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THE ROLE OF THE PRESS

“A community needs news,” said the British author Dame Rebecca West, “for the same reason that a man needs eyes. It has to see where it is going.”

Newspapers can be published daily or weekly, in the morning or in the afternoon; they may be published for the few hundred inhabitants of a small town, for a whole country, or even for an international audience. A newspaper differs from other forms of publication in its immediacy, characteristic headlines, and coverage of a miscellany of topical issues and events. The daily newspaper is essentially the product of an industrialized society. In its independent form, the newspaper is usually integral to the development of democracy.

Both idealistic and mercenary motives have contributed to the development of modern newspapers, which continue to attract millions of regular readers throughout the world despite stern competition from radio, television, and the Internet. Modern electronics, which put a television set in almost every home in the Western world, also revolutionized the newspaper printing process, allowing news

articles and photographs to be transmitted and published simultaneously in many parts of the world.

Electronic and communications technology have continued to revolutionize the ways in which newspapers are written, edited, and printed, while radio, television, and the Internet have developed into serious competitors as sources of news, official information, and entertainment—and as vehicles for advertising.

Newspapers have retained their importance as vehicles for advertising – including display ads as well as classified advertisements. Even after classified advertising became available on the Internet, local papers retained a significant share of classified ads, especially in the categories of job recruitment and real estate. In smaller and rural communities, regional and local papers have remained essential for small businesses wishing to advertise.

Although newspapers had traditionally counted on the income from subscriptions and newsstand purchases, it became increasingly evident that advertising was a newspaper's primary source of profit.

Mass media have nonetheless influenced the style and the substance of newspapers, especially as audiences seek entertainment in tandem with more straightforward news.

One social change that newspapers have capitalized upon regards the increase in leisure time in developed countries. To accompany the growth of a diversity of leisure activities such as home improvement, gardening, and food and wine, newspapers have devoted special features to these activities, particularly in their weekend editions.

The most important factors for the Newspaper Publishing Industry are access to highly skilled workforce, ability to quickly adopt new technology and access to niche markets.

A free press is seen as a central component of a healthy democracy. This freedom does have its limits, however. Some constraints might stem from issues of defamation and national security, and news blackouts or restrictions on information have occurred during military crises. Of even more concern is the growing number of threats made to journalists reporting from areas of political or military tension, where at one time the press card gave the right to independent reporting.

What is more, contemporary journalists are intimidated, attacked, and killed for their role as witnesses to political, economic, and social developments wherever they may be in the world. The freedom to collect, disseminate, and publish news is recognized as so vital to human rights that UNESCO established World Press Freedom Day (May 3) in 1997 and began awarding an annual prize named for Guillermo Cano Isaza, a Colombian journalist slain in 1986, who advocated harsh punishments for narcotics traffickers. With support from UNESCO, several nongovernmental organizations monitor threats made against

journalists and publish reports assessing the status of press freedom around the world.