Abstract:

Despite its substantial growth in recent decades, there is relatively little academic work--and, in particular, little historical work--on business journalism. Since the 2008 financial crisis, however, scholars have brought new attention to the US business press, much of it critical, raising concerns about its close relationships with financial elites, pro-business bias, and failure to perform a watchdog role. This paper aims to contribute to this growing literature by examining a key period of growth for business journalism. From the mid-1970s to mid-1980s, the amount of business coverage presented in US news media increased dramatically, and understanding the causes of this trend--including claims of anti-business bias by business leaders, news organizations’ desire to reach affluent audiences, and a growing conviction that economics and finance were of vital importance to all Americans, not just business professionals--provides important context for recent work on the contemporary business press.