BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

ID 499

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ACCURACY
IN MODERN AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

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PART I
Introduction

The people are the only censors of their governors; and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution. To punish these errors too severely would be to suppress the only safeguard of the public liberty. The way to prevent these irregular interpositions of the people is to give them full information of their affairs thro' the channel of the public papers, & to contrive that those papers should penetrate the whole mass of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.

--Thomas Jefferson

American newspapers have traditionally occupied a position of public trust which has charged them with the awesome responsibility of making large-scale representative government practical. They have been called upon to sustain the vigilant masses which Jefferson and other democratic theorists have maintained are so essential to representative government.

Few would dispute the premise that newspapers play an important role in the functioning of representative government. It is clear that no citizen, however conscientious or concerned, can possibly observe for himself all or even a significant part of the world's important events. He simply must rely upon the mass communication media to observe and report events to him.

A very crucial and timely question, if we accept this theory--and surely few would reject it altogether--that newspapers (and the other mass media) are essential to the functioning of large-scale representative government, is whether they have met their responsibility. The heart of the question is simply, have American newspapers accurately and adequately reported news events?

This is the problem to be dealt with here; the central concern of this paper will be accuracy in American newspapers. This is, of course, a very broad, difficult question to approach, for many reasons. For example, how can we establish a basis for judging "accuracy?" Who but a very few (if any) can tell us what really happened at Pearl Harbor, for example? On what basis are we to say that one report is accurate and another inaccurate? We cannot rely exclusively upon history books—they often disagree on important points. We cannot even rely upon eyewitness accounts—when they are available—they often conflict.

**Defining Accuracy**

An important problem, then, is that of determining which factors contribute to accuracy. Is completeness essential? Is it important that one report contains primarily facts and figures while another contains primarily accounts of the human emotions involved in an event? Does the presence of a single error invalidate an otherwise "accurate" account? Is an eyewitness account necessarily accurate? How much weight does a headline deserve in relation to the story itself? Is location within the newspaper a legitimate consideration in weighing accuracy? How important is the "lead?"

These and countless other questions suggest the kinds of difficulties encountered in a study of this nature. The fact that none has ever been definitively answered—though countless years of research have been devoted to them—suggests that there are no universal answers, or, perhaps, that they are so "subjective" in nature that they defy scientific analysis. Whatever the case, since no universal guidelines have been established for directly judging accuracy, an indirect approach will be employed for this study.
We will use a comparative process, which will allow us to detect variations from one newspaper to the next, thus detecting inaccuracy, without really knowing specifically what is accurate. For example, newspaper "A" says in its coverage of the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand simply that he was shot at Sarajevo at 10:00 A.M. on June 28. Newspaper "B" reports that Ferdinand was shot and killed at Sarajevo, at 10:00 P.M. on June 28, that his wife was also killed, and that the assassin, Gavrilo Princip, a fanatic Serb patriot, was captured. Newspaper "C" reports in one story all the information contained in "B," except that it gives the time as 10:00 A.M. In addition, it prints a second story, quoting top leaders in the Austrian-Hungarian government as warning that the incident may have far-reaching international repercussions, and quoting Germany's minister of state as he warns Austria-Hungary that it may be provoking war by its actions.

Clearly, there is an error in the reported time of the assassination in either "B" or in "A" and "C," or, perhaps, even in all three. The important point, though, is that there is an error at some point. It is not essential to know for the purposes of this study which report is accurate; it is enough to know that at least one of the papers printed an inaccuracy.

This example presents a very narrow perspective on accuracy, however it does illustrate the kind of comparative approach that we will attempt to utilize in a much more comprehensive way to analyze the total coverage of each of the newspapers included in this survey. Further, it provides a basis for extrapolation: if one of the newspapers in this example cannot report a fact so basic as the time of occurrence, can it then be expected to accurately report the sequence of events and other more detailed and complex facets of the event?
This indirect, comparative approach, while it is essentially negative—it allows for detection of errors only, not for positive verification of aspects of a story that may be accurate—it does provide a useful tool for the detection of errors. It does not, however, provide any guidelines for determining which factors contribute to accuracy. And this is, as previously noted, one of the key issues which must be dealt with before our study can proceed.

Further use of the example involving the three newspapers and their coverage of the assassination of the Archduke will illustrate the approach decided upon for use in this study. Newspaper "A" provides coverage of the assassination that is accurate only in the very strictest and narrowest sense of the word: it contains no detectable inaccuracies (assuming for the purposes of our discussion here that the time of the assassination has been verified through several independent and reliable historical sources and found to agree with its reported 10:00 A.M.). It is accurate, however, only as far as it goes and in this very narrow sense.

The coverage provided by newspaper "B" is in this narrow sense inaccurate, since it contains an error (it reports the time to be 10:00 P.M.). If we define accuracy in this narrow sense, then, we are led to uphold a story that does not report several important facts, "A," and reject one which does report these facts, "B," simply because "B" contains a relatively minor error.

This example, then, allows us to begin building our working definition of accuracy. We may say that completeness is an important element and that the presence of a minor error in an otherwise accurate account does not invalidate the entire story.
To carry this analysis further, let us bring newspaper "C" into consideration. If newspaper "B" did adequately cover the events, that is, the "facts and figures" associated with the assassination, it did not really provide its readers with the most significant information. The real significance of the event was its implications for international politics; neither newspaper "B" nor newspaper "A" even hinted at this important point. Newspaper "C," on the other hand, provided the facts and figures as well as some information concerning the importance of these facts--interpretation and background in other words.

Also included in the coverage of "C" was some perspective on the human emotions involved in the event. The reports dealing with the personal reactions of the leaders of the two nations involved provided a look at the event as reflected in the emotions of those most closely affected by it. These emotions may help the reader of the account to assess the importance of the event more accurately, and thus to gain a better perspective on the event and its implications.

We might add to our working definition of accuracy, then, that very often coverage of the "straight" facts and figures is not enough, that interpretation of the significance of the event may be more important than the facts of the event itself. Further, we might add that reporting of the human emotions and background involved in an incident may also be of great importance.

To continue with our example, let us assume that one of the newspapers printed an eyewitness account of the shooting. Our inclination would probably be to accept the eyewitness' story as accurate, because, after all, "he was there." We must bear in mind, however, that the eyewitness cannot base his story upon what really happened, but only upon
his perception of what happened, which may or may not match reality. Since perception equals sensation plus interpretation,¹ and since the senses are quite susceptible to failure, due to many causes ranging from physiological weaknesses to poor vantage point, and since interpretation is far from being an objective process—we often see what we want to see, or see what we expect to see, or simply see what appears to be but isn't—and since we always interpret what we see in light of our own individual background and experience, it must follow that perception is a highly subjective process. Perhaps this point is explained more fully and clearly as follows: "... in studying perception, we are studying what it is that the organism experiences; not what the physical world contains."²

This must all be borne in mind when considering eyewitness accounts. They are the events as seen by what can never be impartial observers, human beings. Eyewitness accounts, then, may contribute certain qualities to a news story, but in terms of accuracy, they must not be accepted uncritically.

We raised questions earlier in connection with the bearing of headlines upon accuracy. Let us assume, in continuing our example, that newspaper "A" carried a banner headline: "Duke Assassinated." Newspaper "B" did not devote its banner to the assassination, but to another story. Its story headline was as follows: "Austrian Duke Assassinated; shot by Serbian zealot." Newspaper "C" carried the following banner: "Austrian Duke Assassinated; Shot by Serbian Patriot; War Possible."


²Ibid.
Our discussion must begin with a decision on what the function of headlines is before we can evaluate their implications for accuracy. Journalism theory seems to agree that headlines serve three basic information functions. They summarize the "gist" of the story, appraise its importance, and attract the reader's attention.¹

The first function, summarizing the essence of a news story, is very important, from two standpoints. It is important because it allows the reader to decide at a glance whether a particular story is of interest to him, without reading the entire story. It is also important to the great number of newspaper "readers" who, for lack of time, patience, or whatever other reason do not read more than the headlines and leads. (According to one survey a full 58% of all newspaper readers read no more than the headline and lead paragraphs.²)

The second function of headlines, appraising the story's importance, is very significant. A seven-line banner headline says to the reader that "this story is of overwhelming importance," for example, while a one-line story head does not suggest this kind of urgency or importance at all. If the reader sees a banner headline saying that the Archduke has been assassinated, he knows immediately that this is an event of importance, even before he reads the accompanying story.

