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## The Evolution of Cartoons Throughout the History of Mass Communication

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### Abstract

This article intends to introduce the topic of Six Information Revolutions based on Irving Fang's views in the book *A History of Mass Communications*. In a short review, the history of the emergence of caricature and cartoon is discussed and then the functions and importance of political cartoons in the mass media are examined. This assertion is generally agreed upon that the main place and origin of cartoons is in the press and political cartoons have a long life along with the print media. Relying on this fact, the evolution of political cartoons, especially in the period of the second information revolution, i.e. the Printing Revolution and afterward in the third revolution, i.e. the Mass Media Revolution, has been scrutinized. With the development of the printing industry and publishing of newspapers in high circulation, cartoons became available to the public as an important part of the traditional print media; quickly gained popularity and profound influence, and provided a new outlet for information. And it became a new way of launching socio-political debates. Finally, in a holistic approach, today's pluralized media landscape and the challenges facing editorial cartoonists in the new media space have been analyzed.

**Keywords:** cartoon, caricature, political cartoon, editorial cartoon, information revolutions, Irving Fang, mass media, communication, journalism.

### 1. Introduction

In 1997, Communication researcher Irving Fang presented a broad-ranging approach to media history and divided the complex and long-lasting History of Mass Communication into six periods of time, which are recognized as *Information Revolutions*. Six *Information Revolutions* including the *Writing Revolution*, which began in the eighth century B.C.; the *Printing Revolution*, which began in the fifteenth century; the *Mass Media Revolution*, in middle of the 19th century coincided with the prosperity of mass newspapers, the telegraph, and photography; the *Entertainment Revolution*, which began in the late 19th and early 20th century and encompassing recorded sound and images; the *Toolshed Revolution* which began in the mid-twentieth century, considering the home as the particular position of entertainment communication; and ultimately the *Information Highway Revolution* (Fang, 1997).

Irving Fang applies the term *Information Revolutions*, and employs the concept to the whole history of communication in the West. He focuses on means and demonstrates how means and methods of communicating evolved in various periods, how they expanded and flourished, how they influenced society functions or been influenced by social changes. He also describes how each revolution changes the way we communicate and interact with the world, how means of communications influenced the societies of any era and how they have kept on to apply their

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penetration upon the next generation, and eventually he attempts to clarify where the culture proceeds through the tools people employ to communicate.

According to Irving Fang, the first revolution, which is called the *Writing Revolution*, took place in the eighth century BC in Greece. Writing is taken for granted today, but the impact of this revolution was so enormous and overwhelming that shifted mankind from Oral culture and a culture of “knowing what we could remember” to a culture in which memory was no longer limited. The second revolution, we encountered the invention of printing in the early fifteenth century. Information could now be more widely distributed and made available to the public.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, with the combination of electricity and communications, great strides were made to accelerate and improve communications, sparking a long wave of innovations, including the telegraph, radio, and telephone. Electricity was introduced as the driving force in communication channels and the term *telecommunications* became common.

However, in the mid-19th century, with the advancement of printing technology and the prosperity of faster printing machines, newspapers and magazines became extensively available to ordinary people, not just the elite, the third revolution called mass media emerged and the age of mass communication arrived.

At the end of the nineteenth century, with the invention and prevalence of recording equipment, it was possible to share films, music, and printed word, so information became a hobby and Irving Fang called this period the *Entertainment Revolution*. These changes were exciting enough, in the mid-20th century, but the fifth *Information Revolution* brought communication equipment such as telephones, broadcasting, and modern printers into the home. As the final stage, the sixth *Information Revolution*, which began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, brought the information highway.

The word *caricature* originally comes from the Italian words “carico” and “caricare”, which mean “to load” or “to exaggerate”. About 1600 the term *caricature* appeared in Italian art. There is disagreement in various sources as to who used this term in the artworks for the first time.

