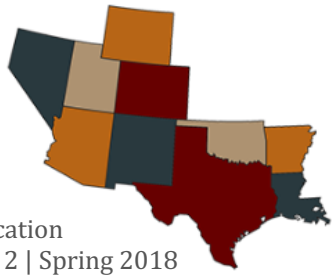
Southwestern Mass Communication Journal

A journal of the Southwest Education Council for Journalism & Mass Communication
ISSN 0891-9186 | Vol. 33, No. 2 | Spring 2018



Carr V. Van Anda and the Advancement Of Science News Coverage

Wafa Unus

Science reporting has a long and rich history in American journalism. While literature is filled with studies on the impact and evolution of science journalism, there remains a gap in the literature where the origins of contemporary science journalism is concerned. In fact, there is no significant investigation into the role in which one of America's premier publications, The New York Times, under its pioneering and somewhat eccentric managing editor, Carr V. Van Anda, pushed forward the development of substantial science reporting. In the early to mid-1900s, Van Anda led The Times in the coverage of a groundbreaking expedition to the North Pole, the introduction of Albert Einstein to the American public, and provided the American people with their first educational resource on atomic energy. Van Anda rose from a small-time typesetter to The Times preeminent managing editor. He filled the post from 1904 to 1932, during the newspaper's most celebrated period. His contributions to the reportage of science in American journalism are unparalleled. Van Anda's personal interest in the sciences deeply impacted his work at The Times and his encouragement of the coverage of sciences spurred continued coverage from The New York Times, one of only nineteen remaining papers with a science section. This study provides the first historical account of Van Anda's contributions to the beginnings of contemporary science journalism.

Suggested citation:
Unus, W. (2018). Carr V. Van Anda and the advancement of science news coverage. *Southwestern Mass Communication Journal, 33*(2). Retrieved from http://swecjmc.wp.txstate.edu.

Carr V. Van Anda and the Advancement Of Science News Coverage

Wafa Unus

Abstract

Science reporting has a long and rich history in American journalism. While literature is filled with studies on the impact and evolution of science journalism, there remains a gap in the literature where the origins of contemporary science journalism is concerned. In fact, there is no significant investigation into the role in which one of America's premier publications, *The New York Times*, under its pioneering and somewhat eccentric managing editor, Carr V. Van Anda, pushed forward the development of substantial science reporting. In the early to mid-1900s, Van Anda led *The Times* in the coverage of a groundbreaking expedition to the North Pole, the introduction of Albert Einstein to the American public, and provided the American people with their first educational resource on atomic energy. Van Anda rose from a small-time typesetter to *The Times* preeminent managing editor. He filled the post from 1904 to 1932, during the newspaper's most celebrated period. His contributions to the reportage of science in American journalism are unparalleled. Van Anda's personal interest in the sciences deeply impacted his work at *The Times* and his encouragement of the coverage of sciences spurred continued coverage from *The New York Times*, one of only nineteen remaining papers with a science section. This study provides the first historical account of Van Anda's contributions to the beginnings of contemporary science journalism.

Science reporting has a long and rich history in American journalism. While literature is filled with studies on the impact and evolution of science journalism, there remains a gap in the literature where the origin of contemporary science journalism is concerned. In fact, there is no significant investigation into the role in which one of America's premier publications, *The New York Times*, under its pioneering and somewhat eccentric managing editor, Carr V. Van Anda, pushed forward substantial science reporting. In the early to mid-1900s, Van Anda led *The Times* in the coverage of a groundbreaking expedition to the North Pole, the introduction of Albert Einstein to the American public, and provided the American people with their first educational resource on atomic energy.

Van Anda rose from a small-time typesetter to *The Times* pre-eminent managing editor. He filled the post from 1904 to 1932, during the newspaper's most celebrated period. His contributions to the reportage of science in American journalism as a whole are unparalleled. Van Anda's personal interest in the sciences deeply impacted his work at *The Times* and his encouragement of the coverage of sciences spurred continued coverage from *The New York Times*, one of only nineteen remaining papers with a science section (Morrison, 2013). This study provides the first historical account of Van Anda's contributions to the beginnings of contemporary science journalism.

Studying Science Journalisms Origins, Not Only Impact

Scholars have provided significant investigation into the impact of science reporting and science journalism on the perceptions of the public. Contemporary discussion on the evolution of science journalism is plenty. However, a search of available literature on the history and origins of contemporary science journalism produces limited results. Academic research in the area of science journalism largely consists of case studies or general studies on the challenges of reporting science. Study into the origins of contemporary science reporting are virtually nonexistent, and where they do occur, they are mostly portions of larger studies, of which they serve as background or basic contextual information. Of those, few make significant mention of Carr V. Van Anda or even *The New York Times*.