The third function is closely allied with the first two. To be effective in summarizing the story's content and to serve effectively


as an indication of the story's urgency and importance, the headline must first capture the reader's attention. To do this, it must be well written, well placed and of an appropriate size.

In our example, the "scanner" of newspaper "A" would be alerted that an important assassination had occurred, but would not learn of the significance of the event. The "scanner" of newspaper "B" would in many cases read the story headline and forget it, since it is not a banner, and since the assassination of an unknown archduke halfway around the world would surely seem to be of little significance. The scanner of newspaper "C," on the other hand, would see that the archduke had been assassinated, and he would be aware that this event was one that could possibly lead to the outbreak of war.

The more complete and more appropriately sized and placed headline, then, would result in the most accurate picture being given to the headline scanner. It should be obvious that the same will hold true for those who use the headlines as guides as to what is important to read; they would see only by reading the headline in newspaper "C" that the story is of urgent importance, although they would possibly be lead by headline "B" to read the story as well.

It is clear, then, that the use of headlines that are well placed, carefully written to convey the substance as well as the significance of the story, and that are of a size and "weight" appropriate to the story's importance and urgency is an important factor to be considered when judging accuracy.

Similar examples could be offered demonstrating that the location assigned to a story within a newspaper is an important consideration, since it helps to place a priority value on the story and since it determines in
part the probability that the story will even be seen by the reader. Research could also be cited in support of this contention; however, because this is such a self-evident fact—that a story at the top of page one is likely to be seen by more readers than one on page eight, for example—and because our time and energy may be used more productively in the consideration of more weighty points, we will not offer formal supporting evidence here.

The same is true in the case of the role of photographs, charts, graphs, maps and other visual aids in the consideration of accuracy. Given two newspaper accounts of the same event, identical except that one provides a map and a photograph, for example, while the other uses no visual aids, it is apparent that the story suplemented by these aids will give its readers a more complete, or at very least a more easily understandable view of the event than the one that did not.

The "lead" is an important consideration for many of the same reasons we have discussed in connection with headlines. It, along with the headline, constitutes for a great proportion of readers, 58% according to the research report previously cited in "Journalism Quarterly," the only part of the story read.¹

MacDougall suggests five functions of the lead, which may be summarized as follows. The lead answers the readers' initial questions about the incident; it emphasizes the feature of the story if there is one; it induces the reader to continue with the body of the story; it indicates the authority on which the news is reported; and it identifies

the individuals mentioned in the story.\textsuperscript{1}

In practice, of course, few leads will serve all these functions; these are ideals, seldom fully met in the real world. They do, however, provide a basis for evaluating this important component of newspaper coverage.

The real point to be made through all this is that a crucial story with a weak lead, for example, will not be read, and the reader will thus be deprived of the information he should have. The lead is for this reason an important contributor to accuracy in the broad sense in which we are defining accuracy.

An inevitable question, and one which is perhaps the most difficult connected with consideration of the components of accuracy, is that of "objectivity." Is objectivity a component of accuracy? Instinctively, we say "yes." But careful consideration may cause us to at least qualify this answer.

True, were it obtainable, "objectivity" would be a grand ideal, but, because it is not obtainable, it is a sort of ideal which has no practical counterpart. Since all words carry with their core meaning a unique complex of subjective, connotative meanings for each of us, it follows that each of us will read a different story as we read even identical words. Thus, a story which I as a reporter write, so that each word has the proper connotative color to convey the precise essence of the event (to my mind), will have a different meaning to each of its readers.\textsuperscript{2}


\textsuperscript{2}Our earlier discussion of perception might be recalled here. Both the reporter and his reader deal in perceptions, not in realities. The reporter deals in perceptions of the event, the reader in perceptions of the account.
The point to be made here is that objectivity simply does not exist and therefore cannot be scientifically considered as a component of accuracy. This is made clearer in the well-known example by Lester Markel.

The reporter, the most objective reporter, collects fifty facts. Out of the fifty he selects twelve to include in his story (there is such a thing as space limitation). Thus he discards thirty-eight. This is Judgement Number One.

Then the reporter or editor decides which of the facts shall be the first paragraph of the story, thus emphasizing one fact above the other eleven. This is Judgement Number Two.

Then the editor decides whether the story shall be placed on Page One or Page Twelve; on Page One it will command many times the attention it would on Page Twelve. This is Judgement Number Three.

This so-called factual presentation is thus subjected to three judgements, all of them most humanly and most ungodly made. ¹

Any discussion of objectivity included in this paper will simply be personal observations of the researcher, offered as "side remarks." They are not to be considered as a part of the accuracy evaluations.

While we have discussed and attempted to place into perspective several of the factors which contribute to accuracy, we have not dealt with all the possible factors. Nor could we ever even isolate all the factors which bear upon accuracy in newspapers, partially because they are so numerous and diverse, and partially because they are, in the final analysis subjective values which cannot be catalogued and described.

**Accounting for Inaccuracy**

If in the course of our study we find inaccuracies in the newspapers, how are they to be accounted for? Some critics have charged that American newspapers are merely capitalistic business enterprises whose chief function is to generate profit by whatever means are most expedient. An example of this kind of argument is made by no less a man than Ben Bagdikian.

The resolutions of most urgent issues—war and peace, the growing chasm between rich nations and poor, decay of cities, inadequacy of schools, race relations, contamination of environment—depend on allocation of national wealth, which means both social policy and taxes. If the news and its interpretation are increasingly merely a byproduct of huge corporations whose primary concern must be conventional gain then this is not a minor matter in public information or in the development of social and fiscal policies.¹

Other critics charge that newspapers are little more than propaganda sheets for "liberals" or "socialists" or "radicals." We need look no further than former Vice President Agnew and his celebrated charges that the news media are dominated by an "Eastern liberal establishment" for an example here.

These critics have in common a conviction that newspapers (and the media in general) are not living up to their responsibilities. They all charge in short, that they are not adequately and accurately reporting the news.

It is the researcher's bias that there are a number of newspapers which fit to some extent into each of the above categories, but that the great mass of newspapers are operated by honest and dedicated journalists whose chief aim is to disseminate information to the public. It is the researcher's belief, accordingly, that the bulk of errors and inaccuracies found in American newspapers are due to factors other than conscious attempts to deceive on the part of newspaper publishers, editors and reporters. That is to say, most inaccuracies are due to incompetency, poor judgement and allied factors more than to deliberate attempts to mislead.

No evidence is offered at this point in support of these assumptions; they are stated so that the researcher's prejudices can be borne in mind when considering his conclusions. It is hoped that at the conclusion of

this study the researcher will be able to cite more than personal prejudice as justification for these beliefs.

**Purpose**

It is hoped, then, that this study will at least serve as a basic starting point toward answering the following important question: have American newspapers fulfilled their implied responsibility to the American public, that is, do they provide news coverage that is accurate? We use the term, "accurate," here in the very broad sense so laboriously outlined in the preceding pages. We use it to include completeness, factual accuracy, appropriate use of interpretation and background information, appropriate use of headlines and leads, appropriate placement of stories within the layout, as well as all the other qualities which together make a newspaper's coverage most true to the substance and significance of the world's events.

**Thesis**

Our thesis is that American newspapers, in the main, provide accurate news coverage to their readers. We do not deny that certain newspapers may occasionally, or even systematically, distort the news; we do not deny that all newspapers—even the best—make mistakes. We maintain simply that in general newspapers provide accurate news coverage.

**Procedure**

Ideally, in a project of this sort every newspaper in the nation would be surveyed and the survey would cover a span of many years. Practically, of course, this kind of massive effort is not possible in a limited research project. This is especially true given the limited size of the newspaper collection in the University library, and the problems and endless delays encountered in interlibrary loan.
This study, therefore, will limit itself to a few prominent newspapers, rather than attempting to survey them all. In addition, because of the limited nature of our study, it is not practical to survey even the few newspapers selected continuously or for any great period of time. Therefore, in order to limit the amount of material to be covered, the following plan will be used. A carefully selected historical incident will form the center of the study, and comparisons will be drawn between the coverage provided by each of the selected newspapers.