Regarding Cartoon terminology, the etymology is the Italian word “cartone”. It means a finished preparatory sketch on a large piece of cardboard. The term *Cartoon* was used for preliminary designs (The Oxford..., 1989). First known use in print media dates back to the mid-19th century, cartoon to refer to comic drawings was used in British Punch magazine in 1843. Punch satirically attributed this term to refer to its political cartoons, and because of the popularity of the Punch cartoons led to the extensive use of the term (Spinozzi, Zironi, 2010: 261).

This assertion is generally agreed upon that the politics is to be identified as a form of complex simplicity, as Oliver Marchart suggests in his book *Conflictual Aesthetics*, as “a multiplicity of lines of clear demarcation crisscrossing each other” (Marchart, 2019: 19), then with its potential of simplification and binary opposition. The art of cartooning could also be presumed as a genuine political action (Göpfert, 2020: 148).

As stated in Encyclopedia Britannica, *editorial cartoon*, also known as a *political cartoon* or *newspaper cartoon*, is a drawing in form of illustration or comic strip, containing a political or social commentary that usually relates to contemporary events or politicians (Knieper, 2013). In this article, *editorial cartoon* and *political cartoon* are being applied with the same meaning, function and purpose. In the final conclusion, we can separate these two terms from their future point of view.

The main role of *political caricature* is the dissemination of a critical idea through the formation of a certain image in the public mind. (Sanina, 2019). Creating a cartoon is a complex creative process based on the analysis of political, social and cultural information (Abdel-Raheem, 2020). Political cartoons combine features of iconicity: direct resemblance, diagrammatic schematization and metaphoric displacement (Chu, 2022). The reader reconstructs the caricature's direct resemblance to real historical figures and situations through the metaphorical distortion presented in the caricature and reconstructs the author's schematic, visual structural thinking to come to an understanding of the caricature's satirical message. The main source of the humorous effect of the cartoon is the discrepancy between the meaning of the cartoon and the viewer's reconstruction of the cartoonist's satirical purpose (Constantinou, 2019; Jaashan, 2019; Prendergast, 2019; Wawra, 2018).

*Editorial cartoons* are journalistic and artistic illustrations, making a humorous point in an ironic manner containing comments addressing political issues, events or personalities, typically combining satire, exaggeration and most of the times written elements to question authorities and

social etiquette (Mateus, 2016). *Political cartoons* usually portray public figures in a way that represents a particular stance. Since political figures and celebrities are the constant subjects of political cartoons, this type of cartoon always carries with it an exaggerated and distorted representation of these famous personalities in the form of a caricature as a permanent and necessary element. Just as caricature is for the viewer who is familiar with the person who has been ridiculed, cartoons are also grounded in a broad familiarity with the subject.

In order to comprehend the functionality of the genre, one should notice that any *political cartoon* is the combination of two different components. The first component is the art of caricature, which is used in exaggerated and humorous depiction of individuals, and the second component is the allusion that refers to the situation or context in which the individual is placed. That is, the subject of the cartoon and the background under discussion are widely known to the audience. To put it another way, the person or persons depicted in the cartoons are in a context of a generally political event, which is recognizable. The caricature will parody the public figures and the allusion refers the viewer to the context. As a result, political cartoons exaggerate the characteristics of particular persons and demonstrate that their inner nature, along with their behaviors, makes satire.

## 2. Materials and methods

The underlying argument in this article is that the historical evolution of cartoon art from primitive art based on deformity; through artistic endeavors in order to reach a deeper visual language, has been advanced to a vehicle containing a myriad of complex means of communication. “The rise and fall of the Political Cartoon”, during the Information Revolutions defined by Irving Fang (Fang, 1997), is the major matter of debate. In the following, in today’s pluralized media landscape and the challenges facing editorial cartoonists in the new media space will be scrutinized. Eventually with examining the rise of new media alternatives, it will be argued that whether the future of political cartoons will be bound to that of print media. Another vital question is whether political cartoons are a dying form of art.

