PART 4

Manuscript, Print, Word of Mouth

All the News that's Fit to Write: The Eighteenth-Century Manuscript Newsletter

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In 1717, Sir Richard Steele sent a letter from London to his wife, Mary Scurlock Steele, at her family estate in Wales to update her on the talk of the town. “I do not write news to you because I have ordered the letter from the Secretary’s office to be sent to you constantly”, he noted in a postscript to his letter.¹ Steele was a former editor of the *London Gazette*, the official state newspaper produced by the Secretary of State’s office, and by 1717 a famous periodicalist as the collaborator with Joseph Addison on the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, and *Guardian*. But rather than arranging for his wife to receive the *Gazette* or a popular newspaper such as the *Post Boy* or *Daily Courant*, Steele indicated that he was forwarding a handwritten document, the manuscript newsletter distributed by the Secretary of State’s office. Alongside the printed *Gazette*, the department continued to produce an official newsletter well into the eighteenth century; this practice had been in place since the tenure of Under-Secretary of State Joseph Williamson, who oversaw both the 1665 founding of the *London Gazette* and the distribution of a newsletter bearing the *imprimatur* ‘Whitehall’. The information in the manuscript and printed productions derived largely from incoming diplomatic correspondence, and the office regularly reminded foreign envoys that one of their duties was to provide a “Circular” containing a “full & particular relation of such occurrences & Transactions as shall from time to time become the subject of news”.² Diplomats, bureaucrats, journalists, and other interested parties depended on manuscript sources as an integral component of the eighteenth-century news marketplace.

The growing body of scholarship on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century newspapers and periodicals, however, persists in seeing the newspaper as quintessentially a print product, and the newsletter as a precursor, supplement, or small-scale alternative to modern commercial printed news.

1 Richard Steele to Mary Scurlock Steele, 1 May 1717, Sir Richard Steele Letters, British Lib. Add. MS. 5145B f. 131. All archival sources retain original spelling and punctuation throughout this essay.

2 James Craggs to Robert Sutton, 11 July 1720, PRO SP 78/168/68, f. 169.

The medium of the printed periodical is central to Jürgen Habermas' account of the development of the public sphere and Benedict Anderson's description of the rise of nationalism, and as David Randall notes, "Scholars of print culture have looked at such ephemera as one of the categories of 'proof-texts' for Elizabeth Eisenstein's theory of a 'print revolution' in early modern Europe".³ Analysis of manuscript news documents often assumes the pre-eminence of 'print culture': James Sutherland, for example, describes the newsletter as "a personal service, beginning politely with the word 'Sir', and giving the recipient the pleasant feeling that he was reading his own private correspondence", while Ian Atherton notes, "newsbooks were in the public sphere, whereas the newsletter belonged to the more private world of correspondence".⁴ And while scholars such as Atherton, Paul Arblaster, and Filippo de Vivo have incisively analysed groups of manuscript newsletters, they have focused on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and seen a post-Restoration decline in the genre's salience.⁵ The continuing presence and prominence of manuscript news in the Restoration and eighteenth century remains a footnote to the story of the rise of the newspaper.

I argue, however, that the newsletter remained an important, valued source of public news well into the eighteenth century, not succumbing to the newspaper but complementing printed sources in many ways. In numerous aspects of form and function, manuscript and printed news were profoundly intertwined. While there were some kinds of news that were more common in manuscript than print, and vice versa, on the whole the relationship between the two media was one of convergence and continuity; the manuscript newsletter had more in common with the printed newspaper than with a personal letter

3 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 16–23, 37–40; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 33–35; David Randall, 'Recent Studies in Print Culture: News, Propaganda, and Ephemera', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67:3 (2004), pp. 457–472 (457).

4 James Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper and Its Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 8; Ian Atherton, 'The Itch Grown a Disease: Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century', in Joad Raymond (ed.), *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), p. 53.

5 See Atherton, 'The Itch Grown a Disease'; Paul Arblaster, 'Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers: England in a European System of Communications', in Joad Raymond (ed.), *News Networks in Seventeenth Century Britain and Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 19–34; Filippo de Vivo, 'Paolo Sarpi and the Uses of Information in Seventeenth-Century Venice', in Joad Raymond (ed.), *News Networks in Seventeenth Century Britain and Europe*, pp. 35–49.

containing items designated ‘news’. These works often shared a format, a single half-folio sheet with a banner heading and date at the top of page one and subscription or colophon at the bottom of page two. Newsletters generally lacked personal salutations in favour of a simple ‘Sir’ or, less frequently, ‘Madam’, and they presented an even clerks’ italic hand [see Figure 4.1]. Unlike seventeenth-century newsbooks or eighteenth-century pamphlets, newsletters and newspapers tended to offer terse, straightforward accounts with little commentary or editorialising. Both genres divided items into discrete paragraphs of news according to the location from which the information had arrived,⁶ and both were published on a periodical schedule, with papers regularly available once, twice, or three times a week. The only explicit organisational structure in either genre was chronological, with the ‘freshest advices’ appearing at the end of the sheet. In this publishing model manuscript in fact had an advantage, as new information could be added up to the deadline for taking letters to the post office and editors could more easily adjust edition sizes in response to demand.

Many newsletters were professionally produced in numbers equal or close to those of printed papers, and they were publicly available to subscribers for a fee, with an increasing number of options from the 1670s and ’80s onward. Indeed, rather than being replaced by the newspaper, the newsletter in England seems to have flourished during the growth of the news marketplace after 1665, with major collections at the Huntington, British, Beinecke, and Bodleian libraries, and at the Harry Ransom Center and British National Archives, spanning the 1670s to 1740s. Eighteenth-century representations of coffeehouses depict written and printed materials lying side by side on tables, and many readers received newsletters and newspapers folded up and mailed together, a fact visible today in the mirror-image impressions of type that remain on some handwritten sheets [see Figures 4.2 and 4.3]. Both news writers and consumers relied on multiple media sources to present and access a holistic sense of the events of the day.