The lack of historical research into the origins of contemporary science journalism, and of the figures who ushered it into major newspapers, suggests a significant gap in the literature. This gap in the literature is of scholarly interest considering the significant general interest in the field of science communication. In fact, communication-related books used as educational guides for both scientists and journalists lack chapters on the history of the field (Krieghbaum, 1967).The early to mid-1900s brought with it the proliferation of flight, electricity, atomic weapons and eventual space travel. It would then seem that greater scholarly attention might be placed on the historiography of science journalism during this period in particular (Weigold, 2001, p. 164-194). After all, at the turn of the century, giants in the fields of journalism and science were working toward developing a relationship between the two. In the 1920s, a leader in the newspaper business, E.W. Scripps, alongside biologist William E. Ritter, launched a news agency called Science Service suggesting that "drama lurks in every test tube" (Weigold, 2001). According to Shortland, following Sputnik, a new level of interest in science education emerged, and newspapers showed greater interest in science in general (Shortland, et al. 1991). The

emergence of modern science reporting faced a great deal of imbalance, but leaders in journalism and in the scientific community valued the importance of a science-minded public and pushed for ways to translate science into accessible information for the American people. Not only was the start of the 20th century a significant time for technological innovation and for the development of newspapers of substance and record, but it also gave rise to a unique partnership between the journalism and science communities.

Investigation into the accuracy of science journalism are also readily available. Both scholarly and professional research seeks to identify the accuracy of science news articles and if pursuing science reporting is an efficient use of already limited newsroom resources. In many cases, concern over waning interest, budgetary restrictions and potential inaccuracies in reporting have contributed to fewer publications producing original science reporting. While today's news organizations are less likely to allocate large amounts of space to science news, and many have merged science sections with technology and health in an effort to cut costs, there remains some vested interest in the pursuit of science journalism. This, however, is truer for national publications for a variety of reasons, than it is for smaller local publications (Friedman, 1986). For example, *The New York Times* is one of only nineteen remaining papers with a dedicated science section (Morrison, 2013b). This can be attributed to the education level of the typical *New York Times* reader. Publications like the *Times*, "cater to an audience interested in reading about some advances in science and medicine that might be ignored by the editors of the *New York Daily News*" (Burkett, 1986).

The way in which science reporters operate has been studied as well. Those who report on science often lack any type of scientific expertise but learn about their subject matter as they report on it. The vast majority of journalists covering science are educated in journalism, and not in a field of science (Hartz & Chappell, 1997). However, those who are trained as science reporters, and thus have a better education in science, lack status in most news organizations (Glynn, 1998, p. 69-74). The science education of editors also plays a factor. Of significance is Dunwoody's assessment of how reporters at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting cover advanced scientific topics. Dunwoody discovered that science writers, depending on their editor's commitment to scientific accuracy, often disagreed with their editor's priorities in covering science largely due to the fact that few editors had any vested interest or expertise in science journalism themselves (Dennis & McCartney, 1979, p. 10-11). He further suggests that the commitment to the publication of the scientific content can often times outweigh the ability of the journalist to communicate scientific information.

This study focuses on Carr V. Van Anda, a managing editor with a particular interest in science. However, to better understand the historical context in which Van Anda operated, the researcher will first provide an overview of the popularization of science and the emergence science journalism in the late 1800s to mid-1900s. This historical context provides a basic overview of a shift in American culture and in the field of journalism. Situated in the midst of this revolutionary time is Van Anda. While other leaders in journalism, like Scripps, are rightfully credited for their contributions to the development of "science journalism" as a beat, figures like Van Anda were critical to setting the standard of such reporting and subsequently demonstrating its value to the American public. In fact, Van Anda is credited with making coverage of the AAAS meetings a staple in American newspapers following Pulitzer Prize winning coverage on

atomic energy, under his management. Existing literature further supports the notion that investigating the origins of contemporary science journalism holds significance in understanding science journalism as a whole.

Literature on Van Anda as a significant figure in the development of science journalism is scarce. No comprehensive academic studies on Van Anda exist. Of the literature available on Van Anda, he is often relegated to indexes and footnotes. Several sources on journalism history mention Van Anda and his contributions to science journalism. In most cases, the information is limited. Van Anda is only mentioned on two pages of *The History of The New York Times: 1851-1921* written by Elmer Davis in 1921. However, a later historical reference of the publication, *The Story of the New York Times: 1851-1951* by Meyer Berger is perhaps the most comprehensive compilation of the contributions of Van Anda, covering 19 pages. The formative work of Jean Folkerts in *Voices of a Nation: A History of Mass Media in the United States*, mentions Van Anda's contributions in only two paragraphs. The third edition of *The Press and America* by Edwin Emery offers only eight pages devoted to Van Anda. Joseph P. McKerns *Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism* published in 1989 mentions Van Anda on four pages. *American Journalism: History, Principles, Practices* by David Sloan and Lisa Mullikin Parcell, another significant text in the documentation of journalism history, makes no mention of Van Anda at all. Only one comprehensive publication exclusively on Carr Van Anda is available. It was published in 1933, before his death, and is not widely available (Fine, 1933). Most coverage of Van Anda is restricted to a brief history of his life. However, if the information about Van Anda that most of these sources document, most are related to his scientific interest, prowess, and contributions to the pursuit of comprehensive science journalism.