*Caricature* as a Western branch of fine art dates back to the inventive examinations Leonardo da Vinci in the field of grotesque in order to find the “ideal type of deformity”, which could be used to better comprehend the concept of ideal beauty (Hoffman, 1957: 16). *Cartoons*, although were born in Italy as part of the fine arts with a new visual language, found new life with the press in the form of editorial cartoons. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the art of Caricature is the product of the Renaissance and Reformation emphasis on the importance of the individual. If caricature deals with the individual and with what makes him exclusive, cartoons could be argued that deal with groups of personages and with their public attributes; both are connected with the classification and categorizing in Renaissance (Ames, 2007).

This evolution from the Renaissance to the invention of the printing machine by Gutenberg in 1455 entered a vital and decisive phase. Undoubtedly, the advancement of printing industry technology played a striking role in this process. The invention of the printing press profoundly changed the functions of cartoons. What is noteworthy in this process is that the printing industry led to the emergence of broadsheets (here “broadsheets” refers to a large piece of paper printed on one side only, which is demonstrating information or advertisement, broadsheets are loose – page editorial productions designed for mass consumption) that widely spread around throughout Renaissance Europe. The employment of cartoons as a highly entertaining form of political commentary expanded the appeal and profitability of their product making it more easily understood and broadly accessible. Hereafter for cartoonists, the broadsheets caused reach to larger groups of audiences along with a sufficient source of revenue. Employing caricature, exaggerations and visual metaphors, Broadsheets put forward targeted audiences a synopsis and analysis of current news and events (Göçek, 1998: 3).

But broadsheets, despite their possible profitability, were an expensive product, and the number of prints ranged from tens to few thousands. The high cost of production led to irregular production, poor distribution, and limited editions. In order to justify necessary expenditure, the subject matters of broadsheets were confined to topics that were considered important or popular enough (Press, 1981: 37). In most cases, selected topics targeted the interests and concerns of the elite class of society, with various metaphors used by cartoonists pointing to the knowledge base of the educated (Duus, 2001: 966).

However, the first cartoons and caricatures were not intended to raise public awareness. At first, they were merely an artistic attempt to reach a newer and deeper visual language. “Public viewing” and “public consciousness” appeared with the Protestant Reforms in Germany that swept through Europe in the early 16th century. During this religious reform movement, “visual propaganda” was extensively used as a visual protest against the hegemony of religion and hierarchy in Church leadership. The context of religious reform was something widely familiar and known to people from all walks of life, so these early political cartoons were an effective tool for public awareness.

The success of Martin Luther's socio-religious reforms depended on the support of two classes of changing society. Emerging classes of merchants who responded positively to Luther's new ideas and could economically resist the powerful institution of the Catholic Church. Although the support of the growing middle class was crucial to the success of Luther's reforms, he realized that in order to lead a popular movement, he needed the involvement of the lower classes, the peasantry. During the growth of graphic art, many artists and designers in that period were engaged in the art of woodcarving and metal engraving. In the meantime, the factor that probably influenced the evolution of caricature more than any other cultural condition was the high rate of illiteracy. The extensive Distribution of broadsheet posters and illustrated booklets to ordinary and often illiterate people was a proficient tactic because the ideas reach as many people as possible and are as comprehensible as possible. For this reason, as the reform movement set out to spread throughout the whole Europe, cartoons as an approach of condensing “a complex idea in one striking and memorable image”, ranked high among the tools that facilitated to convey messages swiftly (Shikes, 1969: 13-17).

As Western culture diversified from its religious infrastructure to various intellectual tendencies, new topics became available for discussion and critique. Stemming from the point that the essential human rights have always authorized people to criticize; cartoons have been one of the most entertaining and efficient methods to get points across. Along with this socio-political movement, the expansion of the use of cartoons led to an increase in the media literacy of the people. According to A. Fedorov and G. Mikhaleva (Fedorov, Mikhaleva, 2020: 155) media literacy is based on the ability of individual to access, analyze and evaluate media contents in various forms and genres. In this way, the appeal and impact of cartoons on public opinion as a media of interpretation with the association of negative connotation, that addressed serious issues and presented them in a manner that was not solely funny but also socially acceptable, increased significantly. The crux of the matter is that the socio-religious reform movement and the Renaissance emphasis on the importance of the individual brought political satire and cartooning in the west to full bloom.

