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Review of *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965*

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The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965 provides a thoughtful overview of significant trends affecting newspapers during the post-war era. The text is the sixth book in The History of American Journalism series, which is intended to provide general readers with strong perspectives on major periods of journalism history. Currently an associate professor of journalism and associate director at the School of Mass Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern Mississippi, David R. Davies is a former newspaper reporter who has written extensively on the newspaper industry, especially its coverage of the civil rights movement.

Belying a surface appearance of post-war economic profitability and market stability, Davies builds a coherent narrative in nine chapters and a bibliographic essay that provides important context for significant
challenges and changes that the newspaper industry would face later in the twentieth century. A chapter on press critics balances a series of charges that newspapers were irresponsible monopolies that were out of touch with readers' concerns, with commentary from editors and publishers and a discussion of self-improvement efforts by journalists to professionalize the field.

Perhaps most compelling is the chapter on newspapers and the civil rights movement, in which he showcases major problems post-war newspapers had covering issues of social upheaval. Battles between northern and southern editors raised questions regarding news judgment and objectivity, ultimately heightening competition between print journalism and television news. The chapter addresses the racial makeup of daily newspaper staffs, noting that only twenty-one African American reporters worked on white-owned daily newspapers in 1955. Yet, Davies explains that as mainstream daily newspapers began to cover the civil rights movement, employment opportunities on daily newspapers expanded for African American reporters while advertising revenue and readership of black newspapers sharply declined.

Three chapters focus primarily on the business aspects of the newspaper industry. Topics include: the rising production costs for newsprint and labor; costs of new technology necessary to modernize newsrooms; advertising and circulation challenges particularly as these challenges related to the rise of television news; and threats to daily urban newspapers due to the growth of suburban newspapers. What is particularly surprising was the lack of concern expressed by many editors and publishers regarding potential competition from the new medium of television. Davies explains newspaper trends of media conglomeration and monopolization as economic strategies used to combat increased production and labor costs and circulation shortfalls. However, it is important to note that efforts to create monopoly situations were also about profit. During antitrust hearings held in 1963 by the House Committee on the Judiciary Investigation of Monopoly Practices in the Newspaper Industry, profit estimates for monopoly newspaper situations indicated that when the monopoly came from two formerly competitive newspapers, the profit was two-and-a-half times the total profit earned under the independent operation of the newspapers.

Overall, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965* makes a valuable contribution to the field of journalism history, but the steep cost of $109.95 for this slim text may limit its circulation.

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