

COMMERCE AND THE CHURCH: The factors that shaped New Journalism in the *Irish Independent*

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First published in January 1905, the Irish Independent is widely acknowledged as having been influenced by developments in journalism first associated, almost a decade earlier, with the Daily Mail in Britain. However, this article argues that while the Irish Independent adopted many elements of New Journalism its proprietor, William Martin Murphy was strategically selective in how elements were incorporated within his new venture. The success of the Irish Independent can be viewed as the outcome of two processes: the selection and adaption of some aspects of New Journalism to create a successful commercial newspaper but also the exclusion of what were considered the less desirable elements of New Journalism that may have damaged the title's circulation in a country where the power of the Roman Catholic Church was strong. Murphy, in effect, 'shopped' for aspects of New Journalism as practiced elsewhere that he felt were most suitable to the local Irish market. In the latter respect, this article highlights the importance of considering the local context when discussing the universality of journalism practice.

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Introduction

In early November 1904 a prominent advertisement appeared on the front-page of the *Irish Daily Independent*. Headed 'Revolution in Irish Journalism' it announced the imminent publication of a new 'high-class morning newspaper' to sell at 'one halfpenny'.¹ The 'new' title was in fact a redesigned *Irish Daily Independent*. The latter newspaper had been first published in 1891 as a partisan publication that supported the Irish nationalist party leader Charles Stewart Parnell following the fall-out from his involvement in a controversial divorce case. Ownership changed in 1900 when prominent Roman Catholic businessman William Martin Murphy purchased the title for £100,000 (£8.4m today).² Murphy invested further in his newspaper business with the 1905 relaunch being underpinned by finance to purchase new printing presses from Chicago. The appointment of new staff was also integral to delivering on the new venture and the most significant appointment was that of T.R. Harrington as editor (1905–31). To further emphasise the influence the *Daily Mail's* New Journalism had on imitators beyond its core British market, Harrington was sent to London to observe the production processes of key newspapers on which the new Irish title would be modelled.

The arrival of the halfpenny newspapers in Britain during the 1890s had heralded changes in approaches to the editorial, commercial and production aspects of the newspaper business. The commercialisation of newspapers – as viewed by W.T. Stead, for example – 'represented an attempt to exploit the opportunities presented by the development of more populist journalism to extend participation in public affairs

to a wider public'.³ This so-called New Journalism manifested itself in different guises on the two sides of the Atlantic.

When Joseph Pulitzer invited Alfred Harmsworth to edit an edition of the *New York World* in 1900 he delivered a twelve-page tabloid format over four columns to great acclaim.⁴ The distinguishing aspects of New Journalism in the United States have been summarised as containing 'the lively style of writing and energetic mission that journalists were given to be constantly out and about, scouring the city for news, with their own "beats" and "exclusives" to supplement material gathered by the cooperative news agencies'.⁵

With Ireland's close geographical proximity to Britain, connected political relationship through its then membership of the United Kingdom, and widespread local availability of British newspapers it might have been expected that the forces of external change in the newspaper business would have impacted on the Irish newspaper sector. Indeed, just as Alfred Harmsworth was an admirer of mass circulation journalism in the United States, Murphy was an admirer of what Harmsworth had achieved with the launch of the *Daily Mail* in 1896.⁶ What is surprising, however, is how long it took for the wider industry changes to manifest themselves in Irish newspapers, and also that when they did their influence was more on the commercial proposition rather than on the editorial side.

In this article we place the reinvention of the *Irish Independent* in the context of the emergence of New Journalism on both sides of the Atlantic. We seek to identify the specific local conditions that shaped New Journalism in the Irish case. We examine the proposition that the Irish case is less about New Journalism and more about, what we label, 'New Commercialism' but one defined very much by a specific local context of conservative Catholic dominance of all facets of Irish life.