Clearly, the selection of the incident to be studied, as well as the selection of the newspapers to be surveyed are important factors, each of which must be carefully defended in order for the results of this study to have any force and validity at all.

The Historical Event

The historical event, the launching of Sputnik, was chosen with great care, so as to meet several requirements. First it is international in scope so that all the newspapers surveyed could reasonably be expected to provide coverage; it is relatively recent, so that any conclusions drawn will apply to "modern" newspapers; it is a critical event in international history as well as the history of the United States; it is an event whose nature is such that it may test, even "strain" the abilities of even the most dedicated, competent and knowledgeable reporters and editors.

In addition to meeting these minimum requirements, this event offered many extra advantages. It was of such a radical technical nature that there were few "experts" available; it required the use of terms, facts and figures in reports that only the most capable reporters and editors could adequately deal with. It was of such new and earthshaking political importance that any newspaper's competence in this area would be tested.
In addition, it was a sensitive political event in its reflection on the cold war; if any newspaper had tendencies to "slant" news in such a way as to favor either the West or the Communist bloc, they would surely tend to appear in the coverage of a story such as this one.

The Newspapers

The newspapers were chosen for their prominence and influence, their relative independence, the size of their readership--especially national--and perhaps most important for their roles as leaders of other newspapers, inasmuch as they are to represent American newspapers in general for the purposes of this study. It should be reiterated that availability was also an important consideration in making the final selections.

The newspapers chosen for inclusion in this study are, first of all the New York Times, clearly a prominent and important newspaper, read by many national leaders, and a model for others to follow in the eyes of many journalists.\(^1\) It has been rated as the number-one American newspaper in most (if not all) national surveys for many years.\(^2\) It has won a great number of Pulitzer prizes, and its staff members have won scores of awards for excellence in virtually every aspect of newspaper journalism.\(^3\) Further, it has a relatively large national circulation and is watched closely by leaders and influential people in many fields.

The Chicago Tribune, long-time leader of many Midwest newspapers, is also read by many leaders. It has a circulation somewhat larger

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than the *Times*, including some regional and national circulation. (Circulation figures for the four newspapers included in our study were as follows in 1957: *New York Times*, 622,843, daily and 1,277,140, sunday; *Chicago Tribune*, 943,741, daily and 1,319,614, sunday; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 441,061, daily and 521,224, sunday; *Christian Science Monitor*, 174,399, daily.) The Tribune has also won many national awards, though not nearly as many as the *Times*, and it has been frequently named by newspaper editors and publishers as one of the top ten newspapers nationally.  

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* is, once again, a newspaper with a relatively large circulation, including regional and national distribution (see figures above). It has received numerous national awards for excellence, including several Pulitzer Prizes. It has also been consistently listed by journalists as one of the top ten papers nationally.  

The *Christian Science Monitor*, a newspaper of considerable national circulation (see above) and one often cited for its detachment and objectivity in reporting, has also received recognition for its journalistic excellence on the national level frequently. Perhaps its most noteworthy recommendation for our purposes—and this applies to the other three newspapers as well—is its being consistently named by working journalists as one of the newspapers they most respect.  

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6Ibid.
Overview

The Chicago Tribune's coverage of the launching of Sputnik relied heavily upon what might be called a "shotgun" approach, that is, parallel coverage by several news sources. The rationale was apparently that aspects of the story missed by one source would be picked up by another. Each of the Tribune's stories did provide some unique material; unfortunately, however, there was considerable duplication and repetition. The satellite's period of orbit was mentioned at least eight times, for example.

Generally, however, its coverage was adequate. It contained the basic facts and figures of the event; and it provided some background and interpretation of these facts.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch provided coverage that was neither as extensive nor as diversified as that of the Tribune, but that nevertheless covers much of the same material. The Tribune's coverage seemed to be more international in approach (owing possibly to its use of the Reuters story). The Post-Dispatch used two Associated Press stories and a small supplemental United Press story, which concentrate considerable attention on the political implications of the launching. The Tribune, in contrast, concentrated the bulk of its attention on reporting the "facts and figures" of the launching. It also devoted a great deal of attention to the reported sightings of the satellite both in this country and around the world.

The Christian Science Monitor provided coverage that was very cohesive and that seldom duplicated facts. Two side-by-side lead stories, under a single banner headline, covered most of the material contained in the other newspapers, but in considerably less space (60 column inches,
compared to 80 in the Post-Dispatch, 110 in the Tribune, and 260 in the Times.) One of the stories concentrated on political implications of the event, while the other, written by the Monitor's own "natural science editor," explained the scientific and technical aspects. The coverage was relatively complete and very well balanced.

The New York Times' coverage was, in a word, exhaustive. It contained more column inches of material than the other three newspapers combined. It printed both fact and interpretation that were unequaled in either quantity or quality by any of the other newspapers. Its coverage was quite complete, and it drew upon a greater variety of sources than any of the other newspapers, ranging from Reuters to the Associated Press to the Canadian Press Service.

Preliminary examinations suggest that each of the four newspapers provides coverage of the basics, the facts and figures associated with the launching of sputnik, that is quite accurate. They all explained (in varying degrees of detail) that the satellite was orbiting the earth; all listed its period as 95 minutes; all listed its size as 23 inches; all listed its weight as 184 or 185 pounds (depending presumably upon how the metric figure was converted); all mentioned at least the three reported sightings at Terre Haute, Columbus, and Whittier; all at least mentioned the official Tass announcement of the launching, and all except the Post-Dispatch carried the full text of the announcement.

Each of the newspapers also explained the connection between the launching and the International Geophysical Year; each mentioned the United States' Project Vanguard and listed its first scheduled launch date as "next spring." In addition, all noted that the Soviet satellite was eight times heavier than the planned United States satellite.
All the newspapers carried at least one map of the earth showing the satellite's orbit; all devoted their major headline to the launching. And all indicated that the launching had potential military implications.

In short, all four newspapers provided the basic facts surrounding the launching; and there was substantial agreement among them on these facts. In addition, all the newspapers provided at least some interpretation of the significance of these facts.¹

This is by no means to suggest, however, that the four newspapers provided identical coverage. It is to say that a careful reader could learn the basic facts surrounding the launching of sputnik through any one of the four newspapers included in this survey.

And we must emphasize two points here: first, we are making this statement only for the "careful reader," that is, the relatively rare reader who looks beyond the headlines and leads, and who does this for every story printed about a given event. Second, we are not suggesting that even the careful reader will have access to all the available information about an event in each of the newspapers; rather, we are maintaining at this point that the careful reader will have access to at least the basic facts in each of them.

¹Exceptions to these generalizations will be discussed in the more detailed analyses which are to follow.
PART II
We have up to this point explained why our topic—accuracy in American newspapers—warrants attention; we have defined our terms, justified our premises and assumptions, explained the procedures to be used, and briefly surveyed each of the newspapers and its treatment of the launching of Sputnik.

Having completed this first part of our research—that depending heavily upon secondary sources—we now move on to the second part, which will center around primary sources, the newspapers themselves.

Because they are the first point of contact between reader and news, and because, for so many readers, they are the primary (if not sole) contact, headlines and leads will be our first area of concentration here. If we devote what seems to be a disproportionately large share of our effort to these two topics, it is because they are of such crucial importance to our study.

**Headlines & Leads**

The major headline carried by each of the newspapers was devoted to the satellite launching. The *Times* and *Post-Dispatch* printed nearly identical headlines, but the other two differed somewhat. The banner headlines printed by the four newspapers were as follows: *Tribune*, "Reds Fire 'Moon' in Orbit;" *Monitor*, "Made-in-U.S.S.R. 'Moon' Circles Earth; Space Era Advent Jolts Washington;" *Times*, "Soviet Fires Earth Satellite Into Space; it is Circling the Globe at 18,000 M.P.H. Sphere Tracked in 4 Crossings Over U.S.;" *Post-Dispatch*, "Soviet Satellite Passes Over U.S. 4 Times, Detected by Radio; it is 560 Miles up at 18,000 M.P.H."

