



SETH ROGEN JAMES FRANCO

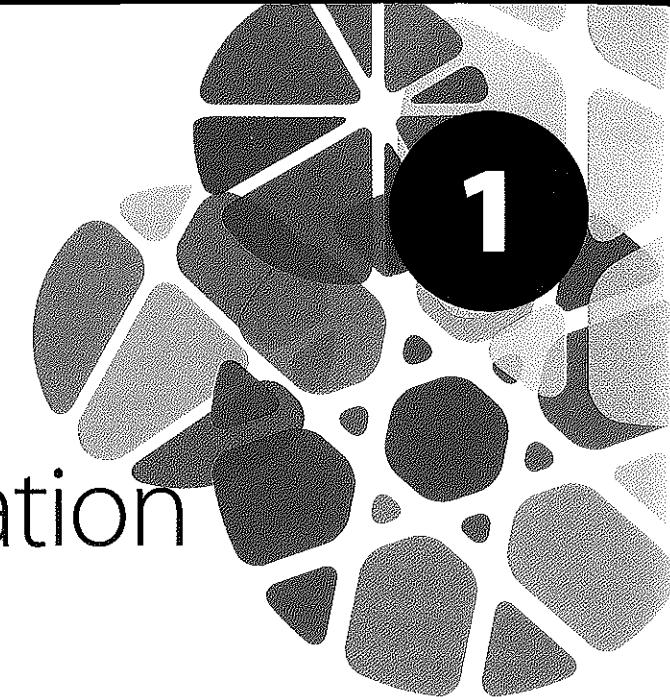
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THE INTERVIEW

CHAPTER PREVIEW

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Mass Communication and Its Digital Transformation

A crude Seth Rogen comedy seems an unlikely candidate to spark an international incident that became a cause célèbre for free speech, increased fears about cyberwarfare, and led to U.S. sanctions against North Korea, but that is exactly what happened in the final months of 2014 and into early 2015. This curious chain of events also highlights—often unexpectedly—just how much digital media has transformed mass communication.

North Korea was vocal in its displeasure about the planned Christmas Day release of the comedy *The Interview* in which Rogen and James Franco play a pair of celebrity tabloid-show producers chosen by the CIA to assassinate North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

On November 24, Sony Pictures, distributor of the film, learned that its computer systems had been hacked. In the days that followed, a string of embarrassing emails between executives and other sensitive corporate data, including early versions of screenplays and executive salaries, were leaked to the public. Sony and some cybersecurity experts, including those in the FBI, claim it was a North Korean group, while other experts remain doubtful.

On December 17, Sony announced the cancellation of the theatrical release of *The Interview* after receiving threats that movie theaters showing it would be blown up, an executive decision widely criticized as a blow to free speech. Another movie studio scrapped plans to make another anti-North Korean movie, and Paramount refused to allow the rerelease of *Team America: World Police*, the 2004 comedic movie by the makers of *South Park*. It too made fun of North Korea, and some theaters also wanted it to show on Christmas Day.

Less than a week later, Sony reversed itself and announced that *The Interview* would play in theaters that still supported this and be available for rent on video-on-demand (VOD). Just before New Year's, several cable and satellite companies announced deals with Sony to show *The Interview* for pay-per-view, on iTunes, Xbox Video, YouTube Movies, Google Play, and other on-demand services, long

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- >> Define convergence.
- >> Discuss the main types of convergence and their implications for communication.
- >> Explain the eight major changes taking place in communication today because of convergence.
- >> Define mass communication.
- >> Describe the basic theories of mass communication.
- >> Identify the basic components and functions of the mass-communication process.

before the usual three-month window between theatrical releases and being shown on cable or DVD. Between December 24, 2014, and January 4, 2015, *The Interview* earned \$31 million, making it Sony's number one online film.¹

Several ironies make this fiasco worthy of its own comedy feature film. First, it was not government that threatened free speech but corporate interests, ranging from Sony Pictures itself to theater owners who refused to show the movie. Second, the United States issued more sanctions against North Korea in early January, even though cybersecurity experts were still debating who was actually responsible for the hack. Third, it was revealed that even when confronted with a legacy of artificial constraints from an earlier mass-communications era, convergence will prevail, especially where the possibility exists to release a film originally intended for movie theaters on home entertainment gaming systems or iTunes. Finally, a comedy critically reviewed as mediocre at best attracted many more viewers—and generated more income—than it likely would have.

The media of mass communication have long played a fundamental role in people's lives. The media inform, educate, persuade, entertain, and even—or perhaps especially—sell. Media can provide personal companionship and public scrutiny. They can shape perception on matters great and small. They can function in countless and increasing ways as extensions of one's self.

We will examine the nature of mass communication and how it is changing in the digital and social media age in a global village connected by electronic networks. Specific technological advances are producing widespread societal, cultural, and economic changes as journalists, public relations professionals, and advertising practitioners—in short, content creators and consumers of all kinds—face a new world of media symbols, processes, and effects.

Few communications technologies better encapsulate the fundamental aspects of convergence than two seemingly very different devices: the telephone and the television. We will first look briefly at the history and evolution of the telephone as a communications device because it touches on almost every important issue that we are dealing with today regarding the Internet and digital media. Furthermore, the phone continues to be at the heart of some of the most innovative changes taking place in how we communicate with each other and how we interact with the world and with media. At the end of the chapter, we will take a brief look at the television, how it continues to be at the forefront of convergence and how it is changing our relationship with the media.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Keep a media diary for a day of the media you consume (and create). Note the sources of your news, the types of online communication you use with friends and family, and the frequency you are on the phone (talking and texting). What did you learn from the diary?

Telephony: Case Study in Convergence

Although nowadays we may take the portability of our cell phones for granted, this mobility has important repercussions for a wide range of activities. First, we are no longer tied to a specific place when making or answering a phone call. The

question “Where are you now?” when calling a friend on a landline need not be asked—your friend is obviously at home; otherwise, he would not have answered the phone.

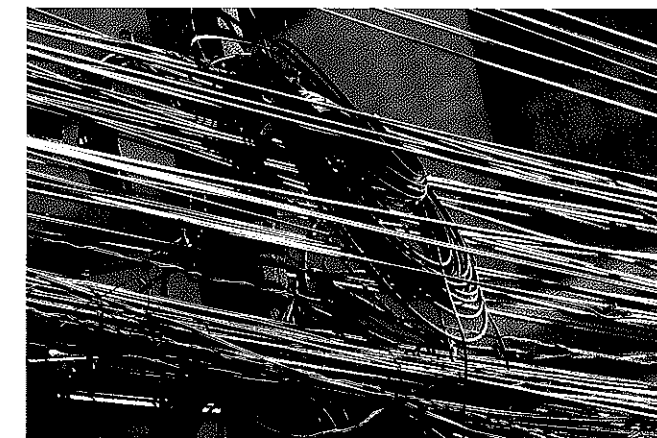
By being able to communicate anywhere and anytime, you are able to coordinate with others with greater spontaneity than in the past. Prior to widespread use of cell phones, if you had a sudden change of plans (or change of heart) regarding a meeting with someone, you had very limited ways to let the person know you would not show up. Coordinating meeting times and places among several people in a group took much more effort and did not allow for last-minute changes. Also, consider how much more we use a phone we carry, as opposed to when you had to travel to the location of the phone (e.g., home, a phone booth). This makes us more likely to call or text to share information on the spot. It also can mean, however, that we are less likely to interact with those immediately around us as we communicate with distant others.

Our familiarity with the phone belies its revolutionary character from a communications standpoint. Before the phone, people could not talk directly to others whom they could not physically see. In an emergency, the only way to inform the proper authorities was to physically go where they were and let them know. The phone played a major role in changing our patterns of communication with each other and thereby changing social relations. But it was the telegraph, created more than thirty years before the telephone, that first revolutionized our speed of communication.

The telegraph was the first means of electronic communication, using a series of taps on a keypad that represented dots and dashes to spell out words. These signals were transmitted over telegraph wires connecting one location to another. Telegraph operators were specially trained to code and decode messages, and the result was a thriving new industry that grew during the mid- to late nineteenth century. This innovative form of instantaneous communication led to entirely new kinds of business enterprises, including personal messaging services and “newswire” services such as Reuters and the Associated Press.

Telephones adopted the principles discovered with telegraphy but allowed voice to be transmitted. Although Alexander Graham Bell is the inventor of record for the telephone in 1876, others were also working on how to transmit voice electronically through wires; and there is some evidence that Bell's invention may have borrowed liberally from existing patents of inventors trying to build similar devices. Still, after years of lawsuits, it was Bell who won out. This parallels the many suits and countersuits seen today as companies claim patent infringement on Internet or software inventions and technologies (e.g., Apple's \$1 billion mobile-device patent infringement victory over Samsung in 2012).²

Regardless of who can claim credit for inventing the telephone, it was easier for the general public to use than the telegraph. Even so, it was not immediately thought of as an interpersonal communication device, largely because it was expensive and difficult to connect every single household to the telephone network. This parallels the “last mile” issue in twenty-first-century broadband, or high-speed, Internet connections coming directly into homes and touches on the importance of networks in our



As the telephone network spread, telephone lines started to clutter the landscape.

communication environment. It also highlights how seemingly obvious uses for new communications technologies become apparent only much later. How they may be used or adopted is very much an open question that relies not only on the technology alone but on a range of economic, social, and cultural issues at the time.