Popularization of Science in America at the Turn of the Century

Despite notable gains in the field during the turn of the century, science straddled the fence of popular interest. Amateur enthusiasts sought a voice in the field, and trained scientists guarded what they felt was their rightful territory (Bowler & Morus, 2005, p. 381). Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* sparked heated debate in the scientific community, drawing significant attention not only to Darwin's work but to scientific study itself. As a result of the attention Darwin's study received, public curiosity in scientific inquiry increased. Subsequently, new scientific jargon entered the public sphere including the popular "survival of the fittest." (Mayr, 1991, p. 381). Enclaves of scientific research had spurred the growth of elite scientific societies at the end of the 19th century including the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1848), the American Chemical Society (1876), the American Physical Society and American Astronomical Society (1899) and the National Academy of Sciences (1863) (McClellan & Dorn, 2006).

While interest in science was growing, America did not have a sizable or reliable infrastructure by which to share scientific gains. Early American publications, like *Scientific American*, established in 1845 as a four-page newspaper struggled to find their footing. *Popular Science Monthly*, established in 1915 struggled as well, particularly after the Second World War. Eventually it found its footing with a less technical audience, rebranding itself as the publication *Popular Science*. Both of these publications originated as dry and science-heavy sources, sometimes reprinting content from science research periodicals published in England. However,

they found success in America by aiming their content at the masses (Bowler & Morus, 2005, p. 383).

Alongside a growing interest in scientific research, inventions, and innovations, the late nineteenth century brought with it an interest in science fiction. H.G. Wells *War of the Worlds* (1895) and Jules Verne's 2000 Leagues Under the Sea (1870) had a great deal of influence on the scientific curiosity. Additionally, attention was brought to the political and social influence that scientific gains could have on the future (Bowler & Morus, 2005, p. 381). Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* was one of the first popular science fiction books to describe actual scientific tools, methods, and measures. This degree of detail contributed to the education of basic scientific concepts and terms to the masses. However, a more comprehensive education, made available to Americans was around the corner. In 1846, the Smithsonian Institute was established. The financial backing was bequeathed by a British citizen and Congress decided to to establish the Smithsonian as a resource for scientific knowledge and general repository of scientific exhibitions (Dupree, 1986). The awarding of the first Nobel Peace Prize in 1901 added to public interest in science and the newsworthiness of the field.

With increased interest in scientific inquiry and a new dedication to scientific research in America, scientists gained both notoriety and fought to retain control over their field. Scientific research was shrouded in mystery during World War I when government secrecy began to erode at the public understanding of the uses and purposes of research. Additionally, complex scientific theories, like Einstein's "Theory of Relativity", developed between 1907 and 1915. The theory sparked debate in the scientific community that cast doubt on the definitive truth of science in the eyes of the lay public. The general public began to see a side of science that was both extremely complex, but also seems irrelevant to the average persons daily life. As a result, support of and interest in scientific research and hard sciences took another hit in the public sphere (Tobey, 1971, p. 6).

As amateur interest in the field increased, professional scientists became more isolated and protective of their work, and as a result, public interest in scientific discoveries began to wain (Tobey, 1971, p. 3). Instead, it was replaced with an interest in the practical application of science. New advances, such as electricity and automotive technologies provided an interest in the applicability of science (Taylor, 1911). American's could interact with the fruits of scientific research labor. Between 1920 and 1927, 300 industrial laboratories in America increased to one thousand (Tobey, 1971, p. 3).

Improvements to hygiene as a result of the study of germs (which contributed to higher quality of life in the early 20th century) garnered interest from the public. Science was practical again and improving lives, if not saving them all together. Scientists, and an emerging field of engineers, in new bustling laboratories, were producing innovating products for the masses. Public interest and support of science that had a more immediate impact on daily life saw significant gains. A dichotomy emerged between the intellectualism of scientific research and the benefit of public support of scientific endeavors. Andrew Ede and Lesley B. Cormack identified the distinction between scientists as intellectuals and scientists as technicians: "Too far to the technical side and a person will appear to be an artisan and lose their status as an intellectual. Too far to the

intellectual side, and a person will have trouble finding support because they have little to offer potential patrons" (Ede & Cormack, 2004, p. 9).

