Thank the Editors for the Buy-ological Urge! 
American Magazines, Advertising and the 
Promotion of the Consumer Culture, 1920-1980 

Richard W. Pollay, University of British Columbia
Thank our editors for this BUYOLOGICAL URGE!

It's the different way Better Homes & Gardens is edited that makes its readers the BUY-minded millions they are.

BH&G devotes every page and paragraph to news, notes and practical suggestions on things to try—things to BUY—to make living more fun, life more complete.

That's why BH&G's 3¾-million families are those with BUY on their minds—with the yen and the wherewithal to act on that BUYological urge.

That's why you know you picked the right book, when this big-time salesman is selling your brand.

Serving 3¾-million families—screened for the BUY ON THEIR MINDS!
THANK THE EDITORS FOR THE BUOLOGICAL URGE!

AMERICAN MAGAZINES, ADVERTISING AND


Richard W. Pollay
Curator, History of Advertising Archives
University of British Columbia

ABSTRACT

Throughout the twentieth century America's largest selling magazines have courted potential advertisers in the professional advertising media. These advertisements to advertisers were studied for information regarding the audiences reached by the magazines, the editorial and promotional tactics used, and evidence of credibility, influence, and impact upon their audiences. The study concludes that magazines worked hand in glove with the advertisers. Far from being reluctant partners to the purveyors of progress, the magazines were enthusiastic merchandisers of materialism and its manners.

INTRODUCTION

American magazines underwent a dramatic transformation during the progressive era, as Wilson (1983) argues very convincingly. This is perhaps not surprising, as much of the social fabric was changing with the emergence of greater literacy, urbanization, advertising agencies, the craft of copywriting, and a host of new consumer goods. But the character of the magazine in the gilded age as a literary communication from elites to other "gentle readers" seems quite removed, nay aloof, from the more pedestrian domestic and commercial functions adopted in the emergent consumer culture. The nature of the contrast is summarized in Exhibit 1.

It is clear that at least some publishers and editors redirected their attention and intentions to the advertisers' interests at an early stage. For example, Curtis Publishing, later to become known for pioneering market research techniques, was promising its readers in 1886 that they could have confidence in its advertisers. They refused the more notorious of the patent medicine promoters to give this claim credibility. By the 1890s the Curtis publications, most notably the Ladies' Home Journal, were "stripping" the editorial matter, running the continuations of stories in single columns on back pages forcing the reader through the bulk of advertising. During this decade they were also designing ads and selling them to manufacturers, predating the copywriting and art direction function to be exercised later by agencies. Wilson's study of four different kinds of magazines suggests that Curtis was not alone in seeing the merits of serving potential advertisers.

But it seems unlikely that the evolution of magazines was completed by 1920, even though by that time magazines were providing audited circulation data and other market research information to advertisers. They were also spending money on advertisements for themselves to potential advertisers within the pages of Advertising Age, Advertising Agency, Advertising and Selling, and Printer's
EXHIBIT 1

THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN MAGAZINES
1880-1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GILDED AGE</th>
<th>PROGRESSIVE ERA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editors</td>
<td>Elite, Ivy League</td>
<td>Immigrants, Midwesterners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Passive, Accepting</td>
<td>Aggressive, Soliciting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
<td>Domestic Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Literary</td>
<td>Colloquial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Heroes&quot;</td>
<td>Intellectual Leaders</td>
<td>Celebrities, &quot;Producers&quot; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>&quot;Consumers&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>&quot;Mass&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Elites</td>
<td>National Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Gentle Readers&quot;</td>
<td>Consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation</td>
<td>Private, Controlled</td>
<td>Public, Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Privileged</td>
<td>Exaggerated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Sources</td>
<td>Subscriptions</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modest</td>
<td>Generous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ink. This paper reports the results of a study of such advertisements in order to explore the evolution of the partnership between publishers and their advertisers since the progressive era.