The *Times* and *Post-Dispatch* headlines both provide the basic "facts" surrounding the event, and the *Tribune* uses roughly the same approach (except that the statistics follow in a subhead rather than being included.
in the banner.) The Monitor, however, uses a unique approach. It states the basic fact that the U.S.S.R. has orbited a satellite and then continues to report two important facts not mentioned by the other three. It notes that this launching marked the advent of the space age, and it reports that Washington was "jolted" by the event. And it accomplishes all this in the short space of a two-line, five-column banner.

We have encountered here an excellent example of the kind of conflict of journalistic values mentioned earlier; perhaps a digression is in order at this point. One journalist might insist that the Times, Tribune and Post-Dispatch were "correct" in printing the simple "objective," physical facts surrounding the event in their headlines, while another journalist, equally competent, might argue that the Monitor's headline was best, because it conveyed both the basic fact of the launching and a sense of the significance of this fact to its readers.

This kind of conflict is not new to journalism; it has been manifested in recent years by the controversies surrounding "advocacy" journalism and even "interpretative reporting," for example. One school maintains that it is the function of the newspaper to provide "objective" facts to the reader so that he may weigh them and reach his own conclusions. Other schools maintain, however, that important factors are overlooked in this "objective" approach.

For example, some would argue that no human reporter can ever be "objective", that it is totally impossible. Further, they continue, the average newspaper reader lacks the background, the time, the education, or even the intelligence to comprehend either the substance or the significance of most news events. Walter Lippmann explains it this way, "... the modern world being so very complicated and so hard to understand, it has become
necessary not only to report the news but to explain it and interpret it.  

These journalists maintain in short that a news report that does not include interpretation and background is an incomplete and thus inaccurate report. They believe, along with Lippmann, that the average reader needs to be told what the story means and what significance it holds, as well as having its substance both reported and explained.

They would argue (the researcher's inclination is to agree with them) that the Monitor's headline, even though it contains fewer "straight" facts about the satellite launching, is better than the other three because it makes both the substance and significance of the event immediately apparent.

As a further justification of this position, it can be argued that the apparently "objective" approach used by at least one of the newspapers in its banner is marred by the use of a word that holds potentially anti-Soviet connotations. The Tribune refers in its banner to the Soviets as the "reds." This word is highly charged with political, partisan connotations. It does not say (to the researcher's mind) "The Soviet Union Launches a Satellite." It says, "the godless enemy launches a satellite."

Perhaps the headline writer did not consciously intend to use an emotion-laden word when he used "red;" perhaps space limitations dictated this choice, but then perhaps a personal prejudice against the Soviet Union, even if unconscious, caused the writer to choose this word. Whatever the case, the point remains: objectivity does not exist in human activities.

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It can be argued with great force that every word used in every piece of writing possesses a mass of subjective casts. A headline like the following, for example, suggests the possibilities: "Mankind Launches Earth Satellite." It could be argued that by specifying that an individual nation, the Soviet Union, launched the first satellite, as all the headlines did, all the newspapers "interpreted" the launching in terms of what they believed their readers should know about it. They all, in this sense, then, perhaps unwittingly, interpreted the news. If this is the case, then all reporting is interpretative and the question of interpretation versus "objectivity" in reporting becomes meaningless.

But this is enough digression. As we have indicated, all the newspapers devoted their banner headline to the satellite launching and all covered the basic facts adequately, though the Monitor's headline would seem to present a more complete perspective.

If, however, we take into consideration all the headlines in each newspaper dealing with the launching, the New York Times emerges as the clear leader in virtually every respect. It treats virtually every "angle" of the launching in a separate story and thus prints a headline for each. In addition to the banner, already listed, the Times contains the following heads: "Navy Picks up Radio Signals--4 Report Sighting Device," "560 Miles High; Visible With Simple Binoculars, Moscow Statement Says," "Satellite Signal Broadcast Here," "U.S. Delay Draws Scientists' Fire; Satellite Lag Laid to the Withholding of Money and Waste of Time," "Soviet Claiming Lead in Science; New Announcements Noted on Ballistic Missile and Rocket for Research," "3-stage Rockets for U.S. Satellite; First Will Lift it Off Ground, 2d Step up Speed, 3d Hurl it Into Space," "Soviet Satellite Visible with Binoculars; Will Reflect Sun's Rays, Scientist Says."

This is a very impressive array of headlines indeed. Virtually all the basics of the story are covered, and, in addition, a wide range of background and interpretation, much of which is not even mentioned in the coverage itself of any of the other newspapers, is outlined.

This is not to say that the reader need not read further than the headlines to get an accurate account of the event. In no case does any headline contain a complete summary of the contents of its story. For example, the story headed, "Device is 8 Times Heavier than One Planned by U.S." deals with the reaction of U.S. scientists to the launching, with the path of the satellite, with reactions from U.S. space officials, and with U.S. plans for satellite launchings, as well as with the information mentioned in the headline.

The Tribune, in contrast to the Times, provides very weak headlines which often serve as little more than markers for the beginning of stories. Its story headlines included the following: "Spins 560 Miles Up; at 5
Miles a Second; 1 hr., 35 Minutes Around Earth; Report Hoosiers See it First; "Moon" Signal Heard, Expert Here Believes; Electronics Engineer Reports Reception; "Russia Puts a Satellite Into the Sky;" "Russians Congratulated by American Scientists;" "Report Indiana Team First to See Red 'Moon,'" "Russian Satellite Will Evaporate or Disintegrate."

Once again, the Tribune's persistent use of "red" for "Soviet" or "Russian" must be noted. In the story head, "Report Indiana Team First to See Red 'Moon,'" the term is not only potentially prejudicial; it is also imprecise. Could not "red" also refer to China or any other communist nation? Further, the term is ambiguous. Amateur observers might easily take "red" to be a description of the satellite's color or apparent color in the sky.

We can but speculate about the reasons for using "red" here and elsewhere, but we can show that its use does not contribute to accuracy, and, in fact, that in many cases and in many respects it actually does the opposite; it stands as an obstacle to accuracy. The above example should suggest the possibilities in this area. Whether the reasons for its use were merely the dictates of headline composition or whether they were more political in nature, the fact remains that this term, used in this way, is not among the most lucid of terms. Further, many other terms could have been used more effectively.

Perhaps the most noteworthy shortcoming of the Tribune's headlines was their failure to suggest the significance of the facts they reported. There is simply no hint of interpretation and very little background information in the Tribune's headlines.

The Post-Dispatch uses its headlines in much the same way as the Times uses them. They outline many of the important points of the story
and in some cases include interpretation and background. Story headlines included in the Post-Dispatch were the following: "Device Circling Globe 15 Times a Day; Will Burn in Dense Space; Sphere is 22.8 Inches in Diameter. Weighs 184 Pounds--Launching Viewed as Potent Propaganda;" "Rocket That Took Satellite up Believed 'Close to' an ICBM;" "'Moon' Travels Over Eastern Cities, Due in Midwest Today; Device Not Visible at Present Because its Path Goes Under Sun, But Many Report Seeing it;" "Russian Predicts Flight to Moon in Few Years;" "Red satellite Seen Over Japan, Geophysical Year Officer Says."

The headline "scanner" in this case would receive a relatively complete picture of the important aspects of the event; he would also learn some background information, and would be exposed to considerable interpretation. As in the case of the Times, the scanner would learn some facts that he could not learn even by reading all the story material in some of the other newspapers. He would learn, for example, that the Russians predict flight to the moon within a few years, and he would learn that the satellite was reportedly seen above Japan. Once again, the use of "red" must be noted, however. Surely a more precise and less prejudicial term could have been found.

The Christian Science Monitor does not make extensive use of headlines, probably because of the nature of its approach, that of presenting relatively compact, tightly written coverage. Its five-column banner also serves as the story head for both of its front-page stories.