However, global conflict continued to tip the balance between a public that saw science and scientists as providers of life-improving innovation and scientists as weapon builders. After all, research on atomic energy would later show its potential to both sustain and destroy cities. The popularization of science in newspapers and other publications waffled. In the historiography of science journalism then, it is significant to consider the context in which that sharing takes place. Context is often a product of a publication's leadership.

The struggles of the popularization of science, according to Roger Cooter and Stephen Pumfrey, are a result of this dichotomy, pushed science into an independent sphere, separate from the conversations of daily life (Cooter & Pumfrey, 1994, p. 240). Status, protected by scientists, meant that there was a distinct expert and amateur culture. Likewise, there was a suggestion that much science was only able to be understood and interacted with by the former. More so, Cooter and Pumfrey argue that race, gender, and culture played a role in the popularization of science (Cooter & Pumfrey, 1994, p. 244). Mainstream publications, then, "watered down" science so that it was easy for the public to understand, consume and develop interest. Furthermore, communicating science was complicated by the imbalanced relationship between the elite scientist and the amateur public (Cooter & Pumfrey, 1994, p. 251, 254).

The shifts between public devotion to the products of scientific inquiry and disinterest in the complexities of scientific theory, complicated the ability for publications to effectively communicate science. However, the world was rapidly changing in the early 1900s and technological advances were largely responsible. Basic education and information for the masses was necessary. Likewise, the proliferation of weapons spurred by global warfare meant that an uneducated public would have little ability to contribute to discussions on government decisions regarding the militaristic use of those scientific innovations, something both scientists and journalists found concerning.

Scripps, Ritter and the Science Service

Edward W Scripps, a journalist and William E. Ritter, a biologist sought to establish a science news organization in 1919, following the end of the First World War. The goal of the news organization was to fill a gap between scientific information and the public. The service would provide accurate science news that was not only engaging, but that was accessible to the populous. Their joint dedication to educating the people and to the field of science was pursued with the hope that the public would not only begin to appreciate science better but that they would start to think scientifically, by habit. Because political discourse was increasingly science-related, Scripps and Ritter believed it was important for the people to understand enough science to allow them to function as well-informed and engaged citizens. With the support of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Academy of Science, the National Research Council and leaders in the field of journalism, the Science Service was established in 1921, two years after Scripps and Ritter joined forces. While Scripps, Ritter and the Science Service are recognized for their contributions to that area of reporting, a lesser-

known individual, at the same time, was deep in the trenches of producing and promoting science in what would become one of the world's leading newspapers of record.

Van Anda: The Little Known "Living Lesson to Newspaper Men"

At the age of six Carr V. Van Anda started his own newspaper, and by the age of ten, he constructed his own printing press from the discarded pieces of a local newspaper establishment. He later purchased a small printing press that he worked after school. He expanded his small venture through the accusation of local printing jobs and advertising. His profits went to feeding his obsession with the sciences, particularly chemistry and physics (Fine, 1933b). At the age of sixteen, Van Anda studied mathematics and physics at Ohio University for two years. He maintained his interest in newspapers while a student and would work at local papers. After two years of formal education, Van Anda left Ohio University. He worked briefly at the *Augelize Republic*, which was followed by a job as a typesetter at *The Cleveland Herald* (Fine, 1933, p. 23). *The Baltimore Sun* offered Van Anda a job as the night editor in 1886. He was only twenty-two. As he advanced in the newspaper business, he fed his insatiable interest in science, learning about the latest research and studying hard science in his free time. Van Anda became known as a newsman with a gift in scientific inquiry, and this only grew during his time at *The Sun* (Fine, 1933c). He left the paper after two years. At the age of twenty-four, Van Anda began work for *The New York Sun* as a reporter on March 12th, 1988, where he stayed for sixteen years. Charles P. Cooper, the managing editor of *The Sun* during Van Anda's years with the publication said of Van Anda, "He might well go down in history as a living lesson to newspaper men" (Cooper, n.d.).

In 1904, Van Anda moved to *The New York Times* after Adolph S. Ochs hired him as the managing editor (Lee, 1923). Van Anda, well-known within the industry, had built a reputation for himself as a serious newsman and Ochs was looking to turn *The Times* into a serious paper. For Ochs, *The New York Times* was, "All the news that's fit to print" (Lee, 1923). Van Anda's private motto was: "All the news is fit to print – if it's handled properly" (Fine, 1933c). Pursuit of the news was a scientific undertaking for Van Anda (Fine, 1933d). Edward Klauber, who worked under Van Anda during his tenure at *The New York Times,* described Van Anda's methods:

> Mr. Van Anda has, more than anyone I ever knew in the business, a legitimate news getting ingenuity. He did not adopt any yellow press or tabloid tricks; he never sent any one to craw into a bathroom window or hide in an elevator shaft, but he was smart enough in getting a legitimate piece of news. He regarded it as an intellectual problem. If you had a story of an elopement or a marriage for example, and everyone was trying to get more facts about it, this was the way Mr. Van Anda went at it: 'Let's see,' he would say, 'they started from this point. Well, if they went by train, then they must be at this village. If by car, they took the Boston Post Road and then this side street. But in that case the justice of the peace would be in bed; and in the other state it is hard to get married without a witness. So they must be here…' And the managing editor would map out the problem and was usually right! As a piece of mental gymnastics he loved to trace down a piece of news in that fashion. I never saw anyone else do it so skillfully - - it was really uncanny. (Klauber, n.d.)