Recognising the continuing importance of the manuscript newsletter into at least the mid-eighteenth century not only corrects our understanding of the history of news periodicals, but also offers broader insight into the gradual processes of transition and adaptation that more accurately characterise media

6 Will Slauter has shown that the “basic unit of news” in the eighteenth-century newspaper was the paragraph, which could be easily republished from one periodical to another and facilitated news transmission across Europe. Will Slauter, ‘The Paragraph as Information Technology: How News Traveled in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World’, *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 67:2 (2012), pp. 253–278 (253).

from England desired immediately audience of the King
 Perigat the Subject of w^h is not known but the English
 also there have since begun to send away their Effects but
 being all this is taken out of the Paris Gazette we can not
 give upon any particulars of it. The last of a article has
 been orders to the Kings Servants to put themselves
 mourning for the late King James - One m^r Lescuyer
 master a Sergeant of the Guards who killed above a
 hundred one of the Sergeants of the Grenadiers is a
 notorious Highwayman and has committed several great
 Obnoxious on the roads leading to this City and great
 work has been made after him in all parts of the Town

London May 23. 1695
 Yesterday Land in a Dutch post wth
 Advice from the Rhine that a
 Fast is to be kept June 3^d in the Dutchy
 of Wirtemberg - That 28. Regim^t of French
 are Engag'd near Newstadt to 40. of the same
 with Louis Fontons and sent for from Strasbourg

FIGURES 4.2 AND 4.3 Manuscript newsletters with mirror-image impressions of type on the handwritten sheets. Huntington Lib. HM 30659.f.85; Clark Library MS.1951.021 box 2 folder 47.

shifts than do amorphous concepts such as the 'print revolution'. Reorienting the critical narrative away from the inevitable triumph of print provides a clearer picture of the eighteenth-century media environment and reveals a back-and-forth interaction between media forms instead of a teleological progression from old to new. Writers and readers exhibited an omnivorous media appetite, often making little practical distinction between written, printed, and, indeed, spoken, sung, and performed sources of news. As D.F. McKenzie writes, "a phrase like the 'impact of print' – however carefully it is qualified – cannot help but imply a major displacement of writing as a form of record ... but for the speaker, auditor, reader or viewer, the texts tend to work in complementary, not competitive, ways".⁷ Rather than seeing the printed newspaper as a replacement for or advancement over the newsletter, we have a better understanding of journalism and print history when we acknowledge that the newspaper was only able to come into being by working alongside the newsletter during the former's first century of existence. And in multiple ways, as I will show, the newspaper retained the impression of its manuscript forebear.

Newsletters had existed alongside the printed corantos of the 1620s and newsbooks of the 1640s; they originated in Venice in the mid-fifteenth century in the genre of handwritten news known as *avvisi*.⁸ Readers could subscribe to the public *avvisi* and receive letters twice a week; many of the subscribers were themselves news writers who re-circulated the information.⁹ In the seventeenth century, almost all Dutch and English corantos, a genre of news pamphlet that flourished in the 1620s, excerpted from the *avvisi*: as de Vivo notes, "manuscript and printed texts interacted, each prolonging the message of the other".¹⁰ In addition, sixteenth-century merchants developed a new business technique of regular correspondence concerning exchange rates, commodity costs, taxes, and transportation; at the same time, improvement in postal networks over the seventeenth century allowed for regular news updates.¹¹ By the early seventeenth century, professional, scribally reproduced newsletters had appeared, consisting of "the public news written out anonymously under the heading of the place and date of origin of the report provided".¹² Given the

7 D.F. McKenzie, 'Speech-Manuscript-Print', *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin*, 20:1–2 (1990), pp. 86–109 (88).

8 Vivo, 'Paolo Sarpi and the Uses of Information in Seventeenth-Century Venice', p. 35.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p. 41.

11 Arblaster, 'Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers', pp. 19–20.

12 Ibid., p. 20.

long-standing connections between the circulation of manuscript and printed news in the seventeenth century, it seems only natural that newsletters would continue to develop as the printed news marketplace also became more extensive and professionalised in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This essay will establish the status of the manuscript newsletter in late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century England based on archival investigation of hundreds of such sources held at repositories in Britain and North America. Although I focus on newsletters written in English and produced in London, I will show how these texts depended upon the international circulation of news in manuscript and print. The essay will begin by addressing a point of contention about the English manuscript newsletter: that its existence was a result of censorship regulations. While this belief has led newspaper historians to neglect both newsletters, on the assumption that they were not a part of the public news sphere, and the *London Gazette*, asserting that it “was an instrument of state propaganda, intended to control rumour and occlude alternative news services”,¹³ censorship does not adequately account for the persistence of manuscript sources, and an overemphasis on its explanatory value in fact distorts our understanding of newsletters and their relationship to printed news. The essay will go on to explore three moments in the history of the newsletter, focusing on individual collections from the Restoration, turn of the eighteenth century, and 1710s. The manuscript newsletter remained a fundamental feature of the news industry throughout the take-off in printed periodicals that scholars have seen as integral to the rise of a modern print culture.

Circulation and Control of Written and Printed News

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries constituted a critical moment of change, innovation, and expansion in the news industry, but it is one that has often been overlooked in favour of a focus on the politically turbulent period of the Civil War. Jason Peacey has argued for continuity in media cultures across the Commonwealth-Restoration divide, asserting that a participatory forum of cheap and accessible print, alongside a “revived and increasingly vigorous scribal culture”, continued in the late seventeenth century despite his-

13 Joad Raymond, ‘The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere’, in Joad Raymond (ed.), *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 109–136 (126).

torians' assumptions that the period saw a return to control and censorship.¹⁴ The 1695 lapse of the Licensing Act led not to rapid changes in the content or format of newspapers but to rapid expansion in the industry: in London, five new papers appeared in the month following the act's demise – two of them within three days – and a dozen periodicals served the capital city by 1712.¹⁵ While there were no provincial newspapers in 1700, there were 13 in 1710, 24 in 1723, and 42 in 1746.¹⁶ Although many of these new publications lasted for only short periods of time, the eighteenth century witnessed ongoing growth in the scope of the news media.