The continued popularity of written communication caused the Printing Revolution to spill into the 17th century. The success of cartoons in engendering thought and inspiring action amongst people, during the late 17th and the 18th centuries, coincided with the age of Enlightenment, helped Consolidation of cartooning as a media tool. Cartoons went far beyond comedy and humor; they took on a humorous and serious tone. They presented serious issues in an acceptable way that was specifically designed to influence public opinion with the intention of making changes in the foundation of the church. As political cartooning became successfully efficient, "graphic satire" was utilized in the western culture and talented aspiring cartoonists thrived who dared to attack arbitrariness, corruption, wrongdoings or misconducts in positions of power that had hitherto been immune to criticism.

In the 19th century with steady improvements in the printing industry and distribution of newspapers in high circulation, cartoons as an important part of print media became available to the public and rapidly gained popularity and profound influence. These Technological innovations resulted in economies of scale that eventually led to the proliferation of visual satire and the birth of the modern political cartoons. Development of the printing technology increased print runs and image quality at the same time as reducing production costs (Press, 1981: 49). On the other hand, the emergence of the photography genre in the 19th century also played an outstanding role in the flourishing of political cartoons because it contributed in producing caricatures of public figures. High levels of illiteracy also helped to the success of the cartoons, as cartoons with exerting symbols and visual cues were recognizable to most people. In addition, for those people who were able to read cartoons in print media, it became a new outlet for knowledge and awareness, meanwhile a novel approach of launching socio-political debates. Political cartoonists hereafter played an influential role in social debates because of their vivid graphical social commentary. They analyzed serious and sophisticated issues and made them humorous and at the same time understandable, which were ultimately quite often extremely blunt and clear.

Broadsheets as visual interpretations to the current events were steadily incorporated into the burgeoning trade of European and American newspapers. The shift from broadsheet production to daily print media in the 19th century had a deep-rooted effect on this evolution. The modern editorial cartoon began as a mutually beneficial partnership between publication institutions and cartoonists. The editorial cartoon agreement came into sight as part of this consolidation. Publishers planned to take advantage of the cartoon's popularity to increase income while the cartoonists achieved job security and access to wider viewers. With accepting the editorial scrutiny and production deadlines, cartoonists were offered a consistent flow of revenue and broader distribution although they lost part of their artistic freedom under the auspices of larger editorial teams (Danjoux, 2007: 245). As cartoons became popular and mainstream, they found their place in newspapers, brochures and weekly digests. In this regard, it can be argued that cartoons, and peculiarly political cartoons, have a history as long as the life of the press. Shortly before that, political cartoons with Enlightenment motivations were made available to the public by Steel engravings in much more limited editions. Cartoons became impressive because everyone in the audiences group could become influenced. The visual images contained simplicity and brevity, which were important.

At any rate, *cartoon* became rather a broad term and clearly defined idea and its practice quickly became a popular genre of fine art in the 16th to 19th century. This period marked the significance and genuine emergence of political cartooning for social and political objectives. To sum up, it can be concluded that political cartoons were born and got peculiar attention in the second Information Revolution, which is identified by Irving Fang as the Printing Revolution. Afterward in the middle of the 19th century during the Mass Media Revolution flourished and achieved proper framing into communication context and this evolution continued until the next periods.