Ochs said of Van Anda: “To Mr. Carr V. Van Anda, whose exceptional newspaper experience, genius for news gathering and marvelous appreciation of news values and fidelity to fairness and thoroughness, knowing no friend or foe when presiding over the news pages of *The Times*, the greatest measure of credit is due to the high reputation it has attained, his vigilance and faithfulness to the very highest and best traditions of newspaper making him a tower of strength to the organization” (Ochs, 1921). Former news director of *The Times*, Dr. Allen Sinclair Will said of Van Anda, “He believed that it was not sufficient to merely obtain the news from every quarter of the world, but that it should be displayed with grasp, fullness, and accuracy. His great talents, so copiously poured out for the benefit of *The Times* and its readers, were highly effective in giving the paper the national and international standing as a news medium it has today” (Will, n.d.). Despite those him who knew him touting his journalism acumen, Van Anda kept such a low profile that when one reporter who worked for *The Times* met Van Anda outside of the office and learned that he too worked for *The Times*, the reporter asked what Van Anda did ("Carr Van Anda of N.Y. Times Fame is Dead", 1945).

A Plane, a Train, and the Sinking Titanic

The early 1900s was ripe for the emergence of science journalism. The 20th century brought with it several significant advances in technology. Thomas Edison’s moving pictures and the use of electricity were reaching new levels. The Wright Brothers began their exploration of the air. The “unsinkable” Titanic had sunk. Industrialized America was taking shape and with it came breakthroughs in everything from transportation to communication (Tompkins, 1996). America’s entrance into the First World War in 1917 energized the early 1900s as a particularly newsworthy time, particularly so for scientific interest due to the large-scale use of aviation, heavy machinery, and poison gas. With the 1920s came the introduction of the national broadcasting network and the first radio station.

By 1910, Van Anda’s *New York Times* provided more space for science news than any other New York newspaper (Berger, 1951a). Science journalism grew significantly under his leadership. His expertise in mathematics and his love for astronomy and physics allowed him to handle the coverage with extreme care and dedication to detail (Berger, 1951, 250-260). From the start of his tenure at the paper, Van Anda pursued science stories in innovative and creative ways. He invested a copious time and resources to ensuring that his publication was at the forefront of science news coverage. In 1909 *The Times* spearheaded coverage of the discovery of the North Pole (“How Peary Reached,” 1909). Van Anda’s initiative in the coverage of what, at the time, was an enormous undertaking, greatly helped establish the readership and reputation of *The New York Times*. Competing papers simply copied the *Times*’ stories. Van Anda had maneuvered exclusive coverage. It also forced one of journalism’s first copyright lawsuits. The *Times* sued the rival newspaper. Although the *Times* lost the lawsuit, the proceedings ultimately solidified its position as a “first-hand paper of information, and not merely a recorder of facts garnered by others. While outside the scope of this study, Van Anda’s courtroom battle over copyright in this case is ripe with scholarly opportunity.

Not only did Van Anda utilize his own resource, he capitalized on opportunities presented by his competition. A spectacular feat of ingenuity engineered by Van Anda resulted in the largest coverage of an event in *The New York Times* history up to that point. In 1910, *The New York*

World offered a $10,000 prize for the first flight from Albany to New York down the Hudson River, a feat that had never been done before. When Glenn H. Curtiss took the challenge but repeatedly faced mechanical problems, Van Anda capitalized. He hired a train and filled it with reporters and photographers. The train departed each time Curtiss attempted flight. If he returned, so too did the train. When Curtiss made it to Manhattan, not only had *The Times* procured coverage of his entire journey, Van Anda was there to meet Curtiss personally. As a result, *The Times* scooped *The World* on their own story, and devoted six pages of photos and articles to the event ("Curtiss Flies, Albany to New York, 1910). Up to that time, that was the most space the *Times* had devoted to a single event. Beyond the publicity this garnered for *The Times* itself, Van Anda had made a point through his method of coverage. He had invested a significant amount of time, money, and resources to the coverage of the story. The attention Van Anda paid to the Curtiss flight confirmed his dedication to the coverage of science, and his attendance emphasized his personal dedication.