The commercial proposition is reinforced by the fact that while Murphy had given serious consideration to selling his newspaper interests in the early 1900s he changed his mind when he saw how commercially successful Harmsworth's reinvention of the *Daily Mail* had been. Indeed, Harmsworth even advised Murphy on how to re-launch his newspaper in terms of this New Journalism.⁷ The conservative focus is evident by the campaigns of censorship in the early decades of the twentieth century against imported British newspapers that had the indirect effect of limiting the adaption of strands of New Journalism into locally produced newspapers including the daily market leader, the *Irish Independent*.

A 'new' title

The 'new' *Irish Independent* was first published on 2 January 1905. There was a deliberate policy of representing the publication as a 'new title' although the first edition on 2 January 1905 was listed on its front page as 'Vol. 14 No. 1' in an indication of some continuity with the related publication that had gone previously. Describing itself as Ireland's first halfpenny newspaper there was a self-congratulatory tone in articles about the 'new title' over its first few days. Having incorporated various elements of the New Journalism – headlines and summary leads, a greater emphasis on display adverts, and illustrations – it variously described itself as a 'modern newspaper'; one that was 'brightly written and attractively presented'; 'a paper than is bright, newsy, literary, and pictorial'; and one that, readers were told,

‘contains the news of the day presented in a form which the public will appreciate as a departure from traditions of journalism which are now outworn’.⁸

The new *Irish Independent* was an eight-page publication. The front-page was still dominated by advertisements (as was the back-page) but in style and appearance the newspaper was a departure. Readers would have noticed that each inside page was titled into different sections and that the content was generally carefully organised. In this regard, page two was devoted to ‘Finance and Commerce’ and the new method of collating similar news items continued over the remaining pages, ‘Sports and Play’ (p3); ‘Advertisements’ (p4 which also carried local news/leading articles); ‘The World’s News’ (pp 5–6); and ‘Daily Magazine’ (p7). The ‘Daily Magazine’ page included a ‘serial story’ that allowed scope for the use of sketch drawings. Illustrations were also a prominent component of page designs. For example, an explanation of a key naval battle in the Chino-Japanese War was illustrated with a detailed sketch drawing.⁹

In many respects the new publication was not so much a radical departure as the commencement of a period of gradual change. In short, Murphy was adapting elements of New Journalism to the Irish market with a very clear acknowledgement from the experience elsewhere that, ‘building a mass audience involved creating a coalition of overlapping interests’.¹⁰ Three traits are evident in these early editions in articles published specifically about the ‘new’ title – the adoption of an impartial editorial stance, the importance of the commercial proposition and a distancing from local competitors. First, readers were informed that the newspaper’s editorial stance was in keeping with the aspirations of the Irish nationalist cause – which was to receive the title’s ‘heartiest support’. But there was also a clear departure from the partisanship that had dominated the Irish print market throughout the nineteenth century.¹¹ In the latter regard, the *Irish Independent* pledged that, ‘the extravagance of partisanship will be unknown in its editorial columns’.¹²

This editorial direction signalled ‘the slow end of the dominance of the political press in Ireland’.¹³ The new stance – while still unequivocally nationalist – was evident in the instructions given to journalists covering the 1906 Westminster election (as part of the UK voters in Ireland sent MPs in the parliament in London). The journalists were required to provide ‘unbiased, impartial and reliable reports’ on the campaign and to avoid having close connections with candidates from any parties.¹⁴ Murphy, as proprietor, and his editorial staff were clearly satisfied that their stance was reflected on the pages of the newspaper. A year after the relaunch they declared:

We said we would vindicate our claim to be a National journal, independent in fact as well as in name. We have kept our word. Not by a hair’s breadth have we consciously swerved from the line here laid down and we have been rewarded by the steady support of readers of all shades of opinion. We have won their confidence, and we mean to keep it. We still adhere to the policy we began with, nor will we depart from it.¹⁵

Second, the benefits of the redesigned paper were stressed for advertisers while readers were clearly made aware of the ‘value for money’ in the new halfpenny edition. In the weeks leading up to the relaunch a series of advertisements emphasised the commercial proposition. For example, readers were told: ‘You can save money if

you buy it, and you can't get a better newspaper in Ireland'.¹⁶ In these early editions readers of the *Irish Independent* were left in no doubt that the newspaper was a commercial undertaking and that the new technology and designs would appeal to advertisers:

We invite intending advertisers to study our columns, and judge for themselves the manner in which our display advertisements are 'set'. We have employed special compositors who have made a lifelong study of the art, and we think we are right in claiming that our advertisements are the most attractively displayed of any Irish newspaper. The reader can see at a glance. We do not bury our advertisements in obscure type in back pages where you will require a microscope to read them.¹⁷

There was very obvious pride in the new technology used to produce the newspaper that allowed for improved typography – one of the characteristics of New Journalism elsewhere. A spirit of modernisation was referenced in several articles in early January 1905. An article devoted specifically to describing the new Middle Abbey Street premises in central Dublin declared that they were 'electrically lighted, and are warmed with a low temperature hot water system' while the offices were 'replete with the best equipment that money can buy or mechanical resourcefulness can supply'. The paper's two new Goss printing machines were described, almost lovingly, as being 'truly the perfection of printing presses': each press – 'so costly to acquire' – was capable of producing 25,000 copies per hour for an eight-page edition and up to 32-pages at slower printing speeds.¹⁸

Third, the investment in new presses and the new design gave the *Irish Independent* a comparative advantage over its rivals in the national daily market:

Our new offices in their facilities for up-to-date newspaper production are a long way ahead of anything hitherto attained in Irish journalism, and are equal to – if, indeed, they do not surpass – the best fitted establishments of the great London dailies. Journalists and experts who have been inspecting during the last few days our new premises have been most enthusiastic in their admiration of the vast elaborate network of newspaper-making mechanism which constitutes our works department.¹⁹

The undertaking was a commercial success. By January 1912 the *Irish Independent* proclaimed under its front-page masthead, 'Certified Net Sale EXCEEDS by at Least 15,000 Copies Daily the Net Sales of ALL Other Dublin Morning Papers Added Together'.²⁰ By the end of 1915 the *Irish Independent* was selling 100,000 copies and generating £15,000 in profit, a figure that reached £40,000 three years later.²¹ Indeed, the newspaper put a huge emphasis on publishing its circulation figures. From 1909 onwards it made a big play out of publishing independently verified sales figures as a promotional tactic to attract advertising. In 1931 it noted that it had been 'the first paper outside the U.S.A. to give the public these figures'.²²

As Hearst and Pulitzer had achieved in the United States, and Harmsworth had done with his British titles, William Martin Murphy successfully embraced mass circulation newspapers. But with the *Irish Independent* specific aspects of the New Journalism identified in the United States and United Kingdom were absent. There

was certainly greater acknowledgement of human interest stories, increased coverage of sport and a new recognition of the importance of women readers. But absent in the Irish case was sensationalism in reporting stories while there was less concentration on crime reporting, little investigative zeal and the practice of chasing after stories was far less competitive than has been identified elsewhere,²³ although reporters were sent out on daily and nightly news markings. Murphy, in effect, selected, applied and adapted elements of New Journalism to suit his own commercial objectives but as is discussed below, he also paid particular attention to the constraints of the society in which the new *Irish Independent* was published.

The constraints on New Journalism in Ireland

The environment into which the *Irish Independent* was launched was one that reflected the Catholic Church's strong concern at what some elements of the New Journalism represented. In the words of London-based Irish journalist T.P. O'Connor the New Journalism 'devoted as much attention to the man in the gutter as to the man on the throne' and owed much to O'Connor's view that 'the desire for personal details with regard to public men is healthy, rational, and should be yielded to'.²⁴ A 'modern tabloid sensibility' resulted in an emphasis on 'gossip, display advertising, sports news, human interest features, articles aimed at women and children and, above all, fast-breaking stories transmitted by wire agencies'.²⁵ Serialisations, interviews, crime news and investigative pieces were also staples of the New Journalism – all of which were a far cry from the staid verbatim political journalism that still dominated Irish journalism.