### 3. Discussion

During the late 19th century and early 20th century coinciding with the fourth Information Revolution i.e. the 'Entertainment Revolution', political cartooning was started to be utilized for propagating ideological and sensational content. Political cartoons in various stages of their evolution have become synonymous to political commentary. It is worth mentioning that the first cartoons in the colonial era undertook debates among colonies, cartoons shortly took on the Civil War and during World War II the governments applied political cartoons as ideological propaganda. Both sides in World War I, the Central and Allied Powers, commissioned the cartoonists to portray the enemy as evil and to glorify the struggle in order to strengthen public support on the home front (Göçek, 1998: 5). Particularly from the period of post-American Civil War and the First World War, political cartoons also became a part of yellow journalism and muckraking, which were being planned for secretly or dishonestly searching out and publicizing scandalous information about celebrities. After World War I, yellow journalism declined as the growing educated middle class took more interest in complex and objective media content. This new trend as well resulted in modern critical political cartooning. Nowadays in modern art, political cartoon has become a versatile symbolic means of propaganda, publicity and catharsis.

After the turn of the 20th century, editorial cartooning experienced another significant challenge. The shift from partisan newspapers to objective reporting in the 1920s severely curtailed the prominence that had persistently been associated with this artifice, as evidenced by the decrease in size, impact, and importance of cartoons in the newspaper. Although political cartoons of WWII era sparked social debates, and moreover brilliant cartoons regarding Watergate in the early 1970s often called the heyday of political cartoons, but with the advent of alternative weekly papers in the 1980s and 1990s. The number of editorial cartoons today has significantly dropped, mainly due to the shift of the newspaper industry to large conglomerates and online distribution.

Given the fact that the cartoon has been evolving as an art of visual protest since the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in 1517 to the present time, there has been a huge debate over its privileged position and role in the social movements. This capability of undermining the legitimacy of absolute rulers, signifying the meanings and susceptibility to interpretation is the legacy of satire that has really stood the test of time (Shikes, 1969: 10). This popularity and influence on public opinion continues to this day, and has been increasingly deployed in magazines and newspapers and over the past decades in online media for conveying political commentary and criticizing public figures and politicians. Historic and recent examples visibly prove the relevance attributed to the cartoonist's diligence and the successive uninterrupted capability of the political cartoon to draw attention and spark controversy,

which has made media researchers, become more aware of the power and importance of political cartoons than in the past. Moreover, to measure the relevance of the editorial cartoon in today's media landscape it can be done against the efforts taken to silence them (Danjoux, 2007: 245).

Few forms of art have this capability to keep going such a length of impact in society. Political cartoons sustain themselves because they bridge the apparent gap between fact and fiction (Edwards, 1997). Cartoons today in the internet age are shifting not only in content but also in the method in which they are transmitted and the orientation in which they are obtainable. The prospect of cartoons and the next step in their evolution is unquestionably the World Wide Web and social media. A. Fedorov and G. Mikhaleva stress that "Media literacy is one of the key competencies nowadays" (Fedorov, Mikhaleva, 2020: 155) and become an imperative skill in order to survive in digital surroundings, minimizing online risks and expanding online opportunities (Fedorov, Mikhaleva, 2020: 158). In the current media landscape, when audiences have a manipulated and distorted version of reality, political cartoons by cultivating the cognitive skills of critical and analytical thinking, could foster the skills of media literacy.

For example, experimental data to test the impact of John Oliver's programs *Last Week Tonight* and *ABC News* on the study of the importance and complexity of political issues showed that political satire is just as good a source of knowledge as news, given the viral distribution and increasing audience size of such programs (Becker, Bode, 2018).

Increasingly, consideration has been given to the nature and function of humor in digital game streaming on Twitch, and how the play humor in games and the web combines and evolves (Johnson, 2022).

In recent years, the print media – as the traditional place and mainstay of cartoonists' activities – has faced serious financial barriers and challenges, newspapers in classic paper form are gasping for breath. One of the key reasons for the decrease in print media sales is the fact that the younger generation no longer buys newspapers. They regularly prefer to catch all the required information through websites, blogs and social media. Based on a series of comprehensive statistical surveys in the US press (Watson, 2019), the estimated total earnings of U.S. based publishers have intensively fallen in the past decade from 46 billion U.S. dollars in 2007 to around 28 billion in 2017. Rising costs, shrinking readership, declining advertising incomes, weakening credibility, and an influx of social media have taken a giant toll on their financial health.