On April 15th, 1912, the "unsinkable" Titanic was sinking, and Van Anda was one of the few in the industry who willingly accepted the possibility. Upon receiving the telegraph that reported the Titanic had hit an iceberg and was seeking immediate assistance, Van Anda organized his staff and assigned specific tasks. One reporter looked up the features of the ship, another secured and examined the passenger lists. A third reporter was asked to write a description of the Titanic as it appeared before it left for its voyage as well as write about the potential dangers of its path through Northern waters. His independent research of the ship's schematics exposed the potential for disaster. Van Anda gained access to the Titanic's blueprints and poured over them, hypothesizing potential scenarios and carefully gauging their likelihood based on incoming information.

Initially, White Star Line issued statements denying the disaster had occurred, even calling Van Anda and telling him that there was no danger. Van Anda wired the Cape Race wireless operator and found out if the Titanic had communicated anything more since the previous night. When Van Anda confirmed that there had not been any communication, he confronted White Star Line who was forced into a formal admission that the Titanic was in fact sinking. Van Anda's understanding of technology, not only in its abilities but its limitations, allowed him to make an educated determination that had the Titanic not been sinking, it would have used the wireless to continue communication. He deduced that the silence meant the worst had happened. Just hours after news broke of the calamity *The New York Times* printed pages of description on the Titanic disaster. No other paper provided such detailed coverage. In fact, New York's, *The Evening Sun* published their front page story under the headline, "All Saved from after Collision" ("All saved From Titanic After Collision" 1912).

Van Anda's methods of reporting scientific and his personal understanding and dedication to science aided his understanding of otherwise "unbelievable" situations and circumstances, his interest in the practical application of tools birthed from scientific innovation kept *The New York Times*, consistently, one step ahead of its competition.

Unknown to anyone else, Van Anda had arranged an interview by wireless message with the wireless operator of the Carpathia, even before the ship had docked. While other papers were struggling to pass police barricade, Van Anda had already gotten one reporter on the ship with

Marconi himself and orchestrated an exclusive with the wireless operator. He used new technology, and the scientist behind it, to get the scoop. When Titanic survivors returned to New York City, Van Anda had rented an entire floor of a nearby hotel to most efficiently cover their arrival and collect accounts. He installed what was then considered an "unprecedented four phone lines," to ensure the news was recorded at optimal speeds, leading to a complete coverage of the sinking of the Titanic (Fine, 1993e).

Van Anda's coverage of the Titanic from the first moments of its distress signal to the arrival of its survivors was groundbreaking. It was considered by those at *The Times,* its competitors and even newspapers internationally, as some of the finest reporting that had ever been done (Berger, 1951b). The story was a turning point for *The Times,* and it was significant enough to "secure claim to a position of preeminence among American newspapers that it would never relinquish." (Butler, 2012). Van Anda gained more clout within the industry, even being considered the father of modern disaster coverage (Sullivan, 2012b). *The Times* unparalleled coverage of the disaster remains the primary source for documentation of the sinking of the Titanic.

Correcting a Genius and Explaining Atomic Energy

Years later, Van Anda introduced America to Einstein's theories ("Eisntein Expounds the theory." 1919). Van Anda was following the work of Einstein well before the world became fascinated with his genius. When the Royal Astronomical Society began setting up equipment in northern Brazil and off the west coast of Africa to test Einstein's theories; Van Anda was carefully following the developments. Few people were aware of Einstein and even fewer were able to understand and translate his equations. *Times* newsman Henry Charles Crouch was tasked with covering the testing of Einstein's theories. He struggled with translating the science into layman's terms. He asked scientist Arthur Stanley Eddington to translate it for a newspaper audience.

When Van Anda received the completed piece, he congratulated Crouch on a job well done and copyrighted the piece (Berger, 1951c). His commitment to science allowed him to recognize the newsworthiness of the findings when others were entirely unaware of Einstein's work. Einstein's theories were confirmed resulting in the revision of the Newtonian theory of gravitation and *The Times* story was published; America was formally introduced to Albert Einstein. *The New York Times* would later feature a front-page article written by Einstein himself, yet another example of Van Anda and The Times push of science journalism in the early 1900s ("Einstein Expounds His new theory," 1929). In fact, Van Anda was so well versed with the theories of Einstein that he had identified an error in one of his equations. Christian Gauss, Dean of Princeton at the time of Einstein's residency there wrote in a letter of the time when a translation of one of Einstein's lectures was given to Van Anda:

> In another case of Mr. Van Anda's extraordinary scholarship. It occurred in connection with Professor Einstein's first lecture here at the time when relativity was only understood by Mr. Einstein and by the Deity. When, as I recall it, we sent up the translation of Professor Einstein's second and third lecture, by which time he had already lost even the professorial mathematicians who were here to hear him, The Times called me before going to press to ask whether there was not some mistake in the figures. I called up Professor Adams who had translated the lectures for us and abstracted them for