The idea of newspapers reporting gossip, scandal, crime and conducting investigations was one far removed from Irish journalism in the early decades of the twentieth century. Many of these topics were taboo and the publication of such stories in British newspapers was viewed by the Catholic Church in Ireland as contributing to moral degeneration of the local population. No less a person than Cardinal Michael Logue called for action against the 'printing presses in Great Britain [that] daily pour out a flood of infidel and immoral publications some of which overflows into this country'. Thus, in 1899 the Catholic Truth Society was established to distribute 'cheap publications of sound Catholic literature in popular form [to] remove the temptation of having recourse to filthy garbage'.²⁶ In 1911 the Dominican Order established the Irish Vigilance Association that pressurised newsagents to sign a pledge against stocking or selling objectionable newspapers. The Order also launched a magazine, the *Irish Rosary*, to help in the 'fight against a bad Press – against papers that fill their columns, issue after issue, with vile, filthy, immoral matter, unfit to be read by our Irish men and women – our boys and our girls – and which sully by their presence the sanctity and purity of our Irish homes'.²⁷

In the south of the country, the Limerick-based Holy Family sodality pressurised newsboys and newsagents not to sell objectionable publications. In 1911 twenty-two newsagents signed a pledge not to sell copies of 'undesirable publications' and newsboys undertook not to sell the 'objectionable prints'.²⁸ When pressure did not work, other methods were used. In October of that year a large crowd gathered at Limerick train station and intercepted the delivery of Sunday newspapers. According to one account 'the papers were solemnly burned, amidst a scene of great enthusiasm, the band playing hymns while the obnoxious journals burned, and then the Dead March (Saul) over their ashy remains'.²⁹

Journalists also played their part in the crusade. Writing in trade magazine *The Irish Journalist*, one journalist – writing as ‘Self Respect’ – lamented the morality of entertainment hosted at Dublin’s music halls:

There can be no gainsaying the fact that our music-halls – there are, perhaps, some exceptions – are becoming daily more and more revolting from the moral point of view and risks of bringing ladies to such entertainments are becoming extremely grave. What is called a good ‘turn’ must, in the opinion of music-hall managers, be ‘spicy’. ‘Spiciness’ consists of something openly coarse, or indecently suggestive, and the female artistes must wear the minimum of clothes and be guilty of the maximum of high kicking. And we applaud that kind of thing – in Ireland!

Noting that such performances were ‘very often eulogised’ in the press he called on his fellow journalists to ‘examine their consciences in this matter, and resolve to do better in the future, otherwise they will bring themselves and their profession into contempt’.³⁰ This call to arms attracted some support: the subsequent issue carried a letter from ‘Excelsior’ who declared that music-hall proprietors must ‘be struck at in the most vulnerable part of his anatomy – his pocket’ and advocated that ‘all journalists join the holy crusade against the parading of filth at public entertainments’.³¹ Such exchanges did not go unnoticed by campaigners: the 1916 annual report of the Dublin branch of the Irish Vigilance Association noted somewhat rather optimistically that its crusade was ‘unanimously supported by the Press of the city and indeed of Ireland’ and that its ‘warmest friends are to be found amongst the journalists of Dublin, who have, irrespective of religious belief or political considerations, given to the movement wholehearted support’.³²

For the new *Irish Independent* to survive, William Martin Murphy needed to be aware of the developments that were happening in journalism in Britain but also be mindful of what aspects of these developments would be helpful or damaging in terms of making the *Irish Independent* a commercial success. The title needed to be reinvented to incorporate the content that had facilitated the success of the *Daily Mail* but without incurring the wrath of the Catholic Church. To this end, as already noted, Murphy adopted the new marketing strategies and the elements of the New Journalism that seemed safe – display advertising, condensed reportage, illustrations, serials – but he studiously rejected any element – gossip, scandal, crime reportage and investigative journalism – that would cause controversy or attract condemnation from the Catholic Church. To claim that Murphy did this for purely business reasons would be untrue: he, like many other businessmen, was a product of his time and he was ‘intensely Catholic, nationalist and conservative’.³³

