7. The Competition to Modernize Advertising Services

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The competition among business men to broaden out and find new fields for their products leads to advertising and is an encouraging feature. But the competition among advertising solicitors, among advertising agents, is exceedingly strong, and that competition is leading to a demand for far more service from the advertising agent than was the case ten years ago, or even five years ago.

—W. W. Douglass, at an Ayer & Son “business-getting conference,” 1905

Advertisers’ New Concerns Attract New Services

By the 1910s, U.S. manufacturers of trademarked consumer goods who sought specialized advertising assistance outside their firms generally turned to advertising agencies. Before the economic crises of the 1890s, however, even the largest advertisers only rarely patronized advertising agents for services other than distributing their messages. Instead, job printers, publishers, and freelance artists and copywriters provided most advertisers’ creative resources on those occasions when they did turn outside their own firms.

At the start of the 1890s, it was not at all clear that any single profession would come to dominate advertising creation, advertising agents least of all, given their prevailing attitudes and practices; and as late as 1900, consumer-directed advertising could still have modernized in any of several directions. If we look back, some directions seem now to have had poor prospects, despite their adherents’ efforts. Given public attitudes even then about mailed promotional material or items included in shopping bags at stores, it is hard now to see how job printers could have continued to compete effectively with pe-
riodicals in providing major advertisers with attractive media that would enter consumers' homes. Other directions seem to have had better prospects: publishers might have expanded their own creative services, as Cyrus K. Curtis did, and thereby dominated transactions with advertisers. All major advertisers might have fully developed their internal advertising departments, as did many, or they might have worked closely with a single agency, as Procter & Gamble did with Procter & Collins from the 1890s until 1912. Together, publishers and advertisers might have destroyed the commission system upon which agents had come to depend. Yet by 1920, advertising agencies securely claimed authority in creating advertisements—after three decades of rivalry for advertisers' patronage, during which several groups responded in their own ways to the changing business conditions.

Manufacturers of trademarked consumer goods fueled the processes by which advertising agencies came to prepare advertisers' messages. Then, as now, advertisers initiated the advertising process, determined which messages would go public, where and how they would be distributed, and then paid the bills. High-volume manufacturers of branded consumer goods drove the field's modernization at the end of the century because they increasingly set store by their promotional programs, and in the context of industrial consolidation and specialization, they were willing and able to act on their marketing needs. As their marketing mix shifted away from personal selling because of growing distances and organization sizes, printed media—novelties, catalogs, and letters, as well as periodicals—became more important in reaching not only consumers but distributors of consumer goods and industrial purchasers. Firms' expenditures generally rose with their size, if not proportionally, at least relative to lower-volume producers, and as the costs and marketing consequences of conducting advertising programs rose, making decisions about them became more complex and risky. Manufacturers competed for audiences' attention and loyalty and expanded their markets by patronizing the most prestigious and—to use their phrase—"up-to-date" communications media they could afford. This patronage subsidized technological, stylistic, and distribution innovations when publishers and job printers competed for advertising accounts. Each round of this spiral resulted in trying new ideas and extending distribution that, in turn, set off further rounds of competition. As their costs and exposure rose, advertisers' concerns grew. They began to think about efficiency and effectiveness in content and style as well as in reach and frequency. Media producers and growing numbers of all types of advertising specialists responded to and encouraged manufacturers' concerns for placing and creating advertisements by altering their own practices and organizations in a variety of ways. When changes pleased advertisers, for whatever reason, the fortunate special-
ists prospered. Altogether, changes made by advertisers, printers and publishers, and advertising practitioners shaped their fields' separate but parallel and reciprocal modernizations.

Advertisers' efforts to reduce the likelihood of poor decisions in placing their messages added to the costs of their marketing when they tried strategies such as blanketing markets or placing with the most popular publications. This latter strategy contributed to a tendency toward concentration among the magazines and big-city newspapers that occurred alongside with the merger movement in manufacturing. Those publications with incremental edges in circulation attracted more advertising revenues, with which they could in turn improve themselves and attract more circulation, and so on. In similar circular fashion, the advertisers' costs in using the most advantageous publications rose, and marketing costs contributed to manufacturer consolidations. Operating within those corporations, advertising managers, rather than owner-managers, faced a long series of questions, some new, some old. The managers for, say, a household product might decide to place advertisements in the *Ladies' Home Journal* and a half-dozen other obvious, but expensive, choices. That decision made, though, others remained: how much to spend during any period of time; whether to pay extra for preferred placement or full pages; how frequently to place the messages; and what, if any, newspapers to use? Advertising budgets grew apace, but each opportunity for expansion again increased the advertisers' choices and expenses. Furthermore, as the complexity and costs of decisions increased, the demand to justify those decisions rose. Once managers rather than owners shaped budgets, their plans to expend amounts that seemed exorbitant by the common practice of the immediate past called for objectifiable rationales, validation by expertise, and positive results. Whims, instincts, and flamboyance served owner-managers well enough, but they ill-suited the new generations of corporate managers. (Owner-managers can still follow their whims in ways not open to managers. Steve Jobs's dramatic "1984" Superbowl commercial for the Macintosh computer debut was a recent case in point.)

Other factors determine the results of an advertising program besides decisions about placement, and as appreciation of these factors grew, they, too, added to the advertising managers' concerns. As some publishers, job printers, and a growing cohort of advisers, copywriters, and artists had begun to argue, the content and appearance of an advertisement had a material impact on its selling effectiveness. Placing one's card frequently into appropriate periodicals, simply filling small amounts of space with heavy and clichéd copy, sending out lovely calendars, or printing trade cards with portraits of one's self or one's fac-
tory or one's product, or even with stories about product benefits, no longer sufficed. Even the most imaginative messages on lithographed show cards and trade cards came under criticism by self-appointed experts addressing advertisers from countless sources. While content and style did not yet receive the highest priority universally, even the raising of such questions complicated the criteria for decisions; hence, the need for more careful consideration by advertisers and their advertising managers. Furthermore, the increasing prestige and circulations of preeminent magazines made certain that advertisements placed therein would be seen by the spouses and peers of many interested parties. Comparisons with other advertisements, both those of competitors and ads in general, were inevitable and added to the pressure (on both the advertiser and the creator) to sponsor effective messages and images. Moreover, by the end of the 1890s, most major advertisers became too concerned with effectiveness and originality to be content with material not specifically created for their products by specialists whose new status as experts validated their output. All of these variables, plus the more obvious motivations to sell ever more, pressed for new and improved methods of devising advertisements and campaigns. Because of trends toward managerial specialization throughout large-scale businesses, such as hiring experts, including efficiency experts, "improvement" and progress entailed specialization on all fronts. Production specialists and marketing specialists took up very different assignments in and for these new, departmentalized bureaucracies. The question remained, however, which specialists would take over advertising?

In this period of flux, when the only certainties seemed to be marketing's increasing importance and costs, manufacturers explored a good many options for help with their creative processes. In a few instances, major advertisers even held public contests for advertising ideas, attracting hundreds of entries. After 1890, as expenditures grew even faster than before, the petitioners seeking some measure of the advertisers' patronage multiplied. The variety of media and specialists competing to serve advertisers included printers, publishers, freelance or employed copywriters and artists, and advertising agencies. Neither precedent nor authority nor institutional structures made it clear to whom advertisers should turn. As one adviser to manufacturers explained in 1902, the "advertising medium that succeeds most nearly in gaining the confidence of the advertiser, and hence in participating in just the right degree in the elaboration of his plan, will not only secure the most business, but it will keep it year after year." The same maxim held true for advertising specialists. Their competition moved advertising practices into new stages of activities, including self-analysis and reform.
Swindles, scams, and nuisances of various kinds darkened advertising's reputation throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Public and trade debates on advertising practices included a case that focused on an ancient form that had come to be much abused; “scenery” advertising was hotly criticized as “defamation of the landscape.” This case indicates something of advertising’s profile in this period and illustrates how practitioners attacked nonperiodical media (from which they could glean no commissions) in the names of modernization, efficiency, and public spirit. In doing so, they attempted to distance their field from such practices that tainted the public’s opinion, as did this “defamation of the landscape,” because of the broad brushes with which critics of advertising painted.

Advertisers of many different products covered visible surfaces in both rural and urban areas with their messages. Rarely did these more than urge the use of products, sometimes stating, but often not, their proprietors’ names, so it was not their contents that offended; still, they disturbed viewers of both rural and urban scenery. Between 1851 and 1900, “defamation of the landscape” was one of the most frequent topics related to advertising written about in the New York Times. One editorial half-seriously speculated that the late increases in insanity might be caused by the “abiding anger with which sensitive minds are filled by the enforced contemplation of . . . scenery . . . covered with monstrous legends vaunting the merits of multitudinous wares.” In their turn, and in their field’s defense, advertising practitioners came to protest landscape advertising as inappropriate, given their modern understandings. An 1893 article in Printers’ Ink declared that “rock painting and the desecrating of landscapes are practically obsolete, and are not countenanced by reputable contractors. All sign-advertising men of wide experience say that landscape spoiling hurts the reputation of the advertiser and injures the character of the article advertised,” because it gave “unpleasant notoriety and not advertising.” Additionally, writers for the trade press regularly joined the general protest with titles such as “Prevention of Cruelty to Landscapes.” As the only occupation entirely identified with advertising, the agents’ reputations as a whole suffered more from criticisms of any advertisements than those of any other trade, including the publications carrying the advertisements or the printers who produced the noncommissionable advertisements. Clearly, in 1890 the advertising agents’ path to credibility and authority was not a simple one, and there were plenty of other trades seeking the advertisers’ growing expenditures and, therefore, their confidence.
Rivals for Advertisers' Patronage

Job Printers

Media producers—job printers and publishers—had provided most of the advice advertisers had received during the nineteenth century, and they had provided it, on request, without charge, as a necessary service to attract and hold customers. Job printers' interactions with advertisers especially included creative services. Because publishers sold audiences—that is, circulations—as their foremost commodities, their assistance to advertisers in creating advertisements was a secondary consideration, even though it affected their publications' appearances, their clients' satisfaction, and possibly the messages' performance. Job printers, on the other hand, had only their printed products and preparation services to sell; appearance, client satisfaction, and performance were everything. Industrialists' trade journals often critiqued catalogs in terms of their attractiveness, writing style, expensiveness, and "salesmanship," indicating to advertisers the importance of all of these variables and advising them to insist on top quality from their printers.

