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[President Lyndon Johnson signs the Gulf of Tonkin... in Encyclopedia of Intelligence & Counterintelligence](#)

Summary Article: **Journalism**

From *The SAGE Glossary of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*

A profession whose purpose is to communicate information, analysis, commentary, and entertainment to the public. The work carried out by reporters, editors, photographers, videographers, publishers, and producers involves collecting, preparing, and distributing news or current events of public interest via a variety of media. The products of journalism are generally frequently published periodicals including newspapers, consumer and trade magazines, television, radio, pamphlets, newsletters, film, books, and the World Wide Web. While the industry was closely associated with newspapers for centuries, it is now just as commonly associated with the electronic media.

Journalistic censorship involves the restriction, suppression, or altering of writing, speech, ideas, or opinions and can occur either before publication or broadcast (preemptive) or afterward (punitive). Those who seek to censor may do so because they find the words or speech to be morally, politically, or otherwise objectionable or because the revelation of facts would be harmful to a person, company, or other entity. Despite the fact that journalists' rights are protected by the First Amendment, indirect pressure or direct censorship can come from media owners, government agents, and special-interest or lobby groups. Journalists may also engage in self-censorship—either by omission or by evasion—out of fear of external censorship, libel claims, or other negative repercussions.

Journalists gather information from direct observation as well as from sources—people connected to a story, with whom they conduct interviews. Sources can include witnesses of an event, though the term generally implies an authority on a particular subject. To retrieve information from sources, reporters frequently need to promise that their identity will remain confidential, though an overabundance of anonymous sources can lessen a story's credibility. The first known case of a journalist seeking the right to silence occurred in the mid-19th century, when a *New York Herald* reporter refused to reveal a source and was subsequently jailed for contempt of Congress. Reporter's privilege refers to the invocation of the First Amendment on the part of journalists in keeping sources confidential in a court of law. In the 1972 landmark *Branzburg v. Hayes* case, the Supreme Court ruled against the conferral of such special privileges to journalists. The ensuing controversy over the ruling provoked some states to implement shield laws that would protect journalists against being forced to reveal sources. For more information, see Bates (2001), *Branzburg v. Hayes* (1972), and Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) in the bibliography.

See also

Censorship, Print Media, Privileged Conversations, Reporter

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