The character of these advertisements as evidence deserves some comment. Clearly these documents, like all advertising, are subject to hyperbole and puffery. Grandiose claims on subjective matters made by these magazines must be taken with a grain of salt 'at the least. But more specific information can be accepted as credible. Audience statistics, information about merchandising programs, dealer support, new editorial formats, etc., must have been verifiable to satisfy the media buyers of both advertising agencies and clients. The data regarding audiences could have been validated with information from independent services like the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

The need for hard information to sell the expensive advertising space of the largest magazines was clearly felt early in the century. American Weekly, a magazine distributed as a supplement to Sunday newspapers with a circulation in the 1920's of over five million families a week felt it offered advertisers a "trans-continental steamroller that crushes market resistance." Nonetheless, its price of $15,000 per page required it to battle its way onto every media list for advertisers. "It secures no contracts through 'fair haired' influence or kindly favor. $15,000 a page puts it out of the 'let's-help-old-Bill's-boy' and 'we-might-as-well-throw-a-little-business-to-Charlie' class. The third assistant space buyer and the sales manager's stenographer can't influence its selection. It's a think-before-you-look rate, a stop-look-and-listen rate -- a rate that provokes verification and invites comparisons. Every order must submit to an inquisition of facts and figures; every contract first runs a gamut of quizzes and questions." (1)

PROGRAMS OF PARTNERSHIP

Serving Up Segments

Home and family service magazines dominated the industry for decades. Their focus on domestic affairs is exemplified by the best known Better Homes and Gardens, Good Housekeeping, Ladies' Home Journal, McCall's, and Women's Home Companion. These magazines touched upon all of the myriad aspects of everyday life. Better Homes and Gardens, in a contest challenging advertising and agency people to articulate the magazine's character, noted that it is a mass circulation magazine, but also could be perceived as a building, home furnishings, or food magazine. They could have also called attention to the editorial and advertising material providing instruction regarding fashion, parenting, marital relations, entertaining, holiday customs, and social climbing. Even the apparently obvious perception of the magazine as primarily a woman's magazine might be naive, for they claimed in the 1950s that nearly half of its readers were men, presumably husbands. (2)

Because they represent both purchasing power and potential style leaders, the affluent have always been a target for advertisers and thus magazines promised delivery of affluent audiences. Cosmopolitan, at the time a fiction magazine with a million and a half circulation, ran campaigns in several trade journals of the 1920s identifying itself as a "class" magazine. These ads presented an abundance of information as to the prosperity and property of their audience, admitting that "Cosmopolitan has found it mighty profitable to cultivate these free spenders." (3)
The trend towards greater specificity of demographic information regarding magazine audiences is not the only way in which magazines meet the needs of marketers. Large magazines, meeting the competition of special interest magazines, worked increasingly to deliver specific audience segments to advertisers. Look pioneered the regional edition concept for these large magazines in 1959 and by 1963 offered 52 different geographic zones that could be purchased independently. These regional editions provided advertisers with even greater flexibility in planning local promotions, permitting sales campaigns in key-prospect areas, facilitating new product introductions with regional sequential roll-outs and product copy testing in locally confined zones. During this same decade, publishers organized their printing and distribution, with the assistance of computers, so that they could offer advertisers not only regions but particular groupings of customers. Reader's Digest, for example, offered a special educational edition that would reach 400,000 teenagers and 18,000 high school faculty members. (8)

This development of special editions during the 1960's was by no means the first or an isolated instance of the magazine's working hand in glove with advertisers to increase advertising effectiveness. Through a variety of programmes, magazines have assembled and distributed data, created and placed point of purchase displays enlisting the cooperation of dealers and distributors, and generally assumed a significant responsibility for the merchandizing efforts. The sale of their audience to advertisers seems far more than the delivery of an incidental by-product of their editorial efforts.