> the press and told him that Mr. Van Anda was of the opinion that one of the equations was incorrect. Adams looked up his notes and said, 'No. That is what Einstein said.' I told Mr. Adams that I took Mr. Van Anda very seriously. Adams worked at the matter a little, called me back and said 'I am going to call Dr. Einstein. I think perhaps Van Anda is right.' When Einstein was consulted, he was very much surprised, looked up the matter himself and then said, 'Yes, Mr. Van Anda is right. I made a slip in transcribing the equation on the board. (Gauss, 1934)

By 1922 *The New York Times* far exceeded its competing papers in its' production of science journalism. Van Anda sent reporter Alva Johnston to cover a three-day science meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts ("3,000 Scientists to Meet: They Will Discuss Latest Discoveries at Boston Conferences," 1922). He selected Johnston because he felt Johnston could properly deliver scientific concepts to the readership. Johnston sent condensed material back to *The Times* but soon realized that Van Anda was willing to dedicate as much space necessary to the coverage of science. He then sent detailed accounts of studies including what became the first newspaper account explaining atomic energy to the masses ("Scientists Witness Smash-up of Atom," 1992). The importance of this preliminary introduction to nuclear energy would be seen in coming decades. The overwhelmingly positive response to the coverage of the conference not only lead to a Pulitzer for Johnston but it also led to the continued yearly coverage of the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science by major news organizations. Prior to this, the meeting and its discussions were little known by the general public. Van Anda's influence was not merely in the comprehensive managing of stories that captivated the American public. His choices as managing editor of one of the most influential newspapers of the time laid out a path for science.

Conclusion

This preliminary investigation into the significance of Carr V. Van Anda as a pioneer in the field of science journalism highlights both the lack of literature surrounding the history of science journalism and the limited investigation into a prominent figure in the development of modern journalism practice. While major events in the history of science are told through various mediums, sometimes with great dramatic effect, little is discussed in the way of where contemporary science journalism began. Because there is a general consensus that science journalism has some impact on public perception of the importance of scientific endeavors, a scholarly understanding of the history, and the prominent figures within that history, is undoubtedly of importance. By understanding this history, scholars of journalism, and practitioners within the field can better understand the evolution of the field and the methods by which it saw some of its greater success.

Van Anda himself is a figure worth investigating. His background and personality made him a unique figure in the field. His dedication to the sciences informed the methods by which he pursued journalism and his eclectic wealth of knowledge allowed him to view the changing world with an open and intrigued mind, one that resulted in not only the coverage of ideas and events that the world had yet to understand the significance but the critical analysis of the ones they did. His dedication to providing space for science journalism in *The New York Times* set a standard and example for newspapers around the world. The vigorous and creative ways in which *The Times* covered major science stories led the newspaper into new territories, and

introduced the American public, and at times the world, to new and unfathomed scientific breakthroughs.

Of practical significance, as well, is Van Anda's encouragement to reporters to provide the most complete and well-vetted articles on science news. His support for science journalism and the reporters who covered scientific topics serves as an example for contemporary practice. His personal interest in science and as a result, his unyielding commitment to research and scientific inquiry provide a blueprint for modern publications in their reportage of science. Further research into the history of science journalism might include a detailed investigation into the methods by which managing editors and journalists, like Van Anda and his team at *The New York Times*, handled coverage of major scientific discoveries, some of which have been mentioned in this work.

Increased knowledge and understanding of science serves as a catalyst for increased support of scientific endeavors. The ability for the public to access scientific information through mediums designed to speak to the masses provides a significant opportunity to establish interest in contemporary issues related to complex scientific concepts. The time in which Van Anda created a science culture within a news organization was not unlike today. Scientific discoveries in the 21st century proliferate at an increasingly rapid rate. There is arguably a great deal more groundbreaking science today but far less commitment to science journalism. Science journalism in major newspapers is limited, and few newsrooms invest in coverage of complex scientific concepts thus robbing readership of a wealth of relevant and newsworthy material. An in-depth investigation of the origins of science journalism that builds upon the introduction provided in this paper would do well to establishing a formidable look at lessons to be learned from an era of American history that saw great strides in scientific innovation reflected in America's emerging powerhouse journalistic entities.

References

"3,000 Scientists to Meet: They Will Discuss Latest Discoveries at Boston Conferences." The New York Times, December 25, 1922, 12.

"All Saved From Titanic after Collision." (1912) .The Evening Sun, April 15, 1912.

“Carr Van Anda of N.Y. Times Fame is Dead.” (1945, January 29). Chicago Tribune, p. 15.

Curtiss Flies, Albany to New York, At the Speed of 54 Miles Per Hour. (1910, May 30). The New York Times, pp. 1-6.

"Einstein Explains His New Discoveries." (1929). the New York Times, February 03, 1929, 1.