Despite the dramatic changes the phone would bring to communications, it was initially either ignored or thought of as simply a novelty. With subsequent technological improvements that made it easier to hear and to increase the number of voices that could be carried on a single wire, the telephone became more widely accepted. The ring of the telephone was a death knell for most telegraph companies, just as later media technologies rendered earlier technologies from which they were built obsolete and changed entire industries in the process.

Initially, especially in Europe, the telephone acted as a kind of early radio. Wealthy patrons paid a fee to listen to music performances that were sent along the wires, and some public venues would pipe in sermons or performances for their patrons.³ For several years in Budapest, Hungary, Telefon Hírmondó delivered news over the telephone, with subscribers dialing in at certain times to listen to someone reading the news of the day. A similar service was also tried in 1911 in Newark, New Jersey, but lasted for only a few months before closing.

Delivering news over telephone wires therefore is not something new with the Internet, and it also shows a public desire for information and entertainment “on demand,” long before video recorders or TiVo. What was still missing at that time was an economic model that could support a business such as telephone newspapers. This issue is commonly dealt with today by media companies that need to see a return on investments before they are willing to experiment with new ways of doing business.

The decision whether to make the telephone a government-run agency or a private enterprise was an important crossroad, and the choices made in Europe (government) differed from those made in the United States (private enterprise). Even into the twenty-first century, these choices have had profound repercussions for the actual and perceived development, use, and control of the Internet. And it continues to be the case that new technologies often inherit the baggage of political or social decisions made much earlier.

Leaving the early development of American telephone systems to private enterprise resulted in many incompatibilities among competing systems. Local telephone companies sold their own telephones, which would often not work with other telephone systems. This might have prevented a person from calling somebody who used a competing phone provider. The issue of compatibility between systems is still seen today in the form of competing computer operating systems, gaming systems, Internet browsers, and other electronic devices, including ebooks and tablet computers.

During the formative years of the telephone industry, the U.S. government sought to eliminate such incompatibilities in the phone network by granting one company, AT&T, a monopoly on the telephone system. This, too, had important repercussions for later developments in telecommunications. Just as the monopoly telegraph company, Western Union, had done in the late 1800s when it became apparent the telephone was a threat to its business, AT&T in the 1960s and 1970s tried to hamper the development of a new kind of network that would potentially hurt its business. The network needed to develop the Internet was not compatible with the AT&T system. Even though AT&T realized the new network was more efficient, the telephone company feared losing dominance and initially refused to adopt it.

Issues of government regulation and private enterprise, monopoly powers, and business interests at the expense of the public interest are still very much with us today. How much we pay for services, what companies charge and how they set up payment plans, and a variety of other business decisions are influenced by the laws and regulations that have been created, sometimes as a result of industry lobbying efforts.

Just as payment amounts and methods may influence how we use the telephone, social and cultural factors play an equally important role in determining whether a technology is adopted. Initially, people do not know how to act or interact with a new technology. Consider the classic story of the farmer, for example, who in the early days of the telephone went to town to place an order for supplies. The store clerk told him to place his order directly with the company over the phone, so the farmer dutifully wrote out his order, rolled it up carefully, and then jammed the rolled note into one of the holes of the phone handset and waited.

If this seems too silly to be true, recall your own reactions when you have to use a friend’s phone or an unfamiliar TV remote control. The variety of functions seen in phones today stretches its very definition compared to even twenty years ago. Young people today in much of the world would consider a phone that does not take pictures or play video games or provide an address book a dinosaur. In short, the phone continues to evolve as a multifunctional communications device. The so-called smartphone connects us to our friends and to the world of information and entertainment through the Internet via almost 1 billion mobile applications (apps). It provides a nearly seamless interface between interpersonal and mass communication, as we access via a favorite app a review of a restaurant and then subsequently snap a photo of our meal to share via Instagram. We might even wirelessly post our own review on the spot, after which it can be seen by potentially millions of people worldwide.

All these aspects of the development and use of the phone—ranging from the technical, legal, and regulatory to the economic, social, and cultural—touch on the notion of media convergence. But as we will see, convergence is a debated concept and has multiple layers of meaning. As we explore this phenomenon, we will unpack its many layers and reveal how they encompass some of the most dramatic transformations taking place in communications today.



Today’s cell phones typically have a variety of functions that have nothing to do with the traditional functions of the phone.

Three Types of Convergence

Convergence is known broadly as the coming together of computing, telecommunications, and media in a digital environment. It is important to study and understand convergence because what might first seem like wholly technological or media issues profoundly influence our economic, social, and cultural lives as well.

There is some disagreement among scholars over a single definition of convergence, an indication of the far-reaching consequences of the changes taking place in mass communication today. Indeed, many transformative forces for which we have still to develop adequate descriptions are in play, changes whose effects are

convergence

The coming together of computing, telecommunications, and media in a digital environment.

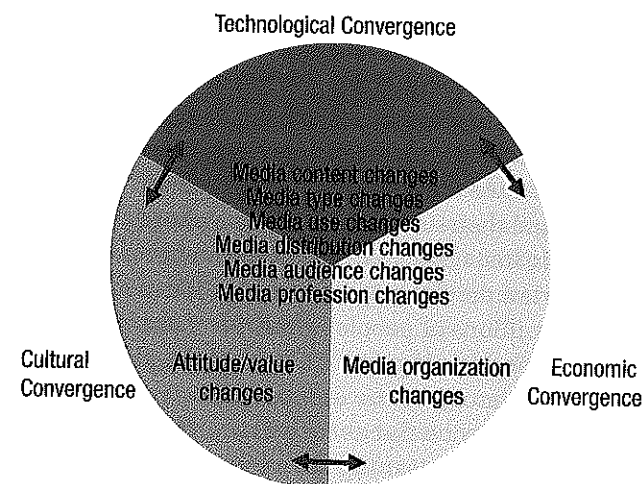
also uncertain. For now, the term “convergence” seems to come closest to encompassing many of these forces. Some argue that convergence has already occurred, and in many respects you could say that is true. But we believe that convergence is an ongoing and dynamic phenomenon that continues to shape the world of traditional media.

We can look at three main categories of convergence as in Figure 1-1 as ways to frame our understanding of the changes taking place today in the media industries: technological convergence, economic convergence, and cultural convergence. As you will see, these three categories actually overlap in many respects.

TECHNOLOGICAL CONVERGENCE

Perhaps the most easily visible aspect of convergence is the rise of digital media and online communication networks. Technological convergence refers to specific types of media, such as print, audio, and video, all converging into a digital media form. Such types of convergence are becoming increasingly apparent in news organizations, for example, where today’s journalists often need to be able to tell stories in text, audio, video, and even interactive media.

FIGURE 1-1 Three Types of Convergence and Their Influence on Media



Digital media often change the very nature of their traditional counterparts and affect how we use and perceive them. For example, although you can look at an ebook on a Kindle as simply digital print, the fact is that a Kindle ebook alters the reading experience. One obvious way is that because of its storage capacity, you can easily carry many books in one device, allowing you to move back and forth between books or for cross-referencing passages quickly. Furthermore, you can change the text size to make reading more comfortable, look up words, annotate and index sections, and even purchase new books on the spot through a wireless Internet connection. Precisely because users can alter the look and size of the text they are reading, the notion of page numbers also becomes meaningless on a Kindle—much to the chagrin of students who realize they need to cite

quotations taken from a book. You can even share your highlighted passages with others, making book reading a collaborative experience.

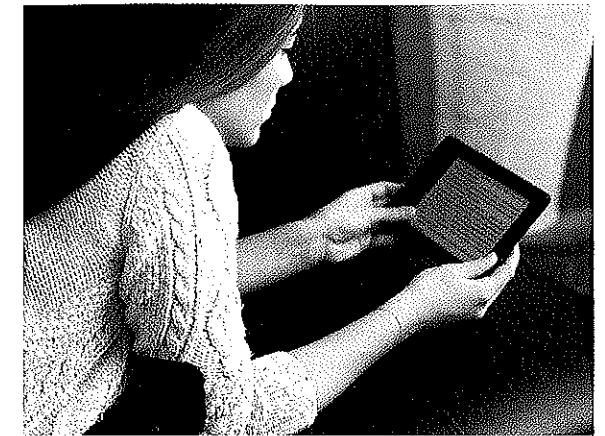
Most of these activities, such as looking up a word you don’t know in a dictionary, already occur with printed books. The significant difference, however, is that a single device now allows for all these actions, eliminating the need to carry a separate dictionary or permanently mark a book. Activities that used to be separate or cumbersome are now easier and folded into the media experience. Not simply a matter of convenience, these changes fundamentally alter how we interact with our media. We may be far more likely to look up a word on a Kindle than if we had to walk to the shelf to get the dictionary, for example. The music, television, and film industries, which we will look at in later chapters, provide other examples of how our media use changes thanks in large part to changes in technology.