Market Research

Throughout the century, publishers have been providing advertisers with a wealth of information about their circulation and the marketplace in general. This effort was also pioneered by the Curtis Publishing Company, with its creation in 1914 of a statistical bureau for commercial research, an effort which fathered the modern field of market research. This department estimated market potentials for various regions in the country and informed advertisers of the characteristics of the two million weekly subscribers to Saturday Evening Post and the 1.65 million Ladies' Home Journal subscribers. Many magazines followed suit. For example, Cosmopolitan offered to help advertisers reach the national consumer market adequately, systematically, and at a reasonable cost by their accumulated data on the "favoured class" which "in social life, sets the standards of complete living", and from whom the advertiser can expect "intelligent reading." (9)

In the 1930s True Story, already acknowledged in advertising circles as a source of authentic economic information on wage earners, began to report some sociological data. Based upon a mail survey of their subscribers, they published a book "How to Get People Excited" which had already been requested by more than 2,500 advertising men while the campaign was still in effect. This was consistent with their mission stated a few years later in this "obligation and pledge: to furnish to industry a means of communication with wage-earning America through magazines which enjoy reader confidence, loyalty and respect, to maintain our service to industry as the most authoritative private source of knowledge and understanding of these people upon whom industry -- and indeed,
our entire economic system as we presently know it -- must depend." The
supplying by magazines of information for marketers probably pinnacled in the
Farm Journal's 1944 publication of a 48 volume set of information on each and
every one of the 3,072 counties in the U.S. Published co-operatively with the
U.S. Department of Commerce and using forms supplied by them, this compendium
provided information not only on the population and its occupation, age, and
ethnic background, but also detailed information on housing, manufacturing,
agriculture, and wholesale and retail trade. Although magazines can today
supply media buyers with data tapes dense with information, this publication
presents an awesome amount of effort without the assistance of computers. (10)

Magazines also supplied manufacturers with other kinds of publications which
condensed information about consumer interests or successful strategies. For
example, in the 1950s McCall's organized at least two conventions which led to
such publications. A "Soft Goods Supermarket Clinic" assembled manufacturers
and advertising people and led to a digest available free for the asking to this
professional audience. In another effort, 100 women selected for their
demonstrated interest in remodelling and redecorating, their ability to
communicate, and balanced by state and income characteristics to provide a good
national cross-section, were assembled in Washington, D.C. for the first annual
Congress on Better Living. Stenographers recorded the 3-day event, including
the round table discussions of these participants, and these transcripts
together with completed questionnaires were analyzed and a final report made
available to members of the home furnishings industry for guidance in
manufacturing and marketing. (11)

Magazine Merchandising

Throughout the century these magazines have engaged in a diverse set of
activities which seem quite tangential to their editorial mission, but highly
relevant to their function as advertising vehicles, and indicative of their
perception of being what Colliers once called "partners in progress" with
marketers. Early in the century the Curtis Publishing Company, publishers of
Ladies' Home Journal and Saturday Evening Post among other titles, proudly
proclaimed its censorship of advertisements. This practice, imitated by other
magazines who could afford the luxury, involved primarily the rejection of ads
by fly-by-night operators and other scoundrels, the rejection of ads for certain
unappealing products, and the screening of ad copy for unfair tactics. With the
elimination of ads for potato bug eradicators (a mail order con of rural
subscribers at the turn of the century), chewing tobacco, and ads of notorious
and outrageous exaggeration, the publisher strove to "protect each reader, thus
securing his confidence ...(and) protecting everybody against unfair tactics,
knocking, untruth, or exaggeration". This strategy permitted magazines to offer
advertisers not only a placement where they would be freer from competition, but
also a magazine which would have the increased good-will and trust of its
readership. (12)