Manufacturers' trade journals advised them to seek guidance from their printers on all of their promotional materials to achieve effectiveness. They also warned their readers against printers who failed to provide them with anything more than "heavy coated paper and cheap ornamentation." Accordingly, leaders among job printers increasingly sought advertisers' patronage by offering to improve their products as advertising instruments. For example, Livermore and Knight, a partnership originally formed in 1883 between a printer and an engraver, promised clients "every type of assistance needed in merchandising goods." Their slogan became "printing with service," and, according to a company history written in 1925, that service made their products effective advertisements. Job printers had always exercised great influence on the contents of advertisements outside of periodicals, particularly because of the widespread use of stock images in lithographed show cards, trade cards, calendars, and so on. Using their experience and the feedback they received from sales of their own nonadvertising prints to the public, printers developed expertise on what sorts of images attracted attention and pleased viewers, even if they did not study the marketing effects of such images. By the mid-1890s, printers' own advertisements and articles in their trade press promoted their creative services to advertisers as a feature for competing with each other and with the periodical press for advertising accounts. For instance, an 1897 headline for the Imperial Engraving Company of Chicago announced that "Advertising Ideas by The Imperial are Impressive."
Printers reminded each other, as Paul Nathan did in his 1900 book on the business aspects of printing, that the “intelligent job printer will never permit himself to forget that printing is allied to advertising, and that almost all of the printing that he does depends in some way upon its success as an advertisement or as an advertising medium.” A full chapter addressed the importance of printers’ becoming “students of advertising, that they may be able to advise and assist their patrons in the production of printing that will be profitable.” In explicit contrast to the 1870s, when printers had not found it appropriate to assist their customers with their copy, Nathan warned that “times have changed.” Instead, “the printer who can do nothing but print well is a good enough man for the production of reprint work, but the printer who writes and edits copy is the man to whom new work should be given.” Nathan also advised printers who “felt a lack of ability to write and edit for their customers” to hire a writing specialist skilled in the new styles of preparing copy. After all, “if advertisements do not pay, they are sooner or later discontinued,” and the printer who can “show a customer how to make his printing profitable” will prosper along with his customer. A Philadelphia printing firm advertised that they did “not feel that our responsibility ends with the preparation and production of printed matter—we rest content only when our client assures us that he is more than satisfied with the RETURNS from the printed matter sent out.”

Writing in *AD Sense: A Magazine for Business Builders* in 1906, Leroy Fairman argued even more strongly in favor of printers’ responsibilities to their advertising clients. He declared that a person “has no business being a printer unless he is by nature, or training, or both, a competent advertising man, for the reason that most of the matter which the average printer puts into type is advertising of some sort or another.” The successful printer “must understand just what the elements of salesmanship are and see that they are embodied in the copy.” Fairman instructed printers who received a piece of copy from their customers to “sit down, and analyze it from the standpoint of the consumer or the dealer, or whoever it is to go to. If [a printer] is not competent to do this, he should enlist the assistance of an advertising man who is.” He declared that the “true printer looks upon a piece of manuscript from the point of view of salesmanship.” Fairman urged printers to develop their advertising expertise because “advertising agents and advertising men are handling millions of dollars worth of printing [business that] belongs to the printer.” Fairman’s indignation at the advertisers’ move away from the job printer recognized but did not forestall the trends well set by 1906.

In their efforts to solicit some of this business, printers advertised extensively to advertisers, both retail and manufacturing. They placed their own ad-
vertisements as indications of the quality of their work in both industrialists' trade journals as well as in their own trade's publications, the latter to attract potential clients actively seeking out a printer. Printers received frequent advice from their own journals on how to advertise, including warnings such as, “People expect your advertisements to be specimens of your work. . . . Advertising is a power, be careful with it. Treat it with as much respect as you do a dynamo.” In the two decades before World War I, many job printers advertised nationally to manufacturers in trade journals, such as the Tobacco Leaf, the American Grocer, the Factory, and Iron Age, offering creative services as well as printing. The Grand Rapids Engraving Company advertised in 1901 that they knew “how to make the strong, striking designs that attract attention,” and that they could “do the work your local printer lacks facilities for.” They could do “[a]ll the work—writing—illustrating—printing—addressing—mailing.” Similarly, the A. B. Morse Co., “The Factory Print Shop,” offered to produce circulars for manufacturers with “more of the order-landing, dollar-drawing power.”

A leading advocate of and adviser to the printing trade, the Inland Printer: A Technical Journal Devoted to the Art of Printing, contained not only information about printing technologies and supplies but also articles and editorials advising printers and their clients about advertising practices. The journal showed its readers, both printers and businesspeople who bought printing, frequent samples of advertisements among its examples of fine printing, expanding this function in the mid-1890s. “Notes on Publicity” was a feature column in 1894 through 1896, replaced in 1897 by “Printing and Publicity Problems.” These columns advised printers on useful and effective advertising practices, evaluated advertisements, and offered news on the advertising field, such as meetings of practitioners. Other articles indicated the importance the editors attached to knowledge about advertising. Examples included “Sentences that Sell Goods,” “The Question of Publicity,” “Noticeable Progress in Advertising Methods,” and “Advertising Experience.” The Inland Printer praised a printer who in 1894 offered “to take over the whole task of designing, writing and compiling a catalogue or pamphlet, as well as the mechanical parts, entirely off a customer's hands, making a price to correspond. The customer will have nothing to do but read and be pleased until his work is delivered.”

In light of the new concerns for effective selling, advisers in many journals often warned printers not to place too high a priority on their printing skills if that in any way compromised the selling value of their compositions. One editorial pointed out that it is “a question if a too attractive poster really gives returns to the advertiser”; striving for beauty could reduce “that subtle influence called ‘pull’.” Printers had to be sure that their poster artists combined their...
“talents with enough commercialism” to make their products effective selling tools. Neither the individual printer nor the field would benefit if “the guileless merchant [is] forced without his knowledge to become a patron of the arts at the expense of his advertising account.” As one regular contributor expressed it, the “user of printers’ ink wants to be advertised, and people don’t care so much about good printing as they do about good sense.”14 In 1908, Profitable Advertising published an article entitled “The Progress of Design in Advertising” that explained recent improvements in advertising art, praising a new generation of printers “of a very different caliber from the old-time printer. . . . These men know the power and value of art, as applied in business, and they have lifted a few printing establishments to a plane undreamt of by the generation before this.”15 Over years of learning from feedback what style of printing “takes” with the class addressed or in the country or locality where it is intended to seek trade,” printers could help their clients target their messages.16 Job printers who most successfully competed for advertising revenues combined sensitivity and skills in printing, art, and business. Even so, as the periodical media’s share of advertisers’ patronage grew, that of job printing continued to decrease, although the absolute volumes of both areas expanded. According to the chief clerk of the U.S. Census, W. S. Rossiter, printing and publishing, together, ranked seventh among American industries by 1905, compared with twenty-first in 1850.17

Turn-of-the-century job printing, despite new methods of reproducing images and additional creative services, declined in its importance to advertisers, relative to the periodical presses, in part because the latter themselves could increasingly include pictures. Printing technologies developed rapidly to reduce labor costs and increase speed substantially through this period, but overall this helped to shift the balance of attractiveness to periodicals. In the first decade of the new century, photolithography, photoengraving, halftones, and electrotypes accelerated the mechanical reproduction of images, quickly replacing slower and more expensive forms of chromolithography, for both publishers and job printers. The job printers’ advertisements, such as posters, trade cards, and calendars, gradually lost their status as state-of-the-art visual communications media, although periodicals’ artwork did not begin to compare in quality with their output for decades. Major advertisers continued to offer high quality prints, “elegant gravures . . . real works of art,” as premiums to both retailers and consumers; but increasingly they did so through periodical advertisements.18 And even though the volume of catalogs, booklets, and circulars continued to increase in selling both to consumers and to the trades because of the ease with which photoengraved images of merchandise could be printed, job printing still fell behind the dollar value of advertisements in pe-
riodicals. By 1900, the periodical press dominated advertising media in both volume and the creative attention advertisers were willing to pay to it and for it.\textsuperscript{19} The complexities and unreliability of getting ephemera into consumers' homes and workplaces became more serious obstacles at the same time that magazines and newspapers improved their successes at meeting this challenge. The medium of choice for achieving national reach by the early 1900s, magazines maintained that position until broadcasting (first radio, and later, television) challenged their hegemony.