This form of convergence, although highly relevant for today’s communications professionals, is not the only way to think of convergence. The changes that come from new technologies also affect business models and established industries, which often see the upstarts as threats to their dominance. These fears can be valid, as sometimes these new companies become larger and more powerful than established ones. Google, founded in 1998, is a case in point. Because of the importance of networks in today’s world, it is often advantageous for a company to control not only media content but the means of distributing that content through the networks, which is part of what economic convergence is about. In August 2015 Google itself announced that it would change its company name to Alphabet, with Google simply being one part of a corporation that exists in many other fields besides just media and technology.

ECONOMIC CONVERGENCE

Economic convergence refers to the merging of Internet or telecommunications companies with traditional media companies, such as Comcast with NBC Universal. Traditional media companies have grown fewer and much larger in the past fifty years through mergers and acquisitions, a process we define as **consolidation**, not convergence. Economic convergence occurs when formerly independent media enterprises further the success of one another because they fall under the same corporate umbrella. Entertainment companies may own news stations; large corporations traditionally outside of the media business, such as GE, may purchase media companies like NBC. This can result in conflicts of interest when corporate parents don’t want some aspects of their businesses covered in the news or when a news outlet gives prominent coverage to a movie produced by a studio also owned by the corporate parent.

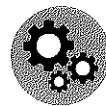
Economic convergence also has important repercussions for the nature of the media, telecommunications, and computing industries. A telecommunications company that also owns a media company can speed the transmission of its own content and slow the content from competing companies, thus influencing customers to watch more of its own material. It could also control the type of content its customers see by blocking material from certain websites.



Ebook readers such as the Kindle and the Nook have transformed the reading habits of people around the world, not to mention the book industry. **CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:** How do you think ebooks are influencing the notion of books and reading? Are ebooks better or more useful than traditional books? Which would you rather read, and why?

consolidation

A process whereby traditional media companies have grown fewer and much larger in the past fifty years through mergers and acquisitions.



MEDIA PIONEERS

Steve Jobs

The cover of *Time* magazine on February 15, 1982, featured 26-year-old Steve Jobs as symbolic of America's risk takers, one who "practically singlehandedly created the personal computer industry." Jobs personalized his high-tech microprocessor devices by having form meet function with eye-catching yet minimalist designs that placed the digital world at the user's fingertips.

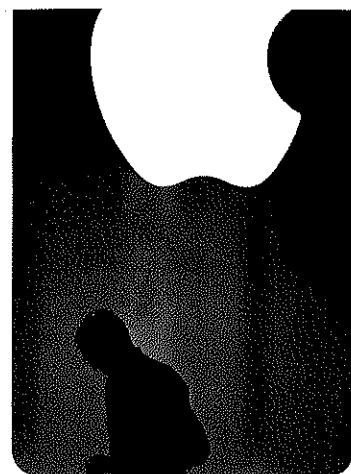
His singular talent was not necessarily for invention but for recognizing how to create what he envisioned from what was available and then finding talented people to do so. In 1979, at Xerox's PARC facility in Palo Alto, California, Jobs saw the future of personal computing—a graphic user interface operated by a mouse, the distinguishing feature of what eventually developed into the Macintosh computer in 1984.⁴ Similarly, decades later, Jobs repurposed for the iPhone a lightweight, damage-resistant glass that Corning had created but never placed in production.

Not content to create devices that manipulated the existing world, Jobs changed the world so that people could better use the tools he created. The iPod (2001) did not introduce any radical new technology, but the accompanying creation of iTunes forever changed the music industry. Cellular technology was hardly new when the iPhone (2007) brought about a transformative

convergence of telecommunications and the Internet. Unlike existing tablets, the iPad (2010) enveloped computing, telecommunications, digital publishing, and even television and movies.

Jobs ran his corporation as a closed system, convinced that only Apple could ensure the quality and integrity of its products. Although, for example, he encouraged anyone to develop apps for use on Apple's mobile devices, such apps are made available only with Apple's approval. Jobs's business model delivered Apple from near bankruptcy in 1997, and made it the most valuable company in the United States shortly before his death in 2011.⁵

Jobs was fond of saying he did not believe in giving customers what they wanted; he gave them what they did not know they needed.⁶ In his mind's eye, that need was digital convergence made possible with smart devices that almost anyone could use and enjoy.



The Internet is not causing this type of behavior, as numerous historical examples exist of media owners censoring content or blocking public access. But what makes this issue more significant and prominent is the combination of consolidated media giants and ever larger audiences. Despite the explosion of channels and media content, our choices may be narrower than they appear. Consider the increasingly frequent temporary blackouts of channels as cable companies and media conglomerates fight over television licensing fees and let their agreements lapse. Over 3 million households on the East Coast missed the first two games of the 2010 World Series as Cablevision and Fox Networks fought over the terms of a new licensing agreement and Fox channels were suspended for Cablevision subscribers. In late 2014 and into early 2015, satellite provider DISH Network stopped carrying Fox News and Fox Business channels because of disagreements over licensing charges.

As both sides accuse the other of working in bad faith and both sides try to gain public sympathy through advertisements, websites, and social media, determining a winner in the court of public opinion is difficult. In a cultural shift, the relationship between the audience or public and media producers is also changing.

CULTURAL CONVERGENCE

Culture refers to the values, beliefs, and practices shared by a group of people. It may refer to a population at large, such as Americans, or to various subgroups within a larger group who may share certain ethnic, social, or professional traditions and practices, such as Irish Americans, video gamers, or corporate attorneys.

A powerful aspect of cultural convergence occurs through the globalization of media content when, for example, an HBO series such as *Sex and the City* becomes wildly popular among female office workers in Thailand; or when a Mexican telenovela, or soap opera, finds avid mass audiences in Russia. The popularity of such shows across a variety of nations speaks to some aspect they possess that foreign audiences identify with or aspire to, indicating that there may be more in common between a young professional woman in Bangkok and one in New York City than one might imagine. In the context of cultural convergence, a significant concern is the impact of global media on multiculturalism, or the diversity of culture, especially internationally.

But we can also look at cultural convergence from the perspective of how we consume, create, and distribute media content. The shift from an audience that was forced to be largely passive and silent, simply consuming content produced by large-scale media companies to a public that can now produce and share content



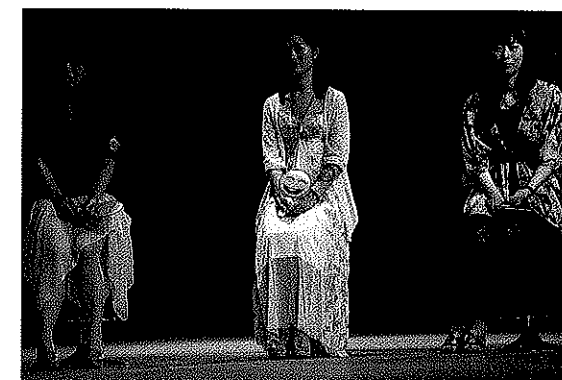
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Crying in a BMW

Television dating shows have become very popular in China, offering viewers a titillating mix of sharp tongues, attractive young women, discussions about sex, and rampant materialism. In the most popular show, *If You Are the One*, produced by Jiangsu TV, a female contestant won notoriety when asked by a bachelor if she would like to ride on his bicycle with him. She said she would "rather cry in the back of a BMW" than smile on the back of a bicycle.

Another female contestant told the panel that if anyone other than her boyfriend wanted to hold her hand it would cost the person \$30,000.⁷ These kinds of comments—combined with on-screen and offscreen scandals—have drawn the ire of China's television censors who claim shows like these are corrupting China's youth with vulgarity and crass materialistic values. As a result, some shows were canceled, and those that stayed on the air toned down the more flamboyant aspects of the programs.

The popular dating shows form part of China's burgeoning commercial television industry. When China's



state-run television allowed commercial stations in the 1990s, it may have created a dragon it cannot now fully control. Periodic attempts to set strict guidelines that discourage materialism among Chinese youth have had doubtful effect. In April 2012, Chinese media reported that several people were arrested for their involvement in a scheme in which a 17-year-old teenager donated a kidney because he wanted to buy an iPad and an iPhone.⁸

with others cheaply and easily is one of the major themes of this book and a crucial component of cultural convergence.

Although mass communication will continue, in the sense that media companies and others will continue to produce messages for large audiences, a significant trend involves more personalized and frequent messages tailored to the needs of individuals. Furthermore, what was traditionally considered interpersonal communication, such as email, can also be widely distributed by individuals through online networks, making the dividing line between interpersonal and mass communication increasingly hard to distinguish.