In addition, according T. Rhodes (Rhodes, 2014) to the Committee to Protect Journalists, since newspapers' advertising revenue continues to decline (Marshall, Vranica, 2016), it is strange that this has allowed large advertisers to have a profound impact; often allowing them to imperceptibly control what should and should not be published. This soft censorship behind closed doors is generally invisible to the public and is a filter that not only news reports, but also images of cartoonists' creativity must go through before publication.

On the other hand, the media is not just afraid of advertisers. Social media has also emerged as a vital threat. While platforms like Twitter can provide substantial ways for constructive feedback from the audience, they can also be a tool for constraint. The urgent need to avoid provoking the online anger mechanism, which can lead to the loss of subscriptions and advertising income, makes the media less inclined to publish content like cartoons that do not conform to public opinion and taste.

In some Conflict-Prone societies today, high fortifications are erected to keep public outrage over issues such as religion and race that are considered "sensitive," keeping them out of the reach of critics or cartoonists. Although modern political cartoons were evolved as a beneficial way for newspaper owners to attract more readership as customers, the shifting of media outlets into media empires and the advent of corporate media conglomerates has made editors responsible to a broader and more diverse consumer base. From the beginning, it has always been the publisher's concern to ensure that the message of cartoons is relevant to most of their audiences, or at least does not offend the bulk of them. Consequently the broader range of readers put more pressure on cartoonists to avoid insulting larger segments of the community since insulting or alienating customers has unconstructive economic impacts (Lamb, 2004: 40). As a result, political satire, in both its written and drawn forms, suffers from self-censorship and behind the dust of artistic vagueness and ambivalence becomes progressively more symbolic. This type of censorship leads to uncompromising restrictions imposed on hard-earned civic achievements and likewise can be detrimental to a democracy that depends on the liberated competition of ideas, even those that are offensive.

Regrettably, among a generation of audiences growing up with banal Instagram content, staff reductions and diminishing freelance budgets, have pushed the art of political cartooning into a tight spot. The freedom of journalists is now being violated by the government, the financial burden and the interests of the media. By observing the above mentioned factors in waning freedom of press, one realizes that political cartoons are also facing an unequal decline and losing much of their previous sting. It can be pointed out the lack of appetite amid audiences for a purposeful ridicule and criticism of the majority way of thinking, and the reason has settled in this fact that tastes have been changed by increasing the influence of the Internet in this phenomenon. Silencing political cartoonists, whether at the hand of governments, losing the centrality in pursuit of economic interests or weakening of their role to appease online mobs, is a warning sign and a herald of the decline of political freedoms. All these factors promise a little optimism where the future of editorial cartoons is concerned.

Caricatures are still pleasant, engaging, and memorable in storytelling, but in today's climate of information overload, they have become an undersized part of a crowded, noisy information highway rather than the influential public phenomena they once were. As a matter of fact in a frustrating process, they are gradually losing their centrality and influential role. Self-contained commentaries, terse wit and vivid imagination existing in cartoons don't dominate anymore and are being politely filed away. New Internet behavioral patterns, banality of content, mixing or confusion of different ideas and the wide range of social media make it impossible to offer a plain but comprehensive analysis of political satire as previously appeared in political cartoons. Instead of trying to perceive the underlying meanings and captions crafted by a professional editorial commentator, public opinion is increasingly being shaped by photomontages and online memes. As a consequence, newspaper cartoons no longer play such a central role as they did during the third period of the Information Revolution, known by Irving Fang as the Mass Media, or in the fourth period, i.e. Entertainment.

Disappointingly, it should be admitted that political cartoonists are an endangered species. New Business models in the digital media space are drawing final lines under the profession, which cartoonists are devoted to. If the time comes when all newspapers are published only in the online version and there is no longer a print edition, will the newspapers have the necessary budget and, in principle, a desire to hire political cartoonists? Many experts believe that, unfortunately, political cartoons are in danger of being forgotten, because the next generation of cartoonists will most probably be few in number and of low quality compared to peak periods due to reduced wages and job opportunities.