In a sense, then, the Monitor is deficient in this aspect of its coverage: its headlines do not summarize even the elementary facts of the event, that is, the satellite's speed, weight, orbit, and the other basic facts displayed so prominently in the other newspapers' headlines.
But in another sense the Monitor's headline is superior to the others: it states the basic fact that the Soviets have launched a satellite; then it outlines the significance of this event: "Made-in-U.S.R. 'Moon' Circles Earth; Space Era Advont Jolts Washington." The fact that this short headline is in conjunction with a compact story makes it more defensible in that those readers without the time to wade through the massive volume of material contained in the Times, for example, and who thus become "scanners" might find time to read the briefer Monitor account.

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But then this is a "Reuters" story, and chances are quite good that the Tribune did not write the lead. Examination of the leads clearly written by the Tribune reveals that with one exception they are of similar quality. The exception is the lead to the story headed, "Moon Signal Heard, Expert Here Believes."

The lead paragraph to this story is clumsily written and is in "pyramid" rather than "inverted pyramid" form: "Jerome Tannenbaum, 37, of 5240 Harper Av., owner of an electronic engineering consulting firm at that address, said that he heard a radio signal early today which he attributed to the Russian satellite which was launched last night."

The important information is printed only near the end of the paragraph while the opening is cluttered with secondary details so that not only does the reader fail to receive the important information first; he is discouraged from reading further as well.

The lead might have been more effective if written as follows, for example, with the important facts first and elaboration later: "Radio signals, said to be from the Soviet satellite, were picked up by a Chicago electronics engineer last night. The signals, a series of "beeps," were heard by Jerome Tannenber, 37, of 5240 Harper on a frequency of 20.005 mc."

The Times' leads were, in the main, well written, but a small number of them faced the same shortcomings discussed in connection with the Tribune. The story headed "3-Stage Rockets for U.S. Satellite," for example, features such a lead: "Publicly discussed American plans for satellite launching call for the "payload" (the instrument bearing aluminum sphere) to be boosted into position in three stages with a gigantic rocket combination."
Surely this lead could have been written better as follows, for example: "Publicly discussed American satellite plans call for launching the sphere with a multiple-stage combination rocket. The 'payload,' an instrument-bearing aluminum sphere, would be boosted into orbit by the final rocket stage ..."

In general, however, the Times' leads are well written and fit into the requirements outlined by MacDougall. The following lead, under the headline "Satellite Signal Broadcast Here," is an example of the generally excellent quality of the Times leads: "Radio signals from the first satellite launched yesterday by the Russians were broadcast to radio and television audiences here last night."

The Post-Dispatch's leads are weaker in general than those in the other newspapers. They are adequate; the reader's initial questions are answered, though often near the end of the paragraph; the feature is emphasized when there is one; the authority is indicated; individuals are mentioned when they play prominent roles in the story; but the reader is not strongly induced to continue. The leads are simply too "wordy" and their order of priorities is inverted.

The story headed, "Progress of Russian Techniques Is Called 'Great Significance' of Launching" provides an example: "United States satellite chief John P. Hagen said today the rocket that blasted the Soviet satellite skyward may have been 'close to' an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile.

Hagen said the 'great significance of the Russian satellite launching is the fact that they are so far along in their rocket techniques that they can do this at this time.'"

In this example, the most important facts are "buried" near the end, and the attribution, to an unknown government official, opens the story.
If the President had made this statement, the *Post-Dispatch* would have been justified in leading off with the attribution, but in this case it simply reduces the impact of the primary facts, and thus reduces the likelihood that the reader will continue with the story.

The *Monitor* uses an approach that is different from those used by any of the other three newspapers. Its story concentrates on the "scientific" aspects of the launching only after it explores the significance of the feat. It opens with a simple statement: "There's a brand new 'moon' circling the earth and it carries the label 'made in the U.S.S.R.'" And it is not until the fourth paragraph that the statistical information is brought into the account. The intervening sentences concentrate almost exclusively on the significance of the launching, making only occasional mention of specific facts.

Even though the scientific aspects of the launching are fully explored in the *Monitor*'s coverage, the concentration in its leads is on background and interpretation rather than on detailed facts.

Does this approach fit into our standards for leads? The leads, of course, may not answer some of the reader's initial questions such as "how large is the satellite?" "What is its speed?" But then it will answer some of the very critical questions such as "what does this launching mean to the world?" And these critical questions are the very ones that are relegated to secondary positions by the *Tribune* especially, the *Post-Dispatch* to some extent and to a lesser extent by the *Times*. The *Monitor*’s leads strongly emphasize the feature of the story; the authority is implied in the fact that the story is by-lined by the "natural science editor" of the *Monitor*’s own staff, as well as by mention of the Tass announcement.

The most difficult question to be answered here is whether the
Monitor's leads and their style induce the reader to continue with the story. It can be argued that because they tend to be "wordy" and indirect at times, they might cause the reader's interest to be lost rapidly. On the other hand, it could be argued that because they deal in broad terms—describing the dawn of the space age rather than simply the physical dimensions of the satellite—they would tend to capture the curiosity of the reader. The researcher's inclination is to accept this latter speculation, although no supporting evidence other than that already offered can be cited.

In summary, all the newspaper's leads were generally adequate. They fit in general into MacDougall's set of standards, though many of them were weak and seemed to use a "pyramid" rather than "inverted pyramid" form.

**Interpretation**

The subject of interpretation and its importance in news coverage has been given considerable attention already in this report. However, this subject is of such importance as perhaps to warrant further, more detailed and concrete attention in our process of comparison.

The Monitor gives the most attention proportionally over to interpretation of the significance of the launching of sputnik, though in actual amount of material it falls behind the Times. It leads both the Post-Dispatch and the Tribune, however, in both respects. The latter two newspapers provide very little material of an interpretative nature, so little, in fact, that their readers must have been in doubt as to why, and in what ways this launching of a simple metal ball into the sky was worth noting.

The Monitor, in addition to providing prominent hints about the satellite's significance in its banner, "Made-in-U.S.S.R. 'Moon' Circles Earth; Space Era Advent Jolts Washington," also provides considerable material in its lead story, as we have noted. It provides, among others,
the following "interpretative" facts to its readers, even as early as the lead paragraphs:

The first earth satellite, hurtling around the earth in its man-made orbit, evoked several Washington reactions:
Congratulations to the Soviet Union for its feat in hoisting the first mechanical moon above earth.
Chagrin that Moscow had beaten the United States, which is not scheduled to launch its earth satellite until next spring, although the date conceivably could be advanced.
Surprise at the size of the Soviet satellite which is more than eight times heavier than the contemplated American vehicle.
Sharp awareness that the Soviet accomplishment indicated a very high degree of skill and development in the field of far-flying missiles.
And finally, a startled look ahead to the not-so-distant future when still heavier satellites, capable of carrying instruments for 'inspecting' other countries' territory and eventually capable of carrying weapons, would be circling this earthly sphere.

Having read only this much of the story, the Monitor reader is sharply aware of some of the many implications and significances of the launching; surely to know that the launching of this satellite portends a time when bombs can be launched from space upon the earth and when silent "eyes" orbiting in space can see all that happens in the world in minute detail is of greater importance than knowing that the satellite itself weighs 184 pounds or that its orbit is inclined sixty-five degrees to the equator.
The other newspapers reported these latter facts in their leads, indeed throughout their lead stories; only in secondary stories if at all did the other newspapers deal with these interpretative facts.

It was the Monitor's editorial judgement that interpretation of the significance of this event at least paralleled in importance the "straight" facts involved. The researcher's inclination is to agree with this approach, and to suggest that in this respect at least the Monitor presented a more accurate account of the event, again using "accurate" in our liberal sense of the word.
The Times printed one account on its front page which was basically interpretative; even it, however, did not make immediately clear many of the ramifications of the event. It made the following points:

Leaders of the United States earth satellite program were astonished tonight to learn that the Soviet Union had launched a satellite eight times heavier than that contemplated by this country.

Dr. Joseph Kaplan, chairman of the United States program for the International Geophysical Year described the 184-pound weight as "fantastic." The heaviest American satellites are to weigh twenty-one and a half pounds...