It was fortuitous that Murphy’s worldview chimed with that of the Catholic Church in relation to what constituted proper journalism, a worldview that was reflected in his newspaper and which helped establish the newspaper as the very profitable voice of middle-class conservative Ireland. In the early 1900s the *Irish Independent* devoted considerable space to reporting the hierarchy’s annual Lenten pastorals that addressed the issue of objectionable newspapers.³⁴ When, in 1911, the newspaper was criticised for not omitting reports of divorce cases, its editor, T.R. Harrington argued in a leading article that it had not been asked to exclude such reports. Instead it had been

requested to ‘discontinue publishing the details of evidence of divorce, and other cases which were calculated to undermine public morals’ and his reply to that request had been ‘that such details did not appear in the “Irish Independent” as the greatest care was exercised to exclude them’. Every effort, Harrington concluded, was made to present such reports ‘in such a way as to render them entirely free from objection’.³⁵

Free State – Free Press?

When the Irish Free State was established in 1922 the *Irish Independent* was the leading newspaper in the daily market. Composition wise, the daily market had undergone a radical transformation in the wake of the war of independence and civil war: among the casualties were the *Freeman’s Journal* and the *Dublin Daily Express*. Once the prominent voice of nationalist Ireland, the *Freeman’s Journal* had suffered from the Parnell split and subsequent newspaper war of the 1890s that had spawned the original *Irish Daily Independent*. With a daily circulation of 30,000 and struggling financially it was bought-out by Murphy in 1924 and ceased publishing as a separate newspaper. At the other end of the political spectrum – but with a similar tale of declining circulation and financial trouble – was the *Dublin Daily Express*. It ceased publication in 1921, leaving the small moderate southern unionist constituency to be served by the *Irish Times*. With a daily circulation of 36,000 copies the *Times* was then a minor publication and it was not until the publication of the Catholic-nationalist *Irish Press* in 1931 that Murphy’s *Irish Independent* faced stiff competition in the daily newspaper market. Murphy’s title – given its readership base – had to take account of the campaign against objectionable imported newspapers from Britain that was amplified in the immediate aftermath of independence.

In early 1920s the Catholic Church’s crusade against what it deemed objectionable publications and objectionable journalism started anew.³⁶ Crime journalism, one of the favoured editorial sources of news for New Journalism, moved centre stage due to the clergy’s fear that reportage of crime would encourage copycat crimes. In an article in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Revd David Barry declared that the ‘publication of every crime is, no doubt, more or less likely to lead those who are weak to its commission, by familiarising their minds with it, lessening their abhorrence of it, and showing them that the perpetration of it is not unthinkable’. He also noted that journalists often justified crime coverage on the grounds that ‘the fear of shame and disgrace incidental to publicity [exerted] a wholesome and restraining influence on those whose sense of propriety is not quite dead’. However, Barry did not believe this and declared that it was:

important for journalists to realise that reporting these lecherous cases cannot be defended on the plea of whetting the legitimate curiosity of the public, or as a warning against the commission of sin. Its sole justification or palliation is to be looked for in the financial return due to the appeal this species of journalism makes to the cruder sentiments or lower instincts of the public.³⁷

At the centre of the renewed crusade was one Revd Richard S. Devane, a passionate promoter of legislation devoted to, as his obituary put it, ‘moral protection’.³⁸ In his writings, Devane was keen to point out that any legislation to deal with objectionable publications would not be directed against Irish journalism and publications as he believed ‘Irish journalism and the Irish press are as near perfection in this matter as any press can be’.³⁹ In contrast, English journalists had descended ‘into a rivalry of

filth'.⁴⁰ The issue of birth control was a central one: in Devane's opinion, wherever birth control adverts were tolerated there had 'arisen a crowd of filthy literary sharks, publishers, writers, sex-fanatics – each surpassing the other in so called "courage" and "daring", in other words, lewdness and filth'. Irish newspapers had, however, excluded such advertisements, refusing 'to barter personal honour and the nation's morals at such a price'.⁴¹