Occasionally extraordinary efforts were expended toward establishing
credibility. For example, McCall's initiated a laundry project in 1934 which
involved in 14 months of study by over 5,000 workers researching the kinds of
soap, equipment and problems of shrinking, ironing, fading, wrinkling,
bleaching, and drying of laundry materials. All of this effort was to make
McCall's a homemaking authority by providing housewives with a volume of
information far in excess of what they could acquire in a lifetime of trial and
error. During the same time McCall's was attempting to establish itself as a style authority with a travelling theatre. This truck trailer travelled from department store to department store across the country, showing a 40-minute film and providing an environment to host prospective subscribers. This, the magazine felt, was a "fresh, original approach to the selling of style and circulation, a better way to merchandise a great magazine to readers and retailers throughout the country". This reach for the credibility of excellence and authority is most recently manifested by the 1970s sponsorship by the Ladies' Home Journal of Teacher of the Year awards given at the White House, a Women's Superstar Sports Championships on television, and a nationally televised honouring of eight Women of the Year. (13)

In the 1950s magazine publishers initiated much merchandising activity, largely through provision of point-of-purchase advertising materials supplied to cooperating dealers. One of the best known of these efforts was the "As advertised in LIFE" campaign. For example in 1951, 933 drug stores ran store-wide promotions of this type, and advertisers bought nearly two million pieces of point-of-purchase material for use in other drug stores. At the same time, the promotion department of Women's Home Companion offered food marketers a merchandising kit that would provide dealers with four different display cards suggesting complete meals, "take-one" recipe booklets, shopping lists to complete the recipes and shelf markers to call consumers' attention to specific ingredients throughout the store. In 1957, the Saturday Evening Post ran a food store spectacular for 35 participating products. This effort involved distribution of 115,000 display kits to 68,000 members of the National Association of Retail Grocers, 1,500,000 newspaper lines and 500 million radio and television impressions in an all-out tie-in advertising campaign that produced a reported $50 million increase in store sales. (14)

By the 1970s consumer magazines had executives with focused responsibility for this type of marketing and merchandising. The drug and toiletries manager of Women's Day magazine created a "spring bouquet of beauty promotion" in 1975 that attracted 3,221 stores and 51 drug store chains. These participating dealers received point of sale materials, display idea sheets, and ad mats to aid in advertising the products in local newspapers. Also offered were similar promotions run co-operatively with other associations such as an annual "Dream Kitchen Contest" with the American Institute of Kitchen Dealers and the National Appliance Dealers Association. (15)

Not to be outdone, Family Circle offered a "Good Looks/Good Health Ideas" program annually. It promised not only its audience of over 17 million women who shop in supermarkets for health and beauty aids, but a special editorial and advertising section and editorial support consisting of in-depth articles on health, beauty, and grooming. The magazine also provided personalized shelf-talkers, displays and posters for some 8,000 supermarkets, all at no extra cost to the advertiser. In addition, advertisers would be featured in Advanced News, a Family Circle merchandising paper circulated to 2,200 store managers, chain executives and toiletries merchandisers. (16)

Perhaps the most famous of all of the efforts of magazines to assist advertisers in their merchandising is the series of public labels provided by Good Housekeeping. Starting in the early 1920s, the magazine created a testing laboratory, apparently unbiased, scientific and practical. After being tested with varying degrees of thoroughness, products could acquire the now-obscure
Bureau or Institute seals, or the more well-known and persistent "Guaranteed as Advertised" emblem. This guarantee offered replacement or refund of money for products that were defective or not as advertised. Since the cost of most consumer goods is modest, this guarantee could be offered with little worry of financial consequences and little testing was required. Advertisers adhering to a minimum of honesty, willing to provide replacements or underwrite refunds and, of course, willing to advertise in Good Housekeeping could easily obtain this endorsement. Thus, this guarantee was simultaneously insubstantial and meaningful; insubstantial in monetary terms, but meaningful in its reassurance to consumers. The endorsement by the magazine, lending its own credibility to that of the manufacturer, produced a totally unambiguous identification of certain products, and their attendant consumer behaviors, as elements of "good housekeeping," improving even a perfect product. In the late 1930's, when all three public labels were still in use, the magazine asserted that "they are American 'buy-words' - signposts that guide millions of women to satisfying purchases." (17)

ASSESSING THE MAGAZINE MARKETING

This sampling of merchandising programmes, coupled with the obvious solicitation of advertisers to their pages, amply demonstrates that the editors were far from reluctant sharers of space with the advertising community. This is perhaps not surprising when we recognize that advertising revenue typically makes up the vast majority of the total revenue for the magazine enterprise. It does suggest, however, that magazines must be viewed as propagandists with a purpose more pedestrian than might otherwise seem. It is simplistic and naive to view magazines as a commercial literary form, supplying editorial content as its product to attract readers, the apparent consumers. This view sees advertising as simply a by-product endured out of economic necessity to subsidize the editorial intention, however noble or humble.