A panoramic observation would reveal that compared to the 1980s, when nearly 300 full-time cartoonists were employed as a steady, important and lucrative job, currently barely a handful of cartoonists are constantly employed by American newspapers due to declining circulation and falling advertising revenue (Marlette, 2004: 21). The emergence of electronic communication has provided editors access to a broad range of syndicated cartoons, reducing their dependence on their own staff cartoonists. Under such circumstances, the necessity to keep constantly employed cartoonists on the payroll has become less economically convincing (Danjoux, 2007: 247). Most of the cartoonists are now freelancers or their cartoons are being managed and distributed by a syndicate, which makes it much harder for them to earn money this way than it was two decades ago. Some political cartoonists own their dedicated personal website or have found alternative online platforms to keep on their work. Needless to say, with the help of the Internet, the art of political cartooning is reaching a broader range of audiences than ever before and keeps on resonating among both audiences and political leaders. However, the artists themselves are not paid for the widespread publication of their works, and even if they are, it is next to nothing.

Although digital media as an alternative is a new way for cartoonists to continue their careers, this alternative media has new technical challenges. One of the technical problems of online cartoons is that digital media are not compatible with traditional illustrated forms. Cartoons do not reach the same type of exposure as they do in print edition, and as a consequence have less visual impact on the viewer insofar as they may be invisible to the viewer. In a print newspaper, cartoons have their regular constant daily position and the readers of the newspaper according to their daily habit cannot avoid them. As a result, the majority of readers, even if they have no particular interest in cartoons, cannot ignore their eye-catching bold presence. When the reader is traditionally confronted with an image in the middle of a page full of typed articles, due to the difference between the font and the image and the power of image language, his eyes are inevitably drawn to that image. But on a website the visitor has to search for cartoons, while in a classic print newspaper he will come across it, willingly or unwillingly.

As print media are grappling with a steep decline in sales and advertising revenue, media owners over the years have been looking for ways to offset dwindles in sales. One of these measures has been to reduce the size of the traditional broadsheets to tabloid format. In order to reduce costs, editors are replacing cartoons with advertising and photomontages. In many cases, they publish cartoons in tiny sizes and do not give them enough room to show off, which reveals another aspect surrounding the decline of political cartoons today. Consequently, political cartoonists have to compete with less specialized forms of visual satire. Cartoons really have a hard time revealing their potency and distinguishing themselves from the relentless flood of information, online memes, manipulated images and photomontage. This is where political cartoons become vulnerable, do an actual disservice and are eliminated from the competition.

#### **4. Results**

Ironically, the origins of today's cartoon decline emanate from the same factors that led to the political cartoon evolution in the first place in the 19th century: technological innovation alongside organizational and economic benefits of media institutions. Is it possible to predict that in the digital age, the Internet will eventually take the print media out of the scene and, consequently, erase the political caricature? Predicting the future, especially in technological advances, is almost impossible. But it could be claimed that with the advent of digital media, the importance and position of political cartoons are changing dramatically. However, many specialists underscore the unfortunate fact that political cartoons may be in the final stages of decline. Due to costs and the financial burdens, many of them had to stop printing editorial cartoons.

In examining the impact of computer software and the possibility of manipulating images and afterward achieving the goal of humorous criticism, it can be concluded that digital image productions are, in a way, becoming a political statement. Image-distorting software for deliberately deceptive purposes is a Thriving online hobby for graphic enthusiasts and designers whose manipulated documents have embedded in the public imagination alongside political cartoons and humorous texts. We are witnessing an increasing number of websites devoted to "political expression, humorous commentary and visual puns", which the number of visitors and their popularity is increasing every moment. It could be compared to the role of political cartoons in traditional media. This is where the digital age meets political cartoons. Computer-generated images with the power of rapid dissemination and ability of "going viral" in social media, now has the place and effect like political cartoons. Photomontage, as a cheaper alternative to cartoons, has become very popular in newspapers. Rather than political cartoons newspapers currently prefer to use photo montages. The degree to which photomontages are actually replacing the editorial cartoons is a matter of debate, but in case newspapers stop publishing paper editions due to financial problems, and revive themselves online, will photomontage, political animations or memes become more effective online media than static cartoons?