The result of all this campaigning was the establishment by the government of a Committee on Evil Literature in 1926 to examine whether the state should take action to prohibit the sale of certain publications. In its oral hearings, the committee heard evidence from numerous religious bodies but not from the Institute of Journalists nor from the National Union of Journalists or from commercial or editorial representatives of newspapers such as the *Irish Independent* or the *Irish Times*. In early 1927 the government received the Committee's report that recommended the establishment of a censorship board. As the subsequent Censorship of Publications Bill made its way through parliament, the Catholic hierarchy requested the faithful to pray for its safe passage.⁴²

Ultimately, the Censorship of Publication Act, 1929 was to have serious implications for journalism in Ireland – most particularly in terms of constraining the development of crime journalism – a central component of New Journalism. During the parliamentary debates on the legislation politicians had expressed concerns about the nature of crime coverage. The Minister for Justice, James FitzGerald-Kenney, had asserted that reading too much about 'sexually unpleasant cases [must] have the effect of depraving a person's mind'. Another deputy had declared it 'demoralising that we should have the attention of the people continually directed to crimes of violence, to sordid, ugly, vulgar things, as to details, say, of divorce trials'. Yet another deputy had noted that readers were 'compelled to wade through pages of headlines dealing with this horror that took place in Paris and that horror that took place in New York, or how this man has committed suicide in a slum in one city, or another man has cut his sweetheart to pieces in another city'.⁴³

To resolve the problem of imported newspapers that carried these types of stories Section 7 of the Act allowed the minister for justice to ban for three months any publication if it 'devoted an unduly large proportion of space to the publication of matter relating to crime'. Once the Act became law this section was used vigorously: in November 1930, the minister indicated that he had banned six imported newspapers – *World's Pictorial News and Competitor's Guide*, *News of the World*, *Empire News*, *The People*, *Thomson's Weekly News*, *Weekly Record* – for devoting an unduly large proportion of space to matters related to crime.⁴⁴ The message to Irish newspaper proprietors and journalists was clear.

In addition, to prevent Irish newspapers from following the lead set by their British counterparts, the Act limited the descriptive nature of crime reporting.⁴⁵ Section 14 of the Act imposed constraints on the details that newspapers could report on in relation to court cases. It declared it unlawful to print or publish 'any indecent matter ... which would be calculated to injure public morals ... or any indecent medical, surgical or physiological details ... which would be calculated to injure public morals'. The aim of this section was to clean up the reporting of the 'sexually unpleasant cases' that the politicians had spoken of. While reports were allowed to

carry the names of the parties involved, the charges put, the points of law argued on, the judge's summing up, and the findings of the jury, medical evidence that mentioned particular body parts was seen as a corrupting power that would damage public morality and so could not be reported on.⁴⁶

Given the climate of the time and William Martin Murphy's background, it was not surprising that the *Irish Independent* did not criticise these censorship provisions: provisions that ultimately further hindered the development of New Journalism in Ireland. In fact, the newspaper positively welcomed them. In an editorial in February 1927 it praised the report of the Committee on Evil Literature as 'a model of brevity' and even observed that the Committee's ban on objectionable publications did not go far enough: it suggested that the law would be less subject to evasion if 'possession of any publication so banned' was criminalised. Noting that the problem of evil literature had 'long been a source of grave anxiety to clergymen and parents, and indeed, to all who are concerned for the moral standards of our people' the *Irish Independent* concluded that 'to the very moderate recommendations of the Departmental Committee no objection can be raised'.⁴⁷ When the censorship bill was introduced in parliament Murphy's newspaper observed that the legislation would 'meet with general approval' for it was 'a fair and reasonable scheme for checking a grave menace to public and private morality without unduly interfering either with the liberty of the Press or the liberty of the subject'.⁴⁸

As proprietor, Murphy knew his market and his newspaper delivered editorially for this conservative climate. In tune with the Catholic zeitgeist that informed Irish identity, throughout the 1920s the *Irish Independent* devoted two full-page length columns every year to the hierarchy's Lenten pastorals. Such reportage was often accompanied by an editorial, such as that of 1924, which noted that the pastorals reminded Catholics 'of the fundamental truths of their religion and of their obligatory Christian duties'.⁴⁹ It sent a 'special representative' to report on the Catholic Truth Society's annual pilgrimage to Lourdes while the Eucharistic Congress of 1932 was described as 'one of the greatest events in the long and not inglorious history of our Catholic nation'.⁵⁰ In short, the *Irish Independent* wore its Catholicism on its sleeve for several decades – a strategy that was good for business, though not necessarily for journalism. Looking back on his long career with the newspaper, one journalist recalled that when writing about anything to do with the church 'blandness' was required:

