of a cigarette girl’s boyfriend, a former district attorney. Hoping to win the girl’s favor, the reporter and a dim-witted detective team up to solve the case in this parody of crime movies. It turns out the reporter is a double for a notorious underworld leader and manages to infiltrate the gang. The detective is constantly insulting the violent gangster under the impression that he is his friend, the newspaper reporter. After getting into a battle between rival gangs and subduing the crooks with tear gas bombs, the two are rescued by the police. The girl who asked them to help ends up in the attorney’s arms while the detective and reporter weep – having stepped on a tear gas bomb that was used to subdue the gang.

In *The Installment Collector* (1929), “the newspaper editor” (played by comedian Fred Allen) of the *Sac-Harbor Bee* is a boob rural editor who arrives at work and posts the “Weather Report. Friday FAIR. Probably followed by SATURDAY.” Then he tries to get his newspaper work done but is constantly interrupted by an installment collector. The editor first has to give up his watch, bought on a payment plan, then his coat and vest and finally his trousers. Using an umbrella to cover himself up, he is asked by a female customer if he knows anything about her husband’s affair. “You want to know if I know what’s going on around here,” he says. As the installment collector arrives again, he adds: “I don’t even know what’s coming off.” In *Peace and Quiet* (1921), a copy boy gets revenge on a small-town editor by mixing up the type so a debutante is described as “wanted by police.” The editor escapes the furor by going to a sanitarium for “peace and quiet.” In *Queen of the Night Clubs* (1929), two reporters – Walter and Mark, named after two well-known columnists of the day, Walter Winchell and Mark Hellinger – appear intermittently throughout the film. “Walter” is even addressed as “Winchell” in one scene. But neither bears any authentic resemblance to either real-life journalist.

Comic actor Chuck Reisner played a star reporter in several short films featuring a journalist who seemed to do almost everything wrong. . In *Jollywood* (1923), he’s a star reporter of *The Morning Mist* sent to “Jollywood” to get some “good stories” and almost destroys a film studio in the process. In *Cracked Wedding Bells* (1923), a white reporter is assigned to cover a wedding “in a colored section of town.” He is chased away, but a faithful newspaper reporter never says “die” so the enterprising journalist blacks himself at a shoe shine stand, goes back, impersonates the groom and almost marries the bride. In *The Pencil Pusher* (1923), a reporter from *The Morning Mist* is ordered by a harsh city editor to get a story from the warden of the local jail at all costs. He tries repeatedly to get inside the jail for the interview, but when he’s about to give up, a cop comes along and arrests him for standing on the grass in front of the prison, so the reporter ends up behind bars and then is forced to escape with the inmates. In *So Long Sultan* (1923), the intrepid *Morning Mist* reporter is sent to find out how the Sultan of Somewhere has great success with his huge harem. “The foreign correspondent of a silk-hat staff newspaper” travels to Turkey and finally, disguised as a harem lady, gets into the Sultan’s private rooms. In *Thundering Landlords* (1925), a weary young newspaperman who has a night beat is forced to move out of his apartment the morning he comes home from work. His family comes to his rescue and most of the film gets its laughs from the family forcing to move into an unfinished house.

Newspaperman Harold Highbrow of the *Sap Center Clarion* appears in 13 comedies[[210]](#endnote-210) from 1927-1928. Sometimes he’s a reporter, other times an editor. A typical comedy is *Money, Money, Money!* (No. 9, 1928), in which our intrepid journalist Harold is entrusted by his employer to deposit the day’s receipts in the bank. Instead he drops them into the hat of a supposed blind man who clearly sees the mistake and tries to make a quick getaway. The reporter recovers the cash. A charwoman starts a rumor the bank has failed. There is an immediate rush for the bank as Harold starts to get out an extra on the bank failure. Later in the day, the bank cashier returns and announces the bank had been closed in observance of National Prune Day.

Young actor Johnny Jones plays several comic characters associated with journalism in a variety of 1922-1923 films: In *The Big Scoop* (1922), editor Johns of *The Whisper*, a local paper full of scintillating gossip, writes under the name of “Eddie Torial.” In *Makin’ Movies* (1922), Johnny Jones plays a newsboy in a film and comes home to produce his own movies. In *Stung* (1923), Jones and his female partner deliver periodicals, a part of their news service, in a decrepit motor car that carries them on their route.

**No subject was off-limits to the comedy filmmakers who used every possible environment – even ancient Rome – to make fun of the journalist**. In *When Caesar Ran a Newspaper* (1929), the opening scenes take place in the editorial rooms of the *Rome Morning After*, a fearless newspaper edited by Caesar. Marc Anthony turns out to be Cleopatra’s press agent and comes to the rescue of the editor with some first-page art – Anthony wants to get Cleopatra’s picture in the paper for publicity purposes. Headline: “Another Scandal Rocks Rome.”

**In one film after another, journalists were the butt of many jokes. Here is a sampling:**[[211]](#endnote-211) In *April Fool* (1924), cub reporter Jimmy Jump is a crack reporter at a behind-the-time daily newspaper (or as the title card puts it: “Ranked very high in college journalism – Accent on the rank”). He’s in love with the editor’s daughter. It is April 1st and the paper’s editorial staff has trouble telling the difference between April Fool’s jokes and real events. According to one reviewer, “The newspaper characters are all exceptionally well done.”[[212]](#endnote-212) In *The Cameraman* (1920), Billy is hired by a local daily newspaper as a staff cameraman but seems incapable of ever shooting a picture that the editor will accept. He’s always a little late or something goes wrong. In *Why Men Work* (1924), an amateur cameraman looks for material he can sell to the newsreel. Most of the film is devoted to his exploits behind the camera. In *Extra! Extra!* (1923), newspaper staff photographer Ham, who vainly tries to get a picture of a criminal just captured by police, finally uses an extra-long typewriter carriage to catch the crook. In *Cupid and Clock* (1927), reporter Nick is sent to get a story and picture of a girl, whose legs have been insured for a large sum. “No news is good news – but not in a newspaper office.” Nick takes a photographer along to the seminary where the girl-with-the-million-dollars-legs is a student. They chase a fat girl by mistake, pursue the story through school dormitories and finally end up with the real story.

In a feature film, *The Great White Way* (1924), the city editor is played for laughs. The *New York Times* reviewer wrote, “One of the interesting sequences of the production is that in which the making of a newspaper is shown. The city editor obviously was picked for his pseudo-comic behavior and not because of his knowledge of newspapers or press agents…(the press agents) in this picture find no difficulty whatever in bearding the lion in his den and rubbing elbows with the city editor, adjuring him to print stories with wonderful adjectives after five or six flat refusals. ‘Leaping Linotypes’ is used as an exclamation.”[[213]](#endnote-213) Although the paper is identified on screen as *The New York American,* the pressroom scenes were shot at the *Los Angeles Examiner.*

In *Editorial Horseplay,* a group of newspapermen do foolish stunts in the woods on a trip to the Canadian Rockies.

# Cartoonists and Illustrators[[214]](#endnote-214)

# In the 1920s, cartoonists became some of the most recognizable journalists in film. Near-legendary cartoonists who showed up as participants in the silent cartoons they drew were Max and David Fleischer and Walter Lantz.

Cartoonist Max Fleischer showed up as himself in a series of cartoons in the 1920s, first in *Out of the Inkwell* (1921-1926)*,* thenin *Inkwell Imps* (1927-1928)*,* interacting with a character initially referred to as “The Clown” and then “Koko” or “Ko-Ko”[[215]](#endnote-215) as the familiar clown came to be known. Each cartoon usually starts with Fleischer taking his brush, dipping it in the inkwell and then drawing the clown who comes to life. The result is often the clown and the animator facing off until the final frame when the clown escapes back into the inkwell. These are innovative cartoons that made Max and David Fleischer two of the most famous cartoonists of their time, defining for the audience what a cartoonist does and how he interacts with his character on paper.[[216]](#endnote-216)

These typical cartoons offer an indication of how the cartoonist interacted with his characters: Max plans to go on an automobile ride with his girlfriend, but the clown has other plans and sabotages the trip (*The Automobile Ride,* 1921*).* Max and a friend go fishing, but the clown follows them and leaves them stranded on a rock, stealing their boat (*Fishing*, 1921). The clown is bothering Max so the cartoonist finds some invisible ink driving the clown crazy and seeking revenge (*Invisible Ink,* 1921). Max takes a blob of clay and forms an inkwell and pen. The clown asks for a piece of clay out of which he makes a bust of Max (*Clay Town*, 1924); Max has a toothache and it’s up to the clown and a bespectacled rabbit to pull out the aching tooth (*The Cure,* 1924); Max draws a picture of Mars and holds it at the end of a telescope through which the clown peers through and thinks he sees an army gathering on Mars to attack the earth. He sends forth a call of distress to all clowns wherever they may be and they prepare to fight, with each clown appearing in real shots of their native land. Eventually they discover it is only a joke and they all end up in the inkwell (*League of Nations*, 1924). Max has a shooting gallery in his office and is practicing his pistol-shooting with KoKo and Fitz holding up the target. Max quickly murders them both in cold blood and they proceed to go to cartoon heaven. Eventually they get back into Max’s office for more crazed gunplay (*Koko the Hot Shot,*1925); Max draws Koko the clown with steaming ink and the clown and his dog try to cool off. They toil under a tropical sun and a boiling water pool. The poor characters manage to escape from their sadistic animator, and end up in a live-action New York swimming pool where they cause malicious mischief with the real-life bathers.

Cartoonist Walter Lantz, like the Fleischers, interacted with his cartoon creations. In his first series, the Col. Heeza Liar cartoons (1922-1924), he drew the colonel as a visual parody of Teddy Roosevelt who was known to spin tall tales.[[217]](#endnote-217) Lantz was involved in an even more successful cartoon series with his *Dinky Doodle Cartoons* (1924-1926),[[218]](#endnote-218) where he interacted with a little mischievous boy named Dinky and his sidekick mutt Weakheart. Lantz and his characters became as famous as the Fleischers and the clown Ko-Ko and Fitz, his dog. Typical examples include *Dinky Doodle: The Pied Piper* (1924), in which Lantz, dressed as a parody of a French “artist” complete with goatee and beret, discovers that his studio is overrun by mice. He does everything he can to get rid of the vermin, even shooting at them, but they catch the bullets and play with them. Frustrated, he yells at Dinky and Weakheart for not taking care of the problem. The pair figure out that music is the answer. Two Pied Pipers lead the mice away from the studio to a land filled with cheese. But when Dinky returns and opens the door to the studio at the end of the cartoon, thousands of mice run back into the studio. In *Dinky Doodle and the Little Orphan* (1926), Lantz finds a pesky infant found at his door. He tries to amuse the baby, but no matter what he does the baby cries louder. Even Dinky and his dog can’t help. So finally the cartoonist draws a picture of a stork and gets the bird to take the baby to another address. In *The Magician* (1926), Lantz is proposing to his girlfriend after receiving his diploma as a magician. Dinky and Weakheart doubt the cartoonist’s magical ability so he shows them some stunts that amaze them. They steal Lantz’s magic book and turn Lantz into all sorts of animals. Finally he becomes a mouse and so scares his girlfriend. Dinky considerately changes him back again to himself. The cartoonist eventually gets his revenge by spanking his cartoon characters.

In 1925, Lantz launched his “Unnatural History Series” in which he occasionally showed up. In *The Leopard’s Spots* (1925), the cartoonist dates a girl and to win her child’s affection, he draws him the story of how the leopard got his spots.[[219]](#endnote-219) In 1926, Lantz created *Hot Dog Cartoons* (1926-1927),[[220]](#endnote-220) in which the cartoonist interacts with his newest creation, Pete the Pup. The series was meant to replace the Dinky Doodle cartoons. The animated Pete the Pup lives in a large, three-dimensional dollhouse located in Lantz’s home. The smart-alecky Pete heckles Lantz and he in turn heckles him back. In *For the Love of Pete* (1926), Lantz appears throughout the cartoon. He discovers his pants have been stolen and it’s the only pair he owns. He immediately calls on Pete by phone for assistance. Pete is taking a bath and is annoyed at being disturbed so he squirts water through the phone until it drenches the cartoonist on the other end. Pete then goes in search of a pair of pants and returns successful after a series of adventures.

**Other cartoonists found silent films the perfect vehicle to move their cartoon characters from the newspaper page to the screen. Many saw their cartoon characters become live-action comedies. But some simply animated their characters into silent film cartoons**. One was cartoonist Bud Fisher who played himself in *On* Strike (1920). When his comic creations, Mutt and Jeff, present an ultimatum to Fisher in true labor union fashion, he turns down their demands for more pay for shorter hours and they decide to produce a film by themselves. When their comedy fails, they eat humble pie and return to Fisher to be hired out again.In *The Kid Stakes* (1927), newspaper cartoonist Syd Nicholls is seen at the drawing board drawing a sketch of his cartoon character, Fatty Finn, who comes to life. Young Fatty looks at the drawing board, and asks, “What sort of a job have I got to do this week, Mr. Nicholls?” From there, the viewer is transported into Fatty’s world populated with human actors assuming the role of Nicholls’s newspaper cartoon strip characters and the story unfolds.

Sid Marcus, the celebrated cartoonist of *The New York Times,* created an almost surrealistic series of silent cartoons called *Animated Hair Cartoons* (1924-1926). The animations are “metamorphic caricatures” of famous people that grow out of a strand of hair. We see the cartoonist’s hand drawing a person with hair and then the cartoon is manipulated so that the hair gradually turns into another recognizable celebrity such as Shakespeare and actor John Barrymore. More than 50 of these short cartoons were distributed and the name “Marcus” because familiar to silent film audiences in mid-twenties. An example is *Animated Hair Cartoon No. 18* (1926) in which the animated hair turns into baseball player Christy Mathewson and then New York Giants manager John McGraw, George Bernard Shaw into baseball commissioner Kenesaw Landis, and film comedians Charlie Chaplin into Buster Keaton, among many others.

**Sometimes cartoonists and illustrators showed up as characters in feature films.** In *Chip of the Flying U* (1925), cartoonist “Chip” Bennett is an amateur cartoonist of quality and a confirmed woman hater. He falls for a woman who secretly submits his drawings to various publications and one of his sketches wins first prize at an exhibition. In *Rent Free,* illustrator Buell Arnister Jr. gets a job sketching on a newspaper. He sketches art critic Count de Mourney and invites him to dinner at an unoccupied mansion that his poverty has forced him to move into. A series of misadventures then takes place. In *A Modern Salome* (1929), a female illustrator faces a life of poverty when her father dies and tries to make a living as an illustrator. She fails and ends up marrying a multimillionaire.

## Newsboys and News Vendors[[221]](#endnote-221), Printers and Other News Employees[[222]](#endnote-222)

**Newsboys still showed up as sympathetic little journalists trying to survive in a hostile world.[[223]](#endnote-223) These small news employees often want to be reporters and end up doing just that – with a little help from their journalist friends.** In the classic journalist Richard Harding Davis story, remade many times since this silent film version, *Let ‘Er Go, Gallegher* (1928), the famous newsboy hero lives in a junk yard and wants to be a detective. He witnesses a crook burglarizing a house and shooting the owner. The editor of *The Morning Press* tries to find out what happened from his reporter Henry Clay (H.C.) Callahan who has been asleep in the press room at the police station. A detective wakes the reporter up: “Say, you’d better stick to business or your city editor will be getting a new police reporter!” Callahan groggily smiles, “New police reporter, eh? Say, the *Press* couldn’t get along without me.” Back at the city room, Callahan is on the phone with the city editor. “Who’s been bumped off?” The detective tells him and Callahan says to the city editor: “Why, I’ve been at the scene, Chief. I just walked in the door this minute – with the whole story.” The city editor doesn’t believe him as Callahan hangs up: “See how easy it is when you know your stuff,” he tells the detective. He leaves the press room and asks the police captain, “Listen, Cap – what’s the dope on the killing? I’ve got to have my story in ten minutes.” The captain shouts back, “If you’d stick to your job, you’d know all about it.” The angry Callahan spots Gallegher who tells him everything that happened. The more Gallegher talks, the more interested Callahan becomes – he realizes this is the killing story he needs. “It’s a wow! Front Page stuff! From now on we Irish stick together.” When Gallegher asks him, “Say, Callahan, how about the newspaper job you been promisin’ me?” Callahan responds: “Kid, I’ll fire the managing editor and give you *his* job.”

The front page story appears in *The Press* with a picture of Gallegher on the front page: “Burbank Slain by Burglar. Press Newsboy is Eye Witness of Fatal Shooting in Banker’s Home. Description of Pistol Battle Causes Police to Suspect Four Fingered Dan.” In the city room, Gallegher is talking to six male reporters who warn him if the crook ever gets hold of him he’s in big trouble. “Nah, I ain’t afraid. I’m a newspaper man now – the next thing to a cop,” Gallegher responds. At least a dozen reporters and copy editors in the newsroom including one woman listen to him. Callahan tells the newsboy, “Keep on telling these saps how good we are.”

Clarissa Mahaffey, the Sunday editor, and Callahan are an item. He comes to see her and she shows him a telegram from Jones of the *Morning World: “*Have been following your Sunday Page. Stop. Good stuff. Would Job in New York appeal to you. Stop.” Gallegher interrupts to tell Callahan that the boss wants to see him. “No doubt he wants to pin a medal on the manly chest of the world’s greatest reporter,” he says. The city editor says to Callahan: “Why don’t you stick on this Burbank story while it’s hot instead of loafing around here? Maybe next time you won’t have that Gallegher kid to hand you a story – on a silver platter.” The city editor smiles and Callahan is alone in the city room. He goes to see the Sunday Department editor and threatens to quit the newspaper.

Callahan is again asleep on his desk in the police press room when the angry city editor calls him, shouting: “You’d better snap out of it or I’ll fire you! I’ve stood enough of your tomfoolery!” Clarissa is standing next to the city editor’s desk and hears the entire exchange. Callahan: “Is that so? Where do you think your punk newspaper would go without me?” The city editor: “Stop in and get your check. You’re fired!” He looks up at Clarissa with a pained look and then hangs up. Callahan continues to harangue the city editor over a silent phone: “You can’t fire me! I quit right now! Whaddya think of that?” A title card: “Much to Callahan’s surprise, *The Press* and the rest of the world move on without him.”

Gallegher and Clarissa are broken-hearted. They and Gallegher’s dog, Watson, head for New York alone. Gallegher sees the murderer, Four-Fingered Dan, at the station. He calls Callahan who tells him that he and a detective are on their way. Four-Fingered Dan grabs Gallegher and holds him hostage. The reporter and the detective rush to save Gallegher and capture the criminal, although Callahan wants to make sure he’ll have an exclusive scoop before they save the newsboy. The two rescue Gallegher and grab Four-Fingered Dan, but Prohibition officers show up and assume they are all bootleggers as Callahan tries to call in the story: “This is the world’s greatest reporter, Mr. H.C. Callahan, speaking. If you’ll kindly hold your illustrious presses, I’ll give you the biggest yarn you’ve ever printed. City editor: “Hold everything. Callahan’s dug up something big.” But the Prohibition officers grab the reporter away from the phone and arrest him. The detective handcuffs the murderer and puts him into a car. Callahan and Gallegher run to the car and drive off with Four-Fingered Dan in the back seat. They rush to the paper in the stolen car but Four-Fingered Dan frees himself and causes Callahan to crash. They fight the crook in the woods and finally subdue him. Callahan then sits in the back seat with the murderer while Gallegher, who has never driven a car before, speeds to the newspaper with the Prohibition officers in hot pursuit.

Back in the city room, skeptical editors doubt if Callahan will deliver the story in time for the press run. The newsboy crashes into the newspaper building and they bring Four Fingered Dan into the busy city room. “Let me present the King of the Crooks – Four Fingered Dan, himself.” Callahan tells the beaming city editor. Gallegher: “Me and Callahan and McGinty captured him – single handed.” The police come charging into the city room and want to arrest Callahan. “Can’t you tell a newspaper man from a crook?” says the city editor. “Hop on your typewriter, Callahan, and get your story started.” Police grab the murderer as Callahan rushes to his typewriter and stars typing with the city editor looking over him encouraging him to write faster. Callahan smiles and hands in his story. The editor marks the copy doing the fastest editing job in history and gives it to Gallegher to run to the press room. Callahan: “Well, chief, how about a raise?” The city editor just laughs. The front page story appears: “Press Employee Captures Killer!” with a byline by John Gallegher and H.C. Callahan. Miss Mahaffey sees the paper as Callahan rushes to the train with Gallegher. They are looking for her berth and Callahan finds her. The train starts moving. “We ain’t got tickets,” cries Gallegher. “Stop the train.” Callahan shuts him up and kisses Clarissa as the train pulls out of the station. A newspaper reviewer said executive producer Cecil B. DeMille “realized that as this newspaper picture would be reviewed by newspaper men and women, it must be correct in every detail. He feels that Mr. Block [Associate producer Ralph Block who had been the dramatic editor of the New York Tribute after wide experience as a reporter] would be invaluable in checking up on the atmosphere.”[[224]](#endnote-224)

In *Clunked on the Corner* (1929), newsboy Handy Andy is a stuttering boy who gets into one adventure after another while trying to sell his newspapers. Title Card: “There’s nothing like selling newspapers to put a boy on his feet. Handy Andy had an eye for business – and a head for no apparent reason.”[[225]](#endnote-225) In *Michael O’Halloran* (1923), newsboy Michael “Mickey” O’Halloran is an orphan living in the slums who adopts a little crippled girl who is alone after her grandmother dies. A young lawyer comes to their rescue. *Dinty (1920)* is a newsboy becomes the family’s breadwinner by selling newspapers after his father is killed in an accident. In *Darling of New York* (1923), a newsboy finds an orphan in a trash can where a gangster dumped her. After several adventures she finds her wealthy grandfather. In *Heartless Husbands* (1925), newsboy Sonny Cain becomes an orphan and is adopted by an eccentric ex-convict who trains him in the profession of safe cracking, but when he is headed back to jail urges the boy to go straight. In *Jealousy* (1929), newsboys shouting “Extra” about sensational murder news. One review pointed out, “The news vendors in this queer conception of Parisian atmosphere are wont to cry “extra” and shout their sensational murder news in English.”[[226]](#endnote-226)

**Sometimes a newsboy’s dog was really his best friend**. In *Checking Out* (1924), a newsboy and newsdog (Pal the wonder dog) sell newspapers and then go on a series of adventures. In *A Dog’s Pal* (aka *Jerry the Paperboy)* (1927), newsboy Jerry and his dog Pal the wonder dog battle an older newsboy rival. In *A Short Tail* (1927), a ragged newsboy and a lost dog are featured in a bizarre silent film in which only the hands and feet of the human actors are seen and there are no subtitles (dialogue or exposition). This experiment was followed by another such film.

**Often the newsboy was really a newsgirl suffering from the same cruel poverty**. In *Daughter of Devil Dan* (1921), a newsgirl, protecting her turf, is fighting in the streets. She eventually is adopted by a rich man who recognizes her as his long-lost granddaughter. In *The Penny Philanthropist* (1920), a newsgirl sells newspapers in the streets of Chicago and then owns a tiny store called the “News Emporium.” She gives a penny away every day to help the less fortunate. In *Little Miss Hawkeye* (1921), newsgirl Patsy runs a newsstand in the poverty-stricken New York Bowery district. In *Kiki* (1926), newsie Kiki is a Paris street gamin who ekes out a living selling newspapers on the streets of Paris before graduating from newspaper seller to chorus girl. Kiki’s friend is newsboy Pierre. In *Enemies of Children* (1923), newsboy Patsy, her sex hidden beneath ragged pans and the shirt of a newsboy, barely makes a living on the streets of the slums of New York City. She escapes her alcoholic guardian to eventually find a life of happiness. In *Sweetie* (1923), newsgirl “Sweetie” is “the little newspaper vendor” who starts out as a waif selling newspapers whose income is described as “smaller than herself.” While crying “extree,” the girl helps a blind man and is eventually adopted by a wealth woman.

**Newsboys often show up in films as a minor character, sometimes just for a scene or two hawking their newspapers.**[[227]](#endnote-227) **Newsreels often featured newsboys because they were so popular with the audience.**[[228]](#endnote-228)

**Newspaper vendors were adults who sold newspapers. Most of them were honest, some weren’t.** In *Men of the Night* (1926), Mrs. Abbott, an elderly newspaper vendor in dire straits, is taken in by an art dealer and his young companion who see in her transparent honesty an excellent shield for the illegal activities in their art shop where they remold gold and silver articles. Mrs. Abbott is horrified when she discovers they are crooks. Trying to return jewels they stole, she is arrested, refuses to give them away and faces prison, but one of the men confesses and clears her of the crime. It then turns out Mrs. Abbott is the long-lost sister of a rich man and heiress to an English estate. She adopts the young man who marries his sweetheart and they all go to England. In *Through a Class Window* (1922), a young news vendor steals money to pay off his sister’s debt, is caught and sent to a reformatory. In *The Midnight Alarm* (1923), another Mrs. Abbott, a newsstand operator, sells newspapers with a crippled newsgirl. In *The Penalty* (1920), one news vendor was as evil as a villain can be, although through most of the film, his occupation is never mentioned. Newspaper vendor Blizzard (played by silent star Lon Chaney) becomes the master of the underworld.

**Newsroom employees, ranging from printers to clerks were usually secondary characters in newspaper films. Some had bigger roles.** In *Homespun Folks* (1920), a fired printer accuses the editor of shooting the district attorney nominee whose shady past he is exposing. The editor’s daughter forces the printer at gunpoint to confess his act of perjury. In *How Baxter Butted in (*aka *Hero Stuff)* (1925), Henry Baxter, a shy, bumbling newspaper clerk in the circulation department of a big newspaper, daydreams constantly about being a hero, impressing the woman he is helplessly in love with, a co-worker who is a stenographer. He saves for the day when they can get married. One day he suggests to his superior, the paper’s business manager and Henry’s rival, that the paper sponsor a series of banquets for heroes to boost circulation. His boss takes sole credit for the idea – just as he does with all of Baxter’s ideas. In the midst of everything, Henry’s brother dies and he is burdened with the widow and two children, and ends up working day and night to pay the bills. Henry suffers a breakdown from overwork. The manager editor learns of Baxter’s devotion to his family and that most of the ideas the business manager has taken credit for are Baxter’s. He decides to give a hero’s banquet for Henry, but during the proceedings, Henry is informed that his house is on fire. He rushes home to save the two children from the flames. He wins a promotion and the stenographer’s hand in marriage. In *Classified* (1925), an employee of a major New York daily works in the classified advertising section and suffers a series of romantic mishaps. She wants to escape from her drab surroundings and onto Fifth avenue before meeting the right man. *The Film Daily* reviewer said, “*The New York Times,* where (the woman) works in the Classified Ad department, is given some great publicity in the picture.”[[229]](#endnote-229) But Mordaunt Hall, *The New York Times Reviewer,* had serious reservations about the portrayal of a *Times* employee: This picture “wanders far from a truthful aspect of things by the false and flighty impression it gives of the girls employed in the classified advertising department of a newspaper. However, it is to be presumed that such ideas must be excused on the grounds of motion picture license, which means in some productions, a pretty wide latitude…(the woman) while in the office, appears to spend most of her time making dinner engagements with any male voice ‘with a smile.’”[[230]](#endnote-230)

**Messengers for the pony express often delivered the news across a continent, news that could have enormous implications for the people involved**. **These heroic early journalists were perfect fodder for the movies.** In *The Pony Express* (1925), messenger “Frisco Jack” Weston of the Pony Express brings news to the West. A senator from California wants to establish an empire and plots to have the new pony express system “fixed” so that any political news from the east which has a bearing on his plan might be delayed. He tells his henchmen: “Any news for California that is detrimental to our cause must be delayed here. Just how is for you to determine.” The heroic pony express rider, “Frisco Jack” carries the news of Lincoln’s election to thwart the senator’s devious plans and influence California to join the Union. The film shows the power of news to change and alter events. Title cards: “Two thousand miles of the roughest riding on earth. Eighty men and four hundred ponies will do it in 10 days.” “This oath is the code of the Pony Express. ‘I agree not to use profane language, not to drink, not to treat animals cruelly, always to conduct myself as a gentleman – to protect the United States mail with my life.’”

**Real-Life Journalists**[[231]](#endnote-231)

**Newspapermen and celebrity journalists often showed up in feature films either playing themselves or portraying the kind of newspaperman they were in real life. This gave the silent film an authenticity that audiences loved. It made everything in the film more believable. Sometimes the newspaper people were added to the film by the writer or director who wanted reporters to really look like reporters and not actors.** In *The Bellamy Trial* (1929), newspaper reporter roles are played by actual newspapermen: “Herb” Cruickshank, formerly of *Moving Picture World;* Jack Woolridge, syndicate editor; Ray Murray of *Motion Picture News* and *“*Speed” Kendall of the *Los Angeles Times.* One reviewer said, “Unfortunately, many of the newspapers and trade papers refused to permit their men to accept the ten-day job, although the ten “berries” a day was very inviting.”[[232]](#endnote-232) One film correspondent described what happened this way: Director Monta Bell “found himself back in his old newspaper days. In one of the sequences a huge staff of newspapermen was retained to appear as bona fide reporters. Anybody who has ever tried to argue with a newspaper man after the paper has gone to press can sympathize with Bell. Everything he wanted done was ‘all wet.’ In one part of the courtroom scene a spectator fainted and was carried out. ‘Say, Monta,’ said one of the scribes, “in a real trial a reporter would follow this guy out and get his name and address.’ ‘All right,’ said Bell, ‘you follow him out and then come back and give me his real name and address.’ This took the reporter out of the picture. Pete Smith, who used to be a New York newspaper man, watched the proceedings with the cynical air of a Richard Harding Davis or Charles Dickens.”[[233]](#endnote-233) To which a newspaper writer added, “For in the great courtroom scenes the director not only has stars of the stage and screen but also stars of the newspaper world in the press rows. The newspaper staff was recruited from various East and West Coast newspapers and wire service officers, the scribes being signed on regular contracts for the duration of the huge production.”[[234]](#endnote-234) Different publications had different stories about real-life reporters appearing in the film. Hollywood Correspondent George Shaffer reported that twenty newspaper reporters from Los Angeles dailies have been cast for the film: “The reporters work days at the studio and nights on their accustomed jobs.”[[235]](#endnote-235) To which another writer added that the director “had recruited a flock of real live newspaper men to act as the reporters in the courtroom scenes so that critics couldn’t condemn his reporters for not looking like reporters. And then he turned right around and made them do things that no self-respecting newspapermen of this day would even think of doing.”[[236]](#endnote-236)

In *Little Annie Rooney* (1925), the police reporter in the hospital and jail scenes is played by William Reitmeier, the *New York World’s* police reporter. “Bill” Reitmeier is the dean of police reporters in New York city who has been covering the Tenderloin for years. When a woman wants to save the man she loves by giving him an emergency blood transfusion, the doctor is reluctant to do so. The reporter says to the doctor, “Why not take her? It’s either that or let him croak. Besides -- it will make a peach of a story.” In *The Studio Murder Mystery* (1929), reporter Read Kendall of the *Los Angeles Times* and reporter Harry Bergman, bureau manager of the International News Service, play themselves. Newspaper headlines blare out the story: “Five Held by Police in Studio Murder Case.” The two reporters quiz the police after being thrown out of the hospital trying to get information. A detective tells them five suspects are in the room and one will soon admit to being the killer. The police chief arrives and tells them to be patient and he’ll give them the story when all the facts are in.[[237]](#endnote-237)

**Celebrity journalists were names that the audience immediately recognized from bylines and photographs they had seen in their newspapers.** Many such as Editor Arthur Brisbane showed up repeatedly. In *Go and Get It* (1920), Brisbane along with sports columnist Ring Lardner, editor-columnist Irving S. Cobb, newspaperman Samuel G. Blythe, and cartoonist-columnist Robert Edgren all give credibility to a film in which the reporter shoots a monster, then races back to the paper with a star witness using a plane, train and ship to get the story in before the presses roll. Using real-life reporters in science fiction-horror films to make the action more believable started in the silent film era and by 1950 had become a staple in that genre. In *The Great White Way* (1924), the film’s feeble plot was bolstered by the appearances of Brisbane, Cobb and journalist Damon Runyon as well as artist-cartoonist-illustrators Nell Brinkley, Harry Hershfield, George McManus, Hal Coffman, Winsor McCay and Billy Debeck. A press agent works to get publicity for his star but nothing works until Mabel Vandegrift and boxer Joe Cain get together. *The New York Times* reviewer said the big names did not disappoint: “Much of the interest was aroused by the fact that such names as Arthur Brisbane…(Irwin Cobb…Damon Runyon…George McManus and others)…would appear upon the screen in the course of the unwinding of *The Great White Way.* And they, these spectators, were not doomed to disappointment for one after another the stars in their respective spheres showed themselves in shadow forms. Mr. Brisbane seemed to be quite at home in a role he has enacted for many a year. Mr. Cobb took the occasion in a sporting way, possibly a bit nervous because of his plus fours and his light-hued golf hose, filled with well-rounded calves and quite smart about the ankles. Mr. Runyon looked like an energetic and studious college professor…Mr. McManus has grown an exotic mustache and is rather heavier than we expected.”[[238]](#endnote-238)

Grantland Rice, probably the most famous sports journalist in early and mid-century America, also appeared as himself in feature films. In *Oh, Baby!* (1926), he joined other real-life sports journalists Jimmy Cannon, Sid Mercer and Ring Lardner as well as *New York Daily News* sportswriter Jackie Farrell, journalist and humorist Arthur “Bugs” Baer,” author Joe Humphreys, and broadcaster Graham McNamee. They appear in the film at ringside in Madison Garden, New York, as themselves. Rice was well-known for producing and writing *Grantland Rice’s Sportlight* (1924-1927) for silent films, which became as well-known as his columns were in the newspapers. Each title card included Rice’s name and proclaimed that all of the titles were written by him.[[239]](#endnote-239) Rice also edited *The Sports Review Speed* (1921).

Journalist-Humorist Will Rogers brought to the silent screen a mixture of his witty editorial columns in a series of films on current topics interspersed with comical shots of Rogers in *Will Rogers Illiterate Digest Series* (1920). In 1922, Commentator Will Rogers discusses the News of the Day for *Selznick News No. 1087, 1089, 1091, 1095, 1099* (1922), *1107, 1109, 1111* (1923). *The Herbert Kaufman Weekly* (1920) illustrates the journalist’s editorials formerly printed by a newspaper syndicate. In 1927, Rogers created *Will Rogers’s Travelogues,* in which Rogers takes his fans around the world in this series of silent film travelogues.[[240]](#endnote-240)

Commentator Robert Benchley, a journalist and humorist, gained more fame doing small sound lectures for the Fox Movietone camera. Sound featurettes featuring Benchley became extremely popular including *The Sex Life of the Polyp* (1928), which documents a dimwitted doctor attempting to discuss the sex life of a polyp to a woman’s club using slides to help illustrate his points; it was the second of the 46 comedy short films Benchley made for the new sound era. *The Spellbinder* (No. 3, 1928) has Benchley pinch-hitting for an absent political speaker at a voters’s rally. He has no idea what he is talking about and rambles on aimlessly, his speech a jumble of half-completed statements, insipid anecdotes, dry-as-dust statistics and other characteristic election-time imbecilities. *The Treasurer’s Report* (1928) finds Benchley as an assistant treasurer who reports on the annual expenditures of the club for its home for “boys between the ages of 14” and other projects. In *Furnace Trouble* (1929), Benchley tries to keep his furnace going. The featurette so enraged the coal companies that in the Pennsylvania coal mine areas the film was banned.[[241]](#endnote-241)

**Other real-life journalists appeared as themselves in various film featurettes**. Editor Eltinge F. Watner of the magazine *Field and Stream* demonstrates the art of using a rod and gun in a series of silent films.[[242]](#endnote-242) *Burton Holmes Travelogues* (1916-1922-1923) feature the popular photographer-documentarian Elias Burton Holmes, who coined the term “travelogue” who turned his travel slide shows into silent motion pictures. Burton traveled the world giving more than 8,000 illustrated travel talks in his lifetime. In *Old Times for New* (1929), real-life music critic Dr. Sigmund Spaeth, a writer on musical topics for the New York daily newspapers and a popularizer of classical music, is known as the “tune detective” because of his skill in tracing the classical roots of popular melodies. In a Movietone featurette, Dr. Spaeth accuses popular composers of stealing their tunes, then sits at the piano and plays the original classical melody showing how these melodies make their way into the popular songs of the day. Bruce Barton, editorial writer of *Collier’s Weekly* , creates “picturization” of his editorials for the silent screen (1923-1924). In *The Just a Little Bit Late Club* (1923), Barton is at his typewriter conceiving of the idea of an editorial upon the habit of being late. **Other silent film featurettes also featured well-known personalities.[[243]](#endnote-243)**

**Pack Journalists**[[244]](#endnote-244)

**Pack journalists are groups of reporters, photojournalists, war correspondents, freelance writers, even newsboys who follow a story or a specific incident together in a group, trying to get the story at all costs. Sometimes they act like a pack of jackals who will do anything to get a picture or a story. By the 1920s, reporters were being far more aggressive on the screen than ever before. They would hound celebrities, the police, attorneys, businessman and private citizens to get a story. Often they would chase people in packs, holding on to their still and newsreel cameras, their pencils and pads.[[245]](#endnote-245)** In *Chicago* (1927), reporter Jake is one of the newspaper boys covering a murder trial in Chicago. Police cooperate with the reporters with one policeman saying to the reporter: “A signed confession in ten minutes! Be sure your paper gives me the credit, Jake.” The reporter takes note in a small reporter’s pad, wears a trench coat and goes to the payphone and calls in the story. The girl accused of murder, Roxie, runs up to the reporter and says, “Don’t let them hang me!...Help me get away and I’ll do *anything* for you!” Jake pushes her away and continues dictating his story, hangs up and talks to her. Come here, he gestures. He shows her her reflection in a glass and says, “Hang a woman with a face like *that –* say Justice ain’t so blind….listen, sister, just trust yours truly. I’m the lad who’ll play you up as ‘Chicago’s Most Beautiful Murderess!’ Who knows you now? NOBODY! But I’ll put you over *big.* Tomorrow they’ll be namin’ babies after you. Why, you’ll be famous.” Jake calls in his news photog and sets up a provocative shot. “You be the murdered man, while I pose Roxie as Remorse,” the photographer tells the reporter. In prison, with the matron, Roxie cuts out and pastes up newspaper headlines: “Roxie Hart, The Jazz Slayer.” “Roxie Riddles Romeo.” “Jazz Slayer’s Jailed on Murder Charge. Blonde Beauty Faces Grand Jury Indictment.” “Beauty Must Stand Trial for First-Degree Murder.” “Beautiful Jazz Slayer Faces Murder Charge.” Roxie surveys her press clippings and shouts, “Seventeen columns and twenty-three pictures” Another woman accused of murder looks at her and says, “That’s nothing. I had twenty-two columns and thirty pictures.”

During the trial, reporters are everywhere in the courtroom. There are close-ups of their note taking throughout the trial. A court illustrator draws Roxie and others for the newspaper. There are shots of hands working telegraphs, filing stories, writing stories. The verdict is screamed out in large headlines: “Roxie Hart Acquitted; Jury Out Four Hours. Famous ‘Jazz Slayer’ Freed in Sensational Murder Charge.” In the courtroom, there is pandemonium. Reporters and photographers are everywhere. Suddenly, a new shooting takes place and the reporters and photogs scramble out of the courtroom to where the shots were fired, leaving Roxie alone. Roxie wants to know why they are leaving. Jake: “Two Gun Rosie! Ain’t God good to the papers!” He tells Roxie: “Listen, sister, you’re yesterday’s news and that’s deader than last year’s hat!” She is left alone. A newspaper story and headlines about her acquittal is seen on the wet sidewalk as people walk all over it. Rain pours down as the newspaper goes down the storm drain. Critic Edwin Schallert of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, “She is rather appalled at the deed as is her husband, but when the hard-boiled sensational newspaper reporter arrives, and various other people more accustomed to murders, she is intrigued with the idea that she may become something of a public figure. She glories in having her photograph taken, and of obtaining publicity prominence, pictures of herself in print.”[[246]](#endnote-246)

In *The Goose Woman* (1925), a reporter and a photographer along with other members of the press show up at the Goose Woman’s farm. The woman had pretended she had seen a murder to get back into the public eye – she was once a famous opera singer. The pack of journalists show up to talk to her about the murder. She spies one reporter in the crowd and shouts at him: “I remember you! You’re the guy that called me a drunken Goose Woman! Get out!” The photographers grab pictures as the woman threatens the press with a shotgun. One reporter climbs a fence to get closer to her and she shoots at him and he falls into a pond filled with geese. The photographer laughs and shoots a picture of the angry reporter in the mud. The rest of the journalists run away.[[247]](#endnote-247)

In *The Trespasser* (1929), a stenographer who had her marriage to a rich man’s son annulled reads in the newspaper that he has gotten married again. What he doesn’t know is that she was pregnant with his child. When the rich man dies, he leaves $500,000 to the stenographer, creating a sensation in the newspapers. Reporters talk their way into the stenographer’s apartment and wait there for her arrival. One of the reporters finds a picture of the millionaire who willed the stenographer the money and another reporter discovers a child. The newshounds put two and two together. They take a picture of the kid pointing at the man’s picture just as the stenographer comes in, hysterical that these newsmen are in her apartment and are using her child in this way. She gives back the money and disappears from Chicago. The man she loves, whose invalid wife has died, searches everywhere for her and finally locates her. The two are reunited and married. In *Food for Scandal* (1920), the reporters scramble over each other to report on a scandalous divorce. In *Partners of the Night* (1920), noisy journalists arrive as a pack to interview a corrupt chief of police. In *The Big Noise* (1928), reporters create a fake family for an accident victim to make the story better.[[248]](#endnote-248)

In *13 Washington Square* (1928), reporters camp out on the doorstep of a Washington Square home, causing a woman and her maid to seek temporary lodging elsewhere rather than answer embarrassing questions about her son and the woman he wants to marry. In *Her Night of Romance* (1924), newspapermen and news photographers greet the marriageable daughter of an American multi-millionaire who is being taken abroad for her health. So that she won’t be hounded by the press, the woman conceals her beauty and wealth by distorting her features and disguising herself to fool the ship news photographers who corner her when she lands in England. Title Card: (Her father) “hates publicity like a bird hates wings.” In *Should Husbands Pay?* (1926), a pack of reporters armed with their cameras chase a married flirt and his friend and accidentally knock over a woman for more incriminating pictures. As soon as the men get home, the newspaper has already printed the innocent-but-incriminating photos, and their wives are furious. **The image of hounding pack reporters even showed up in cinema nightmares**. In *Beggar on Horseback* (1925), reporters are involved in a composer’s nightmare about his future wife. They join a chorus of butlers, typists, jurors, ushers, waiters, dancing masters, big businessmen, family relatives and what-not to torment him.