In the meantime, popular reactions against "scenery" and public advertisements reinforced advertising agents' continuing campaign against noncommissionable advertisements to disincline national advertisers from using traditional, nonperiodical media. Attacks on printed, nonperiodical media varied widely, but they generally came from either publishers or people who specialized in periodical advertising, such as advertising agents and copywriters. In a similar vein, during the 1920s, some of the most vociferous attacks against advertising on radio broadcasts came from advertising agents and periodical publishers who perceived a threat to their revenues. In 1893, the manufacturers' and hardware dealers' trade journal \textit{Iron Age} allied itself with periodicals in this debate and criticized storekeepers who "displayed promiscuously" too many "gaudy and senseless placards" to qualify for the "modern, progressive class" of merchant. Only those that were "really attractive [might] be displayed to advantage, providing they are not too many."\textsuperscript{20}

Printers defended themselves against increasing numbers of attacks with varying degrees of success. In some cases they criticized the advertising specialists. An editorial in the \textit{Printer and Bookmaker} in 1898 argued on behalf of streetcar advertising that it "is useless for newspapers to decry" this format because "it pays those who make use of it" and must "be treated as a rival that has come to stay."\textsuperscript{21} This was still "the printer's age," as printers remained "the chronicler of all achievement and the salesman of the industrial products of the world."\textsuperscript{22} But primacy within the field of printed consumer advertising was quickly moving to publishers and away from job printers. So much so, that when Frank Presbrey wrote his history of advertising in 1929, he recognized only two significant categories of nineteenth-century advertising lithography: the "artistic" posters of the French and the large billboard posters of American theater and circus.\textsuperscript{23} Of course, job printers could still prosper (as they have to the present) in two niches of the advertising market. The first niche results when "small business men comparatively, that is, those who could not afford an advertising man, bring their work with the understanding that we are to take charge of the whole thing."\textsuperscript{24} The second niche continued because advertisers still approached job printers for nonperiodical advertisements, but did

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so through their agents or advertising managers; so this "demand for the best that the reproductive arts can produce sends many advertisers to the lithographers." And, "the great public . . . actually expects and relishes its advertising novelties." 

**Periodical Publishers**

Electrotype plates and halftones for illustrations and other advances in preparing and printing magazines and newspapers combined with rapidly growing circulations to add to the appeal of the periodical press as advertising media. Not only did illustrations become less expensive and more attractive, gradually including color in magazines, but typography, too, improved. Both newspapers and magazines improved their overall appearances with lighter, finer typefaces, increased numbers of illustrations that were themselves lighter because they could now include shades of grey, and, in the larger publications, the gradual acceptance of white areas in both editorial and advertising space. In the 1880s, many magazines made their pages more attractive as advertising media by starting to distribute advertisements throughout their pages, rather than isolating them at the back. 

Advertisers also found newspapers and magazines increasingly useful because of their remarkable growth in circulations, paralleled by more deliberate, although still primitive, market segmentation. Advertising revenues both fueled and rewarded the expansions in newspaper and magazine circulations, which continued unabated, as they had ever since the outbreak of the Civil War. Their distribution systems reached directly into peoples' homes and places of business, giving them a major advantage over all job-printed advertisements other than mail circulars (junk mail), which lack the benefit of being welcomed into homes on a regular basis.

Many newspapers began, in the 1890s, to alter their appearances and content in order to appeal to women, responding to the budding recognition of women's importance in consumer decisions that accompanied what Edward Kirkland has termed the "feminization" of the U.S. marketplace. Participating in this widespread trend, the newspapers competed with the flourishing new magazines that attracted national advertisers of food, household, and women's personal-care products. Many newspapers also increased their circulations and thereby their claims to higher advertising rates by exploiting the popular appeals of yellow journalism. Yet others aimed for a "certain type" of reader rather than the amorphous large numbers that "yellowness" could bring; rather than resort to sensationalism, these papers sought "respectable readers"—and, of course, the advertisers who were trying to reach that "better class" of reader.
A New York Times editorial in 1897 cited a letter from “one of the largest advertisers in New York City,” congratulating the paper on its “clean and dignified” coverage and hoping “to be able to increase our advertising with you in the early future.” The editorial noted that some advertisers questioned whether readers of the “new journalism” had “the means to purchase goods” and concluded that “one reader who examines his paper with intelligent attention that overlooks nothing in its contents is worth more to the merchant whose advertisement appears in that paper than 300 boys who buy the other kind of paper merely to read about a prize fight.” Whether snobbishness or an understanding of marketing conditions and variables motivated this editorial, some large city newspapers targeted affluent markets to attract both national and major local advertisers, although most papers worked simply for large numbers.

With the merger movement consolidating regional and local markets, national, brand-name advertising comprised more and more of the total advertising revenues throughout the country. To help daily newspapers around the country attract and negotiate with national advertisers and advertising agencies, the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) formed in 1887. One of its first projects circulated reports on advertising agents, helping member newspapers to distinguish the reliable ones from those less likely to pay for the space they commissioned. By 1899, the inadequacies of this reporting system convinced the trade association to publish a regular listing of recognized advertising agencies who had a professional right to commissions. These listings also blacklisted agents who were bad financial risks or whose practices hindered the trade, even though many individual newspapers continued to accept whatever advertising they were offered.

The absence of regularized practices for placing newspaper advertisements provided a major source of inefficiencies and irritation, requiring constant negotiations that added substantially to all parties’ expenses and efforts as well as to each one’s inclination to doubt the integrity and worthiness of the other. Unreliable newspaper rate cards allegedly informed potential advertisers of publications’ circulations and their rate schedules for buying space, but the rates and puffed circulations listed simply indicated the levels at which to open negotiations. Advertisers and advertising agents protested these deliberate inaccuracies for decades, the latter led in their indignation by George P. Rowell in his legendary crusade against the abuses. The absence of standardized rates of commission for advertising agencies who bought space for clients also caused uncertainties. The ANPA recommended a 15 percent rate in 1889, lowering this to 10 percent in 1894. Negotiation remained the determinant factor, however. Prominent publishers could insist on lower commissions,
and desperate publishers accepted advertising orders from anyone, furthermore granting them high commissions, to the dismay of established, reputable advertising agents. These problems generated inefficiencies and gave the short-term advantage to unscrupulous agents and publishers, punishing all for the unreliability of some. Worst of all, they detracted from the credibility of both groups in the eyes of the advertisers, injuring agents and newspapers alike to whatever extent they reduced advertisers' confidence in their services and in the entire process. Until more professional standards were established in the early twentieth century, personal reputation and negotiation remained the best means by which one businessperson could decide to trade with another. As a result, agents and newspapers known for their reliability and integrity drew clients to them, setting standards both by example and by the failures of less trustworthy competitors.

Although newspapers differed widely in their efforts to draw on various segments of their potential audiences, magazines came into this period of transformation with a tradition of addressing the "better classes." J. Walter Thompson had helped to convince national advertisers of the advantages of magazines precisely because of their differentials in appeal. Targeting, or market segmentation, remains the modern magazines' greatest claim on advertisers' patronage. Many of the magazines that aimed for the prosperous and literary classes had refused product advertising until the 1880s, when they had to defray the costs of competing with new magazines that used innovative printing technologies and paid writers and artists unprecedented fees. As magazines became prominent advertising media within the overall expansion of consumer advertising through the 1890s, their numbers actually declined significantly, paralleling the bankruptcies and consolidations in business generally brought on by the decade's depression. Of the thousands of journals that jumped into the primordial frays after the Civil War, only a few succeeded in laying claim to large audiences—and, therefore, massive advertising revenues. By 1900, the leaders included the Ladies' Home Journal, Munsey's, the Delineator, McCall's, Cosmopolitan, Harper's, Century, Scribner's, Woman's Home Companion, Colliers, and McClure's. The advertising rates per inside page for these journals ranged from $250 to $800; in 1900, the Ladies' Home Journal successfully commanded $4,000 for its back cover, the most expensive position that year. Those publications that established incremental advantages in their credibility as advertising media in the 1880s and 1890s generally continued to attract more readers and then more advertisers in a mutually reinforcing cycle, profiting from deliberate policies to build themselves as advertising media.

Cyrus K. Curtis's early establishment of the Ladies' Home Journal and, later,
the *Saturday Evening Post* as the nation's commercial pacesetters followed from his appreciation of the lucrative potentials from operating a periodical primarily to attract advertising revenues, rather than as a source of subscription revenues. Even though legend has it that Louisa Knapp Curtis had to prod her husband into being more sensitive to his female audience's perspectives, his early acquiescence in her judgment and editorship evinced a predisposition to strategic experimentation in appealing to worthwhile markets. Other magazine publishers copied, more or less effectively, his spending of unprecedented amounts on popularly written and designed publications geared to the prosperous classes and their petitioners. Curtis first relinquished editing the *Journal* to Mrs. Curtis, then, in 1889, to Edward W. Bok, so he could turn his efforts entirely to directing his own advertising and that of the advertisers in his pages. As late as 1906, he informed a young man from *Printers' Ink* that, "I can hire men to conduct the editorial affairs of my magazines and to look after the circulation satisfactorily, but the *promotion* of the business is a matter I feel it is my duty to attend to myself." He fully credited his successes at building a huge publishing empire to his abilities in advertising, for himself and for those who came to him to distribute their messages, a fitting belief for someone who published to benefit advertisers, not readers.

After having built up the *Ladies' Home Journal* to unprecedented circulations, Curtis sought to reform the publishing/advertising matrix, all the better to enhance the advertising trade. Wielding his circulation, especially among the classes of women increasingly recognized as the purchasing agents for most affluent families, as his power base, he insisted on raising standards for advertising practices, or creating them where none existed. Although he confronted opposition from both advertisers and advertising agents, he and other reformers ultimately elevated both the public's and the advertisers' opinions of magazine advertising, encouraging the former to patronize the products that appeared in his journals and the latter to exploit that opportunity. Some of his reforms required also that advertising agents raise their own standards of performance. Through his lessons for advertisers, their agents, and other publishers, Curtis self-consciously served the advertisers of the coming age, the national, brand-name manufacturers, rather than the advertisers of the past age, encouraging the former and curbing the latter.