The ability of companies to better target people with personalized advertising and messages by tracking their online activities raises important issues of privacy, consumer rights, and media business economic models. Whether people will become more active in media production and more engaged in civic or political activities than in the past remains open to debate, with some scholars taking an increasingly critical look at how media corporations and companies in general are turning online public participation to their advantage. In one future, there is an engaged public who uses digital media and online networks to further interactivity and democracy prevails; and in another, there are established media conglomerates and other powerful economic forces that hijack public interests for their own ends. Such tensions and concerns will shape the nature of the Internet and digital media use far into the twenty-first century.



Digital technology has allowed more people to create professional-quality videos and other media content.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Discuss ways in which audiences can engage with each other through social media and with media organizations. Do you think this has made audiences more active? Why or why not?

Implications of Convergence

Whether an Internet-connected world will ultimately and fundamentally improve society is impossible to say; yet, for better and for worse, digital media have changed and will continue to transform the relationship between mass-communication industries and the public. Media organizations face many challenges, but so do media consumers as the nature of our media environment changes. Some general trends can be discerned that will provide a better perspective on how our digital-media use is changing our media world and, by extension, our social and cultural worlds.

Clearly, the changes brought about by convergence have had dramatic implications. Within the larger framework of the three types of convergence, these changes affect eight different areas, recurring themes addressed throughout this book:

1. Media organization
2. Media type
3. Media content

4. Media use
5. Media distribution
6. Media audience
7. Media profession
8. Attitudes and values

MEDIA ORGANIZATION

In the world that predated convergence, media content was created and published or broadcast on predetermined schedules by centralized media organizations in which a central unit or individual controls content production and distribution as well as marketing and other functions. A newspaper was printed and distributed daily or weekly; a television show appeared at a certain time on a certain day. The economics of the media system throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries heavily favored a mass-production model leveraging centralized control to produce efficiencies. Only large companies could bear the costs of content creation, production, marketing, and distribution.

Internet-based media can be less centralized, partly because many of the associated costs have been greatly reduced. Of course, movies, television shows, and many other types of mass-produced media still rely on the old production and distribution models; but now new marketing avenues on the Internet make it easier to mass distribute media products, as illustrated by the *The Interview* and Sony Pictures example at the beginning of the chapter.

Unlike public service media, most media companies throughout the world operate to make a profit. Advertising is one of the main sources of revenue for these organizations, and advertisers today are spending less in traditional media and more online. The gap is beginning to narrow, although many media companies are still not making up the difference with online advertising. This has increased the financial pressure, especially in print media, which, having seen the largest drop in advertising, has led to layoffs, reduced printing and pages of newspapers and magazines, closings, and buyouts of struggling companies.

Concentration of media ownership, or consolidation, was a growing trend even before digital media. Convergence is in some ways fueling media consolidation by leading traditional media giants such as Time Warner to join with a former online colossus such as America Online, giving rise in 2001 to the short-lived AOL Time Warner. In 2010, AOL, long jettisoned from Time Warner, bought one of the most popular blogs on the Web, *The Huffington Post*, yet another illustration of how the boundaries between traditional technology companies and media companies have blurred.

The trend is clear: Analog and digital media are rapidly being consolidated into the hands of a few very large, very powerful, and very rich owners, an economic structure referred to as an **oligopoly**. These media enterprises are increasingly likely to be part of large, global media organizations publicly owned and accountable to shareholders, whose main interest is the financial bottom line. When traditional telecommunications companies, such as Comcast, join with large media companies, such as NBC Universal, it gives the companies a tremendous centralized control over what access and content is available to media consumers, which is problematic.

oligopoly

An economic structure in which a few very large, very powerful, and very rich owners control an industry or collection of related industries.

Related to changes in media organization and structure are changes in the types of media or ways in which we get our media content. The seemingly insignificant decision to watch a television program on a TV on a specific day and time or on demand on a mobile device actually has significant consequences for media organizations, advertising revenues, and audiences.

MEDIA TYPE

Just what constitutes a television or radio receiver, or TV or radio programming, is in a state of flux. Once, it was simple. Radio programming was what a listener heard on a radio. Today, however, radio stations can transmit their programming via Internet or satellite and listeners can tune in via computers or smartphones. Moreover, these radio station websites can include images, graphics, text, and video, and listeners can choose what they want to hear or see when they want. The audience can sometimes even choose how they want to get content, such as watching the video, listening to the podcast, or reading the story. A growing number of print and radio reporters trained in digital video shooting and editing can now be "VJs," or video journalists, webcasting their stories visually.

Beyond decisions to either watch a video or read a story, defining media types entails consideration of vaster concerns such as media empires built on owning certain kinds of media and complex governmental laws that regulate different media industries and media ownership. In the United States, for example, print media enjoy more free-speech protections than the more tightly regulated electronic broadcast media, and cable providers are treated differently than broadcast networks. This raises the question of how text on the Internet should be treated—does it have the same First Amendment protections as its print counterpart because it is simply words? Or should it be treated as electronic media because it is delivered electronically? And now, as more people watch TV on mobile devices, what are the responsibilities of the Internet provider in all of this, as simply the channel and not the creator of the content itself? Many of these questions have yet to be settled.

MEDIA CONTENT

Stories told in a digital, online medium can make connections with other types of content much more easily than in any other medium. This is done primarily through the use of **hyperlinks**, clickable pointers to other online content. Online interactive advertisements encourage visitors to click on the ads and go to the sponsor's website, or play a game, or take a survey. In entertainment programming, hyperlinked content allows a viewer to explore a story in a nonlinear narrative, whose outcome may be determined by the user's choice of links.

On-demand content has become increasingly popular. In the traditional media world, the publisher or broadcaster set the schedule for news, entertainment, and marketing information. Children growing up in an on-demand media world of YouTube, podcasting, and digital video recorders (DVRs) may not readily understand why the same options don't always exist while listening to the radio or watching a traditional television channel that has no on-demand features. The changes have happened so fast and been so extensive that new terms have been created to highlight the differences between a generation that has grown up with

digital technologies and those that were born in the analog era. **Digital natives** are the postmillennial generation that have only known digital and social media, whereas **digital immigrants** are older generations that may also use digital media, but that generally have more trouble adapting in varying degrees to the digital media world.

Digitization, the process that makes media computer readable, is transforming both how and when media organizations distribute their content. Delivery no longer occurs solely through traditional channels but also via the Internet, satellites, mobile devices, and a host of other digital technologies. Increasingly, content is available twenty-four hours a day, with news organizations updating news continuously and for a worldwide audience.

Digital technology is similarly transforming the production cycle and process as illustrated by Figure 1-2. In fact, the transformation may be even deeper in terms of media-content production. Whether in Hollywood motion pictures, television shows or news, books, magazines, newspapers, or online, producing media content has rapidly become almost an entirely digital process. Shot with digital cameras and edited on computers, movies can be sent by high-speed Internet to digital movie theaters. Reporters working for television, radio, newspapers, or any other news operation capture their raw material with digital devices as well, editing their stories digitally. Even book authors typically compose on a computer, with digital words remaining the norm throughout the production process, being read on e-readers, smartphones, or tablets.

Digital media are challenging our understanding of media content as static or unchangeable. This is especially evident in a **wiki**, a website that can be edited by anyone. Wikis have grown in popularity, revealing the demand among Web users

digital native

A term coined in 2001 by author Marc Prensky for a member of a younger generation that has grown up with and is consequently very comfortable using digital media and adapting to rapid technological changes.

digital immigrant

An individual who grew up in the analog media era and who generally has more trouble adapting to new digital technologies, despite perhaps a desire to use and understand them.

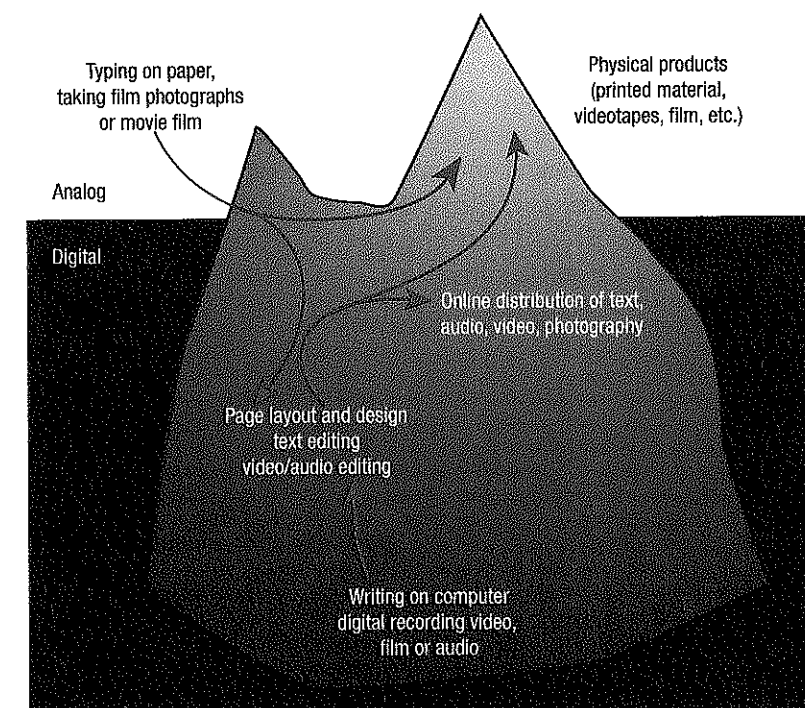
digitization

The process that makes media computer readable.

wiki

Website that lets anyone add, edit, or delete pages and content.