**Real newspaper reporters were amused when reporters were depicted as docile observers.** In *Scandal in Paris* (1929), eight reporters cover a trial. The *Variety* reviewer summed up the popular reaction: “Newspapermen will smile at the atmospheric touch of eight court reporters waiting with dignity and perfect manners to get into one phone booth during a recess in the trial.”[[249]](#endnote-249)

**Most of the time, however, pack journalists are benign, just covering a story as a unit, doing their jobs as efficiently as possible.**[[250]](#endnote-250)In *The Lodger: A Story of London Fog (*aka *The Case of Jonathan Drew*) (1927), director Alfred Hitchcock shows in detail how the investigation of a murder is disseminated in the press.[[251]](#endnote-251) The “Crime Reporter” is part of the film’s introduction in which he phones in the story to the telegraph operator who sends it to the newsroom as we see the editorial room, the presses, the truck delivering the newspapers, the newsboy selling the papers and the public response to a serial killer. The *Variety* reviewer summed up the film this way: “A mysterious criminal has slain a blonde girl on the London embankment on each of seven Tuesday nights. It is desired to picture the inflamed state of public tension over the crimes. The film uses up exactly seven minutes in shots at street mobs crowding around the scene of the newest horror; policemen taking notes on the spot; reporters rushing to their newspapers with harrowing details; telegraphers pounding out the messages, the newspapers being printed; the newspapers being trucked through the streets. How the crowd on the street corners received the news; how they read the reports in the public bars; how they talked about it in chorus girls’s dressing rooms….And at length how the news came to the principals concerned in the story. For this last essential they reproduced the newspaper headlines; which, after all, were all necessary in the first place with the elaborate remainder waste footage.”[[252]](#endnote-252)

*Thru Different Eyes* (1929) begins outside the criminal court building with a newsboy selling papers (“Extra’) to onlookers. A big murder trial is taking place – it makes up the bulk of the film presenting three very different versions and motives via flashbacks for the killing. The first five minutes of the film feature the reporters in the press room covering the story. We see hands pounding on typewriters and telegraph keys. The room is filled with copyboys, many reporters on the phone. One reporter on the phone: “Hello, Boss – the Manning case should reach the jury by night.” The camera pans over to another reporter on the phone talking to his editor. Outside the courtroom, a woman approaches a reporter; “Please, please help me get into the court-room! It’s vitally important!” Reporter: “Lady, if I was somebody else, I couldn’t get myself in.” A sob sister who is covering the “woman’s angle” of the trial is talking into the phone. Another male reporter is talking into another phone when the woman interrupts him to see if he can get her into the courtroom. He dismisses her. The sob sister is dictating a story on the phone: “Mrs. Manning, wife of the defendant, touches all hearts by her brave, unwavering devotion to her husband.” A pan to another reporter dictating his story: “Mrs. Manning’s cold indifference to her husband’s fate is repellant.” A man comes in, pleading to the reporters to let him into the court. They push him aside and head off to court themselves. A reporter and an assistant editor are talking. Two chorus girls come in. One asks a reporter friend about getting her girlfriend into the trial. Reporter: “Don’t be silly. If I had a ticket I’d get five hundred berries for it!” Chorus girl to other chorus girl: “I’ll get you in, dearie, even if I have to date the judge.” Everyone goes to court to watch the trial including the two chorus girls who bluff their way in. The trial gets underway.

In *The Vagabond Lover* (1929), the local police and the press show up when a rich woman discovers she has been the victim of a hoax: an amateur musician in search of work impersonates a big band leader who runs a music correspondent course as a money-making proposition. The journalists include Stevens of the *News,* another male reporter, a female reporter and a reporter from the Police Gazette. The woman, whose niece ran off with the imposter, meets the four reporters and a photographer in her home: “I don’t intend to answer any more questions,” she tells them. Reporter: “But you’ve got to. It’s front page stuff. We’re giving you a million dollars worth of free publicity…Can’t you just see it, boys…’Heiress Elopes With…what did you call him…Vagabond. Auntie Rages. Secret Love Nest. Her Vagabond Lover’…There’s a hedge for you.” Stevens and the other reporters agree. Another reporter comes up to the woman: “Now in the interest of the Police Gazette….” She gasps and gives him a dirty look. “Might I ask you if your niece has ever been photographed in a bathing suit?” She gasps again and shouts: “Go away. Go away.” The local police chief says the woman’s niece might have run away. “Kidnapping. Hot dog,” says one reporter. The woman reporter: “Would you say hypnotism has been used?” The country cop says he thinks an arrest is imminent: “You boys can print that.” Police Gazette reporter: “Now about that bathing suit picture….” The aunt tells him to go away. “I won’t speak to you.” A radio news broadcast interrupts the press conference: It tells about how the woman mistook a group of amateurs for a professional band that is now performing at the charity event. Stevens: “That means the birds you want are right at the benefit now.” Policeman: “The nerve of them. I’ll pinch the whole bunch.” The police, the reporters and the woman rush to the charity event. She confronts the amateur who turns out to be a huge hit on the radio. The real band leader arrives to claim him as a protégé. As the reporters look on, both tell the police that no charges will be made and that the amateur is the new singing sensation of the nation. The singer goes to the niece where they kiss to end the film.

In *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp* (1926), three newsreel segments (“World News”) update the movie house audience on the progress of a cross-country race as well as its ending of the race. The Burton Shoe company in Cleveland, Ohio, is sponsoring the cross-country walking contest and Burton himself briefs newspapermen about the race and why it is important: “Always glad to see you newspaper boys. I have a great story for you today…I’ve invited the champion walkers of the world to compete for a cash prize of $25,000 – in a race to California. All the contestants will wear Burton Shoes….” The newspapermen are laughing while taking notes. The businessman then introduces the press to his daughter, “the Girl on the Burton Billboard!” The race begins and the newsreels keep the folks at home up-to-date on the race and their home-town walker, Harry. As the race winds to an end, a man running out of the *Daily Star* office shouts that a cyclone is descending on the town. Harry survives all to win the race and marries the girl he fell in love with by looking at her billboard picture.

**Newsreels often included groups of journalists in real-life situations.**[[253]](#endnote-253)One newsreel featured newspapermen in a feature, “What They Will Do to Get Into the Newspapers” in which some Washington officials do some goofy stunts as the journalists look on. The notoriety seekers include a flagpole sitter (*Pathe Review No. 5,* 1929).

## The Importance of the Newspapers in Silent Film and the Unidentified News Staff[[254]](#endnote-254) As in Part One (1890-1919), films are included in which a newspaper or magazine plays a strategic part in the plot, showing the influence of the news media of its time on its readers. These films do not feature specific reporters or journalists, but instead are stories, news items and notices printed in the newspaper or magazine without any specifics of who wrote the story or why resulting in the designation, “Unidentified News Staff.”

**In the 1920s, newspapers were an integral part of most households who could afford them. In the movies, readers believed what the newspaper printed and rarely questioned the information. If they were affected personally, they acted without hesitation, even if it led to tragic consequences, irrational acts and even criminal action. Newspaper and magazine articles were used as prime motivators in the plots of films across all genres.**

**Savvy press agents used the news media to publicize the people (usually celebrities) who hired them. Newspapers of the early 20th century were susceptible to planted information from press agents.[[255]](#endnote-255)** In *The Show Girl* (1927), newspapermen fall for a publicity stunt staged by press agent “Breezy” Ayers: a show girl is kidnapped, but it’s all a fake – until it isn’t. In *Inez from Hollywood* (1924), a press agent gets an actress’s name on the front pages of the papers as a vamp who attends wild parties raided by the police, but he ruins her reputation with lurid publicity and she becomes known as “The Worst Woman in Hollywood.” In *The Beautiful Cheat* (1926), a press agent sages a publicity campaign in the newspapers. He takes a pretty shop girl to Europe and sets about to make her a star. To do this, he creates an extensive publicity campaign, saying she is a Russian noblewoman of great wealth who owns the crown jewels. After her first movie fails, her impersonation is exposed – and when that happens there is a rush to see the picture and overnight she becomes a success. The press agent ends up marrying the girl.

In *Bluebeard’s Seven Wives* (1926), a press agent stages a massive publicity campaign to keep a young unknown in the newspaper headlines from making a former plodding bank clerk a movie star. The clerk gets a job as an extra and when the leading man refuses to work, the film’s director, in a fit of conceit, decides to prove that he can choose any poor slop to replace the leading man. He picks the former clerk who turns out to be a natural and soon finds himself a star completely at the mercy of publicity hacks who label him a lady killer, a Spanish Don Juan lover. They plant him on an ocean liner and bring him to town. His moustache and haircut become the craze with all the drug store cowboys intent on following his style. Then the press agent hits on the brilliant idea of marrying and divorcing the star seven times – at least in the newspapers if not in real life. The clerk-star finally flees the frenetic life and runs away to marry his sweetheart and retire to a farm. In *Fashions for Women* (1927), a newspaper publicity stunt by a lying press agent turns a fashionable woman into a Paris fashion queen. The woman is persuaded to retreat from public life to get a face lift thinking her disappearance would be a good publicity stunt. The press agent hires a cigarette girl to pose as the woman in a fashion show. In *Her Face Value* (1921), a press agent uses the newspapers to shape a chorus girl’s image into that of a star. In *The Speed Girl (*1921), a press agent wastes no time in getting his clients’s names in print. In *American Venus* (1926), a press agent considered a hot-shot public relations man publicizes cold cream and American pageant contestants through the tabloids. In *Glad Rags Doll* (1929), a property man gives a stage actor a loaded revolver, and the actor, being a poor shot, grazes his head. The press agent and publicity promoter exploit the incident, making sure it lands on the front pages of the newspaper with the result that the actor becomes more popular than ever.

**Some individuals would use the press for their own personal ends. They figured out what newspapers wanted to print and then gave it to them even if the information was distorted or false. Some craved publicity for publicity’s sake.** In *Notoriety* (1922), a girl of the tenements becomes addicted to newspaper publicity and craves notoriety. She confesses to a murder even though she is innocent. She dreads going back to her drab life, but sees the errors of her ways when she realizes ill-fame leads to disaster and eternal oblivion. Newspaper stories and headlines are seen throughout the film. In *A Tailor Made Man* (1922), a radical agitator, engaged to a woman, is furious when she breaks up with him and plots his rival’s downfall. He gives the newspaper the story of how the man is a fraud. Because of the story, the rival is snubbed in public. In *Beauty Prize* (1924), a young salesman makes the newspapers believe that a manicurist is a society debutante after he persuades her to compete in a beauty contest in Atlantic City. In *Learning to Love* (1925), a born flirt sends a hint of her escapade to a scandal sheet to get the man she wants. In *Youth to Youth* (1922), newspaper stories planted by a theatrical backer causes the man who loves an actress to believe the rumors that the actress is the backer’s mistress and because of what he has read he decides to end their relationship. In *Dangerous Paths* (1921), a distorted newspaper story planted by a wealthy cruel man blackens a woman’s name with dire consequences. In *The World’s Applause,* newspapers print accounts of the murder linking the dead man with a successful stage actress and the ensuing notoriety ruins the actress’s reputation but it cures the actress’s craving for publicity.

In *Celebrity* (1928), a fight manager sees an opportunity to publicize his prize fighter by having him break into the society columns of the newspapers and become a celebrity. He hires a hardboiled mother-and-daughter act from vaudeville to play the boxer’s sweet mother and sweetheart and then hires an ex-newspaperman to write poems the boxer signs. The poems are printed in the society columns of a newspaper and the boxer is soon sufficiently well known to warrant a try for the championship title. At the end of the film, the fighter is led to believe that his manager broke a story with a newspaper that his literary efforts were a fake. Feeling alone in the world, he goes fighting mad and knocks the champ cold. In *The Fair Cheat* (1923), newspapermen plant a story that a girl’s rich father has been shipwrecked after the boys in the press had announced that the young woman was accompanying her father on a ship to Europe. But the story is a ruse because she stays home and gets a job as a chorus girl promising not to see a poor clerk. Her father returns just in time to stop his secretary, who reads in the newspaper that her boss was shipwrecked, from trying to make off with his fortune and gives his consent to his daughter to marry a poor employee.

**Newspapers were so influential in silent films that blackmailers often used them as a threat – they will give the newspapers compromising pictures and/or stories unless the person pays them money to keep that information away from the public. Other unscrupulous or overzealous people as well as journalists use the newspaper to plant false or scandalous stories to defeat a rival or an opponent.** In *The Scarab Ring*  (1921), a man threatens to go to the newspapers with a scandalous story about a woman’s father if the woman doesn’t convince her sister to marry him. The blackmailer will tell the newspapers that her father, who was a bank president, paid a cashier to assume guilt covering up his crime. In *Bab’s Candidate* (1920), the daughter of a powerful senator takes a picture of her father with her darkhorse candidate, a village pauper, and sends it to the newspaper so voters will think the senator is backing the candidate.The newspaper prints the picture without knowing of Bab’s motives. In *Ashes* (1921), a magazine story of two blackmailers who are caught gives a woman second thoughts about her husband’s proposed blackmail scheme. In *The Branded Woman* (1920), a newspaper story about the death of a woman’s mother who once ran a gambling house is used to blackmail her. In *The Fighter* (1921), a man’s enemy, trying to hurt a railroad president through his young ward, uses the press to hurt both of them. He tips off the newspapers about a scandal in the life of her father, a politician, having to do with shady municipal contracts. In *Tongues of Scandal* (1927), newspapers fuel gossip aimed at bringing down a governor. A scandal about the governor’s wife and the sums paid to keep stories concerning her from breaking into print wreck his political prospects and bankrupt his machine.

**Many films use newspaper articles to change the course of the film. They contain revealing information that creates a major turning point in the plot. Sometimes a newspaper article prints information no one was aware of before and this causes major problems or relief for the characters in the film.[[256]](#endnote-256)** In *Blind Hearts* (1921), a newspaper story alerts a man about a trial in which a man is accused of murder and sentenced to be hanged. He gets there just in time to save him. In *The Great Round Up* (1920), a newspaper picture of a notorious counterfeiter offering a $10,000 reward for his capture helps the hero capture the villain. In *The Vanishing Dagger: Episode 13: Spears of Death* (1920), a newspaper account of an impending coronation gives the hero information he needs to put the rightful person on the throne. In *The Vanishing Dagger: Episode 17: Beasts of the Jungle* (1920), a newspaper story reveals to the heroine that the hero is still alive.

In *The Pilgrim* (1923), a newspaper story and photograph reveal: “Convict Makes Daring Escape. ‘Lefty Lombard’ Alias ‘Slippery Elm’ Leaps Into Drain Pipe in Dining Hall of Prison and Escapes Through Sewer. $1,000 Reward Offered.” The newspaper is read by a passenger who turns out to be a deputy sheriff sitting next to the convict on a train. When he holds up the newspaper, the escapee sees the story, chokes on crackers he is eating, hurriedly gets up and rushes out of the train. In *Rugged Water* (1925), a man is hailed as a hero and the publicity about him in newspapers gives him a promotion he doesn’t deserve. In *What Women Love* (1920), newspapers cover the escapades of a rich woman caught in a raid wearing scanty bathing suit on a beach. The incident forces her father and daughter to depart for equatorial waters. In *The Amazing Woman* (1920)*,* a newspaper reveals that a mother has died of a broken heart because her daughter has disappeared. The daughter reads the article and journeys home for the funeral. In *Silver Wings* (1922), a story about a mother who has been reduced to poverty and is ill appears in a Sunday newspaper, and two of her children read the story and come home to take care of their mother.

**And in a change of pace, some people want to keep their names out of the papers.** In *One Wild Week* (1921), a woman will inherit a small fortune if she keeps her name out of the newspapers for six months. It sounds easier than it is. In *The Golden Cocoon* (1925-1926), a girl uses a clever ruse to keep her story out of the paper by feigning suicide – she is counting on newspaper ethics to prevent publication of any libel against the dead. The newspapers print a report of her death and she disappears.

**Silent films in which newspaper articles play a major role in the plot usually involve love and romance.**[[257]](#endnote-257)In *The Diamond Queen: Episode One: Vow of Vengeance* (1921), a newspaper story reveals to a hero who the woman he loves really is and the circumstances surrounding her father’s suicide. In *His Secretary* (1925), a plain and resigned woman reads the “lovelorn” column in the newspaper and is motivated to go after the man she loves. In *Behold My Wife* (1920), a newspaper article informs a man that his fiancee has jilted him for another. In *The Love Gamble* (1925), a woman reads in a Boston newspaper that her former love is being tried for the murder of his wife that occurred the night she was with him at a lodge. She sacrifices her own reputation to save the man she truly loves. Title Card: “She’s given up everything to save him.” In *Broadway Daddies* (1928), a newspaper article in the society page reveals that a poor man is really the son of a wealthy businessman, and a woman who loves him assumes she has been tricked and leaves him.[[258]](#endnote-258) In *Voices of the City* (1922), newspapers print a story about a young man and his sweetheart caught in a compromising situation, causing problems with the girl’s mother who violently criticizes her, forcing her to leave home.

In *Do the Dead Talk*  (1920), an old newspaper article reveals that a couple planning to get married are really brother and sister and the marriage is stopped. In *Why Change Your Wife* (1920), a newspaper item about a woman’s divorce causes gossips to speculate she lost him because she dressed as if she were his aunt, not his wife. This prompts the former wife to demand the latest styles – “sleeveless, backless, transparent, indecent.” She then flaunts herself in high society, transforming herself into a desirable woman and eventually wins back her husband. In *The Secret Studio* (1927), a tabloid newspaper prints what appears to be a nude portrait of a woman and an expose of her fight with an artist – she threw a box of face powder at him and he claims have been blinded by the attack. Because of the articles, the woman is disgraced and cast out, but she vindicates herself and wins back her wealthy sweetheart. In *Jane’s Engagement Party,* a newspaper story reveals that a man is wanted for bigamy, causing all sorts of problems for the girl he wants to marry. In *Any Woman* (1925), a man reads a big story in *The Los Angeles Examiner* about a divorce scandal involving the woman he loves, but when he learns she was tricked into a compromising position, he marries her. In *The Love Charm* (1921), a magazine article on “The Love Charm” shows a young, old-fashioned girl how to win a man. She puts the philosophy to work and succeeds. In *When the Devil Drives* (1922), newspapers print a story about an affair and the woman engaged to the man reads the story and then breaks off the engagement, becoming disillusioned with men.

In *Why Husbands Go Mad* (1924), a naturally suspicious husband finds a strange latch key in his wife’s possession and links up this occurrence with a newspaper clipping from the local scandal sheet. It turns out the key was used to keep a dog as a surprise birthday gift in the hall closet, and the wife’s interest in the clipping was in an advertisement on the reverse side. In *Seven Chances* (1925), a local newspaper article depicts the predicament of a man who needs a bride and advertises for one. He will inherit a fortune if he marries by 7 p.m. the same day. The article results in a mad rush to claim the groom. The woman he loves had rejected him earlier when he told her he must marry a girl, any girl, in order to get his fortune, but when a mob of outraged brides chases the hero, he runs to his sweetheart’s home just in time to be married at the stroke of 7. In *A Fool and His Honey* (1927), an old newspaper circulation gag has contestants endeavoring to identify a roving representative from pictures printed in the paper. If identified, the question is asked of him, “Are you my loved one?” A man who loosely resembles the man in the newspapers is pursued by about a hundred ladies who want to learn if he is their loved one.

In *The Fourth Musketeer* (1923), newspapers print a story about a fighter who refuses a reward for recovering a stolen necklace and is treated like a hero. His estranged wife left him when he retired and went into the garage business, which she felt was beneath her social ambitions. She sees the front-page story and picture in the dailies and returns to him because he is now famous. In *The Snob* (1924), a woman’s husband, thinking his wife has no money, constantly belittles her throughout the marriage since he loves wealthy women. She shows him a newspaper story that she is really an heir to millions. He suddenly has a change of heart and begs her forgiveness, but she divorces him to marry her childhood sweetheart. In *The Unknown Purple* (1923), a prisoner shows another prisoner a newspaper story about a husband framed by his wife’s lover with pictures of the wife and lover now married. The other prisoner looks at the newspaper and reveals he is that husband. In *Champagne* (1928), a Wall Street investor reads one newspaper after another about his daughter crashing a plane in the ocean so she can catch an ocean liner which happens to be carrying her boyfriend. Headline: “Cupid Takes a Leaf from Lindy’s Diary. Wall Street Magnate Again Defied by Headstrong Heiress Daughter. Gives Him The Air and Makes Freak Flight to Join Lover in Atlantic Liner. Romantic Reunion in Mid-Ocean.” In *Back Pay* (1922), a woman reads a newspaper story about a war hero who is badly wounded and blinded in the World War and has a short time to live. He continually calls out for the woman he loves who left him before he went to war to go to New York to find love and adventure. She realizes she is the woman and decides to go to the army hospital to comfort him. Before he dies, they get married and his spirit comforts her for the rest of her life.

In *Slightly Used* (1927), an eldest daughter who is being pressured to get married so her sister can get married picks a man’s name out of the news columns of the daily newspaper, an army officer who just left for an expedition in Nicaragua. She then announces to her family that this man is the man she is going to marry. She then falls in love with someone else, so she inserts an article in the New York newspapers announcing the death of the man who had gone to Nicaragua so she is free to marry another. The man reads his own death notice and returns to find out what is going on. He announces himself as a friend of the woman’s “late husband.” She fearfully plays the part of the bereaved widow until the man reveals his identity and demands his rights as a husband. They discover their love is mutual and so the woman surrenders. In *Mr. Billings Spends His Dime* (1923), a romantic clerk falls in love with the daughter of the president of the South American republic after seeing her picture in a weekly newsreel at a motion picture theater.

**Sometimes newspapers and magazines print photographs that have repercussions in the love lives of the people involved.** In *Cinderella’s Twin* (1920), a maid seeing a picture of a society man in a magazine dreams of marrying him. In *Molly O* (1921), Molly falls in love with an eligible young bachelor millionaire’s picture in the newspaper. She then pastes her own photograph over a question mark used by a sensational newspaper to indicate she is the young woman rumored to be engaged to a very wealthy handsome and likable man. In *Reckless Wives* (1921), a picture in a magazine of a handsome artist gives an unhappy wife an idea: she is determined to win his love. In *Small-Town Idol* (1921), a magazine picture of her former fiancé as a star in Hollywood makes a woman wonder if she made a mistake in rejecting him. In *Sitting Pretty* (1929), a man falls in love with a woman when he sees her picture in the newspaper. While on a train he accidentally meets her. After many misadventures, he finally wins the girl. In *What Happened to Jones* (1920), a picture of a pretty girl who scored a hit in amateur theatricals is printed in the newspaper prompting a young man to look her up because he has fallen in love with the picture and wants to marry her. In *Smilin’ Guns* (1929), a poor cowboy sees a newspaper picture of a beautiful eastern socialite who has come west to summer at a dude ranch. He falls in love with her at first sight, but realizes he is too uncouth for such a woman even though he is foreman of the dude ranch. He goes to a specialist to learn how to become a gentleman. Back at the ranch, the cowboy saves the woman from various villains. Recognizing the man’s good nature despite his rough manner, the socialite declares her love for him. In *The Man from the West* (1926), a newspaper photograph of a woman prompts a ranch foreman to think he has finally found an innocent female. The woman suddenly arrives at the ranch and proves to his disillusion to resemble the other guests – he finds her as snobbish and “jazzily dressed” as the other women. But he is destined to change his mind.

**Sometimes just the popularity of the newspaper creates problems in a marriage.** In *Why Men Leave Home* (1924), it is pointed out that the average husband is a man who likes to read his newspaper without interference. What he hates the most is when his wife begins reading the newspaper over his shoulder just as he is discovering that his pet stock has fallen 10 points. In *Kiss Me Again* (1925), a man pays more attention to his newspaper than his wife so she looks elsewhere for love. She imagines she is in love with a pianist while her husband is buried in his newspaper. In *Lonesome Ladies* (1927), an architect becomes complacent in his married life, preferring to spend his evenings reading newspapers while his wife feels they should talk. When he loses his wife, he wants her back and when she returns he once again settles himself comfortably to read the paper again. Some men never learn. In *Madame Wants No Children* (1927), a successful young lawyer reads a newspaper in the late afternoon and dozes off thinking of home life and children.

**Sometimes a newspaper article results in irrational actions on the part of the reader**. In *The Newlyweds Lose Snookums* (1928), newlyweds read in the newspapers about the operations of kidnappers in their neighborhood and they are sure their baby has been stolen since he is missing from his crib. The frantic parents race all over the apartment house and cause much confusion before they discover that their angel child has stolen the elevator and was giving himself a continuous ride. In *The Bomb Idea* (1920) a newspaper article convinces a railroad porter and his boss that Bolsheviks are on the loose, resulting in hilarious consequences. In *Too Much Business* (1922), a magazine article on efficiency is given by a private secretary to her boss and she suggests the part relating to punctuality. He tears off the “ate” on his desk calendar and the “ov” of November falls on the magazine changing the title from “Let your life affairs be strictly business” to “Let your love affairs be strictly business.” That idea pleases him and he takes action on it. In *The Princess from Hoboken* (1927), newspaper stories about a White Russian princess stranded in Chicago inspire owners of a mom-and-pop restaurant in New Jersey to open a night club and have their daughter impersonate the princess. Unfortunately the real princess shows up on opening night causing all kinds of misadventures.

**Sometimes an article inspires criminals or would-be criminals to take action.**[[259]](#endnote-259)In *Below the Surface (1920),* newspaper headlines about raising a submarine to the surface saving the men aboard attract the attention of a shady promoter and he schemes to capitalize on it by using the diver in a publicity scheme to sell stock to suckers. In *Fools of Fortune* (1922), a man reads a newspaper story about a man who disappeared and is ignorant of his inheritance so the reader decides to represent himself as the long-lost family member. It turns out he is really the person he is impersonating. In *John Smith* (1922), a newspaper story about money left in a strong box causes a band of crooks to break into the drawing room during the night and steal the money, killing a servant in the process and throwing the blame on an ex-convict, John Smith. In *Bucking the Bucket Shop* (1924), a married couple, both swindlers, read in the newspaper of a wealthy young lumberman and they decide to con him out of some money. In *Seven Sinners,* newspaper stories reveal that the private police on Long Island have gone on strike. A variety of criminals including burglars and safecrackers read the story and then descend upon the exclusive colony. Most of the film deals with a series of mix-ups as various crooks arrive on the scene, many of them posing as legitimate citizens.

**Sometimes an article inspires detectives or police to take action.** In *An Awful Ball* (1921), a newspaper article on how police are trying to solve a large jewel robbery inspires a mail-order detective to investigate the case. In *The Gate Crasher* (1928), a mail-order detective reads in the newspaper that a Broadway star’s jewels have been stolen and he goes to New York to search for them. Earlier, he had been involved in an automobile accident with the actress and quickly fell in love with her. He eventually apprehends the thieves (the woman’s maid and her press agent are guilty), recovers the jewels and convinces the Broadway star that they were meant to be together. In *Bulldog Drummond* (1929), a detective uses *The* *London Times* to get cases. He advertises his services in the “agony column” of *The London Times* asking for adventure. He receives an avalanche of letters and picks the case featured in this film. **Sometimes the story involves prisons, fugitives from the law, ex-convicts and the accused.** In *The Last Card* (1921), a newspaper account of a murder brings a man home and he is arrested as the murderer even though he is innocent. In *Houp La!* (1928), a zoologist sees two men beating a third man and goes to his rescue. Next day he learns from a newspaper he has helped a gangster against a couple of men servants who had caught him making a getaway with the family jewels. Thinking he may be arrested for helping a fugitive, he joins a touring circus after making sure three lions who have escaped into a village go back into their cages.

**Often a newspaper will print a story that contains misleading or wrong information and that changes the course of the film’s plot. The most common plot twist involves a major accident in which everyone is reported killed, but a loved one(s) somehow survives or was never on the ship or train in the first place. The reporting of misinformation involving the death of a loved one is a key element in many silent film plots.**[[260]](#endnote-260) In *No Defense (1921),* newspaper accounts convince a woman that her husband has perished at sea so she remarries. But the husband is still alive. In *Big Happiness* (1920), a newspaper reports that a ship on which the hero is returning to his wife is sunk and all are said to be lost. But several weeks later, the husband returns to his shocked wife. In *The Vanishing Dagger: Episode 16: Beneath the Sea* (1920) a newspaper story about the sinking of a steamer includes a man in the list of fatalities who is really alive. In *Life’s Greatest Game* (1924), newspapers report that everyone is lost when the ocean liner Titanic crashes into an iceberg. Believing his wife and son are dead, a baseball pitcher continues to play, ending up as the manager of the New York Giants. But mother and son did survive and now his grown son, thinking his father deserted them, joins the Giants, recognizes his father and resolves to get even by deliberately losing a World Series game. But he can’t do it and ends up winning the deciding game against the Yankees and reunites his father with his ailing mother. In *Pals First* (1926), newspaper reports a young man is drowned at sea and a young tramp shows up who looks just like the missing master of the estate. It turns out he really is the man thought dead who has decided to expose the dishonesty of his cousin in this dramatic way. In *Love’s Penalty* (1921), a newsboy’s cry about a steamship going down with all aboard has serious repercussions.

In *East Lynne* (1921), a newspaper story tells a husband that his wife has been killed in a railroad accident. In *The Way of All Flesh* (1927), a newspaper story reports the death of a bank cashier, thus changing the man’s life forever. A husband and father of six children works as a bank cashier. He is sent to Chicago with some of the bank’s securities and during the train ride, he is vamped by a cheap female crook who takes him on a wild debauch and when he wakes up in a sordid transient hotel, he realizes that she has made off with the securities. He goes in search of her, and is attached by a thug who steals his valuables. As the two men struggle, the thug falls in front of a train and is killed. A few days later, August Schiller reads in the paper that the thug was identified as him and that Schiller is credited by the newspaper accounts as fighting valiantly against the bandit before falling to his death. Instead of disgracing his family, he decides to remain living in secret. Years later, he is completely down and out and hears that his son is now a famous violinist. On Christmas, he makes his way home and watches the family holiday feast through a widow. No one recognizes him as a derelict and he finally fades into the distance up the street during a blizzard.

In *After the Ball* (1924), newspapers report that a man is killed, but the man had exchanged clothes with a crook who is later shot and police think the “crook” is their man. He is arrested and sent to prison. He allows everyone, including his wife, to think he has died. Years later, he escapes prison and is reunited with his wife and child after the real culprit confesses. In *Drums of Fate* (1923), newspapers report that an engineer believed to have been killed in a clash with cannibals survived and is returning home. He finds out that his wife, thinking him dead, married someone else. When a servant shows the newspaper story to her present husband, who has been in ill health, the man dies of shock. In *The White Sister* (1923), Italian newspapers announce that everyone has been massacred in an African camp by Arabs including a man a woman loves, leading her to become a nun. But he was only taken prisoner and he escapes to meet his beloved. When he realizes she is a nun, he tries to persuade her to renounce her vows, but she rejects him, unable to leave the order. Later, the man dies helping the townspeople escape from an erupting Mt. Vesuvius.

**Other printed misinformation also has serious repercussions.**[[261]](#endnote-261)In *It* (1927), a newspaper reporter of the *Daily News-Dispatch* mistakenly writes a story depicting a shop girl as an unwed mother. The reporter is told by his editor: “Get that story.” So the reporter enters the apartment house and sees the shop girl telling the authorities that a child in the apartment is her child. What he doesn’t know is that the authorities had threatened to take away her sickly roommate’s baby and the shop girl did what she had to do protect her friend ‘s interests. The next day, the *Daily News-Dispatch* headline: “Girl Mother Battles Bitterly for Babe. Like Tigress at Bay, Routs Welfare Workers.” The repercussions from the article cause the shop girl all kinds of problems including being snubbed by her current boyfriend, the owner of the department store where she works, after he reads the article. In *Love, Honor and Obey* (1920), a newspaper story creates a false scandal about a writer in love with the daughter of a deacon. She believes the story and consents to marry someone else. In *Lone Larry* (1924, a reissue), an editor sends an office boy to get two photographs – a millionaire polo player who is injured and Lone Larry, a bandit who holds up trains. The sporting editor notices that the photos have been switched but the mail edition has been sent so there is nothing to do except to correct the mistake in the city issues. A sheriff, seeing the mail edition, decides to take action against the man he thinks is the bandit and the millionaire is almost lynched as a result of the blunder. In *The Girl from God’s Country* (1921), newspapers carry big stories on the discovery of solidified gasoline – but they give the credit to a fraud, and not the real inventor who swears revenge.

**Often newspaper stories in silent films confuse the reader by reporting cases of mistaken identity or someone posing as someone else.** In *The Lights of New York* (1922), a newspaper story reveals that a derelict guest at a dinner is really a man who was once a well-known Wall Street man before unrequited love ruined him. In *Broadway Daddies* (1929), a newspaper article in the society page reveals that a rich man is masquerading as a poor but ambitious fellow to win the love of a nightclub dancer. Now she knows the truth. Assuming he tricked her, she dates another suitor before returning to the rich man who it turns out she truly loves. In *the Wrestler* (1925), a man is mistaken for a champion wrestler because of altered captions in a newspaper. He has many adventures because of this but triumphs in the end.

**Sometimes the newspaper simply gets the story wrong for lack of information or inaccurate information.** In *Moonlight and Honeysuckle* (1921), newspapers in Washington print a story about an elopement that results in denials and confusion. In *Mulhall’s Great Catch* (1926), newspapers give all the credit to a policeman for rescuing two women from a big fire. The fireman who rescued them is in love with the same girl as the policeman, but his stock drops with the girl after the newspaper prints the wrong story. The fireman eventually captures two burglars and the girl decides in his favor.

**Occasionally, a newspaper will print an expose, an investigative story or an editorial in the public interest.** In *The Witching Hour* (1921), a newspaper story exposes a vengeful district attorney. In *Sinner or Saint* (1923), newspapers print an expose of an attractive young fortune-teller of dubious reputation exposed by a reformer. It ruins her business, but a series of events gives her a hopeful future. In *Trouble* (1922), a newspaper campaign is started to induce people to adopt orphan children.

**Newspaper headlines and title cards are often used in silent films to sum up major events of the time or to advance the plot and provide necessary exposition.**[[262]](#endnote-262)In *The Trail of ’98* (1928), newspaper headlines get everyone excited about gold in Alaska: “Big Gold Strike in Alaska.” Title card: “The news began to spread! Gold! Klondike! Gold! In a few minutes it had reached the famous Palace Hotel.” There and everywhere else, people read the newspaper stories: “Yukon River Conquered One Boat Each Year to Penetrate Klondike.” Because of all of this publicity, the gold fever hits San Francisco and then men all over the country pick up roots and head for Alaska. But the headline and stories don’t tell the whole story and the film documents what happens to those who gave up everything to search for gold in Alaska. In *Dynamite* (1929), a society girl sees a headline in the newspaper that gives her an idea on how she can fulfill the terms of her grandfather’s will: to be married immediately: “Murderer Offers Body and Brain for $10,000. Man About to Die Will Sell Remains to Science to Save Sister from Orphan Asylum. Derek to Hang Thursday.” The convict on death row agrees to be her husband for $10,000. But surprisingly the convict is exonerated. The society woman wants to marry the married man she really loves and wants to pay his wife for a divorce. When the man finds out, he says if she doesn’t rip up the check “buying” him from his wife, he will never see her again. She does that and the wife becomes furious, saying that she will expose her and ruin her life: “Look in next Sunday’s paper. ‘Prominent Society Girl Attempts to Buy Herself a New Husband.’” It turns out the socialite has to live with her “husband” to obtain her money so she goes to the mining town and lives the life of a miner’s wife. When a mine disaster takes place, the woman realizes she loves the miner and the life she is now leading.

In *Flight* (1929), newspaper headlines tell the world about the bonehead play a football player made on the field when after being hit, he turns around, runs the wrong way and scores a touchdown for the opposition. He becomes the laughing stock of the country. Even newsboys selling the newspapers laugh at him, shouting out the headlines, crying “Extra! Extra!”: “Bonehead Play Makes Football History.” “Phelps Runs Wrong Way – Loses Game.” The dejected player runs into a restroom where he meets a flier who looks at his picture in the newspapers and commiserates. He suggests that the Marine Flying Corps might be the place to get away from the public ridicule and shame. The player agrees and the rest of the film shows his adventures as a flyer. A radio sportscaster gives a play-by-play of Lefty’s infamous run. In *The Notorious Miss Lisle* (1920), a newspaper’s big headlines proclaiming a woman’s innocence causes her husband to beg her forgiveness for not believing her in the first place. In *Felix Turns the Tide* (1922), the cartoon cat reads in the newspaper, “Extra: War Declared!!! Rats Start War on Cats.” He shows the newspaper to his girlfriend and she promises to marry him when he returns from the war. In a similar cartoon five years later, *Felix the Cat Ducks His Duty* (1927), newspaper headlines are used to move the plot along: “Mice Declare War on Cats” and “All Cats Called to the Colors.” A newspaper article says “Married Men will be Exempt from Duty at the Front.” Felix the Cat deserts the army during a war under pretenses of marriage. When his new spouse turns out to be a tyrant, Felix decides he prefers the battlefield and joins the epic battle between cats and mice.

**The physical newspaper was used in many films to advance the plot.** In *Reno* (1923), newspaper clippings are used throughout the film as exposition and one critic was not happy about it: “The picture has been overburdened with subtitles and clippings from newspapers which tend to muddle the action instead of clarifying it.”[[263]](#endnote-263) *Heliotrope* (1920) offers “the genuine appearance of newspaper inserts.”[[264]](#endnote-264) In *Womanhandled* (1925), two bums sitting on a Central Park bench discuss the news of the day by reading a discarded newspaper they have picked up. In *Fig Leaves* (1926), a primitive morning paper consists of stone slabs with the latest news chiseled on it. A newsboy delivers the morning stone paper to Adam and Eve before Adam has to catch his morning commuter train (a cart with strap hangers pulled by a dinosaur). Eve reads about a bargain sale in fig leaves telling Adam “I’ve got nothing to wear.” Adam who is reading the sporting page, responds: “Ever since you ate that apple you’ve had the gimmies…first twin-beds and now it’s clothes.”

In *Mighty Like a Moose* (1926), newspapers are used throughout this comedy as major plot points. A newspaper is used when the married man and woman, who both have had plastic surgery to fix facial defects – the man whose buck teeth of a moose make him a laughingstock and the woman whose nose rivals a moose – don’t recognize each other while sitting in a shoeshine stand. Their photo taken at a party that was raided by prohibition men makes the front page of a newspaper. The man’s plastic surgery is featured in another newspaper story in “before” and “after” shots. In *10 Minutes* (1928), a prisoner sentenced to the electric chair has 10 minutes to live. The film begins with him in his death cell in the penitentiary reading a newspaper and talking about the World Series and other news of the day. His ramblings are finally interrupted by a couple of prison guards who remind him that he only has 10 minutes left to live and might want to put the newspaper down and get some spiritual guidance. He orders them out of his cell and begins a soliloquy on his past life, finally falling into prayer, ready to face his destiny. In *Me, Gangster* (1928), newspaper items reproduced for this early sound film are written as news items are actually written. Critics praised the realism of the newspaper stories. In *Red Kimono* (1926), a scene in a newspaper file room shows a daily newspaper volume dated 1927. A woman opens it to reveal a headline about the Gabrielle Darley case: “Gabrielle Darley Startling Human Document.” This true story is not unique, she explains, but it is occurring even now to hundreds of unfortunate girls. Darley was a former prostitute who had been charged with murder.

**The newspaper appeared in hundreds of films as a minor “character” in the plot.**[[265]](#endnote-265)

**Newsreels were also used to advance plots.**[[266]](#endnote-266) In *The Spirit of the U.S.A.* (1924), real action captured by newsreel cameramen is used in this dramatic film to give the film authenticity, in this case military action. It is an example of how real events integrated into dramatic films are extremely effective. In *The Enemies of Women,* newsreel war footage is smoothly integrated into the action that takes place from 1914 to 1918, giving the film a stamp of reality that could be obtained in no other way. In *Giddap!* (1925), two men show up with blackened eyes and after seeing a story of a rescue by an unknown hero in the newspaper, they each tell their wives that they are that hero and that is why each husband says he got the blackened eye. Members of their country club are shown the new issue of a motion picture newsreel depicting a raid by the Purity League with both men being thrown out in the fracas causing their black eyes. They are exposed and suffer the consequences. In *Luring Lips* (19210, a newsreel shown in prison includes moving pictures of a convict’s wife with the man who ruined him. When he is released, he goes to get revenge, but discovers his wife lured the villain to her home to prove he was the one who was guilty of her husband’s crime. *The Bellamy Trial* (1929) opens with an MGM Newsreel leading up to the courthouse and the start of the trial. After several short news clips (a shot of the West Point cadets, the Pacific Fleet) comes the fictional headline: “Metro News Gets First Pictures of Famous Murder Trial” and “Crowds Flock to Court-House” and the plot is underway.

**Newsreels and Documentaries often offer mini-documentaries of how newspapers and newsreels were created for the public**.[[267]](#endnote-267) “Getting out the news” shows every step in getting out a metropolitan newspaper from the time the reporter hammers out his copy until the paper is sold. The pictures were taken in the *New York Times* offices and press rooms (*Pathe Review No. 96,* 1921). In *Fox Varieties: White Paper* (1925), the evolution of a newspaper is shown – from a log starting at the streams where the logs are directed to the pulp mills through the manufacture of white paper to its final destination on the presses of one of the large metropolitan dailies. In *Urban Popular Classic: Newsprint Paper* (1923), a newspaper from “forest to newsboy” pictures the complete process of printing paper for newspapers in the United States (in 1923, there were more than 2,500 daily newspapers in the United States, which consumed 300,000 acres of wood pulp trees). In *Pathe Review No. 25,* 1926, “The Romance of News” shows how the Associated Press operates in its world-wide dissemination of news. The real-life methods employed in the gathering and distribution of news as done by the AP are shown, from the reception of a foreign bulletin to the writing of a head for the story and the appearance of the “extra” in the street. *Life’s Greatest Thrills* (1925) is a documentary by International Newsreel showing how a newsreel is put together – how the cameramen, editors, laboratory men and others put together these newspapers of the screen. Then a collection of thrilling moments in newsreel history follows.

## Depiction of Image of the Journalist and Newsrooms in Silent Films, 1920-1929

**Many journalists took a mostly dim view of the way silent movies treated their profession. They were annoyed at the way the newspaper world was portrayed on the screen.**[[268]](#endnote-268)In *Protection* (1929), one reviewer couldn’t believe the portrayals of newspapermen and women in the film: “These three – the editor and the two siblings – are like no newspaper people this humble scribbler has ever known. When a notorious gang leader is shot and killed in front of the *Register*’s office, the managing editor calmly ambles over to the cub reporter’s desk and tells the cub reporter to ‘take a bulletin for the final edition.’ When the boy and the girl decide to get out and get married, they go to the boss and ask for an hour off. When the boy and the girl have landed the big story exposing the city grafters the boy sits down with the girl over a chocolate soda. And then, when the tough gang leader comes into the office and tells the managing editor that he is going to kill him, the managing editor sketches a picture of a gallows on a scratch pad and this so unnerves the gangster that he breaks down and promises to tell all. In real life, this delegate, who used to think he was a newspaperman himself, never heard of such things. Some of the reporters in our shop have never heard of a chocolate soda. Others tell me that no managing editor in his right mind has ever given a reporter an hour off. Well, let’s not be a stickler for accuracy. An audience at the Fox Theater yesterday demonstrated a sustained interest in ‘Protection.’ We even overheard someone telling his neighbor that he’d like to be a newspaper man himself someday. ‘They must meet so many interesting people.’ Frankly, the picture bored us. There have been so many stories (mostly bad) about racketeers and clever newspaper reporters.”[[269]](#endnote-269)

In *A Front Page Story* (1922), the *Variety* reviewer calls the film “a pleasant warm weather tale of a newspaper and of its owner-editor,” then adds, “it is merely another film in that long succession of films which have tried to give newspaper work some degree of truthful presentation before the people – but like its predecessors, it has failed miserably. The fault with most of them is that they must introduce a love interest, the boss’s daughter and one of these screen variety of brilliant cubs to make the film stand up. They omit much of the real excitement and lose all the real atmosphere of the offices where copy paper ofttimes gets ankle deep around the city editor’s desk and where the old copy readers still maintain their individual spittoons.”[[270]](#endnote-270) Viewing *Racing Blood* (1926), the *Variety* reviewer felt “the newspaper section of the film is just as awful as are most newspaper sequences in most films. Specifically, one shot shows a sheet of copy paper with a story on it, the story having been written by a brand-new cub reporter. He not only wrote the story, but his own headlines as well and then the story is shown, typed with no spacing between lines. Even a movie managing editor should get sore at that.”[[271]](#endnote-271) In *Biff! Bang!! Bomb!!!* (1920), one reviewer wrote about the newspaper editor depicted in the film: “(the actor) is a capable performer but does not fit into the role of a newspaper editor. He neither dresses nor looks the part and in addition smokes a pipe. Editors smoke cigars as a rule.”[[272]](#endnote-272) In *The Soul of Man* (1921), the scenes in a newspaper office “as usual, are grotesque.”[[273]](#endnote-273) In *Find the Girl* (1920), one reviewer wrote, “The newspaper color, wherever it was obtained, is atrocious. The managing editor dashes around in a white vest, tearing his hair and ordering cub reporters about, while the city editor appears to be an absent member. On the white-vested gentleman’s desk is a large sign with “Editor” conspicuously printed on its face. The office boys are Chinese.”