We might assume, then, that a major and defining difference between manuscript newsletters and printed newspapers was that of edition size – with print presumably reaching a much broader audience – but publication practices and circulation numbers from the period tell a different story. The *Gazette* was the most widely distributed newspaper, with a circulation ranging from 4,000 to almost 9,000 from the 1670s to early 1700s, depending on the season and on public interest in current events.¹⁷ These numbers were partly due to the fact that the *Gazette* was the only newspaper available for portions of this period, and that it was a sponsored government publication with many copies distributed for free. Other newspapers and periodicals saw much more modest tallies. Tax and other financial records show that Daniel Defoe's *Review*, which he wrote thrice weekly from 1704 to 1713, averaged 400 to 500 copies per issue; while Addison and Steele's *Spectator* had a circulation around 1,600, their *Guardian* was less popular at about 850. The first daily newspaper, the *Daily Courant*, fluctuated from 600 to 900 copies per issue in the early 1700s, while the popular tri-weekly *Flying Post* rose from 400 copies in 1704 to around 1,400 in 1712.¹⁸ The *Post Boy* and *Post Man* – both of which offered a blank page for the addition of handwritten news – boasted circulations of 3,000 to 4,000, but many newspapers were printed on the very small scale of 300, 250, or even 100

14 Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 406–408.

15 G.A. Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper, 1700–1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 17–22; James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 117; Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), p. 14.

16 Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper*, pp. 17–22.

17 John Childs, 'The Sales of Government Gazettes during the Exclusion Crisis, 1678–81', *The English Historical Review*, 102, no. 402 (1987), pp. 103–106.

18 Henry L. Snyder, 'The Circulation of Newspapers in the Reign of Queen Anne', *The Library*, s5–xxiii, 3 (1968), pp. 209–210.

copies per number.¹⁹ Similarly, Christine Ferdinand estimates that the average circulation for a provincial newspaper up until the 1730s would be from 200 to 300 copies.²⁰

Meanwhile, various manuscript newsletters had circulations in the hundreds of copies and were, like the most popular London papers, published up to three times a week. Newsletter writer John Dyer was estimated to have a subscriber list of 500, Williamson had about 150 recipients of his official newsletter, and *Gazette* editor Charles Perrot's newsletter circulated around 200 copies per issue.²¹ While manuscript newsletters were more expensive than newspapers – ranging from £5 to £20 per year rather than 1*d.* per issue – their circulation numbers were on the same order of magnitude as those of many newspapers. Lower cost and the ability to produce more, identical copies were certainly long-term factors in the eventual dominance of the newspaper, but given the local, small-scale conditions of the early eighteenth-century print shop, this quantitative distinction may not have been immediately apparent to contemporary news consumers. And as the anonymity and impersonality of print – both features magnified in the newspaper, with its lack of any authorial names – remained a source of concern for readers,²² the correspondence relationship between newsletter writers and subscribers may have appeared preferable to the chaotic fluctuations of early newspapers.

The other apparently definitive distinction between newsletters and newspapers is that of the level of censorship to which they were subject. Newspaper historians often assume that the existence of manuscript sources was due to a higher level of official restriction or self-censorship in the realm of print. Sutherland, for example, notes, “in a time of rigid press control [newsletters] enabled news to be circulated that would never have been permitted to ap-

19 Ibid., pp. 211, 213.

20 Christine Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 18.

21 Sabrina A. Baron, ‘The Guises of Dissemination in Early Seventeenth-Century England: News in Manuscript and Print’, in Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 50; Peter Fraser, *The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State and Their Monopoly of Licensed News, 1660–1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 140–144; P.M. Handover, *A History of the London Gazette, 1665–1965* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1965), p. 17.

22 See Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 30–34; Chad Wellmon, ‘Why Google Isn’t Making Us Stupid ... or Smart’, *The Hedgehog Review*, 14:1 (2012), http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/THR_article_2012_Spring_Wellmon.php.

pear in print”.²³ However, as I have argued elsewhere, the causal relationship between censorship and newsletters does not hold up under scrutiny of either the existing regulations or the comparative content of newsletters and newspapers.²⁴ David McKitterick and James Raven have each argued that censorship regulations were unevenly and sporadically enforced in the late Stuart and early Hanoverian periods,²⁵ while Sabrina A. Baron calls the idea that “a law or a decree or a proclamation somewhere along the line had banned the printing of domestic news” a “fiction”, and notes that both manuscript and printed works were subject to laws against spreading false news and seditious libel.²⁶ Furthermore, Peter Fraser shows that until 1695 the Secretaries of State held an official monopoly on both written and printed news, so that “[a]ll news, either printed or in manuscript, that was not derived from the Secretary’s office or officially licensed, was considered ‘false news’, and declared illegal by proclamation and order in council”.²⁷ In 1688, James II issued a decree “To Restrain the Spreading of FALSE NEWS” promising harsh punishment to “all such Persons who shall be guilty of any such malicious and unlawful Practices by Writing, Printing, or other Publication of such False News and Reports”.²⁸ While it may have been easier to trace the authors or distributors of printed materials, and thus likelier that they would face prosecution, manuscript news encountered many of the same barriers as its printed counterpart.

Comparison of the content of newsletters and newspapers bears out the conclusion that they overlapped significantly in material. From the late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, both genres featured a high proportion of foreign news, which generally comprised the majority of items – not the domestic gossip and scandal assumed to be the preserve of the newsletters. Newsletters, like newspapers, were concerned primarily with foreign battles, trade information, and the activities of continental diplomats. Andrew Pettegree notes that the tone of reporting in both newsletter and newspaper was

23 Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper and Its Development*, p. 6.

24 Rachael Scarborough King, “The Manuscript Newsletter and the Rise of the Newspaper, 1665–1715,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 79:3 (2016), pp. 411–437.

25 David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 152; Raven, *The Business of Books*, p. 83.

26 Baron, “The Guises of Dissemination in Early Seventeenth-Century England,” pp. 46–47.

27 Fraser, *The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State*, p. 115.

28 *London Gazette* No. 2394, 25–29 October 1688, p. 1, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/2394/page/1> (accessed 25 January 2016). Proclamations issued in 1672 and 1674 by Charles II similarly attempted to prohibit the spread of “false news”, but they focused more on the oral spread of information, whereas the 1688 proclamation was aimed at written and printed news.

that of “dry, political, military and diplomatic reports”, as the newsletter “valued unadorned fact ... [and] the total separation of news from the more discursive, analytical and frankly polemical style of news pamphlets”.²⁹ Although the Secretary of State’s control over the news industry and the *London Gazette*, regulations against seditious libel and the printing of parliamentary speeches, and self-censorship were certainly important factors in the emergence and endurance of manuscript newsletters, they do not adequately account for the genre’s longevity, particularly after the lapse of licensing in 1695. As we shall see, newsletters in fact became increasingly aligned with newspapers as the latter proliferated in the eighteenth century. In the remainder of this essay, I will turn to three case studies to demonstrate the newsletter’s wide-reaching influence over the newsgathering methods and style of reportage that would also structure the printed newspaper.