It seems more appropriate to recognize the business of magazine publishing as delivering the audience as its product to advertisers as its consumers. The editorial process is merely the mechanism by which the product, the audience, is produced. The essential editorial objective is the capturing of a particular audience, ideally large, affluent, and sharing a common interest as consumers. The subscription revenue is almost incidental income. The point of much magazine subscription pricing is to "qualify" readers as genuine and seriously interested so that they can be more convincingly sold to potential advertisers. Even that necessity is now disappearing, as more and more magazines are given away through controlled distribution methods that also qualify the readership.

The Power of Print

If market influence in congruence with its advertisers is the magazine's function in the twentieth century, we need to ask about its prospects for effectiveness. What are the characteristics of this media that might make it effective in today's noisy communication environment or in yesterday's less electrified one?

"Magazines are surely the most selective focusing instruments in the whole world of communications. They select definite areas of concern and interest. Therefore, they select audiences... Magazines reach particular levels of education, lifestyle, and responsiveness. They reach eyes that are searching out their content -- inquisitively. Contemplative minds, motivated enough to purchase the medium. They present ideas that can be discussed, passed
along. Reviewed and re-reviewed. At leisure. At the pace of comprehension. At the depth of curiosity's demand." (18)

Good Housekeeping, in a contemporary campaign widely reprinted, offered some of these thoughts about a magazine's tremendous audience of one:

"The act of reading is essentially a process of thinking... It is a concentratively individual act. An involvement. The reader makes the printed communication happen... releases the magic that causes words on a page to leap into living thoughts, ideas, emotions... It is addressed to and received by individuals, one at a time - each in the splendid solitude of his or her own mind. There, the silent language of print can whisper, rage, implore, accuse, burst into song, explode into revelation, stab the conscience. Or work a healing faith." (19)

With the technical capacity for high resolution color photography and other items of graphic excellence, and with the freedom to make the verbal message as brief or as long as felt appropriate, the magazine is often a favourite medium for copywriters. As expressed by the senior vice-president and executive creative director of N.W. Ayer, "A magazine gives you the freedom to tell your story the way it needs to be told. With one picture or with a thousand words. You can startle without the fear of being too loud. You can educate without having to speak at high speed. You can whisper without the fear of not being heard. Because the only limit is your taste, your insight, you imagination." (20)

Small wonder, then, that magazine advertising has successfully grown, and grown on a per capita basis, even if not as a percentage of total advertising, despite the additions of new electronic media. Clearly, radio and television did earn audiences and advertising revenue of their own, but competing against radio was relatively easy. For example, of the 128 minor features one maker felt might potentially determine the selection decision of an automobile, only one of those is best presented by radio -- the tone of the horn. Television networks attracted a mass market and as a result caused the most grief to these magazines with a lack of demographic focus. Magazines serving special interests continued to flourish and have proliferated in the 1970s. While television tempted its viewing audience heavy in high school dropouts, magazines sold to the better educated, the higher income, and the more influential.