In *Her Reputation* (1923)*,* while one newspaper reviewer wrote, “some of the shots of the newspaper local and press rooms are fine,”[[274]](#endnote-274) the *Variety* reviewer was more critical: “In the making of the picture the producers have shown an admirable disregard for newspaper methods, for they have based their whole theme on the assumption that any newspaper in the country can print anything it likes about anybody and get away with it. They forget that there are laws of libel and that nine-tenths of the papers in the world go to a great deal of trouble to verify any questionable story. Added to the intimate knowledge displayed of libel laws and their usage is a neat little error in another newspaper practice, for this film shows a Linotype operator setting type on a local yarn from proof. The scene of the composing room foreman bawling out a compositor for throwing away the type from which the proof was taken is omitted. And one more criticism as far as the newspaper office end of it goes: An editor’s desk is shown, a nice neat mahogany desk, with not a proof or a photo or pair of scissors anywhere in sight, while the editor has his coat on all the time.”[[275]](#endnote-275) In *My Lady’s Lips* (1925), the reviewer of *Exhibitors Herald* wrote; “An interesting crook drama with plenty of suspense. The only fault we found with this: why inject such inconceivable ideas? There isn’t a newspaper reporter living who would go through all the nonsense that is depicted in the film.”[[276]](#endnote-276) In *A Society Scandal,* a *Variety* reviewer said the director did very well with one exception: “He flopped badly on that one. This was the incidental business of a newspaper reporter. Working for one of the big dailies, the reporter rushes into the city room just before press time with a front-page story. The general public will never know the difference, but that reporter certainly wasted a lot of time by not grabbing a phone in the usual way of ‘leg-men’ on daily newspapers and phoning in his stuff to a re-write man.”[[277]](#endnote-277)

Viewing *A Man Must Live* (1925), Mordaunt Hall, the *New York Times* reviewer, was not happy with the portrayals of the journalists: “The blackguard of this story is a managing editor whose lack of knowledge of newspaper work appears only to be equaled by that of his heroic reporter.” Adding: “This editor, who appears to pay his staff out of his own pocket, gives (the reporter) one more chance, and he instructs the reporter to go and get a story from a dancer. ‘Don’t feel sorry for her,’ thunders the managing editor, ‘but tear her to pieces. Our readers don’t feel sorry for a jazz baby.’”[[278]](#endnote-278) The *Variety* reviewer complained, “Much importance is attached to the newspaper climax, something that has been done before. Perhaps too much detail mechanically prevents grinding presses from telling the real story of their apparently ceaseless grind. Things almost unfold themselves without little effort on the part of the camera to tell the story in action.”[[279]](#endnote-279) The *Motion Picture Magazine* reviewer, T.O. Service, added: The lead actor “must put the effect of reality into episodes themselves unreal and illogical. He does it. In no other way can I explain my liking for this picture in spite of the fact that it contains one of those fiction managing editors of a fiction newspaper. I’d say the picture was unnecessarily unfair to newspapers if it weren’t true that newspapers have been unnecessarily unfair to motion pictures in so many instances and for the same purpose. Lest I, too, be unfair, however, I should say that others who are less familiar with newspaper methods liked the picture as is, and, of course, newspaper people don’t pay theatre profits anyway.” Hall of the *New York Times* was not happy with the reporter in *Telling the World* (1928) either: “It is feared, he will never, never make a good reporter.”[[280]](#endnote-280) The *New York Daily News* critic implied that the reporter in the film was so bad he was good: “Screen reporters usually are such jaunty and wisecracking chaps that one grows a little suspicious of their lifelikeness toward the end of a long film. But that is not true in the case of Don Davis, the demon newshound interpreted by William Haines…If anything, he is so consistently unreal that he is convincing…”[[281]](#endnote-281) The *Motion Picture News* reviewer was also not a fan: “Such a freshie would be wisecracked to death in real newspaper circles…he appears as very cock-sure which makes him a terrible pest.”[[282]](#endnote-282)

**By the end of the decade, newspaper films were attaining a realism and a quality unequalled in cinema history. So when a film reverted to a newspaper yarn with a lot of gags but not much realism, the critics weren’t happy.** A *Variety* reviewer of *What a Night!* (1928) summed up the feeling: “Another newspaper yarn built around breezy atmosphere and a lot of gags. It’s not real, natural or particularly enthralling as a newspaper story….The heroine is pictured as a half-witted society gal not only bitten by the reporting bug but also possessed of the conventional poodle and a habit of dropping things for the weary hero to pick up.”[[283]](#endnote-283) The reviewer in *Motion Picture News* added: “The tale is somewhat of a travesty on newspaper life and will be far from pleasing to members of the trade. One seldom sees a wealthy girl in the role of a reporter traipsing a pet poodle along to the office with her and tieing it to her desk. However, the story was not made for the newspapers and movie patrons might be able to overlook some of these ridiculous touches.”[[284]](#endnote-284)

**More often than expected, however, the movies got it right.**[[285]](#endnote-285)*The Racket* (1928) is an adaptation of a stage play by a Chicago newspaperman and one reviewer was impressed, praising its authenticity when it came to dealing with the press that covers the police: “Motion picture directors have been taken to task time and again by their public for poor selection of ‘types’ for character with whom the man on the street believes he is more or less familiar. Almost anyone connected with a newspaper will tell you reporters are miscast more often than any other character. Seldom are they true to life. They do not look or act like reporters do and are as unrealistic as some of the movie stories in which they are placed. A single exception is seen in ‘The Racket,’ which is being shown at the Tampa theater. There are three reporters in this crook picture who act their jobs. Although one of them, who works his police beat in an alcoholic daze, is the rare exception more than the rule, his type is not entirely foreign to some news offices. Another reporter is of the hustling type. And then there is the cub, fresh from a month’s duty on the Omaha News-Bee. In some scenes the news hounds are a bit too aggressive to fit into real life, but all in all, the parts are handled well enough to satisfy the most critical.”[[286]](#endnote-286)

In *Flowing Gold* (1924), a demon reporter wrangles an interview with a soldier of fortune who drifts to the Texas oil fields and becomes rich. A reviewer noted, “For once in the history of motion pictures, a reporter will appear without notebook or pencil. Not only that, with true metropolitan methods, (the reporter) carries a press photographer with him, and still with an eye to realism,” the director hired a real photographer “who happened to be in Los Angeles on assignment to enact the part of the camera man.”[[287]](#endnote-287) In *Living Lies* (1922), a reviewer said the film “will be admired even by those intimately acquainted with newspaper life.”[[288]](#endnote-288) One writer, in reviewing *The Woman’s Side* (1922), said “the newspaper stuff is exceptionally well done and every detail of getting out a big morning paper are shown.”[[289]](#endnote-289)

In the film *What’s Your Hurry* (1920), one writer, Giebler, in his column, “Rubbernecking in Filmland” went on the set and reported, “The set was the most realist thing I ever saw. There was the curved desk of the city editor; the clothes horse file for copies of ‘our leading contemporaries’; the tall brass cuspidor that is regarded as more of an ornament than a receptacle in the average ‘City’ room; the copy table, the mustard jar paste pots, the green eye-shade of some poor devil of a rewrite man who had stepped over to Mike’s Place for a little something to make the night seem less long and the stuff that came to his hand seem less stale….There were no actors in the set until Art Reeves and I got there and then I’m afraid we both acted up a little. It was like a couple of old fire horses smelling smoke. We stirred up the paste pots – the stuff was sour, but was sweet as violets to us. I put the eye-shade on and read some proof, and Art sat down at the city editor’s desk and looked tired, like all city editors look. ‘I’m sorry you couldn’t see the actors at work,’ (the director) said. “I’m glad I cannot,’ I said, ‘actors would spoil it all.’ ‘Not these actors,’ said Art. ‘Sam Wood is directing the stuff and Sam’s got gumption. The city editor part is done by William H. Brown. He’s a good city editor type. The reporters are all real; they do not rush here and there and throw papers around like confetti, or march up to the city editor’s desk and salute, as they do in most movies.’[[290]](#endnote-290) A publicity handout pointed out that editors at a state convention of newspaper editors of Kansas at Topeka “voted it to be the most realistic newspaper story ever screen.”[[291]](#endnote-291)

**Trying to be as authentic as possible, some directors shot newspaper sequences in real newspaper plants, which gave their films a realistic look at where newspapermen and women actually get out the paper.**[[292]](#endnote-292)In *What No Man Knows* (1921), the newsroom shots were filmed in the plant of the *Los Angeles Examiner.* In *Headlines* (1925), permission was obtained to stage the newspaper scenes “in the editorial rooms of the *New York World* located in the World building on New York’s famous newspaper street, Park Row.[[293]](#endnote-293) As the editorial rooms are on the twelfth floor, the transportation of lights and cables entailed quite a task and particularly so since electric power had to be secured from the pressroom in the basement of the building.”[[294]](#endnote-294) *Deadline at Eleven* (1920) was written by a newspaper woman who created a fictionalized newspaper, the *Planet,* but the writer had in mind the *New York Sun* before it absorbed the *Herald* and many of the scenes of the editorial offices were taken in the old *Sun* offices.

*The Last Edition* (1925) was shot on location in 1925 at the *San Francisco Chronicle’s* press plant. In addition to the professional cast, the director featured many of the *Chronicle’s* actual employees as extras. *The Last Edition* becomes a valuable document of working practices of the time. The *Variety* reviewer had some problems with the film: “The boy is framed by the villains and thrown into jail. Immediately the paper gets a flash on the yawn, the time being about 5 a.m. But the city room men were still working and by the time the yarn hit the composing room, a full union force was there also, which must indicate one of two things – that the Frisco ‘Chronicle’ is a very wealthy paper to stand such an expense or (the director’s knowledge of film) is much greater than his knowledge of newspaper work. However, when the yarn gets to the press room, the assistant foreman sees that his boy is implicated and he goes mad, threatening to stop the presses.” He rushes up “to the publisher’s office, and even at that early hour, the boss is still in. Asking that the story be killed, he is refused. …From a newspaperman’s standpoint, the whole thing is dotted with silly errors….At the Cameo Sunday afternoon there were some folks present who apparently knew their newspaper business and whenever the reporter got very brave or whenever the title writer pulled a particularly maudlin title, they would applaud vigorously. Apparently someone in authority knew something about the newspaper business too, for he called out to an usher: ‘Go down there and ask those people to stop kidding this picture.” [[295]](#endnote-295)The *Motion Picture News* reviewer didn’t agree, saying the film was “one of the best newspaper stories ever placed in screen form and well as the most correct in detail.”[[296]](#endnote-296) And *Photoplay* was just as enthusiastic: “All the ‘inside dope’ is shown – from the telephone calls of the reporters to the actual distribution of the papers in the streets.”[[297]](#endnote-297) Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times* reviewer, called the film “quite an interesting document that gives an unusually clear idea of the thought and action involved in bringing out a newspaper. The work in the different departments, such as the city room, the composing room and the pressroom, are exceptionally well filmed, and the scenes depicting the ‘making over’ for an extra edition are decidedly impressive. The ‘story’ is traced from the telephone to the city editor, to the composing room and subsequently to the presses. These interior scenes were pictured in the plant of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the newspaper in this piece of fiction therefore bears the same name, although the publisher and others are fictional characters.”[[298]](#endnote-298)

In *Man, Woman and Sin* (1927), a newspaper reviewer commented, “Details of the publishing of a newspaper are shown so graphically that the audience is literally taken into the ‘inside’ of newspaper work. The local room, the work of reporters and copy readers, the setting of type, operation of presses and distribution of the papers are all shown. The press of a real newspaper was used and the composing room, the local room and the mailing room were constructed at the studios. With the backing of city editors of Los Angeles dailies, real reporters were detailed to act such roles in the picture, and a crew of professionals peopled the mailing room.”[[299]](#endnote-299) And another newspaper reviewer agreed, “The picture gives an intimate glimpse of that fascinating region whence issues the news of the world. The bustle of the city room, the clicking of the Linotype machines and the roaring of the presses provide a background for a romance….”[[300]](#endnote-300)

In *The Office Scandal* (1929), critics praised the authenticity of the newspaper world displayed: “In all my years have I seen a newspaper office as faithfully reproduced…(the director) just made the rounds of the local dailies himself and made notes.”[[301]](#endnote-301) An advertisement proclaimed that the film was the “Greatest Newspaper Story ever Screened” and quoted reviewers’s “song of praise.” *The Motion Picture News* reviewer agreed, “That description ‘greatest newspaper story screened’ in the subhead above takes in a lot of territory, but it goes, doubled or redoubled. After seeing it, one admits not only that much, but adds further it’s the best picture Pathe has made this year – and that bunch in Culver City have turned out a flock of films which no one would hide his head over…There is no hokum about a cub reporter beating the star man to a big story. There’s no false atmosphere which any newspaperman or critic in the country can get sarcastic over. It’s the most natural city room action I’ve seen outside a daily office. There are neither any forced ‘production value’ scenes nor gang fights for the purpose of adding to the overhead. It’s simply a fine story remarkably well told.”[[302]](#endnote-302)

# Conclusion

# By the time the silent film era ended with the explosion of sound, the journalist was an integral part of movie history. Although audiences were familiar with the sights of a newspaper office and the people in it, now they could actually *hear* rather than imagine how the newsroom actually sounded. The fast-speaking reporters and editors spewed out rapid-fire dialogue that was witty, funny, clever, and revealing. The roar of the presses, editors shouting out instructions, reporters complaining aloud, the battles of the sexes, newsboys shouting out “Extra” – all of this was explained in title cards in silent films, but nothing matched actually hearing the sounds and dialogue of an all-talking or partial-talking movie. *Big News* (1929) was a revelation to most audiences – the shouting match between reporter and editor transfixed an audience brought up on silent films. By the time the Broadway sensation, the seminal newspaper play *The Front Page,* was made into a film in 1931, audiences were used to listening as well as watching films at the cinema. And when it came to the newspaper film, they had to pay close attention because no dialogue in motion picture history moved faster than that spoken by newshounds and editors trying to get the news out to the public before their competition did.

# Nothing grabbed the imagination of the audience as much as the sound newsreel. Listening to the familiar voice of radio broadcaster Graham MacNee narrate the newsreel pictures they were used to seeing without sound and hearing sound effects for the first time thrilled silent film audiences and the demand for sound newsreels took over the nation. They were so popular that theaters popped up that specialized in only showing newsreels. To be able to not only see but also hear the news from around the world was thrilling to audiences who were used to silent pictures and radio reports. Seeing them together ushered in a new world of news and information and created the modern news media that would blossom in the age of television.

# The future for more research in this field is unlimited. Analyzing the image of the journalist in silent film resulted in coding and organizing nearly 3,500 films in which journalism played a role. It would be fascinating to see academic papers on how the role of the telephone by newspapers in the early years of the 20th century compares to the role of the use of the cell phone in 21st century newsgathering. Another area ripe for study would be how audiences perceived newspapers in silent films compared with how audiences today perceive the modern news media seen in films and television programs. Specific types of journalists were popular images in the silent film era and deserve studies of their own. A few examples are the images of the advice-to-the-lovelorn and the gossip columnists, the history of cub reporters in film and television, a comparison of female journalists in silent films with female journalists of today, and pack journalists in silent films compared to pack journalists in today’s popular culture.

# The image of the journalist in silent film is remarkable in its complexity of character, in its reproduction of the way news was gathered and published in the early years of the century, in its capturing the spirit and excitement of the newsroom. Silent images of reporters doing anything to get a story, of female reporters fighting all odds to make it in a white male-dominated city room, of editors working to keep drunken reporters on track and to get that story doing whatever it takes, of publishers and newspaper owners using the power of the press for their own gain, of cub reporters idolizing veteran reporters and daydreaming about becoming one of them, of newsboys illustrating the overwhelming poverty and disregard for children prevalent during that era convinced generations of young men and women that being a reporter was the most exciting job in the world. They showed in documentary detail how the news got from a reporter’s typewriter to the newsboy screaming the headlines on the street and the family reading the daily newspaper at home from front page to last page. They persuasively taught generations of immigrants what America – both the ideal and the reality -- was all about and how newspapers, magazines, and eventually radio were an effective way of learning about their new country and the way it worked. They showed them worlds and people far removed from their daily life through newsreels shot by brave men and women around the world who often risked their lives to record international human-made and natural disasters. They showed the average citizen the toll gathering news day in and day had on the members of the news profession who often sacrificed their personal lives in pursuit of the next story.

# Most of all, silent films about journalism taught Americans the value of a free and open press as well as the dangers of an unethical, controlled and biased news media They showed in dramatic fashion what happens when corrupt individuals and businesses control the press for their own personal, economic and political interests as well as reporters and editors doing whatever it takes to serve the public interest. And they made many Americans look upon newspapers and newsreels as a miracle of daily life, a package of newsprint and celluloid that gave them the news and information, entertainment and advice, opinion and ideas that enabled them to make educated decisions on everything from buying a product to voting in an election. The silent film era captured all of this and dramatically prepared the audience for a sound explosion that would make the world of journalism come alive in ways only the imagination could conjure up in the early years of the 20th century.

# Endnotes

1. Appendices in Part One (1890-1919) contain 4,523 pages: Appendix One (1890-1909), 194 pages; Appendix Two (1910), 83 pages; Appendix Three (1911), 92 pages; Appendix Four (1912),179 pages; Appendix Five (1913), 280 pages; Appendix Six (1914), 617 pages; Appendix Seven (1915), 771 pages; Appendix Eight (1916), 788 pages; Appendix Nine (1917), 764 pages; Appendix Ten (1918), 471 pages; Appendix Eleven (1919), 478 pages. Part Two (1920-1929) contains 6,418 pages: Appendix Twelve (1920), 753 pages; Appendix Thirteen (1921), 702 pages; Appendix Fourteen (1922), 789 pages; Appendix Fifteen (1923), 689 pages; Appendix Sixteen (1924), 538 pages; Appendix Seventeen (1925), 605 pages; Appendix Eighteen (1926), 573 pages; Appendix Nineteen (1927), 573 pages; Appendix Twenty (1928), 620 pages; Appendix Twenty-One (1929), 576 pages. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. *Variety*, the best known and most important trade paper in the history of American entertainment, 1905-1929, available from the Library of Congress, most libraries and the Media History Digital Library online edition. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. *The New York Times* Film Reviews, 1907-1929, available online by titles. [www.nytimes.com.](http://www.nytimes.com/) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *Motion Picture News* (1913-1929), available from Media History Digital Library, Early Cinema Collection, [*http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/earlycinema/index.html*](http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/earlycinema/index.html) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. *The Moving Picture World,* available from Media History Digital Library, Early Cinema Collection, [*http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/earlycinema/index.html*](http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/earlycinema/index.html) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. *Exhibitor’s Herald* (1917-1927, available from Media History Digital Library, Early Cinema Collection, [*http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/earlycinema/index.html*](http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/earlycinema/index.html)*..* From 1928 to 1929, the *Exhibitor’s Herald-World* is available in scattered years on the Internet. Not all issues are available. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. *Wid’s Daily* (1918-1921), then became *Film Daily* (1922-1929) and is available in complete editions on the Internet by year. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. *Billboard* (1894-1921), available from Media History Digital Library, Early Cinema Collection, [*http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/earlycinema/index.html*](http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/earlycinema/index.html) [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. *Photoplay* (1914-1963), available from Media History Digital Library, Fan Magazines Collections, <http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/fanmagazines/index.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. *Picture-Play* Magazine (1915-1936) available from Media History Digital Library, Fan Magazines Collections, <http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/fanmagazines/index.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. *Screenland* (1920-1940), available from Media History Digital Library, Fan Magazines Collections, <http://vsrv01.mediahistoryproject.org/fanmagazines/index.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. More than 12,100 newspapers from the 1700s-2000s are available on the largest online newspaper archive, Newspapers.com (<https://www.newspapers.com/>). Millions of additional pages are added every month. You can search by city, date and topic. More than 60 newspapers were used in the appendices for reference. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) is an online database of information related to films, television programs and video games, including cast, production crew, fictional characters, biographies, plot summaries, trivia, and reviews. By November, 2019, IMDb had almost six million titles in its database. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. The AFI Catalog of Feature films is the most authoritative filmographic database on the web. It includes entries on nearly 60,000 American feature-length films and 17,000 short films produced from 1893-2011. Director Martin Scorsese wrote, “No other source of information is as complete and accurate, and no other source is produced with the scrupulous level of attention to scholarship and research as the AFI catalog.” The AFI catalog “is a unique filmographic resource providing an unmatched level of comprehensiveness and detail on every feature-length film produced in America or financed by American production companies. Detailed information on cast, crew, plot summaries, subjects, genres and historical notes are included for each film.” No page numbers are referenced since the catalog can easily be referenced by searching a specific title. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. The Online IJPC Database includes more than 92,000 entries (2019) including almost 22,000 film titles. In addition, various online databases and Web sites, including the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), and Richard R. Ness’s definitive journalism filmography (*From Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography*) were searched for verification and new possibilities. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Among the silent film sites of some value is *Silent Hall of Fame* (silent-hall-of-fame.org), which offers movie reviews and silent film videos. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Richard R. Ness, professor at Western Illinois University, is the chief film consultant-researcher and associate director of the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture, a project of the Norman Lear Center, USC Annenberg. An updated edition of his classic filmography will be published in 2020. His book is the definitive resource for films featuring the journalist. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Howard Good, x *Outcasts: Acquainted with the Night: The Image of the Journalist in American Fiction, 1890-1930* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986); *Outcasts: The Image of the Journalist in Contemporary Film* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989); *Girl Reporter: Gender, Journalism and the Movies* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1998) and *The Drunken Journalist: The Biography of a Film Stereotype* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Joe Saltzman, *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film* (Los Angeles. CA: The Norman Lear Center, University of Southern California, 2002); Matthew C. Ehrlich and Joe Saltzman *Heroes and Scoundrels: The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Larry Langman, *The Silent Era: Biographies and Indexes in the Performing Arts, Number 22* (West Point, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1998); *A Guide to Silent Westerns: Biographies and Indexes in the Performing Arts, Number 13* (West Point, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1992); Larry Langman and Daniel Finn, *A Guide to American Silent Crime Films: Biographies and Indexes in the Performing Arts, Number 15* (West Point, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence, Sex, Violence, Prejudice, Crime: Films of Social Conscience in the Silent Era* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968); *The Parade’s Gone By* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968); *The War, the West and the Wilderness* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979). [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture Through 1925* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1926). [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Raymond William Stedman, *The Serials: Suspense and Drama by Installment* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971, 1977). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Michael Slade Shull, *Radicalism in American Silent Films, 1909-1929: A Filmography and History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. *Early Sound Film and Multiple Language Versions,* Film Reference <http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Criticism-Ideology/Dubbing-and-Subtitling-EARLY-SOUND-FILM-> AND-MULTIPLE-LANGUAGE-VERSIONS.html early cinema report. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. A September 2013 report by the United States Library of Congress reported that a total of 70 percent of American silent feature films are believed to be lost. (*Library Reports on America’s Endangered Silent Film Heritage,* Library of Congress, December 4, 2013). There is no single number for existing American silent era feature films, as the surviving copies vary in format and completeness. Some are originals, others are foreign release versions, and some are incomplete. The remaining 70 percent are believed to be lost. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. An early variation of this template was first used in a paper “Fact or Fiction: Hollywood Looks at the News” by Loren Ghiglione and Joe Saltzman, curators of “Hollywood Looks at the News: The Image of the Journalist in Film and Television” exhibit at the Newseum, Washington DC, 2005 and in “Analyzing the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture: A Unique Method of Studying the Public’s Perception of Its Journalists and the News Media,” by Saltzman in a series of papers delivered at the “Media History and History in the Media” conference at the University of Wales, 2005, and at the Association for Education for Journalism and Mass Communications (AEJMC) in San Antonio, Texas, 2005. It has continually been redefined and improved for various IJPC studies, including this one. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. The tables, percentages and graphs were compiled by Tajwar Khandaker, a USC undergraduate student and IJPC Manager, 2019-2020, who also was one of many who checked the coding for accuracy and helped resolve any differences of opinion and preference. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Many genre designations could include multiple designations. The first genre listed in the American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films and the Internet Movie Database is usually used for continuity purposes. When the IMDb fails to offer a genre, other sources were used to form a consensus. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. For a complete discussion of each film including reviews, pictures and casts, please check the appendix for each year that is included in this research project. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Films featuring male reporters from 1920-1929 include *Accidental Accidents* (1924), *The Acquittal* (1923), *Always Audacious* (1920), *The Amateur Detective* (1925), *The Amazing Partnership* (1921), *Anna Descends* (1922), *L’Argent (aka Money)* (1928-1929), *Atta Boy* (1926), *The Average Woman* (1924), *The Aviator* (1929), *Bellamy Trial* (1929), *Belphegor (*1927), *Big News* (1929), *The Big Shot* (1929), *Black Waters* (1929), *Blind Alleys* (1927), *A Blind Bargain* (1922), *The Blue Mountains Mystery* (1922), *La Boheme* (1926), *The Bowery Cinderella* (1927), *The Breaking Point* (1924), *Broken Barriers* (1928), *Broken Hearts of Broadway* (1923), *Café X* (1928), *The Capitol* (1920), *Catch as Catch Can* (1927), *Celebrity* (1928), *Chained* *(aka Michael)* (1927), *Chains of Evidence* (1920), *Champion of Lost Causes* (1925), *Chinatown Nights (aka Tong War)* 1929, *The Chink* (1921), *Chicago* (1927-1928), *Circus Rookie* (1928), *The City That Never Sleeps* (1924), *Clever Cubs* (1920), *The Clue of the New Pin* (1929), *The Coast of Folly* (1925), *Coshocton’s Hero* (1927), *The College Boob* (1926), *Contraband* (1925), *Copy* (1929), *Cracked Wedding Bells* (1923), *Crooks Can’t Wait* (1928), *Cupid and the Clock* (1927), *Dandy Lions* (1921), *Dangerous Dude* (1926), *The Day of Faith* (1923), *Deadline at Eleven* (1920), *Deliverance* (1928), *Democracy – The Vision Restored* (1920), *Der Trufelsreporter (The Daredevil Reporter)* (1929), *The Desperate Hero* (1920), *The Devil’s Pass Key* (1920), *Dicky Monteith* (1922), *Dobry vojak Svejk (aka the Good Soldier Schweik)* (1926), *Dollar Down* (1925), *Double Adventure* (1921), *Duty’s Reward* (1927), *Eleven P.M.* (1928), *The Exalted Flapper* (1929), *Dynamite Smith* (1924), *Everybody’s Acting* (1926), *Extra! Extra!* (1922), *The Family Closet* (1921), *The Fatal 30* (1921), *The Fear Market* (1920), *Feel My Pulse* (1928), *Fighting Hearts* (1926), *The Fighting Marine* (1926), *The Final Extra* (1927), *Find the Girl* (1920), *Fine Feathers* (1921), *The Fighting Cub* (1925), *The Flaming Crisis* (1924), *The Flash* (1923), *Flirting With Love (aka Temperament)* (1924), *Flowing Gold* (1924), *A Fool and His Money* (1925), *For Sale* (1924), *Fox Movietone Interview with Julius Rosenwald* (1929), *Fox Movietone Interview with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (1929),*Fox Movietone News No. 2* (1927), *Fox Movietone News, No. 26, 34, 37, 39* (1929), *Fox News No. 84* (1923), *Fox News No. 104* (1925), *Fox News No. 16* (1926), *Flying Pat* (1920), *The Game Hunter* (1924), *Gang War* (1928),*Das Geheimnis der Sant Margherita (aka The Secret of Santana Magarita)* (1921), *Get Rich-Quick Wallingford* (1921), *Gentlemen of the Press* (1929), *Gimme Strength* (1926*), Ginsburg the Great* (1927), *The Girl from Gay Paree* (1927), *The Girl in the Glass Cage* (1929), *Glad Rags Doll Trailer* l (1929), *Go and Get It* (1920), *The Gold Rush* (1925), *The Golden Cocoon* (1925-1926), *The Goldfish* (1924), *The Goose Woman* (1925), *The Gorilla* (1927), *The Greatest Menace* (1923), *The Green Archer* (1925-1926), *The Guilty One* (1924), *Harold Highbrow: Her Haunted Heritage* (1928), *Harold Highbrow: Hot Stuff* (1927), *Harold Highbrow: Mistakes Will Happen* (1928), *Harold Highbrow: Money, Money, Money!* (1928), *Harold Highbrow: Monkey Shines* (1927), *Harold Highbrow: A Rattling Good Time* (1927), *Harold Highbrow: Scrambled Honeymoon* (1927), *Harold Highbrow: So This is Sapp Center?* (1928), *Harold Highbrow: Social Lions* (1928), *Harold Highbrow: Special Edition* (1928), *Harold Highbrow: The Trackless Trolley* (1928), *Harold Highbrow: Tricky Trickster* (1928), *Haunted Valley* (1923), *Have a Heart* (1928), *The Heart of Twenty* (1920), *Her Big Night* (1926), *Her Reputation* (1923), *Her Wild Oat* (1927), *Heroes of the Street* (1922),*The Hidden Menace* (1925), *High Stoppers* (1926), *High Treason* (1929), *The Hill Park Mystery* (1923), *Hold Your Breath* (1924), *The Hole in the Wall* (1921), *The Hole in the Wall* (1929), *The Hollywood Reporter* (1926), *The House of Horror* (1929), *House of the Tolling Bell* (1920), *Hugh O’Connell: Dead or Alive* (1929), *Hugh O’Connell: The Familiar Face* (1929), *Hugh O’Connell: The Interview* (1929), *The Humming Bird* (1924), *Husbands for Rent* (1927), *Hutch of the U.S.A.* (1924), *The Imposter* (1926), *In The Headlines* (1929), *It Can Be Done* (1929), *Interference* (1928), *International News No. 8* (1921), *International News No. 44* (1923), *The Iron Man* (1924), *It* (1927), *It Can Be Done* (1921), *The Jazz Girl* (1926), *Jazzmania* (1923), *Jollywood* (1923), *The Joyous Troublemaker* (1920), *The Kentuckians* (1921), *The Keyhole Reporter* (1920), *Kinograms No. 2315, 2316, 2317, 2325, 2327, 2328, 2331* (1924), *Legally Dead* (1923), *The Lodger: A Story of London Fog (aka The Case of Jonathan Drew)* (1927), *Oh, Lady, Lady!* (1920), *The Last Edition* (1925), *Laughing Lady* (1929), *Lavendar and Old Lace* (1921), *Legion of the Command* (1928), *Legend of Hollywood* (1924), *Let ‘Er Go Gallegher* (1928), *Lightning Speed* (1928), *Little Annie Ronney* (1925), *A Little Girl in a Big City* (1925), *Lola Montez* (1922), *The Lost World* (1925), *Love in the Dark* (1922), *Love’s Masquerade* (1922), *Living Lies* (1922), *Lure of the Orient* (1921), *Mammy* Trailer (1929-1930), *A Man Must Live* (1925), *Man Rustlin’* (1926), *Man, Woman and Sin* (1927), *Mannequin* (1926), *Marching On* (1928), *Marriage by Contract* (1928), *Masquerade* (1929), *The Masquerader* (1922), *McCall Colour Fashion News* (1928), *Me, Gangster* (1928), *MGM News No. 20* (1927), *Minnie* (1922), *The Misleading Lady* (1920), *Miss Mend (aka The Adventures of the Three Reporters)* (1926), *The Mistress of the World* (1922), *Monte Carlo* (1926), *Moulders of Men* (1927), *Movie Chats* (1922), *My Lady’s Lips* (1925), *Ned of the News* (1921-1922-1923), *Never the Twain Shall Meet* 1925), *The Nervous Reporter* (1924), *The New Babylon* (1929), *The Night Bride* (1927), *No Woman Knows* (1921), *Nobody’s Money* (1923), *Not for Publication* (1927), *A Noise in Newboro* (1923), *North Star* (1925), *The Office Scandal* (1929), *The Old Fool* (1923), *Old Man in the , , Corner #3: The Brighton Mystery* (1924), *The Old War Horse* (1926), *On the Front Page* (1926), *Out With the Tide (aka Silent Evidence* (1928), *Paramount News No. 46* (1929), *Partners in Crime* (1928), *The Part Time Wife* (1925), *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1921), *Pathe Audio Review No. 2, 12* (1929), *Pathe News No. 56* (1925), *Pathe News No. 86, 88* (1927), *Pathe Review No. , 146* (1922), *Pathe Review No. 147* (1922), *Pathe Review No. 4* (1923), *Pathe Review No. 26* (1924), *Pathe Review No. 23, 48* (1925), *Pathe Review No. 9* (1929), *Pathe Sound News RCA Photophone* (1929), *Pathe Sound News: Interview with Admiral Hilary Jones* (1929), *Pathe Sound News No. 7, 15* (1929), *Payment Guaranteed* (1921), *Peggy of the Secret Service* (1925), *The Pencil Pusher* (1923), *The Perfect Flapper* (1924), *Pirates of the Sky* (1926), *Police Reporter* (1928), *A Poor Relation* (1921), *Power of the Press* (1928), *The Princess of New York* (1921), *Protection* (1929), *Queen of the Night Clubs* (1929), *The Racket* (1928), *Red Russia Revisited* (1923), *A Rogue in Love* (1922), *Roped In* (1927), *Rouletabille Among the Gypsies* (1922), *Runaway Girls* (1928), *The Savage* (1926), *The Scarlet Streak* (1925-1926, *The Secrets of the Hills* (1921), *A Self-Made Man* (1922), *Selznick Newsreel Edition* (1922), *Serpentin reporter* (1920), *Shadows of the Night* (1928), *The Shady Lady* (1928-1929), *Sheltered Daughters* (1921), *Short and Sweet* (1921), *Show Girl* (1928), *The Sign on the Door* (1921), *The Silent Watcher* (1924), *Sinners Parade* (1928), *The Siren* (1927), *So Long Sultan* (1923), *South of Panama* (1928), *South Sea Bubble* (1928), *Speakeasy* (1929), *Squibs Wins the Calcutta Sweep* (1922), *The Star Reporter* (1921), *Star Reporter* (1927), *Stephen Steps Out* (1923), *The Studio Murder Mystery* (1929), *Sunshine Harbor* (1922), *Sunless Sunday* (1921), *The Supreme Passion* (1921), *Sympathy* (1929), *That Royle Girl* (1925), *The Third Eye* (1920), *Thru Different Eyes* (1929), *Thundering Landlords* (1925), *The Tin Ghost* (1926), *Tip O’Neill: Getting ‘Em Right* (1925), *Tip O’Neill: Midnight Secrets* (1924), *Tip O’Neill: The Pell Street Mystery* (1924), *Tip O’Neill: Quick Change* (1925), *Tip O’Neill: The Right Man* (1925), *Tip O’Neill: Rough Stuff* (1925), *Todd of the Times* (1922 reissue), *Trent’s Last Case* (1920), *Trent’s Last Case* (1929), *The Trespasser* (1929), *Trickery* (1922), *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge* (1920), *Universal Newsreel No. 1 – Graham McNamee* (1929), *The Vagabond Lover* (1929), *Venus of Venice* (1927), *The Verdict* (1922), *The Way of All Flesh* (1927), *West Point* (1928), *What a Night* (1928), *What an Eye* (1924), *What Happened to Rosa?* (1920), *What Love Will Do* (1923), *Where am I?* (1923), *While the City Sleeps* (1928), *Whispers* (1920), *The White Sister* (1923), *The Wild Party* (1923), *The Wizard* (1927), *Why Men Forget* (1921), *A Woman Against the* *World* (1928), *Woman of Affairs* (1928), *Woman Trap* (1929). [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. For a complete discussion of the Male Reporter’s image in silent film, see Part One, 1890-1919) for details.[*http://ijpc.uscannenberg.org/journal/index.php/ijpcjournal/issue/current*](http://ijpc.uscannenberg.org/journal/index.php/ijpcjournal/issue/current) [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. The concept of stereotype is very broad; it encompasses the beliefs, knowledge, and expectations about social groups (Macrae et al.). Some researchers argue that the public would reject a stereotype without a kernel of truth (Banaji). Research is divided on whether there must be a kernel of truth in stereotypes (Brigham); quantitative research confirms that stereotypes are rarely accurate representations (McCauley and Stitt). Others contend that stereotypes are self-fulfilling prophecies (Jones). See C.N. Macrae, C. Stangor., and M. Hewstone, eds., *Stereotypes and Stereotyping* (New York: Gulford Press, 1966). M.R. Banaji, “Social Psychology of Stereotypes,” in N.J. Smelser and P.B. Baltes, eds., *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001), pp. 15100-15104. J.C. Brigham, “Ethnic Stereotypes,” *Psychological Bulletin,* Vol. 76, No. 1, (1971), pp. 15-38. C. McCauley and C.L. Stitt,“An Individual and Quantitative Measure of Stereotypes,” *Journal of Personality and Social Pscyhology,* Vol. 36, No. 9 (1978), pp. 929-40. R. Jones, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Social, Psychological and Physiological Effects of Expectancies* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978). These references are quoted in Frances Miley Andrew Read, “Jokes in Popular Culture: The Characterization of the Accountant,” *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal,* Vol. 25, Issue 4 (2012), pp. 703-718. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09513571211225105,](http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09513571211225105)