Diplomacy and the International Exchange of News

When Henry Muddiman assumed the editorship of England’s first broadsheet newspaper, the *London Gazette*, in 1665, he was ideally positioned to bridge the realms of manuscript and printed news. Muddiman, who held the official title of “king’s journalist”, had overseen both newsletters and newsbooks for a decade, and he continued his newsletter service as a private enterprise after becoming Gazetteer, now enclosing the printed production with his letters.³⁰ However, he soon clashed with his supervisor Williamson – possibly because Muddiman was reserving the more interesting news items for his profitable newsletters – and he was fired as gazetteer in early 1666.³¹ Williamson maintained his own newsletter service and later *Gazette* editors, including Henry Ball, Charles Perrot, and Robert Yard, were responsible for both the written and printed sources,³² but Muddiman remained a competitor until the late 1680s; as a subordinate wrote to Williamson in 1667, “Mr. Muddiman gives far larger accounts to his correspondents than you do, which makes them much desired”.³³ While Williamson and his superior, Secretary of State for the Southern Department Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington, chose recipients for the of-

29 Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know about Itself* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 183, 265.

30 Handover, *A History of the London Gazette, 1665–1965*, p. 7.

31 J.G. Muddiman, *The King’s Journalist, 1659–1689* (London: John Lane, 1923), p. 193.

32 Ibid., p. 204.

33 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 195.

ficial newsletter – which many received in exchange for providing news, rather than for a fee – the newsletter services of Muddiman and other writers in the 1670s, '80s, and '90s were commercial ventures.³⁴

Both Muddiman and Williamson relied on a network of correspondents supplying them with news, much of it foreign, to be republished in the newsletters, in the *Gazette* or in both. Williamson may have begun the policy requiring foreign envoys to send regular weekly news bulletins, whether or not there were dramatic events to report, to the Secretary of State's office for use in the manuscript and printed venues.³⁵ The Harry Ransom Center's Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of English Manuscripts includes hundreds of newsletters sent from Williamson to Sir Richard Bulstrode, agent and later resident ambassador at Brussels from 1674 to 1689,³⁶ along with instructions to Bulstrode for supplying news. From 1675 Bulstrode also began receiving newsletters from the office of Edward Coleman, a prominent Catholic and the secretary to the Duchess of York,³⁷ apparently as a supplement to the official Whitehall letters. Williamson's letters to Bulstrode employ a two- to four-page half-sheet quarto format, a typical layout for a personal letter, but they include almost no personalisation: the letters feature a number of different clerks' handwritings, and they are generally formatted with wide left-hand margins containing the datelines for the news [see Figure 4.4]. The only heading is the date on which the letter was sent, and there is no subscription or signature at the bottom of page four.

Bulstrode received newsletters from Williamson both before and after leaving England for Brussels in 1674. These records help illuminate the intersecting uses of written and printed news during a period when the *Gazette* was, for the most part, the only available newspaper.³⁸ There are certainly categories of information that are more likely to appear in the newsletters than in the

34 Fraser, *The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State*, pp. 28–29.

35 Ibid., p. 71.

36 J.D. Davies, 'Bulstrode, Sir Richard (1617–1711)', in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3930> (accessed 25 January 2016).

37 Andrew Barclay, 'Colman, Edward (1636–1678)', in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5871> (accessed 30 January 2016).

38 When the Licensing Act first lapsed in 1679, many newspapers immediately appeared, particularly to provide commentary on the ongoing Popish Plot. These were suppressed in the early 1680s and licensing reinstated in 1685 before finally lapsing in 1695. C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 89–95.

May 11 - The frigate Galliflowe brought into Monaco
 a Dutch full prize of 16 guns of a commodore
 called bound Edward; & from hence word came
 that Monsieur Dubois Capt. of our Gallies
 was gone from hence for England, having
 been before confined by the State all people
 dependant in the affairs.
 By arrival from Harwich that 9 ships out
 of the 12 sent by Sir Francis were
 told that on Sunday night 12 ships into the
 Dutch & were in a fogge between 8 & 9
 in the morning & by 10 were in their possession.
 The State proposed to accept the Word in
 their favor & full spending money proposed
 to release all English & Dutch ships together
 with their goods men store in Holland
 before the declaration of War.
 Mond-13 - Fry morning at 11 the Lord & Sirs of
 the Kings Exchequer, troops of Dragoons & some
 of the 1st parades looked them very well.
 Afternoon about 12 happened a puff
 of 20. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100. 101. 102. 103. 104. 105. 106. 107. 108. 109. 110. 111. 112. 113. 114. 115. 116. 117. 118. 119. 120. 121. 122. 123. 124. 125. 126. 127. 128. 129. 130. 131. 132. 133. 134. 135. 136. 137. 138. 139. 140. 141. 142. 143. 144. 145. 146. 147. 148. 149. 150. 151. 152. 153. 154. 155. 156. 157. 158. 159. 160. 161. 162. 163. 164. 165. 166. 167. 168. 169. 170. 171. 172. 173. 174. 175. 176. 177. 178. 179. 180. 181. 182. 183. 184. 185. 186. 187. 188. 189. 190. 191. 192. 193. 194. 195. 196. 197. 198. 199. 200. 201. 202. 203. 204. 205. 206. 207. 208. 209. 210. 211. 212. 213. 214. 215. 216. 217. 218. 219. 220. 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2013. 2014. 2015. 2016. 2017. 2018. 2019. 2020. 2021. 2022. 2023. 2024. 2025. 2026. 2027. 2028. 2029. 2030. 2031. 2032. 2033. 2034. 2035. 2036. 2037. 2038. 2039. 2040. 2041. 2042. 2043. 2044. 2045. 2046. 2047. 2048. 2049. 2050. 2051. 2052. 2053. 2054. 2055. 2056. 2057. 2058. 2059. 2060. 2061. 2062. 2063. 2064. 2065. 2066. 2067. 2068. 2069. 2070. 2071. 2072. 2073. 2074. 2075. 2076. 2077. 2078. 2079. 2080. 2081. 2082. 2083. 2084. 2085. 2086. 2087. 2088. 2089. 2090. 2091. 2092. 2093. 2094. 2095. 2096. 2097. 2098. 2099. 2100. 2101. 2102. 2103. 2104. 2105. 2106. 2107. 2108. 2109. 2110. 2111. 2112. 2113. 2114. 2115. 2116. 2117. 2118. 2119. 2120. 2121. 2122. 2123. 2124. 2125. 2126. 2127. 2128. 2129. 2130. 2131. 2132. 2133. 2134. 2135. 2136. 2137. 2138. 2139. 2140. 2141. 2142. 2143. 2144. 2145. 2146. 2147. 2148. 2149. 2150. 2151. 2152. 2153. 2154. 2155. 2156. 2157. 2158. 2159. 2160. 2161. 2162. 2163. 2164. 2165. 2166. 2167. 2168. 2169. 2170. 2171. 2172. 2173. 2174. 2175. 2176. 2177. 21