You wrote "nice" copy and nice copy meant the sub-editors did not have to entertain qualms about letting it through. It was eminently suitable to the era when the Catholic Church exerted an influence in Irish life that was awesome and it extended into what went into the papers and what stayed out ... Those who made it to the top had an uncanny perception of what did not ruffle the feathers of the Hierarchy or bring blushes to the faces of the "good nuns" as we invariably seemed to describe them.⁵¹

Another journalist recalled that 'we didn't know whether the editor or Archbishop McQuaid was running the show. We look back at it now but at the time we tolerated it but it was pretty bad, yes'.⁵² In 1954, as the newspaper prepared to celebrate fifty years in business, Dublin's Catholic Archbishop John Charles McQuaid publicly praised its 'policy of distinctive loyalty to the Church'.⁵³

Discussion and Conclusion

The example of New Journalism in Ireland is useful in understanding the development of journalism in different jurisdictions and in contextualising how professional practices implemented in one newspaper market diffused to other countries. It does not seem that William Martin Murphy was intent on achieving the type of journalistic outcomes described by Chapman (2005) and Bromley (1997) with his relaunched *Irish Independent*. This specific Irish case is less about New Journalism and more about, what might be labelled 'New Commercialism' combined with a strong dose of Irish Catholic conservatism.

In other studies – and particularly in Wiener's work on the United States and the United Kingdom – linkages have been made between developments in journalism practice in different jurisdictions at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. This study on the emergence of the *Irish Independent* after 1905 adds an important caveat to such cross-national considerations of New Journalism, namely the importance when discussing the universality of journalism practice to maintain consideration of the local context.

In many respects, what the case of the *Irish Independent* provides is a variation of what is known in political communication literature as the 'shopping model'. In the context of political campaigning techniques first devised in the United States what the 'shopping model' suggests is that campaigners elsewhere embrace country-specific supplementation of traditional campaign practices with select features of the American-style campaign.⁵⁴ New Journalism was practiced on the pages of the leading newspaper in the Irish market but its proprietor ensured that only aspects amenable to his commercial interests – and which were conscious of the sensitivities of a conservative Catholic society – were imported.

With the *Irish Independent* Murphy was undoubtedly intent on capitalising on what has been described as 'the commercial potential of journalism'.⁵⁵ He was impressed with the business success achieved by Harmsworth in making his titles 'popular, lively and prosperous'.⁵⁶ Moreover, in proceeding to deliver this 'revolution in Irish journalism' Murphy was intent on delivering a title that would gain wide readership and achieve commercial success. The *Irish Independent* was aimed at the emerging Catholic nationalist middle-class population. There was a local market for a popular title targeted at this segment of the population – the percentage unable to read or write had fallen from 53% in 1847 to 14% in 1901.⁵⁷

Murphy was a successful businessman with a variety of interests including in the transport and retail sectors. During a bitter dispute with organised labour in Dublin in 1913 he took a lead role in defending the interests of the business community and, in the opinion of one writer, abandoned 'any pretence of objectivity' in his newspapers.⁵⁸ O'Brien concurs that editorial interventionism was evident during this controversial episode as Murphy 'was not shy using the *Irish Independent* to define his commercial interests'.⁵⁹ In a related vein, Murphy used his position as proprietor to promote his political preferences and was 'likely to send notes and comments, enclose letters or articles from friends, request that a favourite leader-writer be set to work on his suggestions, and specify parliamentary figures and policies to be supported or attacked'.⁶⁰ This, inevitably, led to tensions between Murphy and the editor he had appointed in 1905 to oversee the new title. In June 1915 Harrington

sought an assurance from Murphy ‘that you will not persist in forcing your unpopular views on me with a view to getting them into the editorial columns of the *Independent*, especially when I tell you, as I often have done, that I believe that such opinions would, if published in the paper in the form in which you want them, inflict untold injury on it’.⁶¹ Thus, it would appear that in another respect, that of proprietor influence, Murphy also mirrored the proprietorial role pursued by counterparts such as Hearst and Harmsworth in other newspaper markets.