    [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. *The Front Page* started out as a Broadway comedy about tabloid newspaper reporters on the police beat. It was written by former Chicago reporters Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur starring Lee Tracy as reporter Hildy Johnson and Osgood Perkins as Editor Walter Burns. It became a stage hit in 1928 and its first of many film versions was made in 1931with Pat O’Brien as Hildy and Adolphe Menjou as Burns. In 1940, it was remade as *His Girl Friday* in which the star reporter, Hildy Johnson, is female and played by Rosalind Russell and the editor was Walter Burns played by Cary Grant. In 1949, after several successful radio broadcasts, it became a CBS TV series with John Daly and Mark Roberts. In 1974, director Billy Wilder remade the original with Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau. In 1988, *His Girl Friday* was remade in a television newsroom with Burt Reynolds and Kathleen Turner. Television productions occurred through the 20th century in 1945 and 1970. A musical based on the play, *Windy City,* appeared in England in 1982. And numerous productions of the play have been produced on Broadway throughout the years. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,* October 7, 1929, p. 22. The four-act play, originally called *For Two Cents*, was written by former newspaperman George S. Brooks and was produced in 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. *Variety,* October 9, 1929, p. 41 [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. *Central New Jersey Home News,* New Brunswick, December 10, 1929, p. 11 [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Delight Evans reviews, *Screenland,* December, 1929, p. 85 [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Advertisement in *Motion Picture News,* August 31, 1929, p. 830ff [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. *Photoplay Magazine,* June, 1929, p. 55 [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. *The Film Daily,* May 19, 1929, p. 8 [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. *Variety,* May 15, 1929, p. 23 [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Martin Dickstein, *The Brooklyn Eagle,* May 13, 1929, p. 34 [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Richard R. Ness, *From Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography,* pp. 57-58 [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. *The Film Daily,* February 16, 1930, p. 9 [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. *Exhibitors Herald-Moving Picture World,* April 28, 1928, pp. 69-70 [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. “The scenes showing how news can be flashed clear around the world within a few short hours are brilliantly conceived. Movies built around newspaper offices are often an inaccurate portrayal, but it must be said for this one that it compels both admiration and attention” (*The Paducah Sun-Democrat,* Kentucky, August 21, 1928, p. 7.) The *Variety* reviewer commented on how this newspaper film looked like other newspaper films: “The opening shots are almost identical to those in William Haines’s *Telling the World*” (MGM), also a newspaper yarn, with its scenes of speeding railroads, airplanes, telegraph wires and other means of communication, all hastening to interpret themselves into printer’s ink. Story, in entirety, is pretty familiar stuff, of a pattern often encountered before, but lent a somewhat timely touch in this particular season of newspaper plays.” (*Variety,* September 26, 1928, p. 15.) And another reviewer: “There have been many newspaper films, but never before has there been one that depicted life as it actually existed on a great metropolitan daily. The hurrying, feverish atmosphere for which newspaper men will give up greater success in other occupations in order to remain at their typewriters in the city room, has been brought before the screen public in a dramatic and interesting manner.” (Included in reviews in the Silent Hall of Fame Website reprinted on [htt*ps://silent-hall-of-fame.org/index.php/1925-1929/97-freedom-of-the-press-1928*](https://silent-hall-of-fame.org/index.php/1925-1929/97-freedom-of-the-press-1928)*,* This one is from *The Banner).*  [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. In *The Green Archer* (1925-1926), a 10-chapter serial, reporter Spike Holland exposes the criminal secrets of a reclusive heartless millionaire helped by a mysterious green archer who prowls the ground of his medieval castle. In chapter nine, the reporter and the heroine are imprisoned near a box of dynamite which is about to explode with a slow-burning fuse while state troopers surround the castle and are met by gunfire by the conspirators led by the millionaire. In *Police Reporter* (1928), a 10-chapter serial, police reporter Hugh Mackay investigates a crime wave created by a mysterious master criminal known as The Phantom. His girlfriend, Eugenia Gilbert, gets trapped again and again by the evil crook. In *The Fighting Marine* (1926), a 10-chapter serial, reporter Dick Farrington played by celebrity boxer Gene Tunney becomes the champion and guardian of a woman who, in order to inherit vast mining properties in the American West, must occupy them without interruption for six months. If she leaves the property for even a day, then the land will be inherited by the miners and the mine superintendent, who creates one harrowing crisis after another for the woman and the reporter. In chapter five, the conspirators blow up a mine leaving the heroine at the bottom of a mine pit with no way out and she is trapped in the mine until chapter six. In *The Iron Man* (1924), a 10-chapter serial, reporter Paul Breen who works on a Parisian newspaper is assigned to solve the mystery of the disappearance of the niece of a wealthy American motion picture magnate. The reporter rescues the heiress and brings her to America to unmask the imposter. The actor playing the reporter was given the role because of his reputation as a daredevil athlete and there are stunts galore including falling through a deep chute into the sewers of Paris (chapter one), a collision of a racing car with a truck loaded with explosives (chapter two), fights the wings of an airplane in midair (chapter three). Another woman was substituted for her to claim the inheritance for her gang. Also, the reporter beating up a whole gang of crooks, leaping from one roof to another and from a balcony to an automobile, and jumping into ferocious fights in speeding motor cars, fast trains, speed boats, airplanes and ocean liners. In *The Third Eye (*1920), a 15-chapter serial, a reporter goes through various adventures to prove that his sweetheart did not commit a murder including a daring escape by swinging on the branch of a tree from the roof tops and almost getting crushed by an oncoming locomotive. In *Duty’s Reward* (1927), an absent-minded reporter “Peek” Harvey tries to expose a builder for constructing a building with rotten cement that collapses. But even though the newspaper prints scandal stories about the builder, the reporter needs the help of a motorcycle cop to unmask the real villain responsible, a gang leader, and save the builder from ruin. In *Dangerous Due* (1926), there are two rival publisher-editors. One is a contractor building a dam whose son, Bob Downes, works for his newspaper editing fashion columns. The rival contractor attacks him in his newspaper and schemes through his political influence to stop work on the dam – concrete shipments are being held up and rotten materials are being delivered. The young journalist eventually saves the day through a series of adventures using the dam construction as a background: he swings from the towering wall of the dam across yawning valleys and fearsome chasms through the air while being chased by his enemies and saves the daughter of the contractor when the girl is in a concrete bucket 100 feet high with a cable that has been tampered with by plotters, and the newsman climbs up hand over hand on the scaffold work to rescue her. Of course, he ends up with the girl. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. A 15-chapter serial [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. A 15-chapter serial. The reporter does everything he can to keep the invention out of the villain’s hands – the opening episode ends with an express train crashing into an auto, and the next episode ends with a ferocious fight on a balcony that breaks. But the most sensational stunt is where the daredevil reporter throws a rope from an auto to a moving train and boards the train by climbing across the rope with both the train and the auto in the action. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. In chapter seven, a motor boat is on fire with the heroine trapped and the reporter saves her. In chapter eight, Bob and the daughter get into a cable car and start to cross a canyon at the bottom of which is a swirling current; in the middle, the car breaks loose and both drop to the vortex below. In chapter nine, Bob and the heroine are speeding on horseback when the girl’s horse stops suddenly at the edge of a cliff and throws her into the rapids below; Bob dives to her rescue. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. *The Journal and Courier,* Lafayette, Indiana, June 8, 1925, p. 8. Other films include *The Pell Street Mystery* (1924), in which the star reporter, who covers police headquarters, investigates the shooting of a woman in Chinatown. He disguises himself as a tango dancer, escapes from the gang involved in the murder, rescues his kidnapped girlfriend, gets the murderer to confess and writes another scoop for his paper. In *Getting ‘Em Right* (No. 4, 1925), big city reporter Tip O’Neill moves to a small town and becomes editor of a local paper and solves a robbery that involves a gang of international crooks. Along the way, he is held at gunpoint, rescues a captured heiress, uses a horse to help capture a crook and becomes engaged to the heiress. In *Quick Change* (1925), Tip is back on a big city newspaper ready for action. In *The Right Man* (1925), Tip and his managing editor, Bruce Dergan, are both in love with feature writer Mary Burton. The ambitious editor has plans to take control of the newspaper from meek publisher Hoyt by pretending to be in love with Hoyt’s restless wife and gaining control of her stock in the paper. After a series of misadventures, Tip reveals Dergan’s schemes to Mrs. Hoyt, after which her houseboy “mistakenly” shoots and kills Dergan when the managing editor tries to take the stock certificates by force from Mrs. Hoyt. Finally, Tip is rewarded with Mary’s promise to marry him because he is the right man. In *Rough Stuff* (1925), Tip investigates the death of a wealthy broker who is killed during a party he is hosting. The star reporter on the *Globe* is a guest at the party and when the brother of the girl he is interested in is arrested as a suspect, he volunteers to work on the case. The result is a series of sensational fights between the reporter and various villains until the case is solved. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Other examples: *The Imposter* (1926), in which reporter Bruce Gordon trails a woman because he believes she is a member of a gang of jewel thieves and wants to reform her. The woman actually is trying to recover a valuable piece of jewelry stolen from her brother and has even resorted to posing as a prostitute to infiltrate the gang. Gordon rescues her when the villain locks her in a cellar and she nearly suffocates after breaking a gas pipe to escape. Gordon proposes marriage to the woman who readily accepts. In *Lightning Speed* (1928), reporter Jack Pemberton, a non-smoker and drinker, is in love with the governor’s daughter and learns that a notorious criminal is planning to abduct her in order to force the governor to pardon his brother before he is hanged. Pemberton tries to warn her, but she falls into the criminal’s hands. Pemberton, wanting to save his sweetheart but also trying to get a scoop for his paper and make himself solid with the governor so he can marry his daughter, finally rescues her when the kidnapper tries to escape with her in a balloon and falls to his death. In *The Heart of Twenty* (1920), reporter Jimmie Hearn takes a job at an automobile factory to expose corruption. He ends up with the story as well as the woman he saved from drowning. In *The Hidden Menace* (1925), reporter Christopher Hamlin of the *Evening Star* out scoops the competition and earns the animosity of the other journalists. He smells another scoop after learning that a crazed sculptor has abducted his lovely model and is holding her prisoner hoping to create the ultimate work of art. The daredevil reporter falls in love with her and saves her in the nick of time. In *Catch-as-Catch-Can* (1927), reporter Reed Powers was a manager of a baseball team accused of cheating although he actually was covering for his star pitcher, the mayor’s son. He becomes a newspaper writer to expose the crook. After the crook is killed during a chase, the reporter is cleared and made chief of police. In *The Royle Girl* (1925), a venturesome *Chicago Tribune* reporter helps the heroine disguise herself and works with her to get evidence of a gangster’s guilt. In *The Fatal 30* (1921), a star reporter on a big newspaper is assigned to cover the story of a sensational kidnapping of a pretty girl. He ends up searching for a lost treasure map, gets involved in a bizarre sun-worshipping cult which believes in human sacrifices, and ends up in love. In *The Money-Changers* (1920), a reporter investigates an illegal drug ring, falls in love with the fiancee of the head of the drug ring and eventually exposes the criminal and marries the woman. In *The Amazing Partnership* (1921), a reporter teams up with a girl detective to recover stolen gems hidden in a Chinese idol. In *Champion of Lost Causes* (1925), a journalist researching an article on gambling stumbles on a murder. When the father of the woman he loves is accused, he investigates and before solving the case, he is beaten up by a gang of thugs and defeats the villain in a final fight. The father is freed and the journalist marries his daughter. In *The Kentuckians* (1921), Journalist Colton covers elections and mountain feuds in Kentucky. In *Always Audacious* (1920), a city editor and his star reporter help a wealthy heir prove his identity when a double has him kidnapped and takes over his business. In *Sheltered Daughters* (1921), Reporter “Pep” Mullins helps a New York policeman rescue his daughter and ends up marrying her. In *The Old Fool* (1923), Reporter John Steele of the *Baredo Blade* rescues his sweetheart and his grandad kills the kidnapper with his Civil War sword. In *The Coast of Folly* (1925), a reporter investigates a scandal for his newspaper involving a young woman who will lose her fortune because of his story – the will specifies that she will lose her inheritance if she becomes involved in a scandal. In *Go and Get It* (1920), a reporter attempts to solve a series of murders committed by a gorilla carrying the transplanted brain of a human. He teams up with the female newspaper owner who gets a job on the paper using an assumed name to find out what is going on when two villains conspire to take control of her newspaper. In *The Star Reporter* (1921), Anthony Trent for the *Times* helps a woman whose father has been confined to a sanitarium by crooks. The father then buys the newspaper and makes Trent managing editor – as well as his son-in-law. He doesn’t reveal until the end of the film that he is a reporter. In *The Blue Mountains Mystery* (1922), newspaperman Richard “Dick” Maxon helps solve a murder puzzle that releasing the woman he loves from prison. In *Heroes of the Street* (1922), a reporter helps a newsboy locate and arrest a blackmailer who killed his policeman father. During the adventure, the reporter rescues a chorus girl he loves from the blackmailer’s scheme. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. It turns out the woman who is posing as the fortune teller, seeks vengeance against a wealthy dowager who sent her to prison on a false robbery charge to get her away from her wealthy son. She and her cohorts kidnap the old woman’s granddaughter and the fortune teller plans to raise her and teach the young girl to be a thief to get even with the old woman.. Newspaper headline: “Heir to Ramsy Millions Kidnaped in Central Park. Gang of Criminals Overcome Grandmother and Abduct Wealthy Baby Marcia in Car; Police Spread Dragnet.” The rich woman shows up at the police station to find out why the police haven’t found her granddaughter. She shows them a note by a woman telling her why the girl was kidnapped – to get revenge. The reporter looks at the note and recognizes his schoolmate’s handwriting. But a police report says that the woman was killed in a bus wreck. The reporter realizes she must be alive. On a hunch, the reporter and the old woman visit the fake fortune teller with the police outside ready to raid the place. Gradually the plot unravels. A cohort has taken the child away to avoid the police and when helping the girl up a ladder to get to the pier from a boat, he falls and is killed leaving the kidnapped girl on the ladder as the tide gets higher and higher. The police arrest the man involved but the crafty gangster says he is the only one who knows where the missing child is and wants to trade that information for a statement from the old woman saying the fortune-teller is innocent. The reporter convinces them that to save the child is worth any sacrifice. The child is saved, the woman freed and reunited with the reporter, her childhood sweetheart. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. The detective is reprimanded and is furious at the reporter, threatening to hit him. But the reporter puts on a pair of glasses because no decent cop would hit a man with glasses. The detective gives up and walks away. The telephone rings and everyone swings into action. The reporter follows the police to find out what is going on. Later, a newspaper headline explains: “Robbery Charges Against Gangster-Undertaker Dismissed by Court. Unsolved Murder of Bessie Ward Leaves State Without Witness Against ‘Boston Skeeter”. One reviewer referred to the old police reporter as “a charming bit of whimsical comedy.” *The Greenwood Commonwealth,* Mississippi, January 26, 1929, p. 6 [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. A small newsboy who wants to become a reporter becomes a hero when he rescues the woman. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. After many exciting and unusual incidents, the reporter saves the life and reputation of a chief of police’s daughter after getting a tip to a great scandal – the daughter is photographed in a gambling den by crooks trying to oust the police chief. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. It is not revealed that he is a reporter until midway through the film. The heroine, an heiress, is forced to lead a germ-free life. Newspaper headline: “Millionaire Health Crank Leaves Stranger Will. Infant Daughter of Late J.Q. Manning to Lead Ger-Proof life Until Twenty-One.” When she is twenty-one, she decides to hide from a scheming uncle in a sanitarium she has inherited not realizing it serves as a front for a gang of rumrunners who have turned it into a hideout for criminals on the run from the law and a place for them to fend off their enemies, the hijackers. She believes they and the undercover reporter are patients. Roberts, who has fallen in love with her, asks her to leave because she is afraid she will be harmed. He reveals who he is by showing her his typed article: “A Reporter Among Rum-Runners. The Inside of What Goes on Outside the Three-Mile Limit by Wallace Roberts.” He also includes a sentence: “This girl who just arrived is a problem. She is attractive, but they come no dumber.” Parker asks her if she read the manuscript: “Yes – and I don’t like some of the things you wrote about me,” she tells him. The reporter asks her if she read the last paragraph: “Every suggestion I make, she says ‘No.’ I wonder what she’d say if I asked her to marry me?” She takes a pencil and writes, “Yes.” The heiress refuses to leave and comes to the reporter’s aid when the gang figures out who he is and attacks him. The heiress subdues the gang with a bottle of chloroform and surgical instruments discovering she is not sickly at all. The authorities arrive at the island to find a robustly healthy heiress and the reporter holding the rumrunners prisoner. She and Roberts, triumphant, agree to get engaged. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Other examples are *The Savage* (1926), in which reporter Dan Terry, a wild animal expert writing for a scientific publication, goes to the Mariposa Islands and pretends to be a white savage to put over a hoax on a scientific expedition sponsored by a rival publication. He is captured and falls in love with the chief scientist’s daughter. When Terry’s editor tries to expose the hoax, the reporter has second thoughts because doesn’t want his sweetheart’s father disgraced. The daughter finds out about the hoax but still goes away with Terry who convinces everyone that the “savage” has escaped and can’t be found. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. The society woman had sought revenge on the attorney but he becomes sympathetic after learning that her husband has been seeing another woman secretly and is falling in love with her. That’s when they fall in love setting up the reporter’s downfall. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. The contractor agrees to withdraw his support of the water commissioner, who is furious and threatens the contractor. In a struggle between the two, the commissioner is accidentally killed. The reporter schemes to be hired by the contractor and falls in love with his sister, antagonizing a man who is blackmailing her father. After the reporter finds out about the accidental killing, the contractor blows up the dam and he and the blackmailer are killed in the process. The reporter and the sister look forward to a happy future. The actor who plays the reporter, Rex Lease, “seems doomed to remain a newspaper man, either real or make-believe. He thought he had quit reporting when the Columbus paper on which he was working ceased publication and he came west to try to be an actor. But one of his first film opportunities proved to be the role of a reporter, and now he is playing a reporter again in *Not for Publication.” (Tampa Bay Times,* St. Petersburg, Florida, March 23, 1927, p. 5). [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. *The Times,* Munster, Indiana, p. 8 [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Ibid, p. 67 [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. The husband goes on trial and is found guilty until the woman lies and says she was the publisher’s mistress. She makes up the story to save her husband’s life, but he is devastated by her statement and runs off to Africa. She is labeled by the press as “the notorious lady.” When he returns, he realizes that she lied to save him and takes her back into his arms. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Examples include *Circus Rookies* (1928), in which newspaper reporter Francis Byrd is fired from his job on a small-town paper when he lies to the editor in order to spend a day at the circus and “interview” a beautiful circus performer. He decides to join the circus and rescues a trapeze artist from an escaped gorilla on a runaway train. In *Nobody’s Money* (1923), two newspapermen, writing under a pseudonym, score a success with a novel. When they get into trouble with income tax collectors, have contract problems with their publisher and find themselves in a libel suit, they must find someone to pose as the fictitious author the authorities are looking for. In *The Girl from Gay Paree* (1927), feature writer Kenneth Ward ofthe *New York Star* is sent to interview the famous wild star of the Folies Bergere. He falls for her and plays her up in several columns. What he doesn’t know is that the actress is really a destitute woman who agrees to impersonate the star. A picture of the woman is published in the *Star,* and the real star’s friend comes to investigate. He makes advances to the imposter and in a struggle, she thinks she has killed him. The real star shows up and threatens to kill the man. The reporter shows up and following a series of amusing complications, comes to her aid and they are reunited. In *My Lady’s Lips* (1925), the reporter helps a criminal escape and pays the price for his misdeed. Editor Forbes Lombard discovers his daughter is involved with gangsters. He assigns the paper’s star reporter, Scott Seldon, to join the gang to get an exclusive story. Seldon does just that but unexpectedly falls in love with the beautiful gang leader. He is given poison by the gang to blind him and pretends to have taken it, continuing to act blind despite the best efforts of the gang to trick him. When the police come to arrest the thugs, Seldon shields the woman who escapes. Seldon is then arrested for helping the criminal, and the woman gives herself up to save him, but both are forced to sign false confessions under a brutal interrogation and both go to prison. When Seldon is released, he discovers the girl has returned to gambling. She arranges for him to win a fortune at roulette and she takes a bullet in the arm when a disgruntled loser tries to shoot Seldon for taking his place at the roulette table. The lovers are reunited, decide to get married and begin a new life together. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. *Variety,* February 13, 1929, p. 30 [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. *Green Bay Press-Gazette,* Wisconsin, January 11, 1929, p. 3 [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Another example is *Her Reputation* (1923), in which reporter Clinton Kent is an ambitious reporter on a yellow newspaper,the *New Orleans Star,* writes an account of a murder representing the innocent woman as unfaithful. She runs away to escape notoriety and joins a troupe of dancers. Kent finds her, but the publisher’s son, who falls in love with her, prevents Kent’s story from being published. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. *Moving Picture World,* February 7, 1925, p. 557 [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. The veteran had filed a claim against a steel company for damages done to him, but the suit has not been settled so he is forced to get a job on the newspaper. After he is fired, he discovers he finally gets a $100,000 settlement from the steel company and when her brother is freed, he asks the war buddy’s sister to marry him. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. The reporter is in love with a judge’s daughter and saves her father from being a victim of the doctor’s mad scheme. The demented doctor, having enraged the man-ape (who the doctor had grafted the face of a friend onto the monkey’s face), is torn to pieces. The heroine shoots and kills the mad ape just as he about to tear the reporters to pieces. The *New York Times* reviewer wasn’t impressed with the reporter: “The hero of this yarn is the over-smiling Edmund Lowe. He plays the part of a rather stupid and utterly impossible reporter, who takes full advantage of the awkward predicament of an equally stupid detective.” *New York Times,* December 4, 1927, p. 212. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Richard R. Ness, *Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography,* p. 68 [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. *Motion Picture News,* December 29, 1928, p. 1949 [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. One reviewer wrote, “Whether ‘Nosey’ Norton is typical or not of the men of his profession, whether his story is told in ‘In the Headlines’ is implausible, unreal or simply impossible is a matter of small concern to a film audience, which seeks to be entertained at any cost. If this were not the case, there would be no dashing cavaliers, no honorable thieves, no knights in shining armor in the movies, and that from the standpoint of the spectator, would be a grave mistake.”*The Montclair Times,* New Jersey, October 30, 1929, p. 17 [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. The girl, described as a Brooklyn cutie, is in love with Jimmy Doyle, but he seems all wrapped up in his newspaper career before he gives into her charms. She is kidnapped by her partner and gets away, but the reporter convinces her to lay low so he can exploit the kidnapping in the newspaper by selling her life story to his paper. The recovered sugar daddy decides, as an apology for the way he acted, to bankroll a show which the reporter with her as the star. The show is a success and Jimmy and the show girl are married. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. Often a reporter’s offenses are more minor. In *Love’s Masquerade* (1922), a reporter is beaten up by a man who went to prison to protect a woman who killed her husband. He thrashes the reporter who threatens to expose her affair with him after which the lovers are happily reunited. In *Her Wild Oat* (1927), reporter Tommy Warren is a journalist described as having “won the Pulitzer Prize for the remarkable imagination he displayed in making out his expense account.” Warren regales a girl who runs a New York City lunch wagon with stories about an exclusive summer resort that he has never seen but continually writes about. The woman decides to pursue her dream and take a glamorous vacation to the resort. She gets bad advice on how to dress and act and is shunned by everyone at the resort. The sympathetic reporter senses a publicity stunt that could become a sensational story so gives the girl a new name and suggests she re-registers at the hotel as a duchess. He then calls his editor to tell him he will be writing a huge story on the visiting duchess. Warren arranges for local beauticians and couturiers to transform the lunch wagon girl into an elegant aristocrat. A San Francisco reviewer sarcastically wrote: “And, note, the newspaper reporter is getting to be quite a figure in the movie world, being officially recognized now to replace the half-witted brother as the cause of all the trouble.” (*San Francisco Examiner,* December 26, 1927, p. 11.) In *Crooked Alley* (1923), the editor of a scandal sheet is tipped by Boston Blackie that a crook’s daughter is meeting a judge’s son. The judge had refused to release a San Quentin criminal who is dying so he could spend his final hours with his daughter. So Blackie and his daughter want revenge – they plan to make the judge’s son fall in love with the girl and steal for her. The printed story hurts the judge who doesn’t want his son going out with any one of low quality. But a romance between the two young people prevents the plan from succeeding. In *Trifling with Honor* (1923), Kelsey Lewis runs a syndicated news service and wants an interview with a new public favorite, a baseball hero. He gets a far better story than expected. When his sanitized life story appears in the press, his sweetheart who helped him escape from prison five years ago, recognizes him at once. After crooks try to blackmail the player into losing a game, threatening him with an expose, he wins the game, double-crossing them and then gives himself up. A judge releases him from all charges and his sweetheart rejoins him to provide a happy ending. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. The manager arrives and sabotages the wires of the automaton so when the inventor demonstrates the machine it does not work. The reporter’s sweetheart is the daughter of the inventor so the reporter sets out to help. He manages to fix the machine and the automaton marches into the house, grabs the conspirators and throws them out. In celebration, the reporter and the inventor’s daughter set their wedding day. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. Examples include *Interference* (1928), which was released both as a silent and as an early all-talking version, and tells the story of a woman who threatens to blackmail a wife who had an indiscreet romance prior to her marriage to a prominent British heart doctor. “I have letters written by you which if published in the Morning Bugle will ruin your husband’s standing as a physician.” She later calls a reporter to tell him she has an important story about a famous heart surgeon. The reporter shows up and discovers the police are there and the woman is dead. He covers the newly developing story about her murder. In the trailer for *Mammy* (1929-1930), a reporter takes notes as he talks to the star Al Jolson about the film in between jokes and chatter. In *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge* (1920), a reporter wanders around a village and encounters a man decorating a neglected grave who tells the reporter the dead man was known as “Uncle Sam.” In *Never the Twain Shall Meet* (1925), San Francisco newspaper reporter Mark Mellenger helps a friend care for a South Seas island girl when her father commits suicide after learning he has leprosy. When his friend gets ill, the reporter stays on the island offering the girl his comfort and love. In *The Masquerader* (1922), a struggling journalist who is a cousin and the exact double of a British statesman, trades places with him because his political career and home life are on the rocks. The wife falls in love with the journalist but the situation is resolved when the statesman dies. In *Democracy: the Vision Restored”* (1920), a reporter, who is the son of a thoroughly corrupt capitalist, acquires a social conscience and is fired for his political activities before convincing his brother to recognize the rights of humanity and rescuing his blind working-class wife. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. Trent also falls in love with the chief suspect (the millionaire’s widow). Trent is an ordinary, friendly, humorous artist who works for a newspaper as a crime journalist. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. In *A Blind Bargain* (1922), a journalist sells his real-life horror story of adventure to a newspaper syndicate. In *Stephen Steps Out* (1923), a breezy reporter gets involved with a student sent to Turkey to learn his lessons after he fails a course in Turkish history and gets involved in one adventure after another. Harry Myers, the actor playing the reporter, was said by *Variety* that he “plays it properly.”(*Variety,* November 23, 1923, p. 16.) In *The Day of Faith* (1923), reporter Tom Barnett is a lame journalist who has become a cynic because he is crippled. He is hired by a millionaire to write an expose on a mission run by a woman loved by the rich man’s son. The son is beaten to death by a mob angry at his father. The reporter helps a little lame girl and is cured of his lameness. But once the seeds of suspicion are planted in his mind, he limps as usual. In *A Self-Made Man* (1922), society reporter Jack Spurlock is lazy and leads a hedonistic life causing his father to disown him and his girlfriend to break up with him. He eventually conquers his indolent habits and proves to be a hero by saving his father from a financial disaster. His family and girlfriend welcome back with open arms. One reviewer wrote, “It turns out that Jack is meant for something better than his frivolous job as a society reporter.” (Janis Garza, all-movie.com., www.allmovie.com/movie/self-made-man-v109432#kWfu0KxqjJpTVvAP.99.) In *What Happened to Rosa?*  (1920), a reporter tries to help a doctor find an unknown woman he has fallen in love with at a costume party. In *Monte Carlo* (1926), star reporter Bancroft is given the task of escorting three female contest winners to Monte Carlo, Monaco, in a contest sponsored by the local newspaper. Throughout the film, the reporter sends daily wires to the paper on the progress of the hunt for titled husbands by the contest winners. In *The Night Bride* (1927), writer Stanley Warrington is a woman-hating author. A flapper driving a roadster collides with Warrington’s car on a one-way road. He gets into a milkman’s truck and leaves her stranded. She finally makes her way home and finds her sister in the arms of her fiancé. Disillusioned, she wanders to Warrington’s home and sleeps in a vacant room. Horrified, Warrington begs her to return home, but she refuses. When they are interrupted by the woman’s father, she insists she and Warrington have just been married. The happy father insists on sending the couple on a steamship wedding tour. Once the ship leaves the harbor the couple realize they want to be married and ask the captain to perform the ceremony. In *Venus of Venice* (1927), an American journalist with a wordly opinion thinks of himself as a great lover and tries to seduce a lady thief, but she avoids him by jumping into the canal. In *Ginsberg the Great* (1927), reporter Hawkins makes a small town boy who goes to the city to become a Broadway magician a hero after he ends up capturing a gang of crooks. But the boy returns to his hometown thinking he is a failure. But the vaudeville performer whose jewels were recovered through the boy’s efforts shows up with the metropolitan newspaper clippings of his heroism and offers him a reward and a contract. In *The Desperate Hero,* a young reporter tries to impress his sweetheart with disastrous results until she agrees to marry him. In *House of the Tolling Bell* (1920), a freelance writer agrees to spend one year in a spooky house to inherit his grandfather’s fortune. In *the Joyous Troublemakers* (1920), a rich young businessman is mistaken as a reporter. In *Oh Lady! Lady!* (1920) a former press agent now a reporter tries to help a man deal with a former sweetheart who plans to show up just before he gets married. In *Fine Feathers* (1921), a sympathetic reporter gives solace to a wife whose husband has committed suicide. In *No Woman Knows* (1921), a reporter has become a “brilliant newspaperman” and is in love with the heroine, his childhood sweetheart. When he convinces her to let her spiritual side come to the surface again forsaking the materialistic life, she nestles into his arms secure in the knowledge of her future love and happiness. In *The Supreme Passion* (1921), Jerry Burke follows his Irish fiancee to America and gets a job on a newspaper. When the woman he loves pretends to be disfigured in a fire to avoid marriage to another man, they are reconciled. In *Legend of Hollywood* (1924), a newspaperman goes from studio to studio trying to sell his story. He fills seven glasses of wine, one of which is poisoned, moves them around and not knowing which one is lethal, he drinks one glass a day. As the last is consumed, he receives a check in the mail – and by chance the woman who loves him had replaced the poisoned glass and all ends happily. In *What Love Will Do* (1923), a young newspaperman seems pursued by a jinx, and after many unsuccessful jobs, he ends up on a farm where he clears the owner of murder and marries the daughter. In *A Rogue in Love* (1922), Journalist Joe Bradwick is “an impecunious journalist” of small order – “a man who, having to fight his own way in the world without assistance, had drifted into journalism, as other men drift into debt – and with equally disastrous results…he was a big, heavy, good-natured fellow, slow of speech and movement, with a strong, rather humorous face, cleanly shaved, and lit by a pair of singularly honest clear brown eyes. His hair, which was rather long, had an untidy fashion of falling into his eyes – to be shaken back, as often as it fell, by an impatient movement of the head. He worked hard and he worked late…People who knew him intimately called him ‘Joe’ and the name seemed somehow to fit him pretty accurately.” (From the novel on which the film is based, *A Rogue in Love* by Tom Gallon, pp. 41-42, Hutchinson, London, 1900. Available on https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951002120743w;view=1up;seq=50. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. In *Accidental Accidents* (1924), a reporter gets pictures of a man being run over by a girl and trapped underneath a rear wheel of the car. In *Flying Pat* (1920), a reporter for a gossip sheet is “introduced for obvious effect.” (*Motion Picture News,* January 1, 1921, pp. 431, 453.) In *The Sign on the Door* (1921), a newspaperman photographs a woman arrested in a raid. The man she is with confiscates the negative and keeps it out of the newspaper. In *The Mistress of the World* (1922), the Editor of the *World* sends a giant aeroplane to rescue the heroine and her friends who are searching for the hidden jewels of the queen of Sheba. When they return to civilization, *World* reporter Jonathan Fletcher is there to greet them. In *Squibs Wins the Calcutta Sweep* (1922), a reporter covers the story of a Cockney flower girl who wins 60,000 pounds in a Calcutta sweepstake. In *Broken Hearts of Broadway* (1923), an out-of-work journalist who is an aspiring playwright listens to a cab driver narrating a story about “Broadway must break you before it can make you.” It is the prologue to the film itself. In *For Sale* (1924), a Journalist Eric Porter is included in the film’s cast. In *The Perfect Flapper* (1924), an enterprising reporter “flashlights” a picture of the roadhouse balcony scene with an old-fashioned girl and her older sister’s husband, both unknowingly drunk, dressed up as Romeo and Juliet. Their so-called affair gets into the newspaper and the man’s outraged wife threatens divorce. In *Marching On* (1928), at a ceremony of the unveiling of a Lincoln statute, a reporter induces an old veteran to give him anecdotes about Lincoln for a special newspaper story. The impending story reunites the veteran with his family – not because they love him, but because they now feel he is a celebrity and want to be associated with him to further their social ambitions. In *The Silent Watcher* (1924), reporter Herrold covers a scandal. In *Dollar Down* (1925), a reporter covers a real estate scandal. In *South Sea Bubble* (1928), a reporter is one of several adventurers setting out in the South Seas in search of buried treasures. In *The Fighting Heart* (1925), a reporter gives a man advice to go to the city and become a prize fighter. In *The College Bomb* (1926), a reporter and cameraman interview football player and flashlight him between halves of the game. In *Dobry vojak Svejk (*aka *The Good Soldier Schweik)* (1926), a reporter is listed in the credits. In *The Old War Horse* (1926), a messenger brings news that the Civil War is over just in time to save a man from getting shot. In *The Gorilla* (1927), the reporter is described in one review as “nervy.” (*The Minneapolis Star,* January 1, 1927, p. 23.) In a locally produced film, *Star Reporter* (1927), star reporter Jimmie Dare of the *Racine Journal-News* and Editor Jasper Craig with a supporting case of Reporter Jake Stone, and two women who work in the classified department of the newspaper. This is an example of a city’s attempt to make a movie for distribution featuring hometown actors, directors and producers. This was the city of Racine’s first locally produced feature film. In *Sinners Parade* (1928), a cabaret owner risks his life to expose a man who is running a crime syndicate with money embezzled from his father’s bank by telling his story to a newspaper reporter. In *West Point* (1928), an egotistical football player who is the world’s worst braggart lets the sports page publicity about him go to his head: “Brice Wayne’s Brilliant Playing Boosts Army Half Back to Big Lead Among Eastern Point Scorers. Wayne’s Three Touchdowns Scored Against Ursinus Breaks Record of 96 Points.” Because the player’s arrogance causes problems on the field, the coach benches him: “On the bench…until that nasty temper of yours cools off.” After the game, reporter Shaw of the *Evening News*, gets an interview with the player and asks him, “How come you’re on the bench?” The player shouts back, “It’s a lot of jealousy and favoritism!” When a fellow player tries to stop him, he barks, “The press is interviewing me my boy! Don’t annoy me.” The next day’s paper prints the interview: “Brice Wayne, Star Army Player, Decries Coach’s Favoritism Among Football Players.” He is asked, “Are you responsible for this story?” to which he responds: “What of it? It’s the truth and you know it.” One of the players says to him: “you haven’t got the spirit of the Corps.” The angry football player answers back: “To hell with the Corps!” He is then told: “That means you’ll be shunned! No West Pointer will even speak to you – as long as you live.” The player resigns, but is encouraged to come back to the team. He realizes what a fool he has been and is restored to the team On the field he tells his teammates: “I apologize…fellows. If you can forgive me…I…I wish you would.” He leads Army to a victory over Navy even playing when he is injured with a broken arm. In *The Exalted Flapper* (1929), a reporter covers royal shenanigans. In *Glad Rags Doll* (1929), a newspaper reporter interviews one of the characters in the trailer for the film on the picture’s highlights. In *Masquerade* (1929), four reporters are listed in the credits. In *It Can Be Done* (1929), a writer’s book on how to succeed in business is pushed by a young clerk in a publishing hour who masquerades as his boss to get the book published and ends up as a junior partner in the firm. Others include *Payment Guaranteed* (1921); *The Goldfish* (1924); *The Nervous Reporter* (1924), *Coshocton’s Hero* (1927). [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. In *A Fool and His Money* (1925), freelance writer John Smart wants to be a novelist or a playwright: “Being a journalist, of course, was preliminary; a sort of makeshift. At any rate I was going to be a writer” (from the novel, *A Fool and His Money,* by George Barr McCutcheon, pp. 2-3). In *The Bowery Cinderella* (1927), reporter Larry Dugan, “a typically pocket-bare reporter” is in love with a struggling fashion designer who has taken up with a millionaire while trying to help her sick mother. The reporter is sent to investigate the wealthy theatrical backer and philanderer, finds the woman in a compromising situation with the millionaire, and becomes disillusioned. The fashion designer is reconciled with the reporter, and the millionaire plots with an accomplice to put the woman who spurned him in financial straits so he can get her back, but when she resists his pleas, a struggle ensues. Larry shows up and saves her, writes a successful play and marries the girl. In *The Part Time Wife* (1925), a poor newspaperman Kenneth Scott marries Doris Fuller, a screen star. His pride is hurt when he is called Mr. Doris Fuller” and by the disparity in their earnings. At her husband’s request, she quits to become his “full-time wife” but returns to the screen when she sees him becoming a nervous wreck trying to write a play to boost their earnings. He thinks she is having an affair with her leading man and beats up the actor. He then begins to pay attention to a rising young actress. His actions cause a real breach and they separate. His play turns out to be a success, but he is not happy. Doris is injured at the studio, they are reconciled and once again she becomes his “full-time wife.” [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. *From 1920 to 1929:* *New Screen Magazine* (1919-1920); *Movie Chats (aka Urban Movie Chats)* (1922) features interviews of people in the news and of interest – an interviewer questions the head of the United States Steel Corporation (*Official Movie Chats No. 12*); Samuel Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labor (*Official Movie Chats No. 13);* Charles M. Schwab, president of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation (*Official Movie Chats No. 15);* Mrs. Woodrow Wilson gives an illustrated interview (*Official Urban Movie Chats No. 19);* Congressman Fess of Ohio (*Official Urban Movie Chats No. 30);* Sophie Irene Loeb, feminist, in picturized interview (*Movie Chats* no number given); Max Bohm of the National Academy (*Pathe Review No 147,* 1922); Reporter Ted Meredith of the *New York Sun* and Publisher Josephus Daniels, once a member of President Wilson’s cabinet as Secretary of the Navy, has returned to his newspaper at Raleigh, N.C. (*Selznick Newsreel Edition,* 1922); camera interviews with stars of the theatrical world are included in *Starland Revue, No. 2*  (1922); W.G. McAdoo, leading Democratic candidate for president gives a camera interview to Fox News (*Fox News No. 84,* 1923); a *Washington* *Herald* reporter wins the golf cup in a tourney played by President Harding and Ambassador Harvey (*International News No. 44,* 1923); a camera interview with Bonnie McLeary, a sculptress, who works as she talks (*Pathe Review No. 4,* 1923); Kinogram Newsreel screen interviews in 1924 with Roger W. Babson, America’s foremost business analyst who discloses business conditions (*Kinograms No. 2315*), with Author Arthur Train on why Americans break laws *(Kinograms No. 2316*), with Father C.M. DeHeredia (*Kinograms No. 2317*), with Publisher R.J. Cudahy of “Literary Digest” and Radio broadcaster J. Andrew White (*Kinograms No. 2325)*, with Journalist-Author Albert Payson Terhune (*Kinograms No. 327),* with Peter B. Kyne who says America must have merchant marines (*Kinograms No. 2328),* and with the Anti-Saloon League head (*Kinograms No. 2331);* a Paris Pathe Newsman presents a detailed record of the Olympic Games(*Pathe News No. 59-60,* 1924); camera interview with W.Granville Smith, a famous artist and angler (*Pathe Review No. 26,* 1924), with William Ritschel, the marine painter (*Pathe Review No. 34,* 1924); a camera interview with Charles MacVeach, the new ambassador to Japan (*Fox News No, 104,* 1925); William Jennings Bryan presents his views in an exclusive pictorial interview with s Pathe News staff man. Part of the coverage of the Scopes trial and the events preceding it was included (*Pathe News No. 56,* 1925); a series, “Camera Interviews with Famous Painters,” features Henry R. Rittenberg at work on a canvas (*Pathe Review No. 23,* 1925); camera interview with Hobart Nichols, American landscape artist (*Pathe Review No. 48,* 1925); camera interview with Admiral Von Tirpitz, author of U-Boat Warfare and the Kaiser’s Naval Chief (*Fox News No. 16,* 1926); newspaper publisher Cornelius Vanderbilt does his own housework to pay off millions lost on his newspapers (*International News No. 13,* 1927); the Austrian president is seen at his farm in an intimate camera interview (*MGM News No. 20,* 1927); Playwright George Bernard Shaw in a camera interview (*Pathe News No. 86,* 1927); Inventor Thomas Edison in an interview over the radio captured by Pathe News (*Pathe News No. 88,* 1927); an interview with publisher Cyrus H.K. Curtis (*Fox News No. 48,* 1928). Interview with publisher Norman E. Mack of the *Buffalo Times* (*Fox News No. 49,* 1928); interview with owner Ralph Pulitzer of the *New York World* (*Fox News No. 52, No. 76,* 1928); with publisher Paul Block, newspaper owner (*Fox News No. 55,* 1928); with publisher E.D. Stair of the *Detroit Free Press* (*Fox News No. 59,* 1928); with publisher Clark Howell, owner of the *Atlanta Constitution* (*Fox News No. 61,* 1928); with William Randolph Hearst (*Fox News No. 98,* 1928); with Sir Hall Caine (*Kinograms No. 5399,* 1928); Miss Kathlyn Sullivan tells of her duties as one of the three San Francisco policewomen in a sound interview (*Fox Movietone News No. 2,* 1927); novelist Robert Herrick is seen in an exclusive camera interview for Pathe News (*Pathe News No. 4,* 1928); cameraman Tom Hogan gets a camera interview with one of the crew members on the first successful trans-Atlantic aircraft flight from East to West (*Pathe News No. 35,* 1928); camera interview with Sir Phillip Gibbs (*Pathe Review No. 49,* 1928); a sound interview with the engineer of the New York-Jersey Bridge (*Pathe Sound News No. 1,* 1928); a sound interview with Harry Fay, who was one of the last to leave the ill-fated ship, S.S. Vestris. Pathe sound interview combines the salient elements of newspaper reportorial practice and screen reporting (*Pathe Sound Newsreel First Special Extra,* 1928); sound interview with De Wolf Hopper who also recites the last paragraph on the last verse of the famous baseball lyric “Casey at the Bat” where he stammers over the punch line (*Pathe Sound News Nos. 2-3,* 1928); interview with Julius Rosenwald, the man who built Sears and Roebuck. The interview involves philanthropy. He said in part: “I have always believed that most large fortunes are made by men of mediocre ability who stumbled into a lucky opportunity and could not help but get rich, and in most cases others given the same chance would have done far better with it. Hard work and attention to business are necessary, but they rarely result in achieving a large fortune. Do not be fooled into believing that because a man is rich, he is necessarily smart. There is ample proof to the contrary” (*Fox Movietone Interview,* 1929); interview with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1929 – filmed in 1927 but received its biggest audience in 1929). Jack Connolly, a former newspaper editor was hired by Fox to secure world-class personalities for the Movietone microphone. He was responsible for this historic interview. The famous Britisher talks directly to the audience explaining how he came to write the Sherlock Holmes stories (*Fox Movietone Interview,* 1927-1929); British statesmen Lloyd George speaks to the cameraman on the latest British political situation (*Fox Movietone News No. 39,* 1929); poet and novelist Nathalia Crane in a talkie interview (*Pathe Audio Review No. 2,* 1929); Joan Lowell, actor who wrote a sensational autobiography (*Pathe Audio Review No. 12,*  1929). *Red Russia Revealed* (1923) offers a five-minute close-up of the Soviet statesman Lenin as he is being interviewed on camera. *International News No. 5* (1920) has newspaper editors looking over a huge dam project just completed. *International News No. 84* (1920) show reporters playing deck shuffleboard with President-elect Harding on his Panama vacation trip. *Hearst Metrotone News Newsreel Vol. 1, No. 239* features an interview with Hearst newspaper cartoonist Harry Hershfield who tells two of his favorite jokes. Title Card: “Harry Hershfield Now Tells One. Famous cartoonist and wit of the Hearst newspapers gives you a sample of his favorite stories.” [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. It included camera interviews with Fontaine Fox, the cartoonist (*Pathe Review No. 1, 1928);* famous English and American authors as well as other celebrities including, in this edition, camera interviews with Charles Francis Coe, author of “Me, Gangster” (*Pathe Review No. 3*, 1928); fMilt Gross, creator of the Sunday comic strip featuring ‘Nize Baby’” (*Paris Review No. 7,* 1928); Albert Peyton Terhune shown with his collies around which he wrote his dog stories and Frank Willard, creator of the cartoon strip, “Moon Mullins” (*Pathe Review No. 11,* 1928); three famous Indiana sons – Author Meredith Nicholson, Cartoonist-Humorist-Journalist Kin Hubbard and Newspaper columnist George Ade shown in camera interviews in their home surroundings (*Pathe Review No. 13,* 1928); Fannie Hurst, authoress and Percy Carosby, cartoonist (*Pathe Review No. 17,* 1928); radio broadcasters Graham McNamee and Major White and producer, entrepreneur and radio industry pioneer, Nils Grunland (*Pathe Review No. 25,* 1928); cartoonist-inventor Rube Goldberg (*Pathe Review No. 27,* 1928); newspaper cartoonist Harold Gray, “Orphan Annie’s Friend” in his Chicago home (*Pathe Review No. 34,* 1928); Author Rex Beach (*Pathe Review No. 50,* 1928); sculptor Alexander Archipenko is interviewed in his New York Studios in “The Very Weird Art of Archipenko” (*Pathe Review No. 52,* 1928); publisher-owner of the *New York Times* Adolph S. Ochs points out that without news there is no advertising for a paper, meaning support and independence; also a brief interview with boxer Jack Dempsey (*Fox Movietone News, Vol. 2, No. 17,* 1929); an interviewer questions a news sports promotion trio: Jack Dempsey, Jack Fugazy and Ed Cole (*Fox Movietone News, No. 26,* 1929); with publisher Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr. (*Fox Movietone News No. 28,* 1929); with Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, a 70-year-old who helps to put the “she” in “franchise” (*Fox Movietone News No. 34* (1929); with Ramsay MacDonald, newly elected United Kingdom prime minister, his daughter and son as MacDonald speaks of his aims and hopes for the new government and his daughter speaks on labor and politics (*Fox Movietone News No. 37,* 1929); Governor John H. Trumbull of Connecticut in aviator’s garb talks about the prospects for aviation in front of his own plane, and Karl Bickert, manager of the United Press and director of world news, picks the 10 headliners in the public eye (*Pathe Sound News RCA Photophone,* 1929); a hard-boiled Admiral Hilary Jones, after dodging newspapers and other news sources for several years, does an interview with Pathe Sound News scoring a real scoop for the newsreel (*Pathe Sound News: Interview with Admiral Hilary Jones,* 1929); interview with Fridtjof Nansen (*Pathe Sound News No. 7,* 1929); Captain Einar Lundborg, the Swedish flyer who participated in the rescue of the Nobile Expedition to the arctic (*Pathe Sound News No. 15,* 1929). Other episodes include *Paris Review No. 5* and *Pathe Review No. 9,* 1928. In *Screen Smiles* (1920), animated topic sayings make up timely and witty remarks from America’s leading newspaper writers. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. The interview with Shaw is the most memorable. Mordaunt Hall, writing in the *New York Times* about the Shaw interview:“It is a delightful and breezy little address in which the illustrious writer adroitly causes one to forget that it is only his shadow chatting from a screen….” (*New York Times,* July 1, 1928, p. 99). [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. In *The Clue of the New Pin* (1929), reporter Tab Holland works for a newspaper in Britain. A rich recluse is killed and Holland helps clear the prime suspect by revealing the identity of the true killer. The only clue? The recluse’s nephew discovers the corpse of his wealthy uncle in a sealed vault with a key lying beside the body. It turns out the rich man was killed by that same nephew. During his investigation, the reporter is almost set afire. This was Britain’s first talkie. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. Huret, the French journalist, introduces the aviator and his wife to a financier who comes up with a publicity stunt involving the aviator flying across the Atlantic to Guyana and drilling for oil there. A mob of reporters surround the aviator when he is about to take off on the biggest transatlantic crossing in history. Title card: “A feverish frenzy has seized everyone.” The Tokyo Stock Exchange reports that the aviator’s aircraft has crashed and exploded in flames and the news causes a stock market panic around the world. It turns out the news report is wrong. The financier knows this and makes a fortune on the stock market. The businessman continues to try to seduce the aviator’s wife without success. The financier is arrested for his manipulation of the stock market and the aviator, suffering from temporary blindness, returns home realizing he has been deceived by the business tycoon and has lost everything. He also ends up in court. The reporter comforts the wife as her husband stands trial. He is vindicated and the financier is jailed, but not defeated (he has another financial scheme he plans to use). [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. Famed American director Billy Wilder, an ex-reporter from Austria, received credit as a scriptwriter, but labeled the film as “absolute bullshit.” It suggests the scathing view of journalism he would subsequently develop in future films. *The German Way & More: Language and Culture in Austria, Germany and Switzerland,* [*https://www.german-way.com/notable-people/featured-bios/billy-wilder/billy-wilder-films/*](https://www.german-way.com/notable-people/featured-bios/billy-wilder/billy-wilder-films/) [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. At her murder trial, Lulu is sentenced to five years for manslaughter as journalists cover the sensational trial. In the confusion following the verdict, Lulu’s friends trigger a fire alarm and spirit her away in the confusion. When Alwa finds her back in the publisher’s home, he asks her: “How dare you come here.” She tells him, “Where else should I go if not at home?” He confesses her feelings for her and they decide to flee the country. After a series of horrible episodes, Lulu is driven to prostitution and has the misfortune of picking a remorseful Jack the Ripper as her first client. Unaware of Lulu’s fate, Alwa deserts her and ends up in the Salvation Army. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. For a discussion of those films see Part I: 1890 to 1919. Also the individual year appendices in which these films appear for reviews, pictures and a thorough description of the film. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. Good, *The Drunken Reporter: The Biography of a Film Stereotype,”* (The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2000), p. 40 [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. Ibid, *The Drunken Reporter,* p. 20 [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. Ibid, *The Drunken Reporter,*, pp. 35-38. An exception to the alcoholic journalist who reforms by the end of the film is the 1921 silent film, *Certain Rich Man.* Good also writes that “the high rate of recovery in films distinguishes them from nineteenth-century temperance tales, which typically ended with the drunkard in the gutter or the grave…But the films are similar to the temperance tales in depicting the support of a loving woman as an essential part of a drinking cure.” [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. Ibid, *The Drunken Reporter,* pp. 41-42. [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. A complete discussion of these films is included in “Male Reporters.” In this section, the material on alcoholism and the press is these films is featured. [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. Martin Dickstein, *The Brooklyn Eagle,* May 13, 1929, p. 34 [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. “Con.,”*Variety,* July 11, 1928, p. 25 [↑](#endnote-ref-97)
98. *Picture Play,* December 1928, p. 32 [↑](#endnote-ref-98)
99. Good, *The Drunken Reporter,* p. 50. [↑](#endnote-ref-99)
100. Ibid, *The Drunken Reporter,* pp. 68-69. [↑](#endnote-ref-100)
101. In *A Certain Rich Man* (1921), publisher Adrian Brownwell goes to a small town to start a newspaper and the woman he loves is forced to marry him to save her family from financial ruin. Twenty years later, the publisher is a drunk and his wife works for the newspaper, now run by the man his wife really loves, Bob Hendricks. Brownwell shoots Hendricks and then is killed in a railroad accident. Hendricks survives and marries the widow Brownwell. In *Don’t Neglect Your Wife* (1921), Editor Langdon Masters, a brilliant young newspaper writer and editor, is in love with the wife of a San Francisco doctor. A scandal involving one of those innocent situations misconstrued, causes Masters to go to New York, abandoning his career and becomes an alcoholic – drinking himself to death in the lowest haunts of vice and crimes. Eventually he is redeemed when the now-divorced doctor’s wife comes to save him from degradation. In *The Misleading Lady* (1920), a drunken reporter is among the characters used for comic escapades. In *Dicky Monteith* (1922), a drunken journalist, who is cheated out of a large sum of money by a crooked lawyer, sacrifices himself for a friend. [↑](#endnote-ref-101)
102. One critic complained about the sound: “The ringing of a phone eclipses the noise inspired by a mighty daily going to press” *(Variety,* July 24, 1929, p. 35,) And another praised the film’s authenticity: “That the lives of the workers on the metropolitan newspapers are reproduced with fidelity is assured by the fact that Ralph Block, the producer of ‘The Office Scandal,’ and Jack Jungmeyer and Paul Gangelin the authors, formerly were newspaper men of experience” (*The Independent Record,* Helena, Montana, August 6, 1929, p. 2). [↑](#endnote-ref-102)
103. Arthur W. Eddy, *The Film Daily,* January 3, 1929, p. 7 [↑](#endnote-ref-103)
104. Films featuring female reporters from 1920-1929 include *The Abysmal Brute* (1923), *Anna Descends* (1922), *Beau Sabreur* (1928), *Bellamy Trial* (1929), *Big News* (1929), *Big Timber* (1924), *Daring Days* (1925), *The Fighting Hearts* (1926), *The Fighting Lover* (1921), *The Fire Detective* (1929), *The Foolish Matrons* (1921), *The Fourth Face* (1920), *A Front Page Story* (1922), *Gimme Strength* (1926), *The Interview* (1928), *Grass: A Nation’s Battle for Life* (1925), *The Green Flame* (1920), *Headlines* (1925), *Heroes of the Night* (1927), *Her Dangerous Path* (1923), *Hold Your Breath* (1924), *Hot off the Press* (1922), *The Iron Trail* (1921), *The House of Horror* (1929), *In the Headlines* (1929), *Just in Time* (1925), *Lavender and Old Lace* (1921), *The Lion King* (1920-1921), *The Love Trap* (1923), *The Makers of Melody (aka The Melody Makers)* (1929), *Man, Woman and Sin* (1927), *My Husband’s Other Wife* (1920), *Nothing But Lies* (1920), *Oh, Baby!* (1926), *The Old Man in the Corner #1: Kensington Mystery* (1924), *The Old Man in the Corner #2: The Affair at the Novelty Theatre* (1924). *The Old Man in the Corner #3: The Tragedy of Barnsdale Manor* (1924, *The Old Man in the Corner #4:* The York Mystery (1924), *The Old Man in the Corner #6: The Northern Mystery* (1924), *The Old Man in the Corner #7: The Regent’s Park Mystery* (1924), *The Old Man in the Corner #8: The Mystery of Dogstooth Cliff*  (1924), *The Old Man in the Corner #10: The Mystery of the Khaki Tunic* (1924*), The Old Man in the Corner #11: The Tremarne Case* (1924), *The Old Man in the Corner #12: The Hocussing of Cigarette* (1924), *Paramount Magazine: “Miss Jerry*” (1920), *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1921), *The Perfect Sap* (1927), *Pixie at the Wheel* (1924), *Pixie at the Wheel #2: Speeding into Trouble* (1924), *Pixie at the Wheel #3: Peacetime Spies* (1924*), Protection* (1929*), The Radio King* (1922), *The Reporter* (1926), *Salome of the Tenements* (1925), *The Screaming Shadow* (1920), *Show People* (1928),