letter was not initially or solely to fill that gap.³⁹ Parliament, of course, was not always in session, and in 1680 the House decided to start printing its votes and transactions;⁴⁰ over the course of the eighteenth century, regulations about printing Parliamentary proceedings, and the enforcement of those restrictions, fluctuated.⁴¹ The newsletters were also full of the military, mercantile, shipping, and diplomatic information that was the primary concern of the *Gazette*. This material was presented in the same style in both media, with brief sentences or paragraphs strung together with minimal connection or analysis. Foreign and domestic, public and private, information was not distinguished in any way, and it would be up to the reader to determine the relative importance of individual pieces of news. For example, in August 1672 the newsletter presented a typical alternation between types of information:

At the Hague t'was reported the Prince of Conde was dead at Arnhem but we having the news from noe other part suppose it only feigned. ... This morning was solemnized at Goring house the marriage between the Earle of Euston & the Daughter of *thee* Earle of Arlington where their Majesties and all the principall persons of quallity were pleased to be present, & were nobly entertained at dinner and spend this evening withe balls & other divertissements on such occasions. From Amsterdame of *the* 5 their stile they write they had just come thither news of the East Indya fleet 14 in number being on their coast, & that they were reported to be two of them got in Ems in Friesland & soe to Delfzyle, and that two English fregats were engaged with them & had taken one of them, but of this we daily expect to have a farr better account from his Royall Highness, the stormes have been this week strangely high ... but we hear of noe damage we have received thereby more than two or 3 small vessels returned into port disabled.⁴²

39 Fraser, *The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State*, p. 43.

40 Sutherland, *The Restoration Newspaper and Its Development*, p. 16.

41 Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp. 77–79; Bob Clarke, *From Grub Street to Fleet Street: An Illustrated History of English Newspapers to 1899* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), pp. 92–93.

42 Newsletter from the office of Sir Joseph Williamson, Whitehall, London, to Sir Richard Bulstrode, 1672 August 2, Harry Ransom Center Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of English Manuscripts, PFORZ-MS-0633, MS.103c, Box 5, Folder 11.

The letters do not appear to be tailored to the interest of the individual recipient and – other than occasionally offering commentary on the reliability of a source – do not provide guidelines on how to construe the news.

Such evidence does not support the contention that newsletters “contained parliamentary proceedings and other news not allowed to be printed” or “were packed with parliamentary news and political gossip”.⁴³ Instead, there was significant commonality between the stories in the *Gazette* and those in the newsletters. For example, in December 1671, the newspaper reported from The Hague, “On thursday [sic] last was brought into the Assembly of the States General, the Advice of the Province of *Zealand* for the making the Prince of *Orange*, Captain General &c.”, and continued in an item datelined London, “This week dyed here in Town, His Grace *William* Duke of *Somerset* &c. in the twentieth year of his Age, after five days illness, of the small-Pox, to the great affliction of that Family; having left his Unkle the Lord *John Seymour*, Heir of his Honor and Estate”.⁴⁴ Williamson’s newsletter of 15 December reported the death of Somerset almost word-for-word with the *Gazette* item: “This night dyed here his Grace *the* Duke of Somerset, after 5 days sickness of *the* small pox to *the* great affliction of *that* family, leaveing as heir to his estate and honours my Lord John Seymor his uncle”. But it added more context to the debates in the States General, noting of the proposal, “Delfe, Rotterdam, Dort, & Tergood opposed it, but *the* other townes who were for his being [advanced] are more powerful: it may easily be believed that they may be induced to follow their steps”.⁴⁵ Likewise, the newsletters, like the newspapers, were full of continental military information. In August 1672, the letter informed, “The Dutch say the Brandenburg forces are on their march, and ... that the Emperor has 15000 men, the Elector of Brandenburg 25000, the Dukes of Lundenburgh 10000, & the Landgravinne of Hesse 6000, which when they come together will make a considerable army”. This item updated the *Gazette* of 15–19 August, which reported, “the *Brandenburgh* Forces may now very suddainly begin to march”; a few issues later, the newspaper continued, “it is reported here [in Cologne], that the Elector of *Brandenburgh* will act apart with his Army, to consist of

43 Muddiman, *The King’s Journalist*, 1659–1689, p. 179; Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, p. 31.

44 *London Gazette* No. 635, 14–19 December 1671, p. 2, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/635/page/2> (accessed 25 January 2016).

45 Newsletter from the office of Sir Joseph Williamson, Whitehall, London, to Sir Richard Bulstrode and Mr. Richardson, 1671 December 15, HRC PFORZ-MS-0605, MS.103c, Box 5, Folder 9.

30000 Men, against the Bishop of *Munster*".⁴⁶ The sources acted in concert to provide detailed military information to readers.

