

Book Review: Magazines' Clout—and the Data to Prove It

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Magazines and the Making of America: Modernization, Community, and Print Culture, 1741–1860. Heather A. Haveman. Princeton University Press, 2015. 407 pp. \$45 hardcover.

Historians burrow in archives and emerge with narratives. Sociologists cast nets and pull in boatloads of data. But when sociologists and historians overlap in their interests, great work can take root. Such interdisciplinary work, done by scholars not necessarily tied to one discipline's epistemology, often benefits the fields of journalism and communication studies. Indeed, sociologists of media history — Paul Starr and Michael Schudson come to mind — have initiated paradigm shifts in the way scholars view the interactions of culture, technology, law, social movements, and the media. Although sociological studies may lack the fine-grained detail of well-crafted narrative histories, the sweep of their generalizations allows scholars to understand history in terms of broader movements.

Heather A. Haveman's book *Magazines and the Making of America* is a recent example of such interdisciplinarity. Haveman comes to the history of magazines as a sociologist, bringing to bear sophisticated statistical instruments on the earliest years of American magazine making — from the pre-Revolutionary period to the cusp of the Civil War. The result is an empirical demonstration of magazines' wide social influence. Her findings won't surprise magazine historians, with whose work she is already acquainted (given her references to standard magazine histories, including Tebbel and Zuckerman's *The Magazine in America* and Mott's multi-volume *A History of American Magazines*). But the sheer volume of data Haveman has amassed makes her book a go-to for any magazine scholar seeking firm grounding for a historical or sociological argument.

This treasure chest of data contains details on 1,200 antebellum magazines and their founders. Haveman has defined many of these magazines' attributes, including the content areas they covered and their genres, publishing locations, geographic scope, advertising, and audiences. She has also coded the individual founders' education levels, occupations, and locations. These taxonomies alone are a valuable resource for future researchers (the appended essays on data sources and analysis run to more than 60 pages).

However, Haveman's larger goal here is to interweave the early growth of the magazine industry with the growth of national and regional communities in the young republic. Chapters 2 and 3 of the book (the introduction is chapter 1) address the history of American magazines and the material and cultural foundations — including changing political, religious, and educational conditions — that allowed them to grow. Chapter 4 focuses on how and why the magazines were founded and what factors led to their success or

failure. Haveman argues that magazines were instrumental in at first helping create a unified opposition to British rule and later bringing together communities of common interest. Some of these communities were geographically delineated (the Ohio River valley, say), while others were geographically dispersed yet united in common interests (scientific agriculture, temperance, Methodism).

The three subsequent chapters apply this overview of the landscape of antebellum American magazines to the industry's interplay with three areas of social influence: religion, social reform (including abolitionism), and economics. Readers' opinions on these chapters' utility will likely vary. It is difficult to imagine the graduate seminar that would address all three of them in depth, and scholars mining Haveman's analysis as a foundation for their own work will also likely pick and choose. Because of its range of coverage, the book will undoubtedly appear in many literature reviews of magazine studies — both historical and sociological — to come.

Taken holistically, the argument in *Magazines and the Making of America* boosts the thesis that so many magazine scholars take to heart: that magazines are important and influential because they build not only communities of common interest but also the American culture at large. For those of us who believe in the power of magazines, the conclusions of Haveman's rigorous empirical analysis will be a relief. The book also fills a large hole in the scholarship of early American magazines, finally putting their influence on a par with the much more widely studied newspaper form.