     *The Silent Barrier* (1920), *Speakeasy* (1929), *Speed Cop: A Minute to Go* (1926), *The Talker* (1925), *The Thirteenth Hour* (1927), *The Vortex* (1928), *What No Man Knows* (1921), *When Dawn Came* (1920), *The Whispered Name* (1924), *A Woman Against the World* (1928), *Woman Who Dare* (1928), *The Wrong Woman* (1920). [↑](#endnote-ref-104)
105. This concept is developed in Part I and this summary comes from that section. See Part One, 1890-1919. [↑](#endnote-ref-105)
106. For a full discussion of the definition of “sob sister” see Part I (1890-1919). [↑](#endnote-ref-106)
107. An 18-episode serial. [↑](#endnote-ref-107)
108. A 10-chapter serial. The hero is a special investigator for the fire department trying to uncover who is starting a series of disastrous fires. Evidence shows a band of criminals are setting the fires. In chapter four, the reporter is kidnapped by a human brute whose own nature matches the gorilla garb he wears. In chapter six, the heroine is smuggled out of her house by the arson gang and pushed into a motor beat. While out in deep water, the boat bursts into flames and the gang dives overboard leaving the reporter gagged and bound, helpless amid the flames. [↑](#endnote-ref-108)
109. A 12-chapter serial. Jerry Hawkins is a tramp printer and Tom O’Rourke is his assistant. In chapter one, the two try to get a roll of print paper from a nearby town to get the paper out in time to keep the county newspaper contract; in chapter two, the pair try to keep the paper from closing because of a mortgage foreclosure; in chapter four, the villain hires a fighter to pick on the editor and the matter is settled in a boxing ring, which the editor wins; in chapter six, when the villain is defeated in his attempts to foreclose a mortgage, he turns his henchmen on Sally and they imprison her in a cellar and gradually fill it with water, but Harry shows up just in time to save her; in chapter seven, Sally and Harry are playing in an annual baseball game between rival cities. The villain bets a thousand dollars with Sally’s father that the other city will win. To insure that he can win the bet, the villain orders his gang to tie up Harry at the newspaper office. When Harry doesn’t show up for the game, printers Jerry and Tom come to the rescue. Harry gets to the game just in time, knocks a homer with the bases full in the eighth inning. Sally hits another home run in the ninth and the father wins the bet; in chapter eight, the villain hires a crook to plant $500 in Harry’s pocket and then accuses the editor of stealing the money. But Sally overhears the plot and clears Harry of any wrongdoing; in chapter nine, Sally is about to be arrested for the disappearance of charity funds left in her care. Harry enters the boxing ring to win the money back and licks the villain. A tramp returns the money when he learns it was for the orphans; in chapter ten, Sally finds a cashier’s check made out to Harry after he kills a story charging the cashiers and others with ruining the bank. The check was Harry’s pay for playing in a football game where his side wins; in chapter twelve, the last entry, Sally and Harry are sent to pay back a large sum of money the newspaper has borrowed from the bank. They are ambushed by the villain and his henchman. Harry is knocked out while Sally and the money are taken on board a tramp steamer. After several misadventures, Sally and Harry beat up the villains, with the help of the inept Tom and Jerry. [↑](#endnote-ref-109)
110. A 10-chapter serial. [↑](#endnote-ref-110)
111. A 10-chapter serial. [↑](#endnote-ref-111)
112. Examples include *The Fourth Face (aka The Mystery of Washington Square)* (1920), in which a newspaperwoman solves a murder in a deserted mansion. In *The Wild Party* (1923), a gum-chewing secretary begs the city editor to give a chance to be a reporter so he sends her to cover a crowd of society people who throw wild parties. She tracks down a “society divorcer,” but her story gets the newspaper involved in a libel suit, and she has to prove her story or lose her job. She fails to prove that she was right, but she wins the love of the man who threatened the libel suit. In the process, she also helps several “misunderstood” couples work out their marital affairs. In *The Screaming Show* (1920), a 15-chapter serial, in which reporter Mary Landers is a rich journalist who helps a scientist experimenting in finding the secret of longevity, Mary is heiress to millions but prefers the newspaper business on account of its adventure and romance. In *Nothing But Lies* (1920), a female reporter for the *Journal* goes undercover to expose an ad agency but it turns out it is all a successful advertising stunt for the paper that Rosie works for. [↑](#endnote-ref-112)
113. Fictional air pirates, as opposed to the more traditional pirates on the high seas who travel by [ship](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ship), travel the airways and just as traditional seafaring pirates target sailing ships, air pirates serve a similar role in science fiction and fantasy media: they capture and plunder aircraft and other targets for cargo, loot and occasionally steal an entire aircraft, sometimes killing the crew members in the process. In the film, a secret service man jumps from plane to plane trying to capture the pirates in one thrilling air sequence after another. [↑](#endnote-ref-113)
114. He captures the crooks with some fancy stunt work including a mid-air change of planes, and dropping from a plane onto a hay stack. [↑](#endnote-ref-114)
115. *Variety,* March 28, 1928, p. 31 [↑](#endnote-ref-115)
116. *Variety,* June 29, 1927, p. 26 [↑](#endnote-ref-116)
117. Earlier, chasing after the crook, Joe sees a beautiful girl and helps rescue her. He returns to the office admitting defeat: he couldn’t find the check. The next day, Dorothy joins the staff and succeeds in getting an interview with a gunman, getting him to divulge the whereabouts of a canceled check that will link a gangster to a corrupt political boss. The gang leader finds out and plans a trap. Winston and Madison find the check and Madison telephones his father to go ahead and print the expose. But the crook pulls a gun on Joe and takes the check back. Newsman Herman Mankiewicz is responsible for the dead-on titles and one reviewer pointed out he sure knows whereof he wrote, pointing out the story that got away is always the biggest one in a newspaper office. [↑](#endnote-ref-117)
118. *The Motion Picture News* reviewer pointed out Gray works as the editor of a sob-sister page: “She blossoms forth in clothes which would appear to be beyond her income.” (*Motion Picture News,* January 19, 1924, p. 274). *Exhibitors Herald* reviewer pointed out that it was difficult to believe that “a country girl can become editor of a society column in the short space of time that it takes in ‘The Whispered Name.’” [↑](#endnote-ref-118)
119. In *The Kensington Mystery* aka *The Tragedy in Dartmoor Terrace* No. 1), the old man solves the mystery of a missing deed; In *The Affair at the Novelty Theatre*  (No. 2), he solves the mystery surrounding the theft of a pearl necklace from an actress at the Novelty Theatre. Other films in the series include *The Tragedy of Barnsdale Manor* (No. 3); *The York Mystery* (No. 4); *The Brighton Mystery* (No 5); *The Northern Mystery* (No. 6); *The Regent’s Park Mystery* (No. 7); *The of Mystery of Dogstooth Cliff* (No. 8), *The Mystery of Brudenel Court* No. 9); *The Mystery of the Khaki* Tunic (No. 10); *The Tremarne Case* (No. 11); The *Hocussing of Cigarette* (No. 12). [↑](#endnote-ref-119)
120. *Buffalo Enquirer,* Buffalo, New York, April 3, 1922, p. 10 [↑](#endnote-ref-120)
121. Other examples are *The Fighting Lover* (1921), in which reporter Helen Leigh is one of three females suspected in being involved in a diamond robbery. She explains her apparent attempt to escape was only to telegraph the story to the newspaper for which she works, not to escape the authorities. Eventually, one of the other women is revealed to be the crook, and the man who thought she was guilty ends up falling in love with her. In *The Foolish Matrons* (1921), Sheila Hopkins, a newspaperwoman who is worried about being an old maid, marries a poet but is selfishly concerned only with her career and refuses to bear him children, driving him to drink and eventually death, leaving her to regret her loss. This film is indicative of the attitudes toward working women at the time. The only woman who fares well is the one who gives up her career for home and family. In *The Wrong Woman* (1920), reporter Viola Sherwin is secretly married, is accused of shooting her husband when he proves unfaithful and is acquitted when a man reveals he is the murderer. In *The Unfoldment* (1922), a female reporter causes a number of individuals including a newspaper owner, a city editor and the editor’s bitter brother to face their true natures. The city editor, who is hated and feared, is attracted to the female reporter. She tries to change his atheistic views, and eventually does. She produces a photoplay that shows each one as others see them. In the process, she untangles several difficulties, creates two romances and leads the city editor to have renewed faith in the Deity. In *Speed Cop: A Minute to Go* (1926), a female reporter is the heroine and the juvenile lead is a cub reporter in a plot that deals with the theft of a string of pearls. The cub reporter is framed for the theft and the kidnapping of the female reporter and the motorcycle cop who is the hero of the Speed Cop series. In *Oh, Baby!* (1926)*,* magazine reporter Dorothy Brennan poses as the wife of a man who would like to get some of his wealthy aunt’s money. American reporter Pixie O’Hara, who is a racing motorist who runs out of money and is compelled to become a journalist, gets some help from an English motorist in reporting a story in a series of 1924 films (*Pixie at the Wheel #1: Miles Against Minutes* *Pixie at the Wheel #2: Speeding into Trouble*, *Pixie at the Wheel #3: Peacetime Spies*). In *Daring Days* (1925), newspaperwoman Eve Underhill (some reviews say she worked in the classified, not the editorial department) from San Francisco leaves her job to become mayor of a small Arizona town. On her way to the town, she is attacked by ruffians from a neighboring town. The mayor of a rival town rescues her. But the violence continues until several persons are killed and the villain is captured. In *The Silent Barrier* (1920), reporter Helen Wynton, a society reporter on the *Argus*, goes to St. Moritz to cover the winter carnival in the Alps as two men in love with her follow her to the carnival. In *Big Timber* (1924), newspaperwoman Poppy Ordway investigates a story at a lumber camp about a former president of the company committing suicide. The foreman of a rival company, who is in love with her, tells her he has letters incriminating the man who took over the company. She gets the letters and escapes, but the new company president saves the reporter from a forest fire and in gratitude she gives him the incriminating letters. *The Reporter* (1926) features reporter Sylvia Paddock in a minor role. There is also a female reporter in *The Love Trap* (1923). [↑](#endnote-ref-121)
122. In one instance, we see Rodgers and Hart leaving a music publisher’s office talking about going into the real estate business. They sit on a bench reading a newspaper. Rodgers: “Murder, Suicide, Robbery, Blackmail….” Hart:” Which one are you going to do?” Rodgers: “The way I feel I’d like to do them all.” Hart: What a beautiful tough hard-hearted town it is.” Rodgers: What?” Hart: “Manhattan. We’ll have Manhattan, the Bronx and Statten…” the a full production of the song takes place. The same thing happens with every question the reporter asks. [↑](#endnote-ref-122)
123. *Exhibitors Herald,*  April 8, 1922, p. 76 [↑](#endnote-ref-123)
124. *Screenland,* July, 1928, pp. 10-11 [↑](#endnote-ref-124)
125. Films featuring radio cub reporters from 1920-1929 include *April Fool* (1924), *Biff! Bang!! Bomb!!!* (1920), *The Cub Reporter* (1922), *Dangerous Traffic* (1926), *Extra! Extra!* (1922), *The Fatal Mistake* (1924), *The Fighting Cub* (1925), *The Final Extra* (1927), *A Front Page Story* (1922), *Gentlemen of the Press* (1929), *Her Big Night* (1926), *Her Reputation* (1923), *Hold Still* (1926), *In The Headlines* (1929), *Is That Nice?* (1926), *The Kid Reporter* (1923), *Lightning Reporter* (1926), *Live News* (1927), *The Magic Cup* (1921), *The News Maker* (1922), *The Nut* (1921), *Power of the Press* (1928), *Racing Blood* (1926), *The Racket* (1928), *Rainbow Riley* (1926), *She’s My Girl* (1928), *Social Errors* (1922), *The Social Highwayman* (1926), *Stick to Your Story* (1926), *Telling the World* (1928), *Tie That Bull* (1927), *What a Night!* (1928), *Wing Toy* (1921). [↑](#endnote-ref-125)
126. Silent film audiences were familiar with this reference to Arthur Brisbane, one of the best known American newspaper editors of the early 20th century. He was editor of the greatest New York newspapers, from *The Sun,* to Joseph Pulitzer’s *World* to William Randolph Hearst’s *Journal.* He became Hearst’s confidant and his syndicated column had an estimated daily readership of more than 20 million. He also became a public relations professional who coached many businesspeople in the field of public relations including Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and John D. Rockefeller. *Various* Sources [↑](#endnote-ref-126)
127. Other examples include *A Front Page Story* (1922), in which cub reporter Rodney Marvin gets a job on the *Gazette* where Editor-Publisher Matt Hayward and the mayor are enemies. After writing a smear campaign against the mayor, the cub brings about a reconciliation between the two and marries the editor’s daughter who works as a reporter on the paper. In *Her Big Night* (1926), a woman trades places with a look-alike actress but things get complicated when a popcorn-eating, old hardboiled newspaper reporter J.Q. Adams with a nose for news who never accepts anything until it is positive, gets suspicious, senses the duality and tries to prove it. He sends cub reporter Harold Crosby to impersonate the actress's husband. The cub faces farce situations involving deception and mistaken identity before he gets an interview with the actress who when confronted with the reporter manages to bluff her way as the real actress. The woman eventually exchanges places with the real actress and all ends happily. In *Lightning Reporter* (1926), cub reporter Jimmy Blayne helps a railroad president beat his unscrupulous rival in the stock market and falls in love with his daughter. In *Racing Blood* (1926), cub reporter Jimmy Fleming goes to work for a small California newspaper after his uncle loses a fortune and commits suicide. He later buys a horse at an auction without knowing that it was stolen from his former girlfriend, Muriel Sterling. She recognizes the horse but doesn’t tell Jimmy who decides to ride the horse in a steeplechase, but when his weight prohibits him, she ends up riding the horse herself and after a series of complications in which she almost gets killed, she wins the race, the money and the reporter’s love. In *Rainbow Riley* (1926), cub reporter Steve “Rainbow” Riley works for the *Louisville Ledger* and is assigned to cover a feud between Kentucky mountain families. When he falls for the daughter of one family and ignores the daughter of the other clan, both families go after him. Eventually he is rescued by the state militia and returns with a big story and a wife. In *Tie That Bull* (1927), Bobby is a cub reporter (“who pulled more bloomers than are worn in a girls’s gymnasium”). He meets a girl in a police station who tells him, “I love brave men!” Bobby says to her: “Say, I’m the watch-dog of this station…they never do anything without me.” He gets a large camera with a huge tripod that he can barely hold, discovers where a criminal is, sets up to shoot the picture (a very long process) and then shows policemen where the criminal is. The criminal starts shooting and in the chaos that follows, the cub is thrown out of a train window, chased by the criminal and captured. A police shakes the cub’s hand and congratulations him. Back at the station, Bobby takes all the credit in front of the girl until the criminal stares at him saying, “When I get out, I’ll squeeze your Adam’s apple until you spit apple cider!” Police take the criminal away while the cub demonstrates to the girl how he caught the crook: “I hope he gets out – I need the exercise,” he says. A newspaper headline: “Bull Escapes! Killer Escapes After Threatening Reporter Who Caused his Arrest.” Bobby goes to the girl’s home to protect her. The cub sees the criminal outside and hides in the cellar where the criminal finds him. The chase is on. Bobby eventually falls through the ceiling on top of the criminal, jumps on top of the unconscious man, and ties his hands to his feet. He then pretends to knock him out as police arrive and take the criminal to jail proclaiming that Bobby is a hero. But the criminal escapes again and chases Bobby who somehow captures him and police lock the crook up again. “From now I’m going to be busy,” he tells the cops as he walks arm in arm out of the police station with the girl. In *The Nut (1921),* Pernelius Vanderbook Jr., a millionaire cub reporter who works for *The New York Times,* brings two lovers together while on a story involving bodies in Greenwich Village that turn out to be mannequins. When he realizes the dead bodies are wax figures, he says, “Some story! If I can get a scoop on it I’ll do a whole lot for you.” The man involved and the reporter make a deal to help each other. In *Extra! Extra!* (1922), cub reporter Barry Price for the *Morning Sun* is teamed up with reporter Jim Rogers to get a story on a business merger. The reporter fails to get aboard the businessman’s yacht to get the interview and is later fired. Price fakes drowning and gets the interview. He also disguises himself as a butler to get to papers in a safe that verify the merger, steals the papers and helps Rogers get his job back before marrying the reporter’s daughter. In *The Social Highwayman* (1926), cub reporter Jay Walker for *The Magnolia News* is ordered to find a notorious bandit or be fired since the newspaper has criticized the administration for not catching the bandit. Walker is held up by the bandit who was disguised as a gypsy woman and he and his newspaper are ridiculed by a rival newspaper which gets the cub into even more trouble. He is told not to return until he has captured the thief. Walker meets the crook, now disguised as a medicine man, and to impress him claims to be the highwayman. He tries to prove it by holding up a woman who turns out to be the niece of his publisher. Walker also accidentally rescues a baby from a bank safe then pursues the bandit aboard a moving freight train. [↑](#endnote-ref-127)
128. Police reporter Conner is spelled “Connor” in IMDb, but reviews in 1925 refer to him as Bull Conner. [↑](#endnote-ref-128)
129. Motion Picture News, September 5, 1925, p. 1162 [↑](#endnote-ref-129)
130. New York Daily Nerws, August 1, 1925, p. 19 [↑](#endnote-ref-130)
131. *Variety,* May 25, 1927, p. 21 [↑](#endnote-ref-131)
132. When his lawyer arrives with a writ of habeas corpus to free his client, the police captain rips it up and locks up the attorney. His crooked City Hall cronies led by the district attorney show up to release him. But the jailed singer who hates the mobster for the way he has treated her gets him to confess. Since reporters get the story, the district attorney, acting on orders from “the Old Man,” decide the mobster is more of a liability than an asset because he threatens to go to the press and tell all if they don’t help him. They believe he must be killed when he tries to escape. They help him plan his escape but as he tries to flee through a window, the captain arrives. The mobster shoots at him, but his political cohorts gave him an unloaded gun and the mobster is shot and killed by the police. One of the reporters says, “What a break for the Sunday papers! But why shoot him?” Pratt sarcastically answers for the police: “So that government of the professionals by the professionals and for the professionals shall not perish from the earth.” They run out to make sure the sensational news is printed in their paper’s Sunday edition. [↑](#endnote-ref-132)
133. Films featuring war correspondents from 1920-1929, include *The Drums of Jeopardy* (1923), *Held by the Enemy* (1920), *The Light That Failed* (1923), *Livingstone (aka Livingstone in Africa)* (1925), *The Reporter* (1922), *A Splendid Hazard* (1920), *With Stanley in Africa* (1922). [↑](#endnote-ref-133)
134. Other examples include: *In Splendid Hazard* (1920), American war Correspondent John Fitzgerald and a former war correspondent have an obsession about Napoleon. In *Jazzmania* (1923), an American correspondent volunteers to get a story on the refusal of the queen of Jazzmania to marry a prince. He dresses up in a black cape and false moustache telling her guards, “Don’t shoot, it’s only the press.” The queen sneaks out with the reporter while a revolution is brewing and goes with him back to America. In *The Legion of the Condemned* (1928), Gale Price is a newspaper reporter in Washington D.C. assigned to cover an embassy ball. He falls in love with a woman he did not know was in the French secret service, and when he falls in finds her in a private room in the arms of a German baron apparently drunk, he is devastated and joins the French flying squadron in World War I (aka the Legion of the Condemned because it is composed of men with various reasons for desiring death). Now he is assigned to fly a spy into enemy territory and it turns out to be the woman. Three days later after she is dropped safely behind enemy lines, she is captured. The Germans then use her as a decoy to lure Price’s plane into a trap. After he too is captured, the woman manages to get a message through to his squadron who rescue them just before they are about to be shot by a firing squad. The *Variety* reviewer said the film made “just a foolish kid of the big, hulking he-man reporter who should have stuck with his typewriter.” [↑](#endnote-ref-134)
135. “Fred,” *Variety,* November 4, 1921 [↑](#endnote-ref-135)
136. Newsreels occasionally featured correspondents. *Pathe Review’s* continental correspondent offers tea tips to the audience (*Pathe Review No. 9,*  1929). [↑](#endnote-ref-136)
137. The film opens with Dick driving his car to the border of Latin American republic of El Tovar where two soldiers try to stop him from entering. Each soldier from each country hates each other so the reporter makes a quick getaway and drives off. He meets an export company representative and friend of the royal family. In town, he is stopped by soldiers who tear up his press card when he hands it to them. The exporter gets them out of trouble saying he has an important message for the president. They are escorted to the palace immediately. The exporter hooks up with the president’s daughter while the reporter is entranced by the daughter of the American counsel who he impresses by showing her his reporter’s card. Dick discovers guns in boxes in a storage area. The crooks come in and he hides in the box with the guns. He is almost discovered, but the crooks leave and he escapes. Meanwhile, the exporter is framed for killing a man. The reporter helps him escape by using his finger as a gun on the guard. They rush to rescue the president’s daughter who has been kidnapped and capture the crooks with the reporter becoming a hero by knocking out one crook after another with the butt of one of the stolen guns. [↑](#endnote-ref-137)
138. Films featuring editors from 1920-1929 include*All Dolled Up* (1921), *April Fool* (1924), *The Arizona Whirlwind* (1927), *As the World Rolls On* (1921), *Beggar in Purpose* (1920), *Biff! Bang!! Bomb!!!* (1920), *Big News* (1929), *The Big Noise* (1928), *The Big Scoop* (1922), *Bing Bang Boom* (1922), *Boston Blackie* (1923), *Bring Him In* (1924), *The Clean Heart (*1924), *The Cleanup* (1929), *Copy* (1929), *Counsel for the Defense* (1925), *Crooked Alley* (1923), *The Danger Man* (1921), *Dangerous Love* (1920), *Deliverance* (1928), *Der Teufelsreporter (aka The Daredevil Reporter)* (1929), *The Devil’s Cargo* (1925), *Don’t Neglect Your Wife* (1921), *Drag* (1929), *Eleven P.M.* (1928), *Every Woman’s Problem* (1921), *The Family Closet* (1921), *The Fear Market* (1920), *The Figurehead* (1920), *The Fighting Hearts* (1926), *The Final Extra* (1927), Fox News No. 42 (1928), *Freedom of the Press* (1928), *A Front Page Story* (1922), *Gang War* (1928), *Gentlemen of the West* (1923), *Grinning Guns* (1927), *The Gray Dawn* (1922), *The Head Man* (1928), *Headlines* (1925), *Her Story* (1920-1922), *High Steppers* (1926), *His Nibs* (1921), *The Hollywood Reporter* (1926), *Homespun Folks* (1920), *Hot Off the Press* (1922), *How Baxter Butted In (aka Hero Stuff)* (1925), *A Hulu Honeymoon* (1923), *In the Heart of a Fool* (1920), *The Installment Collector* (1929), *Is That Nice?* (1926), *It Can Be Done* (1921), *The Jailbird* (1920), *Kissed* (1922), *Laughing Lady* (1929), *Law and the Man* (1928), *The Law of the Yukon* (1920), *Leap Year Leaps* (1920), *Let ‘Er Go Gallegher* (1928), *Lone Larry* (1924), *Looking for Trouble* (1926), *Love in the Dark* (1922), *A Man Must Live* (1925), *Man Rustlin’* (1926), *The Man Without Desire* (1923), *Man, Woman and Sin* (1927), *The Midlanders* (1920), *Modern Daughters* (1927), *Not for Publication* (1927), *The Office Scandal* (1929), *An Old Sweetheart of Mine* (1923), *Our Leading Citizen* (1922), *Out of the Storm* (1926), *Paramount News No. 49* (1928), *Pathe News No. 7* (1929*), Pathe Review No. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 17, 25, 27, 34, 50, 52* (1928), *Pathe Review No. 10* (1929), *Pathe Sound Newsreel First Special Extra* (1928), *Pathe Sound News No. 1, 2, 3* (1928), *Peace and Quiet* (1921), *Playing It Wild* (1923), *Power of the Press* (1928), *The Racket* (1928), *Red Courage* (1921), *Red Hot Papa* (1926), *The Return of the Riddle Rider* (1927) , *The Riddle Rider* (1924-1925), *Riders of the Dark* (1928), *Ruggles of Red Gap* (1923), *The Scarlet Car* (1923), *Screen Snapshots No. 20* (1921), *Shameful Behavior* (1926), *Star Reporter* (1927), *The Steadfast Heart* (1923), *Stick to Your Story* (1926), *Sunless Sunday* (1921), *Tea – With a Kick* (1923), *That Dirty Dog Morris* (1924), *The Thinker* (1922), *Todd of the Times* (reissue 1922), *Topical Tips and Topics of the Day* (1920), *The Town Scandal* (1923), *Unconquered* (1922), *What a Night*! (1928), *What No Man Knows* (1921), *What’s Your Hurry* (1920), *When Caesar Ran a Newspaper* (1929), *A Woman Against the World* (1928), *Woman of Affairs* (1928), *The Whispered Name* (1924), *Youth and Adventure* (1925). [↑](#endnote-ref-138)
139. Examples include *Boston Blackie* (1923), in which Blackie, a detective just released from prison, is an editor of a paper with an editorial campaign about prison reform. He arranges with the district attorney, who is running for governor, to send him back to prison to get the facts, but then the district attorney is killed and Blackie is sent to prison for life. The governor releases him when the real murderer of the district attorney confesses. In *Bring Him* (1924), a newspaper editor relentlessly criticizes the police force. The San Francisco police commissioner makes a bet with him – the editor promises if the policeman assigned brings in a thug before ten o’clock that night, the editor will be become the police force’s strongest backer. [↑](#endnote-ref-139)
140. A 15-chapter serial. [↑](#endnote-ref-140)
141. A 10-chapter serial. In chapter seven, the heroine is trapped by a gang and falls down a flight of stairs and then escapes. Later, Parker, a friend, and the heroine are attacked by the gang and the woman falls into a deep well while Parker is knocked out. In chapter eight, the rangers arrive at the top of the cliff and battle the gang members. A boulder is loosened. It rolls down against a pile of dynamite at the entrance and there is an explosion just as the Riddle Rider, a friend and the heroine come running out.

     [↑](#endnote-ref-141)
142. *Photoplay,* August, 1929, p. 111 [↑](#endnote-ref-142)
143. The heroine tries to stop publication and fails. Huge printing presses grind out papers containing the sensational story as the heroine races to her husband to tell him the true story before he reads it in a newspaper. [↑](#endnote-ref-143)
144. A female editor shows up in *Dangerous Love* (1920) and plays more of a vamp than a journalist. [↑](#endnote-ref-144)
145. Another example is *The Law of the Yukon* (1920), in which a man leaves his unfaithful wife in San Francisco and goes to the Yukon to establish a daily newspaper. He falls in love with his secretary, is stabbed in the back as he struggles to get out the first edition of his newspaper, is accused of theft and arrested, but his wife shows up at the trial to say she saw the editor and his secretary together the night of the theft. The editor is released, his wife is killed by gang members and he is free to marry his secretary. In *Everybody’s Acting* (1926), editor Peter O’Brien adopts a little girl with four members of an acting company when her father shoots her mother and then kills himself. She grows up and the five “fathers” help the adopted daughter’s romance with Ted Potter, a taxi driver who is secretly wealthy but driving a cab to get information for a book. They stage false scenes of their home life to impress Potter’s disapproving mother. After several mishaps, the mother is finally brought around when she is told that editor O’Brien can help advance her social position ion his newspaper. In *It Can Be Done* (1921), Byron Tingley is the muck-raking editor of *The Morning Clarion.* He hires an author of detective fiction to expose three business profiteers. He finds out one of them is the father of his fiancee and decides to resign rather than expose him. Then the author reveals that the whole thing was a game. [↑](#endnote-ref-145)
146. See earlier examples of editors in **Male Reporters, Female Reporters and Cub Reporters.** [↑](#endnote-ref-146)
147. Other examples include *Our Leading Citizen* (1922), which features the rustic editor of a small-town newspaper.