William A. Holaday, special assistant to the Secretary of Defense for guided missiles, said the launching was not evidence of Soviet technological superiority in missile and rocket developments.

Mr. Holaday noted that Project Vanguard, the United States satellite program, had been an "open" project as part of the International Geophysical Year and there has been no "crash" program to rush a satellite into orbit.

Mr. Holaday suggested that the Russians deliberately may have placed greater emphasis and money in getting a satellite into orbit first in order to embarrass the United States.

Rear Admiral Rawson Bennett, whose Office of Naval Research is in charge of launching the United States satellites, said the United States had never envisaged the satellite launching program as "a race." He said that Project Vanguard, the United States satellite program, would "proceed as presently scheduled."

The kinds of interpretation contained in this story, while of importance, are not the kind of vitally important points made in the Monitor. The Times does, however, provide this kind of interpretation in several page two and three stories, notably in one headed, "Satellite Flight a Step Into Space." Considerable interpretative and background material is also contained in stories with the following heads: "U.S. Delay Draws Scientists' Fire; Satellite Lag Laid to the Withholding of Money and Waste of Time," "Soviet Claiming Lead in Science; New Announcements Noted on Ballistic Missile and Rocket Research," "Satellite Belittled; Admiral Says Almost Anybody Could Launch 'Hunk of Iron,' "Military Role Doubted; Aide at SHAPE Headquarters Gives View on Satellites."¹

¹See appendix for accompanying stories.
The Times' overall coverage in this respect was good, but the interpretative stories would have been more effective on the front page, if not in place of the "straight" stories, at very least in positions of parallel prominence. Because of its placement and the quality of material itself, the Monitor must in the opinion of the researcher, be given the "edge" in this case over the Times.

The Post-Dispatch provides some interpretative material, and most of it on page one. Under the head, "Progress of Russian Techniques is Called 'Great Significance' of Launching," an interview with John P. Hagen (see page 29 for text) provides a great deal of interpretation as we noted in our earlier discussion of leads.

In another story on page one, under the head "Russian Predicts Flight to the Moon in Few Years," predictions about future moon travel as well as the launching of weather satellites and communications satellites are made. The Post-Dispatch touches on some of the important points of interpretation made at the time of the launching, but it also fails to cover some adequately. It does not, for example, mention political reaction from Washington or elsewhere to the launching.

The Tribune provides virtually no interpretative coverage on page one at all, and provides only one partially interpretative story in its entire coverage, that "hidden away" on page six: "Russians Congratulated by American Scientists." This story deals in interpretation only briefly in the form of comments, first of Dr. Lloyd Berkner, an American IGY official: "I am amazed that in the short time which they had to plan—obviously not any longer than we had—I think it was a remarkable achievement on their part. From the point of view of international cooperation the important thing is that a satellite has been launched. They did it and did it first . . . ."
The story continues: "Dr. Richard W. Porter of New York, chairman of the technical panel on United States satellites, said, 'it is a magnificent step forward in science.'"

Whether considered in absolute terms or in comparison to the other newspapers, this is certainly very scant interpretative treatment, especially for a story so important, and so new and baffling to the great mass of newspaper readers of the time. Very little background is supplied, and the reader is deprived of the perspective given by the *Times'* coverage, for example.

**Completeness**

We move now to consideration of an aspect of accuracy heretofore largely ignored: "factual completeness." In order for the coverage provided by a newspaper to be accurate it must be essentially complete; it must not commit the error of omission, in other words.

As we discussed earlier, all four of the newspapers included in this survey provided essentially complete coverage of the central facts associated with the launching of Sputnik. There were several notable exceptions, however. Some are outright omissions while others are in effect compound omissions resulting from the printing of incorrect or misleading information.

The *Post-Dispatch* printed an essentially complete factual account, judged in relation to the other newspapers' accounts, as well as on the basis of examination of subsequent historical accounts.¹ (Neither of these methods alone--simple comparisons among newspaper accounts, or comparison...

¹"Space Exploration," *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1972, XXV, 320v, 320w; "Space Exploration," *Collier's Encyclopedia*, 1972, XXI, 348-349. Note: Several other sources were consulted here, including *Britannica*, *World Book*, and several almanacs, but the sources cited provided the most complete and useful accounts.
of them to subsequent historical accounts--was considered sufficient for this aspect of our evaluation in itself; taken together, however, the probability of accuracy is considered high enough to be acceptable.)

The Post-Dispatch reported some facts and aspects of the story that were not covered by any of the other newspapers. For example, it printed a story under the head, "West Learns of Satellite Before People of Moscow," which explained that news of the launching had been broadcast in English to the United States before it was carried by Radio Moscow. None of the other newspapers printed this fact. It also printed a story, under the head, "Russian Predicts Flight to Moon in Few Years," that contained a Soviet scientist's projections about interplanetary and moon travel, which none of the others carried.

It also carried a United Press interview with the head of Project Vanguard, John P. Hagen, which was not printed by the other papers, although much of the information offered by Hagen was printed in the other newspapers.

The Post-Dispatch failed to report a small number of basic facts about sputnik, but most were relatively minor. It did not report the satellite's orbit angle (sixty-five degrees) or the fact that its sweep would cover most of the inhabited world. It also failed to report the fact that Soviet and American scientists were gathered at the Soviet embassy in Washington at the time of the announcement.

In addition, the Post-Dispatch printed two descriptions that are, if not clearly contradictory, at least not wholly in agreement. One story refers to the satellite as an "instrument-laden globe," while another says that it is "not a 'scientific' instrument but only a test satellite able to provide small amounts of information."
In general, however, the Post-Dispatch provided "complete" coverage which reported the essential and basic facts of the event. Its omissions were not really those of crucial information; nor was the internal contradiction noted of great importance. In the whole its coverage of the facts was complete.

The Monitor, likewise, provided essentially complete coverage of the basics, as well as a very small amount of "exclusive" material. It reported, for example, a revelation by Dr. Blagonravov, a Soviet scientist visiting the United States, that he had sent a dog up ninety miles in a rocket and recovered it alive, with no apparent ill effects; this fact was not mentioned by any of the other newspapers. (It is relevant to the sputnik launching because it was reported in conjunction with his comments on the space travel implications of the launching.)

The Monitor also omitted several pieces of information reported by the other newspapers. It did not mention the "Moonwatch" project in conjunction with reported visual sightings of the satellite; nor did it mention the times of the reported visual sightings. Its coverage was otherwise impressively complete, however.

The Tribune provided coverage that was quite complete, both relative to the other newspapers and to historical accounts. As previously stated, it covered the basics, including the satellite's weight, size, period of orbit, angle of orbit as well as the more abstract but equally important information about what is meant by "orbit," for example, the details of the launch and of the official Soviet announcement of the launching. (The Tribune, as well as the Times and Monitor printed the complete text of the official statement; the Post-Dispatch did not.)
It also provided some "exclusive" accounts, including an interview with a Chicago electronics engineer who explained various technical aspects of the satellite's radio transmissions as well as the techniques used to make visual sightings. It also went into greater detail in explaining the plans for Soviet-United States cooperation in satellite launching and observation: "The first Russian reactions came at the end of July 1955, when A.G. Karpeake, Russian scientist, said Russia was 'in principle' ready to cooperate with the American satellite plans. Later in the year, a spokesman for the manufacturers making the satellites for the United States government said they would be launched soon after July 1957. Almost simultaneously, Russia said it would launch 'one or more' of the satellites in 1957."

The Tribune also went into early American announcements of intentions: "The first plans to launch earth satellites were announced in July 1955, by the United States. American scientists then said they would launch their satellites within two years... It was said then that the satellites would revolve in an orbit about 185 miles above the earth, circling the globe in 90 minutes." Neither of these areas was covered in any detail by the other newspapers.

The Tribune's coverage was remarkably free from factual errors (based, again, on comparison with the other newspapers and on our historical accounts). It did, however, print at least two clear errors. First, it reported the satellite's diameter to be 18 inches in one story and 23 inches in all its others. No other newspapers mentioned 18 inches and later historical accounts agree with the 23 inch figure.