#### **5. Conclusion**

Media has changed over each century; from the printing press to the World Wide Web and eventually, according to Irving Fang, to the sixth stage, which is identified as "information highway". Changes have been inevitable and dramatic. It is no surprise, that media's content also evolves and political cartoons follow the same rule. Although they are a unique phenomenon unto themselves there are sharply contrasting differences in each neighborhood of the Information Revolution or with the turn of each century. What the vast majority of people consider about the Six Information Revolutions is probably the rapid acceleration of change. The big challenge is that we have not really advanced at the same speed as technology (Lazutova, Volkova, 2017), and many people find constant change threatening rather than provocative.

In a general assessment, this paper stresses that in the age where journalism and artistic creativity are continually changing and facing serious challenges, political cartoons have remained of its time an everlasting form of political satire. They should be observed not only as news sources but also as an invaluable historical documentation of the political climate in any era. The ability of cartoons to raise public awareness and convey a persuasive, detailed message has unquestionably stood the test of time, particularly in an era of massive media output.

Unhappily, in the existing fractious and irritable media landscape, editorial cartoons are increasingly being pushed to a marginal place. But their capability to enlighten the truth, demonstrate that the men in power have nothing to hide, and to entertain the public does not diminish. Even though



this particular style of humor may retreat in encountering the emerging media forces of the digital age, political satire is not going to disappear as long as it has the correct materials to feed. From an optimistic viewpoint with exploring the rise of new media alternatives, there is hope that cartoonists will be able to adapt to this rapid rhythm of changes and over time, quality journalism and credible voices will be more appreciated by the audience. Good political cartoons are punctual meaningful images and versatile form of communication that quickly and responsibly react to events and could be completely updated in a short span of time. The facility for react and update quickly, also the ability to convey complex messages succinctly appears ideally suited to the age of instant messaging and puts them in a suitable place to survive in the digital revolution.

Although the claim that visual satire in the form of cartoons is fully disappearing in the digital age seems pessimistic, with a realistic observation, political cartoons are no longer the main component of the Central Tribune and are losing their importance and centrality. Correspondingly with the annihilation or diminish of the central role of political cartoons, journalism will lose one of its greatest democratic weapons. Two decades ago, we could realistically consider the cartoons in traditional media as an index of satirical commentary on social and political issues. Certainly, this reality of the loss of power and influence is not the outcome of waning of satirical power in political cartoons themselves. It is a striking consequence of changing formal and economic models in the media. These changes are a big loss, although it seems that the spirit of cartoons and satirical commentary in the modern media space is undoubtedly strong and healthy and will undoubtedly find its own new ways of expression in the future.

Political cartoons have changed dramatically in terms of both content and presentation along with media developments, and future changes cannot be predicted with certainty. The only definite statement is that they will remain a tribune for political expression and will continue to influence public opinion and the culture of the society. With mounting challenges for editorial cartoonists, the capability of the Internet to provide extensive access to a broader audience without editorial control would make the future of political cartoons more hopeful and bright. Since newspapers are no longer the best means of distribution and undermine job security, cartoonists can use the internet as a medium to bypass the “bottleneck” and deliver their sensitive topics, which previously had to be approved by newspaper editors before publication. Nowadays as independent commentators they could challenge mass targeted the audience by utilizing artistic freedoms, without the control of the editorial team.

Eventually with examining the rise of new media alternatives, it could be anticipated that the future of political cartoons will never be bound to that of print media. While the future of the traditional editorial model of cartoons in newspapers may be indecisive, the future of the political cartoon in digital form looks promising and even brighter. Instead of mourning in the twilight of print media, it may be time to embrace the dawn of digital alternatives to editorial cartoons.

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