Audiences of this character were of course of great interest to advertisers. In 1925 Good Housekeeping sold nearly 1,700 pages to 723 different advertisers, 286 of which used Good Housekeeping exclusively. By 1923 the readers of McCall's alone would buy 300,000 new automobiles, and spend over $1 million per week on sugar. Over 20 million meals a day were served on "McCall's Street" that year. By 1955 Life was able to deliver 26,450,000 as a total audience from a circulation of slightly over 5.6 million copies. This attracted 4,398 pages of advertising at a cost to advertisers of over $121 million dollars. That year the ten largest national magazines sold a total of over 22,000 pages to advertisers for an average of almost $18,000 a page for a total revenue of approximately $390 million. With Reader's Digest beginning to accept advertising space that year, it quickly took over as the largest circulation advertising medium. By 1963 it had a circulation of over 13,750,000 copies per issue and each advertising page was looked at more than 60 million times, according to Politz, reaching one out of every four families in America. The 1964 Politz magazine study showed McCall's, Good Housekeeping, and Ladies' Home Journal reached a collective audience of over 48 million women and teenagers.
TABLE 1

GREAT AMERICAN BUSINESS LEADERS WHO HAVE CONSISTENTLY USED THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>No. of Years (as of 1946)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastman Kodak Company</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mennen Company, The</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parker Pen Company, The</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-phy-lac-tic Brush Company</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remington Rand, Inc.</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colgate-Palmolive-Peet Company</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Bros. Mfg. Co.</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florsheim Shoe Company, The</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Mill, Inc.</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodyear Tire &amp; Rubber Co., Inc.</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proctor &amp; Gamble Company, The</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Corporation of America</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Safety Razor Corporation</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadillac Motor Car Division</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Motors Corporation</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Foods Corporation</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nash-Kelvinator Corporation</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldsmobile Division</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Motors Corporation</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packard Motor Car Co.</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker Oats Co., The</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elgin National Watch Co.</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodrich Company, The B.F.</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudential Insurance Company of America, The</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, Inc.</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Playing Card Company, The</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluett, Peabody &amp; Co., Inc.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swift &amp; Company</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol-Myers Company</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stein and Company, A.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Post ad, Printer's Ink, 3/1/46
In 1963 a campaign by General Electric using only 4 Curtis magazines, with the Saturday Evening Post as the "spearhead", produced over 475 million actual ads in print, and more than 1,350,000,000 adult impressions on an audience that included over 63% of all college educated breadwinners. (21)

The backbone of this advertising is the persistent and patient presence of America's blue chip companies. In 1946, the Saturday Evening Post was able to list 349 such companies who had advertised consistently along the "Post Road" from 10 to 47 years. The success of the firms listed in Table 1 suggests the rewards accruing to those with the greatest persistence. These advertisers are in these pages only because it works, or as the Post says, "It gets to the heart of America." (22)

Involvement and Impact

Even given the persuasive intent of editors and advertisers, and the mass market that they reach, the magazines might be poorly read or disbelieved, although this would be strange for both loyal subscribers and those buying single issues. The primary evidence that the audience is involved is, of course, the sales success of the advertisers. American Motors, for example, testified to the Readers' Digest delivery of over a half a million prospects to their showrooms in 1964. Publishers also noted the extent to which their articles were reprinted, quoted, discussed, preached in pulpits, and even occasionally written into the congressional record. The world's largest investment house, Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Beane was "struck by an unexpected avalanche of letters, wires and phone calls from bank presidents, corporation executives, educators, and thousands of others," as a consequence of a two-part article in the Saturday Evening Post. The normally sagacious firm was amazed at the response for they had "no idea The Post was so widely read and so well respected." (23)

Cards and letters from readers have long been used by magazine editors as evidence of the responsiveness and involvement of their readers. Without any advertising inducement at all, Women's Day readers wrote more than 600,000 letters to the editorial offices in 1947. At the same time, women were sending in nickles and dimes for 283,000 pamphlets and leaflets from the Women's Home Companion. Their packaged programme materials for women's clubs was subscribed to by 1,288 such clubs. A series of public service articles over a two year period attracted some 795,000 reprint requests. More recently Family Circle, with an average audience of over 13 million readers per issue, received over 2 million letters in 1972. A notice of less than 2 inches of space in the March 1973 issue of Family Circle led to 500,000 requests to the American Petroleum Institute for their booklet on efficient energy use. Two years later, an article on free samples and booklets led to almost 2 million mailed responses. (24)

THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

In order to clearly see the maturation process of magazines and their increasing participation in the propaganda for products, we can recapitulate and while so doing let the editors speak for themselves. In the early part of the century the essential problem for publishers was the establishment of credibility of the advertisers, which they attempted by a selectivity which at least pruned out the most obvious rascals and scoundrels. In addition, these editors explicitly
instructed their readership to trust and heed the advertisers. As the editors of Home Life boasted, "Our readers have been educated to ask for advertised articles and to believe in the responsibility of our advertisers!" (25)

The publishers soon realized that they were, at least in some cases, selling both the homes of today and tomorrow. In 1926, for example, Better Homes and Gardens noted that their teen audience was already deciding how to build, landscape and furnish their future homes, and the editors volunteered to "make a place in those homes for your products." This was accomplished in part by establishing research organizations or other feedback mechanisms which would permit the publisher to more precisely understand the consuming public. They then adapted and coordinated the editorial and advertising materials to channel this interest.

"Sixteen hundred enthusiastic 'reader-editors' are helping us determine the Companion's editorial contents and service. Sixteen hundred typical homemakers in as many American communities - telling us what foods they eat, what shoes and corsets they wear, what home equipment they own, or want to own ... exchanging experience for advice.

Never has a magazine discussed feminine interests so intimately over the national back fence. Never were editorial pages so closely allied with industry in feeding women's material wants."

This type of information was then utilized to offer manufacturers a "line of least resistance -- an equipment article clears the way for an improved refrigerator ... a fashion page breaks down opposition to a current style ... a single recipe opens up the field for a new food -- a brand selling makes gain on gain! Such things are accomplished by women's magazines all the time." (26)

With WWII involving so many men on battle fronts, women's role as planner, purchaser and manager of the purse strings increased substantially. So too did the importance of women's magazines. Testimonials to Better Homes and Gardens from readers thanked them for the many ways in which the magazine helped them anticipate the changes that war time living made necessary. This training apparently made even traditional husbands confident that they were "leaving the purse strings in able hands. They know that years of training have prepared the American women for the biggest, toughest buying job of this, or any other generation. She is aware that the jungle is getting thicker, and that she needs more help. But she is also assured that such advice and guidance will be forthcoming from her women's service magazines." "With the extra demands of war work, with growing shortages of help and equipment, homemaking must be carefully studied, planned and simplified. Fortunately for your hurried, harried wife, women's service magazines like the Companion shortcut her tasks, organize her day, give her the very homemaking information she needs." (27)

As the end of the war approached, magazines and advertisers joined in the general concern of how to realign the economy to peace time without reversion to the depression experience. The specific mission of advertisers, expressed with fighting fervor by the editors of True Story, was to make customers, for customers make jobs for servicemen. "This is no community chest, give-the-boys-a-break proposition. It is a serious problem of survival. Ten million servicemen must be absorbed back into industry. The specific job of your advertising is to so burn your brand name into their minds and hearts so that after the war they will buy new jobs into being." (28)
By the early 1950s, this process was so complete it could be taken for granted. It seemed to be so much a part of human nature that magazines vied to claim credit for having created this "Buyological urge." The millions of entranced consumers were an answer to an advertiser's dream. "They immediately slip into the kind of buying mood that advertisers dream about. This buying mood is created by the very nature of Better Homes and Gardens. Every page of every issue features practical suggestions on how readers can make their homes and their lives better and more enjoyable." (32)

CONCLUSION

The magazines enthusiastically joined the persuasion effort of advertisers. They instructed readers to believe and heed advertisers, gave their own endorsements, engineered the editorial material to increase advertising effectiveness, and designed and executed supplemental merchandising programmes of substantial magnitude. This needs, however, to be interpreted carefully. It is not accurate to take these magazines to task for having been traitorous to the trust given them by their enormous audiences. The interesting fact is not that the largest selling magazines turned mercenary, but that the magazines so replete with propaganda on behalf of materialism and its manners were the largest sellers. Thus it is more accurate to perceive the magazines, however mercenary their motivation, as serving some interest of the public.