Early on, Curtis opposed patent medicines and their domination of national advertising's general image. He first discouraged them from advertising in the *Ladies' Home Journal*; then in 1892 he forbade them altogether. His editor, Bok, and other writers crusaded against the misrepresentations addressed later by the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. By censoring the products that applied to advertise in his publications, Curtis legitimized those that appeared.
As a 1907 biography in *Printers' Ink* put it, Curtis's "columns [are] so clean that an advertisement in [them] is almost equivalent to a business rating for the advertiser"; hence, "the more rejected and the greater [the] restrictions, the more comes in." In 1906, an ad for the Curtis Publishing Company in the *American Grocer* reminded "Mr. Manufacturer" that, "not all the people in the country could or would buy your wares." After extolling the "economy of appeal" of the millions reached by Curtis's circulations, the message concluded with some justification, "Of one thing you may be sure—our advice is candid. With our advertising columns frequently crowded for space, we are under small temptation to lead you astray." Curtis institutionalized his standards in *The Curtis Advertising Code*, published in 1910 and bound in red leather with gilt-edged, rounded pages. With these twenty-one rules, Curtis sought "to conduct our advertising columns as to command the confidence of our readers and lead them to greater dependence upon the printed message." The rules excluded fraudulent ads, "extravagantly worded" ads, those that "knocked" other products, as well as advertisements for alcohol, medicines, mail-order lines, and businesses that violated Curtis's business or ethical standards.  

Ernest Elmo Calkins, one of the most important advertising professionals in the early twentieth century, endorsed Curtis's achievements by dedicating *The Business of Advertising* to Curtis in 1915, as "the man who has done most to put the modern conduct of advertising on the right basis."  

Curtis taught national-brand advertisers lessons about both strategy and content. He and his staff encouraged them to take a longer view of their advertisements' effects—to build their reputations rather than attempt to achieve immediate sales through unseemly promotions. By dissuading advertisers from withdrawing programs that did not achieve fast results, Curtis prompted advertisers to study feedback patterns and to attempt to find unique ways to present their wares for forming strong and productive associations in the readers' memories. To the same end, Curtis hired Charles Coolidge Parlin in 1910 to establish a department of "Commercial Research," that is, market research. Parlin's reports created unprecedented information with which Curtis representatives could act as consultants to potential and actual advertisers. Curtis also required that he or his staff approve of the styles and contents of advertisements before placing them in his pages. In particular, he always rejected displays filled with heavy type or that were too crowded, and advertisers often protested his rejections of their ready-made electrotypes. Some refused to conform, such as Sears, Roebuck, and Company, which was not allowed to advertise in the *Ladies' Home Journal* until Richard Sears no longer controlled the firm's advertising policies, since Sears persisted in leaving no white space around densely printed copy. By 1892, only two leading advertis-
ing agents had hired full-time copywriting specialists, George P. Rowell and F. Wayland Ayer; yet in that year Curtis hired an advertising copywriter, a typesetter, and an artist to create new designs and to improve existing designs for advertisers.40

Other publishers ambitious to gain advertisers' patronage also increased their efforts on behalf of copywriting and layout during this transition period. As the National Association of Manufacturers' American Industries explained to industrialists in 1902:

It is because the publisher cannot afford to take a man's money on any misapprehension whatever that the most long-headed among them not only employ honest devices to obtain advertisements, but also exert themselves afterwards to the utmost to have the advertising pay. They are willing personally or through their various solicitors to study the real advertising problems of a business almost as hard as the advertiser himself must do. . . . [T]hey are only too glad to help him prepare his copy; they are glad to go to the trouble and expense of writing copy over and over again, and of changing it, and of having it displayed to the best advantage, and in short, by striving in every way to employ their own experience to advantage, to have the advertiser come as near as possible to making all the money by means of his advertising appropriation that he possibly can.41

Despite all this, no one publisher could satisfy national advertisers' full range of needs under the existing business conditions. The continuing disorder and disrepute of the business dealings between advertisers, advertising agents, and magazine and newspaper publishers, fueled by a deep sense of competition, worked against publishers routinely serving advertisers without intermediaries. Even Curtis's services and reforms on behalf of advertisers, singly and collectively, were clearly self-interested, and were recognized as such. Although some publishers shared Curtis's ambitions to win advertisers' confidence and thereby to establish their profession as the first to which advertisers turned, others sought their profits from advertisers more narrowly, selling only circulation claims, and often unreliable claims at that, feeding distrust. Manufacturers, and advertisers generally, pressured publishers and agents alike to provide accurate information: "The advertiser has a right to know just what he is getting for his money—who reads the paper, where they read it, what parts of it the various classes of its subscribers read," and so on.42

The individualism, constant negotiation, and lack of standardization that characterized nineteenth-century business practices in general had functioned reasonably well in advertising, if not smoothly, as long as the parties involved remained small and localized. As more and more advertising operations ap-
proached national scale between 1890 and 1910, however, the systems by which those advertisers interacted with publishers approached such magnitude that the traditional mechanisms added increasingly unacceptable costs and uncertainties to each transaction. Magazine publishers found themselves in an ironic position, attracting advertisers who sought their national reach, but as a group, raising the advertisers’ concerns about reliability, as did the newspaper publishers, because of the scale and uncertainty of the transactions. Because advertisers’ contacts with job printers still remain largely localized, or mediated by salespeople, for job printing these conditions have continued until the present without causing practical difficulties. (The formation of the American Lithographic Company, a trust, in 1892 had little impact on the creative responsiveness of printers to their proximate customers.) Advertising agents, likewise, have generally dealt with their clients on a face-to-face basis, so that advertisers could watch them more closely. The working relationships of these three groups—advertisers, printers and publishers, and advertising practitioners—remained essentially adversarial and filled with constant negotiation as the depression of the 1890s wore on. Their mutual dependence only served to exacerbate their certainties that each was at the mercy of the other and would be aggressively exploited without eternal vigilance. So each advertiser went into the fray seeking to negotiate favorable deals with publishers, demanding bargains and benefits, whether agencies handled their negotiations or not.

Even more than the disorder and mutual distrust that characterized transactions between advertisers and publishers, the cumulative costs that advertisers faced when putting together a campaign, publication by publication, worked against Curtis’s ambitions to bypass agents, even when publishers gave commissions directly to advertisers. National advertisers generally wanted to maximize their reach through many publications and to do so efficiently. Working and negotiating with each publication, and having an original advertisement created for each, increased transaction costs significantly. The cumulative transaction costs of using more than a few magazines in this manner were prohibitive; for newspapers, such costs had long since given agents their livelihoods. Then, too, what if an advertiser liked one publishers’ creations well enough to want to use it in other publications? So, despite the attractions of fitting advertisements to each publication and its audiences and retaining at least some portion of commissions that otherwise went to agents, such a non-centralized, highly redundant system could not compete with a more centralized, less complex alternative. By 1913, even the Curtis Publishing Company had ended its battle with advertising agency predominance. That year it published a book addressed to manufacturers on the subject of efficient advertis-
ing and recommended repeatedly that they turn to advertising agents "to be shown how to do it." 43

Publishers of Handbooks and Trade Journals

For the price of a book or a subscription, handbooks and journals gave advice to advertisers. During the 1890s and early 1900s, as advertising became an increasingly important component of firms' marketing mixes, published advice sources proliferated, some focusing on advertising alone, others part of more general publications. For instance, as the decades progressed, trade journals in most fields, from the American Brewers' Review to Iron Age, offered advice on all aspects of advertising with increasing frequency. In its third issue, System, a journal aimed at all business owners and managers—manufacturing and distributing alike—announced that each issue thereafter would feature the "promotion of trade [in no] fewer than two articles." 44 Still, most of the advice in manufacturers' journals was in the nature of encouragements to do more advertising and to do it better. The National Association of Manufacturers' journal, American Industries ("Of, By and For Manufacturers of the United States"), warned that advertising and selling were "the real problem of the business" of manufacturing. In the first issue, 1902, "The Advertising Man" began a series of guidance articles because "there is no business man of whatever kind, no advertiser of any of these classes, who does not constantly wish to do better and better advertising." Competition required it. 45 Catalogs, for instance, made up a major component of marketing for industrialists, whether they sought trade with consumers, retailers, wholesales, or other manufacturers, and American Industries published full-page columns regularly on catalog styles and content. These articles carried such titles as "Glimpses of Salesmanship in Catalogs" and "As Others See Them in their Catalogs" and reminded manufacturers that a firm's well-constructed catalog "indicates that similar care and judgment are bestowed on the articles which it manufactures." 46 Despite all this help from their own trades, advertisers continued to receive the most prolific and specific advice on how to improve their advertising from printers' journals and those in the advertising field, especially Printers' Ink, Profitable Advertising, and the Inland Printer, which wrote for both advertisers and specialists in advertising and printing. Other journals sometimes referred their readers to one of these. 47

Gradually, through the 1890s and into the early 1900s, advice through the trade journals evolved from an emphasis related to buying advertising media—buying more, and selecting media wisely—to content. A series of columns in the American Grocer in 1900 by William Woodhouse Jr. summarized many of
the stylistic criticisms current among advisers in print to the trades. Woodhouse joined countless others with warnings to advertisers to avoid "silly and unnecessary" superlatives and multiple typefaces in a small "card" jammed with information. He admonished, "One point well taken is better than a dozen just hinted at." Similar criticisms had increased in the preceding decade along with a growing recognition of the importance of making "your advertising a silent salesman." Woodhouse responded to an example "of the good, non-paying, old-fashioned, price-listy order—things and prices, with scarcely any descriptions or facts," by reminding retailers that they would "discharge any salesman who, when a customer approached him turned himself into a walking price list and jabbered things and prices into the customer's ears." Criticism and suggestions increasingly offered after 1890 included advice to focus on consumers' interests and concerns.