At the same time, the *Gazette* was not as devoid of local news, and even what we might classify as court gossip, as scholars often assume. To take one example, in March 1672 the newspaper reported from Whitehall, "On Thursday last His Majesty was pleased to Honour the Reader of *Lincoln's Inn*, Sir *Francis Goodricke*, with his Presence at Dinner, accompanied with his Royal Highness, his Highness Prince *Rupert*, and attended by several of the Nobility, and many other Honourable persons".⁴⁷ The language follows that of the newsletters' reports on royal activities, as when Williamson wrote, "This morning his Majesty with many persons of quallity went to Hampton Court to divert themselves there for this day, where they dined and returned in the evening".⁴⁸ Similarly, in August 1672 both the newsletter and newspaper reported the news of the birth of a son to the Duchess of Monmouth. While it is true that the newspaper, able as it was to fit more text onto its pages than could the handwritten sheet, provided a greater quantity of foreign news than the newsletters, it is also clear that there was genuine public interest in foreign affairs: as scholars have shown, circulation numbers for the *Gazette* and other newspapers increased during periods of continental battles and declined at other times.⁴⁹ It is also possible that Williamson and the *Gazette*'s editors anticipated a lack of interest in the business of individual aristocrats or the Royal Family, whose movements would conversely have been useful news for the courtiers and diplomats who received the newsletter.

The intersection between news items in the printed and written sources was largely due to their shared newsgathering method: republication from incoming diplomatic correspondence. This practice is evident in the named sources of items, diplomatic capitals such as The Hague, Paris, Vienna, Rome, and Florence. Both media make frequent reference to incoming letters, as well as foreign newspapers, as the foundation of news, relying less commonly on local items that have been 'heard' or 'discoursed'. For example, an October 1669 newsletter to the Earl of Huntingdon, likely written by Muddiman, now in the

46 *London Gazette* No. 704, 15–19 August 1672, p. 1, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/704/page/1>; *London Gazette* No. 708, 29 August–2 September 1672, p. 1, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/708/page/1> (accessed 25 January 2016).

47 *London Gazette* No. 657, 29 February–4 March 1671/2, 2, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/657/page/1>, accessed 25 Jan. 2016.

48 Newsletter from the office of Sir Joseph Williamson, Whitehall, London, to Sir Richard Bulstrode, 1671/1672 March 1, HRC PFORZ-MS-0614, MS.103c, Box 5, Folder 10.

49 Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere', p. 127.

collection of the Huntington Library, attributed the majority of its items to letters: “The French Gazett mentions Letters by way of Venice which tell *them* that *the* Turks have blowne up a mine Neere Saborinera ... They write from Hamburg that *the* heats have been soe great this Autumne in those partes ... They write from Paris dat 5th inst. that they are assured from Marcellis that *the* French Ambassador and their Effects are seised in Constantinople”.⁵⁰ The newsletters, like the newspapers, displayed a global network of postal news transmission.

After Bulstrode’s move to Brussels to serve as envoy he at first received shorter letters from Williamson, but was now expected to provide news in return. The newsletters became slightly more individualised – as when, for example, Williamson apologised, “I am very sorry that my letters are so short still, but here happening so little worth *your* knowledge I know not how to make them longer”⁵¹ – but they still presented the usual digest of items, were composed by clerks, and lacked personal salutations and subscriptions. The exceptions were those letters in which the writers requested news or thanked Bulstrode for information. As Gazetteer Robert Yard wrote in July 1688, perhaps referring to the disputed election of the Archbishop of Cologne that had been reported in the *Gazette*, “I thanke you for the favour of yours from Liese, and had I not heard the same before from Holland, what you told me would have mightily surprised me; It’s above my comprehension to understand what they would be at”.⁵² The newspaper continued the newsletter’s practice of updating stories, often in the course of a single issue, as new letters arrived, and of juxtaposing different incoming letters to allow the reader to make a determination about the accuracy of a story. The methods that Williamson had instituted to obtain information for both his newsletter and newspaper shaped the course of eighteenth-century news as it remained skewed toward foreign military and diplomatic activities.

50 Newsletters addressed to the Earl of Huntington, 1669–1671, 5 October 1669, Huntington Lib., MSS. HA 9599–9614.

51 Newsletter from the office of Sir Joseph Williamson, Whitehall, London, to Sir Richard Bulstrode, Brussels, 1676 August 21, HRC PFORZ-MS-0797, MS.103c, Box 6, Folder 6.

52 Newsletter from the office of Sir Joseph Williamson, Whitehall, London, to Sir Richard Bulstrode, Brussels, 1688 July 20, HRC PFORZ-MS-1812, MS.103c, Box 10, Folder 4.

Eighteenth-Century Convergence of Manuscript and Printed News

In the early eighteenth century, the *Gazette* began declining in prominence and circulation as it faced competition from new daily and tri-weekly newspapers, but manuscript newsletters remained common. Some innovations in printed news attempted to further bridge the media; Ichabod Dawks' *News-Letter* used a specially cut font designed to resemble handwriting and began its issues with a large flourishing "Sir", while the *Post Boy* and *Post Man* provided space for readers or news writers to provide additional or updated information by hand. Anne Pole, a Derbyshire widow, received both printed newspapers and handwritten newsletters through the mail from the 1690s to 1710s. The letters maintained the same format, style, and variety of information across the 1695 lapse of licensing, and Pole valued them enough to subscribe three times a week at a cost of £4 per year. Hundreds of Pole's newsletters survive in two collections, at UCLA's William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, and at Yale University's Beinecke Library. The letters show the extent to which manuscript and printed news increasingly converged at the turn of the eighteenth century.

In the newsletters sent to Pole, the reportorial language is almost identical to that of the newspaper, and the letters focus even more on foreign news than had the earlier ones from Williamson's office. The letters, like the newspaper, almost always began with foreign news before filling in any remaining space with domestic items, and they attributed the presence or lack of news to the arrival of letters. As the writer noted in January 1691, "Wee want 3. Holland & as many Flanders Posts & therefore having nothing of forraine news".⁵³ A letter the following week made up for this dearth with two full pages of foreign items beginning, "The Paris Letters of the 12 give an account that the Envoye was arrived there from Florence, but his Negotiation was not yet known", and continuing with information concerning Brussels, Savoy, Venice, Dublin, and Provence.⁵⁴ Between January and June 1691, a period for which a continuous sequence of letters is available, half of the items in the letters contained foreign news, with an additional 42% pertaining to London and 8% to other locations in England. From March to August 1695, 60% of the items included London news, 24% foreign, and 16% provincial. The newsletters frequently updated the *Gazette* or other printed sources and made reference to the relationship

53 8 January 1691. Newsletters Addressed to Madam Pole. Beinecke Lib. OSB MSS. 60, Box 1 folder 1.