     In *The Midlanders* (1920), a newspaper editor in a small river town is one of a woman’s many suitors but she ends up with someone else. In *An Old Sweetheart of Mine*  (1923), the editor of a local paper, while rummaging through an old trunk, is reminded of his first sweetheart. His musings end with his wife – his first sweetheart – entering the attic with their two children. In *A Hulu Honeymoon* (1923), to boost his circulation, the editor of a small-town paper conceives of the idea of running a popularity contest with newlyweds or near prospects eligible for a trip to and from Honolulu, all expenses paid. In *Drag* (1929), David Carroll is an ambitious young man who writes songs but goes to a small town in Vermont to take over the newspaper. He loves another girl, Dot, “the most sophisticated in town,” but finds himself eased into marriage with the town’s daughter and her family who turns out be spongers of the first water. He ends up being the bread-winner for the entire family. Finally he cannot go on and the paper is forced to suspend publication when he goes to New York to try to get a musical he wrote published. He finds Dot who is now a successful costume designer, uses her influence to get his musical produced. It is a hit and the wife’s family comes to New York to get some of the money. By this time, David realizes that he really loves Dot, who left for Paris when he tells her he is going to remain true to his wife. So the editor walks out of his married life after telling the family members exactly what parasites they are, leaves and follows Dot to France. In *Law and the Man* (1928), country editor Quintus Newton is always seen lighting and smoking his cigar and serves as comedy relief in an overdrawn caricature of a newspaperman. In *Ruggles of Red Gap* (1923), the editor of the local newspaper publishes an account of the visit of the family of a noted British officer. The man is really a valet to the British earl, but assumes the role after the newspaper article comes out as to not embarrass the family and their friends. [↑](#endnote-ref-147)
148. The resourceful woman, posing as insane, goes to her absent-minded sweetheart, a candidate for senator who doesn’t respond to her affections, insists she is his wife and he finally falls in love with her. The real crazy woman appears as a trained nurse with her ex-husband who tries to burglarize the house. The head of the reform committee sponsoring the candidate bursts in demanding an explanation. The man asserts the girl is his wife, and after the complications are resolved, they decide to make the arrangement legal. [↑](#endnote-ref-148)
149. A tramp sacrifices his wife to save the editor when the journalist retreats to the country. He also falls in love with a woman who restores his sense of well-being. The editor discovers a book he wrote has become a success. When the woman falls off a cliff during a storm, the editor, in his unbalanced state, suggests that they run off together without getting married. Later he proposes. There is no mention of his previous wife. *The New York Times* reviewer wrote that the film “reveals the gradual breakdown of the editor. From a cheerful young man, he becomes at 34, an irritable genius, who dreads the grinding rumble of the newspaper presses, even in his comfortable office. A double exposure effect depicting faintly the presses at work tells of the man’s mental condition.” (*The New York Times,* September 10, 1924, p. 211.) [↑](#endnote-ref-149)
150. Examples include *Woman of Affairs* (1928), in which a city editor agrees with his reporter that a woman who hasn’t been in England for years would make a good story, so the reporter goes to the newspaper morgue and pulls out pictures and text on what the woman has been during for the last seven years. This newspaper montage lets the pictures tell what happened to the woman who had plunged into an orgy of amorous adventures from Calais to Cairo. The newspaperman’s reference files include poses of the heroine with her various boyfriends. The sequence also has the director cunningly dodging the censor by treating the many-lover episodes as a series of photos with captions taken from a newspaper’s files. The journalist then writes the story under “Today’s Gossip: News and Views About Men, Women and Affairs….” in *the Daily Mirror.* In *Screen Shots No. 20* (1921), a city editor of a Los Angeles newspaper entertains a film personality. In *Kissed* (1922), editor Needham is a character in the film. In *Love in the Dark* (1922), Editor Dr. Horton, a minister, takes in a woman after she is arrested and employs her as a companion for his wife. In *Red Hot Papa* (1926), the cast includes the editor of the *Fanal des Charentes*. [↑](#endnote-ref-150)
151. Examples include *Topical Tips* and *Topics of the Day* (1920-1921) and *Topics of the Day* (1922-1926) in which smart sayings by the world’s famous editors are selected from newspapers and magazines of the world by the editors of the Literary Digest. In *International News No. 14* (1924), Publisher William Randolph Hearst and Washington newspaperman G. Logan Payne leave the White House after a social call on President Coolidge in Washington D.C. In *Fox News No. 38* (1926), publishers and editors of newspapers in Southern states confer at Vanderbilt University; California editors are treated today on a trip to a stone pile (deliberately stacked stone) in Inglewood, California (*International News No. 35,* 1926); first in the series of prominent editors of the country (*Fox News No. 42,* 1928); United States editors take in “pumpmobiles” at Palm Beach, Florida (*Paramount News No. 49,* 1928); Editor Roy W. Howard starts war on wood alcohol peddlers (*Pathe News No. 7,* 1929). In a special series “Famous Editors You Do Not Know” for *Pathe Review*, J.P. O’Connell, editor of the New York telephone book, Albert N. Marquis, the guiding hand behind “Who’s Who in America,” J.F. Mixer, editor of the Automobile Blue Book, Dr. F.H. Vizetelly of the Standard Dictionary, A.J. Burns of the Official Railway Guide and Ray Hall, editor of Pathe News are featured in *Pathe Review No. 10,* (1929). [↑](#endnote-ref-151)
152. *The Film Daily,* October 14, 1923, p. 9 [↑](#endnote-ref-152)
153. Films featuring publishers, owners and media barons from 1920-1929 include *Anna Descends* (1922), *Back Home and Broke* (1922), *A Certain Rich Man* (1921), *Contraband* (1925), *Deliverance* (1928), *The Enemy Sex* (1924), *Eyes of the Underworld* (1929), *The Fear Market* (1920), *Fox Movietone News, Vol. 2, No. 17* (1929), *Fox Movietone News No. 28* (1929), *Fox News No. 37, 48, 49, 52, 55, 59, 61, 76, 98* (1928), *Freedom of the Press* (1928), *Gentle Julia* (1923), *Gentlemen of the West* (1923), *Go and Get It* (1920), *Grinning Guns* (1927), *Her Reputation* (1923), *High Steppers* (1926), *Hot News* (1928), *International News No. 14* (1924), *International News No. 13* (1927), *Is That Nice?* (1926), *Jazzland* (1928), *The Kid Reporter* (1923), *A Little Girl in a Big City* (1925), *The Little Wanderer* (1920), *Livingstone (aka Livingstone in Africa)* (1925), *Loves of an Actress* (1928), *The Lying Truth* (1922), *The Man Under Cover* (1922), *Man, Woman and Sin* (1927), *Not the Type* (1927), *The Notorious Lady* (1927), *On the Front Page* (1926), *Out of the Storm* (1926), *Pagan Love* (1920), *Pandora’s Box* (1929), *A Perfect Crime* (1921), *Playing It Wild* (1923), *A Prince There Was* (1921-1922), *Printer’s Devil* (1923), *The Reckless Age* (1924), *Red Hot Sp*eed (1929), *The Rustle of Silk* (1923), *Salome of the Tenements* (1925), *Selznick Newsreel Edition* (1922), *Smudge* (1922), *The Social Code* (1923), *Stolen Kisses* (1929), *The Telephone Girl* (1927), *The Unfoldment* (1922), *Whispers* (1920), *The Woman in the Suitcase* (1920), *The Woman’s Side* (1922), *The World’s Applause* (1923), *Youth and Adventure* (1925). [↑](#endnote-ref-153)
154. While Mary gets the police, Dillingham fights the gang single-handed, following them on a boat while trying to make a getaway. Taggart is arrested when the editor turns over the evidence he has collected on him to the police. Reggie wins Mary, and his lawyer informs him that his investments have doubled in value and he is once again a rich man. [↑](#endnote-ref-154)
155. The *Variety* reviewer had this to say about the film: “It has never been possible to produce a play built on the getting out of a newspaper that has proven much of a success. The girl picture reviewers of Chicago emphasized that this photoplay sets the newspaper business in a wrong light, but that is either one of their illusions or a play they are making to other newspaper folks who know more than they do about real newspaper work. There is an organization in this paper which is determined to provide what the people want, and stops at nothing, and another organization that has a heart. The big boss divides his attention between the two and shifts from one to the other as he sees fit. Finally in this picture, the newspaper owner does what is ‘right’ at the expense of an edition of his paper and this is not asking more of a publisher than it is reasonable to assume he will perform.” *Variety,* September 13, 1923, p. 30 [↑](#endnote-ref-155)
156. J.S. Dickerson, *Motion Picture News,* February 7, 1920, p. 1537 [↑](#endnote-ref-156)
157. Richard R. Ness, *From Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography,* pp. 44-45 [↑](#endnote-ref-157)
158. Examples include *The Woman’s Side* (1922), in which a publisher supports a judge who is a gubernatorial candidate believing he has a clean record. An attorney who is running against the judge tells the publisher some dirt on the judge. The attorney goes to the judge and tells him if he doesn’t withdraw from the race the story will be published. The judge’s daughter threatens to commit suicide if the story is not retracted. The judge forces the attorney to telephone the publisher to kill the story. In *Back Home and Broke* (1922), a young man whose family goes broke and is rejected by the town and leaves in disgrace, becomes a millionaire and returns as a poor man. Secretly he buys up the town’s properties and becomes publisher of the newspaper before revealing who he is to the shocked residents. In *Gentle Julia* (1923), small-town publisher Herbert Atwater Jr. gets out an “extra” on his small printing press that his older sister wants to marry another man other than her neighbor. The rejected man reads the story and it causes him great distress. In *A Prince There Was* (1921, a man buys a magazine so he can publish the stories of the woman he loves. In *The Woman in the Suitcase* (1920), a newspaper owner’s son falls in love after answering an advertisement in his father’s paper. In *A Perfect Crime* (1921), a publisher wants to make a book out of a man’s self-admitted wild adventure . [↑](#endnote-ref-158)
159. *Motion Picture World,* March 7, 1925, p. 59 [↑](#endnote-ref-159)
160. Films featuring newsreel shooters and photojournalists from 1920-1929 include *Around the World Via Graf Zeppelin* (1929), *Bee’s Knees* (1924), *The Big Shot* (1929), *Burton Holmes Travelogues* (1920-1921-1922-1923-1924), *The Cameraman* (1920), *The Cameraman* (1928), *Chasing Through Europe* (1929), *The College Boob* (1926), *Ella Cinders* (1926), *Eucharistic Congress Film* (1926), *Extra! Extra!* (1923), *Face the Camera* (1922), *Felix the Cat: Felix in Jungle Bungles* (1928), *Fifty-Fifty* (1925), *The Film Reporter* (1926), *Fox Movietone Interviews* (1928), *Fox Movietone News, Vol. 2, No. 14* (1929), *Fox Movietone News No. 38, 83* (1929), *Fox News No. 74, 76, 80* (1923), *Fox News No. 9. 33* (1924), *Fox News No. 25* (1925), *Fox News No. 20, 23, 30, 76, 84, 103* (1926), *Fox News No. 66* (1927), *Grass: A Nation’s Battle for Life* (1925), *His Own Law* (1924), *Hodge Podge: Some Sense and Some Nonsense* (1922), *Hogan’s Alley* (1925), *Hot News* (1928), *Hunting Tigers in India* (1929), *International News No. 38* (1923), *International News No. 48, 64* (1923), *International News No. 11, 22, 38, 78, 79, 82* (1924), *International News No. 49, 55, 81, 93, 102* (1925), *International News No. 10, 12, 54, 61* (1926), *International News No. 16* (1927), *International News No. 4,* 104 (1927), *Kinograms No. 2311* (1923), *Kinograms No. 5026* (1924), *Kinograms No. 5042, 5043. 5105* (1925), *Kinograms No. 5147, 5149, 5151, 5156, 5209, 5210, 5229, 5230* (1926), K*inograms No. 5260, 5265, 5269, 5284, 5292* (1927), *Kinograms No. 5399* (1928), *Life’s Greatest Thrills* (1925), *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929), *MGM News No. 1* (1927), *Miss Mend (aka The Adventures of the Three Reporters*) (1926), *Naughty Baby* (1929), *The News Parade* (1928), *Never Again* (1924), *News Reeling* (1928), *The Nooze Weekly with Mutt and Jeff* (1920), *Paramount News No. 1* (1927), *Paramount News No. 77* (1928), *Pathe News No. 13* (1920), *Pathe News No. 18, 23, 32, 45, 50, 55, 66, 72, 79, 90* (1923), *Pathe News No. 8, 12, 13, 16, 24, 59, 60, 80, 95, 101, 196* (1924), *Pathe News No. 13, 15, 33. 36, 39, 52, 70, 85* (1925), *Pathe News No. 7, 9, 43, 74, 95, 97* (1926), *Pathe News No. 12, 28, 36, 44* (1927), *Pathe News No. 4, 35, 37, 96-97* (1928), *Pathe Review No. 3, 35* (1925), *Pathe Review No. 17. 34* (1926), *Pathe Review No. 1, 6, 18, 52* (1927), *Pathe Review No. 12, 38, 45, 49* (1928), *Pathe Review No. 4. 13, 49* (1929), *Reel Life* (1928), *Reputation* (1921), *Roughest Africa* (1923), *Screen Snapshots No. 25* (1921), *Screen Snapshots* (1929), *Selznick Newsreel Edition* (1922), *Selznick News No. 1013* (1922), *Selznick News No. 1028* (1922), *The Shakedown* (1929), *Talking Screen Snapshots* (1929), *Trifling With Honor* (1923), *Why Men Work* (1924). [↑](#endnote-ref-160)
161. A newspaper reviewer writing about the latest sound newsreel that appeared in August 1928 was enthusiastic about “sound” newsreels: “The latest in real news reels is the Fox ‘Movietone’ news which makes it advent locally this week at the Des Moines theater. By this process of photographing the sound of objects on the film, we are enabled to hear the drumming of the motors in the motorboat race, the snapping of huge trees as they are mowed down by mighty tanks which, with an awesome roar, seem to pass over our heads! It’s thrilling.” (*Des Moines Register,* Iowa, August 6, 1928, p. 11.) [↑](#endnote-ref-161)
162. Sid, *Variety,* May 30, 1928, pp. 14-30 [↑](#endnote-ref-162)
163. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,*  May 29, 1928, p. 17 [↑](#endnote-ref-163)
164. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,* July 23, 1928, p. 11 [↑](#endnote-ref-164)
165. *Exhibitors Herald-Moving Picture World,* July 14, 1928, p. 53 [↑](#endnote-ref-165)
166. *New York Daily News,* July 23, 1928, p. 108 [↑](#endnote-ref-166)
167. *Times Herald,* Olean, New York, July 26, 1928, p. 3 [↑](#endnote-ref-167)
168. *Variety,* September 18, 1929, p. 29 [↑](#endnote-ref-168)
169. *Motion Picture News,* November 21, 1928, p. 1600 [↑](#endnote-ref-169)
170. Other examples include an International News cameraman who risks his life time and again to furnish the outside world with views of the Japanese earthquake and subsequent fire and tidal waves. His shots during the actual earthquake include flaming buildings, toppling skyscrapers, streets strewn with ruin and dead. The close-ups offer an intimate study of how terrible the catastrophe really was (*International News No. 80,* 1923). Kinograms newsman Gene Lamb films industrial activities of natives of Tibet (*Kinograms No. 5151*, 1926) then leads the first white expedition to cross the Alexander III range in the Tibetan Mountains. It is a Kinograms exclusive. A Paramount News cameraman Ray Fernstrom shot footage of the first successful trans-Atlantic aircraft flight from East to West in 1928 capturing pictures of the men who flew the plane and the financial backer and passenger on the first westward transatlantic flight (*Paramount News No. 77,* 1928). A Pathe News cameraman risks his life to shoot unusual pictures of a 68,000-pound load hauled up a mountainside in Big Creek, California (*Pathe News No. 90,* 1923). International News cameraman Sanford Greenwald went on a record flight through Death Trap in the Grand Canyon (*International News No. 38,* 1924). International News “aerial” cameraman John A. Bockhorst and a crack pilot fly through narrow canyons in Texas (*International News No. 55,* 1925). Pathe News cameraman Harry Harde shot exceptional views of the “Bottling up of the Rum Fleet” by the Coast Guard blockade. Flying in the face of a gal over Rum Row and vicinity, Harde photographed the Coast Guard ship Seneca leading out the dry enforcement fleet and also discovered a complete line of Government picket boats extending from Montauk Point to Barnegal cutting off the Rum Fleet from the shore (*Pathe News No. 39, 1925*); Pathe News cameraman Maurice Kellermann makes a film record of the American excavation of ancient Carthage (*Pathe Review No. 17* 1926); a Kinograms cameraman films the crash of Commander Byrd’s Paris flight test and about half of the newsreel is devoted to the accident after its landing wheels sank into a gully and the whirring propellers struck the soft earth as the craft tumbled over upon its back in a smashup (*Kinograms No. 5284,* 1927); a Pathe News cameraman keeps grinding while a car at Daytona Beach, Florida, crashes and Frank Lockhart, the holder of many world’s driving records is hurtled to his death (*Pathe News No. 37,* 1928); a Pathe News cameraman is attacked by an infuriated rhino while covering Prince William’s Great Expedition to Africa (*Pathe Review No. 12,* 1928); cameraman Ettore Villani captures Vesuvius in its latest eruption (*Fox Movietone News No. 38,* 1929); a Pathe News cameraman risks his life to “make his picture” as he braves a tempest on the Atlanta when the RMS Caronia fight stiff gales and mountainous billows to reach port (*Pathe News No. 55,* 1923). [↑](#endnote-ref-170)
171. *The Film Daily,* January 13, 1929, p. 9 [↑](#endnote-ref-171)
172. A Fox News cameraman films the famed Riviera from the air in trial flight of the new French dirigible (*Fox News No. 74*, 1923). A Fox News cameraman with the Greek army sees how an armed truce is kept on the Turkish frontier. (*Fox News No. 76,* 1923). A Fox News cameraman risks his life to film the volcano Etna’s rivers of lava burying villages in its path (*Fox News No. 89,* 1923); A Fox News cameraman is aboard the U.S. Navy dirigible along the Pacific Coast in the Shenandoah (*Fox News No 9*, 1924); A Fox News cameraman plays the role of a detective in Chicago (*Fox News No. 33,* 1924); a Fox News cameraman spends an eventful day in the hills of Pennsylvania (*Fox News No. 25,* 1925); a Fox News cameraman accompanies Coast Guard patrol (*Fox News No. 64,* 1925); a Fox News cameraman pays a visit to the studio of a famed portrait painter of France’s society women (*Fox News No. 20,* 1926); a Fox News cameraman accompanies the Spanish dictator Primo de Rivera to the front (*Fox News No. 23,* 1926); a Fox News cameraman accompanies dry agents on a perilous “moonshine” raid in Dismal Swamp (*Fox New No. 30,* 1926); Fox News cameraman records Coast Guard’s patrol of the ship lanes (*Fox News No. 76,* 1926); cameraman invades gloomy Dismal Swamp in Norfolk, Virginia (*Fox News No. 84,* 1926); cameraman mingles with fish in the clearest body of water in the world in Beneath the Surface, Silver Springs, Florida (*Fox News No. 66,* 1927); cameraman Al Waldron films Helen Hicks as she birdies a hole while explaining how she does it (*Fox Movietone News No. 38,* 1929); cameraman Carl Engelbrecht gets exclusive newsreel feature of John D. Rockefeller on his 90th birthday. One reviewer was impressed: “Sound may be the big guy in the pond today, but listen to this account of a silent subject that outstrips most sound subjects we have seen for audience interest” (*The Film Daily,* July 12, 1929, pp.1-2.) (*Fox News No. 83,* 1929); In *Eucharistic Congress Film* (1926)*,* twenty cameramen from the Fox Film Company worked ceaselessly to crowd every picture angle possible into the story of the 28th Catholic Eucharistic Congress, held in 1926 in Chicago. The *Motion Picture News* reviewer was impressed: “the motion picture once more proved itself the great reporter for the visualization of the various events, will carry the people in the far corners of the earth a much better idea of what transpired than the best written story.” (*Motion Picture News,* November 27, 1926, p. 20560). [↑](#endnote-ref-172)
173. A cameraman from International News accompanies a plane covering the first non-stop flight across the American continent in 27 hours, from the Atlantic to the Pacific (*International News No. 38,* 1923). An International News cameraman rides a big Army tank (*International News No. 48,* 1923); an International News cameraman gets exclusive pictures of the Prince of Wales after his Royal Highness spent two weeks dodging the news media. He finally surrendered and posed for the cameraman (*International News No. 79,* 1924); an International News cameraman takes a unique air ride to obtain unusual views of a British metropolis in England (*International News No. 82*, 1924); an International Newsreel camera expedition ford the Nile on a journey to unexplored sections of Africa using the same transportation as 2,000 years ago. In another segment, a big parade opens a newsboys’s celebration in Lexington, Massachusetts (*International News No. 49,* 1925); International News cameraman is a daredevil who rides on the wings of a new sky express in Hollywood. In another segment, an old-time town-crier (the human newspaper) has his day again in a unique tournament in San Francisco, California (*International News No. 81,* 1925); International News cameraman calls at the home of U.S. Senator Arthur Robinson in Indianapolis (*International News No. 93,* 1925); International News cameramen shoots big game with lenses, not rifles and the results are some striking pictures (*International News, No. 12,* 1926); the subterranean wonders, strange and fantastic formations are revealed when the “Cave of the Winds” is opened to an International News cameraman (*International News No. 54,* 1926); an International News cameraman corners a rare Chinese anteater in Fukien, China (*International News No. 61,* 1926); a cameraman helps La France win the Steamship Speed title (*International News No. 4,* 1927); cameraman presents greatest thrills of 1926; leading Detroiters turn newsies to aid Santa Claus (*International News No. 104,* 1927). [↑](#endnote-ref-173)
174. A cameraman climbs a skyscraper to get spectacular shots in *Kinograms No. 2311* (1923); a Kinograms cameraman climbs a skyscraper (*Kinograms No. 2311,* 1924); a Kinograms cameraman records a vivid trip of Navy’s giant dirigible from San Diego to Seattle (*Kinograms No. 5026,* 1924); a Kinograms cameraman visits Natural Bridge in Virginia, and another talks with author Octavus Roy Cohen in Philadelphia (*Kinograms No. 5042,* 1925); a Kinograms cameraman does a bit of exploring and uses torches to light his ramble as he makes a trip through the caverns of Luray in Virginia (*Kinograms No. 5043,* 1925); a Kinograms cameraman John J. Blythe used a special camera to photograph cavalry practice in Georgia enabling the viewer to see simultaneously a horse jumping naturally and also eight times slower than normal (*Kinograms No. 5105,* 1925); a Kinograms cameraman braves death to photograph a battle between fierce yaks (*Kinograms No. 5147,* 1926); aa cameraman discovers a river that “runs uphill” (*Kinograms No. 5149,* 1926); a cameraman makes a sensational summer flight in a big dirigible “Los Angeles” over New York, Philadelphia and the Jersey Coast (*Kinograms No. 5209,* 1926); a cameraman photographs rum chasers at target practice on board U.S.S. Modoc at sea (*Kinograms No. 5210,* 1926); a cameraman takes pictures from a new type of navy kite (*Kinograms No. 5229,* 1926); cameraman follows schooners tune up for the annual fisherman’s race and gets the thrill of his life (*Kinograms No. 5230,* 1926); cameraman brings huge electric ferry back to shore after it takes its first dip (*Kinograms No. 5260,* 1927); cameraman gets a special interview with famous animal movie stars (*Kinograms No. 5265,* 1927); cameraman and party scale Germany’s highest mountain in a raging blizzard (*Kinograms No. 5269,* 1927); cameraman goes up to shoot a parachute jump (*Kinograms No. 5292,* 1927). [↑](#endnote-ref-174)
175. MGM News cameraman is in a boat tossed about on the turbulent waters of the Cataract Rapids near the Grand Canyon; President Coolidge plays cameraman by “inaugurating” the MGM newsreel by grinding a camera, and a knife-thrower in Paris throws a knife directly at the camera (*MGM News No. 1,* 1927). [↑](#endnote-ref-175)
176. Paramount newsreel cameraman seeks excitement at Coney Island (*Paramount News,* 1928). A Paramount newsman who takes a ride on a ferry 8,000 feet above ground in France (*Paramount News No. 46,* 1929). [↑](#endnote-ref-176)
177. Pathe news cameramen are featured in “Flashes of the Past,” 1910 -1925. “The pulsing historical drama of the past 15 years has been preserved in graphic record by the Pathe News. It now resurrects the greatest chapters of this epoch to make history repeat itself before your eyes.” Of the features included, a cameraman in Earl Daugherty’s plane almost has heart failure as the aerial daredevils perform one amazing death-defying stunt after another (*Pathe News No. 97,* 1926). A Pathe News cameraman goes for an aerial spin with student aviators to find out what they have learned about stunt-flying (*Pathe News No. 18,* 1923). A Pathe News cameraman makes the trip as one of the crew of an American Airlines plane and after a long and dangerous trip from New York receives a warm welcome from Brazilians (*Pathe News No. 23,* 1923). A Pathe News cameraman visits a beauty salon in Palo Alto, California – for animals (*Pathe News No, 32,* 1923). A Pathe News cameraman transverses forests and mountains over 24 miles of operating cable in Alaska while another cameraman is on the Mediterranean with warships returning from Smyrna (*Pathe News No. 50,* 1923). A Pathe News cameraman takes remarkable “skyine” pictures of the aerial trolleys supplanting railways in the lumber district of Spanish Peak, California (*Pathe News No. 66,* 1923). A Pathe News cameraman is the first to enter impenetrable caverns of Postumia, Italy (*Pathe News No. 72,* 1923). A Pathe News cameraman carries a 75-pound camera on his back and climbs a steel structure of the new Mecca Temple dome risking his life to get pictures of the sky-workers at their perilous task (*Pathe News No. 8,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman films unusual views of Britain from the air in an aerial sight-seeing trip over British cities (*Pathe News No. 12,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman gives a startling exhibition of daring by “cranking” atop a wing of a plane speeding at 80 miles an hour (*Pathe News No. 13,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman takes part in a 120-mile dog derby (*Pathe News No. 16,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman in a plane takes parting shots of United States Army planes starting on the second lap of a globe flight (*Pathe News No. 24,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman films a rowing contest in Berlin and Paris (*Pathe News No. 59,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman risks his life to obtain remarkable pictures of painters at work a thousand feet in the air while another cameraman keeps pace with presidential candidates (*Pathe News No. 70,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman gets pictures of the President of Mexico who decides to pose for the camera (*Pathe News No. 80,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman in Egypt comes across a camel camp and is invited to join a caravan in the Sahara (*Pathe News No. 95,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman finds a lofty perch atop the Cologne Cathedral in Germany for a parting shot of Germany’s biggest bell being placed in the cathedral (*Pathe News No. 101,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman takes films in flight over Cairo (*Pathe News No. 196,* 1924). A Pathe News cameraman flies over St. Moritz presenting exclusive aerial views of the world-famous sports resort during mid-winter. After his flight, the cameraman provides further vistas of beauty on the Mountain Railway gliding the tops of giant firs on the way up (*Pathe News No. 15,* 1925). A Pathe News cameraman accompanies the crew on a schooner off the Grand Banks (*Pathe News No. 33,* 1925). A Pathe News cameraman braves icy winds to photograph the huge cascade of Montmorency Falls (*Pathe News No. 36,* 1925). A Pathe News cameraman goes astray in the zoo and finds a new kind of taxicab in New York City (*Pathe News No. 70,* 1925). A Pathe News cameraman climbs the steepest mountain in Wales (*Pathe News No. 85,* 1925). A Pathe News cameraman creates scenes for the “Prettiest Girl Known” series (*Pathe Review No. 3,* 1925). A Pathe News cameraman is right on the edge of the boiling cauldron, picking up a piece of cold lava, breaking it and holding it up for your inspection at “The Cauldron of Kiluea,” the Hawaiian volcano (*Pathe Review No. 35,* 1925). Pigeons hold up Pathe News cameraman on his way to work (*Pathe News No. 7,* 1926*).* In Detroit, a judge awards a child to a foster mother as a result of tests made by a Pathe News cameraman (*Pathe News No. 9,* 1926). A Pathe News cameraman offers thrills aplenty in Long Beach, California (*Pathe News No. 43,* 1926). A Pathe News cameraman shoots Mount Hood, Oregon’s famous mountain at 13,500 feet (*Pathe News No. 74*, 1926). A Pathe News cameraman takes a thrilling cruise on the “Beautiful Columbia,” a new champion Gloucester fishing craft, to show her seaworthiness (*Pathe News No. 95,* 1926). A Pathe News cameraman shows how Eric Hagenlacher, the famous billiardist, demonstrates “hits and misses” on the billiard table (*Pathe Review No. 34,* (1926). A Pathe News cameraman enters the crater of Etna volcano with scientists on an inspection tour (*Pathe News No. 28,* 1927). A Pathe News cameraman visits Vatican’s great observatory (*Pathe News No. 36,* 1927). A Pathe News cameraman visits American businessman and entrepreneur John Coolidge of New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. He was the first son of President Calvin Coolidge and Grace Coolidge (*Pathe News No. 44,* 1927). A Pathe News cameraman visits the country home of Fontaine Fox, who has made the “Toonerville Trolley” characters known throughout the world. One in a series of famous artists who have created universally known comic characters (*Pathe Review No. 1,* 1927). Interview with Helen Winslow Durkee, painting one of her famous miniatures in one of the series of “Camera Interviews with American Painters.” How she works from the start to the finish of her miniature is shown by the cameraman (*Pathe Review No. 6,* 1927). Interview with a grizzly bear captured by the Pathe cameraman (*Pathe Review No. 18,* 1927). A Pathe News cameraman gets artistic pictures of Kent, the first established kingdom of the Saxons in the southeastern part of England (*Pathe Review No. 52,* 1927). A clever novelty camera technique with a lot of jumbled scenes from the camera of “a nutty newsman” is featured in *Pathe Review No. 13* (1929). Pathe New’ jungle cameraman shoots some funny looking animals in Amazon country (*Pathe review No. 49,* 1929). [↑](#endnote-ref-177)
178. In *Screen Snapshots No. 25* (1921), a cameraman demonstrates a double exposure technique. [↑](#endnote-ref-178)
179. A news cameraman exercises ingenuity to secure exclusive pictures of Prince Eitel Friedrich, son of the ex-Kaiser now in retirement. The Prince has steadfastly refused to pose for news film. The cameraman got shots of the Prince busy at spring planting in his garden (*Selznick News No. 1028,* 1922). In *Selznick Newsreel Edition* (1922), a cameraman takes pictures of a mysterious young lady whose identity is not known to anyone including the editors of the Newsreel. She is said to epitomize the concept of beautiful women by nationally known creators of “feminine loveliness.” This model was picked by Howard Chandler Christy, whose American Girl has adorned the front page of smart magazines. After newspaper reports that the body of Evelyn Nesbit, a model and actress, has been found in the Potomac River, a Selznick News cameraman claims a beat by discovering Miss Nesbit alive and safe in New York City beating every reporter of the daily press (*Selznick News No. 1013,* 1922). [↑](#endnote-ref-179)
180. Bryony Dixon, *100 Silent Films: BFI Screen Guides,* pp. 19-130 [↑](#endnote-ref-180)
181. In a *Talking Screen Snapshots* (1929), a cameraman keeps up a running fire of chatter over silent scenes made in Hollywood showing screen stars at home, at work and at play. The sound was obviously synchronized later. It was one of the first times that a cameraman talked descriptively of the various characters as he shoots them and dashes around from one scene to another with his camera causing laughter in the process. The film ends with the cameraman ringing the time clock at the studio and dashing out as some screen celebrities start a scene with a fight. In *The Film Reporter* (1926), cameramen watch the comings and goings of screen and sports celebrities in this novelty newsreel. [↑](#endnote-ref-181)
182. A example of a photojournalist in a minor role is In *Reputation* (1921), which includes photographer and his assistant. [↑](#endnote-ref-182)
183. See ***Journalists as Comic Characters in Silent Films, 1920 to 1929*** for films featuring photographers**.** [↑](#endnote-ref-183)
184. Films featuring critics from 1920-1929 include *Black Oxen* (1924), *Blind Youth* (1920), *For Art’s Sake* (1923), *Her Winning Way* (1921), *The Hidden Light* (1920), *Life’s Darn Funny* (1921), *Madame Guillotine* (1924), *The Man Upstairs* (1926), *A Man’s Mate* (1924), *The Marriage Clause* (1926), *Old Times for New* (1929), *Parisian Nights* (1925), *Power of the Press* (1928), *R.S.V.P.* (1921), *Rent Free* (1922), *The Sea Wolf* (1926), *So This is Hamlet* (1923), *Soul-Fire* (1925), *Two Weeks* (1920), *Unknown Dangers* (1926), *We Moderns* (1925). [↑](#endnote-ref-184)
185. Other examples include In *Rent Free* (1922), which features Art Critic Count de Mourney. In *For Art’s Sake* (1923), when a musician comes to play before the music critics, his rival sends in a swarm of cats who upset the recital. In *So This is Hamlet*  (1923), two men in the fur business who produce “Hamlet with variations” as a movie watch the film critics’s faces as they watch the first showing of their movie. In *Two Weeks* (1920), dramatic critic Jimby Lewis is one of three bachelors in a country house when a Broadway chorus girl shows up begging for protection. She captures the confirmed bachelors’s hearts who do all they can to help her. [↑](#endnote-ref-185)
186. *Variety,* September 29, 1926, p. 14 [↑](#endnote-ref-186)
187. Rose Pelswick, *New York Evening Journal,* as quoted in *Moving Picture World,* June 13, 1925, p. 799 [↑](#endnote-ref-187)
188. Films featuring columnists from 1920-1929 include *Advice to Lovers* (1927), *Are Brunettes Safe?* (1927), *Copy* (1929), *Deadline at Eleven* (1920), *The Desert Song* (1929), *The Heart Specialist* (1922), *How to Educate a Wife* (1924), *How to Handle Women* (1928), *June Madness* (1922), *The Lovelorn* (1927), *My Kingdom for a Hearse* (1928), *Parlor, Bedroom and Bath* (1920), and *Power of the Press* (1928). In *A Poor Relation* (1921), columnist Noah Vale, who rescued two orphans from the gutter, goes to work on a newspaper. His friend, Johnny Smith, also gets a job as a reporter on the same newspaper. [↑](#endnote-ref-188)
189. In *Deadline at Eleven* (1920), advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist Helen Stevens takes a job on a New York newspaper rather than marry a nobleman. The columnist is sent out on a missing girl story and her friend, drunken reporter Jack Rawson, goes with her. He gets drunk, stumbles upon the scene of a murder and is accused of the killing of the girl, but Stevens urges the police to keep the story from the other papers in exchange for her finding the real killer. With the aid of one of her lovelorn letters, Stevens investigates the story and uncovers the real murderer. [↑](#endnote-ref-189)
190. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,* December 19, 1927, p. 30. Beatrice Fairfax’s name and occupation were used in a 15-chapter serial in 1916 and featured the real-life advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist having various adventures. She was played by Grace Darling. She is assisted by an energetic reporter, Jimmy Barton. The character was inspired by the popular newspaper advice column [*Ask Beatrice Fairfax*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Manning_(writer)), which had been the world's first column of its kind when launched in 1898. The *Dear Beatrice Fairfax* advice column was started by journalist [Marie Manning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Manning_(writer)) on July 20, 1898, and ran in newspapers owned by [William Randolph Hearst](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Randolph_Hearst). For full details, See Part One. [↑](#endnote-ref-190)
191. *Photoplay Magazine,* March 1928, p. 141 [↑](#endnote-ref-191)
192. *Exhibitors Herald,* May 21, 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-192)
193. *Variety,* December 21, 1927, p. 24 [↑](#endnote-ref-193)
194. For more films featuring Beatrice Fairfax, including an exciting serial, see Part I, 1890-1919. [↑](#endnote-ref-194)
195. A small-town commercial artist and cartoonist switches places with a prince to successfully market the prince’s peanut crop. Fairbanks ends up being his publicity agent for the peanuts and falls in love with the artist. [↑](#endnote-ref-195)
196. The city hall reporter tells the city editor there is no story of the mayor’s wedding because the bride didn’t show up. The editor is dumbfounded by the reporter’s stupidity. What follows is pure comedy setups: the editor attempts to adjust the ribbon in his typewriter and ends up with ribbon all over him, and, blinded by the ribbon, steps into two waste-baskets which catch on fire from a cigarette butt. The columnist and the reporter come to his assistance. The columnist sits at his desk to type and the carriage of the typewriter turns over just as he is inserting the paper. He tries to sneak it in, but has no success. By the time the paper is adjusted, he has overturned a bottle of ink upon the typewriter and this now splashes in his face as he presses the keys. More shenanigans fill up the rest of the film. [↑](#endnote-ref-196)
197. *Motion Picture News,* April 8, 1922, p. 2100 [↑](#endnote-ref-197)
198. When Charley arrives in town by train he is disturbed to find that the townsfolk react with surprise and fear when they see him and run away. All he knows about the son is that he walks with a limp so he hobbles down the street while business owners react with horror and close their shops. A schoolmarm sees him and grabs the girls and yanks them inside. He reaches the mother’s house and she accepts him as her son and says she knew he could come back some day – and fight the charges against him! Charley fools his own “mother” and falls in love with his “sister” until the real son arrives and straightens things out. [↑](#endnote-ref-198)
199. Films featuring radio broadcasters from 1920-1929 include *Across the Atlantic Via Zeppelin* (1929), *Broadcasting (*1922), *Dynamite* (1929), *Easy Come, Easy Go* (1928), *Flight* (1929), *High Treason* (1929), *Knockout Reilly* (1927), *Perfect Crime* (1928), *Salute* (1929), *Universal Newsreel No. 1 – Graham McNamee* (1929), *The Vagabond Lover* (1929) [↑](#endnote-ref-199)
200. *Variety,* January 15, 1930, p. 22 [↑](#endnote-ref-200)
201. *Motion Picture News,* August 31, 1929, p. 789 [↑](#endnote-ref-201)
202. *The Film Daily,* September 30, 1929, p. 12 [↑](#endnote-ref-202)
203. *Variety,* February 20, 1929, p. 14 [↑](#endnote-ref-203)
204. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,* August 6, 1928, p. 15 [↑](#endnote-ref-204)
205. Films featuring sports reporters from 1920-1929 include *The Kid Stakes* (1927), *Night Parade* (1929), *The Tomboy* (1921), *Salute* (1929). [↑](#endnote-ref-205)
206. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,* November 11, 1929, p. 20 [↑](#endnote-ref-206)
207. Examples include *Gimme Strength* (1926), in which reporter Jimmie can keep his job if he gets photographs of a noted physician and his criminal patient. Jimmie is in love with a girl reporter who pretends to be a nurse to get the story herself. The reporter goes through many misadventures because he hides his identity and is mistaken for the criminal by four insane men who believe they are doctors. The real physician rescues the reporter and offers to help him by giving him the photographs. Jimmie has fallen in love with the reporter when she was masquerading as a nurse. In *What an Eye* (1924), a reporter, his brother (an office boy) and the reporter’s fiancee (the paper’s stenographer), all work for *The Morning Star* and try to outdo each other to score a scoop. They solve a mystery of a haunted house and a large eye traveling through space frightening women. In *Sympathy* (1929), Larry, a reporter who is always seen in a tuxedo, has been a newspaperman for 15 years and tells a friend that he knows how to make sure the man can have a night out on the town with a girl and have his wife welcome him home with open arms the next morning. The friend is dubious. The newspaperman makes him promise to do everything he says. He has him call his wife, tell her he has to work late, and hang up on her if she gets angry. Then he plants a fake story about his friend being hurt in an accident. The next morning, the finds his story in the newspaper and reads it to his friend at breakfast. He then accompanies him to the hospital, tells him everything is going to be OK and says goodbye. The man’s concerned wife and girlfriend both show up. They don’t know each other and each tells the other the story of the man they are there to see. When they both see him, they realize he’s the same man. The girlfriend leaves in a huff and the wife stays to berate him. He climbs out the window of the hospital and while hanging on the wall tells her that he would rather die than have her be angry at him. She answers, “Here are your flowers” and drops a flower pot on his head. He falls to the ground unconscious and the 10-minute-long Vitaphone Vanity ends. [↑](#endnote-ref-207)
208. Benny is thrown from a horse and rolls down a sand dune. He is captured by a rebel gang who threatens to kill him: He asks his captor: “Where do you think you are? In Chicago?”. Instead of trying to get a scoop on the gang’s mysterious leader, he decides to escape. Later he dictates the story to his secretary who is in love with him: “I have enough news to fill the front page of the *Paris Herald*,” he tells her. Susan is skeptical of the story, but takes it all down. Later he tells her she doesn’t have “It” and doesn’t see their relationship going anywhere (the secretary is not overly bright – she thinks sex is the number that comes after five). Kidd meets the hero who he doesn’t know is secretly the rebel leader and tells him if he meets the leader again he will punch him in the mouth. When the secretary and the heroine are captured, Kidd swears allegiance to the rebels and is soon dressed in ridiculously oversized robes. A harem girl starts flirting with Benny and they are caught by a sheik who threatens to kill the journalist. Kidd conspires with Susan to get a message to the general that the rebels have taken over the fort. The two escape and Susan explains to the general, who turns out to be her father, that she loves Benny and Benny loves her. Scholars consider the reporter character to be one of the earlier portrayals of a gay character in the movies. The love interest is contrived to hide the fact since gay characters weren’t accepted. [↑](#endnote-ref-208)
209. The Van Bibber series of silent films is based on stories by journalist Richard Harding Davis. In another film featuring the Davis hero, *The Amateur Detective* (1925), Reginald Van Bibber is a newspaperman who fancies himself an amateur detective. He’s out to find a famous painting of Napoleon and ends up chasing the crooks who stole the painting and being knocked out of a skyscraper hanging on to a telephone wire until being rescued. He ends up getting the painting – and a girl as well. [↑](#endnote-ref-209)
210. Other comedies include *Hot Stuff* (1927), in which Harold is editor of the *Clarion* who takes pride in his appointment as chief of the local fire department and immediately starts looking for a fire. A false alarm proves a disappointment to the chief so he refuses to answer the next alarm – until he learns the fire is in his own house. In *Monkey Shines* (1927), Harold exposes a crook who is a politician cheating the public. The paper’s publisher calls up and asks that the paper be suppressed because the evidence against the political boss was lost. The “office monkey” has already distributed the paper and now the politician has cause for a libel suit. But the monkey steals the evidence of graft that the boss has been hiding and because of this the criminal is brought to justice. In *A Rattling Good Time* (1927), reporter Harold Highbrow, the owner of the *Clarion,* and the publisher’s daughter go to a picnic and encounter an unscrupulous old constable who arrests them for illegally fishing. They make a getaway in a flivver and are pursed by the sheriff on his donkey. The machine blows up on the road, but Harold and the girl are locked in an embrace and don’t really care about the catastrophe. In *Scrambled Honeymoon* (1927), cub reporter Harold goes after a village scandal for the paper’s front page when the owner of the *Sap Center Clarion* wants more circulation. Harold comes upon an actress called “The Female Hercules” who has just given a man a good beating for being fresh with her. Harold finds a watch she lost in the scuffle and returns it. She invites him to call upon her at the hotel. When he arrives, he inadvertently goes into the wrong room, much to the chagrin of the charming bride who is its occupant. Fearing her husband, who is due at any moment, will make a wreck of Harold, she pushes Harold into the bathroom and when her husband arrives, the reporter is busily playing plumber. But the real plumber shows up and things look bad for Harold until “The Female Hercules” comes to his rescue. The husband transfers his blows to the real plumber who turns out to be a burglar. Harold now has the front-page story he needs for the newspaper. In *So This is Sapp Center?* (No. 4, 1928), Harold, now editor of *The Clarion,* is a judge at a baby show and has to decide whether to award first prize to a thug who threatens Harold if his baby doesn’t win. It also turns out the promoter of the contest is a crook who has stolen all of the prize money collected. Harold and his cohorts give chase and capture him, recover the money and get a story. In *Mistakes Will Happen* (No. 6, 1928), Harold is lacking news so he uses his imagination for a sensational story by coming up with a fake escaped desperate character. Annie, the office janitress, discovers the story on Harold’s desk and the fake story is printed. Harold discovers he must prove the story true or lose his job. This results in Harold capturing a real desperate character. In *Social Lions* (No. 7, 1928), Harold, the paper’s star reporter, is in love with the editor’s daughter who is throwing a lawn party for a wealthy oil king. The girls’s father gets up to announce the engagement of his daughter to the millionaire when keepers from a nearby insane asylum arrive to pick up the millionaire and his friends and take them back to the asylum. In *Special Edition* (No. 8, 1928), Harold, the editor of the *Clarion,* has just seen his extra come off the press exposing a boss’sgraft when it is discovered that the crook stole the incriminating proof from the newspaper owner. The distribution of the extra is ordered stopped, but the office monkey circulates enough copies so the political boss sues the paper for libel. The monkey, however, steals the evidence from the boss and slips it to Harold who dramatically saves the day when he flashes the evidence in the face of the crook. In *Tricky Trickster* (No. 10, 1928), Harold loses his job as star reporter on *The Clarion* and joins up with a fake hypnotist who hypnotizes Annie and Harold’s best girl. Both escape the trance and cancel the spell, restoring the audience to normalcy, capturing the fleeing hypnotist. Harold gets his job back with the sensational story of the chase and capture. In *Her Haunted Heritage* (No, 11, 1928), Harold learns that Annie, who works in the office, has inherited a house that is haunted. In *The Trackless Trolley* (No. 12, 1928), Harold invents the trackless machine and the owner of a competing trolley service tries to sabotage his invention on its first trip with a load of passengers. [↑](#endnote-ref-210)
211. Other examples include *The Aviator* (1929), in which a publisher and a publicist want to assure the sale of a new book of wartime experiences written by an anonymous aviator and decide to credit authorship to Robert Street, a successful writer who hates aviation, knows nothing about the book in question and finds the situation socially embarrassing. In *The Interview* (1928), a Movietone talkie, a girl reporter interviews two senators played by a well-known musical comedy team. In *The Keyhole Reporter* (1920), a reporter is featured in a slapstick variety short. In *Serpentin reporter* (1920) from France, a reporter is featured in a comedy short. In a film with the regrettable title, *The Chink* (1921), a reporter’s clothes get splashed by mud when a black youngster drums up business for a Chinese laundry. In *Short and Sweet* (1921), reporter Billy makes a bet he can find a missing heiress. He not only finds her, but he also marries her. *Get Rich-Quick Wallingford* (1921 includes, among the town’s characters, reporter Clint Harkins of the *Battlesburg Blade* in Iowa. In *Held by the Enemy* (1920), a reporter becomes a “pestering” war correspondent during the Civil War. He is used for comic relief. In *Clever Cubs* (1920), comedy duo Percy and Ferdie show up as cub reporters. In *My Husband’s Other Wife* (1920), the female reporter contributes some comedy touches. In *Social Errors* (1922), a cub reporter attempts to solve a series of mysterious hotel robberies. In *His Nibs* (1921), a newspaper editor of *The Weekly Bee* appoints himself as censor of motion pictures playing at the local theater. In *Bee’s Knees* (the tenth episode in *The Telephone Girl* comedy series, 1924), a press agent wants to secure a photograph of a switchboard operator’s knees and a cameraman, with a white cloth over his head, tries to get the shot. In *Roped In* (1927), a writer has written a book on wrestling based on pure theory. To exploit the book, the publisher decides to stage a match between the author and a professional wrestler. That’s when the fun begins. Somehow the writer wins the wrestling match as well as the girl. In *The Game Hunter* (1924), a reporter snaps a man’s picture with a girl and the man’s wife plot revenge when she sees it in the newspaper. In *Hogan’s Alley* (1925), a reporter-photographer shoots a boxing match (comic Ben Turpin in a short role). In *Good Morning!* (1924), a newsboy is a poor but honest lad trying to get along. He rescues a dog for a girl and his adventures begin. In *Dandy Lions,* a star reporter causes havoc in the newsroom and away from the newsroom. He places a cake of ice before an “aeroplane propeller” to keep cool and the wind blows the papers from the desks in the newsroom so when the editor arrives it looks as if the office was hit by a cyclone. The editor fires the reporter. When the artist-owner of a restaurant takes a liking to the reporter’s wife, the reporter releases a crate of lions at the railroad station and they effectively put the restaurant out of business. [↑](#endnote-ref-211)
212. *Motion Picture World,* May 17, 1924, p. 321 [↑](#endnote-ref-212)
213. *New York Times,* January 4, 1924, p. 179 [↑](#endnote-ref-213)
214. Films featuring cartoonists and illustrators from 1920-1929 include *Animated Hair Cartoons* (1924-1925-1926), *Barnyard Rivals: Sad Stuff* (1928), *Bud Fisher – On Strike (Mutt and Jeff)* (1920), *Chip of the Flying U* (1926), *Col. Heeza Liar and the Ghost* (1923), *Col. Heeza Liar, Bull Thrower* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar, Daredevil* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar, Detective* (1923), *Col. Heeza Liar in the African Jungles* (1923), *Col. Heeza Liar in Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1923), *Col. Heeza Liar The Lying Tamer* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar, Nature Faker* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar, Sky Pilot* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar, The Strikebreaker* (1923), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Ancestor* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Burglar* (1923), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Forbidden Fruit* (1923), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Horseplay* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Knighthood* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Mysterious Case* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Romance* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Vacation* (1923), *Dinky Doodle: The Babes in the Woods* (1925), *Dinky Doodle: Captain’s Kid (aka Captain Kidd)* (1925), *Dinky Doodle: Cinderella* (1925), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle and the Bad Man* (1925), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle and the Little Orphan* (1926), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle at the Restaurant* (1925), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle in the Arctic* (1926), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle in the Army* (1926), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle in the Circus* (1925), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle in Egypt* (1926), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle in the Hunt* (1925), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle in Lost and Found* (1926), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle in Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1936), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle in the Wild West* (1926), *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle’s Bedtime Story* (1926), *Dinky Doodle: The Giant Killer (aka Jack and the Beanstalk)* (1924), *Dinky Doodle: The House that Dinky Built (1925), Dinky Doodle: Just Spooks* (1925), *Dinky Doodle: Little Red Riding Hood* (1925), *Dinky Doodle: The Magic Carpet (aka The Magic Rug)* (1925), *Dinky Doodle: The Magic Lamp (aka Aladdin’s Lamp)* (1924), *Dinky Doodle: The Magician* (1926), *Dinky Doodle: Peter Pan Handled* (1925), , *Dinky Doodle: The Pied Piper* (1924), *Dinky Doodle: Robinson Crusoe* (1925), *Harry Hershfield Now Tells One: Hearst Metrotone News Vol. 1, No. 239* (1929), *Hot Dog Cartoon: Along Came Fido* (1927), *Hot Dog Cartoon: Bone Dry* (1927), *Hot Dog Cartoon: Dog Gone It* (1927), *Hot Dog Cartoon: The Farm Hand* (1927), *Hot Dog Cartoon: Jungle Bells (aka Jungle Belles)* (1927), *Hot Dog Cartoon: Lunch Hound* (1927), *Hot Dog Cartoon: Pete’s Haunted House* (1926), *Hot Dog Cartoon: Pete’s Party* (1926), *Hot Dog Cartoon: Pete’s Pow-Wow (aka Amateur Show)* (1927), *Hot Dog Cartoon: Petering Out* (1927), *Hot Dog Cartoon: The Puppy Express* (1927), *Hot Dog Cartoon: S’matter Pete* (1927), *Hy Mayer Sketches* (1926), *Hy Mayer “Such Is Life”* (1920, 1922), *Inkwell Imps: Koko Back Tracks (aka Koko in Reverse* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Beats Time* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Chemical Ko-Ko* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Chops Suey* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Cleans Up* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Conquest* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Crib* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Explores* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Focus* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Goes Over* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Heaves-Ho* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Hops Off* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Koko in 1999 (aka Koko Kills Time*) (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko in the Rough* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Lamps Alladin* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Koko Makes ‘Em Laugh* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Koko Needles the Boss* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko on the Track* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Plays Pool* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Smokes* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko Squeals* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Koko the Kavalier* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko the Kid* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko the Knight* (1927), In*kwell Imps: Ko-Ko the Kop* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Act* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Bawth* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Catch* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Chase* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Courtship* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Earth Control* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Field Daze* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Germ Jam* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Haunted House (aka Ko-Ko Goes Ghosting*) (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Hot Dog* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Hot Ink* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Hypnotism* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Kane* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Kink* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Klack (*1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Knock Down* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Korner* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Magic* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Parade* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Quest* (1927), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Reward* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Saxophonies* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Signals* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s Tattoo* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: Ko-Ko’s War Dogs* (1928), *Inkwell Imps: No Eyes Today* (1929), *Inkwell Imps: Noise Annoys Ko-Ko* (1929), *The Kid Stakes* (1927), *A Modern Salome* (1920), *Newslaff* (1927), *Out of the Inkwell: Automobile Ride* (1921), *Out of the Inkwell: Balloons* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: The Battle* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: Bed Time* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: Big Chief Koko* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: The Birthday (aka Koko’s Birthday)* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: The Boxing Kangaroo* (1920), *Out of the Inkwell: Bubbles* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: The Cartoon Factory* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: Cartoonland* (1921), *Out of the Inkwell: The Challenge* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: Chinamen* (1920), *Out of the Inkwell: The Circus* (1920), *Out of the Inkwell: Clay Town* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: The Clown’s Little Brother* (1920), *Out of the Inkwell: The Contest* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: The Cure* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: Fadeaway* (1926), *Out of the Inkwell: False Alarm* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: The Fish* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: Fishing* (1921), *Out of the Inkwell: Flies* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: Fortune Teller* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: The Hypnotist* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: Invisible Ink* (1921), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko at the* *Circus* (1926), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko Baffles the Bulls* (1926), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko Celebrates the Fourth* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko Gets Egg-Cited (aka Koko’s Barnyard)* (1926), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko Hot After It* (1926), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko in Toyland* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko Kidnapped* (1926), Ou*t of the Inkwell: Koko the Barber* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko the Convict* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko the Hot Shot* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko Nuts* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko on the Run* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko Packs ‘Em (aka Koko Packs Up)* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko Sees Spooks* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko Steps Out* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko Trains ‘Em (aka Koko’s Pup Talent* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko’s Paradise* (1926), *Out of the Inkwell: Koko’s Queen* (1926), *Out of the Inkwell: Laundry* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: League of Nations* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: Masquerade* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: The Mechanical Doll* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: Modeling* (1921), *Out of the Inkwell: The Mosquito* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: Mother Goose Land* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: The Ouija Board* (1920), *Out of the Inkwell: Pay Day* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: Poker (aka the Card Game*) (1920), *Out of the Inkwell: Perpetual Motion* (1920), *Out of the Inkwell: The Puzzle* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: The Restaurant* (1920), *Out of the Inkwell: The Reunion* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: The Runaway (aka Koko the Runaway)* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: Shadows* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: The Show* (1922), *Out of the Inkwell: Sparring Partners* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: A Stitch in Time* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: The Storm (aka Koko’s Storm)* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Surprise* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: Thanksgiving* (1925), *Out of the Inkwell: Toot Toot (aka Koko’s Toot Toot)* (1926), *Out of the Inkwell: Trapped* (1923), *Out of the Inkwell: Trip to Mars* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: Vacation* (1924), *Out of the Inkwell: Vaudeville* (1924), *Pathe Review No. 114* (1921), *R.S.V.P.* (1921), *Rent Free* (1922), *Trent’s Last Case* (1920), *Trent’s Last Case* (1929), *Unnatural History Series* (1925). [↑](#endnote-ref-214)
215. In the beginning, the character was referred to as “the clown,” but in later years, he became “KoKo” or “Ko-Ko.” Reviews of the period use all three names, especially Koko with a hyphen (Ko-Ko) and they seemed interchangeable. [↑](#endnote-ref-215)
216. In one cartoon, Fleischer and a janitor are playing with a Ouija board and the result is that the clown faces an army of cartoon ghosts emerging from a haunted house (*The Ouija Board,* 1920). Max offers to buy an inventor’s perpetual motion machine, and the clown figures out it’s a deception and rejoices in “stinging” the man who creates him (*Perpetual Motion,* 1920). Max, a sculptor and his model are harassed by the clown in one absurd trick after another (*Modeling,* 1921). Max celebrates Koko’s birthday with a new hat, fireworks and a paperhanger (*The Birthday,* 1922); Max teaches the clown how to blow bubbles and then both engage in a bubble-blowing contest. The clown ends up in a bubble floating across the city before ending up back in the ink bottle (*Bubbles*, 1922); the clown wakes Max up and when Max scolds him, he makes a slurring remark about the difference in their sizes. So Max draws a cartoon of himself and in a prize fight, chastises the clown who finally runs for safety by jumping back into the inkwell (*The Challenge,* 1922); Max is chasing a fly and the clown joins him for the adventure as Max sits down on a piece of fly paper (*Flies,* 1922); The clown is chased by jumping beans. Max plants one of the beans and a gigantic vine grows far into the sky. The clown climbs up, finds a giant and the chase is on. The clown then sends an army of his likeness who run off the board and attack Max, tying him up with rope. Max frees himself and all the clowns put themselves back into the inkwell (*Jumping Beans,* 1922); Max sends the clown via telephone wires to the movie theater where the clown falls in love with a mechanical doll (*The Mechanical Doll,* 1922); a mosquito stings Max’s nose while he is sleeping over his drawing board. The clown gets involved (*The Mosquito,* 1922); the clown wants to get paid like everyone else in the office, but Max maintains that only people who work get paid (*Pay Day,* 1922); Max helps the clown prepare for a family reunion *(The Reunion,* 1922); Max follows the clown in his car (*The Show,*1922); the clown fills Max’s studio with so many balloons, it floats away (*Balloons,* 1923); two cartoonists are sitting side by side using the same inkwell. One draws the clown, the other a harlequin. The artists get into a scuffle over the inkwell and the little drawings they made square off with troops and cannons as they leap off their respective sheets of paper and use the entire room as a battleground while the cartoonists have an actual fistfight (*The Battle,* 1923); the clown is annoying Max who is trying to sleep. To punish him, Max draws a high cliff and puts the clown on its pinnacle so that he cannot get down. Both fall asleep and both have nightmares – the cartoonist dreams of the clown chasing him all over the city in his pajamas (*Bed Time*, 1923); Max sends the clown into film projection booth that features a circus tent and crowd. He decides to offer a hundred dollars to anyone who can ride a mechanical donkey. He rigs the contest and is chased by the audience off a cliff and is eventually kicked out of the projector (*The Contest,* 1923); Max has his clown playing a fireman. A jail is on fire and the clown breaks a window allowing the convicts to escape, then discovers the smoke is coming from Max’s pipe (*False Alarm,* 1923); Max draws a gypsy fortune teller to visit the clown. Max puts on a sheet to scare the gypsy and she gets so angry she makes a deck of cards come to life and attack the clown who gets trapped in the deck before escaping into the inkwell (*Fortune Teller,* 1923); Max has problems with a jigsaw puzzle when the clown won’t let him work on the puzzle. He tears down everything Max does. Finally, Max’s hand chases the clown, catches him, ties him to the chair, adds wheels to the chair and pushes him into a wild ride (*The Puzzle,* 1923); the clown gets involved with shadows of his own figure while Max makes silhouettes of animals with his fingers. The animals annoy the clown to the extent that he is glad to jump back into the inkwell (*Shadows,* 1923); Max tries to catch a mouse, but ends up catching the clown instead. The clown is chased by a spider causing one mishap after another (*Trapped,* 1923); Max opens the inkwell and draws the clown who comes to life. But this time he has invented a new, electric drawing device. He uses this to finish the drawing and then, with a maniacal grin on his face, the cartoonist turns the device on the poor, hapless Koko. To make amends, Max creates an automatic drawing machine for the clown which results in a series of mischievous adventures and finally an outright catastrophe before the clown jumps back into the inkwell (*The Cartoon Factory,* 1924); Max plans to go to a masquerade dressed as the inkwell clown, but the clown steals his hat and as Max plunges into cartoon land after it he shrinks until he is just the size of the cartoon clown (*Masquerade*, 1924); Max goes back to nursery rhymes for material depicting Jack and Jill, Old Mother Hubbard, Jack Horner, Humpty Dumpty and other well-known characters of fairyland. The clown interacts with these characters (*Mother Goose Land,* 1924); Koko does not want to go back into the ink bottle and runs away. He falls in a hole landing in Hell, but finally makes it back to the animation studio and the ink bottle (*The Runaway*, 1924); Max books Koko on a rocket ship to Mars, but he doesn’t want to go. So Max blasts the clown into outer space (*Trip to Mars*, 1924); Max draws himself into the film and the clown ends up at a vaudeville house where he does impersonations of commentator Will Rogers and other personalities. The cartoon ends when Max swallows some ink and turns into a blob of black ink, jumps on the drawing board and takes soaks up all of the ink ending up in the inkwell (*Vaudeville,* (1924); Max is seen in his office sketching the clown and a stereotyped Indian chief character comes into the cartoonist’s studio giving him some drawings. Max puts Koko into the drawings and a struggle between the clown and the Indian turns into war. The Indian chief is forced back into real life to escape the clown’s anger (*Big Chief Koko,*1925); Koko gets a note saying that Max will be away. He finds some fireworks and starts to set them off. Max returns to find his office almost destroyed by Koko’s fireworks display – the firecrackers are shown in color (*Koko Celebrates the Fourth* (1925); Max sets up a blank drawing board then pours a bottle of Indian ink on it striking a match and igniting it. Smoke pours from the bottle which is replaced by an oil-well gusher and the ink splashes onto the drawing board magically transforming into a Toyland village. KoKo then emerges from the ink gusher and jumps into the village. A series of adventures follow ending with Koko saving a girl tied to the train tracks by a crook as an approaching train bears down on her (*Koko in Toyland,* 1925); KoKo the Clown becomes a barber and escapes the animated world for the real world hiding in a shaving mug when Max tries to lather up. The ink-infused shaving cream turns Max’s face into blackface (*Koko the Barber*, 1925); Koko and his dog take over a nuthouse. Max is carried off by attendants in the end (*Koko Nuts,* 1925); two cartoonists draw their respective clowns and decide to race them for the winning of the cartoon championship. Both artists keep adding all kinds of assistance to their drawing board. The clowns hop into a toy airship, fly around the room and hop right into Max’s eye. The other artist digs them out and drops them into the inkwell (*Koko on the Run,* 1925); Max decides to move his studio, but prepares to leave KoKo behind, but the cartoon clown and his dog decide they will not be left behind. They pack everything in sight and all of it goes into a vacuum cleaner. Max himself disappears back into the inkwell bottle ending the cartoon (*Koko Packs ‘Em,* 1925); Koko finds himself in front of a haunted house. A gust of wind blows his hat into the house and he cajoles his dog to enter the house and get his hat. Ghosts and other eerie residents chase the clown and his dog until both escape back into the inkwell (*Ko-Ko Sees Spooks,* 1925); Ko-Ko learns to do the Charleston when Max’s daughter Ruth, who is a professional dancer, becomes his teacher. They go back to the drawing board where Max draws the living figure of a dancer. Even Max eventually joins in the Charleston dance (*Koko Steps Out,* 1925); Ko-Ko shows Max how to make a dog do tricks. A friend visits Max’s office bringing a young pup. He tries to draw a picture of the dog, but it runs into the little clown who trains the dog himself. Finally, the dog unleashes trained fleas that take over the office (*Koko Trains ‘Em,* 1925); Koko displays the cartoonist’s warning that a storm is approaching and he refuses to return to the ink bottle saying he must exercise his baby. Both get caught in a severe storm, which turns into a hurricane. All ends well as they return to the inkwell (*The Storm*, 1925); to earn his Thanksgiving dinner, Koko shows a film he made, a diary of his recent activities, which includes clips from previous cartoons (*Thanksgiving,* 1925); Max invents an ink made from “Fade Out Powder” that makes things fade away. He lures Ko-Ko and Fitz the dog into a magical Fade-Away land where no end of mischief ensues (*Fadeaway,* 1926); Max tries to keep Koko from going to the circus where the clown finds himself at odds with the giant of the circus and eventually overpowers him (*Koko at the Circus,* 1926); Max becomes peeved when Koko and Fitz play a joke on him and then try to evade him. He “hires” (draws) two cartoon detectives, one like Sherlock Holmes and the other a “rube” and sets them to work to find the clown. Koko’s pup outwits them by disguising himself as a rooster and the clown himself finally captures one detective and obliterates the other. Max appears in disguise and is able to put the clown and his pup back in the inkwell where they belong (*Koko Baffles the Bulls*, 1926); Max and a ship captain follow a treasure map. Koko and Fitz want a piece of the treasure, which turns out to be a magical ink well. They steal the inkwell and the chase is on with everyone ending up in the inkwell (*Koko Hot After It,* 1926); Max is going to a shooting gallery so he practices on Koko and Fitz, sending them both to Paradise (*Koko’s Paradise,* 1926); Koko and his pup discover that Max’s girlfriend is a beauty contest competitor so they demand female companions too. Max draws one for each but these fall short of expectations so Koko tries various contraptions to remake his girl until he substitutes a mask for her face. Koko draws his ideal woman. Max draws “Shrinko” to save the damsel battling the clown. Only returning Koko to the bottle can clean the mess up (*Koko’s Queen,* 1926); Max tells Koko and Fitz, “I can’t bother with you two mutts, I have a new one” introducing a real dog. But the cartoon pair plot to get rid of the new rival for Max’s attention. Max responds and puts the two into prison (*Koko the Convict,* 1926); Max is taking a railroad trip and pulls out his pen to draw Koko, Fitz and a railroad. Maybe the trip is too bumpy because nothing works as it is supposed to (*Toot Toot,* 1926); Koko and his pup make time go backwards – for everyone including the cartoonist by running the hands of a clock in reverse: smoke goes up a chimney, dirt into a steam shovel, traffic and people go backwards (*Koko Back Tracks,* 1927); Ko-Ko and Fitz are sitting around bored while Max writes the day’s scenario. When one of the cannibals he is writing about steals Max’s head, it is up to our intrepid heroes to rescue the boss who doesn’t know how to do things without the top of his body (*Ko-Ko Explores,* 1927); Ko-Ko and Fitz compete to be the first pilot in a “non-stop hop around the world” with a little live-action help and hindrance from Max and Dave Fleischer (*Ko-Ko Hops Off,* 1927); When Max tries to bring the clown down a peg or two by creating a bunch of rival clowns, Ko-Ko rebels and knocks the competition out of the frame. Max punishes his creation by conjuring Father Time who pursues Ko-Ko into the future – 1999 to be precise. There he is assailed by all kinds of automated obstacles and acquires a wife out of a vending machine (*Koko in 1999,* aka *Koko Kills Time,* 1927); the clown tries to make a wooden-faced Indian smile; then he and the pup appear in a vaudeville show (*Koko Makes ‘Em Laugh,* 1927).