FIGURE 1-2 "Media Iceberg"



hyperlink

Clickable pointer to other online content.

for such a function. The wiki owes much of its success to Wikipedia, where the stuffy and authoritative encyclopedia article became a collaborative hybrid of encyclopedia and breaking news updated by users.

Of course, content was never actually unchangeable; it just seemed that way. A book could be reprinted as a new edition, yet for most readers the changes between editions were practically speaking impossible to discern. An online book is a much more fluid and dynamic document, with discussion forums on book material incorporated into the contents, ongoing online discussions between the author and readers, and interactions among readers.

Similarly, mash-ups of existing media have become common thanks to digital editing tools for music and video. Any popular item produced from mass media (e.g., advertisements, movie trailers, music videos) has the potential of being quickly transformed into a number of user-generated parodies or send-ups, most done simply for the fun of creating something rather than for commercial gain. Consider the many mash-up videos of Canadian singer-songwriter Carly Rae Jepsen's 2012 smash hit "Call Me Maybe." Online discussions and mash-ups exemplify increasing audience interaction and participation, one of many changes in media use.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Discuss any media content you have created in the past week or so (such as posting pictures to social media, forwarding videos or stories, etc.) and what happened with that media. Who saw the content you posted, and did it reach a wider audience than you thought it would?

MEDIA USE

The pervasiveness of the media system, expanded exponentially by modern global satellite communications, entails unprecedented access to mass communication. Fewer and fewer places on the globe are truly isolated, even famously remote and physically inaccessible locations. In May 1996, climber and guide Rob Hall was trapped high on Mt. Everest for more than a day after a sudden storm hit. Facing certain death—unable to descend and unable to be rescued—Hall was nonetheless capable of speaking to his pregnant wife in New Zealand by satellite phone.⁹

A 24/7 media age, which had begun to emerge even before the advent of the Internet, has arrived. This environment has several implications for industries and for consumers, how we use media, and what we expect from them. Media companies have to find content to fill the time, and thus we are seeing more encore performances of hit shows or movies on channels like TNT, showing the same movie two or three times in a row and on multiple nights. This practice fills programming time while allowing viewers greater scheduling flexibility.

Portable media devices and flat-screen technologies mean that we can take our media with us and access them in previously inaccessible places. Video displays in elevators or at checkout registers are two examples of how advertisers are using technology to reach captive audiences. Playing video games or watching videos on smartphones make media even more ubiquitous. Research shows we live in a multiscreen world where the tablet has begun to replace the personal computer or laptop.¹⁰ Although the TV is still the first screen or the most used, it is often employed in combination with a tablet or a smartphone, a phenomenon

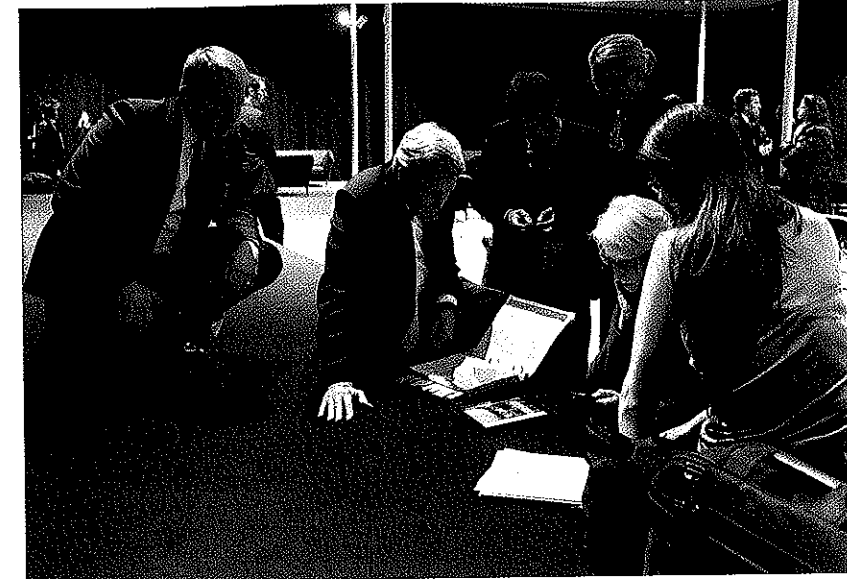
called "the third or fourth screen," depending on the relative position of the movie screen in terms of public use.

Pervasive mass communication means better access to entertainment, information, and news—in theory. It can also mean that media organizations can turn us into super-consumers of media of questionable social or civic value. One might, for example, question the value of viewing a lowbrow reality show on your mobile phone while riding the bus or spending hours at home watching funny cat videos on YouTube.

All the activities mentioned here are predicated on the broad assumption that individuals have ready access to computers, a broadband Internet (wired or Wi-Fi) connection, and the knowledge and skills to use them. Many in advanced, industrialized countries take these as givens, but these digital advantages are far from universal, even within developed countries.

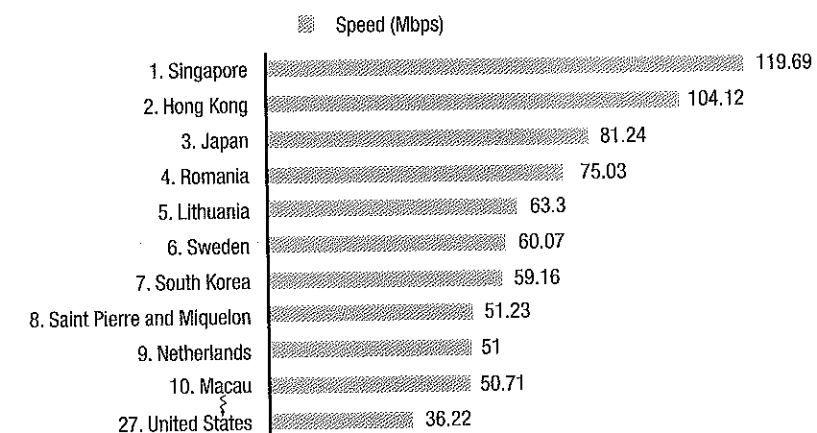
Better Internet access has neither arrived equally to all nor allowed everyone to benefit equally from that access. People in lower socioeconomic groups in industrialized countries have lagged in almost every category of Internet access. The high cost of telecommunication services, including broadband Internet, keeps many from being able to develop the skills and knowledge that can help them participate fully in society.

Although still far behind dozens of other countries, the United States has been making slight gains in high-speed Internet penetration and affordability of available services, as well as Internet speed. In 2013, the United States ranked thirty-third in terms of Internet speed, trailing Canada, but in 2015 it had moved up to twenty-seventh, slightly behind Norway. Even so, Americans' average Internet speed was less than a third that of first-ranked Singapore.¹¹ (See Figure 1-3.)



In Switzerland, Secretary of State John Kerry and his team huddle around a tablet to watch President Obama announce from the White House a new agreement with Iran on its nuclear program. **CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:** How important is a tablet or mobile device for your news consumption? Does digital portability help keep you better informed?

FIGURE 1-3 Average Consumer Download Speed by Country (2015)



Source: Ookla Speedtest, Household Download Index, <http://www.netindex.com/download/allcountries/>

MEDIA DISTRIBUTION

Content is much more fluid, dynamic, and rapidly transmitted around the globe in an online environment. The expansive reach of global media and instantaneous communications is not without its perils, however, for events in distant places can have far-reaching repercussions. False rumors about political or company leaders can demonstrate the power and danger of rapid global communication. For instance, a fake tweet in spring 2013 from a hacked Associated Press account claiming President Obama had been injured in an explosion temporarily wiped out \$130 billion in the stock market.

The Internet enables audiences around the world to participate in a dialog about global events and issues, bringing individuals separated by thousands of miles and various political and cultural boundaries into direct contact with each other. It is not clear what the net effect of this sea change in communication will be, but it is clear the foundation is potentially being laid for a more connected and engaged global public. Increased connectivity and engagement does not necessarily mean more rational discussion or civilized debate though, especially as people discover that what they may consider cultural common sense others may consider heresy. Consider the vitriol displayed in many discussion groups, even among people of the same culture but whose opinions differ.

Audiences are increasingly active in their communication with each other and with the creators of mass-communication content, a trend that can decrease corporate power as it increases consumer control. Through **viral marketing**, the online equivalent of word-of-mouth advertising, a popular website, product, or piece of content can rapidly reach millions of online users, all without corporate promotion or advertising dollars. The success of **peer-to-peer (P2P)** file-sharing programs demonstrates how an Internet audience can shift the balance of power from media organizations to consumers, even though those organizations created and provided that content in the first place.

