The AJHA Doctoral Dissertation Award, established in 1997, is awarded annually for the best doctoral dissertation dealing with mass communication history. A cash award of three hundred dollars accompanies the prize.
This dissertation tells the story of Edward W. Scripps’s pioneering effort to create an independent force in journalism: a profitable adless newspaper. Already well on his way to building the nation’s first major newspaper chain, Scripps set out in 1911 to prove that a newspaper could be profitable without any advertising at all. His adless newspaper, The Day Book, was to be supported entirely by circulation revenue and committed to a higher threshold of editorial integrity and honesty than Scripps thought was possible with journalism financed largely by advertising. As with his other newspapers, Scripps wanted to create an inexpensive paper that would appeal to the working class and would crusade for higher wages, more unions, safer working conditions, and other causes. Though The Day Book’s financial losses steadily declined over the years, it never became profitable, and, in 1917, ended publication. But The Day Book had proved to be a steadfast ally of the working class and the dispossessed, and a primary source of news on their struggles. In writing about violent circulation battles, the lives of store clerks, elevator accidents, and other subjects ignored or suppressed by the mainstream press, The Day Book redefined news and thinking.