Handbooks, alongside journals, mostly helped small advertisers, especially retailers who patronized local newspapers and job printers and who could not afford billings enough to interest agencies. These handbooks ranged from brochures freely disseminated by journal publishers to brochures or bound books produced and sold by "experts." Sometimes handbooks, and occasionally journals, even disseminated template layouts and copy for advertisers to adapt. One handbook told jewelry store owners that they had, "in this book, placed at your disposal... absolutely everything that a high salaried advertising man in your own employ could give you—and you are free from his vagaries and independent of his help." The reader who was "intelligent, progressive, and hence open to conviction," would surely appreciate this volume as "one of the best possible investments." Many of the advertising field's leading spokespersons published similar advice. The Ad-School promoted itself as "owned, published and pushed by practical Advertising Men who know what they are talking about." George P. Rowell subtitled his Printers' Ink "The Little Schoolmaster in the Art of Advertising," and through it he circulated advice and suggestions aplenty. Like Profitable Advertising, the slogan of which was "We Show You How to Do It," Printers' Ink encouraged advertisers to "study all that you can lay your hands on of advertising literature." But at the same time readers were warned against depending on "book learning" and advertisements that were "clipped," "ready-made," or "stock cut." Charles Austin Bates sought to profit from all angles: he wrote manuals to guide self-advertisers, columns that insisted on professional copywriting, and copy for clients who could afford his individual attention. Despite all these various options for aid through print and printers, by the middle 1890s advertisers who could afford it were increasingly advised to turn to the "successful professional ad man." Writing copy, designing layouts, and placing messages became in-
creasingly specialized, and therefore the work of specialists, whether freelance or at advertising agencies. Advertising journals continued to offer advice to nonspecialists through the 1910s, but by that time they had begun to assume that all but the smallest of advertisers had specialized assistance, either in-house or from the outside.

**Freelance and In-House Specialists**

During this transition period, freelance copywriters and artists offered their creative services, interjecting themselves into the advertising process. A rare few, most notably John E. Powers, had such reputations that they prospered at their copywriting for a variety of clients. Other copywriters often promoted themselves aggressively in both paid advertisements and in the columns they wrote for the trade and general presses. Charles Austin Bates and Nathaniel Fowler Jr. were among the most prominent of those freelances who boosted themselves and their profession loudly and immodestly. Bates claimed that “in nine out of ten cases, my work has been very much more productive of results than anything [clients] had previously used. That sounds egotistical, but it isn’t. It’s a fact.” Bates believed that acknowledging his “egotism pure and simple” was the best strategy for building clients’ confidence in his services. In promoting himself he repeatedly described his background, his experience, his facilities, his personnel, and his contacts, as well as his ambition to be the leading “specialist in advertising.”

Freelances without Powers’s, Bates’s, or Fowler’s reputations could most easily acquire accounts that were relatively small and so not attractive to those publications, and the few agencies, willing to provide creative services in the 1880s and 1890s. They could also find work with advertisers unwilling or unable to put a creative specialist on salary or to work with one for an extended length of time. None of these types of clients offered good prospects for the long run; so, except for a relatively few, the vicissitudes of getting and keeping clients, negotiating terms, and consumating payment made steady employment either with advertisers, publishers, or agents more attractive to all concerned. Freelance copywriters and artists who took on space buying for their clients simply joined the ranks of competing advertising agents if they succeeded, as did Bates in the 1890s. Fowler, on the other hand, gave up space buying altogether in order to devote his energies entirely to copywriting; he could command the extra cost and inconvenience to the advertisers. Although some analysts suggested at that time that freelances and advertising agents complemented each others’ work—that copywriters and artists “sold” through their ideas, and the agents conducted “business”—freelance creative
specialists simply could rarely compete with those whose labors appeared to be free, subsumed under the agencies' fees or commissions.

Besides their costs, distance from their clients disadvantaged freelance copywriters. As Claude C. Hopkins's success in the late 1880s in winning the Bissell advertising account from Powers demonstrated, an intimate understanding of a client's markets, products, and marketing problems made for a superior advertising program. By most accounts of the time, the best way to acquire such intimacy came from inside a firm, not by an occasional contact. As American Industries argued in its first issue, "Perhaps the most important qualification for the advertising manager of the live concern—for it is never too much to dignify him by that name—is that he should understand the spirit of the business; understand it as the head of the concern does; understand it as hardly anybody else in the organization does." Because "no two manufacturing, or jobbing, or retailing propositions, are exactly alike ... they cannot be studied from the same point of view, ... regardless of what anybody else is doing." Hence, “the advertising problem connected with a good business is worthy of the closest attention of the brightest mind in the concern.” A few years later, in 1905, another writer indicated that advertising “must be one of the most important branches of the business and just as skilfully [sic] handled as any other, even if the head of the concern himself has to devote part of his time to it.”

In the creation of appropriate advertisements for a firm, the importance of intimacy with the enterprise argued for hiring in-house advertising specialists. As managers replaced owner-managers in the increasingly bureaucratic firms that sponsored national campaigns, advertising responsibilities did fall onto a variety of shoulders, including employees. During this transitional period many firms chose to hire specialized advertising copywriters as well as managers, especially if they placed advertisements directly with periodicals and obtained discounts in lieu of commissions. By 1890, a few stars, such as both John E. Powers and Artemas Ward at times, received lordly incomes when under salary as in-house specialists. As the American Grocer explained then, a "man would have been considered insane five and twenty years ago who would have paid writers of advertisements salaries ranging, as they do now, from $10,000 to $25,000." Yet many firms preferred minimizing their costs and imposed copywriting on someone already employed to do other tasks; this gave the benefits of intimacy but lost the benefits of specialization. Against all these options, having an agency that did all the work in order to compete for billings commissions appeared attractive, especially once agencies began to appreciate the importance of learning about their clients. This alternative minimized
firms' overhead and maximized their flexibility, should they want a change of
tack. When, after 1900, many publishers increasingly refused to give discounts
to any but bona fide agents, in-house copywriters became even less attractive
to most firms.

**Agencies Respond to the Changing Environment**

As major advertisers of branded consumer goods shifted their expenditures
to the published, commissioned media during the 1890s, they vastly expanded
the niche filled by agents, as well as their rewards. Newspapers grew in size,
number, and amount of illustration as the national scope and sheer volume of
advertising expenditures grew. Fueled by past advertising revenues and the
promise of more, magazines by mid-decade provided a whole new level of ac­
cess to consumers' attention at home and at work. Agents stood to prosper if
they could hold on to their decades-old claim on commissions for facilitating
many of these placements. Even though they entered the decade with the ad­
vantage of their experience and contacts with publishers, their privileged
twentieth-century position as advertising authorities was in no way assured.
Agents still operated idiosyncratically at a time when the increasing com­
plexities and magnitude of the communications and marketing networks were
inclining advertisers to reward greater coordination and systematization, not
only between parties, but within the professions serving them. The evolving
business culture of the period, with the decline of owner-managers and the rise
of corporations and their layers of specialists and managers, also favored for­
malized, standardized transactions. How and why advertising agents responded
as they did to these changing circumstances, and their varying successes and
failures in doing so, determined the nature of their profession in the twentieth
century.

In order to take advantage of the opportunities presented by national ad­
vertisers' growing expenditures and win advertisers' patronage as a matter of
authority and routine, agents had to convince advertisers that specialized, in­
dependent agencies optimized their clients' profits. This required both im­
proving their collective reputations for honest dealings and developing serv­
ices that satisfied high-volume advertisers. Advertising practitioners with an
eye to the future encouraged these goals, both for individual businesses and, as
importantly, for their profession. Such long-term thinking, rare before 1890,
became commonplace by the 1910s. Reformers within the field believed that
more efficient and effective services to the advertisers would increase the

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field's viability and public profile. Because the figures who prospered most visibly did follow these principles—such as Ayer, Rowell, and Thompson—their examples as much as their words led the field.

The Commission System

Ironically, the commission system put agencies at risk even as it provided their greatest advantage. On the one hand, other sectors, including advertisers and publishers themselves, calculated how to hold or acquire the large sums that commissions transferred to agencies. On the other, the commission system had accustomed most large advertisers to paying for their advertising space through agents who first deducted their agreed-upon percentage then forwarded the balance to publishers. This provided an established mechanism by which advertising agents could provide clients with additional creative and planning services without charging extra for them, giving them a substantial edge over other contenders for advertisers' patronage. If agencies had had to set up a fee system for their services, the inefficiencies of micronegotiating for each service would likely have made their status as untenable as that of competing fields. (Many agencies moved toward a fee system in the 1970s, but that came after decades of standardized practices, quite unlike the earlier, highly volatile, distrustful environment for negotiating.)

The very advantages that the commission system gave advertising agents brought it under heavy criticism and challenge. Threats to it surfaced whenever advertisers considered buying their own space and claiming commissions from the publishers, instead of going through an independent agent. Although the knowledge and networks that reputable agents had built up offered important benefits, the lure of retaining the publishers' commissions—from 5 to 25 percent—tempted both advertisers and publishers to bypass agents. More large advertisers could have chosen to develop their own internal advertising departments to plan, create, and place advertisements; such practices could have centralized manufacturers' advertising efforts within their own firms, although for smaller firms this would have strained their resources, further exacerbating the concentration of industry. Under such conditions, agents would have held only smaller clients' patronage.

Most publishers held deeply seated objections to the very aspects of commissions that pleased the advertisers; namely, that the agents' compensation diminished the publishers' revenues, rather than increased the advertisers' expenditures. Cyrus Curtis believed that agents served advertisers rather than publishers; therefore, the agents' payments should not derive from publishers' commissions. Despite his influence, however, Curtis could not keep advertis-
ers from agencies. He could only complain about the commission system, lower his commissions to 10 percent for a time, and insist that agencies' commissions not be shared with advertisers as a means of competition between agencies. Like Curtis, publishers generally—along with anyone trying to regularize practices—objected to abuses by which agents rebated portions of their commissions to their clients in order to compete aggressively with other agents. Protests appeared in print, yet because this practice gave the advertiser an edge in negotiating with agents, advertisers did not generally object. Rebates exacerbated negotiations and added to transaction costs and irregularities, but the practice intensified during difficult times, when agencies competed most vigorously. Rebates were widely held in poor repute because they figured in much of the public discussion about abuses of railroad rates during this period. Rebates reminded both agents and publishers that the advertisers' interests drove the system, and would do so unless the two services sectors could coordinate and standardize practices.