54 15 January 1691. Newsletters Addressed to Madam Pole. Beinecke Lib. OSB MSS. 60, Box 1 folder 1.

between the media; for example, the writer noted, “Besides the *account* the Gazette gives as of his Majesties landing in Holland, the letters say the K. upon his arrival at the Hague being mightily fatigued desired there might be little noise made, & went forthwith to bed”.⁵⁵ In March 1691, he wrote, “The Advises from Ireland further add to what the Gazette relates, that the Lords Justices have made custome free the bringing in Arms & Ammunition for the use of our Army”.⁵⁶ Occasionally, the writer also made reference to his manuscript competitors, noting in February 1693, for example, “One Buttlar, that writes news letters, was seized 3 dayes agoe at the Post house in Lumbard street by order of the Lord Mayor, having counterfeited the hands of severall Parliamentmen & in their names carried the Letters to the Post house to frank them”.⁵⁷ Relying on the same sources of incoming correspondence, the newsletter often described its own role as updating or expanding upon the printed newspaper.

This dynamic is clear in the newsletter’s coverage of the arrest and trial of the Jacobite conspirators in 1691. While we might assume this is the kind of local, politically sensitive story that would be excluded from the printed newspaper, the media in fact offered complementary reporting. For example, on 27 January 1691, the newsletter reported of one of the co-conspirators, John Ashton, “Mr. Ashton is to dye to morrow”, while the 26–29 January *Gazette* had the update, “Mr. *John Ashton*, lately convicted of High-Treason at the *Old-Baily*, was this day executed at *Tyburn*”.⁵⁸ In the following issue, the newsletter offered more details, noting,

Major Ashton had at the request of his Relations the Queens favour not to be drawn & quartered but was carried to Tyburn in a coach, there hanged & then brought back againe to be interred by his Relations. He made noe speech, but delivered a paper to the sheriff. The papists say he died like a

55 29 January 1691. Newsletters Addressed to Madam Pole. Beinecke Lib. OSB MSS. 60, Box 1 folder 2.

56 3 March 1691. Newsletters Addressed to Madam Pole. Beinecke Lib. OSB MSS. 60, Box 1 folder 5.

57 2 February 1692/3. Newsletters Addressed to Madam Pole. Beinecke Lib. OSB MSS. 60, Box 2 folder 35.

58 27 January 1691, Newsletters Addressed to Madam Pole. Beinecke Lib. OSB MSS. 60, Box 1 folder 2. *Gazette* No. 2631, 26–29 January 1691, p. 2, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/2631/page/2> (accessed 27 January 2016).

man of a heroick spirit, saying if he had 10 lives he would spend them all for the ^{late} K[ing].⁵⁹

In February 1691, the newspaper frequently printed advertisements for a forthcoming book about the conspiracy and Ashton's execution, while the newsletter provided more speculation than the newspaper; as the writer noted of another one of the conspirators, Richard Graham, Viscount Preston, "I hear from very credible hands, *that* the Lord Preston has made a great discovery not only of the methode to carrye on the designe of the Fr. K. but also of the chiefe managers of the same here in England & Scotland" (Preston would escape execution based on the information he had provided).⁶⁰ In this scandalous case, the newsletter and newspaper worked together to provide reliable information.

As the number and variety of newspapers increased in the eighteenth century, newsletters may have become increasingly useful, as they could offer readers, particularly those outside of London, a digest of the most interesting or trustworthy newspaper stories. Printed news also relied on manuscript sources to a mounting extent, as newspapers sought to distinguish and authenticate their items. The diplomatic 'circulars' appear to have become more standardised and attuned to the language of newspaper reporting, allowing for the easy transcription of their items into printed sources. A series of newsletters in English written from Rome, Naples, and continental military camps from 1702 to 1705, now at the Beinecke Library, uses the layout and language of newspapers like the *Gazette*, *Post Boy*, and *Daily Courant*. For example, one letter used the foreign dateline structure to report, "Naples 15 Aprill 1702 Great preparations are continued here against the King of Spaine's arrivall, who wee understand had fixed his departure for the 7th instant, soe wee may be every day expecting him". Likewise, a letter datelined "Camp at Corbais the 24th Aug. 1705" noted, "On Saturday the Army under his Grace's command march'd from Basse Waere to this Camp, and that of the States Commanded by Monsieur D'Auverguere came at the same time to Mount St. Hubert".⁶¹ The Beinecke's collection includes a group of newsletters from The Hague from as late as the 1760s. These letters, which feature at least three different clerks' handwritings, use the same newsletter layout of a four-page half-sheet quarto lacking salu-

59 29 January 1691. Newsletters Addressed to Madam Pole. Beinecke Lib. OSB MSS. 60, Box 1 folder 2.

60 17 February 1691, Newsletters Addressed to Madam Pole. Beinecke Lib. OSB MSS. 60, Box 1 folder 4.

61 William Blathwayt Papers, Beinecke Lib. OSB MSS. 2, Box 6, folder 131.

tations and subscriptions, and many of them are endorsed by the recipient “Hague News” or “Hague Letter”.⁶² These incoming letters mimicked elements of both the outgoing manuscript newsletters and printed newspapers, and they reveal the systems in place throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for transcontinental news reporting. However, newsletters appear to have become less common as the century wore on, with most of those still in existence dating to the turn of the eighteenth century. By the mid-century period, they may have remained prevalent in the context of diplomacy, but the commercial news business had shifted more decisively to print.