In addition, the Tribune carried several prominently placed stories about reported sightings, but did not qualify these in any way with at least
one of the two scientists' determinations carried by the other newspapers, explaining that none of these early sightings could have been of the satellite because of its relation to the sun at those times.

With these two exceptions, however, the Tribune provided coverage that was generally complete and free from error. While it did contain some exclusive material, it did not print nearly so much in this category as our next subject of study, the Times.

The Times printed by far the most extensive, intensive and complete account of the launching of sputnik. In addition to printing the basic facts with accuracy (one exception will be noted below), it also printed a great deal of background and interpretative material not contained in the other newspapers.

The bulk of the material is so great as to make more than brief attention to it impractical. Reprints of the Times stories which were wholly or very nearly wholly "exclusive" are included in an appendix for closer examination.

These include a story explaining that ordinary radio sets cannot receive signals from the satellite, one that suggests that an upcoming meeting by U.S. Secretary of State Dulles and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko will include discussions about the satellite launching, one dealing with a Canadian astronomer's surprised reactions to the launching, one dealing with reactions of the incoming U.S. Secretary of Defense, one dealing with appeals from the National Committee for the International Geophysical Year to radio amateurs for help in tracking the satellite. Other stories discuss reactions from various observatories as well as police headquarters in New York. Another deals with SHAPE reactions to the launching; one contains comments by a U.S. admiral belittling the launching's significance.
Other stories include one containing a report on the role of the Russian space pioneer Tsiolkovsky (mentioned briefly in the official Tass announcement) in pioneering the theory of interplanetary travel.

Another story explains the kinds of information that scientists hope will be gained from this and other earth satellites, including more precise information about the earth's exact size, shape, density and mass.

This is quite an impressive collection of exclusive stories, especially in conjunction with the Times' very complete and thorough coverage of the "basics." One minor error is found, however. The other newspapers report that the first "sighting" of the satellite was at Terre Haute, Ind. at 8:50 p.m. The Times, however, says: "The first sighting was reported last night at 10:23 (EST) from Columbus." This single error, if it is in fact an error in the Times—as indications are—rather than in the other newspapers, is significant because it indicates that no newspaper, even the Times, is immune to error. It is also significant because it allows us to extrapolate and expect that other errors might exist that were not detected, perhaps because they were more subtle and difficult to detect.

Eyewitness Accounts

Our earlier discussion of the role of eyewitness accounts, neglected in this phase of our study, deserves some attention here. The Tribune gives considerable space in its coverage of the launching to reports of amateur observers seeing the satellite on its early passes over the U.S. It devotes an entire story, approximately twenty column inches at the top of page one, to reports of sightings, but nowhere does it raise any questions about the reliability of these sightings. The tone of the story suggests that, if they have not been confirmed, they are generally accepted as authentic, scientifically verified sightings.
The Times, in sharp contrast, mentions the reported sightings only on page three, and then it describes them as "unconfirmed sightings of the Soviet satellite." The Post-Dispatch states very clearly in one of its page-one heads: "Device Not Visible at Present Because its Path Goes Under Sun, but Many Report Seeing it." This summarizes the situation very precisely. It does not neglect the reported sightings, but it makes very plain the scientific opinions that such sightings are not possible. Similarly, the Monitor reported the sightings, but quickly noted the scientists' calculations as well.

While the eyewitness accounts in the Tribune were not inaccurate in a strict sense—they were simply reports about reported sightings—they were misleading, since they gave the impression, both by their tone and by their failure to mention the scientists' calculations, that the sightings were authentic. In this case, then, the Tribune trusted eyewitness accounts without seeking verification, and the result was an incomplete and misleading report.

Location

Up to this point we have not discussed location of stories within the newspapers in relation to accuracy; the reason for this is essentially that each of the newspapers gave the launching front-page, first-priority coverage. They all devoted considerable portions of their front pages to the event and the Times devoted virtually all of pages two and three to it as well. The Tribune, however, devoted less front page space to the story than the others and provided most of its coverage on page six. It did devote a banner to the story, however, making the importance of the event in this way apparent on page one.
Visual Aids

As mentioned earlier, all the newspapers studied here provided at least one map showing the calculated orbit of the satellite. These maps were undoubtedly of prime interest to the bewildered readers of the time, since they indicated in a more graphic way than words could what is meant by "orbiting." The Times, in addition to the maps used by each of the other newspapers, also printed a flat world map showing the areas to be swept by the satellite's path. It also printed a photograph of American and Soviet scientists discussing the event in Washington, and, in addition, it printed a photograph of the Russian space pioneer whose theories had helped to make the launching possible. The Tribune relegated the map to page six, and printed its photograph in the bottom left corner of the same page. The Monitor and Post-Dispatch both carried front-page maps, but no photographs.

Human Factors

Each of the four newspapers devoted some attention to the "human emotions" surrounding the event, including the descriptions of reactions of the Russian scientists visiting American when the announcement was made: "Dr. Berkner, who is the reporter on earth satellites and rockets for a special committee of the IGY . . . offered his congratulations. Dr. A.A. Blagonravov and other Russian scientists at the party beamed in appreciation." This account was taken from the Tribune, but a similar account was printed in the Times.

The Times also included a survey of reactions of people calling the Museum of Natural History and Hayden Planetarium as well as the police switchboard in New York. The account is contained in full in the appendix, but parts of it are worth noting especially here:
The announcement by the Soviet Union of the launching brought apparently mixed reactions from New Yorkers. The Museum of Natural History reported that it received a great many phone calls. The planetarium said most of the calls were from newspapers and "the scientific public--amateur astronomers and the like."

At police headquarters, where switchboard activity is usually a good index of public anxiety, a spokesman said no inquiries had been received.

Also reported by the Times was a story in which a United States admiral "belittles" the Soviet accomplishment:

Rear Admiral Rowson Bennett, Chief of Naval Operations, said tonight the Soviet earth satellite was a 'hunk of iron almost anybody could launch.' Admiral Bennett said he saw no reason why we should not believe that the Russians had launched the satellite. However, he said its weight, 185 pounds, as quoted by Soviet spokesmen, seemed to be erroneous in terms of the satellite's performance.

This is of value not so much as an expert opinion, but as a human reaction to the launching. It is also of value because it reports a viewpoint not expressed elsewhere.

The Monitor devoted a great deal of attention to the human emotions and reactions associated with the launching; one of its two stories, in fact, centered on official reactions to the event and on analyses of "experts."

The enthusiasm of one American scientist is made apparent in the following paragraphs for example:

Commenting on this, Dr. Joseph Kaplan, chairman of the United States National Committee for the IGY was quoted by the Associated Press as exclaiming that the 185 pound weight and 23-inch span "is really fantastic. If they can launch that they can launch much heavier ones ... ."

Dr. Kaplan said he is "Amazed that (the Soviets did it) in the short time which they had to plan--obviously not any longer than we had--I think it was a remarkable achievement on their part."

The Post-Dispatch offered little in the area of human reactions and responses to the event in its coverage. It did include a brief statement by John P. Hagen, a U.S. space official: "Of course I was disappointed that we did not get our satellite up first ... (but) this is not a race."
Our approach is one of performing an experiment. Even when we knew they had announced the program, we took no short cuts. "We are going to proceed with our efforts."

**Conclusion**

Had we dealt in the depth and detail that a thorough and comprehensive examination of our subject demands, this project would have required years of research and countless volumes of written interpretation. Had we examined in detail even the four newspaper accounts, our research would have required many times the volume of analysis represented by this paper.

Then to summarize what is little more than a superficial survey itself, a cursory examination of the few newspapers sampled, is not only a very difficult task, it is a labor of questionable worth. In short, it is difficult and probably of little value to summarize a summary. But some effort must be made to draw together the few bits of insight gained by our research, and to form some sort of conclusion.

Our examination of the four newspaper accounts revealed that there were great similarities among them; they all covered the basic facts of the launching and they all provided some background and interpretation of these facts. The Times and Monitor both went beyond the basic facts and devoted great attention to background and interpretation, while the Post-Dispatch and Tribune gave this aspect of the story less attention. Once again, however, all the newspapers did give sufficient attention to background and interpretation of the events that a reasonably knowledgeable reader could grasp both the substance and some of the significance of the launching by reading their accounts.