Digital media make it easier than ever for the public to create and distribute media content, whether it is **user-generated content (UGC)** such as an original drawing done via illustration software, an animation or video, or a song sampled and mixed from current hits by famous recording artists. Writing and music have led the way in consumer-created content—especially music, where remixes of previously recorded (and copyrighted) material are common. This is not to say that the average person now has the same ability to produce and create a hit song as a major recording label, for most individuals lack the marketing and promotion resources that a recording label has at its disposal; but the basic capability of producing and distributing at least exists. Media companies have failed to control the channels of media distribution as they once did, and the Internet continues to threaten their business models. This has led to important changes in how consumers view and use content while changing the relationship between media companies and their audiences.

MEDIA AUDIENCE

Traditional mass communication is largely one way, from the sender of a message to the receiver. Relatively large, heterogeneous, and anonymous audiences have relatively few means by which to communicate either with each other on a mass scale or with the creators and publishers. Audiences in the age of convergence can now more easily and quickly communicate with each other and with those who create and publish mass-communication content via social media, email, online

viral marketing

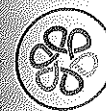
Promoting a product, service, or brand online through word of mouth, usually via online discussion groups, chats, and emails.

peer-to-peer (P2P)

The basis of file-sharing services, a computer communications model and network whose computers are considered equal peers who can send, store, and receive information equally well.

user-generated content (UGC)

Content created by the general public for distribution by digital media.

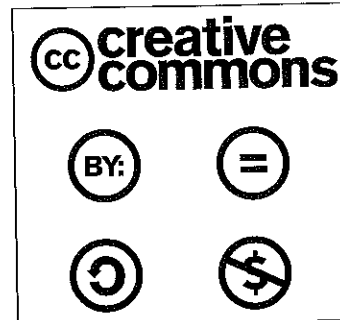


CONVERGENCE CULTURE

User-Generated Content: Creativity or Piracy?

With the ease of copying and altering digital content, almost anyone can remake media content. Two or three popular songs from different artists can be combined into a new song; an artist's paintings can be manipulated digitally and mixed with one's own work. Is this kind of content creation original art, or is it copyright infringement because it relies on preexisting art owned by someone else? What are the ethical and legal obligations of the creator who uses others' works?

Some argue that previous works encountered by an artist will influence almost any creative endeavor and that digital content simply facilitates mash-ups. They argue that copyright—essentially a government-granted monopoly to the content creator (or owner of the copyright, as is often the case with recording labels where the artists don't own the copyright)—is anachronistic in the digital age and increasingly stifles creativity through steep licensing or copyright fees. Copyright reduces the amount of creative material in the public domain, thus reducing the pool of works freely available.



Yet copyright remains a cornerstone of media industries, a fundamental way for media companies to generate revenues. Most media industries, especially in entertainment, would be hard pressed to envision a world with no copyright that would still allow them to create the kind of content they do.

Creative Commons, a non-profit organization, has made a range of "copyleft" contracts for content creators that help ensure creative works remain in the public domain. Under the various contracts, content creators allow their content to be used by anyone for free but with certain stipulations, such as they must be credited or the content can be used only if it isn't sold. Another common stipulation within the community is that people using the content must allow it to remain free for public use.

Visit the Creative Commons website and click on the "Find CC-licensed works" link (under the Explore heading). Search for some content of interest, such as "hip hop" via SoundCloud (Music) or ccMixer (Music). What do you find?

forums, and other interactive media. In addition, they can create the content themselves and reach far larger audiences with less expense than was possible with traditional media. They are generally not anonymous because they can be tracked through user names or IP addresses.

Audiences aren't willing to wait for the evening news or the next day's newspaper for developments in a breaking story. They can get their information and entertainment from literally thousands of sources around the world. Audiences are no longer content to sit back and listen in silence to what the media report; they actively seek, relay, and question the most recent information on social media, blogs, instant messaging, and other informal communication channels. There have been cases of employees finding out about looming company layoffs through websites hours before the company officially announced its plans, and military family members learning of the death of a loved one in combat through social media before the military informed the family.

Digital media do not cause people to become active media producers, called **produsers** by some media scholars in an attempt to capture how we now use and produce (not just consume) content. Nevertheless, digital media provide people who are so inclined with ready tools to produce media far more cheaply and easily than with analog alternatives. Active audiences have two important implications for media companies: They may compete for the limited time of target audiences, and they may become more critical consumers of mass communication, which is relevant to media literacy, the topic covered in Chapter 2.

produsers

Audiences who no longer are simply consumers but also produce content.

As producers, people learn to become more critical of the media and to raise questions about the quality of the news, information, and entertainment they receive. The channels available through interactive media let the public speak to a general audience and directly to traditional media producers, thereby imparting a sense of shared experience, even perhaps community, as people see that others may feel as they do; others also found a particular advertisement offensive or considered a certain show rather lame. An interactive public is more likely to be an active public, organizing and working together on common problems. Those who have developed trusting relationships through interaction are less likely to perceive themselves as anonymous faces in a crowd or isolated individuals who have no voice.

Risks accompany these changes, however. Actively choosing the media you want to see, hear, or read can narrow the scope of news or entertainment that you would see. The late Michael Dertouzos, former MIT Media Lab director called the tailoring of news to one's specific interests "The Daily Me." Some scholars worry that this phenomenon could fragment audiences into small groups of like-minded individuals who avoid interacting with other groups and who select only news and information that reinforces their beliefs and values. Although digital media can easily accelerate media fragmentation, a trend already evident in analog media, personalization and localization of news does have potential benefits by allowing the public to get the most relevant and engaging content for them as individuals while becoming better informed about current events.

MEDIA PROFESSION

Obviously, all the changes that convergence has brought to mass communication will also change the way communications professionals do their jobs. Just as digital media absorbed traditional print, video, and audio, divisions between print and electronic journalists, and between advertising and public relations practitioners, will fade. In addition to writing effectively, more newsrooms expect reporters to use video and audio to tell stories. To better reach and persuade audiences, those in advertising and public relations find themselves increasingly using tools that were previously the sole domain of the other profession.

To take advantage of digital media, new skills will have to be learned, and it will be more important than ever not to abandon the fundamental principles and ethics of each profession in the inexorable march toward the digital realm. This is no easy order given how corporate parents can exert pressure to blur the lines between news and entertainment or news and promotion.

Giving the audience a chance to respond to and interact with journalists as well as provide their own news coverage in the form of **citizen journalism** is another important development in journalism today. A mistake in a story can be publicly countered, corrected in the discussion section of the story, and then incorporated in a revised version. Citizens can provide news content or report on stories of relevance to their locales that big news operations may not deem newsworthy.

ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Changes in audience interactions have had repercussions for companies in general and media companies in particular. People have come to expect a certain degree of

transparency in their communications with each other and with leading organizations, including media organizations. A growing number of cases that exposed organizations deceiving the public have damaged their reputations. One such example involved Edelman, a global PR firm that financed the "Wal-Marting Across America" blog in 2006. The blog was ostensibly written by a couple traveling around the country who liked to park their recreational vehicle at Wal-Mart because of the free services offered to RVers. Of course, they had nothing but good things to say about Wal-Mart and its employees. When the truth was revealed that Edelman, whose client was Wal-Mart, was actually paying the couple, the ethics of such a blog, which failed to state who was funding it, were hotly debated.

Because most people on the Web do not physically make contact with each other and know one another only through their online interactions and communication, establishing a sense of trust has become crucial. A growing number of reputation systems aid users in this effort, such as rankings on Amazon or eBay and "karma points" on Slashdot, a popular technology news and discussion website. Managing an online reputation is serious business for companies as well as for individuals. Imagine the potential impact of bad reviews on eBay for someone trying to make a living by selling items on the site. Companies are also vulnerable and can fall prey to disinformation campaigns, which makes monitoring rival blogs and online discussions important.

Reputation and transparency rely on digital relationships founded on trust and respect. Media companies that do not realize this will suffer in the long run. For many, it means a shift in corporate policies or philosophies and a loss of the control they have enjoyed through much of the mass-communications era. Conventional wisdom among some executives is that employees are more willing to spend company time doing personal things, like shopping online, than they were in the past. But, on the other hand, companies, which also expect employees to stay longer at work or to answer business emails while at home or on vacation, must accept that the blurring of company time and private time is a large-scale trend.

The convergence of digital media has led to confusion over our traditional notions of privacy, both for individuals and for companies. Although privacy laws in a number of cases have clearly been violated, even by traditional standards, often what is acceptable or even legal and what is not is still a source of confusion. A person writing a blog, for instance, may consider it a private journal. So if a potential employer mentions inappropriate postings during a job interview, she may be angered by what feels like an invasion of her privacy. Similarly, information that always has been public but too cumbersome to retrieve, such as property deeds or police arrests, can now be easy to find online.

One component of privacy is alone time, and these moments have become increasingly rare in an age of pervasive media. Maintaining a sense of privacy can be difficult when we are getting barraged with updates from Facebook friends or receiving text messages. Some even argue that digital natives raised on social media have lost the ability to appreciate or even tolerate solitude, once a coveted commodity.

