

A book is a storehouse of information. So is a newspaper for that matter. The storehouse however does direct us to the miscellany – ‘a form marked by variety of tone and constituent parts’ (Beetham 1996: 1) – and the first magazines did indeed display miscellaneous content that distinguished them from newspapers or books (although books can be a miscellany too). Historians disagree as to which was the first magazine.

Apart from Edward Cave’s *Gentleman’s magazine* that first used the word, some cite the German *Erbauliche monaths-unterredungen* in 1663 (Morrish 2003: 5). Others name the French *Journal des scavans* in 1665 (Davis 1988), *The English ladies mercury* in 1693 or Daniel Defoe’s *Review* in 1704 (Wood 1956: 3–4).

The Ladies Mercury

The Ladies Mercury was the first periodical designed for a female audience, and ran for four weeks during 1693. It provided an important moment in publishing history, opening the door to future publications aimed at entirely female audiences.

The Ladies Mercury inspired many subsequent publications for female-only audiences, including *The Female Tatler*, also contained in this archive.



The ladies mercury, with its questions from readers and discussion of matters relating to love, was a collection of textual items that were quite different to the news and longer articles on domestic affairs and national policy of *The review*. *Journal des scavans* contained condensed versions of books, bibliographies and the obituaries of writers. *The gentleman’s magazine* was initially a digest, aggregating content from other sources and after a decade began to include original

material. But this miscellaneous content was carefully selected via the filtering mechanism of an editorial philosophy devised by the editor with a particular readership in mind.

Then we had The Economist, Collier's, The Saturday Evening Post, National Geographic, Time, The New Yorker, Life, People etc. In the present age of the tablet and social media, the idea of a "magazine" is returning to its storehouse roots. Functionally, a magazine still represents the idea of a bunch of thematically-related content put together as one package. A magazine can also be considered as a cabinet of curiosities; i.e. a display case in which interesting, unusual and occasionally 'eccentric' objects are collected and displayed as a conversation piece or an expression of the writer's wide-ranging interests or tastes. The readers are treated with a fascinating, mind-expanding and unique set of wonders they had never dreamt of.

Marcia Prior-Miller surveyed magazine typologies used amongst communications scholars and concluded that while magazines, journals and newspaper periodicals could indeed be classified, these scholars 'differ on category criteria, on definitions for commonly used labels and on relationships between characteristics' (1995: 3).

Characteristics of magazines

While popular magazines provide broad overviews of topics, scholarly journals provide in-depth analysis of topics and report the findings of research, and trade magazines report on industry trends, new products or techniques. A popular magazine which caters to the general public uses non-technical language. The contents of these magazines include interviews, general interest articles and various types of features. They usually cover a wide range of topics based on research, source comments and generalizations. Articles are usually written by a staff writer or a journalist;

in some cases, interesting articles of freelancers are also encouraged. They generally contain many interesting and sometimes sensuous photographs to attract readers. In general, magazine articles are easy to read, fairly brief in length, and may include illustrations or photographs. Magazines don't necessarily follow a specific format or structure in writing the articles. Its attractive appearance, eye-catching cover pictures and illustrations on quality paper make it more appealing to the reading public. Magazines also contain many colourful and impressive advertisements.

- **Magazines and medium**
- **Magazines have an editorial philosophy**
- **Magazines have editors**
- **Magazine as business model?**
- **Magazines as serial**
- **Magazines as serial**
- **Magazines have readers**

Magazines are containers for the curated content of words, images and design, where each of these elements is as important as the other and the entire content is filtered through an editor via an editorial philosophy that speaks and responds to the specific needs of a niche readership. Magazines are serial in nature and finite in execution. Each issue is almost always produced and consumed in a mid-temporal media space, allowing time for contemplation and desire