¹ *Irish Daily Independent*, November 9, 1904.

² Calculation based on average retail price index from 1900 to 2010; See <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/> (Accessed 1 July 2013).

³ Bromley, *A Journalism Reader*, 14.

⁴ Chapman, *Comparative Media History*, 80.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁶ Wiener, *Americanization of the British Press* (2011), 199.

⁷ *Irish Independent*, January 2, 1909.

⁸ *Ibid.*, January 2, 1909, January 7, 1909 and January 2, 1909.

⁹ *Ibid.*, January 3, 1905.

¹⁰ Tulloch, ‘Eternal Recurrence of New Journalism’, 144.

¹¹ O’Brien, ‘Journalism in Ireland’, 12-34

¹² *Irish Independent*, January 2, 1905.

¹³ Foley, ‘Colonialism and Journalism in Ireland’, 382.

¹⁴ Larkin, ‘No longer a political side show’, 32.

¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, January 1, 1906.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, December 10, 1904.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, January 7, 1905.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, January 2, 1912.

²¹ Morrissey, *William Martin Murphy*, 38.

²² *Irish Independent*, September 12, 1931.

²³ Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press* (2011), 217.

²⁴ *Irish Times*, April 14, 1911; O’Connor, ‘The New Journalism’, 428.

²⁵ Wiener, ‘The Americanization of the British Press’ (1994), 62-66.

²⁶ *Irish Times*, December 4, 1899.

²⁷ *Irish Rosary*, February 1913, cited in Adams, *Censorship*, 16.

²⁸ *Irish Times*, October 26, 1911.

²⁹ *Freeman’s Journal*, October 31, 1911.

³⁰ *The Irish Journalist*, July–August 1915, 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, September 1915, 6.

³² *Ibid.*, February 1916, 2.

³³ Yeates, ‘Life and career of William Martin Murphy’, 14.

³⁴ *Irish Independent*, March 2, 1908 and February 7, 1910.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, November 17, 1911.

³⁶ Rafter, ‘Evil Literature’, 408-420.

³⁷ Barry, ‘The Ethics of Journalism’, 524.

³⁸ *Irish Times*, May 24, 1951.

³⁹ Devane, ‘Committee on Evil Literature’, 370.

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- ⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 371.
⁴¹ *ibid.*, 372.
⁴² *Irish Times*, February 11, 1929.
⁴³ Dáil Debates, vol. 26, October 18, 1928.
⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 35, November 28, 1930.
⁴⁵ Keating, 'Sexual Crime in the Irish Free State'.
⁴⁶ Censorship of Publications Act 1929: Section 14.
⁴⁷ *Irish Independent*, February 1, 1927.
⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, August 13, 1928.
⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, March 3, 1924.
⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, September 7, 1927 and June 22, 1932.
⁵¹ Smith, *Urbi Et Orbi and All That*, 2-3.
⁵² Interview with Jim Eadie conducted by Mark O'Brien, July 2011.
⁵³ *Irish Independent*, January 3, 1955.
⁵⁴ Plasser and Plasser, *Global Political Campaigning*.
⁵⁵ Conboy, *Journalism in Britain*, 9.
⁵⁶ Morrissey, *William Martin Murphy*, 32.
⁵⁷ McCartney, 'William Martin Murphy: an Irish Press Baron', 30.
⁵⁸ Yeates, 'Life and career of William Martin Murphy', 23.
⁵⁹ O'Brien, 'Independent Newspapers and Irish Society', 170.
⁶⁰ Morrissey, *William Martin Murphy*, 35.
⁶¹ Callanan, *T.M. Healy*, 485-86.

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