Wireless communication between devices, without the need for specific human direction—such as swiping a debit card at a supermarket checkout—makes it easy to establish a profile of a person simply through his electronic transactions over a short period of time. The ability to track consumers with such accuracy, especially on the Web and through mobile devices, means that we can personalize our media content; but it also means we have revealed much about our

citizen journalism

The gathering and sharing of news and information by public citizens, particularly via mobile and social media, sometimes via traditional media.



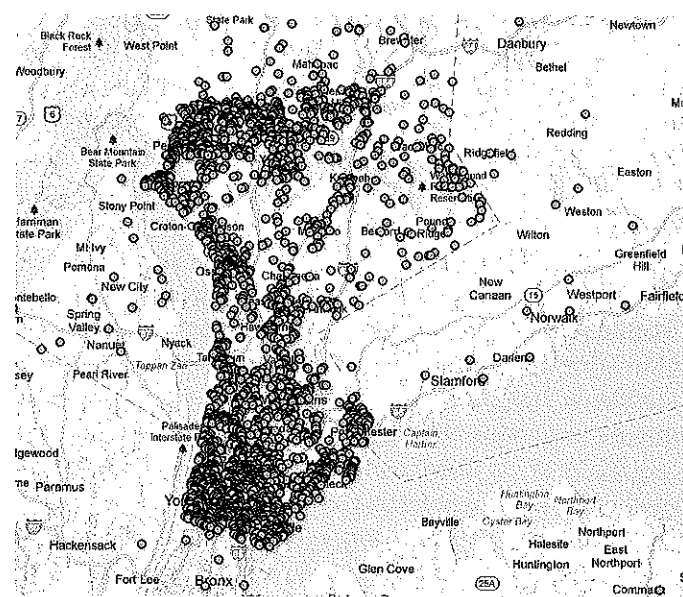
ETHICS IN MEDIA

Interactively Mapping Gun Owners

On December 22, 2012, the Poughkeepsie (NY) *Journal News* published online an interactive map providing the names and addresses of all registered handgun owners in New York and Rockland counties. Although the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution protects citizens' right to bear arms, there has never been consensus about just what this right means. Recently, the enduring national debate about gun control or rights has intensified following a spate of shooting of schoolchildren, such as that in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012; Sparks, Nevada, in 2013; Troutdale, Oregon, in 2014, and elsewhere—these, in addition to similar episodes of carnage on university campuses across the country.

When the *Journal News* published the names and addresses of thousands of legal gun owners, however, a vigorous debate ensued about gun owners' right to privacy and public access to personal information, even if such information was in the public domain. Within seventy-two hours of the publication of the interactive map, more than 1,700 comments about the map and its data had been posted on the *Journal News* discussion board. Both sides weighed in on the debate. One poster wrote, "LOVE the Gun License map! Excellent information to anyone concerned with who they live around!" Another wrote, "So should we start wearing yellow Stars of David so the general public can be aware of who we are?"

In the age before ubiquitous Internet access, government agencies centrally kept such public domain data and restricted access to limited groups or individuals with a



Mining public data sources, this interactive news map enables access to detailed personal information about gun ownership.

special interest and who were willing to physically go where the data were housed.

The convergence of data, the Internet, and digital devices has made it increasingly common for media organizations or others to post such personal information for all to see, from Poughkeepsie to Kathmandu. Is it ethical to make these data so easily and widely available for all? Should media make such personal information available if it helps foster more debate about important topics, regardless of ethical concerns?

personal habits and interests, not all of which we may wish to share with companies or advertisers who use that information for **behavioral targeting** in their advertising campaigns.

Mass-communication organizations can keep detailed and updated records on their audiences by tracking their paths within their websites through intelligent software agents and programs known as **cookies**. These allow a website to recognize when a previous user returns and to offer personalized content. Cookies provide invaluable information for media organizations to better understand an audience's media behaviors, preferences, and habits. Advertisers on websites also add cookies to your computer so they can track your browsing behavior as well. Surveillance is an increasingly powerful tool necessary to optimize content and to give advertisers a high return on their investment, even as it raises serious concerns about the erosion of privacy.

behavioral targeting

Advertisers tracking individuals' web-browsing behavior to provide ads that closely match the topics of sites visited or searches made.

cookies

Information that a website puts on a user's local hard drive so that it can recognize when that computer accesses the website again. Cookies also allow for conveniences like password recognition and personalization.

So far we have discussed how convergence has been changing the media industries and their business models, the issues communications professionals have faced with the advent of new technologies, the nature of the relationship between media producers and audiences, and legal matters that have yet to be addressed. You have gotten a glimpse of the powerful transformations taking place today in mass communications and the media and will see even more detailed examples in subsequent chapters.

But before we can move forward, we have to take a step back and look at what mass communication itself is and how media scholars theorize it operates. We will then be able to use these foundations to better understand the changes taking place today.

Mass Communication in the Digital Age

The traditional mass-communication model differs from other forms of communication, such as **interpersonal communication**, which is communication between two or more persons. Interpersonal communication often interacts and intersects with **mass communication**, communication to a large group or groups of people that remain largely unknown to the sender of the message.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Interpersonal communication is usually interactive, or flowing at least two ways, and tends not to be anonymous. Think of chatting with a friend or a small group. Responses are generally immediate, and the speaker or speakers will often adjust their messages based on the responses they receive. Interpersonal communication involves both verbal and nonverbal messages: not just what was said, but how it was said.

These same principles apply to live public speaking, even though this is a one-to-many model, and opportunities for audience feedback will be more limited than in a casual small-group setting. The speaker and the audience can communicate through a variety of nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, physical contact, or body language. If speakers see looks of boredom or audience members yawning, they can adjust their presentation accordingly in an effort to make it more interesting.

Interpersonal communication can also take place through a **medium**, or communication channel, such as the telephone, when texting or talking, or the Internet, when participating in a chat room or on a discussion board, for example. Note how the mediation limits some aspects of interpersonal communication compared to face-to-face interactions. Visual cues are absent either on the telephone or online (unless using a webcam), and meanings can be misconstrued in text messages (even those supplemented with emoticons). The online medium also blurs the line between interpersonal and mass communication, as a private email or text can be forwarded to many other people.

interpersonal communication

Communication between two or more individuals, often in a small group, although it can involve communication between a live speaker and an audience.

mass communication

Communication to a large group or groups of people that remain largely unknown to the sender of the message.

medium

A communication channel, such as talking on the telephone, instant messaging, or writing back and forth in a chat room.



Interpersonal communication takes place between two or more people, is interactive, and can happen face-to-face or through a medium.

MASS COMMUNICATION

Media of mass communication refer to any technological means of communicating between large numbers of people distributed widely over space or time. Ever since Johannes Gutenberg invented the Western world's first mechanical printing press in Germany in 1455, one general model of communication has traditionally characterized mass media, whose central features, as articulated by different theorists, are also outlined in Table 1-1.

According to this framework, media companies create content they believe the audience will want and distribute that content to an audience who has very few ways to provide immediate feedback. This premise has characterized all media of mass communication—books, magazines, newspapers, broadcast television or radio, cable or satellite TV, recorded music, or motion pictures. Digital media, however, are radically changing that model, as we will see throughout this book.

In the traditional mass-communication model, content creators play a fundamental role in society by representing and defining reality (consider the work of journalists or other communication professionals) or by creating fictional works to explain, interpret, or entertain (consider the work of artists, authors, and film auteurs). Authors and artists create stories about issues and events; they write books and articles; they create music or motion pictures; and then they publish, broadcast, or present their creations at set dates or times and in set locations.

Some mass-communications models, such as live television or radio, are **synchronous media**, which require the audience to be assembled simultaneously for the broadcast, transmission, or event. Others are **asynchronous media**, such as newspapers or magazines, for example, which do not require the audience to assemble at any given time. Audio and video recording devices let people

synchronous media

Media that take place in real time and require the audience to be present during the broadcast or performance, such as live television or radio.

asynchronous media

Media that do not require the audience to assemble at a given time, such as printed materials and recorded audio or video.

TABLE 1-1 Traditional Theories or Models of Analog Media

THEORY OR MODEL	MAIN FEATURES OR CHARACTERISTICS
General Mass Media	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication flow is largely one-way, from sender or source to receiver or audience. 2. Communication is from one or a few to many (i.e., one or a few sources generate and distribute content to large, heterogeneous audiences). 3. Communication is anonymous (sources typically do not know their audiences, and audiences do not know the sources, except at a general level). 4. Audiences are seen as largely passive recipients of the messages distributed by the media, with little opportunity for feedback and practically no opportunity for immediate feedback or interaction with each other.
Shannon and Weaver Transmission Model (see p. 28)	Information source Transmitter Channel Receiver Destination
Schramm's Simplified Communication Model (see p. 29)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A source, who encodes 2. a message, or signal, which is transmitted (via the media or directly via interpersonal communication) to 3. a destination, where the receiver decodes it.

time shift and record a live concert or performance so that it can be watched any-time, thereby turning synchronous media into asynchronous media.

time shift

Recording of an audio or video event for later listening or viewing.