     In *Koko Needles the Boss* (1927), Max draws a spool of thread and a needle. The needle then penetrates a blank canvas and stitch by stitch Ko-Ko the clown is “drawn.” Ko-Ko, rebelling against his ostensible creator, Max, attempts to destroy his own world and escape into the real world including a duel with Max; in *Ko-Ko Plays Pool* (1927), Max and his brother David are playing pool when Ko-Ko and Fitz force their way out of the ink bottle. They want to play pool too, so Max obligingly draws a table for their use. However, it’s not what Max draws that makes trouble for them – it’s the parts he did not. In *Ko-Ko the Kid* (1927), Max and Dave Fleischer give Koko the Clown a beard. In trying to lose it, he seeks the Fountain of Youth, and sprays the entire city with its magic waters turning hard-working executives and their secretaries into small babies in diapers. In *Ko-Ko the Knight* (1927), when a beautiful princess escapes from the ink bottle only to be captured by a villainous knave, Max draws a stove which he has Ko-Ko use as armor, inflates Fitz into a knight’s steed and sends them off in a deed of daring-do. In *Ko-Ko the Kop* (1927), policeman Koko tries to catch Fitz by using bones as bait. He also flirts with pretty women. In *Ko-Ko’s Kane* (1927), Koko and Fitz want to play but Max is working on his newest invention, a convertible cane-umbrella. So he stuffs them in a safe with his convertible invention. When they start pushing buttons, things start to happen. In *Ko-Ko’s Klock* (1927), Max and his clown look into gluttony. In *Ko-Ko Goes Over* (1928), Ko-Ko and his dog join the army and end up on a battle font and the clown bombards Max who finally gets his lawless imp back again into the old familiar ink bottle. In *Ko-Ko’s Catch* (1928), Max is busy with his pretty new secretary and puts Koko and Bimbo on automatic for the day. In *Ko-Ko’s Courtship* (1928), Max is drawing Ko-Ko who comes to life. He rolls up the drawing and gives it to a fat child and tells him to rush it to Inkwell Studios and fast. Off goes the fat kid (whose name is Skinny) while Max draws Fitz the dog and tells him to run after Skinny and make sure he doesn’t waste any time. Fitz jumps off the page and runs after the kid, drawn against real city street scenes. Meanwhile Skinny is shown wasting time by watching ditch diggers, a bit of a baseball game and flirting with a girl in the park. Skinny drops the drawing of Ko-Ko who leaps to life and creates a scene of himself flirting in the park in order to show Skinny how it’s done. Fitz arrives and leaps into the scene messing up Ko-Ko’s routine. Soon Ko-Ko finds hmself courting a no-nonsense dancer on a trolley. In *Ko-Ko’s Earth Control* (1928), Max draws the Earth and puts Ko-Ko and his dog on top of the globe and starts them running. They stumble upon a building which controls various aspects of the Earth. They pull on random levers that control the natural cycles of the earth wrecking the world and creating chaos. Battling against the nature, the earth goes haywire and humans are affected in a cartoon world*.* In *Ko-Ko’s Germ Jam* (1928), Max and a scientist are examining a test tube full of microbes so Ko-Ko decides to open the tube and apply some of the germs to various individuals to change their personalities. In *Ko-Ko’s Haunted House (*aka *Ko-Ko Goes Ghosting,* 1928), Max’s friend draws a haunted house and Ko-Ko and Fitz go inside encountering spooks and ghosts. The two animators make sure there are lots of skeletons to plague Ko-Ko and at one point the animator’s pen makes more Ko-Kos so he can wreck supernatural havoc in the haunted house. In *Ko-Ko’s Hot Dog* (1928), Max and another animator are devouring hot dogs and soda at their drawing boards, Ko-Ko wants to know why he can’t have a hot dog. So the other animator inks in a hot dog, but as Ko-Ko tries to eat it the hot dog turns into his pet dog Fitz. They two are very angry but go on an adventure eating plenty of hot dogs before the angry animator draws a dog catcher who catches the clown and his dog. They end up in a dog pound and finally escape to the artist’s desk. The animator is laughing at what he created when Fitz takes a paper holder with a sharp point and puts it on the animator’ chair. Max sits down and gets up hollering in pain. Ko-Ko cuts a slit down the last hot dog and both he and the pup jump into the hot dog ending the cartoon. In *Ko-Ko’s Kozy Korner* (1928), the clown and his dog live like country gentlemen in a mansion with many servants to attend to their every need. Then they suddenly wake up in a barn sleeping in the hay. In *Chemical Ko-Ko* (1929), the clown tries a mad scientist’s formula on various animals. In *Ko-Ko’s Big Sale* (1929), an unidentified animator drawing Koko and Fitz is interrupted by an unsuccessful salesman. The clown and the dog decide they could be better salesmen – with surrealist results (selling two frugal Scotsmen a single pair of shoes to share, a hair tonic to grow hair and a lawnmover to cut it). In *Ko-Ko’s Conquest* (1929), cartoonist David Fleischer takes over for Max and shows the clown a medal he got for saving a town from a flood, and Ko-Ko also wants such a medal. Ko-Ko encounters a slinky blonde and rescues her from drowning and a villain. In *Ko-Ko’s Hot Ink* (1929), Max draws Koko the clown with steaming ink; he and Fitz toil under a tropic sun, from which they escape to a live-action swimming pool for some malicious mischief. In *Ko-Ko’s Hypnotism* (1929), David gets a book on hypnotism and torments Ko-Ko and his dog making fools out of them by forcing them to act in various ways. Ko-Ko and Fitz find a way to learn hypnotism themselves when a witch helps them out and get revenge by forcing the animator to dive into a fishbowl getting his head stuck inside. In *Ko-Ko’s Reward* (1929), Max keeps his little girl waiting while he draws Koko and Fitz so she jumps into the drawing with the aid of Magic Ink and joins them in a haunted-house adventure. In *No Eyes Today* (1929), Max draws a curvy model who morphs into Ko-Ko. He starts ogling another model who takes offense so Max erases Ko-Ko’s eyes. He goes around town getting to trouble until the Fitz tracks him down with the help of a snake. They take the snake eyes for Ko-Ko and how that he can see so the clown goes back to eyeing the model. Other Out cartoons include *Sparring Partners* (1924), *A Stitch in Time* (1924), *Vacation* (1924), *Koko Eats* (1925), *Koko Gets Egg-Cited* (1926), *Koko Kidnapped* (1926), *It’s the Cats* (1926), *Koko Chops Suey* (1927), *Koko the Kavalier* (1927), *Ko-Ko’s Quest*  (1927), *Ko-Ko Cleans Up* (1928), *Ko-Ko Heaves-Ho* (1928), *Ko-Ko in the Rough* (1928), *Ko-Ko on the Track* (1928), *Ko-Ko Lamps Alladin* (1928), *Ko-Ko Smokes* (1928), *Ko-Ko Smokes* (1928), *Ko-Ko Squeals* (1928), *Ko-Ko’s Act* (1928), *Ko-Ko’s Bawth* (1928), *Ko-Ko’s Big Pull* (1928), *Ko-Ko’s Chase* (1928), *Ko-Ko’s Dog Gone*  (1928), *Ko-Ko’s Field Daze* (1928), *Ko-Ko’s Kink* (1928), *Ko-Ko’s Magic* (1928), *Ko-Ko’s Parade* (1928), *Ko-Ko’s Tattoo* (1928), *Ko-Ko’s War* Dog (1928), *Ko-Ko Beats Time* (1929), *Ko-Ko’s Crib* (1929), *Ko-Ko’s Focus* (1929), *Ko-Ko’s Knock Down* (1929), *Ko-Ko’s Saxophonies* (1929); *Ko-Ko’s Signals* (1929), *Noise Annoys Ko-Ko* (1929). [↑](#endnote-ref-216)
217. In *Col. Heeza Liar’s* Forbidden Fruit (1923), the colonel tells Lanz, who is eating a banana, “That reminds me of the time that I ended the great banana famine in 1923.” In *Col. Heeza Liar’s Burglar* (1923), the colonel delves into the pages of a magazine and has some adventures with a burglar; in *Col. Heeza Liar, Detective* (1923), the colonel jumps off the drawing board and into the real world to track down a stolen rooster; in *Col. Heeza Liar’s Knighthood* (1924), the colonel gets into a sword fight with a live action partner and then explains how he was one of the finest knights in a long ago kingdom; also *Col. Heeza Liar, Bull Thrower* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar, Cave Man* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar, Daredevil* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar, The Lying Tamer* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar, Nature Fake* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar, Sky Pilot* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Ancestor* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Horseplay* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Mysterious Case* (1924), *Col. Heeza Liar’s Romance* (1924). [↑](#endnote-ref-217)
218. In *Dinky Doodle: The Magic Lamp* (1924), Dinky and his sidekick mutt Weakheart enter a storybook to find a magic lamp and have a series of adventures; in *Dinky Doodle: The Giant Killer* aka *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1924), Dinky and his dog take home a magic guitar and a hen which lays golden eggs from an ogre’s house and face the consequences; in *Dinky Doodle: The Babes in the Woods* (1925), Lantz gets tired of his pen children and abandons them in the woods where they are transported to another planet by a villainous cat and an evil old witch; in *Dinky Doodle: Captain’s Kid* (1925), Dinky and Weakheart fight a pirate; in *Dinky Doodle: Cinderella* (1925), Dinky looks for the beautiful dancer who lost her shoe the night before; in *Dinky Doodle and the Bad Men* (1925), Lantz creates a burlesque of a “shoot ‘em up.” Dinky and his dog perform breath-taking stunts and feats of heroism just like the leading screen stars of Western films; in *Dinky Doodle at the Restaurant* (1925), Dinky does interesting things with flapjacks; in *Dinky Doodle in the Circus* (1925), the duo meet the people of the circus including the Fat Lady, the Rubber Man, the Inseparable Twins and others including a cartoon mule the cartoonist ends up riding; in *Dinky Doodle: Dinky Doodle in the Hunt* (1925), Lantz is at a hunting lodge out in the country along with Dinky and Weakheart. Dinky turns out to be a much better marksman than Lantz since he lets Dinky shoot an apple on his head with live ammunition, but Dinky won’t let the cartoonist do the same thing to him. Lantz confronts a number of animated forest creatures, each of which outwit him. Dinky goes hunting and gets himself into trouble; in *The House that Dinky Built* (1925), the House that Jack Built is being renovated by Dinky Doodle and company. They fall asleep on the job and the cartoonist scolds them. They respond by spraying him with a hose. Finally, they all get to work. Lantz slaps mortar on a brick and throws it to Dinky, standing on the roof, who uses it to build a chimney. The life-size brick becomes Dinky-size by the time it gets to him in the drawing. The cartoonist throws him a rapid succession of bricks, but they come too fast overwhelming Dinky who raises the white flag; in *Just Spooks* (1925), a burlesque on mystery plays, Dinky and Weakheart decide to play a joke on Lantz scaring him when they masquerade as ghosts. The cartoonist was quietly painting landscapes of the countryside when he wanders into an abandoned house that Dinky tries to fool him into thinking that the house is haunted; in *Little Red Riding Hood* (1925), Dinky sees Little Red Riding Hood reading a book and crying. So, he jumps into the book to help her and they fall in love. The wolf ends up chasing them out of the book; in *Robinson Crusoe* (1925), the naughty boy is marooned on a desert isle with Robinson Crusoe; In *Dinky Doodle in Egypt* (1926), Lantz goes to a masquerade ball as an Egyptian princess and Dinky and his dog take a nap and dream about Egypt and a princess; in *Dinky Doodle in Lost and Found*  (1926), Lantz tries to lose Dinky and Weakheart in the countryside and they are kidnapped and taken to the moon by a witch. They finally get back to earth to take their revenge against their creator, the cartoonist; In *Dinky Doodle in the Arctic* (1926), Lantz sends Dinky and Weakheart to the arctic with a detour through Polynesia and China before winding up in the far north where they deal with igloos and Eskimos; In *Dinky Doodle in the Army* (1926), Lantz is the general who puts Dinky and his pup through their paces in the Army; In *Dinky Doodle in the Wild West* (1926), Lantz is discussing the Wild West and Indian warfare with Dinky and Weakheart. The pair then brag about what they would do if they encounter any Indians, so Lantz draws a stagecoach and Dinky and his pup jump in it and the adventure is underway. Indians invade their stage coach and they are captured. Both fight back and, in revenge, the Indians chase Dinky back to the studio and scalp him of the only hair on his bald head; in *Dinky Doodle’s Bedtime Story* (1926), Lantz tries to tune in a certain radio station but gets Fairyland instead. Dinky joins all of the familiar characters including Humpty Dumpty, Mary and Her Little Lamb, Tom, the Piper’s son. When the station signs off, Dinky is so angry that Mary has refused his marriage proposal that he boots the little lamb across the yard; another episode is *Dinky Doodle in Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1926). [↑](#endnote-ref-218)
219. Other episodes include *The Magic Carpet* (1925), *Peter Pan Handled* (1925), *The Three Bears* (1925). In 1927, Lantz created *Barnyard Rivals* in 1928*.* In *Sad Stuff,* he interacts with life on the farm when he and his helper meet a city girl and try to teach her the joys of farm life including how to milk a cow. [↑](#endnote-ref-219)
220. In *Pete’s Haunted House* (926), Lantz sees Pete in his little house reading about spooks, so he drops skeletons down the chimney and shoves apparitions in the windows. He also picks up the cardboard house until the pup thinks he is in the middle of a major earthquake or hurricane. Pete finally figures it out and blows the cartoonist up with a giant firecracker. In *Pete’s Party* (1926), Lantz gives Pete a birthday party. In *Along Came Fideo* (1927), Pete rescues his sweetheart by trapping a sheik who kidnapped her in a motion picture camera. He turns the crank and changes the sheik into a string of hot dogs. In *Dog Gone It* (1927), Lantz is a laughing observer as Pete wants to cross the English Channel. In *Lunch Hound* (1927), Lantz entices Pete to come out from behind a rock by drawing a roasted turkey. In *Petering Out* (1927), Lantz ends up all covered with wallpaper and falls out of the window in his paper suit that makes him look like a convict to the cop outside. Other Hot Dog cartoons include *Bone Dry* (1927); *The Farm Hand* (1927); *Jungle Bells* (1927); *Pete’s Pow-Wow* (1927); *The Puppy Express* (1927); *S’Matter Pete* (1927). [↑](#endnote-ref-220)
221. Films featuring newsboys and news vendors from 1920-1929 include *Checking Out* (1924), *Chums* (1921), *Clunked on the Corner* (1929), *The Cowboy Cop* (1926), *Crainquebille (aka Bill)* (1922), *The Darling of New York* (1923), *Daughter of Devil Dan* (1921), *Daughters of the Rich* (1923), *Dinty* (1920), *Dog’s Pal* (1927), *Enemies of Children* (1923), *Flight* (1929), *For His Sake* (1922), F*ox News No. 42* (1923), *Going to Congress* (1924), *Good Morning!* (1924), *Gus Edwards’s Song Revue* (1929), *Heartless Husbands* (1925), *Her Mad Bargain* (1921), *Heroes of the Street* (1922), *The ighbinders* (1926), *His People* (1925), *Howdy Duke* (1927), *Hush Money* (1921), *Idaho Red* (1929), *Jealousy* (1929), *Kiki* (1926), *Kinograms No. 2223* (1923), Ki*nograms No. 5355* (1928), *Let ‘Er Go Gallegher* (1928), *Little Miss Hawkshaw* (1921), *Long Live the Ring* (1923), *Love’s Penalty* (1921), *Makin’ Movies* (1922), *Men of the Night* (1926), *Michael O’Halloran* (1923), *The Midnight Alarm* (1923), *My Best Girl* (1927), *Pathe News No. 15* (1924), *Pathe News No. 17* (1926), *Perfect Crime* (1928), *The Penalty* (1920), *The Penny Philanthropist* (1920), *The Rat’s Knuckles* (1925), *Say It with Songs* (1929), *Seeing Double* (1923), *She’s a Vamp* (1920), *A Short Tail* (1927), *The Show Girl* (1927), *Smiling All the* Way (1920), The *Soul of Youth* (1920), *Square Shoulders* (1929), *Stepping Along* (1926), *The Swamp* (1921), *Sweetie* (1923), *A Texas Steer* (1927), *Three O’Clock in the Morning* (1923), *Through a Class Window* (1922), *A Tough Winter* (1923), *Velvet Fingers* (1920-1921), *A Wide-Open Town* (1922). [↑](#endnote-ref-221)
222. Films featuring printers and other news employees from 1920-1929 include *Charles Urban’s Movie Chats No. 56* (1921), *Classified* (1925), *L’eternal feminine (aka The Eternal Feminine*) (1921), *From Tree to Newspaper* (1928), *Homespun Folks* (1920), *How Baxter Butted In (aka Hero Stuff)* (1925), *International News No. 10* (1924), *The Jailbird* (1920), *The Law of the Yukon* (1920), M*adame Guillotine* (1924), *Pathe News No. 20* (1920), *Pathe Review No. 25* (1926), *The Pony Express* (1925), *Power of the Press* (1928), *Printer’s Devil* (1923), *The Rat’s Knuckles* (1925), *Stung* (1923). [↑](#endnote-ref-222)
223. Other examples include *Her Mad Bargain* (1921) in which newsboy Jerry Dunn brings a “moment of pathos” to the film after he is injured in a car accident. In *Hush Money* (1921) newsboy Terry “Pipe” McGuire is hit and badly injured by a car driving at high speed by a millionaire’s daughter. The father uses his influence to try to keep the accident out of the newspapers knowing it would be front page news. The story does appear in print, but without any names. A man who overheard the daughter and her lover talking in the garage identifies them from the story as it appears in print. He blackmails the millionaire to keep the information a secret. But the daughter does not believe money should outweigh justice. She goes to the hospital to see the boy against her father’s opposition revealing she was the one who injured the lad. In *The Swamp* (1921), newsboy Buster struggles for existence in a poor tenement in the Swamp, the lowest quarter of a great city. In *Chums* (1921), Baby Peggy’s mother sells newspapers so she can pay the rent. Peggy becomes wealthy and arrives home finding her mother still selling newspapers. She hugs her mother and saves the old home. In *Crainquebille (aka Bill)* (1922), newsboy Mouse saves a vegetable push-cart peddler from suicide in Paris after the peddler runs afoul of the law and finds himself ground up in the cogs of the corrupt French judicial system. In *Seeing Double* (1923), a newsboy is a tough kid who looks just like an English prince and is hired by a con man to impersonate him. In *A Tough Winter* (1923), a newsgirl and her little brother is adopted by a bum. In *Square Shoulders* (1929), newsboy John W. “Tad” Collins, Jr. lives in a newsboys’ home. His father is a hard-boiled drunken veteran who comes home for the first time since the war to discover his boy is selling newspapers to stay alive because the boy’s mother has died. The boy wants to go to military school so he can grow up to be a great soldier, like his father, who was a decorated war hero. Meeting his son by chance, the father, who has become a bum and a thief, vows to do everything he can for the lad, but conceals his true identity because he doesn’t want to destroy the boy’s image of his father as a war hero. After robbing a factory, he uses the money to send the boy to a military academy. In *Stepping Along* (1926), newsboy Johnny Rooney sells newspapers and dreams of a future with a girl who has ambitions for a Broadway career. Johnny wants to be a politician. After a series of misadventures, Johnny is elected to the assembly and is reunited with the girl. In *Howdy Duke* (1927), newsboy White impersonates a duke that looks like him. At a house party, the newsboy is confused by the multitude of silverware, meets the real Duke (played by the same actor), falls in love with a girl, and ends up with her. In *The Cowboy Cop* (1926), when an Arizona cowpuncher arrives in Los Angeles and is robbed by a stranger in a taxi and stranded, he is befriended by newsboy Little Frankie who buys him dinner and becomes his pal. The newsboy and his dog, Beans, help catch some crooks. In *Gus Edwards’s Song Revue* (1929), newsboys sing “If I Was a Millionaire.” *L’eternal feminine (aka The Eternal Feminine* (1921) includes a newspaper seller. In *Velvet Fingers* (1920-1921, a 15-chapter serial, a newsboy becomes a valuable aide to a crook who pulls off sensational robberies single-handed. In *For His Sake* (1922), newsboy Jimmie and a girl whose mother has died of consumption leaving her an orphan, set out to find her mother’s brother, a wealthy financier. In *The Third Alarm* (1922), newsboy Little Jimmie is a friend of a fireman who was fired because he cannot drive the new horseless auto-engines. His faithful horse, Bullet, is discharged and sold to a cruel master. Jimmie finds Bullet roaming in the streets and locks him up in the fireman’s barn. When the horse is discovered, the fireman is arrested for robbery, but is freed when Jimmie explains to the police what happened. The fireman risks his life to fight a fire and as the result of his bravery, he is given the job as guardian of old fire horses and a farm. In *Idaho Red* (1929), Tadpole, an orphaned newsboy, is forced to elude authorities aided by an ex-Marine who acts as his guardian and takes him to his ranch in Idaho. It seems the crooked foreman and his gang are running a counterfeit plant on the ranch. They try to frame the ex-Marine as the guilty party, but Tadpole and a girl, who is part owner of the ranch, won’t let that happen and the orphan newsboy reveals a hidden staircase leading to the counterfeit plant. The ex-Marine gets to the scene and is captured, bound and tied. The acid used in counterfeiting, nearly suffocates him before a wild chase and a furious fight licks the mob and puts them in jail. In *A Wide-Open Town* (1922), newsboy Billy “Cliff” Clifford befriends his chum, newsboy Talbot and even serves a reform school sentence for something Talbot did. When they grow up, Talbot, now governor, returns the favorite by pardoning Clifford who is arrested for shooting his former partner who has kidnapped the woman he loves. [↑](#endnote-ref-223)
224. *Detroit Free Press,* October 30, 1928, p. 57 [↑](#endnote-ref-224)
225. He shouts “Extra” reading the latest newspaper headlines aloud. After being conned out of some of his money, Andy becomes distracted and his papers catch on fire causing all kinds of complications. He then tries to sell a newspaper to the driver of a rich man’s car. A vicious dog is sitting on his papers. He takes a bone and throws it for the dog to fetch, but it hits the rich man’s hat and knocks it to the ground. The scared newsboy runs away. Andy sees a picture of a crook in the newspaper and realizes the crook is standing near him. When he goes to get a brick to knock him out, his prized newspapers under the brick blow away. After he retrieves them, he tries to hit the crook, but the crook took a cab moments earlier while the newsboy was distracted. A plainclothes policeman is standing where the crook was standing and the newsboy hits him on the head by mistake. Later, the newsboy is standing in front of a jewelry store when a woman known as “Necklace Nell” puts the pearls she just stole into his pocket. She follows him and seduces him to get back the pearls. It turns out the crook pictured in the newspaper is her boyfriend. They finally get the jewels from Andy and after one adventure after another, the pair is captured by the police and taken away. Andy, who was told the police were the real crooks, runs away and is dangling from, then falls down a cliff where he accidentally picks up some dynamite sticks and “blasts” his way out of the movie with one stick after another exploding after he drops them. [↑](#endnote-ref-225)
226. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,* September 14, 1929, p. 17 [↑](#endnote-ref-226)
227. A crippled newsboy shows up in *The Last Moment* (1923). A newsboy sells a newspaper to a town idler elected as congressman in Washington D.C. in *Going to Congress* (1924). In *The Highbinders* (1926), newsboy Humpty Dugan is a hunchback newsie. In *My Best Girl* (1927), a couple in love take a walk in the rain and buy a paper from a newspaper seller. In *Handicapped* (1928), a tramp sitting on a park bench reads in a newspaper that he has inherited a fortune. No faces are shown in this silent film, just hands of the actors. In *A Texas Steer* (1927), a newsboy at the capitol building Washington D.C. sells a newspaper to a new congressman (played by Commentator Will Rogers). In *Say It with Songs* (1929), newsboy Little Pal’s father, a radio entertainer and songwriter, goes to prison for accidentally killing a radio studio manager who made improper advances to his wife. When he is released, money is scarce, so Little Pal helps by selling papers. He is hit by a truck causing the paralysis of his legs and the loss of his voice. The father arranges an operation with his former wife’s husband, a surgeon, on the condition that he will return the boy to his mother. The operation is successful and restores the use of both of the kid’s legs and he regains his voice when he awakens to one of his father’s recordings. [↑](#endnote-ref-227)
228. In *Kinograms No, 222* (1923), the newsreel features the world’s oldest newsboy who has sold newspapers for 60 years and is still going strong. In *Kinograms No. 2223* (1923), a newsboy delivers papers by airmail – every day he arrives with out-of-town papers for news-hungry resorters in Palm Beach. In *Fox News No. 42* (1923), New York governor Al Smith attends a newsboys banquet in New York City. In *Long Live the Ring* (1923), a boxer stages a fight for newsboys. In *Pathe News No. 15*  (1924), “King David” newsboy sells paper and preaches every day. In *Pathe News No. 17* (1926), news carriers have a “rip roarin’ time at a ranch in Oklahoma. In *Kinograms No. 5355* (1928), newsboys in Louisville get live turkeys. [↑](#endnote-ref-228)
229. *The Film Daily,* October 11, 1925, p. 11 [↑](#endnote-ref-229)
230. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,* November 2, 1925, p. 20 [↑](#endnote-ref-230)
231. Films featuring real-life journalists from 1920-1929 include *Bellamy Trial* (1929), *Bruce Barton Editorials* (1923-1924), *Field and Stream Editor Eltinge F. Warner - Pathe Review No. 146* (1922), *Field and Stream Editor Eltinge F. Warner – Pathe Review No. 148* (1922), *Field and Stream: Afield with Rod and Gun* (1921), *Field and Stream: A Day of Black Bass* (1921), *Field and Stream: A Day with the Blues* (1921), *Field and Stream: Days Afield with Rod and Gun* (1923), *Field and Stream: Striped Bass off Montauk Point* (1921), *Go and Get It* (1920), Gr*antland Rice’s Sportlight* (1924-1925-1926-1927-1928-1929), *The Great White Way* (1924), *The Herbert Kaufman Weekly* (1920), *International News No. 5* (1920),*The Last Moment* (1923), *Louella Parsons: Show People* (1928), *Luke McLuke’s “Film-Osophy”* (1920), *Oh, Baby!* (1926), *Robert Benchley: Fox Movietone News Vol. 2, No. 7* (1928), *Robert Benchley: Furnace Trouble* (1929), *Robert Benchley: Lesson No. 1* (1929), *Robert Benchley: The Sex Life of the Polyp* (1928), Ro*bert Benchley: The Spellbinder* (1928), *Robert Benchley: Stewed, Fried and Boiled* (1929), *Robert Benchley: The Treasurer’s Report* (1928), *Tony Sarg’s Almanac* (1921), *Will Rogers Illiterate Digest Series* (1920), *Will Rogers – Selznick News No. 1087, 1089, 1091, 1099* (1922), *Will Rogers – Selznick News No. 1107, 1109, 1111* (1923), *Will Rogers – MGM News No. 21* (1927), *Will Rogers’s Travelogue: Exploring England* (1927), *Will Rogers’s Travelogue: Hiking Through Holland* (1927), W*ill Rogers’s Travelogue: Hunting for Germans in Berlin* (1927), *Will Rogers’s Travelogue: In Dublin* (1927), *Will Rogers’s Travelogue: In London* (1927), *Will Rogers’s Travelogue: In Paris* (1927), W*ill Rogers’s Travelogue: Over the Bounding Blue with Will Rogers* (1928), *Will Rogers’s Travelogue: Prowling Around France* (1927), *Will Rogers’s Travelogue: Reeling Down the Rhine* (1927), *Will Rogers’s Travelogue: Roaming the Emerald Isle* (1927), *Will Rogers’s Travelogue: Through Switzerland and Bavaria* (1927), *Will Rogers’s Travelogue: Winging Round Europe* (1927). [↑](#endnote-ref-231)
232. *Exhibitors Herald-Moving Picture World,* April 21, 1928, p. 24 [↑](#endnote-ref-232)
233. *Exhibitors Herald-Moving Picture World,* April 28, 1928, p. 76 [↑](#endnote-ref-233)
234. *The Daily Press,* Newport News, Virginia, April 20, 1929, p. 12 [↑](#endnote-ref-234)
235. *New York Daily News,* April 7, 1928, p. 56 [↑](#endnote-ref-235)
236. [↑](#endnote-ref-236)
237. A newsboy sells the paper with a startling headline: “MacDonald Jury Out Nine Hours. Girl Awaits Verdict for Hardell Murder.” She is convicted, but a studio gagman in love with her stumbles on a clue and reveals the real murderer – the director did it. [↑](#endnote-ref-237)
238. *New York Times,* January 4, 1924, p. 179 [↑](#endnote-ref-238)
239. The first six films produced in 1924 included *Wild and Wooly* about a Western rodeo; *Girls and Records* about how women of the day are making athletic history; *The National Rash* on why golf is becoming a national game; *Taking a Chance* on why nerve is required in football, polo, horse-jumping and other sports; *Great Competitor* contrasts the closest rivals in many sports, and *The Call of the Game* compares the solitary sports such as fishing and hunting and those which are witnessed by “vast multitudes.” The 1925 titles include *By Hook or Crook, Action, Beauty Spots, Barrier Busters, Sporting Judgment, Clever Feet, Seven Ages of Sport.* The 1926 titles include *Glory or Dollars, Jacks-of-One-Trade, Ball and Bat, With the Wind, Top-Notchers, By the Wholesale, Hooks and Holidays, Durable Souls, More Ways Than One, The Restless Race, Bull’s-Eyes, Big and Little, The Great Arena, The Strenuous Life, The Uprising Generation, All Astride.*The episodes produced in 1927 include *The Agile Age, Alien Antics, Bucking the Handicap. Crowd Bait, Chills and Fever, Cups and Contenders, The Defensive Catch, The Defensive Ends, The Defense Half-Backs, Down to the Sea, Eyes and Angles, The Fair Catch, Flying Feet, Football Field Officials, The Forward Pass, Frolics in Frost, The Frost Line, Fundamental Football, Ginger and Genius, Hook, Horses, Horse, Keeping Fit, The Kick, Ladies’s Day, The Lateral Pass, Outwitting Time, Pioneer Instinct, The Rival Sex, Rollin’ Along, Scenes and Dog Sense, The Sporting Knack, Tabloid Editions, Tackles and Touchdowns, Taking Punishment, Up the Ladder, Water Sprites, Weatherproof.* The episodes produced in 1928 include *Amateur Antics, Bath Time, Bunker Battlers, Busy Bodies, Canned Thrills, Clothes and the Game, Crowned Heads, A Fair Affair, Family Frolics, Famous Playgrounds, Fun Afoot, Getting Together, Gridiron Cocktails, Limberlegs, Matching Wits, Muscle Marvels, School Days, Season to Taste, Spartan Diet, Star Builders, The Supple Sex, Tail Waggers, Targets, Versatility.* Episodes produced in 1929 include *Sport-a-la-Carte, Feminine Fitness, Stamina, Gridiron Glory, Boyhood Memories, Duffers and Champs, Burning the Scales, Hook Line and Melody, The River Drivers, Rhythm, Modern Rhythm, The Right Technique, Sport Afloat, Sport Almanac, Footwork, Conditioning, Clowning the Game, Fish and Feathers, Surf and Sail, Crystal Champions, Young Hopeful, Water Wonders, Three Aces, Bridle Byways, Dogging It, Winning Patterns, Close Figuring, Girls will be Boys, Mild or Mighty, Players at Play, Knowing the Ropes.* Advertisements boast that *Grantland Rice’s Sportlight* is produced and written by “the country’s most celebrated authority on sports.” (*Motion Picture News,* March 27, 1926, p. 1383ff.) [↑](#endnote-ref-239)
240. Eleven were produced in 1927 including *Exploring England, Hiking Through Holland, Hunting for Germans in Berlin, In Dublin, In London, In Paris, Prowling Around France, Reeling Down the Rhine, Roaming the Emerald Isle, Through Switzerland and Bavaria, Winging Round Europe.* One more was produced in 1928, *Over the Bonding Blue with Will Rogers.* Commentator Will Rogers sets a new flying record as an airmail passenger (*MGM News No. 21,* 1927). [↑](#endnote-ref-240)
241. Other Benchley films include *Lesson No. 1* (1929) and *Stewed, Fried and Boiled* (1929). His talking shorts became so popular that Fox Movietone news excerpted some of them for their newsreel. In *Fox Movietone News, Volume 2 No. 7,* 1928, Benchley carves a turkey at a Thanksgiving dinner. [↑](#endnote-ref-241)
242. Films include *Days Afield with Rod and Gun* (1921, 1923); *A Day of Black Bass* (1921); *Day with the Blues* (1921); *Striped Bass off Montauk Point* (1921); *Pathe Review No. 146* (1922); *Pathe Review No. 148* (1922); *Turkey* (1923); *The Goose* (1923); *The Quail* (1923); *Salmon Fishing with a Dry Fly on the Restigouche River in New Brunswick* (1923); *Duck Shooting on Wapanocca Lake* (1923). [↑](#endnote-ref-242)
243. Newspaper Columnist Luke McLuke’s humorous column, which is syndicated in more than 250 daily newspapers, comes to the movies as “Film-Osophy.” Henry “Hy” Mayer, cartoonist and magazine illustrator who worked for The *New York Times* and *Puck,* was represented in the silent films with two short subject film series that combined animation with live action film taken in exotic locations. Magazine Illustrator C.D. Gibson is profiled in his studio with illustrations from his world-famous pen as part of the “Masters of American Art” series (*Pathe Review No. 114,* 1921). Tony Sarg, one of America’s best known illustrators, brings his work to the silent screen (*Tony Sarg’s Almanac,* 1921). *McCall Colour Fashion News* (1928) features model Hope Hampton in eight episodes wearing the latest Paris fashions (“doing her gorgeous mannequin act arrayed in a million dollars more or less of Parisian finery”) in two-color Kodachrome sponsored by her husband, Jules Brulatour. In *Blind Alleys* (1927), a local Louisiana boy with no acting experience is picked to play a reporter in this movie. His role is small, but his local audience is large. The story of printer Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of movable type, is featured in *Charles Urban’s Movie Chats No. 56* (1921). [↑](#endnote-ref-243)
244. Films featuring pack journalists from 1920-1929 include *13 Washington Square* (1928), *The Acquittal* (1923), *L’Argent (aka Money*) (1929), *Babies Welcome* (1923), *Beggar on Horseback* (1925), *Bellamy Trial* (1929), *The Big Noise* (1928), *Broadway Daddies* (1928), *Dead Easy* (1927), *The Fair Cheat* (1923), *The Figurehead* (1920), *Food for Scandal* (1920), *Fox News No. 27* (1924), *Fox News No. 35, 64* (1925), *Fox News No. 38* (1926), *The Goose Woman* (1925), *Her Night of Romance* (1924), *Her Sister from Paris* (1925), *His New York Wife* (1926), *House of Youth* (1924), *International News No. 10* (1921), *International News No. 82* (1923), *International News No. 34, 35* (1926), *International News No. 35* (1927), *Kinograms No. 2253* (1923), *Kinograms No. 5052* (1925), *The Lodger: A Story of London Fog (aka The Case of Jonathan Drew)* (1927), *Midnight Molly* (1925), *The Monster* (1925), *Our Congressman (aka Alfalfa Doolittle, Our Congressman)* (1924), *Partners of the Night* (1920), Pathe News No. 4 (1921), *Pathe News No. 34* (1923), *Pathe News No. 48* (1924), *Pathe News No. 21, 39* (1926), *Pathe Review No. 15* (1929), *Princess Jones* (1921), *Red Lights* (1923), *The Road to Broadway* (1926), *The Scandal Hunters* (1925), *Scandal in Paris* (1929), *Should Husbands Pay?* (1926), *A Society Scandal* (1924), *Society Snobs* (1921), *Starland Revue* (1922), T*opics of the Day* (1921), *Tramp, Tramp. Tramp* (1926), *Woman Trap* (1929). Press Conferences: *International News No. 68* (1923). *Kinograms No. 2330* (1924).*Pathe News No. 67* (1923). [↑](#endnote-ref-244)
245. Other examples include *The House of Youth* (1924), in which reporters and news photographers cover a police raid on a roadhouse and print a story about a woman who has been enticed to a roadhouse and is compromised by a married cad she despises. The woman’s fiancé reads the story and breaks off their engagement. The newspapers ruin her reputation. In *Our Congressman* (1924), reporters, news photographers, and newsreel cameramen make fun of a young congressman who believes he is a great man. When asked questions by the reporters, the hick congressman (played by commentator-humorist Will Rogers) offers sarcastic observations of the world-at-large. In *So This is Paris* (1924), a boxer (played by real boxer Jack Dempsey) puts on a heavy false beard to elude reporters trying to interview him. In *A Society Scandal* (1924), newspaper and newsreel coverage of a scandal destroys a woman’s reputation by the brutal headlines of the day. In *Her Sister from Paris* (1925), reporters, photographers and newsreel shooters follow a notorious dancer from Paris to Vienna. In *Midnight Molly* (1925), pack journalists are on the scent of a story involving a man running for office who fears defeat through a scandal. When the politician’s wife runs off with the cashier of a manufacturing firm who hires a lady crook who looks like his wife to impersonate her. In *His New York Wife* (1926), a woman masquerades as the wife of a young rich man who has gone away with his real wife to avoid reporters. And she immediately sees why since the reporters hope to get something scandalous on the supposed wife. In *The Road to Broadway* (1926), three New York reporters fall for a publicity man’s story. When police break up a duel with swords between the hero and a Frenchman, New York reporters – all three of them – get the story, and it’s a great publicity break for the film company because the cops and the French villains are all phonies, hired by the film company to exploit their forthcoming picture. The reporters don’t get wise, leaving the scene immediately at the command of the director. In *Dead Easy* (1927), newspaper reporters fall for a publicity stunt arranged by an actress’s press agent in which the hero pretends to publicly commit suicide for the love of a French actress who scorned him. The press agent promises the actor he will buy his play if he goes through with the stunt. So while the newspaper reporters watch, he goes through various hilarious attempts to apparently bump himself off. [↑](#endnote-ref-245)
246. *Motion Picture News,* December 30, 1927, p. 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-246)
247. The press discovers later she is indeed the famous opera singer who everyone thought was dead for the last 20 years. It turns out the murder she pretended to witness involved her son and the old woman’s statement is being used to convict him of a crime he didn’t do. The woman tells the authorities, “I’ve been acting all my life. When I lost my voice I lost my audience. This murder gave me the chance to come back to my public. I don’t know and I don’t care who killed (the man)…I just made up the story to see my name in print again, but I didn’t know it would hurt my boy.” [↑](#endnote-ref-247)