"To put it simply, people have faith in the (Reader's) Digest... (and) this faith...over and over again leads people to action." "Never underestimate the power of a woman! Nor the power of a magazine women believe in!" It remains for us now to identify those values which have been reinforced by this advertising. Clearly advertising presents persuasive images that define "good housekeeping" and "the good life." To the extent they are successful, we are seduced and emulate this ideal. But whether business, through its persuasion apparatus of advertising, is leading Americans down the primrose path, is behind us and pushing is a moot point. More serious than this question of causality is the question of quo vadis - where are we heading? What are the values most prevalent in the purposively persuasive portion of our communication - our commercial culture's propaganda to itself. (33) There is nothing so powerful as an idea, especially if persuasively presented to a wide audience. Magazine advertising does this and "the right idea can change the everyday living habits of millions of families. And that's the kind of ideas Better Homes and Gardens (and similar magazines) specializes in...." (33)

Given the potential social impact of these ideas, touching all aspects of home and family life, it behooves us to ask what social behaviours and roles are displayed and what norms and values are characteristic of magazine advertising.
Thank our editors for this BUYOLOGICAL URGE!

It's the different way Better Homes & Gardens is edited that makes its readers the BUY-minded millions they are.

BH&G devotes every page and paragraph to news, notes and practical suggestions on things to try—things to BUY—to make living more fun, life more complete.

That's why BH&G's 3½-million families are those with BUY on their minds—with the yen and the wherewithal to act on that BUYological urge.

That's why you know you picked the right book, when this big-time salesman is selling your brand.

Serving 3½-million families—screened for the BUY ON THEIR MINDS!
NOTES

1. **Printer's Ink (PI)** 10/13/27, pp. 102-103 (American Weekly).


7. **AA**, 1/16/56, p. 5; 1/2/56, p. 5 (This Week); **PI**, 2/4/55, p. 21 (Saturday Evening Post).


11. **PI**, 2/5/54 (McCall's).


17. **AA**, 11/29/37, p. 8 (Good Housekeeping); **PI**, 3/19/43, pp. 12-13 (Good Housekeeping).


20. **AA**, 10/26/81 (Magazine Publisher's Assoc.).

21. **A&S**, 4/21/26, p. 65 (Good Housekeeping); **PI**, 1/25/23, pp. 162-163 (McCall's); **AA**, 2/20/56, p. 79 (Life); **AA**, 3/63; 1/65 (McCall's); **PI**, 3/1/63, pp. 2-3 (Curtis-GE).
22. PI, 3/1/46 (Saturday Evening Post).

23. PI, 10/2/64, pp. 2-3 (Reader's Digest); A&S, 8/48, p. 9 (Saturday Evening Post).

24. PI, 10/17/47, p. 86 (Woman's Day); A&S, 7/48; 10/48-12/48 (Woman's Home Companion); AA, 3/26/73, p. 3; 5/19/75, p. 13; 6/16/75, p. 13 (Family Circle).

25. PI, 11/22/14 (Home Life).

26. A&S, 5/26/26, p. 57 (Better Homes and Gardens); PI, 11/18/37, pp. 58-59 (Woman's Home Companion); PI, 10/21/37, pp. 58-59 (Woman's Home Companion).


28. AA, 12/6/43, p. 3 (True Story).

29. PI, 9/5/47, inside front cover; 10/3/47, inside front cover; AA, 2/2/46, p. 26 (McCall's).

30. PI, 1/4/46, p. 15 (Better Homes and Gardens); PI, 3/1/46, p. 17 (Better Homes and Gardens).


33. AA, 1/2/56 (Reader's Digest); PI, 2/19/43, p. 73 (Ladies' Home Journal); PI, 11/22/57, p. 49 (Better Homes and Gardens).