MASS COMMUNICATION AND CONVERGENCE

Digital media and online networks have blurred the line between interpersonal and mass communication. The media companies built on mass-communication models, despite facing many challenges in the digital era, are not disappearing anytime soon, and neither will certain fundamental aspects of mass communication.

What is changing, however, is the interplay between mediated interpersonal communication and mass communication: Interpersonal communication is capable of adopting some characteristics of mass communication, and mass communication is trying to adopt certain characteristics of interpersonal communication in an attempt to remain relevant to audiences. Let's examine some examples.

Email is considered a form of mediated interpersonal communication, yet as anyone who has had his or her inbox clogged with forwarded jokes from Aunt Gertrude can attest, it can also be broadcast to many recipients, following the one-to-many model typical of mass communication.

Despite their interpersonal tone and scope, some weblogs, or **blogs**, have become very influential among the public or among decision makers, with readership greater than many well-established mainstream publications. Blogs may allow immediate feedback or discussion from readers, who often must be registered to post feedback and are therefore not anonymous—thereby weakening two of the linchpins in the definition of mass communication. Yet it is hard to claim that the most popular blogs are not a type of mass communication because of the numbers of audience members reading them and the lack of interaction between the blog author and a respondent.

blog

Short for weblog, a type of website in which a person posts regular journal or diary entries, with the posts arranged chronologically.

Twitter also follows a blended mass-communication and mediated interpersonal-communication model, as people broadcast their tweets to thousands or even millions of followers, yet the followers can re-tweet and interact with each other and their followers.

The fragmented nature of audiences on the Web complicates attempts to define a "mass." Some websites have small but dedicated followings, while others have millions of visitors a month, reaching far more people than your typical local newspaper. Yet the local newspaper would traditionally be considered a type of mass communication, unlike a YouTube video such as "Charlie Bit My Finger—Again!" despite over 808 million views eight years after being posted and well over two thousand various remixes and spoofs.

It is important to remember that much of the interaction and conversation that occurs online does so because of the information and entertainment generated from mass communication. "Charlie Bit My Finger," for example, gave rise to a handful of fan clubs on Facebook (including a Mexican one). Consider a TV series like *Star Trek*, though, which ran for only three seasons in the late 1960s but continues to have a thriving fan subculture that consumes—and creates—content about the series and its actors, not to mention the various movies and television-series spin-offs from the original *Star Trek*. The daily mix of news, information, and entertainment that we consume through mass-communication channels gives us fodder for remixes, blogs, interactions with each other—and reactions to media producers who provide the content.

Functions of Mass Communication

Defining mass communication was once straightforward. The media were relatively stable and well known. The functions of mass communication in society were also relatively well understood and thoroughly researched. Studies by Harold D. Lasswell, Charles Wright, and others suggest that these functions have tended to fall largely into four broad categories.¹² These functions can be a useful lens through which to examine various forms of mass communication.

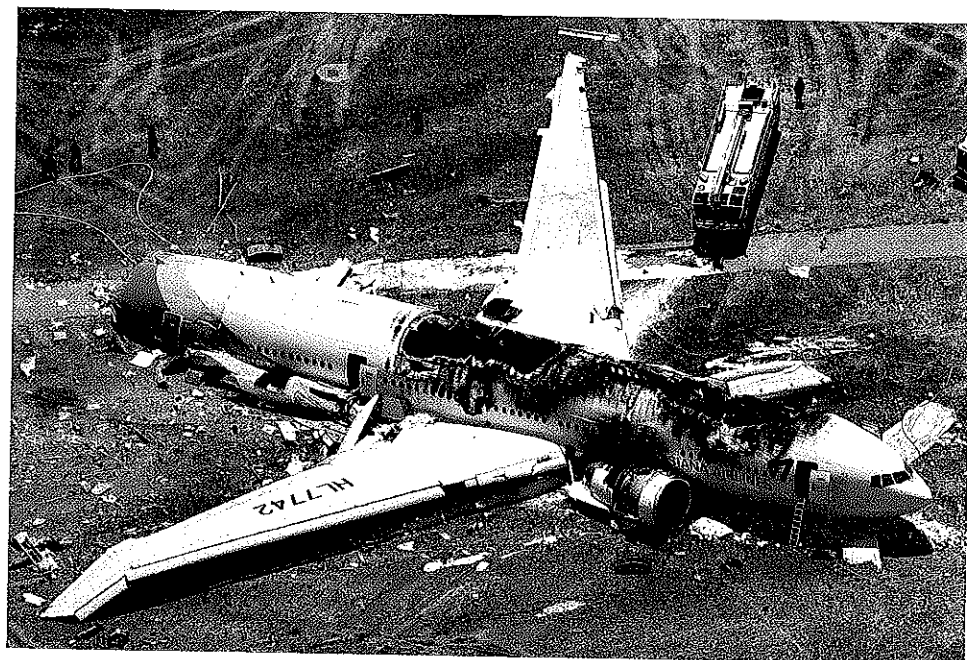
surveillance

Primarily the journalism function of mass communication, which provides information about processes, issues, events, and other developments in society.

SURVEILLANCE

In mass communication, **surveillance** refers primarily to journalism that provides information about processes, issues, events, and other developments in society. This can include news on the latest military activities, weather alerts, and political scandals. Aspects of advertising and public relations as well as educational communication can also employ surveillance.

One weakness in the surveillance function is that an excess of news about disasters, murders, or other unusual events can skew the audience's perception of what is normal in society. Receiving too much information on a particular topic can also promote apathy. Consider how media coverage of a scandal regarding a sports figure such as Yankees baseball player Alex Rodriguez can take on a life of its own and seem to continue forever until we are truly sick of seeing any more stories about A-Rod and athlete doping. Celebrity scandals may present more trivial examples, but skewed or apathetic responses to coverage of wars or disasters, especially in developing countries, are more significant and problematic.



Although surveillance is an important function of mass communication, repeated exposure to a story can have negative effects. After you hear about plane crashes in the media, are you more likely to worry about being in a plane crash?

CORRELATION

Correlation refers to the ways in which media interpret events and issues and ascribe meanings that help individuals understand their roles within the larger society and culture. Journalism, advertising, and public relations all shape public opinion through commentary, criticism, or even targeted marketing campaigns. Polls or surveys allow individuals to learn what others think about an issue and where their views fit within mainstream opinions. People may even shift their views or beliefs subtly to better align themselves with a desirable social group.

By correlating one's views with other groups or perceived notions of general public opinion, the media can help maintain social stability, although this function can be taken too far, and the media can thwart social change or block a full range of views from being disseminated to a mass audience. Interpretation can also tend to favor established business or elite interests over disadvantaged or minority groups, increasing the apparent credibility and authority of the dominant culture.

CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

Cultural transmission refers to the transference of the dominant culture, as well as its subcultures, from one generation to the next or to immigrants. This includes socialization, which the media perform by teaching societal rules and depicting standards of behavior. This function is especially important for children but also necessary for adults who may have immigrated recently to a new country with a different culture.

Not all aspects of cultural transmission are viewed favorably. It has been criticized for creating a homogenized culture that promotes mindless consumerism as a means to achieve happiness rather than imparting more humanistic, and ultimately more rewarding, values such as an appreciation of multiculturalism and diversity.

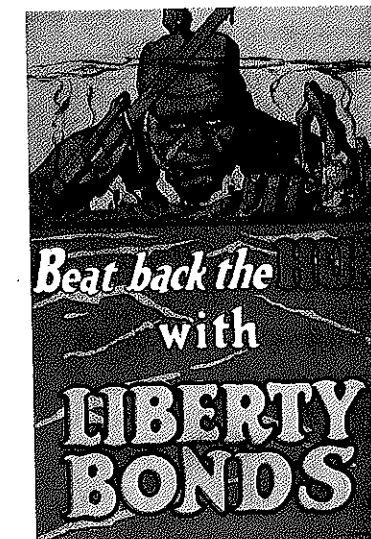
ENTERTAINMENT

The entertainment function is performed in part by all three of these activities (surveillance, correlation, and cultural transmission) but also involves the generation of content designed specifically and exclusively to entertain. Although some claim that this function helps raise artistic and cultural taste among the general populace, others disagree, arguing that mass media encourage escapism and promote lowbrow entertainment at the expense of high art.

Entertainment can also perpetuate certain stereotypes about various groups, wittingly or unwittingly. These can be especially hard to detect because they are often presented as part and parcel of a story line that makes oversimplified characters seem natural in context. For good and for bad, powerful cultural principles and symbols permeate entertainment, transmitting specific sets of values that can go unquestioned.

correlation

Media interpretation ascribing meaning to issues and events that helps individuals understand their roles within the larger society and culture.



Wartime propaganda posters provide windows into how public opinion can be shaped.

cultural transmission

The process of passing on culturally relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values from person to person or group to group.



Cultural transmission is a function of mass communication sometimes criticized for promoting mindless consumerism.