All the newspapers used headlines in such a way that the reader could get a reasonably clear picture of the launching and its meaning.
from reading them alone. The headlines were also generally written in such a way that the reader's attention would be caught and directed into the body of the story. The Tribune's headlines were somewhat deficient in this latter respect, and the Times and Monitor were judged superior to the other newspapers in the quality of their headlines. But once again, all the newspapers provided headlines that were functional.

The newspapers all used leads effectively to answer many of the initial questions—who, what, when, where, why, how—that the reader is likely to ask. The leads also effectively emphasized the "feature" of their stories. In addition, they were all written in such a way as to intice the reader to continue with the story, though some, of course, were stronger in this respect than others.

The leads also gave the authority for their information quite faithfully; some in fact emphasized this too heavily, as we noted, by using it to open the lead and in effect de-emphasize the importance of the facts themselves. Few individuals were prominently connected with the launching, but when appropriate, the newspapers did bring these individuals into their leads. With certain exceptions, then, all the newspapers used the lead quite effectively.

All the newspapers acknowledged the importance of the launching of sputnik by giving prime page one coverage to it. The Tribune devoted less front-page attention to it than the others, but nevertheless devoted sufficient space to it on page one to make clear that it was an important event.

All the newspapers made use of at least one visual aid, the most common being a drawing of the earth, showing the satellite's orbital path. Others used photographs, but this story was not one that demanded photographic coverage in the way that a natural disaster would, for example.
In these components of their make-up, then, all the newspapers measured up very well to the standards set down. Even the worst provided essentially full, complete and accurate coverage of the events, if our factor-by-factor comparison has any validity at all.

This is not to suggest that there were not weaknesses and mistakes; many of these were detected in the course of our effort. Occasionally a newspaper printed conflicting reports; occasionally reports conflicted from one newspaper to the next. But the points of difference were in nearly all cases minor, even inconsequential.

The only major area in which noteworthy deficiency was found was that of background and interpretation. Neither the Tribune nor the Post-Dispatch provided as much as would be necessary to bring both the substance and the significance of the launching into clear focus for the "average" newspaper reader, to whom perhaps the word "satellite" was strange, for example.

And this is perhaps the most substantial weakness found in the newspapers included in this study. All of them could have provided more background and interpretation, not less, as some critics of the mass communications media have insisted in recent years, without being in danger of overstepping the traditional boundary between "newspaper" and "magazine" style, and without fear of compromising "objectivity."

What, then, is to be said about our thesis, that American newspapers do live up to their implied responsibility to make representative government workable by keeping the people fully informed? We must conclude that it is borne out by the results of our study.

Our thesis is borne out by the results of this study more strongly, in fact, than could have been projected on the basis of our most optimistic expectations. We were able to find weaknesses and inaccuracies in the
newspapers only with the greatest of effort, and the few shortcomings found were generally of no more than minor significance. The newspapers' shortcomings and weaknesses were found to be insignificant beside their great strengths.

Given our conclusion, then, that modern American newspapers can be trusted to faithfully carry out their public responsibility—to accurately and fully report the news—and given the current state of affairs in the American government, perhaps we might appropriately conclude by recalling, with a certain sense of irony, our opening words from Jefferson, "... and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."
SATELLITE SIGNAL BROADCAST HERE

Reported on Radio and TV—First Reported by Long Island Station

By LON NEW

Radio signals from the first satellite broadcast publicly in the United States were heard Tuesday evening for the first time. The satellite, launched into orbit by the Soviets, transmitted a few words that could be received only by special equipment.

The first word the Signals had been received in the country was reported by RCA Communications, Inc., and that its receiving station at Princeton, N. J., had picked up what it believed to be the signals from the Soviet satellite.

(RCA Communications, Inc., a subsidiary of the American Telephone & Telegraph Co., was not part of the broadcasting in London, but it had tuned powerful receivers to the Soviet satellite frequencies. The station of the American Telephone & Telegraph Co. on the 18th floor of the RCA Building.

One and a half minutes later, at 9:46 P.M., the receiving station, situated about sixty miles from the city, reported that the satellite was picking up another signal of the same character, but that it was not possible to determine the station's origin.

The signal was first received at 11:00 and 12:20 A.M. The communications company said it would continue to monitor the signals throughout the night.

The satellite was described as a small disc of a second or third generation in orbit. The first one that had been picked up was broadcast at a power of 3,000 watts on a frequency of 40 M.C., according to RCA.

The signals were transmitted in a stream of continuous sound, and the satellite was tracked by the station that received them.

In addition, the station in Princeton received a signal from the satellite at 11:00 and 12:20 A.M. The signals were broadcast at a power of 3,000 watts on a frequency of 40 M.C., according to RCA.

The signals were transmitted in a stream of continuous sound, and the satellite was tracked by the station that received them.

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**'MOON HOLDS KEY TO EARTH'S SHAPE**

Secrets of Interior's Density May Also Be Revealed—

**Current Data Inexact**

**WASHINGTION, Oct. 8**—The artificial moon now in orbit and those to follow should give much, and their first information on the precise shape of his planet and the bumps of his interior.

> Anticipating among the chief objectives in U.S. Army and United States satellite programs, if the earth does not have a perfect sphere, the interior density and composition of the interior would be essential.

> The earth, however, fits the criteria for an artificial moon. The satellite's path will be determined by its orbital orientation, the reaction of the earth's gravitational field, and the reaction of the earth's magnetic field. It is highly desirable for the artificial moon to have a stable orbit to ensure the accuracy of the information collected by this satellite.

**CAUDILL SURPRISED**

Dr. Caudill, who directed the Soviet satellite program, said on Oct. 8 (Canadian Press) that Dr. C. B. Heald, the chief scientist for the United States satellite program, had already identified the earth satellite. He said the United States satellite program called for a simple experiment, but that such one of the characteristics of the satellite with a special structure was to be observed by the radio beacon.

Only one of three Canadian satellites is currently in operation and the schedule for the United States satellite may not be announced until next summer. The Soviet Union apparently has not been able to do any experiments, and has not expressed any interest in these developments.

> Caudill probably will be able to make the satellite in orbit. The satellite will be placed in the earth's atmosphere and will be launched from the moon's surface.

> The satellite will be launched from the moon's surface and will be placed in orbit. The satellite will be placed in the earth's atmosphere and will be launched from the moon's surface.

**SATELLITE BLITZED**

Admiral Says Almost Anybody Could Launch "Satellite"

**New York, Oct. 8**—Admiral Thomas B. Hess, Chief of Naval Operations, said last night that any man could launch a satellite. He said the United States was not alone in this achievement.

> Admiral Hess said the United States was not alone in this achievement.

> The United States was not alone in this achievement. It is believed that the Soviet Union has already launched a satellite or is about to do so.

**Satellite Announcement Brings Mixed Reactions**

> The announcement of the launch of the Soviet satellite was greeted with smiles and laughter by many people. The admission that the United States was behind the Soviet Union in the launching of a satellite was made by the Secretary of State.

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**U.S. ENSLAVES SCIENTISTS' FIRE**

> The United States government is about to declare a state of emergency in order to protect the scientists who are working on the satellite. The government is considering the possibility of enlisting the scientists to help in the construction of the satellite.
Dollars to Meet Gromyko
Informed Told at Today

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Secre-
ty of State John Foster
Dulles and Soviet Foreign
Minister Andrei Gromyko
will discuss the general
issues dividing the United
States and the Soviet
Union at a meeting here to
morning.

Mr. Dulles may well
view the occasion to initiate
the ranking Soviet official on
the country's launching the
first

The meeting is to take place
at Mr. Dulles' Georgetown
home, which was scheduled
to be located at length. No
formal agenda has been
pre-
pared, however, and Mr. Dul-
les is said to have no specific
prop
pose to offer in the

The launching of the Soviet
satellite is not one of the

The earth station being
launched, or to be
launched by the United
States and the Soviet
Union are in agreement and
will meet at a number of
locations with the Interna-
tional

The difference between
whether the United
States or the Soviet
Union will launch the

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