248. In *The Big Noise,* a tipsy subway guard falls from a platform and is nearly run over. *The Daily Mail* capitalizes on the accident to push for subway reform and promote its candidate. The guard goes to campaign headquarters after the newspaper’s candidate is elected to find that they merely used him for campaign fodder. At one point, reporters show up at the guard’s home and discover that he has only one grown daughter, so they get kids from the slums to pose as his family causing the subway guard, when he sees the photo, to ask a nurse how long has he been in the hospital? Ben Hecht wrote the script exploring some of the less than ethical practices of journalists in the 1920s. The *Variety* reviewer was impressed: “There isn’t a newspaperman anywhere who won’t enjoy this picture.” (*Variety,* May 9, 1928, p. 17.) [↑](#endnote-ref-248)
249. “Land.,” *Variety,* August 14, 1929, pp. 31, 44 [↑](#endnote-ref-249)
250. Other examples include *Woman Trap* (1929), in which a hard-bitten police sergeant says to the new captain of detectives: “Those newspaper boys are probably out there by now. The Gentlemen of the Press.” He goes out the door and into a room filled with newspapermen. When the two men come to see the captain, he takes them into his office and one of the reporters runs to the door, puts his ear up to the keyhole, and tries to hear what’s going on. When one of the men is thrown out of the captain’s office, the press boys grab their phones and talk to their newspapers. With a newsboy crying out “Extray. Extray” newspaper headlines about a man’s arrest, trial and hanging are announced. In *What’s Your Hurry* (1920), a city editor and a room full of reporters do not fall for a hoax. The city editor gives the man pitching the story the gate. In *Princess Jones* (1921), newspaper reporters interview a woman who is not a princess and when the real princess reads the story, she goes to the hotel resort to find out about this imposter. In *Society Snobs* (1921), newspaper reporters find out from a rejected suitor that a society girl has married a common waiter and the story is spread all over the front page of New York newspapers. In *The Acquittal* (1923), reporters from yellow journals cover a sensational trial from start to finish. The director of the film plays one of the reporters. In *Babies Welcome* (1923), newspaper reporters make life miserable for a prospective bride who steals a baby to win a baby contest to replace the money her fiancé gave her that she lost in a taxicab on her way to the jeweler to pick up an engagement ring. In *Red Lights* (1923), a conductor shoos reporters away from a private train car. In *The Rat’s Knuckles* (1925), a pack of news photographers shoot pictures of the rat-trap king and his gorgeous bride who pose for the cameras to celebrate the success of his invention in a dream sequence. The Prince of Wales is integrated into the plot about a hero-inventor of a device to kill rats (through clever editing, the prince says to the inventor: “Morning Ed…”). In *Ella Cinders* (1926), reporters, news cameramen and photographers cover a movie-struck small-town girl who wins a contest and goes to Hollywood. When she arrives, she sees a group of newsreel cameramen waiting and thinks they are there for her, but they not – they are shooting pictures of an Indian chief visiting Hollywood. Many newspaper headlines and stories are included: “Ella Cinders on Her Way to Fame Puts Roseville on World’s Map.” [↑](#endnote-ref-250)
251. Hitchcock also plays an extra in the newspaper office sitting at a desk in the newsroom with his back to the camera operating a telephone. It is his first recognizable film cameo and was to become a standard practice for the remainder of his films. [↑](#endnote-ref-251)
252. *Variety,* June 13, 1928, p. 12 [↑](#endnote-ref-252)
253. In *Pathe News No. 21* (1926), police club reporters and cameraman cover a strike riot in Passaic. Newsreels often included reporters doing their job such as veteran journalists from the days of Greeley, Dana, Bennett and Pulitzer gathering at the Newspaper Club in New York City to talk about the good old days (*Fox News No. 27,* 1924); high school girls produce a newspaper in Oakland, California (*Fox News No. 35,* 1925*, Kinograms* No. 5052, 1925); reporters meeting with a former Democratic presidential candidate (*International News No. 8,* 1921); reporters playing a golf tourney with President Harding (*Kinograms No. 2071,* 1921; White House correspondents talking to President Wilson’s Secretary Joseph Tumulty in Washington D.C. (*International News No. 10,* 1921); journalists attend a press conference with President Coolidge in *International News No. 68* (1923); newspapermen besiege Minnesota Senator Magnus Johnson, a farmer-statesman (*International News No. 82,* 1923); Pan-American journalists inspect site in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (*International News No. 34,* 1926); Pan-American journalists visit a big motor plant in Detroit, Michigan (*Pathe News No, 39,* 1926); President Harding plays in a newspaper men’s golf meet greeting the newsboys (*Kinograms No. 2253,* 1923*)*; reporters meeting Indian runners on the trail with early reports of the rescue of balloonists (*Pathe Newsreel No. 4,* 1921); newspapermen hear from the President about his campaign for U.S. membership in the World Court (*Pathe News No. 34,* 1923); newspapermen meet the president in Washington D.C. (*Pathe News, No. 67,* 1923); news stunt reporters discover a 61-year-old daredevil in Colorado, a “police-crawler” in lofty skyscrapers in New York and a death-teaser in Los Angeles (*Pathe News No. 48,* 1924); President Coolidge visits New York to address the nation’s editors (*International News No. 35,* 1927). [↑](#endnote-ref-253)
254. Films featuring the role of newspapers and unidentified news staffs in silent films from 1920-1929 include *10 Minutes* (1928), *After the Ball* (1924), *Alias Jimmy Valentine* (1929), *An Amateur Devil* (1920), *Amazing Woman* (1920), *American Venus* (1926), *Any Woman* (1925), *Ashes* (1922), *An Awful Bull* (1921), *Beach Babies* (1929), *The Beautiful Cheat* (1926), *Beauty Prize* (1924), *Back Pay* (1922), *Behold My Wife* (1920), *Below the Surface* (1920), *Big Happiness* (1920), *Big Time* (1929), *Blind Hearts* (1921), *Bluebeard’s Seven Wives* (1926), *Bob’s Candidate* (1920), *The Bomb Idea* (1920), *The Branded Woman* (1920), *Brewster’s Millions* (1921), *Broadway Daddies* (1929), *Broadway or Bust* (1924), *Bucking the Bucket Shop* (1924), *Bulldog Drummond* (1929), *Cabaret* (1927), *Champagne* (1928), *Chivalrous Charley* (1921), *Companions* (1923), *Corporal Kate* (1926), *Dangerous Paths* (1921), *The Devil’s Pawn (*1922), *The Diamond Queen: Episode One: Vow of Vengeance* (1921), *Dirty Hands* (1924), *Do the Dead Talk* (1920), *Drums of Fate* (1923), *The Dungeon* (1922), *East Lynne* (1921), *The Enemies of Women* (1923), *Fashions for Women* (1927), *Felix the Cat Ducks His Duty* (1927), *Felix Turns the Tide* (1922), *The Fight* (1924), *The Fighter* (1921), *Find the Woman* (1922), *Flight* (1929), *A Fool and His Honey* (1927), *Fools of Fortune* (1922), *Footlights* (1921), *Forgotten Faces* (1928), *The Fourth Musketeer* (1923), *Fox Varieties: White Paper* (1925), *Fresh Faces* (1926), *Garrison’s Finish* (1923), *The Gate Crasher* (1928), *The Gentle Doctor* (1921), *Gentle Julia* (1923), *Giddap!* (1925), *The Girl from God’s Country* (1921), *The Goat Getter (aka The Speed Champion)* (1925), *The Great Round-Up* (1920), *The Greatest Menace* (1923), *Fig Leaves* (1926), *Handicapped* (1928), *Hearst News No. 49* (1920), *Held to Answer* (1923), *Heliotrope* (1920), *Her Face Value* (1921), *Her Fatal Millions* (1923), *High Treason* (1929), *His Secretary* (1925), *Home Bound* (1920), *Honeymoon Squabble* (1926), *Hoop La!* (1928), *House of Youth* (1924), *Human Wreckage* (1923), *Inez From Hollywood* (1924), *International News No. 66*, 1925), *International News No. 5, 100* (1926), *Irish Luck* (1925), *John Smith* (1922), *The Kid* (1921), *Kinograms No. 2071* (1921), *Kiss Me Again* (1925), *Jane’s Engagement Party* (1926), *The Last Card* (1921), *The Last Laugh* (1924), *The Last Man on Earth* (1924), *Learning to Love* (1925), *The Leatherneck* (1929), *Life’s Greatest Game* (1924), *The Lights of New York* (1922), *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1921), *The Lodger: A Story of London Fog (aka The Case of Jonathan Drew)* (1927), *Lonesome Ladies* (1927), *Long Pants* (1927), *Love, Honor and Obey* (1920), *The Love Charm* (1921), *The Love Gamble* (1925), *Love is a Like* (1927-1928), *The Love Thrill* (1927), *Luring Lips* (1921), *Madame Wants No Children* (1927), *The Making of a Newspaper* (1928), *The Man from Hardpan* (1927), T*he Man from the West* (1926), *The Man Who Lost Himself* (1920), *Missing Millions* (1922-1923), *Molly O* (1921), *Moonlight and Honeysuckle* (1921), *Mr. Billings Spends His Dime* (1923), *Mulhall’s Great Catch* (1926), *No Defense* (1921), *Notoriety* (1922), *The Notorious Miss Lisle* (1920), *One Wild Week* (1921), *The Open Wire* (1922), *The Pace that Kills* (1928), *Pals First* (1926), *Pathe Review No. 96, 105* (1921), *Pathe Review No. 31* (1927), *The Pauper Millionaire* (1922), *The Perfect Flapper* (1924), *Picking on George* (1927), *The Pilgrim* (1923), *Pop Tuttle’s Movie Queen* (1922), *The Potters* (1927), *The Princess from Hoboken* (1927), *Princess Jones* (1921), *A Private Scandal* (1921), *Publicity Madness* (1927), *Reckless Wives* (1921), *The Red Kimono* (1926), *The Rejected Woman* (1924), *Reno* (1923), *Rugged Water* (1925), *The Scarab Ring* (1921), *Screen Smiles* (1920), *Screen Snapshots No. 23* (1921), *The Secret Studio* (1927), *Sensation Seekers* (1927), *Seven Chances* (1925), *Seven Sinners* (1925), *Shipwrecked* (1926), *The Shriek of Araby* (1923), *Silver Wings* (1922), *Sinner or Saint* (1923), *Sitting Pretty* (1929), *Slightly Used* (1927), *Small-Town Idol* (1921), *Smiling All the Way* (1920), *Smilin’ Guns* (1929), *The Smiling Madame Beudet* (1923), *The Snub* (1924), *So This is Paris* (1924), *The Speed Girl* (1921), *The Spirit of the U.S.A.* (1924), *The Spirit of Youth* (1929), *The Sports Review: Speed* (1921), *Squandered Lives* (1920), *A Tailor Made Man* (1922), *Tarnished Reputation* (1920), *Terror Island* (1920), *The Third Alarm* (1922), *Times Flies* (1926), *Tom and His Pals* (1926), *Tongues of Scandal* (1927), *Topics of the Day* (1926), *Torchy’s Hold Up* (1922), *Torchy Takes a Chance* (1921), *The Trail of ’98* (1928), *A Trip to Paramoountown* (1922), *Trouble* (1922), *Two Much Business* (1922), *Underworld* (1927), *The Unhappy Finish* (1921), *The Unknown Purple* (1923), *Unreal News Reel* (1923-1924), *Untamed Justice* (1929), *Urban Popular Classic: Newsprint Paper* (1923), *The Valley of To-Morrow* (1920), *The Vanishing Dagger: Episode 13: Spears of Death* (1920), *The Vanishing Dagger: Episode 16: Beneath the Sea* (1920), *The Vanishing Dagger: Episode 17: Beasts of the Jungle* (1920), *Venus and the Cat: An Aesop Fable* (1921), *A Voice in the Dark* (1921), *Voices of the City* (1922), *Wandering Fires* (1925), *We Faw Down* (1928), *What a Party!* (1928), *What Happened to Jones* (1920), *What Women Love* (1920), *When the Devil Drives* (1922), *White Lies* (1920), *The White Sin* (1924), *Why Change Your Wife* (1920), *Why Husbands Go Mad* (1924), *Why Men Leave Home* (1924), *The Witching Hour* (1921), *Within Our Gates* (1920), *Womanhandled* (1925), *Woman Trap* (1929), *The Wrestler* (1925), *The World’s Champion* (1922), *The Young Rajah* (1922), *Youth to Youth* (1922), *Youth’s Desire* (1920). [↑](#endnote-ref-254)
255. Other examples include *Picking on George* (1927), in which an overzealous press agent will do anything to get newspaper publicity for his actress client. George is a victim when the actress and the press agent lure him to the actress’s room where he is put in a somewhat compromising position when her husband puts in an unexpected appearance. George makes his get-away, but not until after the press agent has taken a flashlight of the proceedings, which subsequently is reproduced in the paper and seen by the husband. In *Publicity Madness* (1927), a young press agent hits upon a fool-proof publicity stunt. He promotes a contest requiring the entrants to complete a non-stop plane flight from California to Hawaii with the winner getting $100,000 of a soap company’s money. He is sure no one would be foolhardy enough to understand an impossible venture. But after Charles Lindbergh makes headlines crossing the Atlantic, the publicity man realizes that someone may actually win the prize and one hundred grand is a lot of money. So, the press agent takes a crash course in aviation and enters the contest himself hoping to collect the prize money and return it to his nervous employer. [↑](#endnote-ref-255)
256. Other examples include *Honor Bound* (1920), in which a newspaper prints unwelcomed publicity about a social event that convinces a father to send his carefree young son to South America hoping that he will make a man of himself. In *The Gentle Doctor* (1921), a Russian doctor, betrayed to the authorities by his wife and lover, gloats over a newspaper account of the lover’s execution for stabbing his wife. In *The Man Who Lost Himself* (1920), a newspaper story details the death of a man who committed suicide. It turns out the man reading the story is the man identified in the story – but it’s really his double, a dissipated earl who got his duplicate, an American, drunk and deposited him at his house before committing suicide. In *The Leatherneck* (1929), two marines who are posted in China read in the newspaper about a Heckla Potash company. They desert to seek revenge against the head of the company, Captain Heckla, a Russian responsible for the death of one of the private’s wife’s family during the Revolution. Heckla is killed. The private’s wife shows up in court to corroborate the details of her husband’s story at his court-martial. He is found innocent and reunited with his wife after three days in the guardhouse for desertion. In *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1921), New York newspapers print a story with photographs of a boy who claims the title of Lord Fauntleroy. The real Lord Fauntleroy’s friends expose the conspiracy. In *Smiling All the Way* (1920), a newspaper story about a successful restaurant brings uninvited guests into a woman’s life. In *Squandered Lives* (1920), a newspaper story results in the saving of two lives. In *Tarnished Reputations* (1920), a newspaper story convinces a woman to go to the city to get an artist’s help with unfortunate results. In *The Devil’s Pawn* (1922), a newspaper story about a young woman winning high honors at the university alerts a man that someone is using his dead sister’s name and identity. He takes immediate action, discovers the woman was using the false identity because she is ineligible to go to the university because she is Jewish. He falls in love with her. It turns out she was adopted and is really Christian so they can get married. In *The Pauper Millionaire* (1922-1923), a newspaper story about an American multi-millionaire announcing his disappearance is read by the man in question who is so excited he promptly falls off a ladder and must go to the hospital. The millionaire had been robbed, is mistaken for a crook and forced to work for a living. He was cleaning windows when he read the article causing the accident. In *Torchy Takes a Chance* (1921), a newspaper story on a winning lottery ticket reminds Torchy that he saw the ticket lying about the office where he works and he sets out to find it. In *Torchy’s Hold Up* (1922), a newspaper accuses Torchy of participating in a bank robbery and his picture is printed in the newspapers for all to see. In *The World’s Champion* (1922), newspaper stories exploit the fame of a middleweight champion changing his father’s mind about his son’s merits. In *Dirty Hands* (1924), a poor kid living in an orphan home because his mother can’t support him, reads in the newspaper that a kennel of dogs has run away. He recognizes the dogs as the ones he had released from the dog-catcher earlier, and he returns the dogs to their rightful owners receiving a large reward so he and his mother can be reunited. In *Held to Answer* (1923), newspapers publish the news of a man’s guilt when he is accused of stealing a necklace. A real thief confesses saving him and the actress once in love with him – who accused him of stealing in order to ruin his life – repents when the truth comes out. In *The Fight* (1924), hometown newspapers declare a socially prominent and wealthy man a hero when after being hypnotized by a female hypnotist he knocks out a prize-winning fighter aboard a ship returning to the United States. In a return bout, the man is pummeled until the hypnotist shows up and the hero scores another knockout. In *Flirting with Love* (1924), newspapers announce that a stage actress has disappeared – after she planned to destroy the man who condemned the risqué play she was starring in causing it to be stopped by the police. In *Time Flies* (1926), a newspaper article about trying to locate a missing heir to a fortune causes complications for a boy who is wearing a family watch revealing his true identity. The complications include a vamp who wants to marry into a fortune. In *Velvet Fingers* (1920-1921), a 15-chapter serial, a newspaper story quotes a college professor, whose hobby is the study of criminology, that he is determined to capture the infamous “Velvet” crook. But a later newspaper story reports that the college professor has drowned whereupon his sweetheart sets out to capture the thief and make good his promise. In *Big Time* (1929), newspapers report on the progress of a vaudeville husband-and-wife team and their subsequent breakup and reunion. In *The Goat Getter (*aka *the Speed Champion,*1925), a fight manager tries to stop a story from getting into the newspapers about his champion fighter getting knocked out by a young kid from the West, but he fails when the hero outraces the thugs and breaks the news. In *The Man from Hardpan* (1927), a newspaper story tells a drifter that he has inherited half the estate of a friend of his father’s and the management of a ranch. The newspaper also prints a half-tone photograph of the daughter who inherited the other half. The man is robbed on his way to the ranch, his papers stolen, and the bandit, an escaped convict, impersonates him. Eventually the real heir forces the ex-convict to reveal his true identity, becomes manager of the ranch, and marries his co-inheritor. In *Find the Woman* (1922), newspaper headlines and stories reveal that a blackmailer has been murdered. The woman he was blackmailing becomes a suspect. In *A Voice in the Dark* (1921), a newspaper article claims a woman has shot a doctor. Police arrest her, but it is later proven she is innocent of the crime. In *Terror Island* (1920), a newspaper story about an inventor’s deep-sea submarine used to salvage valuable cargoes of sunken ships appears despite the inventor’s efforts to keep the invention a secret. A young woman reads the story and seeks the inventor’s help to save her father. [↑](#endnote-ref-256)
257. Other examples are *Where am I?* (1923), in which a husband reads a story about a case of “lost memory.” He is hit on the head and feigns a loss of memory leaving his wife at home. He is engaged to marry someone else, when his wife reads a story about her husband marrying someone else. She arrives just as the wedding is taking place. Her husband suddenly “finds” his memory and goes home with his wife. In *Her Fatal Millions* (1923), a newspaper story about a former sweetheart who has made a fortune affects a young female clerk in a jewelry store. So. when she receives a telegram that he wants to see her, she pretends that she is married and wealthy to impress him. And that causes all kinds of confusion and mix-ups. In *The Man Upstairs* (1926), a personal column in a London newspaper, The Agony Column, is used by the hero to find his heroine. In *Long Pants* (1927), a boy falls in love with a girl crook. He sees a newspaper story that his unknown sweetheart is in jail: “Bebe Blair in City Jail, Proclaims Innocence. Notorious Beauty Deserted by Former Pals.” He goes to her rescue but ends up in jail himself. Finally, he realizes he isn’t really in love with the crook and marries the neighbor’s daughter. In *Marriage by Contract* (1928), a newspaper prints a story that a woman’s ex-husband is going to marry a girl he has just taken out. So, she gets herself another husband. But everything turns out to be a dream. In *We Faw Down* (1928), two men (played by Laurel and Hardy), who want to play poker, tell their wives that they have a business appointment at a theater. What they don’t know is that the theater was destroyed by fire. Their wives see the newspaper headline. When the boys get home they have a lot of explaining to do. In *The Spirit of Youth* (1929), a librarian learns through the newspapers that a navy man she loves is now a professional fighter who has forgotten her because of a wealthy society girl. After the heiress drops the fighter, the librarian is reunited with her old boyfriend. In *Honeymoon Squabble* (1926), a newlywed is shocked by what she reads in the newspaper. In *The Potters* (1927), newspaper reports that a gusher has been found on some oil property and a wife suspects that her husband’s conduct is a result of sudden wealth. In *Three O’Clock in the Morning* (1923), a wealthy playboy sees the picture of a woman who broke their engagement and leaves for New York. The man follows her there to find her, gets her a job as a chorus dancer and secretly pays her salary. When they are out driving, he hits a crippled newsboy and is arrested. In *The Gold Rush* (1925)*,* the hero tells news reporters and press photographers that the woman he is with will become his wife. [↑](#endnote-ref-257)
258. Reporters are at the hospital covering an auto wreck victim when the son of the millionaire shows up to visit her. The reporters write that he is engaged to the girl, infuriating the woman he loves. [↑](#endnote-ref-258)
259. Other examples include *Alias Jimmy Valentine* (1928-1929), in which crooks read newspapers to keep up with news about their activities. In *What a Party!* (1928), two men read a newspaper story about the death of an Italian fruit vendor at the hands of attacking thugs. They think they are the thugs the newspaper is talking about. What they don’t know is that the newspaper is six years old. In *The Young Rajah* (1922), an American newspaper prints a story informing a tyrant running India that the rightful heir is alive. In response, he sends assassins to America to kill him. [↑](#endnote-ref-259)
260. Other examples include *The Love Thrill* (1927), in which the death of an African explorer is reported in the newspapers. A woman reads the story and decides to pose as his widow to sell a big insurance policy to the dead man’s rich friend so she can help out her almost bankrupt insurance agent father. Meanwhile the explorer, who is not dead, arrives at his publisher’s office and discovers his reported death has increased sales of the book and he is advised to stay undercover using an assumed name. He meets the “widow” and pretends to be a friend of the dead man. Eventually he falls in love with her and proposes. In *Forgotten Faces* (1928), a newspaper story of a pending wedding shows a mother that her missing daughter is alive and well. A man goes home and finds his wife with another man. He kills the man, takes his infant daughter and leaves her on the doorstep of a wealthy family. The girl is now engaged to a prominent socialite, but the disreputable mother goes to see the man in prison and informs him of her intention to see the girl and ruin her life. In *Shipwrecked* (1926), a newspaper story clears an artist’s model of the murder charge from which she had run away. In *Wandering Fires* (1925), a newspaper article reported a man dead and accused as a traitor. But a woman clears his name by providing an alibi when admitting she had been with him all night proving that he could not have been implicated in a conspiracy of spies. Her story results in a scandal that is a blemish against her name. The man comes back as a shell-shock victim, regains his memory and tries to prevent the woman’s marriage from going on the rocks because of a brooding jealousy that the husband developed when he learned of what she had done for her lover. The husband realizes his wife loves him and finds peace in his marriage. [↑](#endnote-ref-260)
261. Other examples include *The White Sin* (1924), in which a young maid is supposedly married while on a yacht, discovers the supposed hoax, and leaves the yacht. She has a baby and then after reading a newspaper recounting the wreck of the yacht she was on with all aboard reported lost, she poses as the dead man’s wife. But a wire announces the return of the yachting party after a rescue from a South Sea island. In the meantime, the man’s older brother has fallen in love with the girl and after a fire in which mother and child are trapped in the building, her husband is taunted into trying to save them and is killed in the process leaving the girl free to marry the other brother who loves her. In *White Lies* (1920), newspapers print two reports that are wrong resulting in repercussions that motivate the film’s story. One report is that a young soldier has proven to be a traitor to his country in time of war and the other reports he has been killed. Both stories, central to the film’s action, prove to be wrong. [↑](#endnote-ref-261)
262. In *A Private Scandal* (1921), newspaper headlines create fears of scandal spurring two women into action. In *Underworld* (1927), newspaper stories and headlines are used throughout the film on criminals. “Police Hunt Bank Bandits. Arrests Near in Last Week’s Daring Robbery.” “’Bull’ Weed to Hang Tomorrow. Gang Leader to Pay Penalty for Crime.” A newsboy shouts out the news to sell his newspapers. In *Human Wreckage* (1923), newspaper headlines proclaim: “Stone ‘Not Guilty’ on Dope Ring Charge.” In *Corporal Kate* (1926), newspaper headlines of the Declaration of War begin the film: “U.S. At War with Germany; President Signs Resolution.” “President Proclaims War Between U.S. and Germany Calling Citizens to Colors.” In *The Pace that Kills* (1928), a newspaper headline reveals a woman’s plight. She has shot a gangster and we see the event superimposed on the newspaper story and now she is on the run: “Underworld Chief Shot. Police Dragnet Out for Discarded ‘Sweetie.’” This was an exploitation film on drugs (“forbidden pleasures” including opium, cocaine and morphine) in the late 1920s and the harm it does to good people like those sitting in the audience. [↑](#endnote-ref-262)
263. *Motion Picture News,* December 8, 1923, p. 2694 [↑](#endnote-ref-263)
264. *Variety,* December 3, 1920, p. 32 [↑](#endnote-ref-264)
265. Examples include*Brewster’s Millions* (1921), in which a newspaper gives a millionaire grandfather some ideas about his will. In *The Valley of To-Morrow* (1920), a dying man writes the name of his murderer in blood on an old newspaper hanging by his side. In *Chivalrous Charley* (1921), newspaper stories indicate that a young man sent to a ranch in the West is supposedly cured of his wayward ways and can return to New York. In *The Kid* (1921), newspapers print a reward offer for a sick boy’s return to his mother. In *The Unhappy Finish* (1921), the trade journal, *Exhibitors Journal,* is shown being consulted by the owner of a motion picture studio and the magazine is seen again lying on the executive’s table. In *Venus and the Cat: An Aesop Fable* (1921), a newspaper is being read by an old bewhiskered bachelor. In *Missing Millions* (1922-1923), the newspaper announces the marriage of a woman to Boston Blackie as they are leaving the church. In *A Trip to Paramountown* (1922), a newspaper and a cigar are used to show how an uninvited guest consoles himself. In *Companions* (1923) the independent modern woman reads a magazine and smokes while her husband does the dishes. In *Daughters of the Rich* (1923), a Sunday newspaper magazine publishes a red-hot scandal that has repercussions. In *Garrison’s Finish* (1923), newspapers cover the story of a jockey when he loses a race because he was drugged and is indefinitely suspended. In *The Monster* (1925), a group of townspeople are shown reading the newspaper with the headline: “Insurance Company Sends Detective Jennings to Clear Up Bowman Disappearance.” A review has a reporter saving the day but there is no evidence of him in the film. In *The Shriek of Araby* (1923), a sheik in the middle of the desert has the morning newspaper delivered to his tent. In *The Smiling Madame Beudet* (1923), a handsome tennis pro is pictured in a magazine a woman is reading and she imagines him leaping from the page to haul her detested husband bodily from her sight. In *The Last Man on Earth* (1924), in a final fadeout, an ultra-modern news service broadcasts the announcement that the “last man” and his bride has been blessed with twins. It is 1940 and he is the only man left on earth. In *Broadway or Bust* (1924), two cowboys strike it rich, go to Broadway and get their names in the newspapers. In *Fresh Faces* (1926), Bingville’s town newspaper conducts a beauty contest. In *Irish Luck* (1925), a New York traffic cop wins a free trip to Europe in a newspaper popularity contest. In *Tom and His Pals* (1926), a boy spends half his time reading movie magazines. He is delighted to learn that a movie actress he has read about is arriving on location at the ranch and he is enthralled to meet her. In *Untamed Justice* (1929), an airmail pilot drops copies of the Nevada News each day to subscribers. In *Sensation Seeks* (1927), a man wears a costume made of newspaper headlines about a woman’s arrest and the costume offends her. In *Beach Babies* (1929), a bathing beauty loses her clothes and ends up dressed in a newspaper. In *Cabaret* (1927), a policeman observes a newspaper covering up the revolver from which the bullet that killed the villain was fired. In *Screen Snapshots No. 23* (1921), a model poses for a magazine cover.  
      [↑](#endnote-ref-265)
266. Other examples include *Youth’s Desire* (1920), in which newspapers cover an amateur aviator’s attempt to give the monoplane he has built from scratch a public trial. The publicity draws a crowd to the air field. When the aviator crashes, he is laughed out of town, but lives to fly another day and win the love of his sweetheart. In *International News No. 66* (1925), the Baltimore news sponsors an outing that makes 4,000 kids happy. In *International News No. 81,* (1925). an old-time town-crier (the human newspaper) has his day again in a unique tournament in San Francisco, California In *International News No. 102* (1925), the Hearst newspapers take thousands of youngsters on a personally conducted tour of Santa’s realm in a Christmas show for children in Baltimore, Maryland. In *International News No. 100* (1926), Hearst newspapers send a private car in Baltimore, Maryland, to bring maimed children to see a magician as guests of the newspaper; In *Fox News No 37, (*1928), leading newspaper directors meet in New York. In *High Treason* (1929), there is a look at news media 20 years in the future where there will be electric newsboards for newspapers, television phone calls and a world-wide network of news reports via radio signals: “New York calling the world….” “London calling!...” [↑](#endnote-ref-266)
267. Other examples include *Pathe Review No. 31* (1927), in which a Pathe News cameraman shows in detail the manufacture of newsprint paper in a mill in Newfoundland. In *Fox News No. 103* (1926), a newspaper is edited and issued daily on a trans-Atlantic liner. In *From Tree to Newspaper* (1928) the newspaper production process, from trees to wood pulp ready for printing in a newspaper plant is shown. In *Pathe Review No 105* (1921), the “Newest Thing in Picture Printing” shows the rotogravure pressrooms of *The New York Times.* In *Pathe Review No. 77* (1920), the editing, printing amid distribution of a newspaper in Japan. In *The Making of a Newspaper* (1928), a newspaper is put together for public consumption. It was originally intended for showing only in clubs and before educational bodies, but ended up touring a New York theatrical circuit. [↑](#endnote-ref-267)
268. Other examples include *Counsel for the Defense* (1925), in which a doctor’s daughter fighting for justice gets on the local paper and, according to the *Variety* reviewer, “does some of that fancy publishing which only newspapers can do in the movies.” (*Variety,* March 17, 1925, p. 41.) A *Variety* critic, “Rush.” reviewing *The Witching Hour* (1921) wrote, “The play managed to cover up the newspaper exposure of the vengeful district attorney…without going into details, but the screen must be very literal about it, filming the very newspaper text, headline and all. The newspaper that printed such an item as the one Mr. Taylor shows would have its editor in jail in half an hour and the man who wrote the headline would have been fired ‘pronto’ or sooner. Mr. Thomas [Augustus Thomas, the writer of the play] used to be a practical newspaper man in New York. He never would have allowed such a faux pas.” (*Variety,* March 4, 1921, p. 40.) In *The Flash* (1923), the *Variety* reviewer wrote, “Scenes in the newspaper ‘editorial department’ will never make any scribe who turns in copy for a daily burn with envy. George Larkin as the lead reporter is pictured skipping into the copy room with a scoop, a big “inside” yawn, and tears it off on less than half a sheet of paper. The editor uses a typewriter that couldn’t be more than a thousand years old as a means of strutting his stuff. The howl of the film comes when the star member of the staff knocks his (editor) ‘cold,’ messes up the political boss, ruins the department’s furniture in general, and when the editor comes to he points to the door and states (title) ‘You’re fired.’” (“Skig.,” *Variety,*  January 25, 1923, p. 41.) In *Contraband* (1925)*,* the *Variety* reviewer wrote, “The illuminating spectacle of submitted photographs to the paper – so small the type was set by hand (A paper setting by hand boasts no engraving devices.) There is a good laugh, however and that comes when printer’s devil upsets a long galley of hand-set stuff. But maybe even that laugh is restricted to printers and others of the illuminati. …the printing office was a faithful reproduction of a small-town plant.” (*Variety,* March 25, 1925, p. 37.) [↑](#endnote-ref-268)
269. *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle,* July 8, 1929, p. 21 [↑](#endnote-ref-269)
270. “Sisk.” *Variety,* August 30, 1923, p. 27 [↑](#endnote-ref-270)
271. *Variety,* August 25, 1926, p. 19 [↑](#endnote-ref-271)
272. *Wid’s Daily,* June 20, 1920, p. 27 [↑](#endnote-ref-272)
273. *Motion Picture news,* June 17, 1922, p. 3261 [↑](#endnote-ref-273)
274. *New York Tribune* in The Film Daily *Newspaper Opinions,* September 9, 1923, p. 6 [↑](#endnote-ref-274)
275. “Sisk,” *Variety,* September 27, 1923, p. 24 [↑](#endnote-ref-275)
276. *Exhibitors Herald,* August 29, 1925, p. 84 [↑](#endnote-ref-276)
277. *Variety,* March 12, 1924, p. 26 [↑](#endnote-ref-277)
278. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,* January 29, 1925, p. 233 [↑](#endnote-ref-278)
279. *Variety,* January 28, 1925, pp. 34, 43 [↑](#endnote-ref-279)
280. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,* July 16, 1928, p. 25 [↑](#endnote-ref-280)
281. *The New York Daily News,* July 16, 1928, p. 90 [↑](#endnote-ref-281)
282. *Motion Picture News,* July 21, 1928, p. 220 [↑](#endnote-ref-282)
283. “Mori.,” *Variety,* December 26, 1928, p. 27 [↑](#endnote-ref-283)
284. *Motion Picture News,* January 1, 1929, p. 45 [↑](#endnote-ref-284)
285. Other examples include *Grinning Guns,* in which a newspaper reviewer wrote, “About the only touch of newspaper life is an excellent reproduction of the office of a country newspaper that is ground out weekly from an old flat-bed press.” (*Lansing State Journal,* Michigan, July 29, 1927, p. 19.) In *Go and Get It,* a reviewer wrote, “Prominent newspapermen…pronounced it to be the most faithful portrayal of newspaper life yet screened.” (*Motion Picture News,* July 31, 1920, p. 968.)It was also reported that “every newspaperman in town that could get away turned out to see his ‘boss’s as a movie actor and the ‘bosses’s themselves were on hand to concede that, as actors, they were great editors…incidentally, (this marks) the first time that newspapermen have appeared in a picture together.” (*Motion Picture World,* September 11, 1920, p. 219.) [↑](#endnote-ref-285)
286. *Tampa Tribune,* Florida, July 13, 1928, p. 5 [↑](#endnote-ref-286)
287. *Camera!* December 9, 1923, p. 11 [↑](#endnote-ref-287)
288. *Moving Picture World,* January 21, 1922, p. 322 [↑](#endnote-ref-288)
289. *Exhibitors Herald,* March 18, 1922, p. 58 [↑](#endnote-ref-289)
290. *Motion Picture World,* March 27, 1920, pp. 2151-2152 [↑](#endnote-ref-290)
291. *Motion Picture News,* April 21, 1923, p. 1967 [↑](#endnote-ref-291)
292. Other examples include *A Society Scandal* (1924). One film reporter wrote, “the newspicture is revealed in its actual and potential significance as a record of human activity. As the demonstration is made merely as an incident in the story, its point will register with the public and the newspicture will reap the reaction.” [↑](#endnote-ref-292)
293. Park Row is the street that was home to most of New York’s newspapers in the late 19th century before the Herald moved and renamed Herald Square and the Times moved and renamed Times Square. It was immortalized in a 1952 film, *Park Row,* set in 1886 about a New York city journalist, fired by *The Star,* who establishes *The Globe,* a small but visionary newspaper. The two newspapers become enemies and *The Star’s* ruthless heiress Charity Hackeett decides to eliminate the competition. It is a tribute to the early American newspaper editors who created the modern newspaper. It was written, directed, produced and financed by Samuel Fuller, a former New York reporter who turned to filmmaking. It was his favorite film although it didn’t do well at the box office. [↑](#endnote-ref-293)
294. *Motion Picture World,* June 20, 1925, p. 885 [↑](#endnote-ref-294)
295. *Variety,* November 11, 1925, p. 41 [↑](#endnote-ref-295)
296. *Motion Picture News,* October 17, 1925, p. 1829 [↑](#endnote-ref-296)
297. *Photoplay,* December 1925, p. 47 [↑](#endnote-ref-297)
298. Mordaunt Hall, *New York Times,* November 11, 1925, p. 284 [↑](#endnote-ref-298)
299. *The Scranton Republican,* Pennsylvania, January 9, 1928, p. 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-299)
300. *Democrat and Chronicle,* Rochester, New York, July 8, 1928, p. 46 [↑](#endnote-ref-300)
301. Dotty Jottings-Jerry Hoffman, *Motion Picture News,* November 10, 1928, p. 1450 [↑](#endnote-ref-301)
302. Jerry Hoffman, *Motion Picture News,* December 22, 1928, p. 1860 [↑](#endnote-ref-302)