The eighteenth-century newsletter thus increasingly intersected with the printed newspaper. This was also true in visual terms: newsletters were systematised along the lines of the newspaper, with clear datelines, items separated into individual paragraphs, ‘typographic’ features such as bolding and underlining, and a standard italic hand. A set of newsletters sent to the Hobson/Newey family from about 1690 to 1710, now at the Huntington Library, shows the growing standardisation of manuscript practices: while the seventeenth-century letters feature messier writing with a part-secretary hand, inconsistent headings, and generally low-quality brown paper, by 1710 the clearly laid out letters had fully adopted the newspaper dateline system, marking almost every paragraph of news with either a place and date or with the manuscript or printed source of the news [see Figure 4.5]. While most of the newsletters are addressed to Mrs. Hobson or Mrs. Newey, likely the same person, they are headed with a large “Sir”, showing that they were mass produced, not personalised. The letters employ the same linguistic style as the incoming diplomatic correspondence described above; a letter of 10 March 1708, for example, began, “The Paris Gazette of the 9. confirms what wee wrote before from Letters from thence. That *the* King had declared *that the* Dauphine shall command his Armys in Flanders”. The issue, following the usual geographical progression of the newspaper’s information, continued with items from Vienna, The Hague, Edinburgh, Moscow, and Deal, and closed with the local news that the Duke of Montague was ill but had been blooded.⁶³ These collections show that a demand for newsletters remained even as they coincided more and more with the look and content of the printed newspaper.

This set of newsletters also includes evidence of readers’ use and understanding of their news sources, as the recipient annotated letters with personal opinion and additional information, and endorsed the first page of many letters with a one-line summary of the contents. Frequently, we can see him or

62 Newsletters from the Hague, 1760–1761, Beinecke Lib. Osborn c 199.

63 10 March 1708, News Letters, Huntington Lib., HM 30659, f. 104.

FIGURE 4.5 Manuscript newsletter showing the bifolium format and paragraph and dateline layout, with the recipient's additional underlinings. Individual news items are introduced with "They write from Saxony", "They write from Flanders", "By Letters from Lisbon", and "We have an account from Suffolk". 10 June 1710, News Letters, Huntington Lib. HM 30659.f.124.

her cross-referencing the texts with other newsletters and newspapers, and he or she made little distinction between the written and printed sources while continuing to employ dateline organisation.⁶⁴ To a letter of 4 April 1710, he or she added notes on pages 1, 3, and 4, concluding with a paragraph of additional information:

News letter apr. 6. 1710. Yesternight *the Q.* came to *the* Lords house and *the* Commons called she thankt them [corner torn] *effortes* both houses had showne and the Commons for *their* particular dispatch of funds and

64 It is possible that these notes were added by the news writer, rather than recipient, as there are no signatures to them. However, they occur only in one handwriting, occasionally cover the address panels of the newsletters, and sometimes include news dated after the letter itself, leading me to believe that they were added by the reader rather than writer.

supplyes for carrying on *the* war ... Postman Aprill 1. 1710. We hear *that* at *the* late assize at Welsh pool one Mr. Cornwall having preacht took occasion in his sermon *from the* late proceeding *against* Dr. Sacheverel [sic] to make divers false seditious scurrilous assertions and insinuations highly reflecting upon *the* Queen.⁶⁵

The latter item coincided almost exactly with one in the *Post Man*, showing how the note taker retained the first-person plural voice in transcribing news. The recipient, who often underlined significant passages, treated the material text of the letter almost as a compendium for various sources of news, updating paragraphs as new information arrived. In the eighteenth century, readers apparently continued to rely on the intersection of written and printed media to obtain trustworthy news.

Conclusion

The manuscript newsletter remained a vital and valued part of the news industry in England well after the introduction of the broadsheet newspaper and take off in printed news that followed the lapse of licensing. While newspapers continually referred to 'letters received' and foreign circulars as the source of their items, there was no simple, one-way transmission from manuscript to print in news dissemination: newsletters re-circulated diplomatic correspondence, offered the latest updates on printed news, and were delivered or mailed folded up together with printed sources. As Konstantin Dierks writes, "The very concept of a newspaper was rooted in letter writing: in the service provided by a correspondent positioned to report on events happening at a distance, and also in the service provided by a publisher as a gathering point for numerous correspondents".⁶⁶ The diplomats and paid observers sending news updates from continental Europe were the first 'foreign correspondents', gaining their authority from their status as on-the-scene witnesses – or at least closer recipients of other first-hand accounts – of the events described. Newsletters and newspapers often emphasised this witnessing function by transcribing letters in the first-person voice of the authors, so that, for example, the phrase 'our king' could refer to a foreign monarch. While the first professional

65 4 April 1710, News Letters, Huntington Lib. HM 30659 f. 121.

66 Konstantin Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 144.

reporters did not appear until the nineteenth century, we can see an early version of the role in the newsletter compiler's correspondence network.

The dispersed web of correspondents, editors, and recipients that characterised newsletter services also extends our understanding of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century news distribution beyond the urban, print-centric model of coffeehouse news consumption central to Habermas' description of the public sphere. While historians have disagreed about the extent to which women participated in coffeehouse culture,⁶⁷ significant collections of female subscribers' newsletters – two of which were discussed in this essay – remain in existence. The conventionally 'feminine' genre of the personal letter thus aligned with the more professional forms of business and diplomatic correspondence central to the newsletter. The newspaper in many ways took its size and shape from the existing manuscript newsletters, like Muddiman's, that also used a half-sheet folio format, but by the early eighteenth century the newsletter increasingly resembled the newspaper with banner headings, prominent datelines, and clear paragraphs of news. Rather than constituting two separate spheres, one waning and one waxing, newsletters and newspapers exhibited a mutual reliance as periodical publication became an important and profitable sector of the print marketplace in the first half of the eighteenth century. The manuscript newsletter is therefore an important news genre in its own right, but it also forces us to revisit our assumptions about the development of the newspaper, and of the periodical more generally, as a print product. As attention to newspapers and periodicals becomes increasingly prominent in literary studies – expanding upon the role these documents have long played as historical sources – we can better understand the emergence of the news media if we acknowledge the ways in which it was not solely or even primarily a phenomenon of print culture.

67 See, for example, Brian Cowan, 'What Was Masculine about the Public Sphere? Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England', *History Workshop Journal*, 51 (2001), pp. 127–157.