Although advertisers used the commission system to their advantage, a deep conflict of interest lay within it and other forms of space brokering, such as Rowell's $100 system, whereby advertisers could get one-inch "cards" placed in one hundred newspapers for $100. Agents justified their compensations by assuring their clients that they placed advertisements efficiently and effectively. But they could, and some did, increase their incomes by placing more advertisements than optimal, by placing advertisements in publications that offered them favorable commissions or discounts, by placing advertisements only in papers in which the agents had purchased space at wholesale, by neglecting to pass on savings from publishers, and so on. Advertisers often suspected their agents of deceit, duplicity, or incompetence and switched when they thought another agent might serve them better, or they quit periodical advertising altogether, as did Charles Pinkham, for a time.

Through all this controversy, advertising agents claimed that the commission system allowed fair value to all parties—publishers, advertisers, agents, and consumers alike—as long as each dealt honestly and forthrightly. Agencies willing and able to absorb the costs of additional services and receive their only compensations from the traditional publishers' commissions gave clients the sense that they were getting something for nothing. Such agents set the pace for the field and warded off the encroachments of others who offered their services to advertisers. Conversely, commissions also added materially to the attractiveness of the national advertisers as clients, because their extensive billings allowed their agents sufficient compensation to take on the additional functions. So despite the commission system's profound problems and often negative impacts on agent/advertiser/publisher relations, it survived, and the
independent advertising agent survived with it, because agents collectively were able to convince advertisers and their managers that their services came honestly and competently, at no extra charge, with a fair profit to all parties.

Serving Advertisers

Charles Pinkham’s 1889 decision not to advertise in periodicals rather than trust an agent of the traditional school who had exploited the conflict-of-interest potential of the commission system reflected this sense that the agent/client relationship was fundamentally cutthroat and unstable. Pinkham returned to newspaper and magazine advertising only when a member of the new generation of advertising men offered not only straightforward dealings but increased services. The new Pinkham campaign began in January 1890, a harbinger of the coming transition. 57

Agencies that grew the most under the new business conditions after 1890 absorbed more and more of the advertisers’ tasks, eventually internalizing and centralizing all advertising activities except what must remain the advertisers’ tasks: initiating a campaign, approving it, and paying for it. These agencies reduced the complexities and costs of the transactions involved in creating and placing advertisements, satisfying advertisers’ objective concerns. Moreover, as advertisers began to expect greater effectiveness in their advertisements’ messages, as well as efficiency in their placement, aggressive agencies satisfied those concerns, too, as the next chapter will show. Agencies’ authority as creative experts grew simply by creating; their own efforts over time conferred expertise, and their self-promotions enhanced it. Agencies that specialized their internal operations paralleled their industrial clients’ trends and helped to convince them of their credibility as modern businesses. As Boston manufacturer C. J. Bailey effused in 1893, “Where is the prosperous business concern of to-day that has not experts in every department? And the greatest of them all is he who writes, or manages, the advertising department. . . . To-day the writing of advertisements is a profession.” According to Bailey, every successful business required professionals, either in-house or in agencies, to create and manage its advertisements. 58

Effective, attractive services had to be client-centered; otherwise clients could just as well seek out harried freelances or inexpensive manuals. Charles Austin Bates insisted, therefore, that a copywriter could service an advertisers’ unique marketing problems only by knowing “enough about the other man’s business to be able to explain it clearly, forcibly, convincingly, to the reader who knows nothing about it.” Moreover, “he must be able to do something for this man’s business that the man cannot do for himself. He must understand
the business, in some measure, as its proprietor understands it, and he must also understand it from the advertising standpoint."\textsuperscript{59}

The major advertisers with large billings that agencies could most profitably serve accepted and rewarded this centralization of crucial functions in agencies most readily when they got assurances of square dealings with reputable, up-to-date firms. Advertisers wanted assurances that their bottom line, their total costs for advertising through agents, was their best possible deal for the most effective campaign. The systemic reforms that George P. Rowell and Frances Wayland Ayer had begun to promote in the 1870s did not make much headway as long as most clients prided themselves on their powers of negotiation. Owner-managers in the nineteenth-century tradition did not see the need of a true agent who made independent judgments on their behalf; nor did they trust agents to do so. Because principals determine what agents' functions they will reward, the Rowell-Ayer proposals for client-centered, nonnegotiating relationships saw limited application until advertisers changed their character and needs in the 1890s. Then advertising agents found it profitable to recognize the priority of advertisers' interests as the source of all the field's revenues.

**Changing Clients**

As leading agents increasingly began to feel the need to improve their field's reputation and professionalism, they recognized that the public identified advertising in general with the advertised businesses. When asked about honest advertising in a 1903 interview, Fowler acknowledged that, "as advertising is a part of business, it will be neither better nor worse, neither more truthful nor less truthful, than is the business of its day. The truthfulness of advertising is on the same level as the business it represents, neither above nor below it."\textsuperscript{60} Consequently the high profiles of patent-medicine and alcohol advertising fueled the public's ambivalence toward advertising; such advertised products sold widely and well, but highly vocal sectors of the nation objected loudly to those successes, especially during the Progressive era. At the same time that the temperance movement was providing arguments against advertising alcohol, the nostrums' exaggerated claims and often dubious ingredients made easy and appropriate targets for journalists, medical doctors, clergy, citizens' groups, and legislators. In 1894, the Harvard psychologist William James wrote a letter to the editor of the *Nation* that protested more eloquently than most against "the medical advertisement abomination." He declared that this "evil is increasing with formidable rapidity," and "the authors of these advertisements should be treated as public enemies and have no mercy shown."\textsuperscript{61}
James's diatribe presaged the Progressive Era's assault on patent medicines and their advertisements, along with other abuses in the consumer marketplace. An essay appearing in two popular magazines of 1906 regretted that “escape from the ingenuity of the modern quack advertiser is impossible.” The author attacked all advertisers, but especially the most “poisonous of all,” which dispensed “falsehoods about pills, [and] distasteful notices about the human physiology” and took “an unfair advantage of human nature.” Although the Pure Food and Drug Act that finally worked its way through Congress in 1906 was largely stripped of its provisions against false advertisements by lobbyists’ efforts, its very existence reflected widespread public reactions against the promotion of patent medicines, reinforced by the American Medical Association's determination to gain control over the pharmaceutical market. As the most visible and most objectionable single category of advertiser (since alcohol advertisements rarely reached into bourgeois homes), the patent-medicine promoters drew negative attention to the entire practice of advertising, and the aspersions cast on them spread to the entire field.

This public outcry reinforced economic and structural incentives for agents to begin changing the mix of their most lucrative accounts in the 1890s, eliminating alcohol and patent-medicine purveyors and adding corporations marketing other consumer products or services nationally. N. W. Ayer & Son gradually censored its clients, starting in 1896 when Ayer and his partner Henry N. McKinney began rejecting liquor accounts and instructed their staff not to solicit or accept new brewery accounts. After 1899, the Ayer agency had no clients selling wines or spirits, and it ceased work on all liquor accounts in 1903. Ayer had great respect for Cyrus K. Curtis and, in his history of the firm, Ralph Hower speculates that Curtis's policies at the *Ladies' Home Journal* reinforced Ayer's own personal opposition to alcohol and support for temperance. In 1900 and 1901, the agency stopped working with two of its major patent-medicine accounts, drastically cutting its revenues and, as Ayer stated several years later, resulting in “a year's business without profit.” Ayer and his partners had decided that because patent-medicine promotion “had finally reached the point at which it became necessary to make or fake miracles to secure commensurate results . . . we thought ourselves better off without it.” As with the open-contract system that was not fully in effect even twenty years after its announcement, Ayer did not rigidly follow his restrictive policy immediately. Nonetheless, as a result of these decisions, the agency's income from patent medicines dropped from 15.01 percent of total revenues to 3.44 percent from 1900 to 1901. The agency ceased soliciting or accepting new nostrum accounts after 1902, and after 1905 altogether ceased placing patent-medicine advertisements. This decision coincided with stepped-up campaigns
against patent medicines in the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Collier's Weekly* and comparable declarations against nostrum advertising by other agencies. Three years after the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, Ayer solicited “no business from manufacturers or dealers in alcoholic beverages, no patent-medicine advertising, no questionable financial or speculative propositions.” As a promotional booklet asserted in 1909, N. W. Ayer & Son had “erected the most remarkable advertising structure that the world has ever seen—ind independent, watchful, alert, competent, honest, reliable.”

Although most other agencies did continue to accept some patent-medicine advertising, the number who did so among the leaders of the profession declined as the public expressions of distress at the alleged panaceas increased. J. Walter Thompson began insisting at least as early as 1887 that the medical journals that he handled were “not the vehicles for quack nostrums, but are the mediums for very many proprietary articles which are prescribed by physicians in their practice.” In 1895 and thereafter for at least a decade, Thompson also promoted his agency by indicating that the “customers I desire . . . [are] legitimate advertisers of the better class—only those in whom the publishers and readers can have confidence that they will fulfill every representation.” In contrast, there were “quacks in advertising as in medicine. We do not want their business at any price.” Of course, as special agent for many magazines well into the 1890s, the Thompson agency continued to profit from innumerable transactions with patent-medicine vendors, even though a good many of them came through other agencies.