"How Peary Reached the North Pole: The Conquest of the North Pole." The New York Times, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 66-71.

“Einstein Expounds His New Theory: It Discards Absolute Time and Space, Recognizing 1951), 250-260.

"Scientists Witness Smash-up of Atoms: View Extraordinary Photographs of Crash of Projectiles at 20,000 Miles an Hour." The New York Times, December 28, 1922, 4.

A. Hunter Dupree, (2004). Science in the Federal Government: A History of Policies and Activities.

Andrew Ede & Lesley B. Cormack, A History of Science in Society: From Philosophy to Utility (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004).

Barnett Fine, (1933). *A Giant of the Press,* (New York: Editor & Publisher Co. 1933, 21-22).

Barnett Fine, (1933). *A Giant of the Press,* (New York: Editor & Publisher Co. 1933, 25).

Barnett Fine, (1933). *A Giant of the Press*, (New York: Editor & Publisher Co., 1933, 55-60).

Burkett, W. (1986). News reporting: Science Medicine and High Technology. Ames: Iowa State.

Christopher Sullivan, (1923). “Covering the Titanic, 100 years ago; The Story of the Massive Ocean.

Liner's Sinking Demanded - and Established – A New Kind of Journalism.” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr 15, 2012, 2012. City Pub. Co., 1923), 387.

Daniel Butler, (2012) *Unsinkable: The Full Story of the RMS Titanic*. (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2012).

Dennis, E., & J. McCartney. (1979). Science Journalists on Metropolitan Dailies. *Journal of Environmental Education*. 10:10-11.

Edwin E. Olsson, (1927). "On Translating Science," The Science News-Letter 11, No. 317 (May 7, 1927): 289, Retrieved on http://www.jstor.org/stable/3902321.

Ernst Mayr, (1991). One Long Argument: Charles Darwin and the Genesis of Modern Evolutionary Thought. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991. 93, 1-8.

Frederick Winslow Taylor, (1911). The Principles of Scientific Management, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1911).

Friedman, S.M. (1986). The Journalist's World. In Scientists and Journalists: Reporting Science As News, edited by S.M. Friedman, S. Dunwoody and C.L. Rogers, 17-41. New York Free Press.

Glynn, C.J. (1998). Science reporters and their editors judge "sensationnalism." Newspaper.

Hartz, J., & H. Chappell. (1997). World's apart: How distance between science and journalism Threatens America's future. Nashville, T.N.: First Amendment Center

Interview with Charles P. Cooper [Interview by B. Fine]. (n.d.).

Interview with Edward Klauber [Interview by B. Fine]. (n.d.).

Interview with Allen Sinclair Will [Interview by B. Fine]. (n.d.).

James E. McClellan, III & Harold Dorn, (2006) .Science and Technology in World History: An Introduction. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

James Melvin Lee, (1923). *History of American Journalism*. New, rev ed. Garden City, N.Y.: Garden. City Pub. Co., 1923, 387.

Jonathan R. Topsham, (2009). "Introduction," Isis 100, No. 2 (Jun. 2009): 312, Retrieved on http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/599551. Ibid., 314.

Krieghbaum, H. (1967). Science and the mass media. New York: New York University Press.

Letter, Christian Gauss to Russell Owen, November 13, 1934, New York Times Archives. Longman.

Meyer Berger, (1951). *The Story of the New York Times, 1851-1951*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951, 201.

Ochs, A. S. (1921, August 21). A 25th Anniversary. The New York Times, p. 29.

Paul Heyer, (1995). *Titanic Legacy: Disaster as Media Event and Myth*. Westport, CT: Praeger,

1995), 79-89.

Peter J. Bowler, & Iwan Rhys Morus, (2005). Making Modern Science: *A Historical Survey Chicago*: The University of Chicago Press, 2005, 381.

Peter J. Bowler, and Iwan Rhys Morus, (2005). Making Modern Science: *A Historical Survey Chicago*: The University of Chicago Press, 2005, 383.

Roger Cooter, and Stephen Pumfrey, (1994). "Separate Spheres and Public Places: Reflections on the History of Science Popularization and Science in Popular Culture," History of Science 32, (1994): 240-254.

Ronald C. Tobey, (1971). The American Ideology of National Science, 1919-1930 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971).

Sara Morrison, (2013). Hard Numbers 2013 Columbia Journalism Review Retrieved on http://www.cjr.org/currents/hard_numbers_jf2013.php. September 12, 1909. "Time Square, Airplane Bulletin," Photo.

Shortland, M., & J. Gregory. (1991), communicating science: A Handbook. New York: University Press.
"Time Square, Airplane Bulletin," Photo.

Vincent Tompkins, (1996). American Decades 1900-1909. Vol. 1. (Detroit: Gale, 1996).

Weigold, M. F. (2001). Communicating science: A review of the literature. Science Communication 23:164-194.