Beyond leaders’ recognition of the ethical and publicity merits of moving away from controversial clients, major economic and structural incentives rewarded other changes in clientele. Typically, a plethora of small accounts filled agencies’ portfolios before the middle 1890s—too many to provide with creative services without raising fees or losing profits. Here, again, the interaction between changes in the overall business environment drove and then reinforced changes in advertising practices. Creating ads for a single aggressive corporation could yield billings approaching those of all of the firms it had subsumed in mergers. As corporate advertisers sought creative assistance to help achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency in addressing their marketing problems, they sometimes even expended larger amounts on media buying than the sum of the parts. Agents’ billings per consolidated company certainly increased, yielding directly proportional commissions and paying for additional client-centered services. This cycle clearly made the large national accounts of companies manufacturing consumer goods the most attractive clients. N. W. Ayer & Son, Lord & Thomas, and most others that prospered in the early twentieth century actively solicited such accounts. Smaller agencies

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that could not attract corporate accounts suffered losses in their billings when their former clients disappeared into mergers.

In the 1880s, even before giving up the revenues from their alcohol and patent-medicine accounts, Ayer and McKinney had begun to seek larger accounts. At first they hoped simply to increase their billings overall, but later they realized that reducing their total number of accounts would enable them to serve and attract large clients better. By 1900, N. W. Ayer & Son handled accounts for Hires’ Root Beer, Montgomery Ward’s mail-order company, Mellin’s Baby Food, Burpee Seeds, the N. K. Fairbank Company, which produced many popular household products, eleven Standard Oil subsidiaries, and, most importantly, the National Biscuit Company. The same year that Ayer closed its largest patent-medicine accounts, 1900, the agency also began a self-promotion campaign targeted at the large-scale manufacturing corporations coming to dominate national consumer markets, aiming to convince those manufacturers that their market dominance did not eliminate the need for advertising their goods. Booklets such as “Concerning Staples” argued that manufacturers attempting to sell their merchandise on a large scale required advertising to maintain demand. In the next few years, many such firms began working with the Ayer agency, including the American Tobacco Company, H. J. Heinz, the International Silver Company, the American Sugar Refining Company, the Cadillac Company, and Steinway & Sons. In 1905, the Ayer agency helped the New York Mutual Life Insurance Company through a crisis in its public reputation by “institutional,” or image, advertising. In this case, and starting in 1908 with both the American Telephone and Telegraph Company and Western Union Telegraph Company, the agency began to develop advertising campaigns suited to clients who needed to promote something other than short-term sales.

**Changing Personnel and Structures**

The trend toward managerial specialization that progressed within manufacturing corporations contributed to these advertisers’ interests in new standards for advertising practices. The parties engaged in negotiations between printers/publishers, advertisers, and/or advertising agents were increasingly owner-managers, but managerial employees with very different skills and sources of authority. Reading the character of one’s business rivals with acumen had been a matter of pride, and part of the nineteenth-century repertoire of entrepreneurial abilities when business was conducted on a scale that allowed personal contact and judgment. But the new corporate business environment required bureaucratic protocols and standards; employers relin-
quished ordinary negotiations to employees who might have to conduct them at some distance. In setting up such protocols and standards, advertising specialists inside the firms or in agencies lifted tasks off the shoulders of increasingly specialized managers who did not share the precorporate owner-managers' personal incentives for controlling their firms' advertising; nor did they have the expertise, confidence, or authority to justify increasing expenditures as rational and reasonable, and not just capricious.

In order to provide additional services, growing agencies during this transitional period found that internal specialization into departments was as necessary as divisions of labor were in other areas of business. The traditional nineteenth-century agency had functioned adequately with fewer than ten workers, with owner-managers soliciting as well as servicing accounts. Even in the remarkably large Ayer agency, which had 112 workers in 1890, partners directed every detail. Agents then typically boosted themselves by asserting that they attended to their clients' needs personally. For instance, through at least the last years of the nineteenth century, J. Walter Thompson's copy for his agency was largely written in the first-person singular. Typical statements included, “While magazines are my specialty, I deal in all of the large publications,” and “I . . . give my personal attention to all business of this nature.”

This contrasted with a 1909 book that referred to the agency and its personnel throughout, even in Thompson's signed “Introduction,” by the first-person plural or as “The J. Walter Thompson Company.” This publication also listed the various departments into which the agency had been divided by that time, underlining each of them for emphasis. Similarly, F. Wayland Ayer stated in 1907, then with 238 on staff, that one of his agency's early improvements was to separate important functions: “This, then is one of our oldest ‘standards’ that the man who meets advertisers and the man who meets publishers should work independently of each other.” The agency’s publicity went so far as to scoff at other agencies’ claims of “personal attention and personal service.” This was in 1909, when its fortieth-anniversary promotion argued on behalf of the superiority of division of labor and large organizations. The older and “fallacious” proposition disregarded the important reality that “no man ever lived who is equally good at all kinds of work, and modern advertising embraces many lines of effort.” The best people in any line, Ayer said, were even more likely than the ordinary to neglect areas outside of their expertise.

Agency self-promotions in this new phase instructed advertisers to find the best talent in large, well-coordinated organizations—firms like those the national advertisers themselves ran.

Not all agencies successfully transformed themselves from being owner-managed, relatively undifferentiated enterprises into highly structured, de-

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partmentalized organizations. George Rowell's agency declined at the end of the century because he had not restructured it according to an effective division of labor. Tellingly, he misconstrued his agency's decline by attributing it to his own shift of attention to *Printers' Ink* and the *Directory*. In true nineteenth-century fashion, he summoned up “a homely proverb” in explanation: “He who by the plough would thrive,/Himself must either hold or drive.” Both J. Walter Thompson and F. Wayland Ayer were younger men who built organizations better able to make the transition into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Thompson resisted the assumption of creative services, and his staff's specialties were distributed disproportionately and could not meet the needs of the changing business environment. His agency was consequently in great difficulty when Thompson sold it to Stanley B. Resor and several other members of the firm in 1916. At that time, the agency's two hundred employees, most of them solicitors and clerks, served more than two hundred small accounts. As Resor coarsely recounted, “the copy department consisted of one very deaf former editor of the *Springfield Republican*, one deaf artist and a dumb [speech-impaired] artist.” Resor aggressively reconstructed the agency and its activities, and the J. Walter Thompson Company quickly regained its prominence. N. W. Ayer & Son survived its founder better than the others because Ayer had always sought to build an organization according to what best suited the advertisers; he also was willing to bring in strong partners to share responsibilities, notable among them, McKinney. As a result, his agency led in each of the responses that the advertising field made to the evolution of business during his lifetime, balking only at the final step of modernization, namely, joining with his competitors in a professional association. Ayer fit the stereotype of the nineteenth-century, inner-directed businessman, contrasting sharply with the socially pliant personality more typical of the modern advertising man. As an in-house historian for Ayer, Inc., stated, “Wayland Ayer could just have well been a banker as an advertising man.” His interests were in building a profitable, respectable business, and he had little attachment to any particular internal structure as long as it succeeded at that goal.

**Professional Associations**

Initially, reformers within the ranks of the advertising practitioners wrote and argued as individuals about their field's activities and participants. In the course of defending and promoting their occupation, however, many professionals increasingly worked at institutionalizing it, developing standards, and forming a modern profession. Just as manufacturers had found it advantageous to concentrate their facilities and functions, advertising practitioners and
members of other occupations began to see that some form of concentration could benefit them, too. Outside of production, however, there was little or nothing to gain in the way of economies of scale through horizontal or vertical integration at this stage, and so the models of merger, incorporation, or unionization were not appropriate for these occupational groups. Therefore, in seeking the benefits of cooperation and common standards, most occupational groups, including advertising practitioners, began to move toward professional associations. Whether speaking as individuals or single agencies or in nascent professional organizations, advocates and reformers worked in three directions: urging publishers and fellow practitioners to raise their individual standards for conducting business; encouraging peers to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their services; and justifying their positions within business activities and culture more broadly.

The mix of early associations in this field evinced just how unclear people who worked in advertising were about what constituted an advertising profession. The first associations generally included the advertising managers and special agents of publications, in-house managers employed by manufacturing and other advertisers, and independent advertising agents and their personnel. The most influential of this type of association, by far, was the Sphinx Club of New York, organized in 1896 to promote a “clearer understanding of the problems of advertising and a betterment of advertising” through discussions and the collegiality of its members from advertising institutions across the country. In 1902, it established the National Society for the Investigation and Suppression of Fraudulent Advertising in order to protect the readers of newspapers and magazines and to improve the public’s confidence in advertisements overall. Articles in the New York Times applauded reformist actions by the Sphinx Club, as did others, including Charles Arthur Carlisle of Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company, writing in 1902 for the National Association of Manufacturers in American Industries. He praised its work “against fraudulent advertising,” concluding that the agent who participates in such reform activities will also give “to his client his best talent in the expenditure of an advertising appropriation.” In some cases, membership of “advertising clubs” ranged even farther afield. Some member clubs of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World were “merely town-boosting clubs,” formed to advertise their communities, according to Earnest Calkins. By the 1910s, however, the various associations increasingly included people “engaged in advertising work or in advertising a particular business.” As one of the most aggressively modernizing advertising publications expressed it in 1902, whatever the form, “the club idea in advertising” was a boon to “the development of advertising as a profession.”

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In addition to calling for organized, internal enforcement of honesty in advertising practices, an editorial in *Profitable Advertising* in 1908 suggested that other efforts be made “To Regulate the Experts.” This response to criticisms about advertising experts insisted that solutions would have to affect the field collectively. “It is perhaps the greatest brake on the wheels of genuine advertising that there are in the business so many men who are so poorly equipped to practise it, and so unable to do justice to those who spasmodically employ them.” Although all professions had “incompetents,” other fields had “standards for estimating the attainments of their professors, at least.” The editors lamented that “in advertising there are no standards.”\(^80\) George French, a leader in systematizing advertising practices in the early twentieth century, declared that the “most imminent problem now before the advertising profession is this question of legitimizing and standardizing the work of the advertising man.” He asserted that there had previously been “a sufficient excuse for the chaos that reigned in advertising, in that it was so young a business.” That excuse had become obsolete by 1909, French insisted, and it was time that advertising be “put on a better and more luminous basis.”\(^81\)

Although many reformers in advertising sought the security and distinction of standards for preparation and admission to the profession, as in medicine and law, none of the many associations that advertising practitioners formed ever succeeded at that. Since the 1910s, they have developed mechanisms to recommend and to pressure members to conform to standards of ethics, but they have rarely been able enforce them. The Truth-in-Advertising movement of the 1910s attempted such self-regulation. It began when Samuel C. Dobbs observed that “something is wrong. . . . All advertising is under suspicion, good, bad, and indifferent.” The movement he launched directed its collective efforts at the public’s opinion explicitly in order to forestall regulation. As George French, a vocal participant in the movement, stated in 1915, advertising sought “to relieve itself of a certain odium that [had] accumulated against it as the conscious assistant to unworthy efforts to dupe or defraud the people.” The movement’s self-policing entailed setting up vigilance committees to purge false advertisements and thereby improve consumers’ and state officials’ confidence in what remained.\(^82\) In a range of other settings, various loose coalitions of agencies and individuals worked toward goals analogous to those of other professional associations. Their accomplishments included regularizing and standardizing interactions with publishers and clients, cooperating to achieve political, business, and social goals, and encouraging innovation.\(^83\)

The most influential of all advertising associations, both locally and nationally, began with the formation of the New York City Association of Advertising Agencies in 1911. From its inception, this organization performed
one of the essential functions of an effective professional association, namely, the exclusion of nonspecialists. Soon other cities, notably Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston, organized allied associations, and out of this network came the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) in 1917. Eventually, this organization became the hub for advertising professionals around the nation. The second largest continuing organization is the American Advertising Federation (AAF), formed by the merging in 1967 of the Advertising Federation of America and the Advertising Association of the West, both founded around 1905. The AAF's objectives likewise seek to promote the field and to do so by promoting high professional standards.

By 1917, most advertising professionals who continued to operate had successfully made the transitions in their functions discussed here as well as the alterations in their professional attitudes that are the final subjects of this study. This timing also coincided with several major changes in advertising's relationships with the body politic. These included the beginning of the U.S. government's innovative, and often troubling, promotional efforts to rally the nation to World War I, the passage of the Internal Revenue Act, which accorded advertising costs the status of a fully deductible business expense, and the continuing transition of American businesses into corporate structures.

Agencies Triumph

The standards for an advertising agency's satisfactory service had evolved by 1920 from simply making reasonably trustworthy placements to providing full planning and creative functions. Ayer and his partner Henry McKinney realized during the 1890s that their own interests were served best by generating advertising plans based on clients' individual needs. As Daniel M. Lord, Chicago's leading agent, explained in 1903 to a group of businessmen involved in all aspects of advertising, "the conditions surrounding the business [had] changed" since his first years as an advertising man. The modern advertising agency "is not only a conduit through which business passes from advertiser to newspaper," Lord declared, "but is a developer of business, and through their agency, through their work, a manufacturer is enabled not only to increase his trade and his profit, but not infrequently adopt new methods and more satisfactory methods for developing his business." The benefits of the agency came "not only so far as saving money, but in more efficient work, in choice of media and more efficient copy." So every advertiser could benefit by working with a good agency, even at the cost of the publishers' commissions that would go to compensate the agent.84
In the past, Lord acknowledged, the parties involved in advertising had not been so able to trust each other. But “we have gone through the usual evolution of business—the dishonest advertising agent—the dishonest paper—the dishonest advertisers—and to-day the successes in each of these lines are the ones that are making the money—the ones that are looked up to—the ones that are respected.” Just as Rowell and Ayer had led the field by prospering with their client-centered emphasis on honesty and service, Lord concluded that “as time goes on the honest advertising man is bound to be of more influence, fill a bigger space in the business world and be a factor to reckon with in all successful manufacturing business, or any line that is seeking general publicity. . . . In short, he stands as a leader in the development of business to the advertiser, to the publisher, and last—to his own profit.”

Although Lord overstated his case when he relegated profit to the bottom of his list of priorities, he understood that, by then, successful advertising agencies had to reposition themselves in order to attract the patronage of major national-brand advertisers. A factor in N. W. Ayer & Son’s successful solicitation of the National Biscuit Company account in 1898 was a letter of recommendation from a Chicago publisher to the new corporation’s chairman of the board, Adolphus Green, that praised the agency’s experience and capacities as “the most skilled in handling advertising in all its aspects. And this I know—they’re honest.”

The Ayer agency’s success with this account, generating the famous Uneeda campaign discussed in the next chapter, followed from the close attention paid by McKinney to Green’s requests, the product, and market conditions. Such successes widely taught both practitioners and advertisers that honesty and client-centered service characterized a productive and mutually profitable agent/client relationship; their examples likely had more impact than any reformers’ pronouncements.

The R. J. Reynolds Company account solicited by William M. Armistead for N. W. Ayer & Son became one of the agency’s most lucrative accounts and demonstrated to advertisers and agents alike the merits of a fully coordinated working relationship. Armistead had joined Ayer in 1909, and two years later he decided to approach the tobacco company because he liked its Prince Albert brand. Although Reynolds was not on Armistead’s soliciting list and did not sell outside of the South at that time, the agent “decided the company could be made a national institution by using ‘Prince Albert’ as a spearhead.” When Armistead met with Reynolds, the tobacco man showed him twelve brands owned and promoted by the American Tobacco Company and expressed his regret that “we cannot meet this competition with one brand.” The adman countered with the proposition that marketing twelve brands could be “only one-twelfth as strong as one brand” and then suggested a concentrated
advertising program to promote Prince Albert. Armistead's proposal required that Reynolds stop his practice of working directly with printers, as when, in 1900, he introduced himself to a printer in New York City and negotiated a large contract for chromolithographed signs. After Reynolds agreed to the program, Ayer & Son developed a series of advertisements and submitted them to him. Although Reynolds had been accustomed to having a strong hand in his advertising copy until then, he responded that he "would not change a word for $500." Nor did he ever reject or change any other copy that was submitted to him thereafter. Shortly after the successes of this model campaign, Reynolds determined to put a cigarette on the market and in 1913 launched Camel cigarettes, following an elaborate and expensive marketing and advertising plan from N. W. Ayer & Son. Combining the remarkable successes of both the Prince Albert and the Camel campaigns, R. J. Reynolds moved from fourth to first place among tobacco companies. These campaigns convinced many of the remaining skeptics to allow advertising specialists to provide a full range of marketing services.

Through the first decade of the new century, the printing trades and their advocates continued to defend publishers and job printers against the advertising specialists' growing presumption of priority and overall authority in the field. They often urged printers to win advertisers' patronage by providing creative services rather than leaving them to advertising agents. In 1907, the Printing Art declared that the "interests of the advertiser and printer are so closely interwoven that the printer must always be looking toward a higher efficiency in this product." This statement notwithstanding, by the end of the old century, their position had clearly become defensive. In response to an article in George Rowell's Printers' Ink defaming the compositor, the Inland Printer found it necessary in 1899 to insist upon the importance of printers' most specialized functions; the printer was not "merely . . . a machine to execute the desires of the so-called advertising 'doctor,' 'expert' or 'schoolmaster.'" Printers, said the response in the Inland Printer, resisted such insinuations, which had found a "place in advertising journals and which are calculated to mislead advertisers" into minimizing the importance of the compositor and his expertise. But by 1910, recognizing that the battles for large accounts were effectively over, the Inland Printer urged its readers to work with "advertising men." The best of all possible worlds by then seemed to be compositors' working with agencies, each acknowledging the other's expertise, the former "making artistry from crude material," the latter creating the message and insisting on "classy" typography that maximized impact. Moreover, the "advertising

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agencies are good people to work for. . . . [T]hey are much more amenable to reason, where the question is one of practicality, than is the average customer, who may think he knows something about type, but whose taste is atrocious and whose ego abnormal." The Inland Printer confirmed this approach by reprinting an article from Harper's Weekly concluding that the "advertising solicitor in the main is a good fellow. His object in life is definite, legitimate and altruistic. He wants to succeed, by making others succeed. He may be persistent, unquenchable, unduly enthusiastic and sometimes too pushing. But he means well."\textsuperscript{90} This was a mixed review, certainly, but one resigned to the new order of things.

Even the Curtis Publishing Company had relinquished its claims on the advertisers' primary loyalties in advertising matters by 1913, quite satisfied to collect revenues from advertisers working through agencies that had taken on full creative responsibility:

Some ten years ago certain agencies began to write copy and to prepare illustrations for their clients, because they found that by this means they could more readily induce men who dreaded the technical details, to advertise. To do this they began to find it necessary to inquire into the client's problems, and to find out what his lines of argument were. Then they began to suggest selling arguments. Next they saw ways of correlating other selling plans with the advertising. . . . Thus step by step grew the well-equipped agency of today . . . which is beginning to make the word "advertising agent" a misnomer. For "advertising" is today but one feature of the work of a real agency.

By this time, "the agent is the real advertising man."\textsuperscript{91} According to some reports, 97 percent of all national advertising in 1917 was placed through agencies.\textsuperscript{92} Although advertising agents had not yet gained the full confidence of advertisers or the public, in twenty years, advertisers' interests in centralized and specialized services had pushed the other contenders for "the real advertising man" into more narrowly specialized niches of their own. Out of the fluid conditions and practices of the turn of the century, a new system for creating advertisements had crystallized.

\section*{Specialization as Progress}